You Can't Go Home Again: Art as Therapy, Photovoice, and Housing Instability

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LOYOLA UNIVERSITY CHICAGO

YOU CAN’T GO HOME AGAIN:
ART AS THERAPY, PHOTOVOICE,
AND HOUSING INSTABILITY

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK

BY
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CHICAGO, IL

AUGUST 2020
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

What a thought-provoking endeavor this has been! I would like to thank my committee for the long hours that they put in to making this possible. To Brian L. Kelly, who was my Chair, thank you for being there for me throughout the process. I experienced several ups and downs while gathering data in the field; you were my advocate when I was down, and you were an endless source of guidance and support when I was up. On the hardest days, when I needed you most, you were always a phone call away. I want to thank my Co-chair Susan Grossman for being a loyal friend and believing in me from day one. I came to you with almost no academic equity, and when I was broke and had nothing to offer, you stood by me, invested in me, and would not give up on me. Thank you for never abandoning me, you truly were a beacon of hope throughout the process. To Henry Kronner, who was my Reader, thank you for your patience, understanding, guidance, mentorship, and mostly your friendship throughout the process. When I first showed up on campus as an adjunct, you were there for me, and when I needed a reprieve or advice, I could rely on you.

To all the faculty and staff at Loyola University Chicago that were a part of my journey, although too numerous to mention, I appreciate each one of you. To my cohort, Amzie Moore and Brent In, thank you for being like brothers to me as I progressed through the program. To the co-investigators who worked hard to make this happen, thank you for working alongside me at various steps throughout the process. Thank you to all of my friends and family, although too numerous to mention, you each played your part.
To my parents June B. Jackson, Wille W. Jackson, Sr., Lois Kelly, and Donald Kelly, thank you for supporting me every step of the way. To Carol Carpenter and Stan Carpenter, thank you for being a source of love and support. To my closest friends Sondra Lee and Power Lee, thank you so much for selflessly sacrificing your time to help me accomplish this goal. I want to thank my immediate family which includes June L. Jackson and Kahley A. Kubal, you felt it the most, as you were the ones who made great sacrifices by going without me for hours on end to see to it that I could accomplish this goal. I want to thank my wife Autumn L.K. Jackson, for the endless love and support. You stood by my side with extraordinary perseverance and resolve, and this accomplishment is as much yours as it is mine. Finally, I’d like to thank God.
This dissertation is dedicated to people that have experienced homelessness. I also dedicate this manuscript to my ancestors, my family, and my loving wife Autumn L.K. Jackson.
You Can’t Go Home Again

-Thomas Wolf
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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

Brief Description

Chicago Help Initiative (CHI) offered participants experiencing housing instability or homelessness a conduit through which they could be exposed to art and cultural events and activities. The objective of this qualitative study was to use an art-based method to better understand how exposure to art and cultural programing impacted people experiencing housing instability. With the use of the Photovoice methodology within the ethnographic tradition (Photoethnography), this study accomplished the following: (1) it used Photovoice, observations, and focus groups to look at the impact of art and cultural exposure on a small group of participants experiencing housing instability, (2) it examined the meaning that participants experiencing housing instability assigned to having their photos and messages disseminated to their community, (3) it attempted to better understand the impact of art and cultural exposure on participants experiencing housing instability by talking to staff, volunteers, and administrators acting as art exposure facilitators within the arts communities. There were three research questions, which were: (1) What is the impact of art and cultural exposure and engagement on CHI program participants experiencing housing instability? (2) What are CHI program participants experiences with disseminating their art, and what meaning did they attach to these experiences? (3) What were the CHI staff, volunteer, and administrators’ perceptions of the impact of art and cultural exposure programing on CHI participants experiencing housing instability? This study had two overarching objectives. One objective of this study was to
utilize Photovoice as an art-based method to better understand how exposure to art via the CHI arts and culture program impacted participants experiencing housing instability. The second objective of this study was to contribute to the sparse literature on the socio-cultural benefits of exposure to art and cultural engagement for individuals experiencing housing instability or homelessness.

**Background**

Because this study promoted the use of Photovoice as an art-based approach to evaluating programs that utilized art and cultural exposure and engagement with individuals experiencing housing instability or homelessness, it was necessary to discuss three topics in this background. This background provided information on the multi-method study that this project fit into, the agencies that were being evaluated, and art-based activities including photography and the use of Photovoice.

**Multi-Method Evaluation**

In March of 2017 researchers from Loyola University Chicago launched a multi-method longitudinal study that was grounded in the ethnographic tradition. The study was titled, *Evaluation of the Chicago Help Initiative and Red Line Service Collaboration: Arts and Culture Exposure and Engagement for Adults Experiencing Homelessness*. The purpose of the study was to better understand how exposure to art and cultural events impacted individuals experiencing housing instability or homelessness. The research study methods included guided focus groups, surveys, and art exposure activity observations. The intervention group participated in the arts and culture program and the comparison group participated in other supportive services groups for literacy and yoga. Study participant recruitment was capped at 20 per group. Data were
collected over various intervals for 12 months. More about the agencies that collaborated on this project is discussed next.

**Agencies**

The art and culture exposure and engagement programing took place through the collaboration of two agencies. This collaboration was the focal point of the multi-method evaluation. The agencies that will be discussed here are Chicago Help Initiative (CHI) and Red Line Service (RLS). Although these agencies collaborated in the initial multi-method study, for the purposes of this study, CHI was the sole service provider and assumed the roles associated with both a drop-in center and an art exposure program.

**Chicago Help Initiative**

The moto of Chicago Help Initiative is, “Helping today for a better tomorrow” (“chicagohelpinitiative.org,” 2020). The agency is appropriately named, as its mission entails an initiative to help those that are homeless. Chicago Help Initiative’s mission is to help form an alliance of business, religious, and social service organizations and leaders from the private, public, and non-profit sectors to create an environment where individuals experiencing housing instability, poverty, or homelessness can gain access to food, shelter, health & medical care, and education & employment services. Chicago Help Initiative’s role within the alliance is also to educate partners on ways in which they can help ease the plight of homelessness by providing opportunities for people to network in a social environment that is conducive to building self-esteem, resilience, and hope (“chicagohelpinitiative.org,” 2020).

CHI runs a weekly dinner, which operates out of Catholic Charities. The people that serve participants at the drop-in center located at 721 N. LaSalle St., Chicago, IL 60654 are Chicago Help Initiative staff, volunteers, and administrators (“chicagohelpinitiative.org,” 2020).
For example, the Executive Director of Chicago Help Initiative (CHI) is there Wednesdays overseeing the agency and ensuring that the programs run smoothly. Additionally, board members serve and help with the serving line every Wednesday. Outside of operating the drop-in center, CHI staff, volunteers, and administrators offer and facilitate a host of services such as: The Jobs Club, The Bike Fair, Health Services, Chair Yoga, Adult Learning Programs, and Red Line Service art and cultural exposure and engagement activities (“chicagohelpinitiative.org,” 2020).

**Red Line Service**

The motto of Red Line Service was, “Reframing Art as a broad Social Justice Endeavor” (“redlineservice.org,” 2020). The agency was named after the Red Line which is a major subway rail throughout Chicago. Red Line Service’s mission was to help expose and engage individuals experiencing homelessness or concerned with homelessness to art and cultural communities where enriching dialogue can take place and relationships can form. Red Line Service’s goal was to help people transition or change with the help of radical social inclusiveness, which can be found within the artistic community (“redlineservice.org,” 2020). Red Line Service made a deliberate effort at reframing art as a means to social justice through social connectedness via engagement within the art community. Through social unity and continued open access to the art community, Red Line Service created an environment where individuals experiencing housing instability or homelessness could be exposed to art as part of their daily lived experiences (“redlineservice.org,” 2020).

Red Line Service (RLS) art program began offering field trips or excursions to participants of the CHI program in March of 2017 (“redlineservice.org,” 2020). Field trips have included the Looking Glass Theatre, Hyde Park Center, The Field Museum, and The Smart
Museum of Art. Field trips were expected to be held on a monthly basis. The RLS programs offered free admission to participating CHI members. Participants not only had access to all of these RLS events, but to all future events through February of 2018. The events were guided by RLS facilitators and artists that set up outings and organized events, meals, and talks (“redlineservice.org,” 2020).

Again, the initial multi-method study looked at a collaboration between CHI and RLS to better understand the impact of art exposure on individuals experiencing housing instability or homelessness. For the purposes of this study, CHI and RLS did not collaborate to offer art and cultural exposure services. While offering insight on these agencies provides some context through which to understand the background of this study, only CHI offered art exposure services in addition to the usual services offered at the drop-in center. In their role as facilitators, CHI staff, volunteers, and administrators offered art exposure services similar to those that were offered by RLS.

**Exposure to Art-Based Activities**

For the purposes of this study, art-based activities were defined as activities that incorporate art as part of the experience. An art-based activity can be a creation activity, such as producing paintings, taking photos, creating music, or participating in plays (Adams, 1909; Kelly & Doherty, 2016; Thomas et al., 2011). As a function of the methodology, participants were exposed to art creation in the form of photography. While the impact of photography on CHI program participants experiencing housing instability was not the focus of this study, it is an important part of the Photovoice methodology. The Photovoice methodology will be discussed below, along with the theoretical empowerment traditions associated with it.
Art-based activities can also be appreciation activities. Examples of appreciation activities include exposure to art museums, enjoying a play, or listening to live music. This project primarily focused on art appreciation activities by examining what happened when a group of adult participants that were exposed to various forms of art and cultural events used the Photovoice methodology to better understand the impact of the program on their own lives.

Art-based activities have long been a part of recreation and leisure in Chicago. According to Kelly and Doherty (2016), in 1885 the recreation movement swept across the nation providing parks and leisure spaces in major cities such as New York and Chicago. Art and music-based activities were also a part of the early Hull House settlement (Addams, 1909). Jane Addams, co-founder of Hull House believed that it was imperative that clients have access to recreational activities such as art, as it allowed them to express themselves and avoid potentially destructive temptations (Addams, 1909).

Young people have also benefited from exposure to art-based activities. Kelly and Doherty (2016) provide an overview of art-based activities in social group work with youth from the late 19th century to the mid-20th century. Lang’s (2016) work suggests that Kelly and Doherty’s (2016) review on art-based activities may lead or lend themselves to non-deliberative social work practice, which is a form of practice that speaks to a more intuitive and artful ingenuity employed by social workers when addressing problems in the moment. In turn, non-deliberative social work provides individuals with the latitude to engage their own strengths. Using art-based activities, social workers are able to help participants engage in creative activities that help them find their own problem-solving approaches outside of the immediate art community. This means that participants can use these art-based activities to later engage and
apply cognitive thought and processes to their various problems (Kelly & Doherty, 2016; Lang, 2016).

**Photovoice**

One artistic medium that can help a participant tell a story is photography. Photovoice is a form of participatory action research (PAR) that was developed by Dr. Wang in the 1990’s. The Photovoice method is a powerful research tool that utilizes photographs that are taken by study participants as talking points. This methodology starts with a prompt, which guides participants in taking pictures that they later use when they tell their stories from their own points of view (Latz & Mulvihill, 2017).

Photovoice was initially referred to as Photo novella (Wang, 1996). The term Photo novella was initially coined by Wang (1996) in her seminal work with Chinese Women. According to Wang (1996), the goal of her work was to empower Chinese women to record their health needs, increase the participants’ knowledge of those needs, and to influence policy makers and society at large to act on those needs. Wang (1996) outlines the theoretical underpinnings of Photovoice. She described them as Freirean and feminist, which are participant centered theories that speak to the empowerment tradition, and expressed the importance of the participants taking their own photos and telling their own stories to influence policy (Wang, Burris, & Ping, 1996). Building on the tradition of Participatory Action Research (PAR), these women received training and guidance on how to carry out their portion of the study, which included co-constructing a policy narrative, contextualizing their photos, and having that narrative disseminated before policy makers.

According to Latz (2017), photography has been used in research prior to Photovoice. For example, photography was used in Sociology to create a research design called Visual
Sociology. In the *American Journal of Sociology*, this type of work was in use as early as 1896 (Latz, 2017). Latz (2017) also notes that Visual Anthropology and Photoethnography have taken root. These designs allow ethnographers to gather observational data through various sources with the use of additional data collection tools (camera, phone, digital camera, etcetera). Finally, Auto-Photography and the use of photos in psychology have taken root as useful tools for participants and clients alike (Latz & Mulvihill, 2017).

**Rationale**

Individuals experiencing housing instability are at risk of becoming homeless. Homelessness is associated with marginalization and a loss of social capital (Griffith et al., 2015; Thomas et al., 2011). The *Social Work Professional Code of Ethics* requires social work researchers to advocate for vulnerable populations within the broader society. According to Ethical Standard 6.01 *Social Welfare* (2020), social workers are to fight for social justice so as to improve the living conditions of those in poverty (National Association of Social Workers [NASW], 2020). According to the *NASW Illinois Chapter* (2020), social workers should help individuals that are in poverty, particularly the homeless, many of whom are suffering from disabling conditions such as addiction, depression, and mental illness (“naswil.org,” 2020).

This study is important because art engagement and exposure can lead to the acquisition of social capital, which is a type of benefit acquired through socializing that leads to positive feelings and benefits associated with being more socially connected. In short, these benefits alleviate problems associated with the marginalizing and isolating effects brought on by the plight of homelessness (Thomas et al., 2011). According to section 401(2) of the *McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, 42 U.S.C. 11360*, homelessness is defined as living in a place that is not designed for occupancy. Chicago’s Point in Time (PIT) counts indicate that over
5,250 people are homeless every night (HUD, 2020). In January of 2019, Point in Time (PIT) counts indicated that over 550,000 people were homeless in the United States (HUD, 2020). In Illinois, there was a .5 percent increase in homelessness between 2014 and 2015 (HUD, 2020; NAEH, 2020). For these reasons, it is important to look at programs that can mitigate the effects of homelessness.

A program area that is showing promise is the utilization of art exposure and engagement with individuals experiencing housing instability or homelessness. Some studies demonstrate that adults experiencing homelessness and utilizing art engagement and exposure programs feel a sense of social inclusion, and some of these adults also gain financial opportunities that help them prepare to transition out of homelessness (Griffith et al., 2015; Thomas et al., 2011).

This study builds on an existing study which was an evaluation of the collaboration of Chicago Help Initiative (CHI) and Red Line Service (RLS) art and cultural exposure and engagement program. The pre-existing CHI & RLS study was a multi-method ethnographic study that used longitudinal qualitative methods to better understand how the program’s art and cultural exposure events impacted individuals experiencing housing instability.

The current study was unique in that participants could use photography through Photovoice as an artistic means of expression. The utilization of Photovoice allowed me to gain an in-depth understanding of the experiences of the participants. This was accomplished by providing opportunities for participants to talk about photos that they took that spoke to the impact of the art exposure program at events, and away from them. Understanding the participants through the artistic medium of Photovoice gave more context and meaning to the experience and impact of the CHI art and cultural exposure program. This dissertation also
shows how this study enhances the earlier multi-method evaluation of CHI and RLS collaborative art exposure and engagement services.

**Significance**

Homelessness is defined as residing in a place not suitable for living (HUD, 2020). This study was centered around marginalized participants experiencing housing instability. This included vulnerable socially isolated participants that are currently experiencing homelessness, or that have experienced homelessness in the past. This study specifically looked at how socially isolated participants experiencing housing instability used Photovoice as an art-based method to make meaning of exposure to art through the CHI program. When people suffer from social isolation associated with the plight of homelessness and the stigma of addiction and psychosis, they are left feeling marginalized, disconnected from the community, and disempowered (Griffith et al., 2015; Thomas et al., 2011).

All of the participants in this study were recipients of homelessness services. In addition to weekly meals, homelessness services consisted of assistance or subsidies that helped individuals experiencing housing instability make ends meet and remain stably housed. Chicago Help Initiative is a program that offers direct services or referrals so that otherwise vulnerable and marginalized recipients can address issues such as social isolation, poverty, homelessness, addictive disorders, and psychiatric disorders (“chicagohelpinitiative.org,” 2020). But despite the efforts of housing and homelessness programs, the effects of homelessness remain a problem. This section will discuss the problem of homelessness and these related issues.

With 33 states seeing a decrease in homelessness between 2014 and 2015, Illinois was one of only 16 states that saw an increase in homelessness (HUD, 2020). Seventeen percent (95,000) of these people were categorized as chronically homeless. According to HUD (2020),
chronic homelessness is defined as being homeless for a period of time greater than or equal to a year, or having accumulated four instances of homelessness within three years, with at least a year of that time being spent homeless.

Individuals experiencing housing instability, homelessness, or chronic homelessness often suffer from social isolation, addictive disorders, and psychiatric disorders (“drugabuse.gov,” 2020; “nimh.nih.gov,” 2020; “samhsa.gov,” 2020). One key to overcoming the effects of homelessness is to address homelessness through a community-based social inclusion framework. Social programs and empowering methodologies correct unbalanced power relationships and provide a platform for social connectedness. This is defined as the accumulation of social capital, and includes benefits that help people acquire social relationships with each other; the agency staff, volunteers, and administrators; and the community. These social benefits are often the springboard through which homelessness, addiction, and behavioral health issues are addressed (Fisk & Frey, 2002; Norma & Pauly, 2013).

**Theoretical Framework**

The theoretical framework for this study was outlined in Appendix A. All subjects being considered for this study were experiencing homelessness, had experienced homelessness, or were experiencing housing instability. In the broadest sense, the problem of homelessness is one that speaks to the issue of housing instability. And while the problem of housing instability gets at the crux of homelessness, there are many other more specific issues associated with homelessness, which means that other related issues like poverty and mental health need to be addressed.

The specific problem that this study addressed was the psychosocial impact of homelessness. It used the Photovoice methodology to better understand how exposure to art
impacted participants that are experiencing homelessness or that have prior episodes of homelessness. Many of the participants were defined as unstably housed. The Photovoice methodology incorporates Feminist, Freirean, and Participatory Action Research (PAR) theoretical frameworks, which are factors that support the methodology and work with the conceptual framework, but are not explicitly labeled as being a part of it (Latz, 2017). This will be discussed in more detail under methodological theory. Exposure to art as an intervention utilizes psychosocial frameworks that lead to feelings of social inclusion, educational gains, and improved psychological outcomes (Belknap et al., 2013; Bennington et al., 2016; Thomas et al., 2011). Therefore, the proposed theoretical framework for this study incorporates concepts that emerge from problems associated with an unstably housed status, the Photovoice methodology theory, and art exposure as an intervention.

The first research question used an art-based method to ask, what is the impact of art and cultural exposure and engagement on CHI program participants experiencing housing instability? Data was analyzed by me and the participants. Data generated by the first research question, the analyses, and dissemination data, was analyzed using a theoretical framework that outlines the functions of art.

De Botton and Armstrong (2016) outline the purposes and functions of art in their book titled, *Art as Therapy*. In this book, they argue that art can be useful to people in that it is therapeutic to those that are exposed to it. They describe art as therapeutic because they view art as a tool that can be used to combat the seven psychological frailties that correspond with the seven functions of art (Debotton & Armstrong, 2016).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phycological Frailties</th>
<th>Corresponding Function of Art</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Forgetfulness (forgetting what's important)</td>
<td>Remembering</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Despair (giving up hope)</td>
<td>Hope</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indifference (which creates loneliness and a loss of so-cap)</td>
<td>Sorrow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unbalanced Life (Failing to fully understand our best selves &amp; failing to tap into strengths/ambitions)</td>
<td>Rebalancing</td>
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<tr>
<td>Self-Misunderstanding (not understanding who we are and what our purpose is)</td>
<td>Self-Understanding</td>
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<td>Stagnation (inability to connect to new persons, places, or things)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Boredom or experiential desensitization (familiarity leaves life seemingly tasteless)</td>
<td>Appreciation</td>
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Table 1. Functions of Art

The psychological frailties include forgetfulness, despair, indifference, being unbalanced, self-misunderstanding, stagnation, and boredom (de Botton, & Armstrong, 2016).

De Botton and Armstrong (2016) propose that art has seven primary functions. These functions are represented in the following core categories (1.) Remembering, (2.) Hope, (3.) Sorrow, (4.) Rebalancing, (5.) Self-understanding, (6.) Growth, (7.) and Appreciation. The relationship between the functions and frailties are discussed below (see Table 1).
In a study exploring the benefits of art exposure with older adults, Bennington et al. (2016) used this framework to understand how art can be used to address psychological frailties and issues associated with social isolation. Using the seven functions of art as an analytic framework, they discovered that older adults exposed to visual art used all seven of the functions of art to improve psychological well-being (Bennington et al., 2016). While this framework has not been used with a vulnerably housed population, the findings from this study show that the theory provides a good framework for understanding common benefits associated with using art as a tool (Bennington et al., 2016). Because this framework delivered what seemed to be a promising analytic and conceptual framework for understanding how exposure to art impacts people, the theory was a good fit for unstably housed individuals that were exposed to art, and that were utilizing art-based methods (photography) to express themselves.

The frailties that correspond with these functions of art are central to this study and are thus reviewed here. Art can be used as a tool for remembering, which addresses a psychological frailty called forgetfulness. Art can help those who suffer from forgetfulness associated with aging and dementia, but for many of us the frailty associated with forgetting has more to do with losing sight of the things that are really important in life (DeBotton & Armstrong, 2016; Roe et al., 2016).

The second tool of art is hope, and this is connected to the frailty despair. In short, despair is giving up hope (DeBotton & Armstrong, 2016). When art is used as a tool to instill hope, it should make people less concerned with negativity within their existence such as homelessness and poverty, and keep them focused on the positive things such becoming more stably housed or employed, all of which keeps people striving toward their goals. These positive outcomes associated with art as a tool for hope provide people with a means to reshape their
attitudes and intentions in positive and productive ways (Belnap et al., 2013; DeBotton & Armstrong, 2016; Kelly & Hunter, 2016). Some individuals experiencing homelessness and housing instability may experience loss of hope from feeling trapped on the streets. For example, art was used along with programing and the social sciences to help homeless African American women feeling hopeless and trapped on the streets of Detroit utilize artistic methods to express themselves to stakeholders, escape homelessness, and stay housed (Washington & Moxley, 2008).

The third function of art is sorrow. The frailty that best corresponds to sorrow is indifference. De Botton (2016) defines this sort of indifference on a social level. He states that this indifference can create loneliness and cause us to misjudge the meaning of various intentions or troubles (social and otherwise). This can mean that the indifference makes us so lonely that after a while it becomes hard to socialize with others in ways that bring us through the sorrow. Using art as a tool to process sorrow allows individuals to move past this state of indifference and cultivate social capital (Bennington et al., 2016). There is no better example of this than in Bennington’s (2016) work, which included a sample of eight older adults suffering social isolation. In her work she not only demonstrates that De Botton’s tools are relevant to understanding the functions of art, but she also shows that older adults can address psychological frailties related to sadness, which leads to their overall psycho-social wellbeing (Bennington, et al., 2016).

The fourth function of art is rebalancing, and the corresponding psychological frailty is unbalanced. This frailty speaks to the fact that we don’t fully understand our best side. Becoming balanced means acting on our best insight, which is our ability to better understand imbalances in our life (De Botton & Armstrong, 2016). Art as a tool to rebalance can provide
convincing insights that empowers one to see and tap into their own positive strengths and ambitions (De Botton & Armstrong, 2016; Griffith et al., 2015; Kelly & Hunter, 2016).

The fifth function is self-understanding, and the corresponding frailty is self-misunderstanding. Sometimes not understanding self makes it hard to explain who we are and what our purpose is in life. Art is a tool that can help people accumulate self-knowledge, providing insight on who they are, and empowering them through learning in general (De Botton & Armstrong, 2016; Lauby et al., 2010). Sometimes people that are marginalized lose a sense of identity. One example of this includes an HIV prevention study conducted by Lauby et al. (2010) where young adolescents incarcerated in the Juvenile Justice System were subjected to art in the form of theater and role play as a means to gaining self-understanding. This accumulation of self-knowledge enhanced or altered future attitudes and behaviors related to safer-sex practices and increased HIV prevention tactics such as using a condom (Lauby et al., 2010).

The sixth function of art is growth, and the corresponding frailty is stagnation. Being foreign to new persons, places, and things may leave a person feeling as if they are unable to connect. While these experiences may be needed for growth, and the only way to fully benefit from them is to be open to them. Art as a tool for growth can connect people to other cultures and get them past these xenophobic tendencies that act as barriers to social capital (De Botton & Armstrong, 2016). Some individuals experiencing homelessness and housing instability may experience social stagnation. For example, Kelly (2017) conducted an ethnographic study with African American youths experiencing homelessness that were able to utilize exposure to art in the form of a music studio to engage their own strengths and move past potentially stagnant social circles, which are either limited circles, or social circles that are not robust enough to contribute to growth. These new social circles allowed them to grow through social connections.
This is because they were able to use exposure to art to make social connections with individuals outside of their social group such as the facilitator (Kelly, 2017).

Finally, the seventh function is appreciation and the corresponding psychological frailty is boredom or experiential desensitization. This frailty concerns itself with everything feeling too familiar leaving life seemingly tasteless. Art as a tool can re-sensitize a person allowing them to see the old and boring through a new and refreshing lens (De Botton & Armstrong, 2016).

In varying degrees, both the literature on art exposure and this research project sits squarely within this conceptual framework for understanding the functions of art and addressing the corresponding frailties. Why is this the case? The literature on art exposure works with this framework because De Botton’s (2016) Art as a Tool to address psychological frailties speaks to how art is being used as an intervention. This will be elaborated on in the literature review, but when one is exposed to art, they are afforded the tools to address issues associated with their frailties.

As an example, art as a tool for remembering and hope will be discussed. Visual art can help a person with dementia use art as a tool for remembering, which combats forgetfulness (Roe et al., 2016). Another example is that art can give marginalized urban youth the tools they need to be heard, feel empowered, and gain a sense of hope (Kelly, 2017). Without these tools, the youth could potentially be left to despair. And because the intervention is art exposure, these functions will all come into play within this conceptual framework.

The intervention presented in this study (art and cultural exposure) addressed multiple frailties such as forgetfulness, despair, self-misunderstanding, and stagnation, through exposing participants to cultural art. The cultural art, which often relates to ethnic, racial, and other
societal groups, reconnected them using art as a tool in a way that helps them remember the
culture, while instilling hope and self-understanding, which inevitably leads to personal growth
(three of De Botton’s functions of art). These frailties and their associated art-based tools
worked within the context of this study because the context was made up of art and cultural
exposure programing, an art-based method (Photovoice), and dissemination of art.

**Methodological Theory**

The Photovoice methodology contains elements of Participatory Action Research (PAR),
Freirean theory on educational and critical consciousness, and Feminist perspective theory (Latz,
2017; Wang, Burris, & Ping, 1996; Wang & Burris, 1997). In keeping with the theoretical roots
of the Photovoice methodology, this study was informed by each of these three theories.

Participatory research is set apart from other approaches by several key concepts. The PAR
approach generally invites the participant to take part in the research process alongside the
researcher, which bestows upon them an elevated status or role that leads to empowerment (Latz,
2017; Padgett, 2008; Patton, 2002). Instead of participants being subjects of a study, they
become co-investigators, research partners, or research collaborators. In addition to this form of
empowerment, participants are also empowered because of the impact that their research can
potentially have on programs and policies that affect their lives (McTaggart 1994; Patton, 2002).

Freirean theory was also utilized by this study. This theory focuses on the oppressed
claiming power through empowerment education and challenging the status quo (Freire, 2014;
Latz, 2017; Wang, Burris, & Ping, 1996). Freirean theory is in line with the theoretical
underpinnings of PAR and the Photovoice methodology because participants empower
themselves as equals working alongside the researcher which shifts the balance of power.
Because the participants’ work was also disseminated, exhibited, and published, there was a
potential for changes in agency and governmental policies. Additionally, participants had the opportunity to reveal and challenge unjust systems pertaining to poverty and the plight of the unstably housed.

Feminist theory was also a good fit for this study, and consequently was utilized in this study. Feminist theory is centered around experiences of the marginalized and oppressed within a male-dominated society with research purposes geared toward gender equality (Latz, 2017; Payne, 2005). Through the methodology, issues of oppression within a male dominated society may be addressed. This is because the sample, research objectives, and research questions are also consistent with the feminist approach. They are consistent with this approach because unstably housed socially isolated participants are often silenced and oppressed within the context of a patriarchal society. The research objectives, methodology, and research questions challenge this issue. This is because Photovoice and exposure to the arts honors the voices of participants in a nurturing social environment, which has demonstrated efficacy addressing feminist issues that lead to social isolation (Wang & Burris, 1997).

One example of an issue is oppression and isolation in a male dominated society. Themes and topics likely surfaced from the focus groups that stemmed from being oppressed in a male-dominated society. With the participants’ experiences and interests in mind, feminist theory played a role in this study by helping to explain and address their experiences of feeling of isolated and oppressed in a male dominated society.

It is important to note that while these theories represent the underpinnings of the Photovoice methodology, and while they do support the conceptual framework, they are not explicitly named as part of the conceptual framework. That is to say that these concepts come out of using Photovoice as an art-based method, but they are not the same concepts embedded in
De Botton’s art exposure tools for correcting the seven psychological frailties, and therefore they do not make up the conceptual framework of this study (De Botton & Armstrong, 2016; Latz, 2017).

**Theoretical Sensitivity**

This theoretical sensitivity section outlines my personal experiences, assumptions and beliefs. I believe that my personal background shapes the type of research I do, influences how I collect data, and subtly directs the way that I analyze data. My perspectives and biases are shaped by my prior experiences with homelessness and homeless services. My background is in social work, in particular the work that I did at a homeless shelter shaped the way I think about homelessness. Also, my actual experiences with the impact of art on homelessness have undoubtedly shaped my study. There are four areas of my life that shape the type of research that I do. The following is a discussion on my experiences with homelessness, social work, race, and academia.

**Homelessness**

For a short while I did live out of my art studio, which was amazing. The rent was about $60 per month, with utilities coming to about $13 per month. The place was a roach infested industrial dump, but at the time it was home, and I made myself pretty comfortable there. Per HUDS definition, I guess I was homeless while staying there because it was a place not designated for living in permanently, but if you asked me if I was homeless at the time, I would have answered in the negative. I was with a community of artists, some of which were in the same position as me, and we all looked out for each other. We were friends, and it was a happy time in my life. Again, I really can’t say that I felt homeless at all, so it’s hard to claim that
without feeling dishonest. Looking back on it now, perhaps my artistic community of friends ameliorated the deleterious effects of homelessness.

As someone that was actually homeless, I learned that art has the power to shape your perspective. It gives voice to individuals that might not otherwise feel that they are heard. Being involved in the arts and an artistic community can mitigate the sting of homelessness and remove barriers to having your voice heard. From what I’ve observed, being homeless can be a very isolating experience. But a strong art community can completely circumvent psychological frailties that might be normally associated with the isolating experience of homelessness. Creating art and having people that normally wouldn’t make eye contact with you suddenly take a deep interest in you and your work is humanizing.

**Social Work**

I spent over a decade interning, volunteering, and working at a homeless shelter. Most of that time was spent in the capacity of Program Director over a Housing First harm reduction permanent supportive housing program called LIGHT-House. The ministry was very low threshold, a phrase that means that you don’t have to meet a lot of requirements to gain entry to the program, with the goal being to house individuals that were experiencing chronic homelessness and suffering from a myriad of disabling conditions such as physical disabilities, psychiatric disorders, addictive disorders, and personality disorders. These were considered the hardcore homeless and written off by higher threshold agencies and shelters as next to impossible to house.

The program that I headed up was designed to house individuals first, and deal with disabling conditions later. As a recipient of this housing, it was next to impossible to lose your housing as the ministry subscribed to harm reduction principles. The idea was to let the stability
of being housed take root so that if people wanted to, they could begin to address other issues at their leisure. Addressing disabling conditions was never a requirement. It seems the answer to chronic homelessness was simple after all, give a person a home with no strings attached, with no strings meaning house them first without requiring them to get sober, take psychiatric medications, go to treatment, etcetera.

Further the agency subscribed to Chesed (תַּוְָדָּש) principles, with an emphasis on God’s unconditional love, which included denouncing the concept of an undeserving poor while striving to help the “least of these” individuals. Micah 6:8 (יהיה תַּוְָדָּש) which requires us to seek out social justice, be kind and merciful to others, and walk humbly with our God, was often cited as an aim of the agency (The Holy Bible, 2020). This is actually in line with my personal spiritual values. I believe in God, but I don’t currently subscribe to a religion. This gives me the freedom to choose and do what I perceive to be morally right without restrictions brought about by what I perceive to be unnecessary moralistic religious entanglements.

My background as a social worker also means I subscribe to a professional code of ethics. In some ways I believe this shapes the way that I do research. Because I’m typically in the role of being a service provider, it seems only natural that I would select a methodology that can be transformative and used as a means to correct social injustices. Much of this ties into the ideals of the social work profession which views people as having inherent worth and value, and deserving of dignity. The redistribution of power into the hands of participants by having them take on a role as researcher speaks to my professional feelings on how a relationship between a social worker and a guest experiencing homelessness at a homeless shelter should be. Just as the services that I provided were client centered and client driven, so was my research.
In terms of guests experiencing homelessness at a homeless shelter, we should value their input, there should be buy-in and vested interest in the selected tasks and goals, and there should be self-determination involved in making decisions regarding those goals. So for me, having guests experiencing homelessness at a homeless shelter gather data, code it for themes, and decide on how it will be disseminated means letting the guests determine for themselves what their goals and outcomes are. All that being said, I also realize that I’m a researcher, so part of my job is to make sure that this takes place within the context of using the best tools (methodology) for this particular job.

**Race**

As a black man that once worked in a shelter and that was previously homeless and living out of an art studio, I have a strong sense of what art and the art community can do for people. Art has the ability to improve your psycho-social circumstances and change your perspective on life. Because I didn’t feel homeless as a result of being involved in the arts, I believe that art can have similar impacts on other individuals that are experiencing homelessness. I understand that this may be skewed thinking, and I also understand that others’ experiences might not be similar to mine. I also understand that the framework that I chose (de Botton) might not work best with individuals experiencing homelessness, but given my social identity, which included my experiences and background, I believed that art would help people resolve all sorts of psychological frailties. Also, I know that I’m seeing things through the lens of a black man which means that race will likely be over emphasized. In acknowledging this as my truth, I also openly accept the inherent flaws brought on by my personal perception of things.
Academia

I’m a doctoral student with a strong belief in the power of art as a practical means for addressing psychological frailties. I realize that I may find what I’m looking for if I’m not careful, which means that because I believe that art can be used as a practical tool to address frailties, I may accidentally look for it to the point that it is impossible to see other viable answers and conclusions. Because I’m concerned with helping individuals who are experiencing homelessness, I could easily be extracting answers from the data as opposed to allowing the data to reveal what’s most relevant. Because I’m invested in academia, I have a responsibility to publish, and there is an underlying assumption (as a social worker) that I in some way will give the participants a window to achieve some social action through their work, the point being that academia shapes your work because you must publish, and social work scholarship shapes your work because it should be relevant to the profession. As a doctoral student I had very real goals and deadlines. This may have led to unintentionally cutting short the voices of the very people I wanted to hear. The great thing about this study is that it was PAR, which meant that the participants were co-investigators in the process. They also have a say in the funders, policy makers, and key stakeholders with which to share their work. While this might have influenced my research, the methodology (Photovoice) should have kept me honest.

Finally, my three committee members were made up of fairly diverse and marginalized groups, and while their experiences with isms are likely far different than mine, I feel assured that they have all felt the sting of discrimination, and that in some ways they can at least relate to how I feel. Currently all of my committee members are white, which might seem risky for a person of color, but they were actually all selected based on how well I thought I could trust them to see me through this process.
In sum, these various perspectives impacted the way that I collected data because they shape what I value. I want to know what the impact of art exposure is because I believe that it is powerful and necessary. I’m interested in Photovoice because I believe it is the best tool, methodologically speaking, to answer the research question while redistributing power. My approaches and even my conceptual framework (de Botton) are grounded in what I believe art can offer. Over time my perspectives did change as I shifted between observer-as-participant and participant-as-observer. But the aforementioned core values that I carried with me throughout the study never changed.

Research Questions

The research questions are designed to capture two perspectives, those of the people experiencing housing instability and those of the staff, volunteers, and administrators that worked closely with them. From the perspective of participants using Photovoice as an art-based method, the first question is: What is the impact of art and cultural exposure and engagement on CHI program participants experiencing housing instability? The second question is: What are CHI program participants’ experiences with disseminating their art, and what meaning do they attach to these experiences? The third and final question is: What are the CHI staff, volunteer, and administrators’ perceptions of the impact of art and cultural exposure programing on CHI participants experiencing housing instability?
CHAPTER 2
LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature review examines articles that explore topics related to the intersectionality of art and cultural engagement and exposure, and individuals experiencing homelessness. The proposed study sought to gain insight on art engagement and exposure by observing and discussing participants’ photography around the research questions and the topics. I listened to statements made by participants who had access to art, museums, music, theaters, shows, and other types audio and visual exhibits. The statements that participants made were about the impact of art exposure on their lives. The intervention was diverse as exposure to art can happen in a vast number of art communities over a broad range of mediums. As such, this section will critically review literature using a number of key concepts and search terms focused on exposure to various types of art. Key search terms included: art, exposure, experience, listen, music, watch, theater, plays, concerts, dance, museums, shows, exhibits, recreation, and cultural engagement. Other search terms utilized were related to other problem issues and a number of vulnerable and disenfranchised populations. These terms included: homeless, youth, prisoner, student, elderly, addiction, pain, and psychiatric. Finally, potential benefits of art and cultural exposure and the theoretical framework of this study and the Photovoice method were searched. These search terms included: social inclusion, resilience, empowerment, social capital, education, and psychological benefits.

Participants in this study were exposed to various types of art. The literature review will start by examining the literature on art exposure and cultural engagement through music. The
literature on art exposure and cultural engagement through music dealt with a number of problem issues. Much of this literature review points to the benefits received when exposed to calming auditory stimulus such as relaxing classical music. To this end, this review focuses on those that are exposed to art as opposed to those that are engaged in creating art in the form of music.

Next, this review of the literature will examine art exposure and cultural engagement in the form of plays, theater (musicals), concerts, and dance performances. The purpose of the second part of this literature review is to examine exposure to art interventions that are among the performing arts such as musicals, plays, movies, and dance recitals. While these interventions may share elements with strictly auditory interventions, these interventions do not hinge solely on their auditory components.

Finally, this review looks at exposure to visual art in the form of museums, displays, shows, galleries, art, and exhibits. Much of the literature on art exposure and cultural engagement is qualitative in nature. High impact qualitative articles were searched in this review using search engines such as Google Scholar, JSTOR, EBSCO, and ERIC. Finally, Web of Science was also searched to find articles with a high impact.

To expose the gap in the literature, a review of literature must concern two things. First, it must concern art and cultural exposure literature, and second it must concern homelessness literature. Literature where these two topics intersect or converge is discussed. The goal of the final section of this literature review is to find articles where the literature on art exposure and homelessness converge in an effort to demonstrate that the present study research questions have yet to be answered. While the previous sections on art exposure provide a glimpse of the various problems that exposure to art addresses, this section of the literature review will be more precise
and relevant to the research topic and question, which addresses exposure to art among those experiencing homelessness, which is associated with housing instability.

**Art Exposure and Cultural Engagement**

The primary research question is from the perspective of participants was, “what is the impact of art and cultural exposure and engagement on CHI program participants experiencing housing instability?” Therefore, this section of the literature review will first explore literature pertaining to art exposure and cultural engagement with the primary mode of transmission being through the auditory faculty. An example of using an auditory faculty would be listening to music. There are a number of subjects within peer reviewed articles on art, such as art-based therapy. These subjects tend to use art as a means of therapy, and often require participants to produce art. This review focuses on the appreciation of art, and therefore focuses specifically on art exposure and engagement via appreciation. Here, art appreciation is defined as the act of experiencing art through exposure, or taking art in through the senses, without producing it (Adams, 1909; Kelly & Doherty, 2016; & Thomas et al., 2011). By sorting through and selecting articles that deal with participants who are only exposed to art, this review makes an intentional effort to look solely at the impact of exposure as opposed to the benefits of creating art or participating in art-based therapy. Although this study deals with individuals experiencing housing instability, art exposure has been used with other vulnerable populations. To fully capture the potential benefits of art exposure, a myriad of vulnerable populations will be examined in relation to art exposure. Three types of art exposure will be discussed: auditory exposure to art, audio-visual exposure to art (performing arts), and visual exposure to art. This literature review concludes with an examination of a convergence of the homelessness and art
exposure literature. Because the literature on this topic is sparse, both art creation and art appreciation are discussed along with homelessness.

**Auditory Exposure to Art**

This section of the review deals exclusively with exposure to art in its auditory forms. It also deals exclusively with art appreciation as opposed to art creation. Participants that listen to music can benefit from exposure to art. Although de Botton (2016) focusses on exposure to visual art, a review of the auditory exposure literature demonstrates that music can be used to address psychological frailties among various vulnerable populations.

Exposure to calming music is as an intervention that can be beneficial to participants that are incarcerated. Bensimon et al. (2015) conducted a study with participants (N=48) that were incarcerated at a medium-security prison. Prisoners were randomly selected into an experimental group and a control group from two different wings of the prison. The prisoners in Wing 1 were exposed to carefully selected culturally appropriate calming music and prisoners in Wing 2 acted as the control group. The control group was not exposed to music. The prisoners’ anxiety and anger levels were monitored at baseline, treatment, and after treatment (ABA). Both groups used standardized questionnaires, specifically the State-Trait Anxiety Inventory (STAI) and State-Trait Anger Expression Inventory (STAXI) to self-record how they were feeling before, during, and after treatment. At baseline both groups showed equivalent measures of stress and anxiety. Prisoners that were exposed to the music saw a significant reduction in stress and a moderate reduction in anger (Bensimon, Einat, & Gilboa, 2015). This research also suggests that the effects of exposure dissipated after the intervention was removed.

Exposure to calming music can also benefit healthy adults that are suffering from acute bouts of stress. In a double blinded randomized controlled trial (RCT) conducted with healthy
adults between the ages of 18 and 35, participants were assigned to a treatment group that received computer generated Melomics relaxing music, and a control group that received no music (De la Torre-Luque et al., 2016). Music was selected for the experimental group using the Musical Styles Questionnaire (MSQ; Megias & Rodriguez, 2002). Quantitative survey data were also collected from each group to score levels of anxiety and psychological symptoms such as stress, depression, and psychoticism. In addition to questionnaires, this study also used an apparatus to record psychophysiological changes through electrocardiographs. To induce stress, the participants were asked to participate in simulated tasks that included giving a short speech. Although there were no measured physiological differences between the two groups post treatment, during treatment relaxing music did help participants by improving their flexibility to regulate their emotions after being subjected to acute stress (De la Torre-Luque et al, 2016).

Exposure to art in the form of music can also help participants that are suffering from psychiatric disorders. In a pre-test post-test pilot study, N=50 participants suffering from various psychiatric disorders were randomly assigned into the treatment and control groups with each group (N=25 participants) (Muller et al., 2014). Music for the treatment group was adapted for the patient needs and recorded onto a compact disc, which was the mode of transmission. All participants received music, but the control group was offered standard classical music that had not been manipulated for their needs. Both groups were asked to listen to the compact discs for 18 months. Using the Brief Symptom Inventory (BSI) survey, participants in the experimental group indicated a significant reduction in symptoms associated with their psychiatric disorders as a result of exposure to adapted music (Derogatis & Spencer, 1982; Muller et al., 2014).

Being exposed to music may also be helpful to elderly people suffering from depression and sleep disorders (Chan et al., 2010). Researchers conducted a randomized controlled trial to
examine the effects of exposure to art in the form of music with N=42 participants that were elderly. Physiological and psychological data was recorded over a period of four weeks to see if there were any differences between the control group and the experimental group. The experimental group was asked to listen to self-selected music for at least two hours within the four weeks (30 mins/wk). While there were no physiological differences reported between both groups, on the 4th week elderly participants in the treatment group reported reductions in depression and improvements in quality of sleep (Chan et al., 2010).

There is evidence that supports that mere exposure to music will help patients of all ages who are suffering from sleep disorders. In a systematic review conducted by Wang et al. (2014), 10 studies with over N=550 participants were reviewed to determine whether or not music as an intervention had helpful, harmful, or neutral outcomes when used as a treatment for sleep disorders. Other systematic reviews exist on the use of music, and they are titled: Music therapy improves sleep quality in acute and chronic sleep disorders: A meta-analysis of 10 randomized studies and Reviewing the effectiveness of music interventions in treating depression (Leubner & Hinterberger, 2017; Wang et al., 2014). These systematic reviews incorporate exposure to music, but what makes this review particularly useful is the exclusionary criteria of creating art in the form of music or music making (Leubner & Hinterberger, 2017; Wang et al., 2014). The importance of this exclusionary criteria is that the systematic review only includes those who were exposed to art in the form of music (Wang et al., 2014). This systematic review demonstrated that exposure to music improves sleep quality with diverse populations suffering from acute to chronic sleep disorders (Wang et al., 2014).

Another systematic review was conducted on exposure to art in the form of music with postoperative patients that were in recovery. This systematic review did not include the
production of art in the form of music among its findings. Hole et al. (2015) pulled over 4,000 articles and used 73 randomized controlled trials (RCTs) to examine the effects of exposure to music on patients in recovery. In many of these RCTs the control group received treatment as usual, with the intervention being withheld. Exposure to art in the form of music helped patients recover by reducing symptoms associated with surgery such as pain and anxiety (Hole et al, 2015). Again, this study is also important because it focuses on participants who gain benefits as consumers of music, with no mention of art therapy or the creation of art.

Auditory exposure to art in the form of music is beneficial to a variety of vulnerable populations. Exposure to auditory art often contributes to psychological benefits including a reduction in anxiety, depression, and other psychiatric symptoms. Additionally, exposure to auditory art helped people regulate their sleep, manage pain, and manage stress. The idea that art is a tool that can be used to address psychological frailties is in line with de Botton’s (2016) framework. That is because exposure to music is the art that is being used as a tool, and in that form it is providing something that is relaxing, pleasant, pretty, and cheerful. Although these are not visual images, exposure to this form of art produces the same thing. Just like with visual forms of art, the music does not lead to a denial of the problem, but sets the stage for people to be appreciative, find a sense of rebalancing, and be hopeful (de Botton & Armstrong, 2016). de Botton (2016) identified his framework by conceptualizing art as a useful tool for addressing psychological frailties which make up the functions of art. By engaging functions such as hope, sorrow, growth, self-understanding, and rebalancing through art, those exposed to auditory art can regulate anxiety, depression, and other frailties associated with poor mental well-being (de Botton & Armstrong, 2016).
While auditory interventions are beneficial, there are other types of art that incorporate a visual dimension. This combination of audio-visual (AV) exposure to art is known as the performing arts, and it can benefit vulnerable populations as well. The next section of this literature review explores the benefits of exposure to the performing arts.

**Exposure to the Performing Arts**

For the purposes of this study, combined audio-visual (AV) exposure involves exposure to the performing arts. The performing arts incorporate auditory and visual components for participant appreciation. Performing arts exposure includes theater, plays, concerts, performances, musicals, dance performances and similar artistic expressions that incorporate music or spoken word into their visual performances (dance, acting, cinema, martial arts, cultural events, etcetera).

Exposure to theater as an intervention is one such example of performing arts exposure that has shown promise with youths. In a quasi-experimental mixed method pre-test post-test study, 66 Latin American teenagers were exposed to art in the form of theater (Belnap et al., 2013). The participants were exposed to two plays, one titled *Homeroom* and one titled *Lily and Jake*. They first looked at nonphysical violence and showed how it can be addressed in a non-violent way. The second play looked at physical forms of violence, and saw the protagonist challenge the violence and demonstrate healthy behaviors toward partners. Both the qualitative and quantitative data indicated that teens were less likely to be accepting of dating violence, and that attitudes toward dating violence changed to a position of less acceptable (Belnap et al., 2013). The authors suggests that exposure to theater can yield positive outcomes on attitudes, confidence, and intentions associated with teen dating violence (TDV).
Exposure to performing arts performances have also had an impact on youth that are incarcerated in the juvenile justice system. One study focused on AIDS prevention for African American teens that are at high risk for transmission of HIV or AIDS (Lauby et al., 2010). The study examined the efficacy of a program called Preventing AIDS through Live Movement and Sound (PALMS). The study was a non-randomized quasi-experimental design that drew $N=289$ participants from two juvenile prisons out of Philadelphia. The intervention consisted of participants being exposed to performances by professional actors. These performances were educational tools that helped participants learn how to prevent the transmission of STIs. Participants were invited to also engage in games and exercises that were designed to test and solidify what they learned across three sessions. Individuals exposed to the PALMS theater-based intervention showed improved attitudes toward HIV and the use of condoms, HIV testing, and attitudes toward those that are HIV/AIDS positive (Lauby et al., 2010). Additionally, those exposed to performing arts in the form of PALMS theater were also more likely to use condoms (Lauby et al., 2010).

Exposure to art in the form of theater can also be used with diverse populations outside of minority youths. In a study conducted by Dill-Shackleford et al. (2015), a study was conducted on a racially diverse population between the ages of 17 and 85 to see if false beliefs about domestic violence could be changed. The intervention for this study was live theater, with $N=75$ participants in the treatment group and $N=93$ participants in the control group. The treatment in this study was a domestic abuse play that educated participants on false perceptions of domestic abuse. In this study, individuals that were exposed to the domestic abuse play exhibited increased knowledge about domestic abuse and coercion, and could also better identify nonphysical abuse (Dill-Shackleford et al., 2015). Non-physical abuse was any type of abuse
that was not physical such as psychological abuse. Those exposed to the treatment were also less likely to believe myths regarding domestic violence. These findings indicate that exposure to art in the form of theater could lead to important social change in attitudes and knowledge pertaining to domestic violence.

Older adults have also been impacted by exposure to visual and audio art via a play. In a study conducted by Tuokko et al. (2013), research was conducted in three phases to gather information about adult drivers via focus groups, which means that three focused groups were conducted to gather the data. Researchers facilitated the development of a play with that data, and helped facilitate exposure of elderly participants and stakeholders from the community to art in the form of a play. A total of 248 participants (N = 248) whom were either elderly adults or stakeholders (someone that cared about the older drivers) were exposed to the play. Exposed elderly adults (especially women) changed their attitudes toward driving as a result of realizing the physiological age-related changes that they were going through. Nearly half of the older adults that were exposed to the play stated that they were planning on switching to safer driving behaviors in response to what they learned from being exposed to the play (Tuokko et al., 2013). One might argue that there is some art production by participants involved in this study, which means that the participants were involved in making art in the form of a play, but exposed participants in the final phase of the study were recruited much more broadly using mediums such as newspapers, radio stations, and other elderly list serves (Tuokko et al., 2013). This study demonstrates that exposure to informed or adapted performing arts in the form of plays can benefit elderly target populations where a social change can have a positive impact.

Students are also benefitting from cultural exposure to art in the form of theater (Green et al., 2015). A randomized study was conducted to determine how live theater enhances or
enriches student outcomes. Forty-nine schools participated with 670 students agreeing to participate in the study. A lottery was done to see who would gain exposure to live performances of *A Christmas Carol* and *Hamlet*. Matched groups were used to produce like groups. Participants that were exposed to the live plays were more likely to understand the plots behind the performances much better compared to their understanding when reading the plays or watching them on television (Green et al., 2015). In addition to better understanding the plays, exposed students also demonstrated more tolerance for others and their feelings and emotions, coupled with an improved ability to read others’ emotions. These outcomes indicate that cultural exposure and engagement leads to benefits in learning, empathy, and tolerance among students. This fits nicely with De Botton’s (2016) *Art as Tools* as part of self-understanding through learning, and eventually rebalancing to develop empathy and tolerance.

Exposure to the performing arts, which includes auditory and visual (AV) elements, benefits a wide range of vulnerable populations across the spectrum of life ranging from teenagers to the elderly. Benefits are largely educational and social, which in turn leads to positive changes among participants. These educational and social outcomes often lead to changes in attitudes and behaviors that generate empowerment learning and social capital. As stated above, the accumulation of empowerment learning, and social capital helps shape attitudes that reduce engagement in risky conduct. That being said, exposure to the performing arts contributes to self-understanding and growth through learning, as there is an acquired and lasting sense of appreciation and empowerment. de Botton’s (2016) framework also states that exposure to art can be used as a means to happiness and appreciation, learned self-understanding, and personal growth as a result of learning. An example of how this connects with de Botton’s
framework is that empowerment learning and social capital are respectively synonymous with functions of art such as self-understanding and growth (de Botton & Armstrong, 2016).

Visual exposure to art can also contribute to gains in social capital because the act of appreciating visual art can take place within the inclusive psycho-social context of the art community. The next section of this review exclusively looks at art that is meant to be appreciated visually, notwithstanding the above-mentioned benefits of an auditory component.

**Visual Exposure to Art**

The final section of this review is on exposure to art through visual faculties. This section of the literature review also isolates and excludes literature on creating visual art. Types of art that largely rely on vision as the main mode of transmission include: museums, art galleries, exhibits, displays, etcetera. While these forms of art are not always completely void of accompanying music or spoken word, they tend to be pieces (paintings, drawings, sculptures, etc.) that are appreciated, consumed, or experienced visually. As demonstrated below in this review, visual exposure to art can also benefit a number of vulnerable populations across a range of ages.

Roe et al. (2016) conducted a study to observe the feasibility of acquiring health benefits from exposure to art in the form of museums. The target population was elderly adults who were a part of an assisted living program, or receiving assisted living care from home. Between the months of June and November, participants were exposed to art and cultural museums, galleries, and exhibits. Researchers collected fields notes that captured the participants’ experiences and interactions. One of the primary benefits of the program was the flexibility of the staff. Flexibility on the staffs part meant they were willing to adjust things such as scheduling, provide chairs when necessary, and offer private rooms for viewing art. Because staff were willing to
adjust to meet the needs of elderly participants, the elderly participants found the program beneficial to their wellbeing (Roe et al., 2016). Health benefits of the program were noted in this study. Some of the patients may have been afflicted with undiagnosed dementia. These participants often suffered from symptoms such as confusion, memory loss, and anxiety problems. Participants were able to focus on the art, their memories, and their thoughts after arriving at the museum, and remember details of their exposure to the art that they saw in the museum after departing (Roe et al., 2016). Care staff also capitalized on these benefits as they were able to utilize exhibits from the program as talking points, which led to participant gains in terms of social inclusion, social capital, and overall wellbeing, which means that care staff used art at the museum to help the participants feel socially connected, remember more, and have an overall feeling of better quality of life (Roe et al., 2016).

This study seems to suggest that when exposed to art in the form of exhibits or museums, elderly participants, who are often isolated, marginalized, and suffering from symptoms related to dementia, often see healing through a reduction of these symptoms. These participants also experienced gains through increased feelings of social inclusion and social connectedness. Next, there will be an examination on how exposure to art museums impact adults with an outright diagnosis of Alzheimer’s.

Another study out of Northwestern University focused on social inclusion and a sense of normalcy among people with Alzheimer’s as a result of exposure to museums. Thirty-five participants including staff, educators, caregivers, and their elderly patients suffering from Alzheimer’s were interviewed to better understand the impact of exposure of patients to two separate museums over two summers (Mangione, 2013). Results from this ethnographic study showed that educators argued that museums should be inclusive and open to everyone and
equated social inclusion with a normalizing experience for those with dementia. Another theme surfaced called “art-means-everything,” which highlighted the importance of using art as a conversation piece, and transitioning to finding art everywhere (Mangione, 2013). The transition to finding art everywhere is important and fits within the study because it means participants can look at and garner any number of meanings from art depending on their various perspectives. Patients found the art aesthetically pleasing and stimulating, and framed discussion around the concept of “art-means-aesthetics”, which means that their discussions were within a framework that looked at art as aesthetically pleasing (Mangione, 2013). The “art-means-aesthetics” frame means that participants benefitted from the beauty that they experienced when looking at art. The benefit was that they were able to enjoy something beautiful or pleasing to the eye. This was relevant to participants because they derived pleasure and enjoyment from certain pieces, such as Greek and roman art, fashion art, and animal art. The study concluded that access to museums was important, but that the intellectual and aesthetic stimulation from the exposure to the art community was important as well.

A recent study was done by Bennington, Backos, Harrison, Reader, & Carolan in 2016 on exposure and engagement to art museums and art activities. This study was also conducted with older adults and sought to understand how exposure to art in the form of museums impacted social inclusion and other psychological factors. This phenomenological study utilized discussion, journals, and art to help participants convey their experiences within the museum while producing data in the form of art. What this means is that they talked about their experiences in the museum by creating art using pen and paper, oil paintings, and other mediums for art creations. These outlets of expression also enhanced social inclusion, but the primary intervention under study was access to museums, ideas that are married because the intervention
of access contributes to inclusion (Bennington et al., 2016). Within the theoretical context of de Botton and Armstrong’s (2013) functions of art exposure, themes were examined. De Botton and Armstrong’s (2013) broad categories of function include: “remembering, hope, sorrow, rebalancing, self-understanding, growth, and appreciation”. The study concluded with all of de Botton and Armstrong’s categories of art being utilized by participants to improve psychological health and increase social connectedness, which means that all 7 functions of art were utilized to address psychological frailties and improve social relationships through social connections (Bennington et al., 2016). These gains were assumed to be as a result of being exposed to museums where participants could view art and express their feelings about what they experienced, which means that the primary intervention of exposure to art via the museum, and the primary form of data collection was through creating art, talking, and writing.

Another recent study by Kelson et al. (2017) demonstrated that exposure to public art can increase feelings of social citizenship among older individuals (ages 50-75) with early onset of dementia. Participants in this study belonged to a group called Paul’s Club that met three days a week to walk around and examine public art in the downtown Vancouver area. Data for this study were collected in the form of fieldnotes and included over 100 hours monitoring of participants by the researchers (Kelson et al., 2017). The study concluded that participants experienced higher levels on social inclusion as a result of the connectedness they felt from access to art, which was a vehicle for participation within the community. Because participants were able to overcome the stigma of dementia through the inclusiveness felt via exposure to art, the researchers hypothesized that exposure and community connectedness may be the key to overcoming marginalization experienced by dementia patients (Kelson et al., 2017).

Middle-aged participants can also benefit from exposure to art museums. In a study
conducted with 12 adult participants between the ages of 25 and 65, participants suffering from psychosis were given access to an art-gallery and asked to reflect on their thoughts and feelings after each event (Colbert et al., 2013). After conducting an analysis of the data, the researchers found that prior to exposure to the gallery, participants felt marginalized, isolated, and defined by psychosis. Feeling defined by psychosis, or any psychiatric disorder means that your diagnosis acts as a label that stigmatizes you. After they were exposed to the gallery, participants felt validated in the inclusive environment and began to change the discourse around the dominant narrative in which psychosis defined them, which means that they led conversations that demonstrated that they no longer felt labeled and stigmatized by the diagnosis (Colbert et al., 2013). Many of the participants saw art as a pathway to acquiring social capital through inclusion, as the gallery was a place to share experiences and bond with others.

The benefits of visual exposure to art across an array of vulnerable populations exist largely within a psychosocial framework. Participants exposed to visual arts often experience psychological gains including improved psychological health and reductions in psychiatric symptomologies. As stated in de Botton’s (2016) work, exposure to visual art is a therapeutic means of addressing psychological frailties. Exposure to the visual arts within the various art communities also contributes to feelings of resilience, hope, social connectedness, and the overall wellbeing associated with the accumulation of social capital (Bennington et al., 2016; Colbert et al., 2013; Kelson et al., 2017; Magione, 2013; & Roe et al., 2016).

Overall, there are four main beneficial outcome variables associated with being exposed to the audio, performing (AV), and visual arts. When looking across these three ways in which various populations are exposed to art, irrespective of the population, the four main outcome concepts include: (1.) social capital, (2.) psychological benefits, (3.) and empowerment
as for the conceptual framework of this study, these three concepts fit nicely within de Botton & Armstrong’s (2016) existing framework on the functions of art because the framework is designed to address psychological frailties which lead to psychological benefits, and social capital and empowerment education align with the functions growth and self-understanding respectively (Bennington et al., 2016).

The next section of this literature review examines the convergence of the art and homelessness literature. Because art and homelessness literature are sparse, all audio, AV, and visual arts will be reviewed in this section. Additionally, because the homelessness art exposure literature is scarce, this review will include exposure in the form of art appreciation and art creation. This means that this section of the literature review is a divergence from the other sections in that it will consider activities such as painting, drawing, sculpting, and other types of therapeutic mediums used in art production.

A Convergence of the Art and Homelessness Literature

In this section of the literature review, the convergence of homelessness literature and art literature will be reviewed. This section of the review focuses on literature on the issue of homelessness, with the primary intervention being art exposure. Contrary to what was discussed prior to this section of the literature review, both art creation and art appreciation will be included in this review. This review makes an intentional effort to identify the gap in the literature while demonstrating that individuals experiencing homelessness benefit from art exposure within the context of de Botton and Armstrong’s (2016) framework.

In an article titled, Homeless Adults Engagement in Art: First Steps Toward Identity, Recovery, and Social Inclusion, a qualitative study was used to explore the benefits of art exposure and engagement in the form of art occupations for individuals experiencing
homelessness (Thomas et al., 2011). Art occupations are jobs that pertain to creating, exhibiting, and selling art for a living. Participants and other stakeholders who were involved in the art program were interviewed, and data were analyzed for themes. The themes that surfaced were on the initial startup and engagement process, perceived benefits of the program, and earned respect and recognition through employment in the art program (Thomas et al., 2011). The initial startup and engagement process included aspects of joining the art program such as light conversation with peers, which led to gradually becoming more interested in art. This eventually led to better attendance and increased participant motivation toward the art and the scheduled routines or structure that the program provided. Additionally, the art program gave them a sense of cultural pride, identity, and a sense of achievement (Thomas et al., 2011). The participants’ perceived benefits of the program included: a sense of personal understanding or self-discovery, the ability to resolve indecisiveness, a diversion of issues associated with addictive disorders, and a reprieve from psychiatric disorders (Thomas et al., 2011). As an occupation, adults experiencing homelessness were able to produce art. They could keep it, exhibit it in a gallery, or put it up for sale. The study found that the art occupations promoted community involvement, public acknowledgment, social inclusion, and a new sense of identity among adults experiencing homelessness (Thomas et al., 2011).

Transition Out of the University of Victoria in Canada, Clover (2011) conducted a feminist art-based participatory action research project with women experiencing homelessness. Over the course of 18 months the researchers worked with 20 female participants who were on the streets of Victoria. In the initial phase of the study the researchers worked with social service agencies to develop and create the program. The women agreed to meet two times a week and offer at least one exhibition of their work. Professional artists were hired for four hours a day,
three days a week (12 hours a week) to coach participants in the works of various artistic mediums. Themes emerged from the data, which were collectively identified by the group. Salient themes were around: trust, community, identity, & empowerment. To summarize the overall impact and meaning of these themes, within this social community where trust could be established, the women expressed that they felt empowered individually and collectively. This was especially important to them within the context of the male-dominated societies in which they exist (Clover, 2011).

Murphy and Alexander (2020) conducted a qualitative interpretive meta-synthesis of studies to better understand the impact of art-based programs on individuals experiencing homelessness and housing instability. The researchers conducted a search of peer reviewed literature using academic search engines such as ERIC and PsycINFO. The initial search yielded 237 articles, and after eliminating studies that did not meet inclusion criteria, eight studies remained. Across all of the remaining studies, there were N=53 participants across three countries, which included the United States, Australia, and Canada. The authors met seven times in the span of a few months to discuss codes and themes and ensure that they reached mutual agreement when coding. After using Atlas.ti to determine which themes surfaced, it was found that salient themes included: healing, advocacy, and self-empowerment. Implications for this study demonstrates that art-based therapy for individuals experiencing homelessness can be used with consistency across nations to contribute to social well-being (Murphy & Alexander, 2020).

A suite of studies was conducted with African American youth experiencing homelessness that were engaged in art through the use of a music studio out of a Chicagoland transitional living facility called the Teen Living Programs (TLP) Belfort House (Kelly & Hunter, 2016; Kelly, 2014; Kelly, 2017). The youth participated in the activity-based study by
recording their discussions through an audio documentary. In the larger primary study, the purpose of this ethnography was to analyze field notes and transcripts for themes. Themes that emerged from the main larger study were around the importance of: their relationship to music, their experiences with producing music, music education & appreciation, connection & engagement, and creative expression (Kelly, 2017).

Two additional studies were built off this initial project. The purpose of the second study was to provide a studio where participants were able to engage in a co-constructed audio documentary where the group was able to develop their own narratives, engage in the research process, promote their own strengths, develop partnerships with adults, and have their voices heard as a result of publishing via media (Kelly, 2014).

In a similar study with adult males using the Hip Hop Self-Expression program, a music and empowerment-based group was used to help individuals cope with psychiatric problems while staying in a homeless shelter. In order to determine the efficacy of the program’s impact on the socio-emotional health of these adults, Travis et al. (2019) utilized measures within the MUZUZE framework, which recorded outcomes such as self-awareness, social awareness, self-esteem, resilience, growth, community, and feelings of empowerment. In addition to using these measures, they also provide some in-depth case examples by looking at individual experiences in the Hip Hop Self-Expression program, which helped elaborate on group experiences and benefits. The individuals that engaged in the program were impacted by elements of Hip Hop which included beats, hooks, and lyrics, all of which contributed to increased engagement in the group process. Participants felt empowered through the Hip Hop Self-Expression program, and this sense of empowerment contributed to themes which included self-esteem, resilience, growth, a sense of community, and change within the community. The implications for this study show
that Hip Hop programs can benefit groups experiencing homelessness by contributing to feelings of empowerment, which impacts socio-emotional health (Tavis et al., 2019).

The purpose of the final study was to look at the development of group dynamics within the framework offered by Toseland and Rivas (2012). This framework consists of the following concepts: group communication and interaction patterns, group cohesion, group integration and influence, and group culture (Toseland & Rivas, 2012). This study’s findings suggest that the participants, many of whom are often marginalized and unacknowledged, were able to find support and affirmations through music and the group process (Kelly & Hunter, 2016).

Kelly’s suite of studies suggest that youth experiencing homelessness can feel empowered by engaging with music-based art. This engagement offers opportunities for youth to be recognized for their strengths, while developing healthy coping mechanisms. Most importantly, young people benefitted not just from creating art in the form of music, but from having access to the studio which allowed them to be in or around it an art community (Hunter & Kelly, 2016; Kelly, 2014; Kelly, 2017).

In addition to bolstering psychosocial needs, art-based activities have the potential to help those experiencing homelessness meet their financial needs. Griffith, Seymour, and Goldberg (2015) conducted a study to investigate outcomes in the form of life achievement. The goal was to better understand what happens when you incorporate financial goals into the psychosocial goals that are usually achieved in art-based therapy. The comparison group participated in the art therapy program, and the treatment group participated in the art therapy program with financial goals defined as taking the initiative to accomplish employment tasks or obtaining employment. There was a positive correlation between involvement in the art-based activities and life achievement, which was operationalized by getting housing, a reduction in substance
abuse, employment, social skills development, and taking the initiative to achieve or accomplish tasks related to these goals (Griffith et al., 2015). Additionally, when participants were subjected to the art therapy program which was the treatment group that included financial goals, they were more likely to acquire life achievements (Griffith et al., 2015).

The next section of this paper summarizes the literature review and provides an explanation of salient concepts found throughout the literature review. It also discusses how de Botton and Armstrong’s (2016) theory on art as a tool to address the seven psychological frailties and how this provides a conceptual framework for understanding the benefits of exposure to art. Finally, there is an explanation of how this literature review addresses the gaps in the literature.

**Literature Review Summary and Salient Concepts**

A review of the art and homelessness literature reveals that art exposure as an intervention helps individuals experiencing homelessness develop a sense of social inclusion, empowerment, resilience, and identity. Notably, historically marginalized groups such as homeless women and African Americans were able to feel a sense of community and social belonging, which sometimes took place within a feminist framework where they felt oppressed by the status quo. Other benefits to using art as an intervention included a reduction in issues associated with addictive disorders and lack of employment. De Botton’s (2016) work best summarizes these benefits by demystifying the purpose of art exposure, and defining it as a tool to aid in the accumulation of psycho-social capital.

In summation, the review of literature revealed that exposure to art with various vulnerable populations, including the vulnerably housed, is beneficial in a number of problem areas associated with homelessness. Many of these problems are associated with, or seated within, a framework consisting of psychological frailties (e.g., forgetfulness, despair, and
dignified sorrow), with exposure to art being a potentially appropriate tool to address these frailties (de Botton & Armstrong, 2016). Most studies revealed some beneficial gains in the areas of: social capital, empowerment education, and psychological health. Consequently, in many of these studies, participants who were exposed to art benefited from functions of art associated with remembering what is important, rebalancing their lives, achieving a sense of self-understanding, and benefitting from personal growth socially and psychologically. While it is clear that exposure to art is beneficial to vulnerable populations, including the vulnerably housed, there are still some questions that have been left unanswered.

One art intervention that has not been touched on with individuals experiencing housing instability is art appreciation which is also known as art exposure. The studies that involve art exposure or appreciation exclude individuals experiencing housing instability, and studies on art exposure or appreciation and individuals experiencing housing instability involve art creation or art therapy as the primary intervention. Therein lies the gap in the literature. This study addresses the gap in the literature by asking the following research questions from the perspectives of CHI program participants using Photovoice as an art-based method, and staff, volunteer, and administrative participants in their roles as facilitators: (1) “What is the impact of art and cultural exposure and engagement on CHI program participants experiencing housing instability? (2) What are CHI program participants’ experiences with disseminating their art, and what meaning do they attach to these experiences? (3) What are the CHI staff, volunteer, and administrators’ perceptions of the impact of art and cultural exposure programing on CHI participants experiencing housing instability?” Although not specifically defined in the research questions, the primary type of intervention utilized in the first research question is art
appreciation as opposed to art creation. Next, the research design section of this paper will provide details on how the study will answer the research questions.
CHAPTER 3
RESEARCH DESIGN

This qualitative study sought to understand the experiences of the participants exposed to art in the CHI art program. This was achieved by asking the following research questions from the CHI program participants perspective: (1) “What is the impact of art and cultural exposure and engagement on CHI program participants experiencing housing instability? (2) What are CHI program participants’ experiences with disseminating their art, and what meaning do they attach to these experiences?” What is meant by experience in this question is what types of observations, thoughts, and feelings they had as a result of disseminating their work. The third and final question is, (3) “What are the CHI staff, volunteer, and administrative perspectives and perceptions of the impact of art and cultural exposure programing on participants experiencing housing instability?”

The Photovoice methodology receives its theoretical underpinnings from the qualitative Participatory Action Research (PAR) tradition. Action Research, also known as Community-Based Participatory Research, or PAR can be a useful way to empower participants (Latz, 2017; Padgett, 2008; Patton, 2002). The Photovoice method also incorporates Freirean and Feminist theories which are a part of the empowerment and education traditions as well (Latz, 2017; Wang & Burris, & Ping, 1996).
**Subjects as Co-Investigators**

Within this study, the participants were exposed to various forms of art within a number of art-based communities. Art-based communities consisted of museums, exhibits, plays, gigs, etcetera. The term community is used because as part of the intervention, participants were encouraged to engage in discussion with artists across these venues over a meal. The participants, who were a part of a vulnerably housed community of individuals that were exposed to art, took an active role in carrying out the study via the Photovoice research method. In order to share, interpret, and describe what they learned or experienced, they needed to work together as a community in focus groups to examine photos that they took and talked about.

The Collaboration Institutional Training Initiative (CITI) is a certification institution that offers training and oversight for entities conducting research (“citiprogram.org, 2020”). Although participants did not need CITI training or certification to carry out their portion of the study, there still needed to be a great deal of buy-in from them. One reason that this project required buy-in was because participants had to choose to remain a part of the project despite the work involved. Being a part of this project was extra work because it required them to be a part of a sub-culture of vulnerably housed individuals that engaged in the art and cultural exposure and engagement experience. This experience not only required engagement in the form of art appreciation, but it also required participants to carry out small jobs such as taking photos and participating in focus groups.

Additionally, the participants made a large contribution by taking an active role in the research process. They contributed to the interviewing process by offering and posing questions during the focus group. They contributed to data collection via taking photos and participating in
the focus groups. Last, they contributed to the analysis by talking about salient themes that surfaced.

As a result of their contributions as research collaborators, the study may lose integrity. This is because the participants did not receive any formal training in research from an academic institution. In order to conduct a study with stronger integrity, the participants would have needed to take CITI training, get trained on the basics of the research methodology, and preferable get tested to find out whether the group had a combined and clear understanding of most research procedures. That being said, the benefits included the potential for wide impact with short completion times.

**Photoethnographic Theoretical Underpinnings**

Photoethnographies have the same theoretical underpinnings as ethnographies. A photo is a capture of an image, ethnos is Greek for culture, and graphy refers to the science of describing something. Notable differences between the two methodologies (Photovoice & ethnography) include length of time a concept is under investigation and a shift in focus on the subjects within a cultural context, which is because Photoethnographies add an ethnographic component which leads to more time spent in the field and a greater focus on the cultures within these settings (Latz, & Mulvihill, 2017; Patton, 2002). The cultural context used in Photoethnographies works well within the PAR framework. As a result of time and financial constraints, PAR is also popular in the health and medical related fields (Padgett, 2008). Although these elements of PAR exist within the study, this study is really grounded in the fact that there was a small group of individuals that shared in a similar cultural experience. That, coupled with the fact that this study took place within the larger context of the suite of ethnographic studies known as *The Evaluation of the CHI and RLS Collaboration*, the data
collected on this group over an extended period means that this study was grounded firmly in the ethnographic approach. This is because ethnographies often examine cultures within groups for extended periods of time (Creswell, 2007; Emerson et al., 1995; Padget, 2008; Patton, 2002).

The Photovoice method works well within the context of a study grounded in the Ethnographic tradition because the Photovoice method sometimes utilizes communities of individuals with shared anthropological cultures in group settings (i.e., focus groups) where ideas, thoughts, and feelings can be shared regarding the photos (i.e., data) they captured (Wang, 1999, Wang, Buris, & Ping, 1996; Latz, 2017). When the Photovoice method is used in this way, it is sometimes referred to as Photoethnography (Latz, 2017). Further, after careful consideration, ethnography was selected as the qualitative tradition in which this study and the larger suite of studies are grounded.

**Research Method Literature Review**

This literature review will introduce the Photovoice method via the literature, explain the key tenets behind using the Photovoice method, talk about some reasons that researchers used Photovoice, and provide reasoning for why Photovoice was a suitable methodology for this study.

**Introduction via Photovoice Literature**

This review starts with published books that help researchers better understand the Photovoice methodology. In a recent Photovoice textbook by Latz (2017), interested researchers are provided with guidelines for conducting their own Photovoice study. The book outlines the theoretical underpinnings of Photovoice describing them as one-part feminism, one part Freirean, and one-part participatory action research (Latz, 2017). Another methodological guide (Palibroda et al., 2009) confirms that Photovoice is a type of Participatory Action Research
(PAR) that provides participants with tools (cameras & voice) they can use to capture and display imagery that brings attention to the problems that they face (Palibroda et al., 2009).

**The Key Tenets of Photovoice**

The key tenets of Photovoice are embedded in the history of Photovoice. Dr. Caroline Wang is a pioneer of Photovoice and has published a number of peer-reviewed articles on the methodology (Wang & Burris, 1997; Wang, Burris, & Ping, 1996; Wang, 1999; Wang & Pies, 2004). In the initial Photovoice studies, Wang, Burris and Ping (1996) outline an approach in which they introduce a novel methodology called Photo novella (Photovoice). The key tenets included giving vulnerable populations a voice and influencing policies. Wang and Burris (1997) describe the process of Photovoice as largely participatory. Pioneer researchers later describe the key concepts of Photovoice as pictures being able to teach policy makers and influence policy, communities coming together for social change, and the importance of participatory action in the community (Wang, 1999; Wang & Pies, 2004).

**The Utility of Photovoice**

The Photovoice approach has been utilized effectively with a broad range of vulnerable populations including older adults in chronic pain (Baker & Wang, 2006), a wide array of patients and clients with psycho-social and medical conditions that often navigate the public health arena (Catalani & Minkler, 2010), African American women suffering from breast cancer (Lopez et al., 2005), impoverished youths, adults, and policy makers in the U.S. (Wang, Morrel-Samuels, Hutchinson, Bell, & Pestrnik, 2004), and young adolescent students (Wilson et al., 2007). Despite dealing with a number of psycho-social challenges, groups with a range of problems across the lifespan that often feel powerless are able to use Photovoice to express themselves and empower themselves to advocate for change in their various communities,
including older adults in the U.S. (Baker and Wang, 2006), youth in the U.S. (Wilson et al., 2007) and people ranging from youth to older adults, with various medical/psycho-social issues and problems, from various continents such as North America, Asia, Australia, Europe, South America, and Africa (Catalani & Minkler, 2010).

**Suitability of Photovoice for this Study**

The review of scholarly articles and textbooks demonstrated that the Photovoice methodology empowers a number of vulnerable populations including older adults, women, minorities, and youths to advocate for themselves (Baker & Wang, 2006; Catalani & Minkler, 2010; Lopez et al., 2005; Wang, Morrel-Samuels, Hutchinson, Bell, & Pestrunk, 2004; Wilson et al., 2007). Photovoice was suitable for this study because it gave people that are normally marginalized and socially isolated a chance to have their voices heard in a meaningful way. The Photovoice method was also suitable because this study was rooted in participatory and community action. Finally, Photovoice was a suitable methodology because this study sought to disseminate the works of an unstably housed population in a public forum with community leaders where policies could be shaped. Participants acting as collaborators gathered data, helped select and invite agency policy makers to attend an exhibit, and used the dissemination of their work as a means to communicate what was important to them, and why it was important.

**Research Methods Overview**

This study used photography through Photovoice as an artistic medium for understanding how exposure to art impacts participants who experience housing instability or homelessness. This art-based method (Photovoice) was grounded in the ethnographic tradition.

All participants experiencing housing instability, including staff, volunteers, and administrative art exposure participants were purposefully recruited, consented, and selected
based on participant characteristics that are stated later in this chapter. At that time, they were also provided with prompts and directions on how to conduct themselves as collaborators, which meant that they learned what the research questions were, how to take photos, what would be expected in terms of contextualizing photos, and what the rules were for taking photos. Contact information in the form of email addresses were acquired. Participants were also provided with an initial meet up time, which took place 30 minutes prior to the first event. Also, reminders were sent out prior to the event via the newly created CHI email listing.

All participants attended at least one CHI art and cultural event. Participants were expected to take photos during the event and after the event for the purpose of answering the research prompts (see Appendix B). A focus group was held after the event, and during the focus group each participant shared five to seven pre-selected photos that they felt best answered the research questions and prompts. The photos were used to prompt discussions among participants in the focus group, and time was allotted for them to talk about the themes that they felt surfaced. They were also able to make recommendations on changing questions and prompts.

I used open coding to code transcriptions of the data and looked for themes that might emerge. The following provides information about the sampling process and the data collection process.

**Population, Sample, and Sampling Strategy**

This study sought to utilize the Photovoice research methodology to conduct a process evaluation of the CHI art and cultural engagement and exposure program. As such, the population included subjects that were experiencing homelessness or housing instability. For additional insight, staff, volunteer, and administrative participants were sampled. They provided
additional insight because rather than experiencing homelessness or housing instability, they facilitated the CHI art and cultural exposure programs. Individuals sampled were: experiencing homelessness or housing instability, receiving services from CHI, and participating in the CHI art and cultural exposure and engagement program. The staff, volunteer, and administrative participant sample included: individuals who that facilitated the CHI art and cultural exposure and engagement programing, and individuals that worked closely with CHI program participants experiencing housing instability. Details on the populations, sample, and sampling strategy follow.

**Population**

The CHI program participant population had three key characteristics:

1. The population (sampling frame) consisted of individuals who qualified for and utilized services offered by CHI. For the purposes of this study, these individuals were considered experiencers of housing instability. Individuals experiencing homelessness may be categorized as homeless or chronically homeless. According to the McKinney Vento Act, homelessness is defined as living in a place not meant for long-term human habitation, but this definition also includes those doubled up or living in motels (HUD, 2020). Chronically homeless is defined as a year or more of continuous homelessness, or four verifiable instances of homelessness within a year (HUD, 2020). Building off of these definitions, experiencers of housing instability are defined as being precariously housed or vulnerably housed (HUD, 2020).

2. The population (sampling frame) also consisted of individuals who were participating in homeless services through the Chicago Help Initiative (CHI) drop-in center. This included referrals to outside agencies. Most individuals who sought out this type of assistance minimally met the criteria of experiencing housing instability. That is because CHI connects individuals
with services via the drop-in center. This helps individuals experiencing housing instability address a myriad of issues that contribute to housing instability. Examples of useful service categories (including outside referrals) offered by CHI included: finance, medical, nutrition (soup kitchen & food pantry), health, transportation, education, employment, etcetera.

3. The population (sampling frame) consisted of individuals participating in the CHI art exposure and engagement events. Minimally, there needed to be some prior engagement in the CHI or Red Line Service (RLS) art exposure and engagement events. Individuals that participated in the CHI art events likely met the first two criteria as they are recipients of direct services from CHI, or they had minimally received a service in the form of a referral from CHI to the CHI art exposure program. And again, those engaged in services with CHI minimally met the criteria of being experiencing housing instability.

This study also samples a staff, volunteer, and administrative participant population. The following are two characteristics of the staff, volunteer, and administrative participant population:

1. The staff, volunteer, and administrative participants consisted of facilitators who worked for the CHI drop in center or art and cultural exposure program through employment or volunteerism.

2. Staff, volunteer, and administrative participants were in regular contact with the CHI program participants, and minimally in a position to offer insight on the CHI art exposure program and the CHI program participants. The criteria for being in a position to minimally offer insight was that they were familiar with the program and participants through regular contact with CHI, despite whether or not they facilitated the CHI art and cultural exposure program frequently.
This was a qualitative study, so it utilized a non-probability sampling method that required fewer participants that could offer deeper, richer, meaning. Non-probability sampling methods are often used in qualitative studies to seek out depth of information over breadth of information. (Frankfort-Nachmias et al., 2015; Monette et al., 2014). This study used a form of non-probability sampling called purposive sampling. Purposive sampling is defined as selecting participants who are information rich (Patton, 2002). Purposive sampling was the best fit for this study because as an ethnographer that was familiar with the potential participants, I was attempting to select people in an effort to learn how the CHI art and cultural exposure and engagement events impact the lives of individuals that were either experiencing homelessness or housing instability. Purposive sampling is the best type of sampling to use if the participants need to be selected purposefully (Creswell, 2007; Padgett, 2008; Patton, 2002). This purposefully selected group of participants yielded a sample that offered rich insight on the program participants experiences with the CHI art and cultural exposure program.

As the principle investigator, I purposefully selected nine CHI program participants experiencing housing instability, and six staff, volunteer, and administration participants. These participants participated in a Photovoice project based on their lived experiences, potential interests, and their ability to offer depth or insight on the research prompts and questions. The unit of analysis was individual.

**Staff, Volunteer, and Administrator Participant Recruitment Strategy**

Staff, volunteer, and administrative participants were recruited by going to CHI and speaking with them. There were six staff, volunteer, administrative participants, and from prior experience I was familiar with each of them. This meant that I knew how to find each person at
the agency, the point being that I wasn’t doing a cold recruitment of participants, but rather following up with participants that I knew could offer insight. Participants that agreed (N=6) were read the staff, volunteer, administrative recruitment script.

Recruitment Strategy

Data were collected within the context of the above-mentioned sampling frame and method. The recruitment strategy was as follows:

STEP 1: I acquired a list of the CHI art exposure participants. This was done by going to the CHI program, consulting with staff, volunteers, and administration on where to find CHI program participants for the purpose of recruiting individuals who participated in the CHI art and cultural events. This was also done to consult with staff, volunteers, and administration on how to reach out to CHI program participants that were not on site.

STEP 2: Because Wednesdays were the only day that CHI services were available, I went to the CHI program on three Wednesdays to find and select CHI program participants from the list based on prior knowledge, interest, and ability to contribute. I reached out to participants that were not on site with the help of staff, volunteers, and administration, which means that I asked the facilitators to help me find people whenever I struggled with located them. The ability to contribute was based on inclusion and exclusion criteria, and on the sampling framework mentioned above.

STEP 3: I approached participants who were on the list and asked them if they were interested in the study. With the CHI staff, volunteers, and administrators assistance, I contacted participants via phone, text message, or email.

STEP 4: If participants were interested, I read them the recruitment script (Appendix H.) along with the releases, and obtained consent forms (Appendix I.). More contact information
(email addresses and phone numbers) was also gathered. Because contact information was needed, data security measures are discussed in greater detail below in order to talk about how this information was kept confidential.

**STEP 5:** After the CHI program participants experiencing housing instability were recruited (8-20 was the range), and the six staff, volunteer, and administrative program facilitator participants maximum were recruited (4-6 was the range), the data collection procedures commenced.

**Participant Data Collection Equipment**

In terms of the actual type of photography equipment used in this study, CHI program participants were given the latitude to use a variety of cameras that they were best able to express themselves with. In addition to this, all CHI program participants were provided with photography equipment. I was the principle investigator. In this role I provided a disposable camera before the event. Because funding was limited, participants were also allowed to use their own more sophisticated types of equipment, so long as they already owned it, and it best suited their needs (mid-range digital camera, camera phone, film fed camera, etcetera).

Where desired, participants were told to express themselves via their own photography editing programs (iOS11 Photos, Effects Studio, and Prisma). These photo editing applications provided participants with additional ways to bring out salient features of their photos, which allowed them to highlight details that were important to them. The hope was to give participants the ability to empower themselves to artistically express how they felt about the art exposure program, of which they were a part of.

The benefit of digital photography was that participants could creatively and artistically enhance photos with editing options to ensure that they turned out exactly as intended before the
focus group. These will later be used in publications within peer reviewed articles, which was discussed during the informed consent process (Appendix I.). At the CHI program participants’ discretion, these photos were disseminated via exhibit (and put up for consignment), book, and webpage. In this respect, the CHI program participants had an opportunity to offer insight on their experiences with the art and cultural exposure and engagement program in various public forums. This was done because dissemination through these public outlets can inform and shape agencies, policies, and the processes that directly affect participants.

**Focus Group Questions and Prompts**

Once CHI program participants were recruited, prompts designed to answer the research questions were shared and discussed with CHI program participants. The research question was posed to garner the perspective of participants using Photovoice as an art-based method and asked, what is the impact of art and cultural exposure and engagement on CHI program participants experiencing housing instability? The initial prompts were: “What (if anything) are you getting out of the art program? What was your (favorite/worst) thing about the last event? Take a few pictures of art at the event and talk about why those pictures are important to you. Take a picture that shows or represents what life is like on the streets. Take a few pictures of art outside the event, what do they mean to you? Take a picture that represents how the art program impacts your life outside the event, explain what that means to you.” What this means is that they were to take pictures at events such as the Looking Glass Theater or the Music Box Theater and use the pictures in focus groups to contextualize what that meant within the context of experiencing housing instability or homelessness. The idea of taking photos outside of the event speaks to the fact that they were able to access art and still use it as a tool for therapy even when not participating in the art and cultural exposure program.
These research prompts were developed from the research question. Photovoice methodologists suggest that you use the SHOWeD acronym to develop questions and prompts (Latz, 2016; Palibroda et al., 2009; Wang, 1999; Wang & Burris, 1997). This acronym stands for, “See it, what Happened?, relate it to Our lives, Why does it Exist?, what can we Do?” (Latz, 2016; Wang, 1999). This is why the research prompts and protocols for follow up questions were developed. Responding to the prompts not only got at answering the research questions, but encouraged the participants to photograph what they saw in a way that collectively revealed their perspectives on the impact of exposure to art. This data fed directly into the planning of various types of dissemination, which gave a voice to the participants.

I made it clear that participants could take captures of various forms of art such as: music performances, lyrics, poetry, sculptures, dance performances, painting, drawings, etcetera. I also made it clear that even artistic creations of their own could be photographed and submitted for discussion and publication so long as they aimed to answer the research questions. Photographs of themselves (selfies) were permissible, but photographs where other people could be identified were either altered or not used because of human subjects’ constraints regarding confidentiality.

**Dissemination Question and Prompts**

In addition to understanding the impact of art and cultural exposure programing on participants’ experiences of housing instability, this study looked at the impact of dissemination. To better understand how dissemination impacted CHI program participants experiencing housing instability, the research question asked was, “What are CHI program participants’ experiences with disseminating their art, and what meaning do they attach to these experiences?”

Again, because the program offered services on Wednesdays, these data were gathered on Wednesdays via focus groups, and prompts were designed and used within those focus groups to
get at the research question. The prompts were: “How did you make meaning of having your voice heard before policy makers at the art exhibit? What (if anything) did you get out of mounting the exhibit? What was your (favorite/worst) thing about the exhibit? Why was the exhibit important to you? What would you change about the exhibit if you could do it again? Is there anything else that you would change about the Photovoice project? What reoccurring themes surfaced during our discussion tonight?”

It should be noted that the primary function of the question and prompts were to get at the impact of dissemination before agency level policy makers, which means that I was very much interested in hearing their thoughts on having their art disseminated before people that shape policies that impact their lives through the program. That beings said, this is tied into the Photovoice methodology and its questions and prompts because dissemination is a function of research that attempts to correct social injustices. Therefore, by better understanding the impact of dissemination of art on participants, we not only understand the Photovoice method better, we get a better understanding of how their contextualized photographs made an impact before policy makers.

**Staff, Volunteer, and Administration Question and Prompts**

Finally, this study also sought to get another perspective on how the art and cultural exposure programing impacted CHI program participants experiencing housing instability. To do this, staff, volunteer, and administrative participants were recruited for individuals’ interviews. These participants were recruited because they facilitated the art and cultural exposure events, and thus were close enough to the phenomenon under study to offer a great deal of insight. The research question was, “What are the CHI staff, volunteer, and administrators’ perceptions of the impact of art and cultural exposure programing on CHI program participants
experiencing housing instability?” Prompts were also developed to get at this question. The prompts were: “What (if anything) are the participants getting out of the art program? What do you believe was their (favorite/worst) thing about the event/program? Why is the program important? What is achieved through this program? What are people getting out of the art exposure program that they can’t get out of another program (sports, reading, employment, etcetera)? Is there anything else that you’d like to add to the discussion tonight? Again, these questions fit within the scope of the first two questions because they pertain to better understanding the impact of the art and cultural exposure program on CHI program participants, and they get at the impact of dissemination because the facilitators accepted the methodology as a part of the art and cultural exposure experience.

Data Collection Procedures

This qualitative study utilized data from the Photovoice project which asked participants to take photos, contextualize those photos through voice, and codify those photos in a focus group setting. This study also examined the impact of the methodology, which included disseminating the participants’ art where their voices could be heard by policy makers, and discussing the meaning of dissemination in a focus group. Finally, this study triangulated these data by asking staff, volunteer, administrative participants their thoughts on the impact of the intervention. What follows are the data collection procedures for the Photovoice project, the Photovoice participant focus group on the impact of dissemination, and the staff, volunteer and administrative interviews.

Photovoice Data

Subjects who consented to participate in the study met briefly with me at the CHI drop-in center prior to the art exposure event to check photography equipment. While consulting with
each of the participants, I made notes of who requested assistance securing photography equipment. At this meeting I also went over the research questions and prompts with the participants and provided them with a copy. The participants were told that they had two weeks to take photos, and that they could take or use any number of their photographs for this project. I asked participants if they needed help with operating any equipment that they planned to use, and where necessary I provided basic training on the function and use of photography equipment.

Just prior to the event, I checked with participants to see who needed photography equipment. Any participant who requested photography equipment was provided with a camera and brief instructions on how to use it. Once everyone had cameras, I once again passed out research questions and prompts. The first research question was, “What is the impact of art and cultural exposure and engagement on CHI program participants experiencing housing instability?” Using the research question as a guide, the participants took photos (gathered data) at the art exposure events, as well as in their own various housed and homeless environments, to artistically express how they felt in regard to answering the questions.

The Wednesday following this art exposure event I went to the CHI drop-in center to give participants reminders letting them know that the focus group would commence in two weeks. In addition to these reminders, participants were given their first opportunity to submit digital photographs and disposable cameras as data. I brought in my laptop, external hard drive, and a number of cables necessary to upload participant photos. Photos were stored on my secure passcode protected laptop and kept in folders that were only identifiable by participant pseudonyms. During this stage of data collection, participants individually selected photos that they wished to contextualize in the focus group. Contextualizing a photo meant that participants took time out to have conversations about their photographs in the focus group so that there
could be a discussion around the pictures they took. I named each of the participant’s seven selected photographs in numeric order with numerals one through seven. At that time, I made a reservation to utilize a room at the CHI drop-in center. This reservation was set exactly two Wednesdays out, with a run time of one and a half hours (16:00-17:30).

The following Wednesday I went to the CHI drop-in center and gathered the last of the photographs from participants. Once again participants were reminded that the focus group would commence in one week, and they were given a reminder slip indicating the specific date and time that the focus group would take place. At this time the participants were also reminded that they would be compensated for their time with $10 in cash (USD). Just as in the prior week, the I brought my laptop, hard drive, and cables to upload participant photos. Again, they were stored, with five to seven photos being selected and labeled for discussion in the Photovoice focus group.

The following Wednesday I met with the participants at the CHI drop-in center and reminded them of the focus group. Participants who still needed to submit or select photos for discussion had one last opportunity to do so prior to the focus group. I brought my laptop, cables, hard drive, audio recorder, monetary compensation, and projector so that the participant selected photographs could be projected and viewed as a group. I handed out the research question and prompts, reminding participants that this was the focus of this group. I set up the audio-visual equipment to record discussions and display photography.

During the focus groups the images were displayed using the projector. Each image that was projected was discussed in turn with each participant taking the lead on their entire set of captures. Before the focus group started, I started the audio recorder and each participant took turns using their voices to contextualize their five to seven photographs in regard to how they
spoke to the research question and prompts (Appendix B). Examples of prompts included: What (if anything) are you getting out of the art program? What was your (favorite/worst) thing about the last event? After each person presented, focus group members got a chance to respond to and discuss each participant’s contextualized selection of photos. Other members of the focus group offered their own thoughts and insights on the images, creating a dialogue about participant’s experiences of the CHI arts and culture program and the impact art exposure had on them.

After everyone presented, the participants were asked to codify their discussions, which means that they identified and clarified important things that were said in their discussions, all of which might later contribute to themes. In order to initiate data analysis and gain the participants’ perspective, as a group the participants were asked to discuss any themes that surfaced as a result of the discussion around the research question and prompts. After the group of CHI program participants experiencing housing instability selected themes, they were compensated, thanked for their time, and informed that we would be planning to have the work disseminated so that their stories could be heard by administrators, stakeholders, and policy makers. Nine program participants (N=9) experiencing housing instability offered insight on their experiences with the CHI art and cultural engagement program.

**Dissemination Data**

Next, all participants (CHI program participants experiencing housing instability & staff, volunteer, and administration participants) were asked to plan the dissemination of the CHI program participant’s art (photography & words) so that it could be displayed. Prior to meeting, they had an opportunity to think about the messages they wished to convey, and they decided to whom they should convey these messages. Dissemination was planned alongside the last focus group which took place a week later on a Wednesday. During the planning of disseminating
artwork, CHI program participants and staff, volunteer, and administrative participants reserved a room at Catholic Charities (CHI) where the focus group could take place. Exactly one week after having their work disseminated, the CHI program participants shared their thoughts and feelings on this experience. This focus group was for the purpose of understanding the meaning having their work disseminated, where CHI program participants’ voices were heard. It took place the following Wednesday between 16:00 and 17:00. The focus group was audio recorded for later transcription. The CHI program participants were asked to make meaning of having their work disseminated where their voices were heard by policy makers and stakeholders. The CHI program participants also discussed any themes that surfaced, and any thoughts that they had regarding the project.

**Administrative Data**

For the final phase of data collection, I scheduled interviews with six CHI staff, volunteer, and administrative participants (N=6) that could speak to the impact that the program had on participants. An attempt was made to schedule these interviews in person, but failed attempts were followed up with email correspondence which are retrievable online. Staff, volunteer, and administrative individual interviews were conducted over the phone. After the dates and times were set, I met with CHI staff, volunteer, and administrative participants individually and asked them questions regarding the impact of art exposure on participants (Appendix B. Art Exposure Card Stock). In addition to the research question, staff, volunteer, and administrative participants were asked, “What (if anything) are the participants getting out of the art program? What do you believe was their (favorite/worst) thing about the event/program? Why is the program important? What is achieved through this program? What are people getting out of the art exposure program that they can’t get out of another program (sports,
These individual interviews were audio recorded for later transcriptions. After each interview, staff, volunteer, and administrative participants were reminded that CHI program participants were planning to have their work disseminated, and as part of that process they would mount an exhibit where their photos and voices would be heard by CHI agency level policy makers (board members). For most of the staff, volunteer, and administrative participants this served as a reminder to come to the event. This is because they had already been invited to the event, and had an opportunity to help with identifying agency level policy makers and choosing methods of dissemination, including planning the art exhibit.

Analytic Framework

The research questions and methodology drove the analytic framework. The research questions were as follows: (1) “What is the impact of art and cultural exposure and engagement on CHI program participants experiencing housing instability? (2) What are CHI program participants’ experiences with disseminating their art, and what meaning do they attach to these experiences? (3) What are the CHI staff, volunteer, and administrators’ perceptions of the impact of art and cultural exposure programing on CHI participants experiencing housing instability?”

These questions reveal two important features that should be central to the analytic framework. First, the analytic framework must have the means to capture the impact of the art-based interventions on CHI program participants experiencing housing instability. Second, the analytic framework should be one that can work within the scope of an art-based methodologies that use dissemination before policy makers to address social injustices. Photovoice has both of these features. To understand the analytic framework and its suitability for this project, literature on the Photovoice methodology will be reviewed, the reasoning for principle investigator coding will be discussed, and the reasoning for participant coding will be discussed. This section
concludes with a talk on how this analytic framework fits within the larger conceptual and methodological frameworks.

Literature on the Photovoice analytic framework suggests that at least two considerations must be made. First, and most importantly the analytic framework should put the participants in a position to empower themselves and be heard (Latz, 2017). To achieve this through Photovoice, participants should capture and select salient photos for exhibition, add meaning to them through spoken word, and code them for themes (Latz, 2017; Wang & Burris, 1997). Since Photovoice is a collective experience that uses focus groups, the acronym VOICE is often applied to remind participants that they should be, “Voicing their Individual & Collective Experiences” (Latz, 2016; Palibroda et al., 2009; Wang & Burris, 1997). The second consideration is in regard to the need to publish and present. For publication purposes, it is advisable that the researcher also use more complex means of coding for themes that speak to academic analytic traditions (Latz, 2017).

As mentioned above, it was not enough to have the CHI program participants experiencing housing instability identify themes. I needed to also do a more complex analysis for publication and presentation. For this reason, I used research expertise and an analytic package called NVivo. To make a contribution, I examined literature on art exposure interventions, and considered these findings when coding. I used open coding to cast a wide net and code data for themes that surfaced. Here, it was suitable for me to use research expertise to select an analytic plan because Photovoice often blends methodologies and traditions and rarely comes with “ready-made” analytic plans for the PI to follow (Latz, 2017).

In addition to methodologist coming up with an analytic plan, focus groups are commonly used by Photovoice methodologist because they offer a medium for sharing
photography and creating data producing dialogue that you would not get with individual interviews (Latz, 2017). Participant coding within focus groups is important because it allows participants to give collective voice to what they believe is important. This collective voice is a pathway to participatory action empowerment and will ultimately shape the exhibit that they will mount within their community (Latz, 2017). When participants are able to identify what they feel are the most important themes, it also acts as a form of member checking, ensuring that the researcher, and eventually their community understands what they perceive to be important.

The analytic framework sits nicely within the methodological and conceptual frameworks. Keeping in mind that this study seeks to use Photovoice as an “art-based” methodology to understand the impact of art exposure among individuals experiencing housing instability, the analytic framework that is presented here is suitable for a number of reasons. De Botton and Armstrong’s (2016) theory works well with the analytic framework because it seeks to understand art as a tool for addressing the seven most common psychological frailties. In this way, the entire study sits within de Botton and Armstrong’s (2016) overarching framework, allowing us to get a sense of how the art-based intervention (exposure to art) is helpful, and how the art-based method (Photovoice) can be used for data collections and analyses.

The methodological theories (Freirean, Feminist, & PAR) fit nicely within de Botton’s (2016) conceptual framework because all of these theories speak to the benefits of using an art-based method (Photovoice) as a means to participatory research empowerment. The same concepts that underlie the 7 Tools of Art for addressing psychological frailties (Hope, Rebalancing, Growth, etcetera) are accomplished using the Photovoice analytic framework, principles, and theories related to community action research, education, and participant empowerment (de Botton & Armstrong, 2016; Latz, 2017).
Analytic Plan

Open coding was used by the participants to identify themes. The analytic plan started with the participants identifying the photographs that best answered the research questions. By talking about how the photos they took related to prompts and questions, they contributed to the coding and theme finding processes. As the researcher, when I noticed themes surfacing in the discussion, they were pointed out to the group for further discussion. Participants were asked to listen for themes and point them out as well. When the themes within discussions took on the form of a problem, we discussed what, if anything, we could do to address that problem as a group.

After data collection ended, all recorded data (photos, audio recordings, and transcriptions) were uploaded to NVivo and coded openly coding. Although open coding was used, concepts such as de Botton’s (2016) 7 Functions of Art and salient findings from the literature review will be considered in the discussion. De Botton’s functions include: (1.) Remembering, (2.) Hope, (3.) Sorrow, (4.) Rebalancing, (5.) Self-understanding, (6.) Growth, (7.) and Appreciation. Salient findings from the literature review included: (1.) social capital, (2.) psychological benefits, (3.) empowerment education, (4.) and social justice.

As mentioned above, to remain true to the PAR process, participants were offered a number of opportunities to identify themes, including problems and solutions that impacted their lives. Additionally, where possible the group discussed and implemented viable solutions to these problems. Finally, as a group we discussed dissemination of our work using photos and statements from the Photovoice project.
Photovoice Analysis

This analysis process started during the focus group. After each person spoke, I confirmed themes that I thought I heard after each person presented on their photos. Before concluding the focus group, the participants also reiterated what they thought the themes were. To conduct a more thorough analysis of the data, I decided that I would use NVivo. I chose NVivo because it is the only program that I have seen used, and because Loyola University Chicago offers students licensure to use it. There was a slight learning curve because this was my first experience with the analytic package. Although I had a theoretical framework (de Botton’s Art as Therapy) that could have been used to do closed coding, I decided on open coding so as not to miss anything. This meant that I would be able to code for themes that were outside of de Botton’s framework for identify functions of art.

During analysis, the biggest challenge for me was coding the data. To be precise, I struggled with how much or how little detail I should code in. About two thirds of the way through I decided that after I finished the initial coding, I would go back and code the data again, but in larger swaths. Although line for line coding offered some assurance that I wouldn’t miss anything, in the end coding slightly larger portions of text better captured the meaning and context of the discussions. In addition to doing open coding twice, I looked at how de Botton’s theoretical framework describes art as a practical way to address psychological frailties. I did not do a priori coding; however, before writing the discussion section I took all of the nodes, which are codes in NVivo that represent themes that surfaced, and looked at whether or not they fit within the framework. This framework has seven categories which include: (1.) Remembering, (2.) Hope, (3.) Sorrow, (4.) Rebalancing, (5.) Self-Understanding, (6.) Growth, and (7.) Appreciation (de Botton & Armstrong, 2016).
In the end I realized that line by line coding was overkill which means that coding every line of what was said in focus groups produces more detailed data that what is needed, but I was already so far along that it made little sense to abruptly start over. With that being said, I continued open coding and finished the analysis twice. There were a total of 19 codes/nodes which included: appreciation, disappointment, financial, homelessness, hope, humor, learning, legal issues, pain, perspective, racism, remembering, resilience, serenity, social capital, social justice, social services, sorrow, and teaching. Another problem that surfaced was that what was talked about most frequently was not necessarily what was strongly emphasized or what was most important to them. What this means is that people talked about certain subjects frequently, but frequency wasn’t the most important thing. Sometimes it was important to focus on things that they put a great deal of emphasis on emotionally or otherwise. In an effort to have their words and feelings reflected honestly, I covered both, but will spend more time stressing what they emphasized.

A Discussion on Validity

One of the best ways to improve validity in a qualitative study is through triangulation, or better yet crystallization. Crystallization is a term that gets at looking at many perspectives, in much the same way that you could look through the many facets of a crystal to gain perspective and insight. (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 245). This study achieved crystallization in a number of ways. First, I spent a great deal of time in the field observing the phenomena under study and making journal entries. Second and relatedly, I developed rapport by getting to know staff, volunteers, and administration, and CHI program participants. Third, I triangulated data by collecting multiple types of data through interviews, focus groups, photographs, artifacts and field observations. Additionally and relatedly, I collected data from multiple sources including
staff, volunteers, administration, my observations of meetings, my observations of events, and program participants. Finally, I used reflexivity in my dissertation to better understand positionality and how my personal life experiences shaped my values and analyses. This study starts with extensive reflexivity work to give readers a feel for my positionality.

**Reflexivity**

The Photovoice methodology is rooted in the PAR, Freirean, and feminist traditions and requires me to work with the participants so that they can be an active part of the investigation. This shift in power, in conjunction with exercises in reflexivity, ensures that sufficient attention is given to the power structures that impact our lives. When doing this type of research, it is of particular importance that one adequately addresses reflexivity and positionality in relationship to where they stand with the program participants (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, pp. 62-65). In this study, I am the primary tool for asking questions, collecting data, and analyzing data. For this reason, my inherent biases are subject to influence the work that I do. The goal isn’t to remove all bias. The purpose of these entries is to make explicit my positionality so that readers can fully understand how my perspectives shaped the study. In qualitative studies grounded in feminist theory, being open about positionality contributes to rigor. Through these reflections, the validity of this study is increased. Reflexivity entries generally follow observations that were made during the data collection phase of the study.

**Conclusion**

**Institutional Review Board**

Because this study sought to learn more from human subjects, there were some risks associated with conducting this study. The primary risk was that participants that decided to include photographs of themselves (selfies) could be identified. Although this is a risk, steps
such as using pseudonyms and keeping data on a password protected computer, were taken to eliminate the possibility of a participant being identified in other ways. All other identifying information was removed from all sources of data (audio & video recordings, transcripts, and photos). The primary method of protecting the participant’s’ privacy was through the use of pseudonyms.

Outside of selfies, no human subject photos were included in the study without being adequately blurred to protect identities. Once photos and other data were collected for use in the study, any other information that would lead to identifying a participant (names, addresses, emails, etcetera) was removed from the photo, or covered up so that it was not visible on the image.

In the proposal phase, this study was submitted to the Institutional Review Board (IRB) for an expedited review, and they did not require me to take additional measures to protect the identity of the participants. The study did not commence until a signed memorandum of understanding (MOU) from CHI was on file with Loyola University Chicago’s IRB (see Appendix J). In terms of informed consent, all participants read and signed all releases, consents, and documents relating to privacy, photography, audio recordings, and confidentiality. It was imperative that all participants were aware of these risks, and that they agreed to every part of the study. In the event that someone did not want to participate in a select part of the study (such as going to art exposure events, taking photos, consenting, or being audio recorded), they would have been notified that they could not participate in the study.
CHAPTER 4
ART EXPOSURE FINDINGS

Terms within the Findings Sections

There are several terms throughout this dissertation that I use to describe the impact of art, the art exposure program, the functions of art as therapy within the conceptual framework, and the benefits from dissemination. I believe it is important to clarify these terms for consistency and clarity. For example, when talking about appreciation, some writers are actually broadly describing the enjoyment of art, while others are specifically speaking to enjoying art while being in the presence of art, meaning that they are excluding art creation as a form of therapy. With this example in mind, I will define a few terms that will help avoid misunderstandings associated with using what might be perceived as double entendres. Potentially problematic terms are art exposure, art creation, art appreciation, and art dissemination, so each will be defined clearly and respectively.

For the purposes of this dissertation, I use the term exposure, in art and cultural exposure to talk about art and cultural exposure programming events, which are separate from art creation events or activities, including art dissemination. As mentioned above, art and cultural exposure refers to being exposed to art through programming, which participants could use to address psychological frailties as understood through the conceptual framework. With that being said, art and cultural exposure does not refer to creating art. This means that the term art exposure meant that participants exposed to art were impacted through exposure only, which is a type of benefit not associated with participants creating art. Another term that was used above was art
creation. In this study I use art creation to mostly describe literature and distinguish art creation activities from art appreciation activities. Although the term art creation will not be overtly discussed in the remainder of this study, it is a function of the photovoice methodology, and it largely happened through the use of photography and attached quotes taken from contextualized photos that came out of the focus groups. Some participants likely benefitted from taking photos and helping to co-construct a narrative for dissemination, but the focus of the study was not on the benefits associated with being a part of a creative art production process. Instead, this study focuses on what happens as a result of disseminating art before agency level policy makers. In short, all art creation endeavors speak to all activities around dissemination, and the impact of feeling heard as a result of dissemination.

In this study, unlike how it’s used above, the term art appreciation refers to a function of art within the conceptual framework as opposed to what was described as art exposure. In other words, when art appreciation is mentioned it is in reference to de Botton’s tools for addressing psychological frailties, and doesn’t stand as a term for excluding art creation endeavors. The seven functions of art are: (1.) Remembering, (2.) Hope, (3.) Sorrow, (4.) Rebalancing, (5.) Self-Understanding, (6.) Growth, and (7.) Appreciation (de Botton & Armstrong, 2016). For the remainder of this study, the use of the term art appreciation is defined within de Botton’s repertoire of practical tools, which were understood through the seven functions of art mentioned above.

A term that was used frequently in this dissertation was art dissemination. This term refers to participants art being disseminated in a number of ways. These methods around dissemination will unfold in the findings section, with details being expressed in the ethnographic observational data. Ultimately, dissemination refers to spreading information
through various mediums, and thus the term is defined through our traditional standardized understanding of the word. For the purposes of this study, the participants minimally agreed to disseminate their art through an art exhibit, a book, and through a website. Additionally, participants agreed to have their art disseminated through scholarly peer reviewed journals. Finally, some participants disseminated their art on their own through their own social media portals.

**A Brief Overview the Findings Sections**

Before launching into the findings, I would like to discuss what the reader can expect to find in chapters four, five, and six. As mentioned before, the Photovoice methodology is grounded in participatory action research (PAR) theory, feminist theory, and Freirean theory. In accordance with PAR, you will see work that is led by the participants, and a transfer of power that speaks to correcting social injustices. Feminist works are often intersectional and require the researcher to think critically about their positionality. For this reason, you will see some reflexivity and positionality work. Freirean theory is often concerned with education and how empowerment educations helps participants reposition themselves to take power from the status quo. You will see these transformative educational experiences throughout the observations and within the focus groups and individual discussions. Additionally, the entire study is grounded in the ethnographic tradition. Elements of data that are often central to ethnographic work include extended time in the field, observational data, and artifacts. So, the reader can expect to see written observations and photos of artifacts. This study uses Photovoice methods, which means that the data comes from contextualized photos. With that being said, you can expect to see a selection of photos that generated important discussions. This study has three findings sections, each of which focuses on answering specific research questions, which are “What is the impact
of art and cultural exposure and engagement on CHI program participants experiencing housing instability? What are CHI program participants’ experiences with disseminating their art, and what meaning do they attach to these experiences? What are the CHI staff, volunteer, and administrators’ perceptions of the impact of art and cultural exposure programing on CHI participants experiencing housing instability?

Chapter 4 presents findings from the first focus group on art exposure. This chapter specifically looks at findings related to participating in the art exposure program. In this chapter CHI program participants experiencing housing instability or homelessness talk about how the art exposure program had an impact on them, and how they made meaning of those experiences. The focus of this section is around understanding the impact of the program on program participants, but observations are included here to provide some context on the events leading up to the focus group. The CHI program participants experiencing housing instability answered research questions by contextualizing photos, so that makes up a portion of the data. Finally, although it exists throughout the findings sections, some of my reflexivity work was done in this section to provide insight on my exact positionality as I navigated through the findings sections. My reflexivity work is tied into my observations, my standing among the participants, and my lived experiences up to those points in time.

Chapters 5 presents findings pertaining to CHI program participants experiencing housing instability and having their voices heard among agency level policy makers through dissemination of their work. This study was rooted in Photoethnograpic traditions, and thus utilized observational data. Observational data from this chapter details a planning session that looked at decisions around how art would be disseminated, which exhibit to mount, where to publish their art, what the message was, and who the message was for. I took observational data
because I wanted to accurately capture how these decisions were negotiated between CHI program participants experiencing housing instability and staff, volunteer, and administrative participants acting as facilitators of the CHI art exposure program. I also recorded observational data at the actual art exhibit to capture important details pertaining to what happened. I included photographic data here to show the layout of the physical exhibit. I also offer a link to the website and include a link to a copy of the book. These resources were reviewed before the final focus group to give participants that were absent a chance to see their disseminated works. This section concludes with an analysis of data from the second focus group, which gets at the meaning of having program participants’ experiences heard through the various art forms (exhibit, website, & book). Finally, I continue to do some reflexivity work throughout this section, especially toward the end of my observations.

Findings from chapter 6 tie in closely with findings from chapters 4 & 5 because the research objectives of this chapter were to better understand the impact of the art exposure program on CHI program participants experiencing housing instability, and to better understand the meaning of CHI program participants experiencing housing instability having their voices heard among agency level policy makers. That being said, chapter 6 focuses on the voices of the CHI staff, volunteer, and administrative participants acting as program facilitators. Staff, volunteer, and administrative CHI program facilitators were in a position to offer insight because they were closest to the phenomena under study. These data were ascertained through individual interviews with staff, volunteer, and administrative participants. Their voices triangulated data from chapters 4 & 5 and provided additional insights via a second perspective. Keep in mind that this study is grounded in feminist theory which often requires reflexive work. This section
also closes with some reflexivity work to show how my positionality shifted toward the end of
the study.

Participants

A total of 15 people agreed to participate in the study (N=15). Of those that consented,
nine were CHI program participants experiencing housing instability and 6 were CHI staff,
volunteer, and administrative participant facilitators. Of the CHI program participants
experiencing housing instability, 78% (N=7) were African American, and 22% (N=2) were
White. The overall attrition rate was 7%, as only one program participant dropped out of the
study. Sixty-seven percent (N=6) of the CHI program participants experiencing housing
instability identified as male. All program participants experiencing housing instability were 50
years of age or older. Tables 1-3 provides a breakdown by race and gender, and details each
major event that the CHI program participants experiencing housing instability took part in.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PSEUDONYM</th>
<th>Race</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>SUBMITTED PHOTOS</th>
<th>PROCESSED PHOTOS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>True Love</td>
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<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jaqueline Smith</td>
<td>African American</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Star Child</td>
<td>African American</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Richard</td>
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<td>M</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>African American</td>
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<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michael</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bobby Jackson</td>
<td>African American</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Larry Jones</td>
<td>African American</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ChiTown Runner</td>
<td>African American</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
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Table 2. Program participant breakdown by pseudonym, race, gender, and submitted &
processed photos.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PSEUDONYM</th>
<th>Planning Session</th>
<th>FG1-1</th>
<th>FG1-2</th>
<th>FG2-1</th>
<th>FG2-2</th>
<th>FG2-3</th>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jaqueline Smith</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Star Child</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Richard</td>
<td>✓</td>
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<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sean</td>
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<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bobby Jackson</td>
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<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Larry Jones</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>ChiTown Runner</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3. Program participant breakdown detailing attendance and contribution at the planning session, as well as both parts of the focus group.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PSEUDONYM</th>
<th>Exhibit</th>
<th>FG2-1</th>
<th>FG2-2</th>
<th>FG2-3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jaqueline Smith</td>
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<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Star Child</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Richard</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sean</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michael</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bobby Jackson</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Larry Jones</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ChiTown Runner</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4. Program participant breakdown detailing those in attendance at the exhibit and all thee parts of the second focus group.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PSUEDONYM</th>
<th>Planning</th>
<th>Exhibit</th>
<th>Interview</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bonnie</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elvis</td>
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<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Queenie</td>
<td>✓</td>
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<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dickie</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother*</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ellie</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5. Participating facilitator breakdown showing those who attended the planning session, art exhibit, and those that participated in the final interview.
With this study being grounded in the ethnographic tradition, observations were made while on site. The goal of these observations was to describe events around the impact of art and cultural exposure. Emerson et al. (1995), states that these “slices of life” offer up rich, thick description as opposed to contributing to an analysis. The following observation data details the events leading up to the first focus group. It not only brings the reader closer to the CHI program participants stories, it acts as an account of the circumstances under which the CHI program participants experiencing housing instability were recruited. These observations do not detail what the participants experienced while exposed to art. They do give the reader some context as to how this dissertation progressed, and what actually happened while planning dissemination, during dissemination, and post dissemination.

**Observation # 1**

During the recruiting and consenting process, observations were used to gather data. Observational data were ideal for recording these processes, as I was the one recruiting and consenting the participants. What this means is that I was the one there doing the recruiting and was thus in an excellent position to make observations. For that reason, I was close enough to the process to get a first-hand account of what happened. According to Frakfort-Nachmias et al. (2015), one of the main goals of a Photoethographic work should be to describe how groups come together and dissipate. I wanted to take jottings during this time because it advances measures of transparency and internal validity, and it shows how the group process worked (Mirriam & Tisdell, 2016).

**Recruiting and Consent**

All of the recruiting and consenting took place in the dining room at Chicago Help Initiative (CHI). The agency operates out of Catholic Charities, and is housed in a five-story
building that spans across an urban city block. It is located in downtown Chicago, and takes on an urban feel (meaning it felt/looked like it was in a metropolis), like many of the other buildings in the area. The outside of the building is surrounded by a black foreboding fence topped with semi-sharp prongs. There is a black life-sized sculpture of a bench with a homeless human laying on it. The human is wrapped in hooded robes, and appears to be sleeping on the bench. A similarly hooded figure is seen just outside the door in a small courtyard, sitting on the ground with legs crossed, and with hands out in a begging gesture.

On Wednesdays, individuals experiencing either homelessness or housing instability line up along the fence to get wrist bands. Most of the potential clients and guests of the CHI program are African American. Once potential clients get a wrist band they become guests. The wrist bands gain guests access to the dining room where meals are served. Guests engaged in on-going services do not need wrist bands to get in. Once inside the dining room, it takes on the appearance of a repurposed church in an urban area. There are tributes to Catholic priests, and many religious pieces deck the walls. The dining room is essentially a large square shaped area. The southern wall has a serving line, and behind that southern wall is a kitchen. The entire room is filled with large circular tables surrounded by chairs. The northern wall has a projector aimed at it, which is where announcements usually take place. When moving about the dining room, smells are sometimes pungent, and break up the pleasant odor of food. The air is often moist, and one feels a residue on one’s skin if a person stays for any length of time. Perhaps this is from the large number of bodies sharing the tight space, or it could be from the sheer amount of food passing through. While I have never eaten at the agency, guests’ reactions to the food are generally positive, but can vary greatly on any given day. This is the setting where much of the recruiting and consenting took place.
Before approaching them with scripts and consents, I observed this group for over a year in the previously mentioned study. One of the benefits to this being grounded in the ethnographic tradition is that I had an opportunity to get to know the participants. This resulted in two advantages; first I was able to easily select individuals that were close to the phenomena under study. When it came time to recruit and consent these individuals, the process was easier because these were people that I already had an ongoing relationship with through the prior project. There were a total of nine people that were part of the core group that I wished to consent. On July 7th, 2018 which is the day that I set out to obtain consents, most of those people were eager to share their stories with me, as well as contribute to this project. The second benefit to having this extended time in the field was that I had a firm understanding of what it was they were going to be talking about. I also knew who I was talking to and had some insights on the context through which they would be telling their stories.

Again, all of the CHI program participants experiencing housing instability were easy to find because this was a part of an ethnography that I took part in prior to this study taking place. Although I created a script and plans to recruit and consent them, the truth was this process was not difficult. These scripts were more about following IRB protocol and ensuring rigor than they were about meeting and greeting CHI program participants experiencing housing instability. The most important element of this endeavor was making sure they understood the research agenda before consenting. So, although I set out to make contact with the CHI program participants experiencing housing instability for the purpose of recruiting and consenting them, much of the contact that I made with them at this stage was monotonous. Between myself and the CHI program participants experiencing housing instability, I believe there was a feeling of getting through the protocols so that we could get down to the real work. What was useful about
this time was I was able to truly explain what it was they would be doing and help them with any questions they might have.

By the end of the day, everybody that I found agreed to participate. The individuals that consented were True Love, Star Child, Richard, Sean, Bobby Jackson, and Larry Jones. On the 18th and the 25th, I found Michael and Jaqueline Smith, respectively. All of them consented without hesitation. I found ChiTown Runner on August 15th, 2018 and he also consented with some reservation. This ended the recruitment and consenting phase of the study. ChiTown Runner warned that he was working, and said that while he would try to help, he might not be available. So, while he was eager to be a part of the project, he knew that he might not be around much. By the time he was recruited and consented the project was well underway. Other individuals were already turning in their disposable cameras.

As cameras trickled in, I did my best to make sure that they were able to get the shots that they wanted. When necessary, I replaced lost and stolen cameras and worked with people as issues surfaced. This meant that when issues surfaced around cameras being misplaced, damaged, or taken, I purchased new ones as replacements to give to the participants. It also meant that I assisted them with taking pictures by offering assistance and advice on camera usage.

The agency offers services and food to the group every Wednesday, so this meant being present on a weekly basis. In some instances, my tasks were a test of my ingenuity, flexibility, ability to work with people, and ability to ultimately help people. For example, on November 19th, 2018 I headed to the agency to collect the last of the cameras. By this time, I was teaching classes, so I would regularly show up before the program started (which was before class began) to gather the cameras, and then double back after class ended to catch any stragglers that hadn’t
finished eating yet. Much of this was about maintaining a presence with CHI program participants experiencing housing instability, even in the face of adversity. On days where contact with CHI program participants experiencing housing instability was critical, I would run to the agency on a 20-minute break, and run back to the school before the break ended. During these times I spent more time running to and from the agency, than engaging with CHI program participants experiencing housing instability. But in some instances, there would be a brief window (3-5 minutes depending on how fast I could walk) to collect a camera, plan a meeting, or notify a CHI program participant experiencing housing instability. This made all the running worthwhile. Despite not having much time at this point, the idea was to be as present as possible so as to address any issues that might surface.

On one such day, when I arrived at the agency early (before class started), and the security guards and I had the lobby to ourselves. As we waited for people to arrive, we had some conversation about 2Pac and Scarface. If this speaks to how much time I spent on site, meaning if this is any indication of how long I was there, I knew all of the security guards on a first name basis, and some were comfortable having more genuine conversations with me about their work and elements of their personal lives. I went to the agency for the purpose of finding Jaqueline and the other participants for the focus group. As people started to show up, I was told repeatedly that Jacqueline was out of town. Despite being told this, I decided to stick around anyway. When the Executive Director passed through, I let him know that we would be planning methods of dissemination, including the exhibit soon. He told me about some upcoming exhibits, including an exhibit at the Music Box Theatre on November 29th, 2018. After we talked, I kept busy by reminding CHI program participants experiencing housing instability of the upcoming focus group.
As the day progressed, to our surprise Jacqueline showed up! I spoke with her briefly, and she informed me that she would be willing to meet with me after I taught my class at around 17:15. After teaching my class at Loyola University Chicago, I rushed back over to the agency to see if Jacqueline was still there. I was running about 15 minutes late, so when I got to the agency I started to ask around. Larry finally told me that he saw her go into the bathroom, but he said that she said she lost her camera while away in Wisconsin. When I finally found her, she confirmed that she lost her camera again, which was problematic because the focus group was starting soon. I asked her if she remembered what she wanted to take photos of, and she explained to me that she wanted pictures of architecture. She told me she really liked older stuff. I realized that giving her another disposable camera would be futile, as we did not have time to get the pictures processed. I told her that we had one last chance. I offered to help her get the shots by going out with her so that she could use my iPhone 7 Plus to take photos. With her taking the pictures on my phone, I could get them processed within an hour. She agreed, and we went out to take photos together. At each location that we went to, she took pictures of older buildings. She sometimes ventured out on her own to get a better shot. On occasion, she asked me to take a picture for her. I began to wonder why she had no interest in the modern steel and glass landscape that made up Chicago. She did not give me the full story while we were out, but she did briefly share with me that the old church that she took pictures of survived the Chicago fire.

Once we were done with the photos she asked if I could see her off to a location of her choosing, which I was happy to do. Because of my efforts, she was able to attend the focus group with everything that she needed to participate. Although my agenda was clearly research related, this exchange reminded me of my time as a social worker. When I was doing direct
generalist practice social work, I always felt that the social worker’s utility was limited only by a social worker’s flexibility. In other words, the more restrictions you put on yourself in terms of what you could do, the less useful you are to the people you served. Refuse to drive people in your car, don’t want to work at certain times, no tolerance of addictive disorders, not willing to learn something new, subscribe to conservative ideologies, etcetera, meant you were a less effective tool when it came to undoing social injustices. I looked at data collection in the same way; flexibility and adaptability meant increasing your utility and ultimately your chances of succeeding. In the end eight of the nine recruited and consented CHI program participants experiencing housing instability turned in cameras, and all of the CHI program participants experiencing housing instability that turned in cameras showed up to the focus group to contextualize their photos.

*Reflexivity # 1*

This initial reflexivity entry is relevant to my first observation because it details my positionality during the observation. Despite this talk on recruitment, I had already situated myself in the study as a part of the group. This was an ethnography, and I had been a part of this group for almost two years now. While my role in the group was researcher, I was also on this art journey with them. In fact, many of the previous events that I attended or had been exposed to while observing were entirely new to me. That is to say, I wasn’t very familiar with the Chicago art scene, and I hadn’t been to any of the events or exhibits that we went to as part of the group. Many of the participants experiencing housing instability had been to these events before attending as CHI program participants experiencing housing instability, and others had more knowledge about Chicago and the art scene. At first my lack of knowledge made me feel like an outsider, but in time it became nice to be surrounded by the professionals.
Observation # 2

Setting Up the First Focus Group

The ride into the agency today left me feeling grateful for the assistance from my committee. Dr. Grossman agreed to cover my classes while I was in the data collection phase, and even though she wasn’t available she was able to call in some favors to get my schedule covered. As I arrived at the parking garage, I checked my email from my iPhone 7 Plus. I found a new email from the Executive Director that asked if I still needed the space for both days. Despite all the planning that I did to have the focus group at CHI, in a specific room, and at a specific date and time, the Executive Directors’ email made me feel like my plans might get cancelled. So that I had plenty of time to prepare, I got in about an hour before we were to begin the focus group. With the extra time I was able to reply to his email and tell him that I still needed the space. I did not hear back from him via email, so I was concerned that he would have limited space, and maybe even have to cancel my focus group!

I briskly made my way over to the agency so that I could find the Executive Director and make sure that I still had the day (and room) set-aside. Quite a bit was riding on this because of the planning that went into it. In order for me to have this day off so that I could gather data, other professors had to agree to work with me, and I did not want to inconvenience them with a short notice cancellation. Additionally, the CHI program participants experiencing housing instability were well aware of the three dates that we were to be sitting down for the focus group, and I did not want to disappoint them or leave them with a feeling that I was unreliable.

On the walk over I tried not to let my anxiety get the best of me. Once I arrived at the agency, I greeted the security guards and let them know that I would be looking for the Executive Director. I headed to the dining room, but I was unable to find him. After checking a
few other rooms, I decided it might be best to wait in the lobby area and catch the Executive Director in passing. In order to be proactive regarding the data collection process, I decided to greet the CHI program participants experiencing housing instability as they came in and reminded them that we would have dinner brought up to us, as the focus group would take place at 16:00. I was actually able to alert all of the CHI program participants experiencing housing instability before catching the Executive Director in passing.

Jaqueline happened to be waiting in the lobby so that she could join us for the focus group. She did not seem to have a wristband on, which indicated that she was not yet a guest and couldn’t get in for programing, so I wondered if she wouldn’t be able to get into the program without me. I gladly worked closely with her so that she could come in with me. We made light conversation, and it was actually good having her to talk to so as to ease the anxiety that I was experiencing. I caught the Executive Director at about 16:00, and to my relief he told me that I could use the break room. With it already being four o’clock, I rushed upstairs to get set up. Jaqueline agreed to come with me, and we went up to the third-floor breakroom where I began to set up equipment. Jaqueline helped me more than I helped her. Jaqueline was actually not pleased with the set up, and felt that we deserved to be in a room where our images could be projected on a large screen. There were actually no blank walls in the break room where our images could be projected (see Figure 1 & Figure 2). At most we would only have about 35 to 40 inches to project the stills if we remained in the break room. Jaqueline was pretty adamant about moving into a conference room and decided to take it upon herself to go after the Executive Director and request a room where we could project our stills up to 300 inches. She asked me to watch her things, and before I could protest, she was already out of earshot. I did not want to make any waves, being grateful and all, but she had no problem advocating for the
project. To my mind, I could see that she valued the project and wanted her work, and the work of her team, to be displayed prominently during the focus group.

Figure 1. View of break room facing northeastern wall where focus group was to take place. This is where the planning session took place.

Figure 2. View of break room facing southwestern wall where focus group was to take place. This is where the planning session took place.
Figure 3. View of northeastern wall of conference room that focus group took place in.

Figure 4. Western wall of conference room where photographs were projected during the focus group.
Jaqueline returned promptly and informed me that we would be moving down the hall to the larger conference room (see Figure 3 & Figure 4). I was delighted with the new room as there was a long table and a white board to project the images on to! I quickly gathered my things to set up in the larger room. I asked Jaqueline if she could keep an eye on the equipment while I ran downstairs to gather the CHI program participants experiencing housing instability. When I went downstairs and let the CHI program participants experiencing housing instability know that we would be heading upstairs for the focus group, as usual the going was slow, and it took a few trips to usher the participants upstairs. By the time I got everything set up, and everyone in their seats, it was already 16:30. I was pretty pressed for time because it took everyone so long to come up and get seated around the table. Unfortunately, I was cognizant of the time during the focus group, which meant I had to focus on the time while facilitating the focus group, but I did my best to push that out of the forefront of my thoughts. I reminded myself of the importance and value of the study, and told myself that these photos and these words are important because they may shape the thoughts and opinions of agency level policymakers and funders that are in a position to extend, modify, or improve our art exposure program.

Reflexivity # 2

This reflexivity entry is relevant to my second observation because it details my thoughts around themes that I noticed during the focus group. During the discussion, I was able to see some of the themes surfacing from my theoretical framework. I also noticed that most of the CHI program participants experiencing housing instability did not want or need to discuss seven photos. As soon as I finished up the focus group, I noticed that I became nervous over the recording. Even though I checked periodically throughout the discussion, I had this feeling that
the data had somehow slipped away or disappeared. I decided to immediately back up the data as a safeguard. This nervous feeling is probably normal for junior researchers. Finally, I noticed that despite being close to this group, I was exhausted after facilitating the first focus group. What follows is my analysis of the audio recorded data that came out of this focus group.

**Photovoice Findings**

Open coding was used in the analysis for the first focus group. The most salient themes that surfaced during the photovoice focus group with CHI program participants experiencing housing instability were: Remembering, Appreciation, Serenity, Social Capital, Social Justice, Perspective, Learning, Resilience, and Homelessness. Each of these themes will be discussed respectively. The CHI program participants experiencing housing instability were asked to clarify and confirm what they said during the focus group, so those confirmations will be discussed. Finally, any observations that were made will be included in these findings.

**Remembering**

One theme that surfaced during the analysis was remembering. It was clear that CHI program participants experiencing housing instability were taking pictures to have a discussion around remembering things that really matter. When talking about things that “really matter”, participants addressed personal things that they cared about or that they were really concerned with. Many of the pictures that were taken by CHI program participants experiencing housing instability had deep and symbolic meanings, and they were clearly of things that demonstrated why art mattered to them, in that it had an impact. Richard talked about art that was meaningful to him through his photography, but he also discussed how art has the ability to keep relevant memories despite a passage of time in excess of a century:
Richard: Photo number 20 please (see Figure 5). When we mentioned the artists, I went to the Richard Singer Sargent gallery. Sargent was an amazing painter in that if you look...A lot of artists would sketch this out and then paint. You can't see the brush strokes here, but it's very visible when you're actually looking at that painting.

![Image](image_url)

Figure 5. Richard used this photo to remember historical and contemporary things of relevance.

Richard: Sargent actually just used a brush. There's no sketching underneath it. He didn't sketch and he didn't draw. That's a very unique ability for an artist. And he also captures a whole period, this was a very famous dancer in the 18th century.

Jaqueline: Oh, that is pretty.

Richard: And the Art Institute calls this...this is a poster for the Art Institute show. It says, “gold is the new black”, so 120 years later it still very relevant. It's about money, it's about prestige, it's about positions. And the artist still 120 years later saying this is what money looks like.

Here Richard is able to describe what is important through contextualizing his photograph, why the art is important, how the art has preserved a memory that was relevant to him. And through understanding the work, he describes how it might be relevant to
others. There are two parts threaded into this discussion, remembering and the importance of the memory. Ultimately, Richard’s knowledge allows us to remember what was important, and how what was important is still relevant today.

Also, during the focus group, I clarified with Bobby what he said to confirm that I was understanding why art was relevant to him. Bobby confirmed that he used exposure to art as a way to remember what was important. He used his photography to talk about poverty and work via the architecture that he was exposed to. Architecture was the primary means to remembering. While contextualizing architecture, he mentioned living in the projects and reflected on going to various buildings to hustle or work for money. He also stated that each mayor had an impact on the inner city and its architecture, but that it didn't always trickle down to the poor. In other words, he perceived the mayor was making improvements to the city, but those improvements were not always visible in neighborhoods that were impoverished.

This was Bobby’s way of talking about using art to remember what was important (see Figure 6). As Bobby reflects on the time period during which these buildings were built, he recalls what his life was like then. In his discussion he reflects on what it was like living in Cabrini Green, and how he had to hustle to make ends meet:

Bobby: Like I said, in terms of the impact... we were little kids when we found out how to get to the lakefront. Back in the day, I didn't wanna sell no drugs, nothing like that, but we did hustle. And we had our own hustling mode. Back in the day, you delivered peoples’ groceries. And out in the projects, you might be from Cabrini Green, but people paid like, five dollars to take their groceries up. The elevators would break down, they'd pay you, yeah, to take their groceries upstairs.

For Bobby architecture was a means to remembering. While Richard drew from classic pieces to remember what was important historically, and how that related to what was relevant today,
Figure 6. Again, Bobby utilized photographs of architecture to remember things that mattered to him.

Bobby used art in the form of architecture to talk about fond memories that were more personal. For Bobby Jackson, remembering what was important, and included the resilience and ingenuity required to survive poverty (see Figure 6). Interestingly enough, the architecture helped Bobby keep what was dear to him in the forefront of his mind, but it was also a way to catalogue memories in chronological order:

Bobby: The more things change in Chicago, the more things stay the same. You got all the new architectural buildings and everything going up, but you still have Merchandise Mart, and you still have the old traffic court building, they stayed downtown when the first National Bank building was downtown... you still got the old structures that bring you back the memories of certain aspects of your life in Chicago.

Here it is very clear that architecture played a key role in helping Bobby remember what was important to him. He spent time talking about the realities of growing up in Cabrini Green, and
the number of ways that you could hustle for money to make ends meet. He talks about buildings going up at various times, and he relates those buildings to time frames that contain memories. For Bobby, art exposure was a personal tool for remembering what was important.

Change of perspective, appreciation, and remember also came up with Michael. During the focus group, I asked Michael to clarify some important points that he made. Michael confirmed that homelessness changed your perspective for the worse. But he also stated that art changed your perspective for the better. He expressed an appreciation for theater, and some discontent over some forms of contemporary art.

Michael also talked about how exposure to art helped him remember. In his discussion with other members of the group, he shared how art triggered memories for him that were relevant. His discussions were around poverty as well, in particular homelessness. In his story he describes what it was like to be a member of the art community, become homeless, and then reenter that community through the art exposure program years later. Although this chain of events happened through the remembrance of what was important, there were also attempts at processing sorrow over the losses that he experienced:

Michael: That's the Biograph theater (see Figure 7). I think a lot of us saw the production of Lettie there. For me, that was a very sentimental, yet weird experience. Because about, I guess it's going on 10 years ago now, well 9, I worked in that theater in a play which was called Blackbird. And if any of you can remember a show called CSI, I did it with Bobby M. Petersen who was the main pathologist on that program. And it was a blast, and it was great fun. I got paid some pretty good dinero for that. It was just the time of my life, and I got to know him. He and I would go out, knock em' back, and chicken wings, and all that. Real nice guy. If anyone knows Bobby M. Petersen, he's what we call the live and die in LA. You can check that.

Richard: Yeah, yeah, he was that ... yeah.
Figure 7. A picture of the theater where Michael was forced to process valuable memories.

Star Child: Oh, that's great.

Michael: But it was very weird to go back to that after all this time because, maybe two years after that, I ended up on the damn streets. Going back that day to that play, which was a good enough play, it was so ... You know, Thomas Wolfe said, “You can't go home again”, and I really think he was right about that because everything had changed. And it was very, very weird. There wasn’t a trace of anyone. I knew a lot of people there, and they were all... psst...gone.

Again, the primary function of art for Michael was remembering things that were important. He used art exposure to remember what it was like when he was gainfully employed, and what it was like return to those spaces after becoming homeless. When Michael pauses the discussion, those seem to be the moments that he is processing sorrow and making meaning of his plight by stating how everything had changed while he was away from his social circle as a result of being homeless. Not being able to go “home”, and returning to find empty spaces, offered the group a
sobering account of what Michael remembered as a result exposure to art.

**Appreciation**

*Appreciation* was a theme that surfaced frequently throughout the discussion. There were many instances of exposure to art contributing to appreciation. Appreciation was more than just gratitude for art exhibits, it often meant finding enjoyment in what would have otherwise been a boring situation. It is through the process of art exposure that participants were resensitized to things. This resensitization was often about making the normal or boring become interesting again. The reason resensitization is connected to appreciation is because the participants were able to look at art in new ways that helped them garner new impressions, feelings, and thoughts about what they were seeing and experiencing. The following statements were evidence of appreciation. Michael had the following conversation with other members of the focus group:

Michael: That's the Ruth Page Theater (see Figure 8). That's on Dearborn Street not too far from where I used to live and...

Figure 8. Michael is able to appreciate theater because exposure resensitized him.
Richard: Your neighborhood.

Michael: My neighborhood, yeah. That's a beautiful name, the neighborhood. That was the scene of one of my favorite things that we did here, which was, we saw a production of Devil's Disciple…which was a Reader's theater thing. And you would think that Reader's theater would be boring, and you can make it boring. You get a music stand, you stand there, and you read. Well who cares? But these actors in this production just made it come alive, because not only did they do the reading, they physicalized the material as they did it, and they wore costumes. And it was really great fun for about, what, two hours, two and half hours.

Sean: Something like that.

Michael: It was just terrific, and it was one of my favorite productions. You know, you can see the connection that most of my stuff is theatrically oriented.

Notice that Michael is resensitized to the familiar. What he thought would be boring actually turned out to be one of his favorite art excursions. The building that he photographed is where the Devil’s Disciple production took place, and where he thought they would be standing at the podium and simply talking. However, what he thought would be actors standing at the podium reading turned out to be an engaging and fun theatrical piece. He was able to appreciate the event by getting reacquainted with the art form. Despite being vulnerably housed, True Love also talked about how fortunate she was to be on an architectural cruise:

True Love: And that day, for me, was the picture-perfect day. And the best part about it was I wasn't walking or hiking, I was just sitting there, just soaking it all in. So, I just remember thinking how fortunate I am, and how there are people who are so much less fortunate than me, that will never ever have the opportunity to experience this. So, I just have to count my blessings, and count my blessings twice for this day. Okay, it was a great day, great day indeed.

What is interesting about this statement is that through exposure to art, True Love sees herself as being more fortunate than others, despite experiencing housing instability. This demonstrates
that exposure to art through the program was able to generate a level of appreciation that made her feel fortunate and blessed.

Richard also sums up what he appreciates about art exposure by talking about a Picasso:

Richard: That's a beautiful picture (see Figure 9). And the other piece that I think is really powerful, I think that really says Chicago, but now if you show this picture to anyone anywhere in the world, they're gonna say, oh Chicago. It's become part of the fiber of the city. The other thing I think is wonderful about this sculpture is Picasso refused to tell people what it represented. I think what art does is helps us begin to look at the world and see the beauty. I think the thing that I heard from everybody was that people are really looking, and what it helps you do is look for beauty and serenity in your life.

Toward the end of his talk he mentions that art appreciation changes your outlook on life by helping you see the beauty in the world and find serenity in your life. So, for Richard art appreciation isn’t just about enjoying art, appreciation also helps you find beauty and serenity in

Figure 9. Richard becomes resensitized via exposure to an iconic Chicago Picasso.
the world. Richard emphasizes that Picasso's piece is unnamed. This is important to him because part of art appreciation is finding what is beautiful to you. An unnamed piece allows some interpretation to take place so that each person can come to appreciate the piece in different ways. This is part of the process of, “looking for beauty and serenity in life” through art appreciation. In fact, other participants had similar discussions but focused more on finding serenity than experiencing appreciation.

Serenity

Some participants that were exposed to art expressed that they experienced a sense of inner peace in the presence of art. This inner peace is defined as serenity. As participants contextualized their photos it became clear that art offered a much-needed reprieve from the daily rigors of life in the inner city. This is especially true for participants experiencing homelessness or housing instability.

In response to Richard’s comments about the Picasso sculpture and perspective, Sean talks about how he found peace and serenity through exposure to art. At this point, the focus of his discussion was on serenity. For him, this meant that being exposed to art led to feelings of peace and tranquility:

Sean: Yeah, I agree with Richard. You try and look past the reflection1 in the mirror. I think that's a challenge sometimes. Even though there may be chaos in your life, you try to find a little peace. Just a little peace sometimes, right now. And I think that's what I tried to share (see figures Figure 10 & Figure 11. When I first discovered that last year, I just sat there for a day. Really, I hadn't felt that peaceful in so long. I don't know why it was, but it just felt that way. And every now and then, this year, I think about three or four times this summer I've gone up there. I sat there and I got to feel it, you know? Yeah, this is one of the places I love to sit right there. You just reflect right there. See the pattern on the little mini-

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1 Looking past the reflection in the mirror is an expression that urges individuals to look beyond what is on the surface to reflect on what’s important. This was especially challenging to participants experiencing housing instability because they were often subjected to spaces that lacked the serenity required to accomplish this task.
terrace right there? And it's almost a very quiet place. It's very quiet there.

Richard: Is this in Evanston still?

Sean: Yeah. Yeah, it is. It's still in Evanston right here. But I mean it's a place I pass, a little place I pass. Not too far from the lakeront. And just the peace and the quiet and the tranquility right there. It's so quiet. You don't get that type of quiet in the city, you know. A lot of times you can be alone with your thoughts right there. Sometimes I just go right there, and I'll sit there. Not this summer, but last summer I sat there.

Bobby: And you can sit there? You sit right there?

Sean: Yeah, you can sit there. You can sit there as well.

Figure 10. Sean finds peace through exposure to art in the form of tranquility and serenity.

Bobby: Is it on David Street?

Sean: Just off. Just off. Yeah.

Sean: But it's really nice. It's nice and quiet, it's peaceful there. You can think and be alone with your thoughts. There you go. Exactly.

Sean: And this one right here's actually my favorite one. I love this… I love to sit right here (see Figure 10). See more of the hand right there. With the
hands on it (see Figure 11). Yeah, exactly, exactly. That's my favorite one right there. So tranquil, so quiet.

Sean used exposure to art as a means to find peace and tranquility in his life. Sean sought solace in these spaces and frequented them for the ambiance. For Sean, this serenity gave him a chance to reflect, relax, and be mindful. On page 106, when Sean talks about looking past the reflection in the mirror, I think that he is trying to bypass his reality (his reflection) to mitigate the psychological frailties associated with his experiences with homelessness. As a person experiencing housing instability in the inner city, Sean doesn’t have much time to be alone for relaxation and mindfulness. This is evident because he also states that he doesn’t get to experience peace that often. Earlier in the conversation, he says there is a lot of chaos in his life. Despite the sculptures being in public, Sean sees it as a place to be alone with your thoughts to relax and reflect.
Both Sean and Richard again talk about spaces that bring peace and tranquility. In this exchange you can see that peace and tranquility (serenity) is important to both of them. As mentioned earlier, Richard emphasizes the importance of access to these exhibits, but this statement is more in line with the idea that art can spark a sense of appreciation, which when faced with the threat of homelessness, means peace and tranquility. Here art is actually filling a void that is missing in their lives. They are using art to find and experience serenity within each of these situations. I believe this statement by Richard is another example of using art to find peace and serenity in the face of housing instability:

Richard: I think what art does is helps us begin to look at the world and see the beauty. This is the Japanese Garden at the Art Institute (see Figure 12) and it's very, I don't know if you can see this, it's very uniform, but it's very peaceful in there. It's a great place just to go and sit and think. And you're surrounded by the beauty of nature. This is in one of the largest cities in the world. This is right in downtown Chicago, and yet there is this place of beauty and peace, and obviously a landscape architect designed it. So, an artist designed this to provide people the opportunity to take a few minutes away from the hustle and bustle of a major city, and just look at the beauty in nature.

Like Sean, Richard sees art as a place to retreat with his thoughts and find solace, something that is sorely missing in their lives. Richard also brings up the fact that being in an urban area can make for few peaceful places. He acknowledges an artist created this space so that people can find serenity, despite the hustle and bustle of living in an urban area. True Love closes out this discussion by responding to Richard’s talk on the Japanese Garden. What’s good about this statement is that she ends on the fact that you can return again and again in times of need. I think this is important because again it shows the importance of being able to find art in an urban area. It means that she realizes that people in urban areas can turn to art repeatedly to find serenity
Figure 12. The Japanese Garden helps Richard see the beauty in the world when they need it most:

True Love: Where the Chagall Mosaic is, I used to work in the building right next door for a law firm, and I remember the first time I saw that mosaic by Chagall (see Figure 13). I was gobsmacked, like the British say. I mean my jaw dropped, and I was like what the, this is amazing. You know because it's a montage of different scenes captured you know, and it's just like, you know tiny mosaic tiles that he painstakingly did. I mean the labor and the creativity and the different shadows of the sun and whatnot hits you. Chagall blew me away when I first saw that. And every time I go to look at that I find some nuance that I missed. Or I go to something that I remember. It's just beautiful. But I think Richard selected things that speak to serenity and calmness, you know in an urban city where you know where everybody is like you know, you're walking in my lane, I'm walking here you know, or horns are honking. Just the everyday way of life in an urban city like Chicago. You need those respites of serenity, and you know it's a welcome thing to discover and to return again and again too.
Figure 13. Richard sees art as addressing the issue of lack of access, which contribute to more socially just spaces.

A lot is going on in this statement. She starts out by remembering how beautiful the piece was when she first saw it. One of the reasons she sees this as beautiful is because she realizes the painstaking work that went into putting the mosaic together. Because it’s a mosaic, she is also able to talk about how she finds something different in the piece depending on how the lighting hits it. In this way, it’s like having the option to come back to a new piece that can offer a respite from the daily rigors of your life. The mosaic not only contributes to a feeling of serenity, it offers fresh ways to engage with the art, even after it has already been seen. Due to a high level of access, and the ever-changing nature of the piece, the mosaic can be used to find serenity in new ways, time and again. The impact of art exposure on participants that are experiencing housing instability is extremely valuable. It helps mitigate the deleterious effects of housing instability in a number of significant ways.
While serenity was an important theme that surfaced, it often spoke to spaces that people sought out for some peace and solitude. Although the serenity that was found in solitude was important, an important theme around conversations pertaining to the accumulation of social capital also surfaced. These conversations are addressed by first defining social capital, and then talking about how participants benefited from it.

Social Capital

Many of the participants experienced a number of social benefits as a result of engaging in the art exposure program. For example, they often developed relationships and used those experiences to grow in a number of areas. Social Capital \(^2\) is the best way to encapsulate the idea of beneficial relationships with others (the art community) through exposure to art. In this way exposure to art is best suited to help participants grow through relationships. During the focus group I asked True Love to reiterate what she talked about. True Love stated that the art exposure program was important because of the people and the social interactions. She stated that she learned to be flexible and resilient when faced with challenges and obstacles in life. For her, art led to the accumulation of social capital.

True Love actually discusses how art exposure led her to grow or evolve socially. When I asked her to clarify whether or not she was speaking to how the art and cultural program enhanced her life socially, she states:

True Love: Well yeah that's true. It does enhance life socially. Because you've discovered that other people's opinions and walks in life might be similar to yours. Slightly somewhat different, but it's just the sharing and the learning you know, and evolving as a person.

\(^2\) For the purposes of this study, Social Capital is defined as inherently valuable interpersonal and social relationships that contribute to beneficial growth in various aspects of a person’s life.
Notice that True Love is able to benefit from those who are similar and dissimilar. Although people may be different from her, she is still able to realize social gains by evolving as a person, which means that she is changing as a person because she is able to tolerate learning new ideas from these people. True Love goes on to say that the art exposure program (CHI) is responsible for helping her continue to grow and evolve as a person through exposure to art.

Figure 14. True Love uses bamboo for a discussion on social capital.

True Love: Alright, you wanna project this so everyone can see (see Figure 14 True Love uses bamboo for a discussion on social capital)? The day that I was doing this was the last day that we had to submit these pictures. And I walked past the shop, and I said wow they have one of those bamboo things in an urn. And you have to go inside the shop. I'll
have to give you guys the address next week 'cause it's right across from Saint James Church, but I like Asian things. You know Asian art, and I like the simplicity of it. And these are bamboo sticks in an urn in this boutique, high scale upscale boutique. But the thing about bamboo is that it bends it never breaks. You know, and I'm thinking to myself this is the way you operate through life you know. You become I... Like the other picture said what doesn't kill you only makes you stronger. You just become much more enriched and evolving as a person through you know the different programs we've had here at CHI. And with Redline, and with you guys from Loyola, I find myself having to become flexible. You know like okay, it's gonna take my all, but it's not gonna kill me.

This demonstrates that social change and growth are taking place through the accumulation of social capital, which is as a result of being exposed to art programming. But it also shows that it is not just the art that is having an impact on people. An important aspect of exposure to art and cultural programing is engagement with the art community. Through this art community, and through the group of individuals that participate, people are subject to have the experiences that lead to the accumulation of social capital, and personal beneficial growth. In this example True Love again uses an art form that may be alien to others to describe how she has grown, and what growth means to her.

True Love also talks about how acquiring social capital has at times set in motion part of her life. True Love’s experiences transcend exposure to art to include the art community. Here, True Love talks about how members of the art community “activated” her life by stating:

True Love: These people with their benevolence, and their monetary kindness, and you know caring and love really activated my life, you know. And I'm much better for it in the long run because I've met some lovely people like you guys.

When True Love is discussing exposure to art, she is more focused on her immediate group, and the group of staff, volunteer, and administration, facilitators that keep the program going. She feels love and kindness as a result of exposure to the art community, and this form of social
capital benefits her greatly. When she says she is much better for it in the long run, I think that she is expressing social benefits in terms of the future, especially in light of the relationships she has formed.

![Figure 15. Participants and facilitators interacting at Saint Clemens](image)

Larry also repeatedly talked about growth in the area of social capital. His statements demonstrate that what he likes the most about being exposed to art through the program are the social bonds that he makes.

Interviewer: What can you tell us about this photo? (see Figure 15)³

³ Larry’s photos were sufficiently blurred by the PI to protect the identity of other CHI program participants and facilitators whom had not consented to the being a part of the Photovoice study.
Larry: What I can tell you about this photo? It's showing people, not only interacting, but it also shows people giving... What I like about this picture, it shows people that are giving back. As well as receiving whatever. This is Saint Clemens. When it comes to giving to people, they come there, they had volunteers, and the volunteers love the people... and they're interacting, talking, and giving. And that's what I like about that picture.

Figure 16. CHI participants interact during an art excursion boat tour.

Interviewer: Very good. Thank you for sharing that.

Larry: This one (see Figure 16).


Larry: Oh, number three. What I like about this picture is, is that it's showing people that are together... and participating with us in these kinds of events. For one example, I'm sure most of these people have great careers. And they could be doing something else, but they choose to do this with us, and that's what I like about that picture.

Star Child: Mm-hmm (affirmative)-
Interviewer: Okay, when you talk about what you like about the picture, are you talking about what you like about what the event does?

Larry: Yes, what the event does, as well as the way the people are interacting with us in the event.

I think that this exchange makes it clear that Larry values the social gains that come from being a part of the art exposure group. There are two distinct values that Larry identified. One was the act of actually spending time with others (socializing). He realized that volunteering was also about sacrificing time. During the focus group, he stated that he was sure that some of these people had important careers. But despite having stuff to do, they still had an interest in spending time with his group. He likened time spent to love. The second value that he identified was giving. Although he doesn’t explicitly identify the donations that they gave, he realizes that this is important. As part of the giving he also realizes that they are receiving. He also doesn’t express what they get out of volunteering, but he states that people do this because they also get something out of it. He used many pictures of volunteers socializing to convey how he felt about the art and cultural exposure group and the programs impact on him.

While there were clearly benefits in the form of social capital from being exposed via art and cultural exposure programing, this was not the only from of social benefit that they acquired. The program participants experiencing housing instability exposed to art and cultural exposure programing also used the program to address social injustices.

**Social Justice**

Social justice comes about through correcting a social injustice, which for program participants experiencing housing instability is about an exchange of power. For the participants experiencing housing instability, art exposure was a way to challenge the status quo. They used art to expose what they saw, and they saw art as a means to speak with board members whom
were agency level policy makers, and individuals with a vested interest. The participants experiencing housing instability openly talked about what they expected from policy makers, what they wanted out of the project, and they gave full permission to have their art used for the purpose of disseminating to policy makers and the general public. They also gave permission to mount an exhibit, post to a website, and create a publication that could be used to communicate the problems of homelessness and the importance of art to those experiencing housing instability. The openly coded theme that contained this concept was *social justice*.

During the focus group, after conceptualizing her photos, Star Child confirmed that she was concerned with homelessness and felt that art was a means to address this problem. It should be noted that Star Child actually used the art and cultural exposure events to take photographs, and then used those photographs to address social injustices via her own social media outlets. In other words, the photos that she took were a part of a collection of photos that were often acquired through art exposure outings, and were later used for social justice endeavors. She used powerful photos that she edited herself to draw out the struggles people face on the streets. She took issue with veterans living on the streets, which means that she thought it was wrong that they lived on the streets after serving our country, and she saw art as a way to speak to the mayor and other politicians to correct social injustices.

Star Child: specifically talked about the importance of using art in the form of photography for political advocacy.

Star Child: But I was appalled when I saw this (see Figure 17). This man is living on the CTA property, along with other people. One limb, it just hurts my heart to see that. And a lot of them are veterans… When I take these pictures, I'm not doing it to belittle anybody, I just want it to be known. Some people just walk past it like it doesn't exist, and I just think maybe the mayor or other politicians, they need to be more… be on top of it, to just come out and talk to these people, make them feel warmer, even though they don't have a place to lay their heads, or whatever. But this
Figure 17. Star Child uses this photo to discuss issues around social justice.

man is missing one limb, and you could tell he was living out there. So that's what I wanted to address my attention to.
Figure 18. Star Child uses art for social justice and resilience, which both contribute to rebalancing.

In Star Child’s discussion, she talked about impacting policy makers. Her photos weren’t just an attempt at informing the general populace, she was interested in reaching out to
politicains or the mayor. This suggests that she has an interest in correcting social
injustices. Much of Star Child’s discussion was around bringing to light the problems of
homelessness. She often pointed out that some of our most vulnerable citizens are being
ignored. She wants policy makers to know that veterans and the elderly are suffering,
and because she doesn’t like to talk, she brings light to the problem with powerful
imagery:

Star Child: I hate talking, I hate it, I hate it! This is a senior, must’ve been winter
time, and I think she has all her belongings with her on the CTA (see Figure 18). This is just another picture I shared on my social media page. So, I put the little words here, what doesn't make you stronger. What doesn't-

Jaqueline: Kill you.

Star Child: ...kill you…

Sean: Kill you will make you stronger.

Michael: Kill you will make you stronger.

Star Child: Kill you will make you stronger. So, this is a very strong woman to be dragging all this stuff around. She's a senior, it's cold on the CTA buses, every day, all day! And she's only one of many. I see them all the time, I mean this is a senior! Like I said, I like to focus on that because the homelessness is overwhelming, overwhelming! Okay one last one (see Figure 19), Yeah, yeah this is a veteran, he said he's a disabled veteran, please help! I see this all the time. There's like two or three people on one block sitting there asking for some kind of help. This is a veteran! Why is a veteran sitting on the street? I'm not sure if he was homeless or not, but veterans are laying all over the streets. What happened to the benefits that they are supposed to get? So that was very touching to me too. It's becoming a norm… To see this type of thing, so I'm just trying to make people more aware of our surroundings because it could be me the next time, it could be you, it could be your mother, your father, your child, or whatever. So, I'm just here to try to focus more on the homelessness, okay.

I think what this passage really does is gives us insight on what Star Child values in art. For her, art is a form of communication that allows her to tackle social injustices. It was particularly important for her to use her photography as a base to contextualize from because she is not fond of speaking. Like in many of the other themes that surfaced, there is an element of homelessness that ties back into this theme.

During my observations of participants experiencing housing instability attending CHI art and cultural events, as a direct result of art exposure, some sensitive topics surfaced regularly. Issues around racism, the legacy of chattel slavery, gentrification, and poverty
surfaced within the group. These exhibits led to discussions around challenging systems of power.

In terms of social justice, Jaqueline took it one step further by talking about holding politicians accountable for affordable housing, but this was within the context of the discussion around activating your life through the accumulation of social capital. For her, discussing problems within her community through art exposure was a pathway to exposing and challenging systems of oppression and social injustice:

Jaqueline: You know, but I feel like to activate your life, everybody that lives in Chicago should have that same option, activate your life. They spent a million dollars to do a riverfront walk, but the rest of the city is in shambles. You know, it's about why don't whoever get into these offices, why shouldn't somebody police them for them to do what they are supposed to do? Instead they get into these positions, and they be in there the rest of their lives. What kind of sense does that make? It's not really working. It's just, okay you get in office, you get elected to do this job, but you are just in there to get paid. Ain't nothing getting done. Now and then they leave office, and when they do everybody wants to run for mayor. What do we need you for mayor for? You didn't even do the job you had when you were in that position. Now everybody wants to run for mayor? They need to get somewhere and sit down.

Jaqueline was expressing some discontent with politicians because as a black woman she has experienced a history of repressive systems and structures that frequently worked against her and her community. When she speaks about policing them, it is apparent that she expects some oversight, and would like for her community to be better represented and benefited.

Richard taps into the concept of social justice by talking about the importance of access. His conversation reveals that individuals elsewhere have restricted access. To Richard, exposure to this art depicts life on the streets in Chicago, and acts as an artifact of what life on the streets is like as a result of access to art (see Figure 20). Having art in Chicago that is available to everyone corrects a social injustice (lack of access) that is experienced in smaller areas. When I
asked Richard to reflect on why exposure to art was important, this is the discussion that surfaced:

Figure 20. Another picture of a mosaic by Chagall.

Interviewer: You talked about art reflecting life. You talked about it being part of the fiber of the city. That it is really intertwined, and very much a part of you. Would you say that's accurate?

Richard: And we have an advantage in the city that most people don't have who live in smaller communities. And that is, you can walk up to that mosaic any time you want.

True Love: Whenever.

Richard: It's free, It's for the public. It was designed for the public, and it was designed to say, this is what life in Chicago is like. And 50 years later, it still represents what life in Chicago is like, I think.
Facilitator: And was that intentional? Because I noticed you used the bean. There was the bean, and I forget the name of the setting, the tranquility garden?

Richard: Japanese Garden.

Facilitator: Yeah, but a lot of these things, they appear to be, or seem to be things that you can look at that are free.

Richard: Yes.

Facilitator: Yeah. Even the Picasso is something that-

Richard: Is free.

Again, Richard’s conversation was around the importance of art being free and accessible to all. But this was a complex statement because while it taps into a social justice issue (access), it also webs out into issues of poverty and homelessness. It is more than just an issue of access though; the fact that Richard’s positionality as a person experiencing housing instability is to be factored into this statement means that this city’s art isn’t just for the elite or privileged. Art can truly be experienced and enjoyed by individuals from all walks of life, including those that are experiencing housing instability, or even chronic bouts of homelessness. Richard explains that 50 years later this mosaic still represents Chicago, which helps people remember aspects of the city and see the city from various perspectives. But this art also stands as symbol of liberation, freedom, and hope because it is free and accessible to everyone.

Perspective

Art impacted CHI program participants experiencing housing instability in a way that changed their perspectives. While perspectives shifted in a number of ways, it was clear that changes were for the better. In the process of contextualizing photos, Richard expressed that art helped change his perspective. Specifically, during the discussion, Richard expressed that art shifted his perspective in a way that made him feel free.
After contextualizing his photos, Richard confirmed that art changed perspectives for the better. He stated that being exposed to art changed perspectives in a way that was liberating. The shift in perspective meant that art could “set you free”. He also talked about appreciating art, especially art that is publicly available and free. For him art reflected life, which speaks to the shift in perspective. For him that shift in perspective was about seeing beauty in the world. Finally, art seemed to be a way to teach and learn perspectives over a period of time, and he talked about how art preserves perspectives despite the passage of time.

Richard talked about how art was liberating because it changed your perspective. In his discussion, the theme of art exposure shifting perspective was evident.

Richard: Okay this is a sculpture that's in the sculpture garden at the Art Institute (see Figure 21). It's by Alexander Calder, and it's titled the Flying Dragon. It looks like it's ready to take off. And although it's made out of very heavy steel, it looks like it's ready to take off. I think what art does, is it sets you free. It helps you to fly, and I think that it elevates you to a different sphere. Where you begin to look at things differently. You begin to think about things differently. You begin to feel about things differently. So that sculpture by Alexander Calder helps me identify what the art program means to me.

I believe that what Richard is talking about is a change of perspective. When art helps him look at things and feel things in another way, this is a result of art changing his perspective in a way that leaves him feeling elevated, lighter, and hopeful.

Again, we see a change in perspective, which was brought about by being exposed to art. In this particular example, we can see that the change in perspective leaves Richard with a more “elevated” perspective that is positive and hopeful. In short, we see how this change of perspective through art exposure leads to more upbeat perspectives.
Figure 21. Richard uses this photo to discuss how art changes your perspective.

In terms of perspective, Richard also briefly describes how art can literally reflect life by visually changing what a person sees; “There's a sculpture in Millennium park called Cloud Gate, which everybody has adopted and called The Bean (see Figure 22). But I think this is a perfect example of how art reflects life. It's a mirrored sculpture, and when you stand in it all of a sudden there's the Chicago skyline. So, it's really art reflecting life.”

Art can have a more immediate impact on perspective as well. This immediate impact can happen as a result of an actual change in what a participant perceives, which was the case with Richard. Other times perspectives were changed in a way that made participants feel peace and serenity. In these cases, art exposure helped participants shift their perspective in such a
Figure 22. Richard shares a literal change in perspective through his capture of Cloud Gate.

way that they were able to find some reprieve from their realities. True Love also discussed change of perspective with the focus group.

True Love: Okay, I just wanted to say that the theater events were really close to my heart. I mean those were the ones that really compelled me to want to come to the events. And when I got there, I was so much enamored of the productions. And in regard to 20,000 Leagues Under the Sea, I told you guys, we were situated around the stage, and they utilized the stage from one end to the other end. Our perspective kept changing, and you had to kind of shift, at least I personally did have to shift, and I felt like I was part of the ebb and flow of the sea. I felt that I was a character in the play myself, personally, and that every time I had to turn this way or look up to see the dangling acrobats, I felt like, well I'm riding the ocean, and I am the ocean, metaphorically speaking.

As a direct result of being engaged in the art exposure program, True Love experienced a literal and immediate change of perspective. As a member of the audience, she was able to feel like she was part of the ocean, if not the ocean itself. Additionally, she described feeling like she was a
character in the play herself, riding the ocean. I think this immediate shift in perspective is also important because it speaks to art’s ability to captivate and engage participants. The level of engagement that this show sparked in True Love demonstrated that for a moment she was able to lose herself in the play long enough to find reprieve from her daily routines. These immediate changes in perspective resulted from art exposure. On some level art appreciation has sparked a deep change in perspective, at least deep enough to captivate the audience. So, while being exposed to a part of the art program changed her immediate perspective, what was important to her was how the production made her feel as a result of changing her perspective.

Learning

The concept of learning was also closely connected to teaching. This was because in many instances CHI program participants experiencing housing instability learned as a result of being taught something through the art exposure participants. Ultimately, CHI program participants experiencing housing instability used exposure to art as a form of education. It was common for CHI program participants experiencing housing instability to help each other understand the art through teaching, and learning was evident, as it often surfaced during the art exposure events. In fact, this was the most common theme to surface during my analysis. Larry specifically talked about how art exposure helped him learn to better interact with people. Being able to better relate to people helped him to understand or improve aspects of himself:

Larry: And to... Being a part of this program, as I always told you, it broadens my horizons in the first place. Because remember, I didn't know diddly about art. I didn't know this could've been art, but it is to me. Now I see it as art.

Interviewer: Right, right, okay, is there anything else you want to say about how the art exposure program has impacted you?

Larry: Oh yeah, it impacted me a lot, a lot!
Interviewer: Okay, is there anything else? What are some additions you would add?

Larry: Well, one… thing about this is it teaches you how to interact with people. That's important… and it not only teaches you how to interact, but it also teaches you about the different types of art, the different levels of art. That's what I'm learning, as well.

What Larry is describing is the learning that takes place as a result of exposure to art programming. Because he is acknowledging the relationships with art and cultural exposure that participants, facilitators, and the art community has, he show that the relationships plays a critical role in the learning process. Larry doesn’t say relationships during the focus group, but what he does speak of is the importance of learning how to interact with other people. Larry sees a benefit to a learning process that leads to engaging with the CHI program participants experiencing housing instability group, the staff, volunteers, and administration participants in the role of facilitators group, and the art communities that they came into contact with via the art exposure events. To be a part of the art exposure program, all of these groups must be engaged and navigated successfully by the participants experiencing housing instability. This is evident because Larry states, “Being a part of this program, as I always told you, it broadens my horizons in the first place. Because remember, I didn't know diddly about art.” This meant that navigating these social spaces carried a benefit in that learning skills pertaining to “interacting with others”, which extends beyond the art exposure program. This is also evident because he states, “Well, one… thing about this is it teaches you how to interact with people. That's important… and it not only teaches you how to interact, but it also teaches you about the different types of art, the different levels of art.” Therefore, this is more about learning important long-term social skills because he makes it clear that through his learning, he is able to make beneficial social gains.
Jaqueline also talked about art, in particular old buildings. For her, art in the form of architecture was also about learning. Learning was important to the group, and participants often took time out to teach each other through art by clarifying misconceptions or sharing their ideas.

Jaqueline had a misconception around a piece of architecture that she thought survived the Chicago Fire (see Figure 23). In reality the building was built after the Chicago Fire. Learning happened as a result of being exposed to art, the art community that they came into contact with during art exposure events, and the CHI art exposure group which consisted of CHI program participants experiencing housing instability; and staff, volunteers, and administrator participants that helped facilitate the program. One example of this took place during the focus group.

Richard took the time to educate the group on what really happened after the Chicago Fire. We all left the focus group with a better understanding of architecture, art, and our own community. This is how that instance of learning played out.

Jaqueline: I thought this one sustained the fire (see Figure 23).

Richard: No, but there is a connection. The reason it's built out of that stone is because the Water Tower was built out of that stone and it survived the fire. So, the catholic cathedral Holy Name built that cathedral out of that material. And Saint James, which is around the corner, also built their cathedral, The Episcopal Cathedral out of that. It was started in about 1874, which was about three years after the fire, but it was built out of the same material as the Water Tower, which was built in 1869...

Jaqueline: Oh, I didn’t know that.

It is important to note that learning was enhanced by the relationships that were formed in the art exposure group. Much of the learning via being exposed to art was interconnected with learning as a result of being a part of the art exposure group. For example, one could argue that the art exposure group as it did with learning from being exposed to art.
We were able to learn as a result of our social interaction within the group. Learning was important because without being a part of the group, and being open to learning from members.
of the group, the learning that we experienced in this example would not have taken place.

Learning was also important because Jaqueline was able to take something that was important to her (architecture) and use that as catalyst to better understand what she was learning. Without her love for older buildings and the art exposure program, it could be argued that the conversation, which led to learning, would not have taken place. So again, while all of this has to do with learning, the edification of participants was enhanced because of their interests and because of the art exposure group.

After Bobby contextualized one of his pictures that included a snapshot of the John Hancock building, an impromptu architecture lesson surfaced that helped the other participants and me learn more about the city that we lived in through architecture. Richard posed a question to Bobby regarding his photo and suddenly we were all learning more about the city through art (see Figure 24)

Richard: Is this the Hancock building?
Bobby: Yeah.
Richard: Okay. With the steel and glass. The very first steel and glass building in the entire world is right here. The 860 and 880 North Lake Shore.
Bobby: Okay, okay. Yeah.
Richard: He designed those in 1948.
Richard: Now, the Hancock building was probably designed about 1960...
Star Child: Can you repeat that?
Richard: Okay. Very first steel and glass high-rise buildings in the world were designed here in Chicago by Mies van der Rohe in 1948. That's 860 and 880.
Richard: Now, to show you how things progressed in those 20 years between 1948 and 1968, look at the difference (see Figure 25)
Figure 24. Bobby's discussion on remembering through art was also used for teaching and learning.

Sean: Yeah.

Richard: These are the very first. And when this was built, these were the highest apartments in the world because this is an apartment building up here. Now it's condos, but it was the highest apartment building in the world.

Bobby: Because it topped with the Empire State Building, right? The Empire State Building was... at one time, the Empire State Building was the tallest building.

Richard: No, no, no, I'm saying this was the highest apartment building.

Bobby: Okay, yeah. Right, right, right, but I'm saying as far as the...

Star Child: You mean in terms of floors.

Bobby: I mean as far as height. The top of the Empire State Building, right?
Figure 25. This picture helped foster learning during the focus group.

Richard: This isn't higher than the Empire State Building, but Sears Tower is.

Bobby: Okay, Sears Tower is.

Richard: When the Sears Tower was built, that was the tallest building in the world.

Richard: At this point, all the other tall buildings were office buildings. This was an apartment building.

Star Child: Oh, the very first. So that's history, that is history.

Richard: This was the very first... the tallest apartment building in the world. So, if you were up on the 92nd floor, you were at the highest of any apartment in the entire world.

Bobby: We were on the 94th floor.

Star Child: Can you give the dynamics to that building when they first came up?

Richard: These are steel and glass. They're both steel and glass. Same architectural designer that designed the John Hancock also designed the Sears Tower.

Star Child: His name?
Richard: Bruce Graham.

Star Child: He is beyond! Thank you.

This is a great example of exposure to art not only contributing to learning, but fostering a genuine interest or love for it. As Richard launches into a discussion about 860 and 880 Lake Shore Drive, you can tell that he is making an effort to teach to the group by offering up details about architecture. When Star Child asks if he could repeat the information that he just shared, the entire group focused in on what he was saying. Not only does he repeat some of these facts, he offers up additional details for the group. When there was a misunderstanding, Richard responds with, “no, no, no….” and corrects the misunderstanding that Bobby had. As Bobby takes the lesson in stride, Star Child demonstrates an expression of surprise and gratitude for having learned something new by saying, “Oh, the very first. So that's history, that is history.” She ends the discussion by thanking Richard for teaching herself (and the group) through art exposure.

**Resilience**

Others used exposure to art as a pathway to becoming more resilient, and they discussed this in the focus group. As noted above, Star Child and other members of the art and cultural exposure program use the outings as a means to take photographs. In this respect the art and cultural program has become a means through which to capture photos, and use the photos to help others. In Star Child’s case, she uses the art and cultural events to bring light to the plight of homelessness, but this did not come without challenges that needed to be overcame. Star Child talked about a disabling condition, but explained why she keeps moving and how she hopes she encourages others to do the same:
Star Child: Even though I'm disabled, I'm a senior, I just keep on moving. I'm in pain 24/7, but I keep it moving so I could support others, to let them know. Just ...you know, do you, do your thing. People don't realize the stuff I have to go through to get the few pictures that I do have. And they don’t realize the things, the other things that I do. And this is what I want to share with the world, really. You know, I'm in pain, I take no medicine because I need my liver. I'm a poor person, I can't buy another liver. But I'm in excruciating pain, but you would never know it by looking at my pictures. You can't tell though, can you?

So, while resilience was not discussed directly, it was embedded in many of the other discussions, some of which led to themes during the analysis. Despite her condition, Star Child states that she has found a way to be resilient. Part of this has to do with being exposed to art through art and cultural exposure outings, part of it has to do with her endeavors around addressing homelessness, but ultimately there are benefits that come along with supporting (and being supported by) a group.

I think the other piece has to do with poverty. The message here is that despite the troubles that a person experiencing housing instability might face, they can use art to push through and inspire others. We know that Star Child is in pain daily, but she feels the desire to keep moving. This is because she says, “Even though I'm disabled, I'm a senior, I just keep on moving. I'm in pain 24/7, but I keep it moving so I could support others, to let them know. Just ...you know, do you, do your thing.” We also know that she is stating that she is doing it to support others, through her work and participation in the program, because she says, “I keep it moving so I could support others” So she is saying that despite experiencing housing instability and suffering with a disabling condition, others can find and “do your thing”, to use her words. When she says, “you do you”, she is getting at the idea that through her actions she can inspire others to chase the dreams that are important to them. To chase dreams in the face of housing instability and pain speaks to resiliency.
Although much of her talk was around resiliency, as True Love expresses herself it becomes clear that resiliency can take place in the form of social benefits. Resiliency through being in the art exposure group was evident as she talked about how people help her find the resiliency to get through life. This is especially important for someone that is experiencing housing instability. The ability to connect with a group and gain some lasting benefits in the form of resiliency demonstrates important gains as a result of being in the art exposure program. When I asked why she felt the need to be flexible like bamboo, this is how she responded (see Figure 26).

True Love: Alright you wanna pass this around you can see this. The day that I was doing this was the last day that we had to submit these pictures. And I walked past the shop, and I said wow they have one of those bamboo things in a urn. And you have to go inside the shop. I'll have to give you guys the address next week 'cause it's right across from Saint James Church, but I like Asian things. You know Asian art, and I like the simplicity of it. And these are bamboo sticks in an urn in this boutique, high scale upscale boutique.

True Love: But the thing about bamboo is that it bends it never breaks. You know, and I'm thinking to myself this is the way you operate through life you know. You become I ... Like the other picture said what doesn't kill you only makes you stronger. You just become much more enriched and evolving as a person through you know the different programs we've had here at CHI. And with Redline, and with you guys from Loyola, but you ... I find myself having to become flexible. You know like okay it's gonna take my all, but it's not gonna kill me.

Facilitator: You talk about being flexible. I'm curious, when you're thinking of yourself as being flexible is it in response to... In response to what things?

True Love: The torrents of life. How life just throws you for a loop...

Facilitator: Okay.

True Love: And you're like what the heck... you know? And that is, me personally. I gotta stay the course. I care about her, you know? I gotta just know, that I know, that I know that God provides, and that he will send people into my
life to keep me afloat. And family, my family are the people, you know, family and friends. And I thank God for them.

Facilitator: Okay it's making sense.

Richard: Like you see the flexibility in the bamboo.

Facilitator: Yeah.

Jaqueline: It stretches and goes back.

True Love: It's a Zen thing, you know? It's like honoring yourself first.

Figure 26. Participants used art to discuss flexibility.
Again, much of this conversation is around finding resiliency through relationships with family and friends. In this example, when I ask why True Love needs to be flexible, she simply says the torrents of life. This is a catch-all phrase for many things that could happen. Earlier in the conversation, she discussed having to be flexible as a result of engaging with other people; this was more in line with enhancing resiliency through the art exposure group. When she says, “The torrents of life”, this is a broader catch-all statement that speaks to things outside of engaging with people in the program, one of which is her experience with housing instability. Where this really speaks to resiliency, is when she states that it’s a Zen thing, like honoring yourself first. Zen is the ability to find peace or calmness in the face of strife, and to honor yourself is to love and appreciate yourself despite what the strife brings. In short, this means that she feels that she can weather the storm and still come out on the other end with admiration and respect for herself. This statement is a testament to her resiliency, and it is connected to the art exposure program because it demonstrates that through the program she gained the ability to connect with a group demonstrated by her saying “You just become much more enriched and evolving as a person through you know the different programs we've had here at CHI...” In sum, this means that she gained some lasting benefits in the form of resiliency.

**Homelessness**

Another theme in these discussions was *homelessness*. When talking about homelessness, participants often expressed sadness or sorrow over having experienced homelessness. However, when participants referenced homelessness, they also used exposure to art to process the sorrow associated with homelessness. As one would expect, sadness was embedded in discussions around homelessness, which was a frequently discussed theme in this study. Since most of the participants were experiencing housing instability, a precursor to
homelessness, this comes as no surprise. Michael sets up another discussion by talking about becoming homeless:

Michael: I was behind in the rent and they just came to me. I was in an SRO (Single Room Occupancy) on Well Street, and I was three months behind on the rent, and they just came to me and they said, okay…psst…gotta get out. So, I had no money, and I spent the first, I guess, month of my life sleeping there (see Figure 27).

Facilitator: What is that?

Michael: That's a park. That's the dog park on Clark Street, if anybody knows where that is?

Facilitator: Okay, so like sleeping back in the grass or on the front?

Michael: Well there used to be a wooded area going to the right.

Star Child I'm sorry.
Michael: That's all right. But anyway, I spent the first month there. The fountain looks very appealing and beautiful, but at night it becomes Ratatouille. It was a very scary experience, and there were other people sleeping in the park. There were other people sleeping in the park, and then one night I guess, maybe about six weeks into it, it was about 2:00 in the morning and a policeman shined his flashlight into my face and said you've gotta take it on the arches as it were. And then I moved to another place. I moved by the history museum. So that was the fun and games of living outside. I wouldn't go to PGM (Pacific Garden Missions) or any shelter, I refused to do that. So, I slept outside. It looks beautiful, and it is, until it gets to be 9:00, and then it changes. I see people sometimes, even today, they got their kids playing in that fountain. If they only knew what was under that fountain.

As Michael discussed his experiences of homelessness, he used his photo to express the sadness that he experienced as a result of being in the presence of the fountain. For him, the fountain triggered a memory that was tied into his experience of homelessness. When Star Child says, “I’m sorry”, she does it in a way that is consoling. Through exposure to this art, there was some pain, but revisiting these painful places allowed for processing that grief. In this case, with Star Child’s assistance, Michael receives consolation for what was no doubt a painful experience.

In response to Michael’s discussion on being homeless, Star Child (whom earlier offered consolation to Michael), talked about her experience of homelessness and housing instability, and what to avoid when you are facing financial problems:

Star Child: I was homeless in the past, but never to the point of really being on the street. Yeah, I was able to stay where I was by contract. Legal contract worked, but yeah, it's not a good feeling, even though you're not on the street, because you don't know where you're gonna be able to go from one moment to the next. But right now, because I have a bankruptcy it's going be hard for me to find a place. Yeah, because people don't like to fool with you after a bankruptcy... Try not to file for bankruptcy if you can, but do not get evicted, it's worse. So, this is just food for thought.

In this brief discussion, while the focus is on homelessness, the pain that Star Child experienced is also revealed. When Star Child states that “it’s not a good feeling” she is expressing the fact
that there are terrible feelings associated with experiencing homelessness and housing instability. After expressing how terrible this feels, she immediately moves into offering up advice that might be helpful to the group. This advice giving is a means of dealing with the distress associated with homeless and housing instability. That is because the advice helps them cope as a group. Not only are they all in the same boat, they can look out for each other by offering up words of advice or consolation.

During Bobby Jackson’s discussion on remembering through architecture, at the tail end of his discussion he also brought up homelessness. This talk on homelessness, also revealed some pain and regret associated with homelessness. As he discussed the burden associated with homelessness, he shifted his talk around coping with staying at a shelter. In his talk he reveals how he dealt with sleeping at a local shelter that felt very institutionalized:

Bobby: The more things change in Chicago, the more things stay the same. You have all the new architectural buildings, and everything going up, but you still have the Merchandise Mart, and you still have the old traffic court building. They were downtown when the first National Bank building was downtown... you still have the old structures that bring back memories of certain aspects of your life in Chicago. People... my first time being homeless, I never thought I was going to become homeless, you know? Like I said, I lived in Phoenix Arizona for five years. When I got sick... that kind of periled me. He (Michael) was saying that he didn’t want to live at PGM (Pacific Garden Missions). When I went to live at PGM, I stayed almost a year. It was 2015. I'm just saying... they helped me out. They helped me find housing and stuff like that. It (PGM) was the next thing to the jail, but then again, too... I thought about it as boot camp. But anyway, you know Chicago.

This discussion shows Bobby Jackson moving from the sorrow associated with homelessness, to a discussion on coping with it. When Bobby Jackson states that becoming homeless imperiled him, he is expressing genuine grief over having experienced homelessness. When he has a discussion around others not wanting to live at PGM, embedded in that discussion is the idea that
it was a dehumanizing experience for Michael (and others). Bobby shares his experience of PGM and educates others on how he survived that experience, and ultimately benefitted from it. When he says it is the next thing to jail, he is describing a very unpleasant experience. But he also described how he overcame that by pretending like the overly institutionalized atmosphere was boot camp. The impact of the art and cultural exposure group sometimes had more to do with being in the group where learning could take place. This teaching and learning experience not only helped him process what happened, but it offered helpful advice for others that may face the same situation in the future.

Star Child discussed homelessness again during the focus group. She spoke to the sadness she felt over society’s disdain for individuals experiencing homelessness. This is an example of how she used art exposure around homelessness to process feelings of sadness:

Star Child: But this man is missing one limb, and you could tell he was living out there (see Figure 28). So that's what I wanted to address my attention to. So that was very touching to me too. It's becoming a norm.

Here, Star Child continues to paint what is already a vivid picture by contextualizing a powerful photo that captures the plight of homelessness. In her discussion with the group, she explains that she was emotionally touched by the fact that someone with a disabling condition is experiencing homelessness. When she says it’s becoming the norm, she is attempting to make it clear that homelessness isn’t an uncommon phenomenon. Most discussions around processing sadness were imbedded in discussions on homelessness, housing instability, and poverty. When Michael talks about homelessness again, he attempts to use art to process grief through humor. He does this by poking fun at the hole in his shoe:
Michael: That's a picture of a hole in somebody's shoe, which you have a lot of that when you're homeless (see Figure 29). And that was just actually a picture of my shoe... I was just testing the camera out. But anyway, I'm done.

His comment was met with laughter. While the tone was humorous, it was also very
melancholy. The duality of this made for a tricky analysis. On the surface this seemed like a funny or humorous talk because of the laughter, but these individuals were all experiencing housing instability. In the face of potential homelessness, not having a means to see your needs adequately met is a somber and constant reminder of your situation. That is what made Michael’s statement melancholy. They were all in the same situation, yet they were willing to have these moments of reprieve. These brief moments where participants poked fun at their situations were not uncommon. Although Michael was particularly great of making light of his reality, he wasn’t the only one to do it. So, while sadness was present while exposed to art via the art exposure events, there was also evidence that exposure to art events provided participants with tools to process sadness associated with homelessness. I also believe that the jokes were
part of the group bonding that came out of being in the art exposure program. Finally, they all had housing instability in common, and were therefore able to more easily snag the punchlines.

**Conclusion**

The problems that this study sought to address were psycho-social issues associated with housing instability among the CHI program participants. One objective of the study was to better understand the impact of art exposure on individuals experiencing housing instability. Individuals who experience homelessness or housing instability often feel marginalized, voiceless, and disenfranchised. This study demonstrates the efficacy of the art exposure program as a means to mitigate the deleterious social effects of housing instability and homelessness. By demonstrating the benefits of art and cultural exposure and engagement with individuals experiencing housing instability, this study demonstrates that psychological frailties resulting from the social issues that these people face may be mitigated by the art exposure program.

The most salient themes that came out of this phase of the study were: Remembering, Appreciation, Serenity, Social Capital, Social Justice, Perspective, Learning, Resilience, and Homelessness. When people talked about remembering, the discussion was around immediate memories or historical information. No matter what they talked about, memories were always of importance. Appreciation often acted as a reprieve from the daily rigors of life. Exposure to art allowed people to become resensitized to the seemingly mundane by offering a fresh view. Art provided spaces where people could find peace and serenity. This is especially important for individuals experiencing the chaos associated with housing instability. Participants experiencing housing instability experienced an accumulation of social capital as a result of engaging in the art exposure program. Art exposure communities are the communities that participants engaged with while at each exhibit, event, or outing. While Participants experiencing housing instability
saw the art exposure communities (via the art exposure events), the staff, volunteer, and administration facilitator participants, and each other as a beneficial social resource. Participants also saw exposure to art as a means to correcting social injustices. Art allowed them to express themselves and open dialogue around social issues, usually that pertained to homelessness.

Exposure to art changed the CHI program participants immediate perspectives, as well their overall perspectives. The CHI program participants experiencing housing instability described their perspectives as being hijacked as a result of being engrossed in a show, but they also talked about how their perspectives shifted as a result of fundamental views changing. The CHI program participants also used exposure to art and their social groups as a means to teach and learn. Because the CHI program participants were in a similar situation (housing instability), they benefitted greatly from advice giving. Finally, conversations regarding resilience and homelessness surfaced. The CHI program participants expressed resiliency within the group and used art to express this about themselves. The discussion on homelessness also surfaced frequently and was often tied to feelings of grief or sorrow. In discussing homelessness, they processed their experiences through stories of triumph.

That being said, the methodology also had an impact on participants. The following sections outline observations from the meeting with program participants and program facilitators. The purpose of the meeting was to plan out how information would be disseminated. The primary method of dissemination was an art exhibit. What follows are the events that led up to the planning session, and notes from the planning session, which is ultimately where the participants formed their goals for the project.
CHAPTER 5
ART DISSEMINATION FINDINGS

A Brief Overview of the Findings Section

The Photovoice method requires CHI program participants experiencing housing
instability to play an active role in the planning and dissemination of their work. And while the
methods section gave participants the latitude to plan and disseminate their work, without
observation data, which is the data that I recorded from directly from jotting taken while
observing participants, it would be difficult to know what decisions were made regarding
dissemination. Consequently, observational data from this chapter details a planning session that
looked at decisions around how art would be disseminated, where to exhibit the art, what the
message was, and who the message was for. The objective of this chapter was to capture data
around CHI program participants experiencing housing instability having their voices heard
through dissemination of their work. Another objective of this study was to involve the CHI
program participants in decision making processes that pertained to the dissemination via the
exhibit so that they felt their voices were heard. The planning session observational data adds to
the objectives of the study because it details decisions around having their voices heard, and the
exhibit observational information captures additional data on one of the planned processes of
having their voices heard. In short, I took observational data because I wanted to accurately
capture how decisions were negotiated between CHI program participants and CHI staff,
volunteer, and administrative participants. I also recorded observational data at the actual exhibit
where their work was disseminated to capture important details pertaining to what happened. In accordance with operating within the ethnographic tradition (Photoethnography), observational data was helpful for capturing information around what happened during dissemination, and how it happened. I included photographic data here to show the layout of the physical exhibit. I also offer a link to the website and include a link to a copy of the book. These resources were reviewed before the final focus group to give CHI program participants that were absent a chance to see their disseminated works. This section concludes with an analysis of data from the second focus group, which gets at the meaning of having program participants voices heard through the dissemination of various art forms (exhibit, website, & book). Finally, I continue to do some reflexivity work throughout this section, especially toward the end of my observations.

Observation # 3

The Planning Session

When I arrived, I headed straight into the dining room, and there I found some of the staff, volunteers, and administrative participants that I was looking for, in particular Elvis, Dickie, Mother, and Ellie (see Table 5). I had not recruited or consented Ellie yet. I also found Queenie, who came up to me and said, “I came here for you”. I thanked her for taking time out of her day to meet with me and went about reminding the CHI program participants of our planning session.

I ended up speaking to Sean, Richard, True Love, Larry, Bobby Jackson, Jaqueline, and Star Child. Jaqueline just happened to be caring for two small children, so she left shortly after I mentioned the planning session to her. Michael and ChiTown Runner were not present. As the program got off to a start, Mother, Ellie, me, and Star Child started talking about the art that they produced for the photovoice project.
The four of us briefly talked about a plan to disseminate their art, and I asked them to tell me what ideas they had. Star Child was already aware of the Music Box Theater, and was beginning to wrap her head around who to invite. I noticed that many of the photos that the CHI program participants took had Ellie in them. Ellie also seemed to be fully invested in helping the CHI program participants get their work into an exhibit. I told her what it was we were doing, and she showed an interest in joining us. I told her that she was welcome to join us, but that I needed to recruit and consent her before she could. Once I got a hold of my paperwork, I read her the script and got her to sign off on the consent form. Right after dinner, at about 17:10, I started to gather CHI program participants, and CHI staff, volunteer, and administrative participants upstairs.

Once I got everyone upstairs, I set the meeting into motion. I let everyone know that the purpose of the meeting was to decide on a way to disseminate their art, and to decide on key policymakers or stakeholders to approach. I also let them know upfront that I in no way wanted to steer this meeting, and that I wanted everyone to have an equal voice in the decisions that were about to be made. Right away, Mother threw her idea out to show their art at the Music Box Theater. She stated that while we were only going to be able to select certain pieces of art for the event, it would be a good chance for us to get our work out and have our voices heard. Mother asked me if it fit the purposes of my study and asked what I was trying to do. I deflected back to the group and I said the goal here was for you all to decide on a way to disseminate your work where your voices could be heard by policymakers and key stakeholders. I told them that it would be great if the group could decide what that meant for themselves. There was a bit of cross talk between CHI program participants and staff, volunteers, and administration participants, but Ellie said, “I think is important to talk about what this organization does so that
people are aware of how important it is to us.” Many other participants (both CHI program participants, & staff, volunteer, and administrative participants) agreed with that statement.

Another question was posed to me which was along the lines of, “How do you feel about only a select few pieces being presented?” I again attempted to deflect by saying, “It’s really up to the group and what you all decide should be presented. I think as a group you need to figure out what’s going to make a powerful statement, and what messages you want convey to the policy makers.

There was some cross talk but Mother and Star Child both stated that because these photos are being blown up so big, we will likely have to use photographs that are of high quality. Ellie said, “There are a lot of things that have to be taken into consideration when selecting these photos, like what inscription we want to use, whether or not it’s something that we can sell, and of course the quality of the photo.” We talked about the message that we would want to convey (the importance of the program), and there was more cross talk on the causes that we want to unify on. Sean explained that we never had opportunities to actually come up with one unified voice in terms of what it is we want to do. He turned to me and asked me if we should have more focus groups for the purpose of deciding what the cause is? Again, I answered his question by deflecting back to the group. I told him that I think I have a grasp on what the causes are, but I don’t want to put words into the group’s mouth. I said, “We can probably figure that out now, what do you all think the causes are?”

Mother responded by saying the cause is art. Sean said, “yes, but what does that mean?” I responded to Sean by saying, “I think in the year that I’ve been here that this art program has different meanings to everyone, but the one theme in all of this is that it is indeed important for these programs to exist and be available to people.” I asked if anyone would agree, disagree, or
wanted to add to that. After some talk most of the CHI program participants and CHI staff, volunteer, and administration participants agreed that disseminating art via the Music Box Theater was a great way to convey what the art exposure program meant to them.

Ellie stated that the Music Box Theatre was showing Miracle on 34th Street on the 29th, and she began talking about planning out the logistics of making it happen. I asked if everyone was okay with the Music Box Theatre and asked for a show of hands to see who wanted to use that venue to exhibit their work. Everyone agreed to attending the Music Box Theatre and having their art featured there. With a smile, Elvis thanked the group for helping.

Ellie mentioned that we should maybe use another method of dissemination to reach out to more folks. The idea of publishing a book, magazine, or newspaper appealed to her, and she wondered if anyone else would be interested. Elvis said we could use streetwise as one of the newspapers, and everyone agreed to the idea. He asked if that was off target; there was some cross talk, and I said it is okay to publish your art in any way that you see fit. I said we will do the Music Box Theater, with the thought process being that we can also get our material out for publication. During the meeting, Mother brought up the idea of creating a simple webpage to get the word out. She has experience with publishing photos to websites, and she agreed to work on the webpage with me. I talked to Ellie and she asked if she could chat with me later.

I responded sure, and then redirected the group back on task by asking, “Now, who should we invite? Let’s try to think of policymakers and stakeholders that we want to speak to.” Star Child jumped in and said, “We should speak to people that have money, people that are rich, and those that sponsor us!” Sean chimed in saying, “Here, here”, and there was similar agreement throughout the room. Elvis said, “I have an idea, why don’t we invite stakeholders that are already involved? We could invite our supporters from DuSable, Looking Glass
Theater, and etcetera to the event. I think these groups can help us moving forward. There’s also a group that did a Go Fund Me page for us and we should certainly invite them. Every time we do something with these groups, including providing stuff that we publish, it is useful. By doing this we might be able to help our program.”

Larry asked, “Who can we invite?” Elvis responded, “It’s a public event, but the admission is $20 per person. We can really invite whoever we want.” I asked if there’s anyone else that they would want to consider, and there wasn’t a response from the group. I said, “Then it’s settled, we will invite folks that are already sponsoring us, and we will reach out to others through publications that might be willing to sponsor us.” There was quite a bit of cross talk and Ellie came across the room to my side of the table to talk to me. Before I got too deeply involved in the conversation with Ellie I said, “If no one else has anything to offer I will end the meeting.” Ellie told me that she wants me to have a look at a publication that they did in the form of book. She said it was very powerful and moving book that was filled with art, and that she thought I would like the idea. I told her I would be more than happy to have a look at the book, and that I do like the idea of presenting the participants’ artwork in a book along with a few words for publication. She said she had a friend that might be able to donate money to have the books published. I asked her if she would be willing to work with me on this, and she replied in the affirmative. She started to well up with tears as she explained to me how the book really touched people. I told her that I hope we can produce something that touches people in a similar manner.

Reflexivity # 3

My positionality work, which is my work around social factors such as race and poverty that speak to how I’m socially positioned in relationship to the participants, is relevant to the research questions because it describes social factors that impacted the planning and execution of
the dissemination of their artwork, as well as the way in which the research questions were answered. While I’m happy that the CHI program participants and the CHI staff, volunteer, and administrative participants came to the table to make plans regarding disseminating art in a way that would best tackle the problems that the CHI program participants defined, I am under no illusion that the CHI staff, volunteers, and administrative participants had a very strong say in the selection of the venue. Despite being outnumbered, staff, volunteer, and administrative participants had some advantages. Methodologically speaking, while it was my wish that the CHI program participants had a strong say in the selection of the venue, one of the benefits of inviting CHI staff, volunteer, and administrative participants was access to high end exhibits. With the help of CHI staff, volunteer, and administrative participants, CHI program participants now had the ability to have their work viewed in places that they might not have ordinarily given them the opportunity. The trade-off was simple. The CHI program participants actually had some great ideas, but many of them were not on the scale of what was offered up by CHI staff, volunteer, and administrative participants. For example, before ChiTown Runner stopped participating in the study, he thought it might be interesting to use a room at the agency, and have projectors pointing at all of the walls in an effort to offer up a virtual experience. Star Child thought it might be interesting to have their work shared at the agency, so that as people were dining, they could see it. Others had similar ideas, but all fell short of dissemination via an actual exhibit in a well-known public arena, before agency level policy makers. Ultimately, despite my concerns, I believe the CHI program participants were eager to have their work exhibited in an actual show and were thus swayed by the ideas of CHI the staff, volunteer, and administrative participants. So, what the CHI program participants lost in ingenuity and independence, they gained in access and exposure.
Similarly, while CHI program participants had some idea as to who they wanted to invite, I realized very quickly that they did not have the resources or means to go about inviting those people. The CHI program participants experiencing housing instability were able to say that inviting partners from other agencies was a good idea, but they did not have the contact information readily available to go about executing that plan. With CHI staff, volunteer, and administrative participants at hand, it became much easier to accomplish this task by delegating it to people who had easy access to those social circles. Additionally, just by accessing upscale venues, CHI program participants were assured that their work would be viewed by individuals that might develop an interest and have the means to support the art exposure group, and ultimately the CHI program participants’ causes. Paradoxically, while individuals with a vested interest, agency level policy makers, and potential philanthropist were expected to grace the venue, the Music Box Theater art display would not be seen as much by the very people who created it, as they did not frequent the same establishments as those folks that were being invited.

In terms of how I socially related to the group at this point, for me it was extremely hard to remain muted while the CHI program participants experiencing housing instability, and the CHI staff, volunteer, and administrative participants took control of the research project. Much was riding on the decisions that the group made, and I had to trust in the artistic and methodological path (way), which meant trusting in all of the research participants. This exercise in trust had much to do with a release of power, which I feel is an essential element of the PAR, Freirean and feminist theories, as well as the theories behind using Art as Therapy. In a personal communication with Alain de Botton, I asked him where he got the idea for the Art as Therapy theory. His response to me was, “My work is not drawn from empirical research; really just selected readings, especially Zen aesthetics, Aristotle, Hegel, and Proust” (de Botton, 2018).
What this means to me is that the utility of art has much to do with Zen aesthetics, which speaks to Taoism and the philosophical theories in which art translates into practical tools to address psychological problems. In short, the transfer of power from researcher to participant was not solely a methodological journey. This was also an artistic journey, as the vision for the entire event was their own. These theories of art and science beckoned me to be at peace with yielding to their power. In much the same way that the yin and yang work, it was only through this exchange that I was able to continue, and ultimately complete my work.

And while I am not so naïve as to believe that as a researcher I was in as vulnerable of a position as they were, I was a doctoral student, and again there was a very real chance that CHI program participants and CHI staff, volunteer, and administrative participants could have planned something that was totally contradictory to some of my goals. With that being said, I must also confess that while I worked to be at peace with the path that I was now on, there was also a very real fear that what they decided to do would be so far outside of what was expected from my committee, that it would render large chunks of the project useless. Finally, all of these issues pertaining to power and positionality impacted the planning of dissemination, and ultimately the outcome of the study.

I will now provide observations that led up to the exhibit, observations of the exhibit, and observations that led up to the second focus group, which were largely regarding what they got out of having some of their work disseminated at the art exhibit, via the book, and through the webpage.
Observation # 4

The Art Exhibit

Before the art exhibit, Ellie and I met a few times briefly to talk more about an idea that came out of the planning session. I was working on a book of the participants artwork (photographs). Attached to each of their pieces were some of the most salient comments that they used to contextualize their stills. Between their pieces I included some explanations of what was being discussed. She shared with me a book that she did on a prior project, and I was very impressed with it. She offered me some suggestions, one of which was to minimize my voice on the project. As I continued to work with her, I slowly made an effort to eliminate my voice so that the participants voices would shine through. Also, even though I took the creative lead on bringing the artwork together, she continued to advise me on the project. She also mentioned that there might be some funding that we could tap into for the purposes of publishing the book. With my curiosity getting the best of me, I asked Ellie about which photos from the project would be featured in the exhibit, she referred me to Jeanie.

I was able to reach out to Mother a few times before the exhibit as well. When I asked her about which photos from the project would be used, she explained to me that it would really be up to what the participants wanted to do. I told her that I have an idea for a canvas, and she said she didn’t want to make assumptions, so she wanted to ask if I would be willing to pay for it. I told her that was fine, that I would be willing to pay for the piece that I entered. I asked her if I could put together some art from the photos in the book, and she said that it would be fine, but that we would need to be careful how much space we used. She told me that I could put together one piece, but it had to be no larger than 18” x 24”. She said I could put multiple photos on one canvas, but again I would need to watch the size of the piece I created. I asked if I could project
all of the photos with a small projector, and she explained to me that there probably wouldn’t be an outlet available to do that. In the end, after weighing out my options, I decided to make a canvas and display one large Photo as opposed to displaying multiple smaller ones. I felt I could make a stronger statement with one great photo and one powerful message. I also knew that I needed to trust that the participants and staff would display art from the project that was important to them.

The final person that I met with regularly before the art exhibit was Elvis. He was very helpful in number of ways. After I finished my art project, I had it printed at Kinko’s on canvas. Elvis allowed me to keep the canvas at the agency, and even agreed to transport it to the Music Box Theatre on the day of the event. In one of my brief discussions with Elvis, I told him that I wanted to invite my wife, daughter, and a few friends. He graciously offered to provide me with tickets for free entry to the event. He let me know that they would need help setting up earlier in the day, so I agreed to meet him there at about 13:30 to help set up the exhibit. The drive-in that morning was a little hectic. It was a busy morning, so I arrived about 10 minutes behind schedule. I quickly found a parking spot, and as I pulled in, I could see that Elvis and his assistant were already unloading the equipment. I apologized for my tardiness and joined the two of them.

When I initially asked Elvis if he needed help, he told me that they were already finished. Once I got in, I realized a lot of work needed to be done in terms of setting up the exhibit. We essentially set up the stands and easels that held the art, and shortly after we set up the lighting. Last we worked on putting up the artwork. It was at this time that I started to keep an eye out for the art participants selected to be a part of the exhibit. What I noticed right away was that there was no singular exhibit that was dedicated to our Photovoice project. Instead, the photos from
the project were mixed in with photos and paintings of a similar tone. I also noticed that the participants didn’t choose as many photos from our project as I initially thought they would. After giving it some thought, I realized that this made sense because most of the photos that they took for the Photovoice project were done with disposable cameras. This meant that the quality of the photos would be diminished, and that limited their ability to resize them. If I were to do the project again, I would find a way to get quality cameras into the hands of the participants so that their prints could easily be enlarged.

Once I arrived at the Music Box Theater, I started to keep an eye out for the art that CHI program participants experiencing housing instability selected to be a part of the exhibit. What I noticed right away was that there was no singular exhibit that was dedicated to our Photovoice project. Instead, the photos from the project were mixed in with photos and paintings of a similar tone. I also noticed that the CHI program participants didn’t choose as many photos from our project as I initially thought they would. After giving it some thought, I realized that this made sense because most of the photos that they took for the Photovoice project were done with disposable cameras. This meant that the quality of the photos would be diminished, and that limited the CHI program participants ability to resize them. If I were to do the project again, I would find a way to get quality cameras into the hands of the CHI program participants so that their prints could easily be enlarged.

What was also nice about the exhibit was that while it did not feature a large number of photos from the Photovoice project, many of the photos took on the tone of the Photovoice project (see Figure 30Figure 31Figure 32Figure 33). For example, there were photos that were taken while participating in the project, but not with the disposable cameras. Also, many of the photos and paintings had a homelessness theme. There were a few photos from the project, but
this paled in comparison to the large proportion of other pieces. Although this study focuses on the pieces that the program participants submitted, all of the other submission were CHI service recipients that were experiencing housing instability or homelessness. Additionally, because other pieces were featured, the overall quality of the exhibit was better. Finally, many of the pieces were submitted by people that were in various types of art programming, but did not participate in the Photovoice study. Some of these non-participants did paintings, drawings, and

Figure 30. At the entrance is a canvas made from one of the participant’s contextualized photos.
Figure 31. Just past the entrance, and at the rear sits collages which included pictures from the participants.

Figure 32. Program participants also created other forms of art for the exhibit.
Figure 33. Vulnerably housed non-participants also entered art into the exhibit. Collages. Again, the trade-off was clear, what was lost in real estate for art from the Photovoice project was gained in picking up pieces that were more impactful. For example, one of the pieces sold for 500 hundred dollars. I’m fairly certain that none of the photographs taken with disposable cameras sold.

As part of the dissemination process, I also had one of their photographs placed on canvas at Kinkos. The piece that I shared was featured prominently near the entrance of the exhibit. Since one of their goals was to ensure that art programming would be funded, I created business cards with Elvis’ contact information on it for anyone that was interested in either buying the canvas or supporting the arts in any way. One thing that I told Elvis was that I would like for him and the group to keep the canvas after the exhibit. While at the exhibit a few people
did approach me to ask me about the canvas. This was a great opportunity to talk about my work and the importance of the program. Also, my friends, family, and committee members asked about the exhibit as well. For these reasons, I know that the importance of art exposure programming reached a number of people. I was not always able to stay near my exhibit. Sometimes I would run small errands like bringing more art in, but I can say with a fair degree of certainty that folks were moved by the exhibit.

While at the exhibit, I had conversations with Elvis, and on a number of occasions he introduced me to some very important people (VIPs), which included board members whom were in the role of agency level policy makers, funders, and donors. As a result of these meet and greets, I also noticed that the CHI program participants and the non-participants were making contact with wealthier clientele. Suddenly, funders, supporters, philanthropist, and other prominent figures were in the same room with CHI program participants experiencing housing instability, as well as their non-participating counterparts, and they were all having genuine conversations over art. Curiosity also got the better of me. I found myself also approaching some of the non-participants and starting a conversation with them to gain insight on the meaning embedded in their art.

Finally, I also noticed that only three of the eight CHI Photovoice program participants actually showed up at the event. I can say that I was pretty surprised by this. I thought that the CHI program participants experiencing homelessness or housing instability would be more involved in this endeavor, and I was interested in finding out why more did not come to the exhibit. This was definitely a question that would surface in the second focus group. The participants that consisted of staff, volunteers, and administration had a strong presence. In fact, four of the six staff, volunteer, and administrative participants showed up at the event. In total,
only 50% (7 out of 14) CHI program participants experiencing housing instability, and CHI staff, volunteer, and administrative participants came to the exhibit. I hoped that everyone would be in attendance during the exhibit. I wondered how the non-attendees as well as the attendees would make meaning of having the art disseminated via the exhibit, and if there would be a difference. At the end of the day, this was their exhibit, their project, and their voice. Regardless of how I made meaning of their presence or lack thereof, what really mattered is what they took away from it.

**Reflexivity # 4**

One of the goals of this study was to involve the CHI program participants experiencing housing instability in decision making processes that pertained to dissemination via the exhibit so that they felt their voices were heard. In terms of inquiry as action, this study does facilitate change in a number of ways. The CHI program participants experiencing housing instability were able to plan the dissemination of their art through an exhibit where they could convey a message to policy makers on the board, and key stakeholders. The CHI program participants experiencing housing instability were empowered to act in a number of ways. As mentioned above, they were co-investigators and they were involved in setting goals. I was concerned with the impact of art exposure on CHI program participants. Honestly, I’m not sure that my study enhanced their appreciation for the arts. I am however certain that they were able to teach and learn as a result of participating in the study. This means that their understanding was enhanced. The goal of the study wasn’t to enhance their understanding, but data revealed that teaching and learning took place frequently, and appreciation was nearly ever-present. I am concerned with how I’m representing the CHI program participants because I realize that some folks may think that work (which is a means to food and shelter) should be more important to someone that is
experiencing homelessness or housing instability. However, art can be meaningful work in that art can generate revenue. In fact, as I mentioned above, one of the pieces earned a guest (non-participant) $500.00 (USD) at the Music Box Theater exhibit.

The next section takes a look at data from the focus group that followed the dissemination of their art through the exhibit. This data comes from the CHI art exposure program participants experiencing housing instability. Data from the staff, volunteer, and administrator participants will be examined separately. These data help tackle some of these ideas and gets at how CHI program participants made meaning of having their voices heard through the various means of dissemination. This focus group essentially took place over three separate days. Six of the 8 CHI program participants were available for the first two sessions, and the last two CHI program participants agreed to speak on the third day. In sum, eight of the eight CHI program participants experiencing housing instability shared their feelings on the meaning of having their artwork disseminated. As mentioned above, while not every CHI program participant was able to go to the Music Box Theater event, they all still wanted to share their thoughts on what it meant to have art from the Photovoice project publicly disseminated, which included a display at the Music Box Theater exhibit. To enhance their understanding of what took place at the venue, I made a slide show from stills that I took at the Music Box Theater. I also shared progress on the other ideas, which included the art book and webpage, both of which came out of the planning session.

**Art Dissemination Focus Group Findings**

Findings suggest CHI program participants experiencing housing instability made
meaning of having their voices heard through dissemination of their art at the exhibit, through
the book, and via the webpage in seven ways. Six of the themes that surfaced were benefits of
art dissemination. The seventh theme that surfaced was a critique that CHI program participants
experiencing housing instability shared. Prior to the focus group, all CHI program participants
viewed a slideshow that I made using stills from the Music Box Theater event. I also showed
them a picture of the canvas that I put together for that art exhibit (see Figure 34). As a result of
the planning session, they were also able to review an art book which featured their work (see
Appendix)⁴. This gave all the CHI program participants experiencing housing instability a clear
understanding on how their work was disseminated.

⁴ The webpage and book consisted of the same content.
Level of Participation

To be clear, the majority of the CHI program participants experiencing housing instability did not attend the Music Box Theater exhibit or have their work featured in it. Although this is a limitation, for transparency it deserves a mention here. This table details the level of participation among CHI program participants experiencing housing instability. It details the planning session for

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<th>PSEUDONYM</th>
<th>Planning Session</th>
<th>Exhibit</th>
<th>Book/Website</th>
<th>Focus Group</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>True Love</td>
<td>✓</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jaqueline Smith</td>
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<td>✓</td>
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<tr>
<td>Star Child</td>
<td>✓</td>
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<td>Richard</td>
<td>✓</td>
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<td>Sean</td>
<td>✓</td>
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<td>Michael</td>
<td>✓</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bobby Jackson</td>
<td>✓</td>
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<tr>
<td>Larry Jones</td>
<td>✓</td>
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<td>ChiTown Runner</td>
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Table 6. Level of Participation
disseminating their work, the various types of ways in which their work was disseminated, and who participated in the focus group (see Table 6).

Although level of participation at the actual exhibit was low, I rationalized interviewing those who did not attend for a number of reasons. First, most of the CHI program participants experiencing housing instability, and CHI staff, volunteer and administrative participants were involved in the planning session. The planning session was used to plan out how work would be disseminated, and who the target audiences would be. This gave CHI program participants experiencing housing instability details around the methods of dissemination, and purposes for dissemination of their work. In short, CHI program participants experiencing housing instability
that went to the planning session laid out what was going to happen, and understood that their voices would be heard in numerous ways. Next, before any material was released, CHI program participants experiencing housing instability were consulted on their individual entries, which were disseminated through the book and website. This was a chance for CHI program participants to clarify their message, and it made for an opportunity for me to confirm each CHI program participant experiencing housing instability’s message. Equally as important, just before the focus group, all CHI program participants experiencing housing instability were shown the entire book, which included all of their entries (see Appendix K. Photovoice Publication). They were also shown photos from the exhibit, and some brief but informative discussion was had pertaining to the exhibit. Last but most importantly, regardless of level of participation, all CHI program participants experiencing housing instability fit within the continuum of this experience, and as a result, the most salient theme was that CHI program participants experiencing housing instability felt heard.

Whether CHI program participants experiencing housing instability were at the exhibit or not, they described the following benefits of having their art disseminated. The three most common themes that were discussed were dissemination as a means of feeling heard, dissemination as a means of helping people, and the dissemination as a means of discussing social issues. Three lesser discussed themes were dissemination as a means of discussing the benefits of the art exposure program, dissemination as an educational experience, and dissemination as a means of financial gain. The seventh theme, which served as a critique was also not discussed much. This theme was the uncertainty of the impact of dissemination.
A Means of Feeling Heard

The most prevalent theme around how the CHI program participants experiencing housing instability made meaning of dissemination was that it was a means of feeling heard. Feeling heard is a broad theme because it concerns itself with how the participants felt. Just because a CHI program participant experiencing housing instability speaks, that doesn’t mean that they actually feel heard. Feeling heard encompasses being heard. That is to say, you feel heard when your message is received to your satisfaction. Being heard is also a part of communicating. You can’t feel heard unless you have a way to communicate with others. The dissemination through the art exhibit, the art book, and the website eliminated barriers to communication and feelings of being heard. Finally, self-worth is a byproduct of eliminating social barriers where people feel heard.

During the focus group several of the CHI program participants experiencing housing instability talked about dissemination as a means of feeling heard. As the focus group progressed, I got the feeling that experiencing housing instability was similar to experiencing homelessness in that there was a desire to feel heard. During a focus group Larry talked about the importance of finding ways to communicate with the community in which he wished to be heard. When I state that I’m basically looking for why he believed it might be important to have your voice heard in front of the donors, this is how he responded:

Larry: Well it's always important to have your voice heard, if you can't speak it, you can at least show it in your art.

Interviewer: Okay, and can you tell me a little about that? That was the question I was going to come back to, why do you think it might be important?

Larry: It could be important to let people know what we're going through as well and what we're trying to put out through our art, I mean because
sometimes, you know they say a picture is worth a thousand words. You might not be able to speak it, but you can also show it.

Interviewer: Okay, so it's another way for you to express yourself.

Larry: Another way of communicating.

Interviewer: Yeah, communicating, okay.

Notice the correction at the end of our conversation. Larry moved me away from self-expression to communicating. While photography offers another way to express yourself, the emphasis here is on communicating. The CHI program participants experiencing housing instability know how to express themselves but lack the medium to communicate those expressions. This medium to communicate is where the CHI program participants experiencing housing instability went to be heard. During the focus group, Richard expressed the same thing in response to a question that I posed. When I asked, what do you think the best thing about having your work disseminated at the exhibit was? Richard responded by saying, “Without the support from the Chicago Help Initiative our voices are just out in the desert. What the Chicago Help Initiative did was give a specific area, and time and place, for that voice to be heard.”

Again, Richard focuses on being heard. Although the Photovoice project was the catalyst for him participating in this program, he rightfully attributes his feelings of being heard to the agency that partnered with his group to plan the dissemination of their art at the exhibit. When Sean discusses the theme, he does it within the context of seeing people all day long without feeling heard. Again, I believe this speaks to a unique awareness that individuals experiencing housing instability suffer through. During the focus group I asked Sean what his thoughts were last time, and asked if he could sum them up, this is how he responded:

Sean: It's an opportunity to get our voices heard, get your voice out there. You see people all day long, but you don't really know what they're thinking
and things like that. I saw it as an opportunity to just get my voice out there.

After being ignored on a day-to-day basis, Sean sees this as a way to communicate and have his voice heard. Alternately, I believe that opening up these lines of communication led to feeling heard, which in turn can lead to improved feelings of self-worth. While this group does not experience the type of social isolation that someone experiencing chronic homelessness goes through, it was obvious they were still victims. When I ask Larry if there is anything else that he wants to add in terms of having his work disseminated, he goes on to explain what is important to him:

Larry: To me, it gives me self-worth. I'm worth something.

Interviewer: What do you mean self-worth? Because your voice is being heard?

Larry: Exactly.

As Larry proceeds to discuss the sensitive topic associated with feeling unheard, he demonstrates how this is connected to self-worth. For Larry, having a medium to feel heard meant that he could share his work. This allowed him to feel like his voice was heard, which impacted his own feeling of worth. Finally, CHI program participants experiencing housing instability also discussed the importance of eliminating social barriers that normally kept them from feeling heard. Michael and True Love both talked about the program as offering a platform to bypass structural barriers that resulted in feeling unheard.

Michael: Well, you know, I am an artist by nature, and I am a very socially aware person. And it's important to be heard and to appreciate other people, and appreciate the group that I'm in with these people, and hear their point of view. It's kind of a black and white kind of thing, and the barriers in some instances have been sort of broken down in that regard. And in terms of being somebody whose went through that, the homelessness, it doesn't come easy... It's a terrible thing to go through.
True Love: Yeah, it gave me a platform that I ordinarily would not have. It gave me exposure to people that I think would find it profoundly interesting, a perspective that they ordinarily would not see from people of color like me, and others who are kind of trying to grapple with their lives and regain some kind of footing with their lives who have something to say, you know, to share with the movers and shakers of the world and the people that are benevolent.

When Michael talks about the importance of being heard, he also explains that it is important to listen (communicate) so that others feel heard. He explains that you are more likely to feel heard when you appreciate the people in your life, regardless of their views. He goes on to explain that barriers to feeling heard were broken down in that respect. True Love discusses feeling heard as a result of having the platform to speak from. As she closes out the discussion, she makes overt some of the potential barriers (race & economic status) that are removed by having the platform.

Although everyone spoke about feeling heard, I pulled quotes from Larry, Richard, Sean, Michael, and True Love to convey why this theme surfaced. This is a great example of why the level of participation made very little difference in responses from CHI program participants experiencing housing instability. Larry was present for all phases of dissemination, including the planning session and the exhibit. Richard, Sean, and Michael were there for the planning session, but were not available for the exhibit. True Love missed the planning session and the exhibit, but gave a great deal of feedback on the book and website (see Table 6). Despite this wide variance, their statements demonstrate that all CHI program participants experiencing housing instability felt heard within the continuum of this experience.

A Means of Helping People

One of the more surprising findings is that CHI program participants experiencing housing instability thought of dissemination as a means of helping other people. This theme was also a broad topic because people can use art exhibits and other forms of dissemination to help
others in a number of ways. The CHI program participants experience housing instability saw
the art and cultural program as a means to helping people, and thus by helping the program they
were helping others. During the planning session, one of the goals was to help the art and
cultural exposure program. The CHI program participants experiencing housing instability saw
spreading the word about the program, or getting support for the program, as a means to helping
future participants. In fact, this was one of the more salient themes that was discussed in the
focus group. With a fair degree of certainty, Bobby Jackson talks about dissemination through
the exhibit as a means of helping others.

Bobby: I can say what pictures I took, and if any of the pictures that were admitted
to the exhibit helped me enhance somebody's life. It's a foregone conclusion. You know it helped! I'm trying think of the pictures I took. I took so many pictures, but anyway, yeah, whatever pictures you chose, put in the exhibit for me, it helped somebody's life you know, so that's a good thing.

For Bobby Jackson, offering up his pictures to be included in the exhibit meant helping others
down the line. I think that Bobby felt that by having their work displayed they were shedding
light on a beneficial program, which could enhance someone’s life and therefore help them.
Ultimately, his expressions were around helping others. When he says, “you know it
helped!”, he is exclaiming that he was certain that his work would help somebody’s life out.

Larry talked about the importance of dissemination as a means of helping other people
gain access to the program. For him, the importance of having his voice heard via dissemination
of his art at the exhibit was akin to helping along the next person. He demonstrates that he is
concerned with getting his voice out for funding by talking about a grant. Having his art seen
was about having the process continue by passing on the benefits to those outside of the
program.
Larry: I think the final thought is that this will continue. That's the final thought, this will continue. If it continues, sometimes you can get a grant for things like this, is that correct? So other people outside can get this stuff.

Interviewer: Hopefully the work that you did on this project will also lead to the project continuing on because in some respects your work was able to be seen and heard by people who already have a vested interest and might be willing to continue?

Larry: And then too, it can make some people in here step up to a different plateau.

Interviewer: Yes.

Sean: Just keeping open exposure to others who might've passed on the first time around, maybe the next time it comes around, they'll take it up as well. It's really an enlightening experience.

Interviewer: It is. Especially if you're able to go through the whole thing, I think.

Sean: Absolutely.

During the focus group I explained to Larry that hopefully the work that he did on this project would also lead to the project continuing on because in some respects his work was able to be seen and heard by people who already have a vested interest and might be willing to continue it. When Larry explains that he hopes that it continues, he talks about funding in the form of grants. I’m not certain that the exhibit will lead to a grant, but the exhibit is another medium through which funders, facilitators, and partners engaged and contributed because they showed up, talked to participants, offered financial support to the agency, and even bought paintings. Larry finishes that conversation by explaining that other people should get this stuff. By this stuff, he means that others should get an opportunity to participate in the art exposure program. When I clarity what Larry discussed with the group, it’s clear that what he is ultimately saying is that he hopes his contributions in the form of art helps others by gaining them access to the art exposure program.
When I was speaking with Michael, he first described the experience as a means of helping me, and then he noted that he was happy to help himself (do it for himself). This also demonstrated to me the importance of using dissemination as a means of helping people.

Toward the end of the discussion I gave participants a chance to speak freely about any and everything related to the discussion. When I asked this final question, this is what Michael said:

Michael: No, it was a very artistic, collective, humane experience among a bunch of people who have those kinds of feelings. And I was happy to be part of it for you, and not just for you, but for me.

Michael describes the program as artistic, collective, and humane, and states that these programs bring those types of people together. When he is saying that this is a humane experience, I believe he is speaking to the program’s charitable or helping nature in that it used art as a humanizing experience. When Michael says he is happy to be a part of it for me, he is describing helping me via his actions as a CHI program participant experiencing housing instability that is contributing to the study. He was able to help me gather material to disseminate via the exhibit, and he was able to help himself by gaining a platform to disseminate through the exhibit. Also, in the interest of transparency, on some level Michael likely knew that this was for my dissertation, so by participating he was helping me achieve my academic goals.

Finally, participants also disseminated actual pieces of art in the exhibit as a means to help people. When making meaning of dissemination, they saw the art itself as a means of therapy, which evident because they talked about the benefits of the program in the first focus group.

Toward the end of my discussion with True Love, I asked if she had to summarize what the most important thing or favorite thing was about the experience of having her voice heard through her art was, what would she say? Before describing what would be the absolute most
important or favorite thing, I asked her to describe the worst. True Love described it in a succinct statement:

True Love: No, I don't have a worst.

Facilitator: Okay.

True Love: And I guess my favorite thing is the feeling that I can contribute in my own way, and the empathy and joy that it brings from those that view and see my art.

When True Love talks about the most important thing, she describes the fact that she can contribute in her own way. By saying this, I believe that she is getting at the fact that she has found something that she can do that will help others. True Love feels that her art can have a more direct helpful impact on people as it is being viewed. When she speaks of her art bringing empathy and joy to the viewer, she is talking about helping people realize feelings that lead them to empathize with individuals experiencing housing instability or homelessness. When she says joy, I believe she is hoping that in the process of empathizing she is helping people that appreciate her art by bringing some enjoyment into their lives. In short, she hopes that she is directly helping people experience joy via her art while being moved to empathize with others.

*A Way to Discuss Social Issues*

Another way that the CHI program participants experiencing housing instability made meaning of having their voices heard via dissemination was through using art to discuss social issues. There seemed to be a need to make homelessness more visible. I believe this stems from the fact that was mentioned above. When people experiencing housing instability or homelessness don’t feel heard, they also don’t feel as if their issues are really known. When I asked why it is important to have your work disseminated, this is how the group responded:

Star Child: I think it was important to get issues across of the things that are going on
around Chicago about people not getting what they really deserve. There is a certain class of people versus another class of people. I just think issues need to be talked about more.

Facilitator: So, can you just recap on what you said?

Star Child: To get the issues out, that are plaguing our community.

Facilitator: Okay. So, getting issues out that are...

Star Child: That plagues our community.

Star Child’s statement is consistent with much of the photography that she submitted. She took powerful photographs of people experiencing homelessness in the city. Her photographs focused on homelessness experienced by veterans, the elderly, and those suffering from severe disabling conditions. To enhance the imagery, she made edits to her photos that drew out the details. When she contextualized her photos, she talked about how veterans, amputees, women, and the elderly were being ignored and walked over in the streets. In her earlier discussion she also said that she, “just wanted it to be known”. So, it makes sense that she used her work as a way to discuss social issues. When she says that it was important to get issues across, I think she wants people to know about the problems associated with homelessness. When she says that she just thinks that issues need to be talked about more, I believe that what she really wants is for people to take note of homelessness issues. She doesn’t just want people to know about it, she wants them to understand and care. Her discussion on classes pitted against each other reveals the lack of empathy she’d like to see addressed. This apathy is at the heart of the social issues that she that she focused on.

When thinking of how they made meaning of having their work disseminated at the exhibit, some of the CHI program participants experiencing housing instability spoke within the context of race and class. They talked about various communities in Chicago, and how there is a
stark difference in terms of wealth. Interestingly enough, the stills submitted by Bobby Jackson and Jacqueline both related to landscaping and architecture. Their ideas area related because they both discuss social issue that need to be addressed. In the first focus group they contextualize their art by using captures of architecture as a means of remembering what was important, and as a means to discuss issues pertaining to political and social justice. It comes as no surprise that they framed their discussion of social issues via how they made meaning of the dissemination of their art. When I told them that I just wanted to get a feel for why or why not that may have been, this is how they responded:

Jaqueline: I think it made an importance because sometimes dealing with so many issues that are going in Chicago, like homelessness, not being able to afford to pay their rent, and it's kind of mind boggling, it makes you feel like, hopeless sometimes. Or depressed that the city is not trying to make jobs for the people, or trying to help the people. I feel like doing that was some kind of a getaway, to let your mind go elsewhere and feel better about the whole situation.

Bobby: You can see the differences as you go from neighborhood to neighborhood. You go on the South Side, some parts of the South Side somebody hit it with an H bomb. But you go up here on the North Side and you see nothing but luxury high-rises going up, sort of like the fences at Wilson and Sheraton area. They are getting ready to redo that whole area. They have monumental building going up. The area I live in on Diversity and Clark over there, they got you know...

Jaqueline: I think that’s because the city doesn’t give the money to those neighborhoods. Now when black people move out of those neighborhoods, they are going to give money to those neighborhoods.

Bobby: Oh yeah, that's why they tore the projects down.

Star Child: And that's when they going to go washing over into Lake Michigan. That's why you got to be careful how you treat people.

Jaqueline: We are electing these peoples to help us, and they're really not. They're just in there for the job.

Bobby: That's it!
Facilitator: And this, in some respects, comes back to that, because you’re telling the community what your concerns are, if I’m hearing you the right way?

Participants: (Agreement in unison)

What I like about this conversation is that it shows that they wanted to use their art as a means to talk about a range of social issues related to homelessness. When Jaqueline leads off the discussion, she immediately brings up a number of issues associated with homelessness such as affordable housing and the lack of jobs. She explains that the city needs to work hard to address the problems, and how the issues can make someone feel hopeless. Bobby chimes in with a talk around gentrification and poverty in neighborhoods throughout Chicago. He explains that some areas look like they have been hit with thermonuclear hydrogen bombs, while others continue to grow more luxurious. Jaqueline shifts the discussion to race when she talks about how some communities suffer from unfair taxation and revenue generating infrastructures. In short, she is getting at the fact that many black communities are poorly funded and thus suffer in a number of ways, including financially. After some talk on the importance of being nice to people that can help you, Jaqueline talks about how trying to vote the right people in never seems to help. In sum, this entire discussion was around using their art as a way to discuss social issues. Although the social issues were around homelessness and housing instability, it was apparent that the dissemination of their work acted as a medium to discuss numerous social issues.

The CHI program participants experiencing housing instability were making meaning of having their voices heard via dissemination of their art. Feeling heard, helping people, and discussing issues seemed to be what was most important to them. While not discussed as frequently, CHI program participants experiencing housing instability also emphasized their feelings around dissemination as a great way to discuss the benefits of the art exposure program.
Additionally, CHI program participants experiencing housing instability talked about their feelings around dissemination as a means to an educational experience, and as a means to making personal financial gains.

**Discussing the Benefits of the Program**

The CHI program participants experiencing housing instability saw the purpose of dissemination as a way of discussing the benefits of the art exposure program. By sharing their feelings on the value of the program, they were able to set the stage for donors to support the programs. Although they may have experienced benefits in different ways, it ultimately meant that they also drew meaning from using dissemination of their art to reveal the benefits of the program. Richard summarizes this in a statement that he made to the group.

Richard: It was there...to show donors what kind of programs the Chicago Help Initiative are doing, and what kind of creative opportunities they are offering people who come to the dinners on Wednesday night, or to the office for help. So, I mean in that particular regard it was probably very successful, I mean if it helped donors open their wallets then it was successful.

Richard believes that the program offers creative opportunities to individuals experiencing housing instability. I think that this is especially important because these individuals might not have the same access as the stably housed. When he says it was there to show donors the kinds of programs offered, he is speaking about a number of art programs, but also about the art exposure program. He finishes off his statement by talking about discussing these benefits with donors. So, for Richard the benefits are twofold. First, dissemination offers opportunities to talk about what the benefits of the programs are to CHI program participants experiencing housing instability, and second, the program acts as a benefit to CHI program participants experiencing housing instability by allowing them to discuss the benefits through dissemination. In other
words, it opens up a platform for discussion, and it allows them to actually drive the conversations.

As the CHI program participants experiencing housing instability continued to talk about the meaning of having their work disseminated through the exhibit, webpage, and the art book, it became clear that discussing the benefits of art programming was important to them. They felt that art exposure programming should be an inherent right, which is a right that everyone deserves, and it was particularly important for individuals experiencing housing instability to have access.

In a brief exchange with Star Child, I asked, what do you think the best thing about having your work disseminated at the exhibit was, she explained that homeless people are God’s children, and are deserving of art programming. The exhibit was a way of discussing that benefit. In her response to me she said, “In my point of view, just to let people know that the homeless people can be artists too. We all are art forms of God's creation.” Embedded in this brief exchange is a theme around discussing the benefit of the program as contributing to the inherent worth and dignity of a person. As the conversation deepened, CHI program participants experiencing housing instability talked about death and the meaning of being remembered through the dissemination of their artwork:

Larry: I look at it this way, when you pass away, people can say, "Remember"?

Sean: That's a little foreshadowing.

Star Child: Not really, because it keeps you living.

Here, Larry discussed the program as beneficial because it helped him create something to be remembered by after he has passed away. Although this was a depressing topic, Star Child confirmed that it was important to be remembered through your art when she stated that a benefit
is that it keeps you alive. This confirmed that some of the CHI program participants experiencing housing instability were concerned with what type of legacy they would leave after they died, and it also confirmed that for some a benefit of the program was keeping their legacy alive through dissemination of art at the exhibit, in the book, on the webpage, or via other platforms.

Part of discussing the benefit of the art and cultural programming via dissemination was letting people know about the inherent worth and dignity of individuals experiencing homelessness, and the importance of their contributions to the community. Embedded in that discussion were underlying themes around human worth such as making contributions, being remembered, and being heard.

An Educational Experience

For many of the CHI program participants experiencing housing instability, when discussing the benefits of dissemination, they described it as doubling as an educational experience. While this was often discussed in tandem with teaching and learning, they made specific educational meaning out of being a part of the Photovoice group and disseminating their artwork. This was the first time that some of them got to be a part of a project where their work was displayed at an exhibit or through publications such as the art book and webpage. The experience of transforming something as “mundane” as a photograph into something as powerful and moving as art was enlightening to the participants. When I asked Larry to clarify what he said about the benefit of dissemination, this is how he responded:

Larry: Getting people, for the first time, that are participating in something like this to get their art shown. Participation.

Facilitator: OK great, so bringing people together who might not have been a part of
this before and making them aware of what's going on, and hopefully getting them to participate more. Whether it be through contributions or what have you. What were some of the other benefits?

Bobby: I say it as a black boy, it's an educational experience for me. Plus, you have to go around and take pictures of certain objects and certain things like buildings and stuff, that kind of enhanced the beauty of something that may be mundane. As far as trying to work on my photography technique, in a way it helped me, but you know all in all, like I said, it's a very educational experience, and whatever you pick in the book you have, anything helps. It helps sell it, I guess.

Larry: And the good thing is you are mounting an experience.

When Larry talks about mounting an experience, he is talking about the transformative educational experience that Bobby mentioned in their discussion. That is to say, embedded in the experience of dissemination via the exhibit was a powerful educational experience that changed the participants, and those that engaged with their art. Bobby overtly describes the benefit of dissemination via the exhibit and having his work featured in the art book and webpage as an educational experience. For him, the experience started with learning more about photography and culminated with having his work disseminated. This transition from photo to art is important to him. As part of his educational experience, he talks about transforming the mundane into something that impacts others (educationally & otherwise). I think that he is also saying that the program extends his educational experience to others. This is because when others learn about the program through his art, they also partake in the educational experience. When Bobby says, it helps sell it, I believe he is saying that it is this educational experience that contributes to financial support.

On the topic of financial support, the next theme shows how CHI program participants experiencing housing instability concerned themselves with personal and programmatic financial gains through dissemination via the exhibit.
Financial Gain

Finally, as you might expect, CHI program participants experiencing housing instability were concerned with financial gain. Individuals experiencing housing instability by extension experience poverty. The CHI program participants experiencing housing instability made meaning of having their art featured by describing gaining access to venues that would normally be too costly for them. These venues meant opportunities that could lead to financial gains. The dissemination at the exhibit instilled a sense of hope in them by giving them exposure to an opportunity to make more money. When I asked CHI program participants experiencing housing instability to talk about why the opportunity was important, the discussion turned to access and the potential for financial gain.

Larry: Also, it gives people the opportunity to get involved in something that would really cost them money to do.

Facilitator: That would certainly cost money, yeah. So normally you wouldn't have access to something like this but this gives you an opportunity to gain access.

Star Child: And then, people can become discovered.

Facilitator: Right, that's true.

Star Child: To help them with a living.

Facilitator: There's a financial aspect.

As Larry discusses the opportunity to get involved, he attributes the lack of access to exorbitant costs associated with gaining access to artistic platforms, which in their case was books and exhibits. Star Child reminds the group that sustainable financial gains are possible, by stating that someone could be discovered. When she finishes the conversation by saying, “to help them with a living”, I believe that she is talking about another viable source of income, one in which
you could “make a living”. So financial gains were about making money through dissemination, and it was also about gaining access to equipment, supplies, and venues (an experience) they couldn’t afford.

How they made meaning of having their work disseminated was not without its critiques, and this is certainly worthy of being mentioned again in the limitations section of the paper. The next section outlines why there was uncertainty of the impact of having their work disseminated via the art exposure program mediums which were planned and executed by CHI program participants experiencing housing instability and CHI staff, volunteer, and administration participants.

Uncertainty of Impact

Although not discussed much, the critiques that came out of the focus group are worthy of mention. Understandably, many of the CHI program participants experiencing housing instability wanted the Photovoice project to continue beyond the length of time that they initially planned. They felt that repeated or extended projects over a longer period of time would increase their chances of having an impact on the policy makers, funders, facilitators, or other potential stakeholders. I agree with their assessments. I ultimately believe that better meaning would have been made of this experience if it were extended. Although they did not indicate for how long, the CHI program participants experiencing housing instability discussed extending the Photovoice project to increase their chances of have their messaged reach policy makers and funders. While I agree that this is a solution, I also believe that this study would have benefited greatly by speaking with the policy makers, supporters, facilitators, and individuals with a vested interest, which I mentioned during the focus group:

Larry: I mean, I don't know what impact it has yet, because we just started it.
So, I don't know the full impact of how good it was.

Facilitator: Right, so what you're saying is it's hard to see the other side of it without actually talking to the people that were there at the exhibit.

Larry: Exactly, because I don't know who the people were anyway, who were the philanthropists? I mean, they introduced us to people, but.

Star Child: I mean it all happened so fast. I mean, I just wished that I got there (Music Box Theater exhibit) on time because I know I missed a lot.

Sean: I would have loved the chance to check it out. I mean it slipped past me. I would have loved the chance to go.

Star Child: Well we can show you some of the stuff. I can show you some of the stuff that I shared.

Larry: And I think it's just getting off the ground really.

Facilitator: You mean the whole project; this is like the first of more to come?

Larry: Yes.

Despite being involved in the program for over a year, the CHI program participants experiencing housing instability and I felt that it wasn’t enough time. Elvis shared with me that people who fund the program, and board members which included policy makers were there.

When Larry states that he doesn’t know the full impact, and that he didn’t know the philanthropists, I believe that he was saying that there wasn’t enough time to really get to know these people and how they were impacted. For that reason, he is uncertain of how dissemination impacted them. Unlike everything else that we did (focus groups, art exposure events, meetings, etcetera), the CHI program participants experiencing housing instability had only one opportunity to attend the Music Box Theater art exhibit event. And while their work was featured in a book and on a social media page, many of them missed the opportunity to physically connect with others at the exhibit. I want to focus on Sean’s statement on wishing he
attended. I think his statement was poignant because it makes the point that without multiple opportunities to attend exhibits, some of the CHI program participants experiencing housing instability simply missed out on actually being there. I’m certain their absences were due to lack of opportunities such as not having funding, or transportation; and this lack of opportunity led to increased feelings around how they made meaning of dissemination via the exhibit. The one promising thing that surfaced from their discussion around this critique was the feeling that they could continue this on their own. This is made evident when Larry states that it is just getting off the ground, and confirms that these are just the initial opportunities to disseminate art. In short, I think he is saying that these platforms (the exhibit, book, and webpage) are the first of many to come. Another promising fact is that the art exhibit is an annual event, so with the help of the CHI staff, volunteers, and administrator art exposure program facilitators, it would just be a matter of getting the photos to the right people next year.

The next set of data looks at what staff, volunteer, and administrative participants thought the impact of art exposure was on the program participants experiencing housing instability. It offers an interesting take on the impact of art exposure from the folks that are often responsible for planning and facilitating these events. Being so close to the CHI program participants experiencing housing instability for the durations of most of the events, they can offer unique insights on the phenomenon.
CHAPTER 6

STAFF, VOLUNTEER, AND ADMINISTRATIVE PARTICIPANT FINDINGS

A Brief Overview of the Findings Section

Findings from chapter 6 tie in closely with findings from chapters 4 & 5 because the objectives of these chapters were to better understand the impact of the art and cultural exposure programing on CHI program participants experiencing housing instability. This chapter also attempted to better understand the meaning CHI program participants assigned to having their voices heard among policy makers. The research question was, “What are the CHI staff, volunteer, and administrators’ perceptions of the impact of art and cultural exposure programing on CHI participants experiencing housing instability?” Chapter 6 focuses on the perceptions held by the staff, volunteer, and administrative participants. Staff, volunteer, and administrative participants were in a position to offer insight because they are closest to the phenomena under study. This is because they often planned and facilitated the art and cultural exposure programing events. By planning and facilitating events, the staff, volunteer, and administrative participants directly observed program participants experiencing housing instability as they took part in the art exposure program. Staff, volunteer, and administrative data were ascertained through individual interviews. Their voices triangulated data from chapters 4 & 5 and provided additional insights via a second perspective.

When examining perceptions held by staff, volunteer, and administrative participants, the themes that surfaced were group benefits, access, appreciation, perspective, growth, education, and critiques. These themes will be defined so as to provide an understanding of what is meant
by each term. Group benefits were referenced the most. The staff, volunteer, and administrative participants, in their role as facilitator, placed most of their emphasis on group benefits. This theme was regarding the social gains that were made as a result of being a part of the art and cultural exposure program group, and the art community.

Access refers to gaining entry to events. Lack of access was often associated with lack of funding and a multitude of person specific barriers that staff, volunteer, and administrative participants perceived as being problematic. Keeping in mind that these were staff, volunteer, and administrative perceptions of CHI program participants experiences, the concept of appreciation was regarding the perceived level of enjoyment that a CHI program participant experienced as a result of exposure to the event.

Education had to do with what staff, volunteer, and administrative participants perceived as teaching and learning. They were inclined to speak on the educational experiences that took place as a result of being a part of the art and cultural exposure group. Whether teaching was through the program participants experiencing housing instability; staff, volunteer, and administrative participants; or other non-participant members of the group, it was evident that the art and cultural exposure group contributed to learning.

Growth had to do with perceptions of any changes that were made as a result of participation in the art and cultural exposure program. Sometimes growth is coded in relationship to finding ways to no longer be stagnant or caught up in the same situation. From the staff, volunteer, and administrative participants’ perceptions, it was growth that encompassed a number of ways in which program participants experiencing housing instability transformed or changed their lives. In contrast, staff, volunteer, and administrative participants perceived perspective as being more about the way in which an event changed thoughts or views. This
could be thought of as a contemplative stage, or a prerequisite to growth. It could also be a perceived literal change in CHI program participants’ perspectives based on the ambiance of the setting.

The impact of art and cultural exposure programming was not without critiques. The events were supposed to provide opportunities for participants to use art as therapy. In terms of perceptions held by staff, volunteer, and administrative participants, anything that impeded group benefits was seen as problematic. These critiques often surfaced in the form of barriers to the group process, which had a direct impact on the efficacy of the art and cultural exposure events. The following is an explanation of why staff, volunteer, and administrative participants thought each of themes was important aspects of how art exposure and cultural exposure programing impacted CHI program participants experiencing housing instability.

Finally, during individual interviews, one of the staff, volunteer, and administrative participants that facilitated the program discussed some of the benefits of art that was disseminated via the exhibit. When those discussions surfaced, I gained more insight and perspective on the impact that art and cultural exposure had on program participants that disseminated their art through the exhibit. In the discussion, I compared and contrasted what the facilitators said with what the program participants said for similarities and differences.

*Group Benefits*

The theme that seemed to resonate with the staff, volunteer, and administrative participants the most was group benefits. From the staff, volunteer, and administrative participants’ perspective, it was clear that they group benefits were a strong byproduct of exposure to art and cultural events. During my conversations with the staff, volunteer, and
administrative participants, they informed me that this was all about nourishing the group process. When speaking with Ellie, she explained to me how the social aspect of it worked:

Ellie: The two trips we've done with Cena and Fallon, we really try to participate and be involved with them, and talk to them, and ask them questions. We're not just taking them and kind of letting them go their own way. We try to make it a group event, and also speak to people one on one. We want to make sure that they are enjoying the participation of this whole experience.

The three facilitators in this example all have a stake in making sure that the CHI program participants experiencing housing instability are having a social experience. This passage reveals that the staff, volunteer, and administrative participants were actively engaged in the social aspect of the event. In this case they were facilitating conversation within the group setting, and on a one-to-one basis. Notice that they equate enjoying the whole experience as part of the social exchange that takes place. The following passage shows that while the CHI program participants certainly enjoyed the experience of being exposed to art, it was also important that this took place within the context of community. When I asked Ellie what she thought the program participants’ favorite part of the event was, she responded by saying the following:

Ellie: I think just being outside on the water, on the boat, if nothing else. We brought a picnic lunch for them to have on the boat too. They seemed to really like that part of the program, you know, even if it's just sandwiches, they seemed to really enjoy that, sitting on the boat and just looking at things and talking to each other. There was a lot of community and togetherness on the boat.

While the architectural boat ride tour was nice, and the meal was sufficient, what they really seemed to enjoy was the togetherness within the group. This is important because it speaks to group benefits in the form of socializing.
Elvis was the Executive Director of the program, but he was present for the facilitation of some of the events. When I spoke with Elvis, he talked about the importance of bringing the group together, and keeping the group together. Elvis believed that exposure to art and cultural programming contributed to a more cohesive group, despite any problems that existed within the group dynamics. Here, Elvis explains the program’s impact on the group’s cohesiveness:

Elvis: It was a set of individuals that were drawn together by an interest, which is something that we look at in terms of connecting people to each other. Of the programs we ran, it was extraordinarily successful in creating a group. They went through this series of events, they went to these places, they talked, they connected, they communicated, and had guided discussions about the art, and relative to the art with the artists, and producers and others. At the end of that process we asked them questions. We had a conversation, in which we said, well, should we expand this to other people? How should we take the next step? Their desire was to continue the program and to continue the group. I wasn't surprised they wanted to continue the program. I did think it was interesting they wanted to continue the group, because they were a very disparate group of people.

Elvis points out the fact that individuals experiencing housing instability or homelessness are often marginalized and on the fringes of society. This means that in their personal lives they may not have many people to connect with. Despite having their differences, the group was interested in remaining a unit. This demonstrates that they were benefiting from the social bonds that they made. Elvis states that:

Elvis: One of the keys of what we're trying to do is connect people to each other. When we look at the population we serve, we find that they're often isolated. They burn through a lot of the positive relationships that they've had, and they're not connected either to institutions, to resources, or to other people in consistent and positive ways. That's something that changed.

I believe that Elvis’ statement is a poignant example of why the staff, volunteer, and administrative participants homed in on art and cultural exposure as a powerful tool for
developing group benefits. Within this statement, it is revealed that the CHI program participants experiencing housing instability suffered from social isolation. Realizing this, staff, volunteer, and administrator participants used art and cultural exposure programming as a means to connect people so that they could experience group benefits.

Elvis goes on to explain why he believes art is particularly useful in terms of group benefits:

Elvis: There are lots of different ways you can have a tool for conversation, but art is a particularly powerful one because it speaks to perspective experience, you can bring so much into it. You can bring your personal perspective, you can bring your life experience into the discussion, and there's relevancy of those. So, you matter in that conversation. What you think matters, where you have been matters, where you're going matters. You matter, and that matters to how you change things.

According to Elvis, it seems that what really matters is that art has the ability to generate meaningful person-centered conversations. This is a group benefit that impacts people, and it is especially important to individuals experiencing housing instability or homelessness because it means that they matter. Elvis perceived art as making it so they are not just engaged in conversation, but bonding as a group. Elvis ends this conversation by describing the importance of bonding, and the real need for social interaction among group members. In short what he is saying is that he perceived CHI program participants experiencing housing instability as group members that long for interactions that leave them feeling like they matter, and he believes that exposure to art is a perfect medium for creating conversation related to addressing this longing:

Elvis: But creating conversation in a positive way creates links between people, they bind together. In a way that just what art does. Being together is important, but it doesn't do the same thing. Art is a uniquely powerful tool for creating that binding, and that binding is essential for you to move forward. You can't do it by yourself. You have to have other people. We are group creatures. I don't know what the right word is here, but we need other people around us. When we are alone, we are unhappy, despite what
we may say or think. When we are connected in various ways to other people, we are better off. Discussing art, talking about it in a safe way creates those bonds.

Although most of this discussion is around Elvis’ perceptions of the group bonds between the CHI program participants, other staff, volunteer, and administrative participants talked about the group benefits beyond the immediate group of CHI program participants experiencing housing instability. From the staff, volunteer, and administrative participants’ perspectives, some of the strongest group benefits in the form of group bonding were between the staff, volunteer, and administrative participants and CHI program participants experiencing housing instability, but it is also important to note that art exposure programming connected people from all walks of life. Dickie explains how exposure to art and cultural events contributes to group benefits in this way:

Dickie: Another advantage that I see, that the guests don't see, but I notice it when I walk into any of the venues, a concert, a play, and I see maybe young students, or I see people of a different ethnic orientation that you don't see very often, and I think, "Wow, this is really nice." It means that the venue isn't homogenous, if you know what I'm saying.

Interviewer: Yes, I do. Yeah.

Dickie: That we're all mixing and feeling comfortable with each other. So, I love that feeling that we're all different but we're all in this together.

Again, Dickie perceives the art and cultural exposure program as contributing to group benefits that extend beyond those within the immediate circle of the CHI program participants experiencing housing instability. Here group benefits have come to mean that as a result of being in the group, they are able to better relate to other groups, despite the heterogeneity that they are faced with at these venues. The staff, volunteer, and administrative participants also discussed their perceptions of the importance of art exposure as a means of developing
relationships with CHI program participants experiencing housing instability. Dickie and Queenie both provided excellent statements regarding art’s ability to contribute to group benefits:

Queenie: It's evident to me as an individual, maybe because I go the extra mile with everybody, it's not just a clinical position. I treat them as equals and as friends. I think that's made all the difference in the world. Not to say that they don't enjoy everything we do, because they definitely do. They get a lot out of going to the museums, or to a talk, or even like Poetry Foundation where we all wrote a poem and discussed everything. They do get a lot out of that. But I believe in their hearts that it is that camaraderie, that social belonging. That's the first thing that is important.

Although Queenie is able to discuss a number of benefits, she highlights that fact that she perceived group benefits such as social belonging and camaraderie as being at the heart of the program. In other words, in this example group benefits are about the social connection that are made as a result of participating in the art and cultural program. Dickie also discussed similar feelings with me during her interview; notice that they both described their relationships with program participants in terms of a friendship:

Dickie: Well, maybe something that I would add that I'm seeing is the relationship between the guests and the, you know, whatever we want to call them, liaisons, chaperones, coordinators.

Interviewer: Okay.

Dickie: I think it's become so interesting, but it's become in many cases, a real solid friendship and a willingness, a kind of a breaking down of barriers.

Interviewer: Okay.

Dickie: We're not leaders, we're not, you know, those of us who are involved in coordinating the program, what we've really become, in many cases, is friends.

Interviewer: Wow.
Dickie: And the relationship has reached beyond just these events, and I understand there are phone calls going back and forth between, for example, Queenie and the people who are participating, that they call each other when they have questions, or needs, or just want to talk.

During interviews with staff, volunteer, and administrative participants responsible for facilitating the art exposure program, many of them commented that they did not see themselves as being in an ordinary facilitator to client relationship. Most of them described their relationship with the CHI program participants experiencing housing instability as a friendship. Here Dickie makes it clear that her perception of a group benefit to CHI program participants experiencing housing instability was the willingness of staff, volunteers, and administrative participants to form genuine and beneficial relationships with them. From the perspective of staff, volunteer, and administrative participants, art not only impacted the CHI program participants experiencing housing instability in this way, it also changed the way they felt about their relationships with the CHI program participants. In short, being exposed to art via the art and cultural exposure program alongside the program participants also contributed to the staff, volunteer, and administrative participants receiving group benefits.

So, while staff, volunteer, and administrative participants perceived CHI participants as benefiting in this area, they were able to further confirm these benefits because they too were recipients of group benefits. Queenie summed up the staff, volunteer, and administrative participants group benefits nicely:

Queenie: You know, I have gotten such personal rewards from this. I mean, I can't begin to put it into words, but we have become friends. I have seen, and I've been doing this for 16 years with CHI, you know, serving on their board, running the kitchen, you know, a variety of things. Taking over this program last year has changed everything for me in so many ways. I feel like I have created an extended family for myself.
Although Queenie initially struggles with putting it into words, it is clear that she has received group benefits from being exposed to art alongside the CHI program participants experiencing housing instability. Again, group benefits extended beyond a facilitator to CHI program participant relationship, because friendships were being formed. Art and cultural exposure transformed her relationship with the CHI program participants, strengthening the bonds in a way that led to feelings akin to familial ties. It is fair to say that staff, volunteer, and administrative participants benefited from stronger bonds in much the same way that CHI program participants experiencing housing instability did. In fact, the types of expressions that staff, volunteer, and administrative participants made about strengthening group bonds gives us insight into why program participants felt they acquired group benefits in the form of social gains.

**Access.** In terms of saliency, second only to group benefits was a theme that supported the importance of access. While group benefits took front stage in terms of importance, none of this would be possible without the access that the arts and cultural exposure program afforded the CHI program participants. Again, almost every staff, volunteer, and administrative participant perceived program participants as ordinarily having limited resources for access, and they attested to the art program’s ability to remove barriers to art and cultural events. Their statements demonstrated a perception that the impact the art and cultural program had on CHI program participants was access to art and cultural events. This was a sort of meta-program benefit that staff, volunteer, and administrative participants perceived, and they described it within the context of the limited resources that individuals experiencing housing instability had. Starting with Queenie’s perception, here are some examples of what they said.
Queenie: They get to do things they've never gotten to do before, and probably wouldn't get to do very often in their life. They see that life can be better, that people that can afford to go to plays or museums and have more access to these things if they worked and had money.

Rightfully so, Queenie spoke of her perception of the stark reality in which many of the CHI program participants lived. When speaking with Queenie, I asked her to reiterate some reasons why the program was important to her. Although Queenie believed that social group benefits were most important, in this statement she describes access as being a close second.

Queenie: I would have to say the social aspect, and a very close second is that they are getting culture, access to culture that they never would have had, and they enjoy it so much. They are drawn out by it.

A critical aspect of access had much to do with flexibility on the part of those facilitating the art and cultural exposure program. During my observations, and during my discussions with staff, volunteer, and administrative participants, all of whom helped facilitate the program, I could see that a lot of planning went into making sure that CHI program participants experiencing housing instability had access. Access did not just mean acquiring a ticket. Access meant having multiple forms of transportation to and from events, having meals for all CHI program participants, and making sure that CHI program participants experiencing housing instability could speak with people who were more closely involved at each event that they attended. Access was a total package that removed all barriers to enjoying or understanding the events offered through the art and cultural exposure program. Bonnie shared her perception of how this worked:

Bonnie: I think that the Arts and Culture Program is robust in the same way, where it's, yes, we have a ticket to a sporting event, but we know there are a couple of you that are going to have a hard time getting there, because we know where you live. We also know when you need to be back if you're at an SRO or whatnot. We know when you need to be back, so we'll figure out how we can help, if it's difficult for you to take the L or the bus, we'll
get you there. We'll get you home. We will make sure that there is a food component so that you're fed as part of the sport event, or whatever the event is. We're going to see if we can get someone from the team to come and meet with us after the game to talk with you about how they became a professional athlete.

From the staff, volunteer, and administrative participants’ perspectives, as this passage indicates, access was not an afterthought. For each CHI program participant experiencing housing instability, they perceived access as meaning something different. What gives merit to these findings is that they were not just perceptions held by the staff, volunteers, and administrative participants pertaining to access as a benefit to CHI program participants. Staff, volunteer, and administrative participants were closer to the benefit of access because rather than just perceiving it from afar, they experienced it as the provider of it. The staff, volunteer, and administrative participants, in their role as facilitators, had to be flexible with their accommodations to ensure that they removed all barriers to art and cultural programming. It was only by removing these barriers that art and cultural exposure took place.

One thing that should be noted is that access included group benefits such as societal membership. CHI program participants experiencing housing instability that had access to art and cultural events were impacted in terms of how they felt about their social standing in society. In addition to access to events, they often had a direct line to individuals who could offer insight into the events. The entire experience of access fostered feelings of belonging and societal membership despite the usual feelings of marginalization and isolation that CHI program participants experiencing housing instability normally experienced. Bonnie explained this when she talked about what she learned from discussions around access and inclusion with the CHI program participants experiencing housing instability:
Bonnie: I have also heard from the guests, and this has been maybe the most impactful thing for me, as I've seen how positively the guests have responded to being treated like any other Chicagoan. I don't think this is news. I think that there are many people in the CHI program and many of the other guests at the weekly CHI meals who, for various reasons, haven't had a shower in a few days or whatnot.

So again, Bonnie perceives the CHI program participants experiencing housing instability as benefitting from societal membership as a result of having access to the art and cultural exposure events. From her perspective, access meant giving CHI program participants experiencing housing instability a means to eliminating barriers that contributed to feeling socially marginalized. It was only through access that she believed that CHI program participants experiencing housing instability were treated as full members of society. It is no wonder that staff, volunteer, and administrative program facilitators went out of their way to ensure access.

Dickie expressed similar feelings regarding her perception on how access to art and cultural programming had an impact on CHI program participants experiencing housing instability. In her discussion she expressed that individuals often felt they didn’t belong, and that access to the program broke down barriers that contributed to feelings of belonging. When I asked Dickie to repeat why she thought the program was important, this is how she responded:

Dickie: The major advantage I see to it is that many of the guests who participate have never had a chance to experience these events. Not just that they haven't had the advantage of going to these things, but I think some of them have simply never felt they belonged. It wasn't part of their experience; they didn't know what to expect if they walked into a concert hall or a glitzy theater. And it has broken down, I think, some of those barriers when they think, "This isn't for me," or, "I'm not wanted, I'm not welcome," maybe.

Again, Dickie perceived access as an important experience for the CHI program participants experiencing housing instability. Not only did it open them up to new social experiences, she believed that it could begin to make them feel as if they belonged. For her, by affording
participants access she was eliminating barriers and offering advantages that led to powerful feelings of belonging.

Staff, volunteer, and administrative participants perceived access as being central to the art and cultural program. They were able to speak more closely to this theme because they were not just bystanders offering their perceptions of what happened. They had more insight because they were in the role of ensuring access. For CHI program participants experiencing homelessness or housing instability, access was more complex than gaining entry. Access meant removing barriers that would prevent entry. What this meant for the staff, volunteer, and administrative participants facilitating the program is that they had to be flexible enough to accommodate the needs of CHI program participants. In turn, this type of Comprehensive Access that the staff, volunteer, and administrative participants made possible contributed group benefits in the form of feelings of social inclusion. So, while access was second only to the group benefits, access contributed to the group benefits.

Appreciation

The staff, volunteer, and administrative participants perceived appreciation as being important to CHI program participants experiencing housing instability. They described the event as providing a level of enjoyment that was therapeutic to CHI program participants experiencing housing instability.

Ellie talked about the importance of enjoying art. Ellie was not only a facilitator for the arts and cultural exposure program, she also oversaw an art program which was purposed to provide space and supplies to participants so that they could create art in the form of drawings and paintings. On the architectural trip, Ellie was hoping that their art would be inspired by the outing. Although that didn’t happen, I believe that Ellie is expressing the importance of just
being in the moment and enjoying art. That is to say, there is inherent value in the pleasure that is derived from being exposed to art:

Ellie: I had kind of hoped that they would go run back and start, you know, drawing buildings and things like that, which they didn't do, but just for the sake of an outing and being on the water, it was just a great experience for them. They really enjoyed it. Most of them, I thought, really did appreciate Chicago's architecture and the differences in the buildings, and what's going on in their city, and of course, seeing the city from the lake, giving you a totally different vantage point.

Although Ellie talked about this being an enjoyable experience, she ended on a very important note. She talked about this giving the program participants a very different vantage point. This vantage point was the perch from which CHI program participants experiencing housing instability were able to fully appreciate immersion within the architectural art and cultural exposure event. Ellie makes it clear that she perceived the participants as really enjoying this particular event, which is a sign of appreciation. She even expresses that they appreciated the event. But she goes on to discuss a deeper level of appreciation based on the fact that CHI program participants experiencing housing instability were given a new vantage point. This vantage point is an important element that will be discussed later.

Bonnie also talked about the CHI program participants experiencing housing instability enjoyment of the events:

Bonnie: I think, generally, everyone I think had a baseline enjoyment from every event, and that certain events have appealed differently to different guests. Some people really enjoy theater and plays and having an opportunity to talk with actors. A couple people told me, "Oh, you know, in high school or when I was growing up, I was really interested in theater" or you know, "Screenwriting was always an interest of mine," so we had some people that have told me specifically, like, "That was an especially fun event".

Staff, volunteer, and administrative participants perceived appreciation as an important benefit to CHI program participants experiencing housing instability. For them, this was a worthy stand-
alone benefit. Notice that there are no ulterior motives here. No one is trying to force the CHI program participants experiencing housing instability to get jobs or find housing. This conversation is all about CHI program participants experiencing housing instability enjoying the art and cultural exposure event. She perceived everyone as having a baseline level of appreciation, and others as having greater levels of appreciation. Her perceptions are not based on purely anecdotal observations. Rather, her perceptions are grounded in actual discussions that she had with CHI program participants experiencing housing instability. Bonnie finished her talk on appreciation by recalling a particularly wonderful lunch that she had with the program participants:

Bonnie: The lunch was an absolutely gourmet over-the-top lunch. All the waitstaff at the restaurant really doted on the guests. The guests and myself were really humbled by that. You know, nobody felt like they were burdening the waitstaff or the management at the restaurant, because the restaurant was so welcoming. You know, I haven't heard, and there've been a lot of different favorite bits, but I haven't heard from the guests things that they really disliked.

What’s important about her talk is that, for a brief moment, she described the CHI program participants experiencing housing instability perspectives as being completely changed by this element of the art and cultural exposure event. In this particular instance, levels of appreciation were perceived as being high because CHI program participants experiencing housing instability were treated as honored guests at a gourmet restaurant. Again, she is not just giving her perception of what participants experienced; she is also incorporating her experience as someone that appreciated being humbled by the service they received. In this way she is able to offer a closer account of how CHI program participants experiencing housing instability were impacted. And she is able to better speak to the appreciation and enjoyment brought on by art and cultural
exposure programing. Often times the enjoyment that they experienced was directly tied into changes in perspective.

**Perspective**

During their time with the CHI program participants experiencing housing instability; the staff, volunteer, and administrative participants saw that a change in perspective acted as a catalyst for growth. CHI program participants experiencing housing instability that were exposed to art and cultural programming had brief windows where their perspectives were changed for the better. According to the staff, volunteer, and administrators, this allowed them to see something outside of or beyond what their usual surroundings allowed for. These brief but positive shifts in perspective acted as a means of educating CHI program participants experiencing housing instability on possibilities beyond their usual experiences. Remember, outside of *Comprehensive Access*; staff, volunteer, and administrative participants, all of whom helped facilitate the art exposure program, had no ulterior motives because the program did not require participants to set any goals such as finding a job or going to counseling of any kind.

Elvis described how brief shifts in perspective led to personal changes:

Elvis: Right, I would say there are two things that make this work. The first is that changing yourself is about changing your perspective, and art is about seeing things from a different perspective. When you start to exercise those muscles as an individual, what this is, how this fits into society, how I fit in, how it relates to me, how it doesn't relate to me, you start to challenge your own notions of where you sit, and why things are the way they are. It is only by changing perspective that you change where you're at. If you're doing the same thing over and over again, and it has never changed, you never challenge it, you never think about it in a profound way, then everything continues as it is.

Elvis’s discussion regarding perspective was profound. He perceived art exposure programing as being the catalyst for seeing things from a different perspective. He also
perceived having a different perspective as being a catalyst for changing yourself. This meant that change of perspective through art and cultural exposure programing benefitted CHI program participants because it gave them additional opportunities to change their lives. Again, Elvis doesn’t get in to dictating what CHI program participants should and shouldn’t change. Rather he focuses on art and cultural exposure as part of the chain of events necessary for personal change to take place through change of perspective. He explains that through exercising muscles associated with changing perspective, each CHI program participant arrives at their own individual conclusions, leading to change of perspective and change of self.

My conversation with Dickie brought together the importance of changing the program participants’ perspectives. For the staff, volunteer, and administrative participants facilitating the program, changing their perspectives wasn’t always about growth. In fact, sometimes the most important thing was that the CHI program participants experiencing housing instability were so immersed that they saw an abbreviated but complete reprieve from their usual surroundings as individuals experiencing housing instability. Dickie does a nice job of explaining how one CHI program participant experiencing housing instability was able to get completely enveloped in the moment as a result of change to her perspective brought on by exposure to the art and cultural event:

Dickie: But they all had a different observation. In the play, the center of the stage was the ship, the submarine in Twenty Thousand Leagues, and the audience was sitting on each side. And, yes, I looked across the stage and I saw people sitting over there and didn't think anything of it. But one of the people in the group said the most interesting thing. She said, "I looked across and I saw people bobbing their heads and moving from side to side." She said, "Those were the waves, to me. I was in the ocean. I was seeing that ship, and the movement across the stage." They were, to me, just other audience members. To her, they were part of the scenery.

Interviewer: Wow, okay wow.
Dickie: And I thought, "My goodness." It's not an earth breaking kind of thing, but she was that deep into what was going on in the play that everything going on around her was all a part of the performance. And I just thought it was such a creative vision and it added something to her, to the performance, that it was so all-enveloping.

Dickie perceived a CHI program participant experiencing housing instability as completely changing her immediate perspective based on what she observed. But again, what makes Dickie’s perception of the impact of art exposure so powerful is that she backs up her perception with an actual conversation that she had with a CHI program participant. In short, she verifies that her perception of art exposure changing perspective is accurate. She ends by saying that art exposure added something to her, which means that she was changed in some way as well. This change is consistent with what Elvis perceived as important.

Queenie also expressed similar feelings about art exposure as a tool to change perspective. Although she struggled to find the words to explain it, this is what I ascertained from my discussion with her. In my conversation with her, I took note of the fact that CHI program participants’ perspectives changed as a result of exposure to art and cultural programing. It was these changes in perspective that contributed to personal change. In this instance, personal change meant improved feelings of self-worth:

Queenie: When they get to go to any kind of venue, you know, whether it's an architectural venue, or if it's just a play, or whatever it is, then they get to feel like everybody else. They get to feel like the tourists that come in and want to go to a museum. And they get to compare things, you know? I'm sorry, I'm just stumbling to find the right words.

Interviewer: It's okay.

Queenie: They are intelligent people, just because they're poor doesn't mean they're lacking in teeth, or they don't have really lovely clothes or anything. They get to enjoy the same things as the next person, and they are as intelligent as the next person, but people look at them differently. It gives them, I
believe, what I think, is a feeling of, “Hey, I deserve to be here too. I belong here too!”

Queenie perceived the venues as changing their immediate perspectives, but after they were immersed, it also indirectly changed their perspective in more meaningful ways. During the brief windows of immersion, as a result of exposure to art and cultural events, CHI program participants experiencing housing instability were no longer a part of the bifurcated system of deserving and undeserving poor that stems from the societal norms that make up a part of their daily existence. In terms of change in perspective, and personal changes, especially around feeling like they mattered, was perhaps where the real growth happened.

**Growth**

Although most of the staff, volunteer, and administrative participants facilitating the program did not mention this as a goal, they did hold perceptions that indicated that as perspectives changed, so did the individuals that held them. Ultimately, individuals who were a part of the art and cultural exposure program experienced growth in various areas of their lives. Dickie speaks to the growth that happened in terms of the confidence and pride that she saw in the CHI program participants experiencing housing instability as she spent time with them:

Dickie: The first thing I would say I noticed is an increase in confidence levels when they came back in. I particularly see this when people come in a couple of days later to book club, and they're all talking about their reaction to what they've just experienced, and they seem eager to share their opinions and debate and discuss what they've done, and they seem so proud of themselves for being a part of the program and for getting to experience things that other people don't. They just kind of seem to glow because of having been a part of the experience.

In this particular instance, Dickie perceives growth as a result of art and cultural exposure programing taking place in the area of self-confidence. She states that this is evident because the participants’ attitudes and behaviors change in the days following an event. She describes them
as having a glow and states that they seem more eager and willing to share their ideas or debate a topic. In other words, access to events acts as a social experience that makes them privy to something that other people might not have access to. From Dickie’s perspective, this level of access can change a person’s perspective, and this ultimately changes the person. In this case, that change was perceived as a means to helping CHI program participants grow.

Others also talked about how people changed and grew. Elvis points out the reasons he feels that growth took place as a result of exposure to art and cultural programming:

Elvis: That's where many of these people are in their lives. They're depressed, they're unhappy, things have not gone well. Otherwise, they wouldn't be dining with us, and they're feeling stuck. But what art does is it forces you in a gentle and productive way to reexamine that. It's not an intervention where you're getting into someone's face and saying, "This is what's wrong with you." It's a tool for having people undertake that journey themselves.

Staff, volunteer, and administration participants observed that different people were impacted by art exposure in different ways. Much of what the CHI program participants experiencing housing instability did in terms of growth was situational and reactive. Elvis explains the various ways in which he saw CHI program participants experiencing housing instability grow as a result of being in the program. Some reacted to being depressed or unhappy, while other reacted to being stuck. He describes art as a gentle catalyst for growth. Notice that there is still no use of forceful language in terms of access to the program, remaining in the program, or growing as a result of the program. According to his statement, CHI program participants experiencing housing instability were not directly challenged and did not have to jump through hoops to engage in the art and cultural exposure program. They were not forced to achieve facilitator generated goals to remain in the program. Elvis perceived the art exposure program as helping CHI program participants experiencing housing instability undertake their
own journeys, which meant that they defined their own goals. This reliance on self-determination, which is a social work tenet, is one of the most promising aspects of the program. Not having forced outcomes more genuinely speaks to the benefits of exposure to art and cultural programming. This was not a program that relied on creaming for program participants with the most potential, or forced outcomes for art event rewards, these were truly benefits of exposure to art and cultural events. Elvis goes on to explain some of these benefits:

Elvis: Many of the guests involved in the program have either self-changed their situation, that is they were slightly more likely to be stably housed, or to have a stable source of employment. Again, it's not statistically relevant, but it's consistent with what I've seen and what I had hoped would happen. They're looking forward in conversations with our social workers and others about how they can more permanently affect their situation and get out of a shelter, or get out of a garage, and get into a more stable situation. There were the positives of the peer group that came from it, there were people actively seeking to change their own situation through self-initiative or connecting to resources, there was less happiness, which surprised me, but then it shouldn't have. Because that's sometimes the motivator for achieving a better state.

Again, although staff, volunteer, and administrative participants shared their perceptions, they often did not rely on perception alone. My study was embedded in the larger ethnographic study that Elvis talks about in his statement. In this case, Elvis is using information from a longitudinal demographic survey data from an ethnography that used a small non-probability sample to look at the impact that art and cultural exposure can have on CHI program participants experiencing housing instability. This explains his concern with the statistical significance of the information that he is providing. When Elvis describes the CHI program participants experiencing housing instability as being less happy, he is describing what happened to the CHI program participants after the programming came to an end. What Elvis states suggests that these brief windows in which CHI program participants experiencing housing instability were
able to experience art and cultural events, later left them with feelings that acted as motivators for growth, which in this case he describes as achieving a better state of being.

**Education**

One final benefit the staff, volunteer, and administrative participants discussed was education. They perceived that CHI program participants experiencing housing instability involved in art and cultural programming were learning. Although meaningful learning (education) can be considered a part of the growth theme, education was a distinct theme among CHI program participants experiencing housing instability due to it surfacing frequently. Perceptions held by CHI program participants experiencing housing instability indicated that they learned many things from the events, but again the learning that had a lasting impact on them spoke better to growth.

Again, staff, volunteer, and administrative participants were not just bystanders observing this phenomenon from afar. As the CHI program facilitators, staff, volunteer, and administrative participants’ efforts aimed at improving social interaction often contributed to learning. On a couple of occasions Ellie mentioned this by stating, “There was a docent on the boat who talked about the different kinds of architecture. A lot of them took photographs.” Later she states, “In this case, the docent, …talked to them and asked them questions about what the art meant to them, so that really got them involved in the discussion of the art. I think they really did enjoy that.” What this statement suggests is that CHI program participants experiencing housing instability used docents and others that were closely connected to the event to learn, and this more intimate educational experience helped them enjoy the events even more. These more involved connections that contributed to learning were a result of CHI staff, volunteer, and administrative program facilitators thoughtfully planning the events. When I spoke with Dickie,
she expressed that the CHI program participants experiencing housing instability were showing growth in terms of learning while at the events. In her discussion she states:

Dickie: I've been so impressed with the people in the group when I have been to some of these performances, and I sit there and I enjoy, and it's a nice experience, but when I hear them talking about what they've seen and how they react, I'm always so impressed at the stretch they make, the intellectual effort they bring to the discussion. That just blows me away. I think, "Wow, that's true, and I didn't see that."

Interviewer: Right, right, right.

Dickie: And so, I think it's an intellectual broadening, maybe. I think many of them have learned to be comfortable expressing their feelings when they might not have in other venues. It's just an opportunity to be more creative, be more inventive, look into an event in some depth.

In this brief discussion Dickie covers a few important concepts. First, she perceives the CHI program participants experiencing housing instability as partaking in an educational experience. While appreciation is evident, they are often not just passively enjoying the events. Through observing their conversations, she supports her perception of what happened with statements that were made by the CHI program participants experiencing housing instability. She describes a certain type of intellectual effort that they put into their conversations with each other. She goes so far as to state that they were able to think about and conceptualize things that she was incapable of seeing. She describes the level of thinking within this educational endeavor as something that blew her away. For Dickie, this educational component was what helped the participants achieve an intellectual broadening.

In my discussion with Bonnie, she stated that learning was one of the most important parts of the event. During her talks with me, there was also a discussion about access and group benefits, which she tied into learning. But throughout her entire talk she comes back to learning, which she states as being the most important element of the events. From her perspective, the
educational aspect of the art and cultural exposure events was central to how CHI program participants experiencing housing instability were impacted by art and cultural events:

Bonnie: I think the number one thing the guest would say is that they are learning about, and being invited to participate in a variety of art and cultural programs that are just really interesting and fun, and they're learning a lot. I think that's really the core of it for the guests. They're learning about Chicago. They're learning about things that you can do in Chicago that they didn't necessarily know about. They're being invited to restaurants that maybe they've heard about, maybe they haven't, but then they're seated and have a great meal. I think that's where the guests would say that's the most important and impactful part of the program to them, is learning about and participating in such a fun, educational, and diverse, you know, range of events.

For Bonnie, education was the key to making the events work. Anytime she had a discussion on the topic, it was clear that she perceived education as being at the forefront. So, while she described CHI program participants experiencing housing instability as having fun, socializing, and benefitting in a number of other ways, Bonnie came back to education as being the central component. In other words, Bonnie perceived the art and cultural exposure events as being an educational tool, whereby many other benefits were experienced in conjunction with learning.

Again, her perceptions of the educational impact on CHI program participants experiencing housing instability isn’t coming forward from a position as a passive observer. In one of her talks she described the type of Comprehensive Access that staff, volunteer, and administrative participants (in their acting role as facilitators) afforded program participants. I talked about this earlier in my discussion on the importance of access as a means to removing barriers to attending events. Even so, notice that in her talk on access, she still places knowledge at the center of the discussion:

Bonnie: I feel like there's definitely been an impact as far as access and knowledge of events. I should say knowledge first and access second, knowledge of different things that are available in Chicago and then access to some of
those things by CHI helping secure tickets, and line up meals, and just basically make it as easy as possible for guests, you know, at no cost to themselves, to go to these different events.

What Bonnie was actually talking about was knowledge of different things available in Chicago. That is to say, she was talking about learning about art and cultural events that are available and free to the public. These are things that are outside of the planned events that are frequented as a result of learning within the program. As proof positive, we saw CHI program participants experiencing housing instability frequenting exhibits on their own when searching for the perfect shots to contextualize during the Photovoice focus group. The CHI program participants experiencing housing instability knew where to go, and none of them paid to gain access to events. This ultimately means that learning was meaningful and was sustained beyond the planned events.

**Critiques**

Critiques had to do with perceptions of any negative impact that CHI program participants experiencing housing instability experienced as a result of attending the events. The staff, volunteer, and administrative participants usually commented on things that acted as an impediment to the social gains experienced as a result of group benefits. While critiques were infrequent, they are worthy of mention.

Although it wasn’t mentioned much, the most concerning impediment to any type of art and cultural gain was disruptive behavior from participants. Queenie, whom the participants were very fond of, mentioned this in her interview with me. During the individual interview, I asked her to choose the worst thing about the program, or the thing that they liked the least about the program. She responded with the following statement:
Queenie: Well, in the rare cases that we had people in the group, who are no longer in the group, but that were incredibly disruptive. In fact, when certain people didn't get along with others, they wouldn't even eat with us when we were at a restaurant. If we were all sitting together in one area, those people went and sat in a completely separate room.

Interviewer: Got it. Okay.

Queenie: That was very disruptive. It breaks that bond that I told you about before. That was a very negative thing. These people are no longer in the group, and it's changed the attitude within the larger group.

First, I applaud the staff, volunteer, and administrative participants’ dogged commitment to Comprehensive Access. I believe that because they worked so hard to provide access, a few individuals who possessed some psychological frailties that were beyond the scope of the art and cultural programming events slipped in. Rather than asking these disruptive people to leave, these people remained. Those antagonizing members of the group were allowed to stay and benefit from the program. These people were allowed to participate until they decided to leave on their own, with no pressure from the staff, volunteer, and administrative participants. I believe that this high degree flexibility on the CHI facilitators part made staff, volunteer, and administrative participants more useful tools within the framework of human service, and by extension the program was able to reach and help individuals that most institutions would have excluded. Second, Queenie’s primary focus was on the participants’ feelings of social inclusion. I believe that when she spoke about breaking the bond, she is speaking to the deeper problem of disrupting the meaningful connections that people were making within the group, and beyond.

Bonnie mentions a similar problem in her talk with me:

Bonnie: Some folks don't always like to sit together. They want to have a little bit of privacy, or they get, you know, they feel crowded. Even on the boat tour, people felt like they were part of the group, but they could kind of spread out a little bit, the folks that wanted to. I think people were very physically comfortable on the boat tour as well.
Notice that Bonnie speaks in the plural; from my observations on that tour, there were a few participants that struggled with this socially isolating behavior. When Bonnie speaks in the plural, I personally believe she is talking about the CHI program participants experiencing housing instability who might have appreciated more space, despite the boat being rather spacious. Regardless, as facilitators, staff, volunteer, and administrative participants made sure that social gains were at the forefront of their thoughts.

Dickie also mentions this in our interview together. Although the talk was brief, notice that it was centered on interpersonal experiences, which was a part of the social gains you would expect to see from the group benefits that the staff, volunteer, and administrative participants worked so hard to make possible:

Dickie: I'm not sure that I've really seen any downside.

Interviewer: Got it.

Dickie: There might be some little interpersonal problems that I have observed or heard about, either among the guest participants, or between guests and the liaisons or chaperones.

Interviewer: Yeah okay, got it.

Although the conversation on this topic ended rather abruptly, it was clear that impediments to the social aspect of group benefits were a concern, and in some cases these impediments were perceived as a part of the impact that art and cultural exposure had on program participants.

*The Art Exhibit*

Although it was not discussed frequently, during my interviews with facilitators, one of them brought up the Music Box Theater event. This was an art event that the CHI program participants experiencing housing instability; and CHI staff, volunteer, and administrative
participants planned and used to disseminate their work. In that discussion they talked about some of the pros and cons of the exhibit, and gave insight on what it meant for CHI program participants experiencing housing instability to have their voices disseminated before agency level policy makers.

Elvis discussed the topic of dissemination through the art exhibit. In his talk with me he confirmed some of the thoughts that the CHI program participants had. If you recall, as a result of dissemination of their art before agency level policy makers and funders, CHI program participants experiencing housing instability felt heard, helped people, discussed social issues, and discussed the benefits of the program. Additionally, CHI program participants saw this as a way to achieve educational and financial gains. In some cases, they were uncertain of the benefits. Elvis hit on some of these topics during the interview:

Elvis: I think, first of all, I would say that what we did, for example, at the Music Box Theater, just to pull that one out, by showing their art there, I think there's two things that are really powerful going on, and then I'll talk about the folks who were there. The first is that, if the guests who have created that art come to see that their art matters, and there's a connection outside of them to other people, it's an extension of that ability. When somebody looks at the piece you've made and value's a part of it, or discusses a part of it with you, you get value out of that. But the second is that it's humanizing for both the guests at the Music Box Theater, and the attendees at the event. For some of them, this is how I would put it in the spiel, “We really serve two groups; we serve the guests who dine, and we serve the volunteers who serve them”.

Elvis hits on the most important theme that surfaced in the second focus group. The most salient theme that program participants discussed was feeling heard. Based on Elvis’ discussion around human connections, and the discussions that surfaced via the art exhibit, it’s clear that he felt that CHI program participants experiencing housing instability were able to tell their story and be heard in a way that left them feeling humanized. However, Elvis doesn’t stop there; he also
discusses the process of CHI program participants experiencing housing instability being heard as humanizing to the agency level policy makers whom engaged in those discussions at the exhibit. This meant that humanization was a bi-lateral benefit of the Music Box Theater art exhibit. From Elvis’ perceptions, CHI program participants experiencing housing instability felt heard, and attendees felt as if they were a part of that process. When asked to elaborate on the importance of that connection, Elvis responded by talking about the types of people at the event:

Elvis: There were two sets of people who attended the Music Box Theater event. There were our volunteers, people who actually served the meal, connect to each other as volunteers, and somewhat to the guests, and there were people who fund us. People who give us money to do what we do. In both instances, it is an example of a deeper humanization, a deeper connection to people that they knew were there intellectually. They walk away from them when they go back to their other lives, and they will return to them when they see something like this (the exhibit). In a context that allows them to think and maintain it into their future, it's a powerful thing for both helping them to continue programs like ours, which helps them (funders), and our guests. I guess that's where I'd wrap it up in that part of the conversation, is that it's a reminder of what you felt when you dined there, or why you supported it. And it's a reaffirmation of that human connection.

As Elvis explains who was there and what he means by humanization, we can easily see that people from different walks of life were drawn together by the exhibit in a beneficial way. For the CHI program participants experiencing housing instability that hoped that their art impacted the funders, which contributed to helping people, Elvis offers confirmation. Because a deeper human connection was made, people were willing to offer their support. As the Executive Director of the program, Elvis isn’t just offering up what he thinks based on his perceptions. He supports those perceptions by confirming that the events did matter to the attendees, and that those philanthropists did contribute financially to keep the art and cultural exposure program
going. Finally, on the theme of being uncertain of gains achieved via the art exhibit, Elvis elaborated on why he thought this might be the case in some situations:

Elvis:  Now, when you walk out of that room, you go back to work, and the next day you walk past a homeless person on the street, and you go back to dehumanizing them. I'm not judging anyone's character; I'm just saying that's what we do. It's both a survival mechanism, and a day to day mechanism, but it happens, and we all do it. We don't walk away from the assumptions we've had for our whole lives just because we served at dinner. That's true of many things that we wish we could change both about ourselves and about our society.

Elvis talked about serving a dinner to use an example that parallels attending one art exhibit. In his honest assessment, he is saying that we can never really know the full extent of the benefits. And while the CHI program participants experiencing housing instability benefitted from having their voices heard at the exhibit, in his experience benefits to other attendees might not preserve beyond the exhibit. Perhaps the CHI program participants experiencing housing instability also felt that real change happened over time, and this is why they expressed a desire to remain engaged via the art exhibits more frequently, or over longer periods of time.

Although these were benefits to the CHI program participants from the staff, volunteer, and administrative participants perspectives, in every case more merit could be given to their statements because as facilitators, they were able to do more than speculate based on direct observations. In a way that triangulated data from the CHI program participants, staff, volunteer, and administrative participants offered supporting statements. This is because they were able to engage and interact in a way that bolstered the perceptions of CHI program participants, ultimately confirmation of how accurate and truthful my observations were.
CHAPTER 7
DISCUSSION

Ultimately, this entire dissertation hinged on the fact that people were able to spend time in spaces where they could be exposed to art. The CHI program facilitators often acted as gatekeepers because they helped program participants experiencing housing instability gain access to spaces rich in art. Shifts in Ambient Capital were an important aspect of this study. To define the term, Ambient Capital relates to the program participants perceptions of ambiance, which are derived from their immediate surroundings. In cases where exposure to art and cultural events took place, the program participants had their vantage points drastically changed for the better, thus contributing to gains in Ambient Capital. Moving forward, throughout this discussion a new concept, which I’ve coined as Ambient Capital, will be used as a succinct way to talk about these transitions into various types of spaces that had an impact on CHI program participants experiencing housing instability.

The purpose of this dissertation was to answer three research questions. The research questions were: (1) What is the impact of art and cultural exposure and engagement on CHI program participants experiencing housing instability? (2) What are CHI program participants’ experiences with disseminating their art, and what meaning do they attach to these experiences?, and (3) What are the CHI staff, volunteer, and administrators’ perceptions of the impact of art and cultural exposure programing on CHI participants experiencing housing instability? More specifically, the first goal of the first question was to better understand how exposure to art and cultural events impacted individuals experiencing housing instability or homelessness. This goal
was accomplished through the perspectives of the CHI program participants experiencing housing instability, and CHI facilitators, which consisted of staff, volunteer, and administrator participants. The second question had more to do with the impact of the Photovoice method on program participants, in particular dissemination of their work before policy makers as a means to feeling heard. This question was answered by analyzing a myriad of data from various sources as well. Finally, the third question concerned itself with the first two research questions because if offered another perspective on both the impact of the program, and by extension the art-based research method.

There are four major parts to this discussion. In the first part of this discussion I’ll give an overview of the findings within the conceptual framework from Chapters 4-6. I’ll tie together the findings from all sources of data to the conceptual framework to gain a better understanding of the phenomena under study. This will be done by comparing and contrasting data from all sources. The conceptual framework is from de Botton’s (2016) Art as Therapy, which outlines 7 core categories that are useful for understanding how art can be used as a tool to impact inherent psychological frailties. Categories consist of remembering, hope, sorrow, rebalancing, self-understanding, growth, and appreciation (pp. 8-56). The findings from this study garnered helpful information that social work facilitators can apply to future art-based group settings when serving oppressed and marginalized populations. To reiterate, the questions were: (1) what is the impact of art and cultural exposure and engagement on program participants experiencing housing instability? (2) What are the program participants experiences with disseminating their work, and what meaning do they attach to those experiences? Answering the first two questions make up the first endeavor of this discussion. This talk will also include multiple sources of data to better understand how the participants made meaning of disseminating their work. The last
question asked what are the CHI staff, volunteer, and administrator perspectives and perceptions of the impact of art and cultural exposure programing on CHI participants experiencing housing instability? This entire discussion will be organized using de Botton’s framework on the practical functions of art. Finally, as I work through the discussion, findings from Chapters 4, 5, and 6 will be discussed under each subheading within the functions of art.

In the second part of the discussion I will demonstrate how findings from the literature tie back into findings from this study. Although the literature on this topic was sparse, some salient concepts surfaced that are important to examine within the context of these findings. The concepts from the literature review were social capital, empowerment education, psychological health, and other concepts associated with social justice. In addition to looking at how these broader themes fit within literature from visual, auditory, and audio-visual literature, this discussion will take a closer look at specific examples of literature where art exposure and homelessness intersect. By examining specific articles, this discussion takes a closer look at how salient concepts from those articles relate to themes from this study.

The third and fourth parts of the discussion offer up a discourse around the limitations and implications of this study. Here I will discuss some valuable lessons that were learned in the hopes that social workers and the people that we serve will utilize them. Finally, I will talk about limitations and discuss ideas to improve upon my work for future scholarship.

**Art Exposure Findings within the Conceptual Framework**

Many of the art exposure findings did fit within the conceptual framework. Despite openly coding the data from the first focus group, because the conceptual framework was highly applicable, the themes are easily discussed within the conceptual framework. In this case the framework held up nicely because discussions were around the benefits of being exposed to art
and cultural programing, which is in line with using art as therapy from de Botton’s framework (deBotton & Armstrong, 2016). Looking across all of the data used to answer the question, “what was the impact of art and cultural exposure on participants experiencing housing instability?” themes surface. When looking at the participant focus group data, they described the impact of exposure to art on themselves using the following themes: remembering, appreciation, serenity, group benefits, social justice, perspective, learning, resilience, and homelessness. These themes not only surfaced in the data, but they were also confirmed by checking with each member of the focus group after they contextualized their photos. I intend to show how each of these themes are connected to de Botton’s framework.

**Art Dissemination Findings within the Conceptual Framework**

The second focus group yielded more complex findings that did not always match up to the framework as nicely. This is because dissemination of art for the purposes of a Photovoice study is less about being exposed to art as therapy, and more about creating and displaying art to reach policy makers. Within the context of the various levels of participation, seven themes surfaced. To reiterate, the themes demonstrated that dissemination was: A means to feeling heard, a means to helping people, a way to address social issues, a way to discuss the benefits of the program, an educational experience, a means to financial gain, and a feeling of uncertainty related to the impact of dissemination. This discussion details which themes were a fit, and why in most cases the framework still held up to the second wave of data.

**Staff, Volunteer, and Administrative Participants Findings within the Conceptual Framework**

When staff, volunteer, and administrative participants were asked what their perception of the impact of art exposure programing was on CHI program participants, the following themes
surfaced: group benefits, access, appreciation, perspective, growth, education, critiques, and the exhibit. All of the themes except critiques not only aligned with the perceptions that CHI participants experiencing housing instability held, they work well within the conceptual framework. This came as no surprise because themes from the staff, volunteer, and administrative perspective match up with themes from the CHI program participants focus groups. In this discussion, findings from staff, volunteer, and administrative participants are examined within the context of de Botton’s (2016) *Art as Therapy* framework.

Finally, in terms of the organization of this discussion, findings will be organized by de Botton’s conceptual framework. The idea is to discuss within each function of art how the findings aligned with the conceptual framework. The remainder of this discussion will be organized by these functions which include: remembering, hope, sorrow, rebalancing, self-understanding, growth, and appreciation. It should be noted that these functions are not mutually exclusive, and as you will see they are sometimes utilized in tandem during art exposure. In these cases, I talk about the most significant function of art, and show how the function that is less emphasized works with it. Finally, due to the importance of *Comprehensive Access*, this discussion will close on an important discussion around access to art as therapy. This is relevant to the framework because de Botton describes access as a key feature to using art as a practical tool set for addressing psychological frailties. For example, most museums are organized in a chronological fashion, and de Botton contributes to mass *Comprehensive Access* by working with museums to organize art in a way that allows people find the types of art they are most interested in using to address psychological frailties (de Botton, 2013).
Remembering

Remembering within the Art Exposure Findings

Remembering was an important theme for many of the CHI participants experiencing housing instability. This theme corresponded perfectly with de Botton’s (2016) function of art. According to de Botton (2016), art is a practical tool for combating psychological frailties associated with forgetfulness because it is used to remember what is really important in life (p. 57). After being exposed to art events that were rich in Ambient Capital, participants talked about how they used art to remember what was important to them. There are many examples of participants demonstrating the importance of remembering through art. What’s great is their statements showed how an artist can preserve an important and relevant memory for many years. As the program participants contextualized their photos, it became clear that they were able to show how concepts such as wealth were still relevant today. Because in the focus group they tied these historical concepts back into what is important today, they used functions of art discussed in de Botton’s framework as a means to remember and discuss topics that are still important to the group, such as power, prestige, and wealth.

While the group did discuss distant memories in order to remember things that were important, they also focused on personal memories. For example, in response to architectural art some of the CHI program participants remembered important events from their childhoods. This meant that participants were able to use art to recall an important personal memory from long ago. It was interesting to see that they were able to recall specific details from their lives by contextualizing the photos within the focus groups. Whether it was a story about hustling for money or living on the streets, or remembering what life was like in Cabrini Green, it was clear that art could be used as a means to address psychological frailties associated with remembering.
Bobby Jackson recalls avoiding selling drugs by delivering groceries up flights of stairs. For many of the participants, remembering was often associate with homelessness and housing instability, but not all memories that surfaced were negative. Sometimes CHI program participants used art to recall fond memories within the context of homelessness and housing instability.

As you will see, as was the case was many of the functions of art, remembering was a function that was used in tandem with other functions of art. For example, one of the participants talks about what it was like to be gainfully employed and working alongside good friends. And while the main focus was on the art event helping him remember those important moments, those memories associated with homelessness also triggered some feelings that required him to process some sorrow. According to de Botton (2016), sorrow is also a function of art, as it can be used as a practical tool to help people grieve. This discussion provides a poignant explanation for why remembering was important, and how exposure to art was used as therapy to combat psychological frailties associated with forgetting.

Interestingly, remembering was not a function of art that mapped well onto the art dissemination findings; or the staff, volunteer, and administrative findings. Hope on the other hand mapped well onto findings from all three findings sections of this dissertation.

**Hope**

*Hope within the Art Exposure Findings*

Participants used exposure to art as a practical tool to express social issues, which spoke to the function called hope. The participants saw art as a means to talk about political issues. As one would expect, the issues that were of most interest to them were housing instability and homelessness. These themes often surfaced in their discussion as a means to correct social
injustice. During their talks they specifically targeted city level policy makers and called them out for not coming out to engage with people experiencing homelessness. Focus group discussion revealed that this lack of empathy among politicians was particularly disturbing because some of the people laying on the streets were veterans. I believe that participants were actually calling out policy makers on what would normally be an issue that garners bipartisan support, namely veteran’s assistance. This demonstrates that not only was art a means to calling out politicians, it was a way to appeal to them for help. I believe that by having these discussion through art, the CHI program participants were using art as a practical tool to address psychological frailties associated with social injustices. De Botton’s (2016) function of art that addresses social injustice is hope.

The evidence doesn’t stop there. During the focus groups they also showed their commitment to bringing about social justice by using social media to get these issues out to the masses. Again, they directly challenged policy makers, such as the mayor, to address social injustices related to poverty. By doing this, they were addressing psychological frailties associated with social injustices through the art exposure program. They used art to discuss problems that are important to them, and by bringing attention to these social injustices, challenged policy makers that are in power. They held the mayor accountable for the injustices they saw in their community, and questioned the fiscal policies and decisions that diverted funds away from impoverished areas and into other parts of the city. When discussion around holding policy makers accountable surfaced, this acted as the function of art that de Botton calls hope. By holding the mayor and other politicians accountable for their actions, they demonstrated that they were hopeful that they could potentially bring about change through policy action.
Hope within the Dissemination Findings

The third most salient theme within the dissemination findings was discussing social issues through dissemination. Given the nature of the Photovoice methodology, dissemination was about making the issues known before policy makers in an effort to correct social injustices. When it comes to the framework, discussing social issues via dissemination was related to the concept of hope. Although the agreed upon purpose of dissemination was about discussing the importance of the program, this was done within the context of educating people on social injustices. These social injustices provided a backdrop through which the target audience could better understand the benefits of the program. Although everyone spoke on the issue, Jaqueline’s statement during the dissemination focus group ties the theme into de Botton’s concept of hope best. On many occasions during the focus group people talked about dealing with social issues related to policy and homelessness. In fact, the CHI program participants were most concerned with issues around homelessness. When these concerns surface, they overtly described themselves as sometimes feeling hopeless. For example, Jaqueline actually says, “It makes you feel hopeless” when the topic surfaced. Many of the program participants discussed this, but what is nice about Jaqueline’s statement is that she overtly discusses hopelessness. De Botton’s (2016) concept of hope is broad in that it is described as a tool for keeping pleasant or hopeful things before you (pp. 58-59). I think that describing these social issues before agency level policy makers and talking about the art exposure program was a hopeful experience. Later, when Jaqueline and the group also talk about how dissemination helps them feel better about the whole situation, I think that they are describing feeling hopeful as a result of making issues known, and potentially garnering support for a beneficial program.
Hope within the Staff, Volunteer, and Administrative Findings

The staff, volunteer, and administrative participants in their roles as program facilitators observed dissemination as a means of bi-lateral hope. That is to say, when CHI program participants used art as a means to communicate with agency level policy makers, they felt hopeful about impacting the policies and programs that affect them. However, staff, volunteer, and administrative participants noted that board members acting as policy makers also felt hopeful when engaging with the CHI program participant’s art. One example is how Elvis described the exhibits impact on both groups, which left them with feelings of “deeper humanization” and socio-intellectual connections. Policy makers felt hopeful when they engaged with program participants, donated money, or purchased art. Program participants felt hopeful about these things as well, but additionally they felt hopeful about interacting with agency policy makers to effect change. Again, Elvis puts those impacted by dissemination into two groups, those involved with the CHI art exposure program regularly, and policy makers. Keeping in mind that de Botton (2016) defines the concept of hope in art as an ideal piece that can help people remain positive, we see both sides benefiting in such a manner (pp. 12-24).

Due to the humanization and deeper connection, CHI program participants experienced hope through having their work and voices valued, and by having a financial impact on the programs that they care about. Due to the same profound humane connection, funders experienced hope by showing appreciation, and supporting programs that matter in the lives of others. Through these shared and mutual affirmations, they both felt hopeful about the future as a result of art placing them in an idealistic situation.

While Hope was the main function, it was also connected to other functions. For example, the human connections that came from dissemination spoke de Botton’s concept of
growth as well. Toward the end of his talk, Elvis makes it clear that human connections are a part of these hopeful experiences. It is my belief that through these social reaffirmations (growth) that participants experienced hope. Thus the function called hope mapped on to findings from all three chapters.

Sorrow

Sorrow within the Art Exposure Findings

I think it is important to acknowledge that CHI program participants experiencing housing instability were often forced to use art within the context of homelessness to process sorrow. This is because as individuals who have seen or lived on the fringes of our society, they shared unique but similar socio-emotional housing experiences. Some of the best examples of this were discussions around being exposed to art within the context of having experienced homelessness.

One poignant example of this was Michael’s discussion on the beautiful fountain that he slept behind. For him, seeing this art forced him to process sorrow, especially because he associated the exhibit with his time spent experiencing homelessness. In the discussion another participant, having the ability to sympathize with him consoles him by telling him that she is sorry to hear that he had to go through that. This exchange demonstrated that Michael was afforded a chance to deal with psychological frailties associated with experiencing homelessness. These were shared and unique experiences to this group because they have all been touched by homelessness or housing instability. What would not normally be associated with homelessness for many others, stood as a piece that was for this group.

Due to exposure to art in the form of architectural structures, other participants were forced to reconcile with the sorrow of experiencing homelessness. When this happened, they
used art exposure and discussions with the group to process that sorrow. It should be noted that addressing psychological frailties associated with sorrow are not defined by de Botton (2016) from a clinical perspective (social work or psychology) or a layman’s perspective (pp. 24-28). Although nuanced, the function of sorrow within the framework is a more practical than both of these perspectives. According to de Botton (2016), sorrow hinges on processing grief in a dignified way. This happens on two conditions. First, people experience art with a group and second the use social expressions with that group to process sorrow through art (pp. 24-28).

From de Botton’s (2016) perspective, art offers a medium by which people can view their own sorrows, and through a dignified discussion process it. In other words, a person won’t necessarily hit a happiness benchmark in that moment, but they will be listened to and heard in a dignified way (pp. 24-28). In this art exposure group, as well as in the focus groups, it was clear that group members were able to address psychological frailties associated with homelessness to process sorrow. And what defined the processing of sorrow was the fact that they were truly heard and supported by a caring and understanding group in a dignified way.

Just as with Remembering, Sorrow was another function of art that did not map on to the findings from the art dissemination data; or the staff, volunteer, and administrative data.

**Rebalancing**

*Rebalancing within the Art Exposure Findings*

Serenity was a theme that tied into de Botton’s function of art called rebalancing. Again, participants talked about the importance of art in public space, and how it could be accessed multiple times for resensitization with the familiar. Sometimes part of the resensitization process led to finding peace and serenity, but not always. Although resensitization was important to participants, it was equally important that participants had familiar spaces to return to where they
could find some peace and serenity. According to deBotton (2016), art can be used as a practical tool to find balance in your life (p. 59). Based on what participants stated during the focus group, they were experiencing psychological frailties associated with a lack of peace and serenity in their daily lives. This was likely associated with living in an urban area and being experiencers of housing instability. So not only was art something they could return to for resensitization, once participants returned, they could move toward rebalancing as a function of art to correct what was missing in their lives, which in their case was serenity. The theme of using rebalancing as function of art surfaced many times throughout the discussion demonstrating that a lack of serenity was a persistent problem that was contributing to psychological frailties.

For example, participants frequented places such as the Japanese Garden and the Evanston Park sculptures to find a moment of respite from their otherwise busy lives. When participants talk about needing peace and serenity, I believe that the participants are speaking to an imbalance in their lives which is related to the hustle and bustle of an urban area. The imbalance is actually described in the focus group as an absence of peace and tranquility. In short, I think that CHI program participants are trying to find a place to retreat to. By having a place to go to find serenity, the CHI program participants were able to use art as a tool to address problems that contribute to psychological frailties. The rebalancing that de Botton (2016) speaks of occurs when participants are able to immerse themselves in a Japanese Garden or a sculpture park where they can find peace and serenity. In short, during the focus group CHI program participants describe art as a tool to address psychological frailties associated with lack of serenity, and the function of art in these cases was often rebalancing.
Rebalancing was used in other areas by CHI program participants. For example, the group also used the art exposure events as a means to becoming more resilient. In turn, being exposed to resiliency inducing experiences fed into de Botton’s concept of rebalancing. As mentioned beforehand, serenity also contributed to the function of art called rebalancing. In the case of serenity, psychological frailties were associated with the lack of peace and quiet. This was a problem that was brought on by living in an urban area and experiencing housing instability. They described exposure to art as a means to correct this imbalance because it provided spaces where they could find serenity and use rebalancing as a function of art to combat psychological frailties associated with the imbalance (lack of serenity). Sometimes the catalyst (art exposure) for using rebalancing as a practical tool was the same, but the psychological frailties differed. De Botton (2016) describes this function of art as an agent that can help a person rebalance various aspects of their lives (p. 59). In some of their discussions, participants described imbalance in the form of a disabling condition, and then they talked about how they were able to use art as a rebalancing agent that contributed to self-resiliency, as well as the group resiliency. One participant described her personal triumphs over pain to get her pictures. Although she talks about the disabling conditions that cause her a great deal of pain, she also describes why she overcomes them. For this participant, the exposure to art program is reason enough to push through the pain. Despite being faced with psychological frailties associated with being in pain, she uses art exposure as a practical rebalancing tool to combat these vulnerabilities and become more resilient. Additionally, she sees her role in moving toward rebalancing as a way to help others combat their imbalances.

Again, although the primary theme is on rebalancing, other themes and functions of art grace the periphery of this topic. For example, if someone takes cues from this story of pain and
resiliency, or if they see the group as an important factor in finding resilience, then the theme of group benefits is at play. And as mentioned above, group benefits contribute to growth, which is another one of de Botton’s functions of art. So, while many of the conceptual concepts from art as therapy were interconnected within the themes, the primary benefit within the theme was rebalancing.

True Love also describes using art as a tool for resiliency. For her the imbalance hinged on a lack of social capital. Within the context of the art exposure group, she discussed rebalancing herself through the use of social interaction that were gained via group benefits. She becomes more resilient as a result of these group benefits and metaphorically describes herself as being similar to bamboo. That is to say, she can use benefits associated with the art exposure program to survive what she called, “The torrents of life” and get by despite “How life throws you for a loop.”

Again, while the primary theme was resiliency, various tools from de Botton’s framework were likely utilized to various degrees. Again, these concepts are likely interlinked and synergistic. True Love likely experienced the function of art called growth (i.e. social growth), a concept from de Botton’s framework that is associated with the theme group benefits. But just as there were primary concepts and themes above, in this example the primary theme is resiliency, and the primary concept from the framework is rebalancing.

**Rebalancing within the Dissemination Findings**

Another really important theme within the dissemination findings was helping people, which was a pathway to the function of art called rebalancing. Participants that found meaning in the exhibit as a result of helping others and described specific forms of help that they could offer. For them, it was about making sure that the program continued, and giving others an
opportunity to have access to these resources. Statements were offered during the focus group that showed how art helped program participants balance out their lives. For example, True Love talked about using dissemination to rebalance by forming relationships with the “movers and shakers” (policy makers) of the world. She and others saw dissemination as a way to “secure a platform” though which they could influence the very people that had power over the programs that impacted their lives (board members). The closest fit to de Botton’s framework was rebalancing (with hope being a close second).

It should be noted that the theme of hope repeats often within the findings because dissemination was about feeling heard by agency policy makers across each of the themes. In the discussion on art exposure, rebalancing was achieved by finding reprieves from the hustle and bustle of city life. The lack of peace and serenity was associated with psychological frailties related to living in an urban area and experiencing housing instability. In this theme, the function of rebalancing was associated with psychological frailties related to social isolation and the lack of access to social circles that could impact policies. Participants used dissemination as a means to empower themselves and overcome the imbalance brought on by social isolation.

Again, all of these themes could easily tie into a number of concepts from de Botton’s framework. For example, the theme of group benefits applies here because access was acquired through relationships with CHI program facilitators. These relationships were closely tied to growth as a function of art because they led to the accumulation of social capital. But overall, program participants sought to empower themselves and others via the dissemination of art because they realized the benefit of having their voices heard by agency policy makers. And the two concepts from de Botton’s work that most closely related to this endeavor were rebalancing first, and hope second. This is because they expressed using dissemination as a form of social
rebalancing and were hopeful as a result of being heard in a way that was helpful. Finally, the function of rebalancing did not pair up with themes from the Staff, Volunteer, and Administrative participants so easily.

**Self-Understanding**

*Self-Understanding within the Art Exposure Findings*

Another theme that surfaced in the art exposure findings was learning. Both teaching and learning were used as educational tools that contributed to what de Botton calls self-understanding. The psychological frailty associated with self-understanding is a lack of self-knowledge (de Botton & Armstrong, 2016). I believe this lack of self-knowledge was addressed through personal traits that bonded the group together. Outside of experiencing housing instability, one major trait of the group was that they all lived in the same urban area. I believe that by trying to understand their city, they were not just using art as a tool to learn. I think that they were using art exposure to understand the city, which contributed to an understanding of their shared history. Through the focus group, participants helped each other correct self-misunderstanding through education. Education took place through both teaching and learning within the group. In one example a CHI program participant helped the group learn the true history of Chicago by describing architectural changes that came out of the Chicago Fire. As they progressed through the talk on the history of Chicago, many of the participants showed appreciation of the art that Richard captured, and appreciation for the educational lessons that were being provided. As evidence of their interest in education, they not only thanked one person for information, they probed where necessary to gain a complete understanding of their history. Many themes could feed into educational interactions. For example, it would be hard to dispute the fact that learning happened through group benefits. But the most relevant exchange
that came out of learning was de Botton’s function of art, which he termed as self-understanding, and defined as building up self-knowledge (de Botton & Armstrong, 2016, p. 40).

**Self-Understanding within the Dissemination Findings**

Very closely related to discussing social issues was discussing the benefits of the program through dissemination. However, de Botton’s concept of self-understanding was prevalent throughout the discussions. For example, during the focus group Richard’s discussion on the topic not only got at the fact that benefits were discussed, but it also showed that the function of art that de Botton calls self-understanding was achieved. That is because Richard talked about having an opportunity to show donors what kind of programs CHI program participants were in, thereby giving the programs some exposure and garnering political and financial support. De Botton (2016) describes the concept of self-understanding as something that can help us get to know ourselves. This can be done by using art as a practical tool for contributing to self-knowledge (pp. 39-43). When Richard talked about dissemination, he was talking about using art as a way to help donors understand the importance of art exposure programing.

Again, hope showed up frequently in dissemination findings. For example, Richard lands on a talk around donors opening their wallets, which I believe is another expression tied into the de Botton’s concept of hope. In many instances, the themes and related concepts follow a lemniscate pattern. For example, Richard was hopeful that the message was received. Elvis confirmed that the message was received in a hopeful way by the agency policy makers and donors at the exhibit. This contributed to self-understanding on the policy makers part, and that self-understanding led to donations, which contributed to hope again. Additionally, this function has a bilateral flow. For agency policy makers, as mentioned above it was a learning experience
(self-understanding) because they were able to receive the message through art and make a contribution (hope), but as indicated in the next section, participants learned and were hopeful from dissemination as well.

As mentioned above, participants used dissemination for self-understanding. The theme of educational experience also matches up closely with self-understanding. The educational experience had much to do with teaching and learning. In terms of dissemination, whether the participants were teaching, or the audience was learning, for many the experience contributed to self-understanding and hope. A few of the participants talked about dissemination as being a hopeful experience during the focus group. Bobby’s talk was an important example because he overtly describes some of the concepts within the framework when going over the benefits of dissemination. Not only does he talk about this being an educational experience, he expresses some yearning in having contributed to selling the idea to agency policy makers. He and the other participants spent a great deal of time working on getting the right shot, and in a couple of cases, laboring over using editing applications to bring out important aspects of the shot. Again, Bobby’s statement is important because he overtly describes the experience as being educational. For him, in order to communicate a message through dissemination, it was important to get the right shot. This likely meant laboring over his photography technique and getting feedback from others on how to get the best shots.

The other reason their discussion on self-understanding was important was because it brought forward talks about the beauty of enhancing something that might be mundane. DeBotton (2016) actually defines his concept of appreciation as being able to look at something mundane and see the beauty. That is to say, they learned through self-understanding that art can be used as a practical tool to resensitize yourself so that you can enjoy what is around you.
While not named resensitization overtly, this happened many times during the focus group. In other words, just as in Michael’s discussion regarding readers theater, and True Love’s discussion regarding the mosaic, we see Bobby taking something that was seemingly boring or mundane (local architecture) and finding new ways to appreciate it through resensitization. Additionally, through dissemination Bobby and the others were also trying to enhance what they were seeing so that others may see the mundane in a way that allows for resensitization, and ultimately appreciation, and this is an educational exercise related to self-understanding.

Keeping all of this in mind, hope was still a close second because in the dissemination findings they were talking about selling the program in a way that will garner support. In other words, they saw their work as being helpful. Finally, they did this all within the context of answering the research questions, considering the impact of the piece, and considering what it might say to policy makers, all of which are skills that minimally work within the concept of self-understanding.

**Self-Understanding in the Staff, Volunteer, and Administrative Findings**

Education contributed to the function of Self-Understanding. Education was also perceived as a benefit of participating in the CHI art exposure events. In this study, both learning and teaching made up the theme of education. But as in the other themes, there were often multiple concepts at play. Comprehensive Access was directly tied into Self-Understanding because it allowed participants to access the material physically and intellectually. During the interviews, Bonnie talked about what she perceived the impact of the art exposure program was on participants. In that discussion she states there are two major impacts, access and knowledge. For Bonnie and the other staff, volunteer, and administrator participants acting as program facilitators, access was more than just securing tickets. Access
included making sure that guests had transportation, food, and other services related to their well-being. Additionally, access was about making sure that participants were socially connected to curators, actors, musicians, artists, tour guides, and others that could give insight on the various art exposure events that they attended. Because of the insight garnered from these social interactions, this type of access is tied into learning. Again, Bonnie and some of the others made it clear that they perceived the greatest benefit of art exposure as being education. This is because people are learning within the event, and that learning has a lasting impact that helps them beyond the event.

But while education happened on a number of levels it would not have been possible without access. The type of Comprehensive Access that Bonnie is describing can be attributed to the concept of growth. By being a part of the program, participants experienced the concept of growth in the form of social gains. These social gains also led to CHI program participants gaining access, which led to them making more social connections, which led to self-understanding through the art exposure events, facilitators (staff, volunteer, and administrators), CHI group members, and the various liaisons, curators, and tour guides they encountered. The point is, while education certainly surfaced because knowledge was perceived as having the greatest impact, you can see how various other concepts from the framework became a part of the network of benefits attributed to being impacted by the art and cultural exposure events. Another way of looking at this is by thinking about how growth in the form of social gains and self-understanding became pathways to a network of other theoretical concepts such as appreciation and rebalancing as a result of an increase in opportunities to engage with art. Again, these concepts are not isolated benefits, but rather a superhighway of lemniscate transactions that offer each other bilateral synergistic benefits.
When looking at the data, facilitators cited learning (self-understanding) as the most important impact, but much of the learning flowed from group benefits. Benefits beyond exposure to art, which I noted in my observations, revealed that the group dynamics also contributed to teaching and learning (self-understanding). The facilitators’ discussions revealed that group benefits was the most important theme. With that being said, when I unpacked group benefits, I realized that it included a number of benefits in the form of social gains. These social gains were essentially gains in social capital that lead to self-understanding. Embedded in this theme were opportunities to learn and gain friendships, and these opportunities were ultimately a result of gaining Comprehensive Access, which is an important element of self-understanding. From their perspective, staff, volunteer, and administrative participants often discussed art as a means for CHI program participants to acquire social capital. I think staff, volunteer, and administrative participants are expressing that there is something uniquely powerful about art. I believe they are saying that art draws people together in a meaningful way. Perhaps that is the real reason that art contributed to group benefits in the form of learning. For example, during his prior discussion Elvis taps into this by talking about how he perceives art as a vehicle for discussions around what matters. Elvis is able to do this by talking about the importance of being drawn together, and how he perceives art as being a unique tool for doing this. As the various perspectives come together, unique experiences are shared, learned, and created in a way that benefits the group. This is about the group contributing to de Botton’s concept of self-understanding. But upon closer inspection, another concept from de Botton’s framework is at play. For example, in his interview with me, Elvis also makes it clear that people are beginning to feel like they matter, and think about how they want to make changes in their lives. This ties into the concept of growth. Growth works with group benefits and social capital because de
Botton (2016) states that art can be used as a practical tool for self-understanding, and for sharing experiences with a group (p. 59). With that said, the function of self-understanding was present in all three findings sections.

**Growth**

*Growth within the Art Exposure Findings*

Group benefits also surfaced as a theme that maps on to the framework through the function of growth. To reiterate, group benefits were defined as inherently valuable interpersonal social relationships that contributed to beneficial growth in various aspects of a person’s life. This definition is similar to the term social capital, which the group described as an important aspect of the program. This ties into the de Botton’s (2016) work because the accumulation of social capital yielded gains in the form of growth. Growth is described as a function of art in de Botton’s work, and in the case of this function, art is used as a practical tool to address psychological frailties associated with stagnation (de Botton, & Armstrong, 2016). During the focus group, CHI program participants demonstrated not only psychological frailties associated with lack of social capital, but how art was used as a tool to promote growth in the form of beneficial social gains. In their discussion with each other they were eager to talk how the importance of developing relationships with each other, with staff volunteers, and administrators, and with the various tour guides and curators that they often came into contact with. In sum, participants described relationships as a very important aspect of art exposure program.

During their focus groups, the participants also talked about why it was important to develop social relationships. They appreciated not just donations, but the fact that others were
able to give of their time. In other words, beneficial social gains (growth) were important to participants experiencing housing instability for a number of reasons beyond socializing.

While all of this certainly came as no surprise, I believe these social gains held special meaning for individuals experiencing homelessness or housing instability. I believe that when thinking about homelessness services, we often center our thoughts around housing, food, and shelter. Although these things are essential, just as essential is the need for social interaction, specifically the need to be heard. Humans are social beings, and when placed in isolation they have a tendency to deteriorate psychologically. Individuals experiencing homelessness feel socially isolated or voiceless. I believe that the art exposure program, and the Photovoice method offered a significant first step toward eliminating feelings of social isolation by bridging gaps between participants and the community. This bridging of the gap was the function of art that de Botton termed growth. In this study, I believe that growth addressed psychological frailties associated with social isolation and a lack of social capital, and this growth ultimately opened doors to spaces rich in Ambient Capital.

**Growth within the Dissemination Findings**

The most important theme that surfaced during the discussion was around the exhibit as a means of feeling heard. The participants saw the exhibit as bridging an important gap so that their voices had an impact on the community. The reason this framework is relevant is because it fits across a couple of de Botton’s concepts, specifically growth, with hope again being a close second. These two concepts work together in this theme because the participants are describing the exhibit as a means of using group benefits to acquire an audience made up of policy makers (growth), and potentially reshaping attitudes through the social justice endeavor related to the groups message (hope). In the discussion on hope, we showed how dissemination impacted
individuals, and how that mapped onto the framework. This discussion speaks more to the growth that happens via dissemination. As indicated by the many examples found in the findings section, every participant talked about the importance of feeling heard. Statements such as: it’s important to feel heard, it’s good to get our voices out there, and we opened a line of communication, were indicators of this happening. Because using art as a means to feeling heard was discussed frequently and overtly in the findings section, it was easy to see that program participants placed a great deal of value on the how important it was to feel heard. Although this was also a function of the photovoice method, it was still a way to use de Botton’s functions of art as a form of therapy. This is because Photovoice was used as an art-based method, and that art was a part of the process of dissemination.

In addition to dissemination being a means to group benefits and social justice, these concepts were associated with more of de Botton’s functions of art, such as growth and hope, which was discussed respectively. Just as they did in the art exposure findings, growth occurred as a result of the accumulation of social capital, and hope occurred as a result of discussing social justice issues. The only difference in this case was that those discussions were via dissemination. Again, with this theme there was not a one to one benefit within the framework that matched up, and while that is the case it would be hard to argue against dissemination as an art for therapy tool within growth, or these other concepts.

**Growth within the Staff, Volunteer, and Administrative Findings**

The theme of perspective encapsulates growth. In terms of what the staff, volunteer, and administrative facilitators perceived, art exposure impacted CHI program participant’s perspectives. These changes in perspective were described as the catalyst for growth in the form of change. These changes as a result of growth contributed to self-understanding. In prior
discussions de Botton’s concept of growth pertained to social growth. Here, we are connecting the theme of growth in another way. De Botton (2016), describes growth as also being something that is cultural and that can help us challenge ourselves and our perceptions of the world. In addition to being challenged and pushed, contained within art and its lessons are concepts that we can adopt so as to enhance our own lives (59). In one of the conversations that came out of the individual interviews, an administrative participant described concepts within the theme of perspective.

Elvis described two perceived benefits of the program. One benefit was related to CHI program participants gaining new perspective so that they can begin to challenge themselves (growth) in terms of how they fit into society. He saw this as the questioning phase of growth because he witnessed them questioning themselves about where they stood in life. The second was that CHI program participants were actually able to use that new perspective as a platform for more tangible life changes (growth). He overtly states that, “It is only by changing perspective that you change where you're at.” What is nice about this statement is that it shows that when the theme of perspective surfaced it was attached to de Botton’s concept of growth. From Elvis’ perspective, as participants were challenged through art exposure, they were forced to see things in different ways. All of the questions that he has observed program participants struggling with are a part of the theoretical function of art call self-understanding, which is largely an educational endeavor. It is through these experiences that perspectives shift in a way that lead to participants thinking about how they fit into the world. This can only be done by going through the uncomfortable experience of breaking up your routines. It is from this new art induced vantage point that CHI program participants can begin to challenge themselves to experience the type of growth outlined in de Botton’s framework.
As mentioned above, de Botton’s (2016) concept of growth is a function of art associated with challenging our views and changing our lives (59). Growth was a theme that surfaced, and despite this entire study being openly coded the theme was the same as de Botton’s concept of growth. Again, this comes as no surprise because de Botton’s framework explores the purpose of art, and these findings examined the impact of art from the staff, volunteer, and administrators’ perspectives. During the individual interviews, when Elvis talked about the benefits of art exposure, de Botton’s concept of growth was evident. Elvis observe people “self-changing” their situations to become either more stably housed or stably employed. Elvis’ talk on growth is expressed in relationship to something that he calls “self-change”.

Self-change is a term that fits within the framework because it is about changing your life for the better. As mentioned above, de Botton (2016) actually defines growth as self-change. Although many of the facilitators talked about how they perceived growth as being a benefit of art exposure in one way or another, Elvis’s talk does more. Also embedded in Elvis’ talk is de Botton’s (2016) second definition of the concept of growth that has to do with interacting with others (p. 59). Elvis makes it clear that through art exposure, he perceives the CHI program participants as engaging with others such as social workers, which in turn helps contribute to further growth. In this case, further growth being taking the initiative to figure out how to address frailties associated with housing instability.

Just as stated before, this theme is also connected other concepts of de Botton’s such as self-understanding, perspective, and rebalancing. As CHI program participants attended the art exposure events, they were exposed to spaces rich in Ambient Capital, which allowed them to learn more about their own situations and observe them from a different perspective. While these and other concepts from the framework were not as present, combined with growth in the
form of social capital, these concepts worked together to help CHI program participants become more stably housed. Finally, growth was a function of art that could be mapped on to all three findings sections.

**Appreciation**

*Appreciation within the Art Exposure Findings*

During their discussions many of the participants talked about how art appreciation literally changed their perspectives. For example, one participant described Alexander Calder’s Flying Dragon (see Figure 21) to explain that art was a means to shifting your perspective. He talked about how it was heavy, but had the appearance of being light and ready to fly. Embedded in discussions like these was de Botton’s function of art called appreciation, with a close second being hope. When participants talked about change in perspective, I believe they were sometimes describing two benefits. One is that art can be appreciated, which helps bring about a certain level of reprieve from the daily rigors of living in an urban area. And two, art can leave you feeling uplifted, free, happy, and hopeful. It is through this appreciation of the Flying Dragon sculpture that participants utilized de Botton’s practical function of art, which is appreciation. And this appreciation led to another function of art, which is hope. They ultimately demonstrate that psychological frailties associated with feeling down are impacted by the statue, which makes you feel lighter and uplifted. In fact, the statue is described with a hopeful expression stating that it makes you feel free enough to fly. If exposed long enough, through appreciation this feeling contributes to hope because it changes your outlook on life by raising you to what was described as a different sphere.

Participants also discussed a shift in perspective, which led to de Botton’s function of art termed appreciation. As participants were engaged in various art exposure outings, they started
to feel truly immersed in the experience. Whether it was feeling like a part of the waves in 20,000 Leagues Under the Sea, or feeling fully engaged in The Devils Disciple readers theater, it was clear that participants were so immersed that they felt like more than just observers. This is because they were able to get lost in it the moment. When a participant stated that their perspective was changed, it meant that they were truly captivated by the show, which is a sign of the function of appreciation. As further testament to perspective being linked to appreciation, events were sometimes described as being heartfelt, and this appreciation was the reason that some were compelled to attend art exposure events.

Appreciation surfaced frequently as an important theme in other discussions. Again, in these discussions this theme matched up perfectly with de Botton’s concept of appreciation as a function of art. According to deBotton (2016), when people use appreciation as a practice tool to address psychological frailties, they are not just enjoying art. They are using art to better understand ordinary or boring things that we have gotten used to (pp. 53-56). Similarly, CHI program participants experiencing housing instability used art exposure programming as a means to resensitize themselves with the mundane. Resensitization was a form of appreciation. This resensitization to their surroundings meant that they had opportunities to make art that they were already exposed to interesting again, which allowed them to appreciate it more. This helped them make the most of their experiences. There were some great example of resensitization throughout the study. A few of the participants made it perfectly clear that they thought that art exposure outings such as the readers theater, boat tour, and mosaic would be boring. By attending the event or revisiting the exhibit, they were sometimes exposed to a familiar art form that they used as a tool to become resensitized through the function of appreciation. In one case a participant talked about how he thought the readers theater would be boring, but he later goes
on to explain that this turned out to be one of his favorite events. By becoming resensitized to
the familiar, not only was he appreciating the art, he was using art as a practical tool to address
psychological frailties associated with boredom.

Another participant also talked about revisiting the Chagall Mosaic. In her discussion
about appreciation in the form of looking at the familiar to become resensitized she provides a
perfect example of how a piece of art can be used as a tool to overcome boredom. What we
learn from her talk about the mosaic is that she enjoys it when she sees it because it reminds her
of what life is like in Chicago. This is an aspect of appreciation that ties into the function of
remembering. She goes on to explain her appreciation for the painstaking work that went into it.
Finally, she states that because of the level of detail in this piece, every time she goes and looks
at the piece, she experiences resensitization with the familiar. For her, appreciation continues to
happened because small things like lighting changed the artwork drastically enough to help her
see something new and interesting. In this way, she was able to return to highly accessible and
beautiful art repeatedly with a fresh set of eyes.

Ultimately, I believe that exposure to art and cultural events leads to improvements in
what I call Ambient Capital. These spaces were directly tied into how much program
participants appreciated (enjoyed) various events. Ambient Capital worked when perception met
appreciation, and gains in this area seemed to be a benefit of exposure to art and cultural
programming. That being said, I believe that shifts in Ambient Capital helped people transition
out of their mundane spaces and into spaces filled with art. And when in these new spaces, they
were impacted by their surroundings. Being in these new surroundings meant experiencing a
shift in environmental ambiance where art could be used as therapy. These art exposure events
were often rich with opportunities for art and cultural exposure, a type of capital that improved the atmosphere of the immediate surroundings and allowed for the use of art as therapy.

**Appreciation within the Dissemination Findings**

The last theme to fit within the framework was financial gain. While not as intuitively paired with a concept as the other themes, the concept of appreciation, which leads to hope, was a great fit. The participants talked about taking mundane or boring items and turning them into important artwork that would impact their lives and potentially correct social injustices through awareness. This artwork in turn was appreciated, and in some cases that appreciation was so great that it led to financial gains. These financial gains were viewed as potential gateways to becoming gainfully employed through art. This would especially be true if someone were to be discovered, which the participants saw as a real possibility. This is certainly a hopeful expression. But appreciation also worked bilaterally. Participants who were paid for their work also received “monetary appreciation”. While monetary appreciation isn’t overtly mentioned within the framework, this dual appreciation helps to revitalize important feelings within both the purchaser and the artist. The purchaser feels great because they are contributing to a cause that they believe in, and artist feels great because they are hopeful that their artwork will someday sustain them. Of course, these are feelings described in the functions of art that de Botton calls appreciation and hope (de Botton & Armstrong, 2016).

As a concluding note on dissemination, the goal of demonstrating connections to each of de Botton’s concepts was not to find a one for one match. On the contrary, when connecting themes from this chapter and the one before it, I was attempting to show that because de Botton’s conceptual framework was so relevant, the concepts formed a complex network of connections that did not start or end with the themes, or within any particular findings section. So, while I
did label these themes with some strongly associated concepts from the framework, there were often other concepts that fit with the themes that were not discussed. I think it’s very important to note that de Botton’s concepts flowed in all directions within the study and ignored the boundaries that I have used to organize my dissertation. That being said, I also believe that showing how themes worked within the context of the framework was a very helpful way to understand my work, dissemination, the conceptual framework, and how they fit together. Again, the findings around the uncertainty of impact were not discussed here because that theme did not fit well within the framework.

**Appreciation within the Staff, Volunteer, and Administrative Findings**

Appreciation was a theme that matched up perfectly with the conceptual framework. It was also a theme the surfaced previously within the art exposure findings, despite both being openly coded. The staff, volunteer, and administrative participants talked about how they perceived the participants as appreciating the CHI art exposure events. In fact, in one of her statements Ellie actually states, “they really did appreciate” the architectural boat tour verbatim. She also talked about how seeing architecture from the water gave them a different perspective. Although these were individual interviews, other staff, volunteer, and administrative participants talked about how the CHI program participants achieved perspective from having a different vantage point, and from being treated to something that they wouldn’t normally get an opportunity to do. Because the function of art was appreciation, the overt discussions in which the word appreciation was used made the connection easy to draw. But how does this really hold up to de Botton’s (2016) concept of appreciation as a tool for resensitization? Ellie talks about seeing the landscape in which they all live from a totally different vantage point. In doing so, she is accurately perceiving that they are looking at something that is commonplace in their lives
(mundane), and finding new ways to appreciate it. Just as in the other events, the CHI program participants were guided through the architectural boat excursion by a tour guide that was able to enhance the way that they accessed architecture (art). Additionally, after the boat tour they met with another speaker over lunch that had a firm understanding of the Chicago landscape.

Again, this isn’t about a one-to-one connection with the element of appreciation within the conceptual framework. It would be easy to say that they learned a great deal by using the function of self-understanding. Also, you could draw a connection to growth because it was through social interactions that they achieved Comprehensive Access and acquired knowledge. For example, in a later statement more connections to the conceptual framework can be made beyond the concept of appreciation.

Bonnie stated that there was appreciation by saying there was a “baseline enjoyment that came from every event”, but in her attempt to describe what people enjoyed, she actually talked about the importance of socializing during art exposure events. She concludes her thought by demonstrating that participants often used art exposure as a form of remembering what was important to them and connecting with each other in ways that were more meaningful. Key words from her talk such as enjoyment can be paired with appreciation. Bonnie makes it clear that she is perceiving them as becoming resensitized to the familiar or mundane (appreciation) because they are finding ways to enjoy things that they already knew about, or have experience with.

However, beyond that you can see that through the process of resensitization they are also remembering what’s important to them. It was clear that some things that were of importance to the CHI program participants while growing, were being remembered for the purposes of socializing. De Botton’s (2016) concept of remembering is used to address the
Bonnie’s statement reveals that she perceived participants as remembering things that happened in the past, with the function of art in this case helping CHI program participants connect with what was important to them.

**Access**

**Access within the Staff, Volunteer, and Administrative Findings**

Access played a heavy part in de Botton’s Art as Therapy framework. Although upon initial review it would seem that access doesn’t fit, a deeper look reveals that the type of Comprehensive Access that the facilitators described is in line with de Botton’s thinking. During a School of Life conference (de Botton, 2013), de Botton speaks about the structural barriers to art and the importance of access. He states that art is a way to address some of our innermost problems, in particular things that trouble our souls. He argues that it’s possible for art to be a form of self-help, but because these spaces are typically unwelcoming, many don’t go. Those that do go, don’t really understand art, which leads to confusion. This confusion is not because of the art. He argues that the confusions surface as a result of the framing of art, which acts as another barrier to Comprehensive Access.

The lack of proper organization and explanation in museums makes it hard for people to use art in more practical and meaningful ways. So, in this way, access acts as one of the more important aspects of a theme within the conceptual framework in that without art it would be difficult to use as a practical tool for addressing psychological frailties. Beyond that, access was connected to group benefits. One example of this stems from Queenies talk on what she perceived was the most important impact being made on CHI program participants. In short, she states that she perceived the participants as getting access that they wouldn’t ordinarily have. The
staff, volunteer, and administrator participants often made it very clear that de Botton’s concept of growth in the form of social gains were a byproduct of ensuring that people had access. People grew socially as a result of the relationships they formed with other CHI group members; staff, volunteer, and administrative facilitators, and people they met within various art communities that the events took place in.

With these things being said, I am arguing that what Allain de Botton is really talking about is very similar to the type of Comprehensive Access that facilitators discussed in their interviews. De Botton is arguing that art should be framed in a way that it can be understood, therefore making it more accessible to the masses of individuals that are seeking to use art as a form of therapy (de Botton, 2013). I assert that facilitators were highly concerned with the framing of each event. Because facilitators did not have the authority to frame the art in a way that made it more accessible, they did the next best thing. They recruited people that were closest to the exhibits because those people could reframe the art through conversations. It is these conversations that allowed the participants to be impacted by exposure to art in more meaningful ways, which allowed for a connection with the concepts of growth and self-understanding. At the conference, de Botton (2013) explains that he was able to convince a museum to get them to reorganize their exhibits by theme as opposed to chronologically. These themes would allow people to go to areas that they are most interested in using to address psychological frailties (love, sadness, money, hope, etcetera). He is also in the process of making art more accessible to museum goers, the difference is he is doing it on a larger scale. In short Alain de Botton; and the staff, volunteer, and administrator participants are facilitators striving to provide Comprehensive Access so that people benefit from spaces rich in Ambient Capital.
Concluding Thoughts Across All Findings

After the themes surfaced, it became clear that the participants responses mapped well onto the entire framework. De Botton’s (2016) framework outlines 7 core categories that are useful for understanding how art impacts inherent psychological frailties. Those categories were remembering, hope, sorrow, rebalancing, self-understanding, growth, and appreciation (pp. 8-56). Because each of these functions of art were utilized numerous times within the themes, the entire framework proved beneficial to understanding the impact of art exposure on individuals experiencing housing instability.

Although the entire framework was beneficial, the functions of art mapped on to the findings with vary degrees of frequency. Remembering and sorrow only mapped on to the findings once, and in both instances, they mapped on to the art exposure findings. This makes sense because while the framework could work for dissemination, or within the scope of what staff, volunteer, or administrators perceived, using art as therapy is more about what one does when using art as a tool to address psychological frailties when exposed. The remaining functions of art from the conceptual framework mapped on to all three findings.

After reviewing the data in NVivo, and reviewing data from my observations, I believe that the CHI program participants were most impacted by the teaching and learning experiences that they had while exposed to art and cultural programing. Themes across findings that matched up nearly word for word were: education (teaching & learning), appreciation, perspective, and group benefits (social capital).

In terms of what was emphasized, during the focus groups with CHI program participants, themes such as homelessness, remembering, serenity, social justice, and resilience surfaced. I believe that all of these themes would be more likely at the forefront of their
discussions because of where those experiencing housing instability are positioned. Homelessness is on their mind, and their experiences with being vulnerably housed means that homelessness is an ever-present threat.

The staff, volunteer, and administrative participant facilitators emphasized different concepts. The facilitators were certainly concerned with addressing the problem of homelessness, but they don’t live it. When you live it, you seek out art to find spaces that act as a reprieve from it. That is why the impact of exposure to art offered a sense of serenity to participants experiencing housing instability. I believe that is why a sense of serenity and remembering surfaced frequently. As de Botton would say, art for them offered a sense of serenity because it provided them with a tool to recall what was really important in life (de Botton & Armstrong, 2016).

Additionally, as a result of experiencing housing instability and homelessness, CHI program participants were more likely to speak of their resilience as a matter of necessity. Because of how they are positioned, they are often faced with social injustices through which they must persevere, which requires resilience. With that being said, it also makes sense that social justice is a theme that would surface frequently among program participants.

Access and growth were among the staff, volunteer, and administrative participant themes that contrasted with the CHI program participants themes. I believe that this makes perfect sense in light of their roles and perspectives as facilitator. First, their primary goal was to ensure Comprehensive Access, without that, exposure to art and cultural programing was not possible. Working to ensure Comprehensive Access meant that CHI program participants were afforded the potential to learn, which eventually leads to what facilitators called growth. These gains in Ambient Capital were as a result of open portals to art events that participants could step
through. Once a participant stepped through a portal, they were forever changed via the learning process, which facilitators saw as tangible and lasting change (growth). But it was not possible for growth to happen on its own. As de Botton (2013) argues in the School of Life conference, art has to be reframed so that it can become a place that holds the greatest utility. Facilitators reframed art during outings by having those who were intimately familiar with the art events reframe it via discussion. This explains why from a facilitator perspective social capital and access would surface to the top as themes.

Many of the themes that surfaced throughout all of the individual interviews with staff, volunteers, and administrators were closely tied into the de Botton’s (2016) Art as Therapy framework. For example, it is not a stretch to see that the theme of education ties in closely with self-understanding. Other themes such as appreciation and growth were concepts that were already embedded in the theory. Concepts around social capital, including access and perspective were a bit more elusive. A change of perspective, which in some respects was the catalyst for growth, can be a part of both growth and de Botton’s concept of rebalancing. According to de Botton (2016), rebalancing can help people connect socially with other groups of people in meaningful ways (pg. 30). I believe this is also the linkage to social capital, another form of growth.

In terms of the impact of the dissemination on participants, looking at my observations, the CHI program participants focus group data, and the facilitator data, there are a number of similarities. All three sources of data saw that the exhibit was a means for feeling heard. In my observations I saw two groups of people in the same room, that might not otherwise connect, having discussions. Elvis and the participants commented on this as well. Elvis added some context to this theme by stating that funders, volunteers, and policy makers also felt heard by
engaging with participants. Feeling heard ties into discussion regarding social issues and solutions, which in this case was the benefit of programming. The exhibit, which is a function of the method, offered a medium for this to take place. With that being said, it was important to everyone in attendance. When it came to the theme of helping people, everyone in attendance thought this was important, but for different reasons. The participants wanted to help keep the program funded. They were also interested in helping future program participants and others outside of their group. The philanthropist derived meaning from helping participants through funding their program. I think that it makes sense that the impact of dissemination included helping others within these various perspectives.

Finally, many were uncertain of the lasting impact of the exhibit. The participants and Elvis both agreed that attending one exhibit isn’t enough to say that any lasting changes will be made. Financial gain was the final benefit of the exhibit. Program participants saw this as a way to make financial gains, while Elvis saw this as a way for exhibit goers to offer program participants affirmations by telling them they value their art enough to purchase it.

**Mapping Findings onto the Methodological Framework**

This dissertation methodologically included Photovoice theories as part of the framework through which the study was conducted. More specifically, this was a Photoethnography that was grounded in Participatory Action Research, Freirean theory, and Feminist theory. Additionally, this dissertation was conducted within the ethnographic tradition and thus included ethnographic theoretical underpinnings.

This study was participatory in nature and included all participants as research collaborators and advocates. As a function of the methodology, both CHI program participants; and staff, volunteer, and administrative participants met to create a strategy for dissemination
before policy makers. Because they worked together, the CHI program participants were able to co-construct a message for policy makers and others to hear; and the staff, volunteer, and administrative participants were able to provide insight on who the agency level policy makers were, and how to contact them with the message. In other words, they all played specific and important parts in seeing to it that the study was conducted within the participatory framework as it relates to social advocacy. Additionally, the CHI program participants also acted as research collaborators because they were responsible for collecting data, searching for themes, and preparing materials for dissemination. Finally, staff, volunteer, and administrative participants also contributed as collaborators because they were largely responsible for securing the resources for the venue, contacting and inviting the policy makers, and setting up the exhibit before dissemination took place.

The dissertation subscribed to Freirean theory in a number of ways, with the most prominent way being through empowerment education. There were several educational endeavors that both CHI program participants; and staff, volunteer, and administrative participants took part in. First, CHI program participants were a part of the art and cultural exposure programing, which meant being a part of a group learning experience. As mentioned in the findings sections, not only did they learn from going to the various art events, they also learned from their peers and the facilitators. Also, coming together to speak out to policy makers was an empowerment education endeavor on their part because they came together to learn how to co-construct their own message, and found ways to disseminate it. Also, it is reasonable to perceive this endeavor as contributing to learning on the part of those that came to the exhibit.

The staff, volunteer, and administrative participants were also a part of the empowerment education endeavor because they subscribed to the concept of Comprehensive Access. In short,
Comprehensive Access meant that staff, volunteer, and administrative facilitators made sure that social relationships were prevalent enough to contribute to learning by forging relationships and opportunities for communication between CHI program participants; and the curators, tour guides, performers, etcetera at each of the art and cultural exposure events. Comprehensive Access allowed participants to fully take advantage of these educational experiences and use art as therapy to learn in ways that best address their psychological frailties.

Elements of Feminist theory also permeated this dissertation. First, as a function of the methodology, Photovoice honors the voices of individuals that are experiencing marginalization or oppression. In Wang, Burris and Pings (1997) seminal work with women in China, they noted that Photovoice was a tool that could be used to help women experiencing oppression co-construct a narrative for dissemination before policy makers in a male dominated society. In a similar manner, CHI program participants experience marginalization and oppression through housing instability were able to have their voices heard before policy makers in a way that honored their voices. Most of the facilitators (83%) and most of the participants from both groups (53%) identified as female. And while the group was not an all-female group addressing feminist issues, the feministic benefits of the methodology were evident. Finally, my reflexivity and positionality work are rooted in feminist traditions, and these exercises allowed me to better understanding intersectionality and positionality in a way that spoke to those Feminist traditions.

Finally, this dissertation was a Photoethnography that included ethnographic theoretical underpinnings. First, this study was a part of a suite of studies that was conducted years prior to the start of this dissertation. My role in that study as an ethnography included making observations and taking jottings at art events. It was only through the extensive time that I put in within the art and cultural exposure group that I was able to gain a better understanding of the
people and culture surrounding it. It was with an ethnographer’s insight that I was able to conduct this study, which allowed me to purposively select participants and quickly home in on themes that surfaced in this study. Also, to better understand dissemination and the role that participants played as research collaborators, I used ethnographic methods to gather artifacts and take jottings for field notes. All of these Ethnographic methods provided essential context in the form of observational data which allowed readers to gain a clear understanding of details surrounding the findings sections.

**Addressing the Gaps in the Literature**

This section of the discussion looks at how some of the gaps in the literature were addressed. This is a fairly easy task because the literature on homelessness, and art and cultural exposure is spare, and the gaps are wide. There were two major parts to the literature review. The first half of the literature review concerned itself with a number of populations. If you recall, due to the lack of art and cultural exposure literature, none of the literature that was reviewed pertained to homelessness. Instead, the literature review was approached and organized by looking at the different types of art and cultural exposure (visual, audio-visual [performing arts], and auditory) among participants experiencing a variety of problems contributing to psychological frailties, marginalization, and oppression. In the second major part of the literature review, this lack of literature also meant looking at articles on homelessness, while taking a broader approach to art and cultural exposure by incorporating material beyond the scope of exposure to art (art appreciation). This meant incorporating literature that dealt with the creation of art (art creation). Therefore, the review landed on a convergence of the art and homelessness literature.
Given everything that has been said, this study addresses a gap in the literature because it specifically looks at how art and cultural exposure impacts program participants that are experiencing housing instability. It might be helpful to take a look at some examples that demonstrate how this study fell within these gaps. This can be done by briefly looking at what was learned from this study, and how lessons learned relate back to gaps in both types of literature (non-homeless & homeless).

**Filling Gaps in the Non-homelessness Literature**

Again, the first half of the literature review deals with populations outside of homelessness and how they are impacted by art and cultural exposure. Because this study pertains to issues around homelessness and housing instability, it addresses a gap in the non-homelessness literature. Beyond that, four salient concepts surfaced across all of the non-homelessness literature in this study. They included social capital, psychological benefits, empowerment education, and social justice. Social Capital was a theme that surfaced in this study. Social capital was also the most prevalent concept that surfaced in the non-homelessness literature review. This makes sense because although the population varied, by its very nature, art exposure programing brings people together for the purposes of being exposed to art. The population in the non-homelessness literature was sometimes at the root of how important social capital was within the study. For example, elderly populations suffering from dementia were more likely to suffer from psychological frailties associated with social isolation because of their age and the lack of access to larger social circles (Roe et al., 2016). For them, socializing through art exposure was an important way to use art as therapy. Similarly, findings from this study demonstrated the people experiencing housing instability see gains in social capital as a result of art and cultural exposure programing.
Another salient concept that surfaced across many of the non-homelessness studies was psychological benefits. In the non-homelessness literature, regardless of the demographics or the problems that were being addressed, the various forms of art (visual, AV, & auditory) contributed to the overall psychological wellbeing of study participants. Although the types of psychological benefits varied greatly depending on the population, findings from this study showed similar psychological benefits. For example, in this study remembering was a finding that came about as a result of using art as a tool to address psychological frailties. Again, while in the non-homelessness literature this may have been more prevalent among older groups that suffered from memory issues, using art and cultural exposure to recall pleasant or important things was a finding in this study. Additionally, in at least one case (with prisoners), it was used to a similar effect as those that were in this study in that it was a calming reprieve from the stressors in life. If you recall, participants in this study indicated that they also used exposure to art to find serenity, which was a finding.

Within the non-homelessness literature, empowerment education was also comparable to a finding in this study. Within the non-homelessness literature, empowerment education spoke to two themes from this study. Those themes were related to teaching and education. Empowerment education in the non-homelessness literature generally benefited young people. For those participants, empowerment learning was a way to use education as a form of self-help. For example, by better understanding teen dating violence, or by reducing HIV transmission through changing perceptions about condoms, participants across the literature were able to put useful knowledge to work. Findings from this study did not indicate that knowledge was always about putting useful information to work. With CHI program participants, knowledge was more about the inherent value of education, teaching, and learning. Additionally, the educational
experience was not always planned and guided in this study, which meant that more unguided reciprocal teaching and learning took place among participants.

Finally, social justice was an important salient concept in the non-homelessness literature. According to the non-homelessness literature, feelings of resilience, hope, empowerment education, and the accumulation of social capital all contributed to social justice. Social justice within the context of these salient concepts from the non-homelessness literature can be compared with the same theme (social justice) that surfaced in this study. For example, in the non-homelessness literature, empowerment education was used to help people who sometimes felt powerless in domestic violence situations overcome or bypass those problems. In contrast, findings from this study indicated that CHI program participants framed social justice around talking about and addressing policy issues in focus groups, or through dissemination of their work to policy makers.

Filling Gaps in the Homelessness Literature

Here we take a look at where the homelessness and arts literature converged. Specifically, this section looks at any literature that examined the impact of art, broadly speaking, on participants experiencing homelessness. Findings from this study addressed a gap in the literature because it concerned itself with understanding the impact of art and cultural exposure using the Photovoice method. None of the studies in the convergence literature used Photovoice as a method, dealt with housing instability, or even focused on art exposure. That being said, comparing findings from this literature to salient concepts from the art and homelessness literature could be beneficial to understanding where this study fell within these wide gaps.
A couple of salient concepts from the art and homelessness literature pertained to social inclusion and empowerment. Salient concepts from the homelessness literature also matched up with themes from this study. Similar themes that surfaced in this study were group benefits, social capital, and social justice. These themes were all understandably similar to concepts in the homelessness literature because they are connected to addressing social injustices in the lives of individuals that often experience social isolation and social injustices as a condition of experiencing homelessness or housing instability.

Beyond that, a couple of specific examples can be cited within this literature. According to Thomas et al. (2011), when participants experiencing homelessness have an opportunity to engage in art in meaningful ways, they are left with feelings of social inclusion and empowerment. For these adults, having an opportunity to make art and put it up for sale in a gallery helped them to feel that they had another means of supporting themselves financially. Through these financial endeavors they experienced a sense of empowerment, through the act of identify as artists in the community, they experienced social inclusion. In the same respect, when themes associated with group benefits, social capital, and social justice surfaced, they sometimes pertained to hopeful expression around making money and feeling more connected via dissemination.

In a similar example, Clover (2011) conducted a participatory action study where women were able to socially engage with coaches that could help them create art for exhibitions. Through these educational and social endeavors, the participants felt a greater sense of community and empowerment. In both of these examples, as a result of being exposed to art programs, participants were benefactors of feelings associated with social inclusion and empowerment. Understandably, given the fact that the populations were similar, these salient
concepts from the literature were comparable with the themes that surfaced in this study (group benefits, social capital, & social justice).

**Limitations**

The biggest limitation of this study was that the attendance at the Music Box Theater exhibit was low. This meant that most participants did not get a first-hand account of the impact of their work. I remedied this problem by providing them with pictures from the exhibit, while giving them an account of my first-hand observations. But, firsthand observations on the part of program participants would have yielded better data. For those wishing to carry out a similar project with a comparable population, one remedy to this is to plan multiple showings for the exhibit. Participants openly talked about wishing they could have gone, but with only one possible option, many were left out. Another limitation of the study is that policy makers were not interviewed. While the study did offer insight from people who had insight on what the policy makers were doing, directly speaking to board members acting as policy makers would have provided more depth to this study.

As with many qualitative studies, the findings from this study may not be generalizable to a larger population. Not surprisingly, the study used non-probability sampling. The goal of this study wasn’t to look at a breadth of some data, but to gain some depth from a small sample that could offer insight. While a strength was that I was able to select individuals based on their ability to provide insight, the bias in my selection was a limitation that likely impacted what I found. Many challenges and questions spring from these limitations. First, how do we begin to scale out the 7 themes covered in de Botton’s Art as Therapy? By having a system of measure, we can begin to better understand the importance of each concept to various populations that are exposed to art and cultural programming.
How does art exposure programing impact other marginalized or oppressed groups, and how can de Botton’s framework be used to better understand the meaning of that impact? When “Comprehensive Access” is applied to other groups, do they experience similar benefits, or are the benefits specific to individuals experiencing housing instability? What are the meaningful benefits of art exposure beyond populations that are experiencing social isolation? By having a deeper understanding of the answers to these questions, we gain more insight on how to best use art exposure programming within the context of de Botton’s framework.

Implications

Individuals experiencing housing instability can stand to benefit from exposure to art and cultural events. This study offers some valuable lessons on the benefits of art exposure programs. One of the primary benefits of exposure to art is that it is a practical way to address a myriad of psychological frailties. Individuals experiencing housing instability are particularly susceptible to psychological frailties pertaining to their experiences with belonging to a marginalized and oppressed group. According to my findings, their marginalization often means that they suffer from social isolation. Art and cultural exposure programming is particularly effective at alleviating frailties associated with social isolation, but there are some valuable lessons that go beyond that. It is my hope that these lessons are communicated to social workers, program facilitators, and program participants.

First, facilitators need to focus on access. It is not enough to simply offer a ticket to an event. In order for programs to achieve the type of effectiveness that I cited in this study, those wishing to offer up art exposure services must strive to provide what I call Comprehensive Access. This means removing as many barriers to art exposure programming as possible. A short list of things to consider would be cost of tickets, framing of the events, transportation, and
food. During my observations, the facilitators went out of their way to ensure *Comprehensive Access*. This often meant being flexible and creating individualized plans. It was painstaking work, but they cared enough to do it. In terms of access, framing of events was of paramount importance. By framing events through discussions with informed persons, participants could make profound meaning of the art as they were exposed to it. I firmly believe that if many institutions lived by this standard of service and access, a great number of institutional problems would simply cease. As social workers overseeing programs like this, we need to stop being gatekeepers and start being gate openers. It is only through *Comprehensive Access* that we can understand the full impact of art exposure programming on a wide array of individuals experiencing housing instability, homelessness, and even chronic homelessness.

Second, social bonds are important. Programs like this work best when facilitators have a vested interest in their work. In all of my observations of CHI staff, volunteer, and administrative facilitators, they were more than just people who oversaw programs, they were friends of the CHI program participants. Assuming that people experiencing homelessness suffer from psychological frailties associated with social isolation, exposure to art isn’t enough. Art communities, including the facilitators, have to make lasting and meaningful connections with the people they serve. This means getting to know people on a deeper level so that we can fully comprehend their situations. CHI staff, volunteer, and administrative participants achieved this through making friends with the CHI program participants. Because of these meaningful relationships, staff were able to detect growth that would be imperceptible to agencies that cream and count outcomes. Of course, this requires visionary leadership that offers up space where volunteers can safely live out their various missions while forming meaningful bonds with
program participants. As social workers responsible for facilitating programs like this, we need to start caring to the point of taking a vested interest in the lives of those we serve.

Finally, art exposure programming seems to benefit from a social advocacy piece. Program participants, policy makers, volunteers, and funders felt heard and valued as a result of engaging with each other at the exhibit. As social workers, our job is to correct social injustices. I believe the social workers can get so caught up in service provision, that they forget our professional goals. That is to say, a person can be a “therapist” or “clinician” with a social work degree, and not be practicing social work. For those individuals the degree is simply a conduit to another job. So, what this means for social workers facilitating similar programs is that we have to adopt the nasty business of advocating for our participants in a way that corrects social injustices. That means connecting program participants to politician, funders, and volunteers so that the politics behind what they are doing has an impact. The exhibit, which was a function of the method, offered a platform for that to happen. However, CHI staff, volunteer, and administrative facilitators plan to continue this exhibit annually as a way to allow participants to advocate for themselves.

By ensuring *Comprehensive Access*, focusing on the importance of social bonds, and focusing on social justice, facilitators are more likely to realize the types of gains achieved in this study, especially when instituting similar programming.

It should be noted that conducting participant centered research speaks to our values as social workers, educators, and researchers. Conducting a study where participants can co-create a narrative that is heard before policy makers speaks to social work values such as self-determination and empowerment. When participants, students, and others that we serve are at
the center of what we do as professors, our work becomes more relevant to all of the people that we serve.

Finally, what is the real value of my work? Art is a practical tool that has the potential to help people. People need food, water, and shelter, I’m not here to dispute that, but I believe that we underestimate the need for art, communication, and social contact. Why do we listen to music, watch television, or go to a show? It is because art is another means of making a connection with others over something that moves us.

Weekly I drive by people experiencing homelessness on my way to school. On nearly every trip that I’ve made to Chicago, I’ve seen people repeatedly ignored on the streets. It is as if once a person finds themselves without a home, they become invisible. The more chronic the homelessness, the more isolation they experience. The need for human contact is just as vital as food and shelter and should hold a place among those items. In complete social isolation, we become ill. Humans are social beings, and art provides a fundamental way for us to connect. We make contact with others through various artforms. In short, art is a form of communication. We all long for a meaningful reprieve from what ails us, which is why art exposure is essential to our wellbeing. Whether its screen time, music, or an exhibit, as social beings we need to make social-emotional connections with others to survive. Without art, and without the social connections we make through art, we cease to thrive.
APPENDIX A

CONCEPT MAP
Feminist, Freirean, & PAR
Theoretical frameworks

de Botton’s 7 Functions of
Art Conceptual Framework

Methodology:
Art-based

Intervention:
Art-Exposure

Research Question: What is the impact of art and cultural exposure and engagement on CHI program participants experiencing housing instability?

Participant Analysis – Open Coding
PI Analysis – Open Coding
APPENDIX B

ART EXPOSURE CARD STOCK
What (if anything) are you getting out of the art program?
What was your (favorite/worst) thing about the event/program? Take a few pictures of art at the event and talk about why those pictures are important to you.
Take a picture that shows or represents what life is like on the streets. Take a few pictures of art outside the event, what do they mean to you? Take a picture that represents how the art program impacts your life outside the event, be prepared to explain what these photos mean to you.

1. Using the Photovoice method, describe the impact that the CHI and art and cultural exposure and engagement program has on you?
APPENDIX C

ART EXPOSURE INTERVIEW
FOCUS GROUP GUIDE – PHOTOVOICE

**Project Title:** The Tao of Art and Science: Understanding the Impact of Art Exposure via Art-Based Scientific Methods

Thank you for taking the time to meet with me. I’m here to facilitate a discussion about your experiences in the arts and culture program you’re participating in with Chicago Help Initiative (CHI). We are audio recording this discussion for future analysis, but any names of people associated with the program mentioned here will be replaced with pseudonyms.

While engaged in this program, you took some pictures that would help you answer the research questions that were posed. I’m going to briefly review those questions and prompts with you today, and then you will each have an opportunity to talk about the photos that you selected for this discussion. After each person has presented their collection of photos, as a group you will have a chance to respond to that person’s collection of photos. Just before we leave we will attempt to identify any reoccurring themes that surfaced during our conversation.

Participation in this focus group may involve risk to you, including loss of confidentiality. In order to address this risk, we ask you not to repeat anything discussed in this focus group. However, we have no control over any participants following the completion of this focus group and cannot guarantee complete confidentiality.

After each person presents, feel free to jump into the discussion wherever you’d like. We’d like to hear from everyone, so we may ask you to speak up if we haven’t heard from you. That being said, you are not required to respond to the photos that you see, or the narrative that is attached.

1. Using the Photovoice method, describe the impact that the CHI art and cultural exposure and engagement program has on you?
a) What (if anything) are you getting out of the art program?
b) What was your (favorite/worst) thing about the event/program?
c) Take a few pictures of art at the event and talk about why those pictures are important to you.
d) Take a picture that shows or represents what life is like on the streets.
e) Take a few pictures of art outside the event, what do they mean to you?
f) Take a picture that represents how the art program impacts your life outside the event, be prepared to explain what these photos mean to you.

2. What reoccurring themes that surfaced during our discussion tonight?

That’s all, thank you very much for your time. Does anyone have anything else to add?
APPENDIX D

STAFF, VOLUNTEER, AND ADMINISTRATION CARD

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What (if anything) are the participants getting out of the art program? What do you believe was their (favorite/worst) thing about the event/program? Why is the program important? What is achieved through this program? What are people getting out of the art exposure program that they can’t get out of another program (sports, reading, employment, etcetera)?

1. Using the Photovoice method, describe the impact that the CHI art and cultural exposure and engagement program has on vulnerably housed participants?
APPENDIX E

STAFF, VOLUNTEER, AND ADMINISTRATOR INTERVIEW
**Project Title:** The Tao of Art and Science: Understanding the Impact of Art Exposure via Art-Based Scientific Methods

Thank you for taking the time to meet with me. I’m here to facilitate a discussion about your experiences in the arts and culture program facilitated by Chicago Help Initiative (CHI). We are audio recording this discussion for future analysis, but any names of people associated with the program mentioned here will be replaced with pseudonyms.

As an administrator of the program, you are seated in a unique position to help you answer the research questions that were posed. I’m going to briefly review those questions and prompts with you today, and then you will each have an opportunity to address each of these questions throughout our discussion.

Participation in this interview may involve risk to you, including loss of confidentiality. In order to address this risk, we ask you not to repeat anything discussed in this interview.

1. Using the Photovoice method, describe the impact that the CHI art and cultural exposure and engagement program has on vulnerably housed participants?

   a) What (if anything) are the participants getting out of the art program?
   b) What do you believe was their (favorite/worst) thing about the event/program?
   c) Why is the program important?
   d) What is achieved through this program?
   e) What are people getting out of the art exposure program that they can’t get out of another program (sports, reading, employment, etcetera)?

2. Is there anything else that you’d like to add to the discussion tonight?
That’s all, thank you very much for your time.
APPENDIX F

DISSEMINATION CARD
What (if anything) did you get out of mounting the exhibit?
What was your (favorite/worst) thing about the exhibit?
Why was the exhibit important to you?
What would you change about the exhibit if you could do it again?
Is there anything else that you would change about the Photovoice project?

How do you make meaning of having your voice heard before policy makers at the art exhibit?
APPENDIX G

DISSEMINATION INTERVIEW
Project Title: The Tao of Art and Science: Understanding the Impact of Art Exposure via Art-Based Scientific Methods

Thank you for taking the time to meet with me. I’m here to facilitate a discussion about your experiences planning and mounting an art exhibit where your voices could be heard by policy makers. We are audio recording this discussion for future analysis, but any names of people associated with the program mentioned here will be replaced with pseudonyms.

While engaged in this project, you all had an opportunity to plan an art exhibit where your photographs could be seen and discussed. I would like to hear about your experiences mounting the exhibit. Although the program administrators did not display art at the exhibit, they were instrumental in helping you all plan the exhibit and invite guests. Additionally, they attended your art exhibit, and can give another first-hand account of what took place at the exhibit from a staff or administrative perspective. For this reason, we have invited all of you here today to talk about the meaning of mounting this exhibit.

Participation in this focus group may involve risk to you, including loss of confidentiality. In order to address this risk, we ask you not to repeat anything discussed in this focus group. However, we have no control over any participants following the completion of this focus group and cannot guarantee complete confidentiality.

As we talk about this research question, feel free to jump into the discussion wherever you’d like. We’d like to hear from everyone, so we may ask you to speak up if we haven’t heard from you. That being said, you are not required to respond any of the questions

1. How do you make meaning of having your voice heard before policy makers at the art exhibit?
a) What (if anything) did you get out of mounting the exhibit?
b) What was your (favorite/worst) thing about the exhibit?
c) Why was the exhibit important to you?
d) What would you change about the exhibit if you could do it again?
e) Is there anything else that you would change about the Photovoice project?

2. What reoccurring themes that surfaced during our discussion tonight?

That’s all, thank you very much for your time. Does anyone have anything else to add?
APPENDIX H

RECRUITMENT SCRIPTS
Hello __________,

I want to let you know about a project I am doing related to our evaluation of the Chicago Help Initiative (CHI) that may be something you are interested in. This is a Photovoice research project to learn about arts and culture exposure and engagement for vulnerably housed adults.

The Chicago Help Initiative (CHI) has been contacted by a PhD student from Loyola University Chicago (LUC), and the CHI has agreed to cooperate with a research study that will help us to learn how direct services combined with Arts and Culture Exposure impacts people. This study focuses on how engagement with CHI services and arts and cultural programming impacts a small group of individuals. The researchers want to know what role, if any, does engagement with RLS arts and cultural programming play in CHI and/or other agency program retention and service utilization. To do this, the researchers need to speak with participants that are vulnerably housed and receiving services from CHI. The researchers want to know how people use arts and culture exposure, how this exposure impacts people, and whether or not these services are perceived as useful.

This part of the study is asking you to take part in a Photovoice project. Photographing opportunities (Photo-ops) of CHI facilitated arts and cultural activities will commence at the art and cultural event. These Photo-ops will last for the duration of the event. Photography from prior CHI & Red Line Service (RLS) art and cultural events can also be discussed. Participants are welcome to pursue and include Photo-ops outside of the events that speak to the importance of the art and cultural events that they attend. After the event, the participants will meet to submit photos and discuss the importance of the photos that were taken. Prompts will be reviewed, which will provide a starting point for the conversations. Conversations will be recorded with audio recorders for transcription. Participants will also plan and mount an art exhibit, which will be followed by a focus group. All photos and voice recordings will be stored on password protected computers. Names and other identifying information will be removed during the transcription process to protect the identity of the participants. Voice recordings will be kept for seven years following the date of the last observation. Photos and transcripts will be kept on file on a secure password protected computer by the PI for an indefinite period of time.
Voluntary Participation
Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. You do not have to agree to take photos or be recorded by the researchers. If you decide that you don’t want to take pictures or discuss them while being recorded, it will not affect any services that you receive from CHI or any other agency either now or in the future. If you decide to be a part of the Photovoice project, you can decide to stop participating at any time.

Questions
If you have any questions, feel free to refer them to me at any time. In addition, if in the future you have any questions for the researcher, you can get in touch Willie W. Jackson Jr. at (630) 706-1335 or wjackson@luc.edu.
Hello __________,

I want to let you know about a project I am doing related to our evaluation of the Chicago Help Initiative (CHI) that may be something you are interested in. This is a Photovoice research project to learn about arts and culture exposure and engagement for vulnerably housed adults.

The Chicago Help Initiative (CHI) has been contacted by a PhD student from Loyola University Chicago (LUC), and the CHI has agreed to cooperate with a research study that will help us to learn how direct services combined with Arts and Culture Exposure impacts people. This study focuses on how engagement with CHI services and arts and cultural programming impacts a small group of individuals. The researchers want to know what role, if any, does engagement with RLS arts and cultural programming play in CHI and/or other agency program retention and service utilization. To do this, the researchers need to speak with administrators and staff that work with CHI participants that are involved in the art exposure program. The researchers want to know how people use arts and culture exposure, how this exposure impacts people, and whether or not these services are perceived as useful.

This part of the study is asking you to take part in an individual interview. Additionally, it asks that you join participants in planning and mounting an art exhibit. If you agree to be in the study, you will be asked to participate in the following activities:

You will be asked to join the PI for individual interviews designed to help the researcher better understand the impact of art exposure on vulnerably housed participants. Although likely shorter, Interviews could run from up to 45 minutes. The interview will be audio recorded for later transcription, researchers make an effort to protect the identity of anyone mentioned in this study by your identity through the use of pseudonyms, which will be added in place of names during transcription. Additionally, you will be asked to help the participants plan and mount an exhibit where their photos can be seen and their voices can be heard by policy makers and community members that have a vested interest in the program.

Voluntary Participation: Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. You do not have to agree to being interviewed or recorded by the researchers. If you decide that you don’t want to be interviewed while being recorded, it will not affect any services that you provide through CHI or any other agency either now or in the future. If you decide to be a part of the Photovoice project, you can decide to stop participating at any time.

Questions
If you have any questions, feel free to refer them to me at any time. In addition, if in the future you have any questions for the researcher, you can get in touch Willie W. Jackson Jr. at (630) 706-1335 or wjackson@luc.edu.
THE TAO OF ART AND SCIENCE
UNDERSTANDING THE IMPACT OF ART EXPOSURE VIA ART-BASED METHODS

PARTICIPANT CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN PHOTOVOICE ACTIVITIES & FOCUS GROUP

**Project Title:** The Tao of Art and Science: Understanding Art Exposure via Art-Based Methods  
**Researcher:** Willie W. Jackson  
**Introduction:** You are being asked to take part in a research study being conducted by a doctoral student and overseen by faculty members in the Department of Social Work at Loyola University of Chicago.  
**Purpose:** The purpose of this study is to examine the impact of art exposure on vulnerably housed adults using the Photovoice as an art-based methodology. The target population consists of people participating in services with the Chicago Help Initiative (CHI). Researchers are also interested in the impact that mounting an art exhibit has on participants. Up to twenty participants will be asked to complete this study.  
**Procedures:**  
If you agree to be in the study, you will join the team and be asked to help investigate the following:

During exposure to the various arts and cultures programs offered by CHI, you will take photographs of observations that you make while you take part in the arts and cultural activities. Where necessary, the researcher responsible for gathering monthly data will arrive at the start of the field trip or activity with cameras so that you can take photographs of what you observe. Although cameras will be provided, you will have the latitude to use any photography equipment that you are comfortable with (i.e. smart phones, cell phones, film fed cameras, digital cameras, etcetera). To capture data on how art exposure has an effect outside of the program, participants can also take photographs outside of the events. Photographers should attempt to capture at least 7 images inside and outside of the event that they wish to display and talk about with the team of researchers. Participants may decide to take pictures of things or places. Participants may also decide to take selfies. If you take pictures of yourself, you have the right to choose if you want them to be displayed in the exhibit, which will occur as part of this project. If you display a picture of yourself in the exhibit, your identity will no longer remain unknown or confidential. After the event, researchers and participants will take the photos that they captured to team meetings where they will be discussed. These discussions will be audio recorded. The purpose of recording these photographs and the related discussions is to use Photovoice to better understand what participation in these types of events is like, how participants engage, and how
the events impact their lives. Finally, participants can opt to plan and mount an exhibit where their photos can be displayed. The Photovoice project will help researchers and collaborators understand what art and cultural exposure is, and how these arts and cultural activities and programs impacts participants lives.

**Risks/Benefits:** Participation in the Photovoice activities by utilizing photography which is supported by statements should not pose any immediate risk to you other than those encountered every day. Participants may decide to take selfies. If you take pictures of yourself, you have the right to choose if you want them to be displayed in the exhibit, which will occur as part of this project. If you display a picture of yourself in the exhibit, your identity will no longer remain unknown or confidential.

There are no direct benefits to CHI arts and culture exposure and engagement participants, other than any benefits that you may experience as a result of participating in the project. Your participation will contribute to gaining a greater understanding of the benefits of arts and culture exposure and engagement among adults experiencing homelessness. Potential benefits to society include gaining a greater understanding of the benefits of arts and culture exposure and engagement among adults experiencing homelessness.

**Confidentiality:** Photographs, recorded statements, and transcriptions will be kept on a secure database at the university so as to protect the confidentiality of the participants. During the transcriptions process, client selected pseudonyms will be used in place of names so as to protect their identity. All Photovoice data will be stored on password protected computers at the university and will not contain names or other identifying information. Focus group audio recordings will be kept for seven years following the date of the last arts event in which observations occur. Photos and transcriptions will be kept on file by the PI for an indefinite period of time.

**Voluntary Participation:** Participation in this study is voluntary. If you do not want to be observed, you do not have to participate. Even if you decide to participate, you are free withdraw from participation at any time without penalty. Whether or not you decide to be observed will have no effect on the services you are receiving from CHI, or any other service provider now or in the future.

**Compensation:** Your participation in this study is very important to us. For each instance that you participate in the team meetings where we discuss the photos that were taken, you will be compensated for your time with $10 in cash. If you participate in the meeting you will be compensated, even if you decide to discontinue the discussion early, or have all or portions of your discussion omitted.

**Contacts and Questions:** If you have any questions about this research study, please feel free to contact Willie W. Jackson Jr. at Loyola University Chicago, at (630) 706-1335 or wjackson@luc.edu.
If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the Loyola University Office of Research Services at (773) 508-2689.

**Statement of Consent:** Your signature below indicates that you have read the information provided above, have had an opportunity to ask questions, and that you agree to participate in this research study. You will be given a copy of this form to keep for your records.

Please check boxes to indicate whether or not you consent to participating in the various portions of this study:

Knowing that if pictures of yourself are displayed in the exhibit you will be waiving your right to confidentiality. If you **DO NOT** want the option to include selfies in the art exhibit, check the box below:

□ I **DO NOT** want photos of myself included in the study or the exhibit.

If you **DO** consent to participating in other parts of the study, check the boxes indicating the parts that you agree to participate in:

□ I **DO** consent to the use of photos of myself for this study, but this is if and only if I decide to take a photo of myself, and I select those photos to be included in the exhibit
□ I **DO** consent to having my voice recorded during focus groups, and later transcribed for this study
□ I **DO** consent to allowing photos that I take for this project to be used for this study

____________________________________________        __________________
Participant’s Signature                                        Date
____________________________________________         ___________________
Researcher’s Signature                                          Date
THE TAO OF ART AND SCIENCE
UNDERSTANDING THE IMPACT OF ART EXPOSURE VIA ART-BASED METHODS

ADMINISTRATION CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN ACTIVITIES & INTERVIEWS

Project Title: The Tao of Art and Science: Understanding Art Exposure via Art-Based Methods
Researcher: Willie W. Jackson

Introduction: You are being asked to take part in a research study being conducted by a doctoral student and overseen by faculty members in the Department of Social Work at Loyola University of Chicago.

Purpose: The purpose of this study is to examine the impact of arts and culture exposure on vulnerably housed adults using the Photovoice as an art-based methodology. The target population consists of people participating in services with the Chicago Help Initiative (CHI). Researchers are also interested in the impact that mounting an art exhibit has on participants and would like additional insight from administrators. Up to six participants will be asked to complete this study.

Procedures: If you agree to be in the study, you will be asked to participate in the following activities:

You will be asked to join the PI for individual interviews designed to help the researcher better understand the impact of art exposure on vulnerably housed participants. Although likely shorter, interviews could run from up to 45 minutes. The interview will be audio recorded for later transcription, researchers make an effort to protect the identity of anyone mentioned in this study by your identity through the use of pseudonyms, which will be added in place of names during transcription. Additionally, you will be asked to help the participants plan and mount an exhibit where their photos can be seen and their voices can be heard by policy makers and community members that have a vested interest in the program.

Risks/Benefits: Participation in these research activities should not pose any immediate risk to you other than those encountered every day. There are no direct benefits to CHI arts and culture exposure and engagement administrators, other than any benefits that you may experience as a result of overseeing the project. Your participation will contribute to gaining a greater understanding of the benefits of arts and culture exposure and engagement among adults experiencing homelessness. Potential benefits to society include gaining a greater understanding of the benefits of arts and culture exposure and engagement among adults experiencing homelessness.

Confidentiality: Interviews, recorded statements, and transcriptions will be kept on a secure database at the university so as to protect the confidentiality of the participants. During the transcriptions process, client selected pseudonyms will be used in place of names so as to protect their identity. All Photovoice data will be stored on password protected computers at the university and will not contain names or other identifying information. All focus group and interview audio recordings will be kept for seven years following the date of the last arts event in which observations occur. Transcriptions will be kept on file by the PI for an indefinite period of time.

Voluntary Participation: Participation in this study is voluntary. If you do not want to answer questions, you do not have to participate. Even if you decide to participate, you are free withdraw from participation at any time without penalty. Whether or not you decide to be participate will have no effect on the services you offer at CHI, or any other services you provide now or in the future.
Contacts and Questions: If you have any questions about this research study, please feel free to contact Willie W. Jackson Jr. at Loyola University Chicago, at (630) 706-1335 or wjackson@luc.edu. If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the Loyola University Office of Research Services at (773) 508-2689.

Statement of Consent: Your signature below indicates that you have read the information provided above, have had an opportunity to ask questions, and that you agree to participate in this research study. You will be given a copy of this form to keep for your records.

Please check boxes to indicate whether or not you consent to participating in the various portions of this study:

____________________________________________        __________________
Participant’s Signature                              Date

____________________________________                ___________________
Researcher’s Signature                                Date
APPENDIX J

MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING
Dear Loyola University of Chicago

The Chicago Help Initiative (CHI) is very pleased to have the opportunity to develop the CHI art exposure project with the Loyola University School of social work and to work with Willie W. Jackson Jr.

The CHI drop-in center provides a weekly evening meal for homeless and very low-income guests in downtown Chicago. Guests at the meal are offered access to a variety of services. Among these options are peer groups centered around art and culture-based activities.

The evaluation tools and expertise that Loyola brings will better allow us to measure and evaluate the impact that these specific in-house programs have in helping our homeless and very low-income supper guests realize their own goals for changing their lives.

We will be providing Loyola with access to both our guests in the art and culture projects and to guests in other in-house programs as well as the general population we serve.

We are very pleased and honored to be working with Loyola.

Thank You,

Doug Fraser, Executive Director
The Chicago Help Initiative
440 N. Wells St. Suite 440
Chicago Illinois 60654
APPENDIX K

PHOTOVOICE PUBLICATION
The Tao of Art

Reflections on Exposure to Art via Artistic Expressions

I truly believe that every time we are forced to ignore a homeless person, it is not only an assault on that person’s dignity, but a detrimental blow to our very own humanity. I believe that housing is a necessary and basic human right, and I believe that our nation is deeply and systematically harmed when we are forced to ignore this type of suffering. That is why I’m dedicated to working with my community to pull together our stories, photos, and other works of art into a book that I believe will communicate the importance of finding our humanity when faced with homelessness. Thank you from the bottom of our hearts for joining us on this journey, and we hope that you enjoy our art.

Willie W. Jackson Jr., MSW
That's the Biograph Theater. I think a lot of us saw the production there. For me, that was a very sentimental, yet weird experience.
I guess it's going on 10 years ago now, well 9, I worked in that theater in a play which was called Blackbird.
But it was very weird to go back to that after all this time because, maybe two years after that, I ended up on the damn street.

Going back that day to that play, which was a good enough play, it was so.... you know Thomas Wolfe said, you can't go home again, and I really think he was right about that because everything had changed. And it was very, very weird.

There wasn't a trace of anyone. That's a picture of a hole in someone's shoe, you have a lot of that when you are homeless. Actually I was just testing my camera.

-Michael-

When I take these pictures I'm not doing it to belittle anybody, I just want it to be known.
Some people just walk past it like it doesn't exist, and I just think maybe the mayor or other politicians, they need to be more... be on top of it to just come out and talk to these people, make them feel warmer even though they don't have a place to lay their heads, or whatever.
But this man is missing one limb, and you could tell he was living out there.

So that's what I wanted to address my attention to. Yeah this is a veteran, he said he's a disabled veteran, please help

Star Child —
My ability to empathize & be a loving person has grown.
I still have my hills & valleys, but the struggle to maintain my life has become less of a burden.
This is the way you navigate in life. Bamboo doesn’t break, it bends. I learned to become flexible, like bamboo.

I felt as though someone just recharged my life. The folks at CHI & Redline restored my sanity.
Their kindness, monetary generosity, caring, and unconditional love really activated my life!

-True Love-

I just love old buildings.
They just make you think back
I love ‘em,
I just like the old feel
and learning about old things.

-Jaqueline-
This is by Alexander Calder; and it’s titled Flying Dragon.
I think art sets you free. It helps you fly. It elevates you to a different sphere where you begin to look at things differently, you begin to think about things differently, and you begin to feel differently, about things.

Art helps us begin to look at the world and see the beauty.

-Richard-

Picasso refused to name it, so whatever you think it is, that’s what it is. It’s in front of what I call a Mesium building, and this kind of a building was invented in Chicago by Lou Vandblit, so Picasso had this made in the foundry with the same material.

This is a Sculpture in Millennium Park called Cloud Gate, which everyone has adopted and called The Bean. This is a perfect example of how Art reflects life.

-Richard-
Because I know when I was a little boy, growing up in Cabrini-Green, they were building the giant Hancock buildings. Because we could see it from... every time, when we would walk up to Lakeshore Drive, we walked to the lake. Go straight down Oak Street, walk straight to the lake. North Avenue Beach, Oak Street Beach, we walked a distance from it, even though we lived in Cabrini-Green. When we were little kids we found out how to get to the Lake Front. We didn’t sell drugs or anything like that, but we had a hustle. For example we would get paid to carry groceries up the stairs. I made a shoe shine stand and I hustled bottles.

-Bobby-

A Moment in Time
A Day of My Life

This is one of the places I love to sit and reflect. It’s just the peace, quiet, and tranquility. It’s so quiet, and you don’t get that type of quiet in the city. Sometimes you can be alone right there with your thoughts. It’s so tranquil and quiet. I’m being one with nature when I’m there. -Sean-
They have volunteers and they love the people.
People are together and participating with us in these types of events.
I’m sure they have great careers and could be doing something else, but they choose to be with us.
-Larry-

I truly believe that art exposure programs are a bold step toward moving beyond food and shelter. This is a place where people from all walks of life come together and experience art within a loving community.
I’ve been blessed enough to experience a program that boldly challenges the status quo by connecting people in ways that help us find our humanity. Thank you for opening your heart to us.
-Willy W. Jackson Jr.
REFERENCE LIST


doi:doi/10.1177/147130121142109


Beverly Palibroda with Brigette Krieg, Lisa Murdock, & Joanne Havelock.*A practical guide to photovoice: Sharing pictures, telling stories and changing communities*


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VITA

Dr. Jackson was born in Saginaw, Michigan, on May 22, 1974. He attended Aurora University, where he minored in Philosophy and earned two degrees, which included a Bachelor of Elementary Education in 2002, and a Master of Social Work in 2007. While at Aurora University, he earned the Ivy Leaf award for academic excellence and graduated with cum laude honors. Dr. Jackson worked at a homeless shelter in Aurora, Illinois between 2006 and 2016. In his capacity as a social worker, he fulfilled many roles and held a number of positions including an entry level Case Worker position. In 2007 he was promoted to Assistant Director, and in 2008 he was promoted again to Program Director.

In 2012, in the midst of a tuberculosis outbreak at the shelter, Dr. Jackson headed up a small team of Case Managers responsible for the care and well-being of confirmed positive tuberculosis cases. Primarily responsible for data collection, he also worked with the Outbreak Investigations Team, Division of Tuberculosis Elimination for the CDC. In this role he tracked and interviewed people experiencing chronic homelessness that were difficult to find due to living arrangements not suitable for long term human habitation. He successfully located transient populations and collected necessary data for the team, which helped strengthen CDC research findings. For his efforts, he was awarded the title Honorary Epidemic Intelligence Service (EIS) Officer.

Having gained a fondness and appreciation for research, after the outbreak ended Dr. Jackson submitted an application to Loyola University Chicago’s School of Social Work PhD
program. While at Loyola University Chicago, he honed his skills as a researcher and teacher by committing to his studies, working on a number of research projects, presenting at academic conferences, and working as an adjunct professor. In 2020, while finishing up his dissertation, Dr. Jackson applied for, and took a full-time tenure track position as Assistant Professor at Aurora University. Dr. Jackson defended his dissertation on April 17, 2020 and is noted as being the 2nd African American male to graduate from Loyola’s School of Social Work with a PhD, with the first African American male (Dr. Mikal Rasheed) graduating over 20 years ago in 1997.