



THE UNIVERSITY OF
WAIKATO
Te Whare Wānanga o Waikato

Research Commons

<http://researchcommons.waikato.ac.nz/>

Research Commons at the University of Waikato

Copyright Statement:

The digital copy of this thesis is protected by the Copyright Act 1994 (New Zealand).

The thesis may be consulted by you, provided you comply with the provisions of the Act and the following conditions of use:

- Any use you make of these documents or images must be for research or private study purposes only, and you may not make them available to any other person.
- Authors control the copyright of their thesis. You will recognise the author's right to be identified as the author of the thesis, and due acknowledgement will be made to the author where appropriate.
- You will obtain the author's permission before publishing any material from the thesis.

How mature adults view the effects of participation in a community visual arts class on their daily lives

A thesis
submitted in partial fulfilment
of the requirements for the degree
of
Master of Education in Department of Education
at
The University of Waikato
by
HELEN ENGLISH



THE UNIVERSITY OF
WAIKATO
Te Whare Wānanga o Waikato

2019

ABSTRACT

The global population is ageing, due to a reduction in birth rate and increasing life expectancy. As a country, New Zealand statistics predict that these changes will impact in the near future, and there is increasing pressure on the need for a functioning older population. The social and educational wellbeing of mature adults is an vital area of research to identify solutions, thus reducing the impact on the generations which support the economy.

Research has linked visual art participation to enhanced curriculum learning as well as benefits to social, mental and physical health. Reported learning outcomes include skills, such as memory, imagination and fine motor skills, however research beyond the curriculum largely centres on wellbeing aspects. Whilst this still has relevance in education, this study's primary focus is the educational effects of visual art participation.

Specifically, the aims of this study are to explore mature adult's perceptions of the changes which are created by learning in visual art, and the effects of these changes on their everyday lives. This research investigates whether active participation in visual art classes may be of value to the mature population through the development of skills and social benefits.

The research question investigated in this thesis is:

How do mature adult participants view the effects of a visual arts class in a community setting on their daily lives?

Participants, who classified themselves as beginners in visual art, attended six weekly two-hour classes, which included drawing, design, printing and painting sessions. They were encouraged to develop drawing skills, and given the choice of completing either a self-portrait or a portrait of someone close to them. They

then designed and made relief printing blocks to represent aspects of the person they had drawn, and used these to create a background for their portrait. The end result, for the participants, was a complete artwork which demonstrated their progress in learning specific visual art skills.

I used qualitative methodology, including an open-ended questionnaire prior to the first of the visual art classes, a reflective journal to record my thoughts of the art classes and their flow (reflecting on how this relates to the planning) and semi-structured interviews with each participant following the completion of the six visual art classes.

The findings indicate that participation in a visual art class in a community setting effects a perceived increase in the visual and creative skills of participants, as well as their problem-solving and listening skills. In addition to this, participants described growth in social bonds, both within and outside of the class, and self-concept. Growth of skill and self-belief were key outcomes of this learning and appeared to improve through positive social interaction. To use visual art participation as a tool in the wider community may benefit older members of the population and, in turn, benefit us all.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

At the start of this research, I was ‘unconsciously unaware’ of my lack of preparation for the journey which lay ahead. I have learned many things, and still have much to learn, about the many processes of research. It is through the support of many people that I have grown through this year, which has been a joy and a challenge in equal amounts.

My supervisor, Claire Coleman - I am grateful for your patience and I thank you for continually pushing me to be the best researcher and writer which I am able to be. There is more to come, I believe!

University of Waikato Faculty of Education – I thank you for granting me the opportunity to explore my questions.

My research participants – I am indebted to you for your willingness to agree to give your time and your honest opinion of the growth which you experienced.

University of Waikato Alumni – Your study award for my research has provided me with the ability to undertake my research and the boost that you understood what my research could do for the community which I am passionate about.

Rotorua Civic Arts Trust – You provided funding for my research project and continued to assist my ability to provide affordable art classes to adults in our community who were unaware of the creativity which lay within them.

My sister, Clare – I am thankful for your belief in my ability to do this, and for the time which you spent reading my thesis from beginning to end. Thank you for being a second pair of eyes in the quest for perfection and for the positive feedback on the topic and the contents of my research.

My husband, Parris - Your support of this, and any projects which I bring into our lives, is endless. You are truly my inspiration because of your absolute belief in who I am. You give me the freedom to explore what is possible and the knowledge that there are no boundaries to that.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iv
TABLE OF CONTENTS	v
Chapter 1 INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Background	1
1.2 Context	2
1.3 Purposes	3
1.4 Definition of terms	4
1.5 Scope of the research	5
1.6 Thesis outline.....	6
Chapter 2 LITERATURE REVIEW	7
2.1 Concepts of the arts	8
2.2 Visual art and arts education in the New Zealand Curriculum	10
2.3 The purpose of visual art and the arts in society	14
2.4 Skills and their transference through participation in visual art.....	16
2.4.1 Skills developed through visual art.....	16
2.4.2 Transference and skills developed through visual art.....	18
2.5 Social and mental wellbeing benefits of visual art.....	21
2.6 Visual art in community contexts	23
2.7 The ageing population	25
2.7.1 Mature adults and visual art education.....	27
2.8 Conclusion and research gaps	34
Chapter 3 METHODOLOGY	35
3.1 Project overview	35
3.2 Theoretical underpinnings.....	36
3.2.1 My background, beliefs and biases.....	36
3.2.2 Ontology, Epistemology and Axiology	37
3.2.3 Social Constructivism	39
3.3 Methods.....	40
3.3.1 Qualitative methodology	41
3.3.2 Research process	45
3.4 Concerns, Ethical and Otherwise.....	53
Chapter 4 FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION	54
4.1 Introduction.....	54
4.2 Themes	57

4.2.1 Self-efficacy and self-concept	57
4.2.2 Social bonding and growth	71
4.2.3 Mature adult learning	84
4.3 Conclusion	100
Chapter 5 CONCLUSION	104
5.1 Chapter outline	104
5.2 Research theory, question and aims	104
5.3 Key findings.....	105
5.4 Connections between findings	107
5.5 Limitations	109
5.6 Lessons learned	110
5.7 Implications and recommendations for future research	111
5.8 Conclusion	113
Appendices	114
Appendix A: Data Collection Timeline	114
Appendix B: Questionnaire.....	115
Appendix C: Interview Questions	115
Appendix D: Isla interview excerpt.....	117
Appendix E: Reflective journal excerpt	119
REFERENCES.....	121

Chapter 1 INTRODUCTION

Visual art has been a topic of interest in the context of education for many years. Stakeholders have regularly altered their understanding and treatment of this curriculum area. Historically, visual art has been taught variously as a technical or an expressive curriculum subject in schools, within its own right and as part of the arts. There are opportunities for adults to join groups and classes within the community to learn visual art skills, and these can be a good way to revisit this area of education in a social environment. However, visual art participation beyond school and university is often understood primarily in relation to health and therapeutic effects, rather than in terms of educational and social outcomes which may, in turn, benefit physical and mental health.

My interest lies in the educational outcomes of visual art on mature adults in community settings. This introduction to my thesis explains the selection of research topic and its context. It will address the purpose of my research, its aims and questions, and will outline the thesis structure and subsequent chapters.

1.1 Background

My interest in the effects of visual art education results from experiences as a generalist primary school teacher. I taught in the arts-focused cohort of an intermediate school, which provided insight and questions about this area. Following further study, focused on the arts, I started working with the community art advisor for the local council in 2017. Given the responsibility for the administration of two public art projects, where I came into contact with a range of local adults selected to produce visual art in the city. The people who apply are frequently retired or involved in other employment, undertaking art as a hobby.

During the time in which I was working with these adults, I noticed that there were many mature artists in the groups and that they appeared to be confident and capable individuals. Within this group, motivation and confidence was strong including those with reduced physical abilities. This led me to question whether visual art contributes to this effect on those who become involved or whether such individuals are simply drawn to artistic activities.

Concurrently, emerging media coverage has highlighted the issue of the ageing population. Over the next decade, the population of New Zealand adults over 65 years will outnumber children under 15 years for the first time in history (Khawaja & Boddington, 2010). This provides impetus for understanding and facilitating inevitable change in the makeup of society. Strategies to strengthen the function of mature adults as a group appear increasingly vital.

My interest is in discovering the educational effect which visual art participation might have on mature adults. My focus is on mature adults with little prior experience of visual art, since change due to effects of participation are likely to be clearly perceived.

1.2 Context

This study is located in a New Zealand context with mature adults and seeks to improve outcomes for this sector of the population. The case study includes adults of fifty and above, rather than simply retirement age. These adults provide a greater range of focus and possibly a wider range of circumstances. The research is set in a local community arts centre, as classes of this nature are often sited.

1.3 Purposes

The main purpose of the research is to understand the effects of active participation in visual art – that is, creating a piece of artwork and discussions associated with that task.

The aims of the research are to explore what mechanisms might be identified as instrumental in learning and what aspects of learning may be perceived by the participants. If community visual art classes affect mature adults, how might they do so, and why? What effects might be perceived on everyday lives and activities? If skills are recognised as being developed by these individuals, how does this change their personal understanding of who they are and what their capabilities are? What would the potential social and educative outcomes be?

This research explored whether active participation in visual art classes may be of benefit to the mature population. The main research question investigated in this thesis is: How do mature adult participants view the effects of a visual arts class in a community setting on their daily lives?

Sub-questions of this were:

Do previous experiences of visual art affect participants' outcomes?

What motivates beginning artists to participate in visual art classes?

What outcomes do participants expect?

Does participation in visual art affect their experiences in other social circles?

Are they helped by others' experiences in class?

Is there a perception of increasing skills through visual art participation? If so, are the differences directly related, with visual skills, or more general?

Do beginner classes motivate participants to continue?

1.4 Definition of terms

The following definitions are given to clarify the terms used in the research question and throughout this document.

Mature adults

Mature adults refer to adults in the 50 years and above age category. This age group was selected as including those who are either of official retirement age or moving towards retirement. The youngest of this age group are likely to be the first affected by the population changes at retirement and are in the sector where mental processing declines are reported to begin (Khawaja & Boddington, 2010; Singh-Manoux et al., 2012). This places potential participants in a range of circumstances where visual art participation could be effective.

Visual art

Visual art in this context is two- and three-dimensional art presented aesthetically, such as “drawing, sculpture, design, painting, printmaking, photography, and moving image” (Ministry of Education, 2007, p. 21). The curriculum definition extends to the exploration and creation of other aesthetic forms produced for visual appreciation as “technologies and multi-disciplinary practices evolve” (Ministry of Education, 2007, p. 21).

The arts

“The arts” are inclusive of “dance, drama, music – sound arts, and visual arts” as defined in the New Zealand Curriculum document (Bell, 2010; Ministry of Education, 2007, p. 20). It does not include other concepts of the arts, such as the literary arts, which are a part of literacy development (Ministry of Education, 2007), or media arts, as included in the Australian Curriculum (Adams, 2014).

Participation in a visual arts class

Participation in a visual arts class is defined, in this research, as physical involvement in a range of activities where participants create an original piece of design. In this sense, it “entails personal engagement in . . .creative activity,” usually within a community or educational setting, rather than “as an audience

member” discussing or viewing work produced by others outside of the community, as specified by Guetzkow (2002, p. 2). Visual arts participation in this context is specifically the exploration and creation of two-dimensional or three-dimensional art, inclusive of drawing, painting and sculpture, and the social discussion by the creators of the work.

Community setting

Community settings refers to places, such as arts or general community centres or facilities, where the local community can attend groups or classes of interest. The cost of classes in these settings is generally lower than those available through tertiary institutions, and attendance is largely not subject to previous experience, which makes the classes accessible for anyone who chooses to attend.

The effects and educational outcomes

Outcomes of interest in this study are changes identified as a result of visual art class participation. These may be a perceived growth in practical skills, which directly link to visual art practice, or thinking skills. Learning in any of these areas is understood as an educational outcome. The other effect of interest is perceived social benefits, and whether perceptions of this or other outcomes are transferred to participants’ lives outside of the classes.

1.5 Scope of the research

As art class members, the research participants were self-selecting. The only attribute which determined their eligibility for the research was their age. The gender, ethnicity and work status of the participants was of no consequence to the research. The study is a qualitative case study, examining participants’ perspectives in depth rather than for generalisability (Punch, 2014; Yin, 2014).

1.6 Thesis outline

The thesis is structured into five chapters. This chapter provides an introduction and overview of the thesis. The remaining chapters are described in the following paragraphs.

The literature review examines current literature on related research. Firstly, the place of arts education in the curriculum, and the history of visual art within this. The wellbeing benefits, and the health sector's use of the arts and visual art, are then discussed as well as the wider purposes of art in terms of skills in the adult sector. Finally, this thesis will address the issues of an ageing population, the potential benefits of visual art for mature adults, and the research gap.

Chapter 3 outlines the methodological aspects of the project and the methods employed. I present my ontological beliefs and how this project was designed.

The findings of the research are reported and discussed in chapter 4. There are three main themes, which are: self-efficacy and self-concept, social bonding and growth, and mature learning outcomes.

Finally, chapter 5 integrates the key findings into a conclusion, discusses limitations, implications and opportunities for future research.

Chapter 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter considers evidence, both in New Zealand and internationally, regarding the potential benefits of participation in visual art and how it may contribute to the lives of adults over fifty years. Although the focus of my research is on visual art, the arts as a whole are considered throughout this review. Relevant research often reports on the arts as a whole and there is a lack of literature considering visual art in some contexts, which necessitates the examination of some inclusive outcomes. However, the arts have common principles of creative expression, which enables combined research to be drawn on when pertinent.

The first section discusses definitions of visual art and the art in the literature, and the relevance of my research. I then discuss how the arts and visual art may be defined and societal attitudes towards education in the arts. The place of education in the arts, and visual art, in the curriculum are considered and, following this, the value of participation in visual art within the adult population. The research is then examined for evidence of the social, educative and wellbeing value of visual art, and how education in community contexts can benefit participants. The significance of our ageing population, the importance of quality of life of those over fifty, and visual arts' potential role are explored. Finally, this review defines the gaps in the current research and where this study may contribute to that body of knowledge in the context of New Zealand.

Two areas contribute to the foundations of the research project. The first is a prior knowledge of research describing the cognitive benefits of visual art in education. These benefits have been shown through participation in, as well as interaction with, visual art (Schindler, Maihöfner, Bolwerk, & Lang, 2015; Wali, Marcheschi, Severson, & Longoni, 2001; Winner, 2007). The second is a growing awareness of our ageing global population and the potential significance of cognitive decline therein. The study of mature adults will become increasingly important on a global scale as the average age increases (Khawaja & Boddington,

2010; Statistics New Zealand, 2013). With these ideas, I specifically sought information on the educational benefits of visual art and the precursors for successful education in this field. Education for mature adults is not necessarily for employment purposes. Rather, as Reynolds (2010) notes, the emphasis should perhaps be on “life satisfaction, competence, choice, generativity, personal growth, and reciprocal social relationships” (p. 135).

This research project examines the experiences and viewpoints of participants aged over fifty years in a visual art class, which ran one evening a week, for six weeks, in an arts community setting. As the facilitator and researcher, I interviewed participants to find out if they noticed any changes in their work or home lives as an outcome of participating regularly in this class. This project explores the perceptions of participants and presents a case for further investigation.

Having described my research motivations, the next section presents definitions of the arts and visual art in literature and the way they are viewed in society.

2.1 Concepts of the arts

The New Zealand curriculum defines “the arts” as “dance, drama, music – sound arts, and visual art,” and the arts as a whole are described as expressions of personal creativity (Ministry of Education, 2007, p. 20). Within research articles, drama is sometimes replaced by literature but the definition of exploring creativity through the arts remains consistent (Pacific Health Ltd, 2014; Wali et al., 2001; Winner & Cooper, 2000).

The arts have varietal roles within society. There is the educational context at school or tertiary institutions, the social context in an informal community or formal theatre or gallery setting, and also wellbeing or therapy (Ministry of

Education, 2007; Reynolds, 2010; Wali et al., 2001; Walls, Deane, & Connor, 2016). Clearly, the context can impact greatly on how accessible the arts are, and what the participants gain from the experience. Arts activities within these contexts can be defined as creative participation, audience participation or involvement in a creative organisation (Guetzkow, 2002). My interest in this study is in individuals who participate creatively in community visual art education. The benefits of participation in the arts for educational purposes, and as a significant activity for the population at large, are recognised both in New Zealand and internationally. In Australia, results of a public attitudes survey tells us that education in the arts is believed to be significant for children's learning and that access to, and participation in, the arts is important for the population in general (Australia Council for the Arts, 2014; Harris & Ammermann, 2016). Kazemek and Rigg (1997) and Rosier, Locker, and Naufel (2013) state that a majority of Americans feel that the arts as a whole are integral to a successful education both in terms of motivation and outcome. Here in New Zealand, Irwin (2018) reports that, in his study of primary school teachers, most feel that the arts are invaluable because they specifically develop an array of skills and strengths in learners. However, there are discrepancies in how the arts are treated in the curriculum as well as how they are regarded as an adult activity.

Participation in visual art education is an important concept to explore presently. The demographic of the national and international population is changing and reaching a critical point where we should address how we can best facilitate a functioning ageing society. The benefits, intimated in research, suggest that visual art participation may help achieve this.

In the following section, the functions of visual art and the arts as a whole are investigated. The literature informs us that access to these areas of the curriculum have changed as has the perception of what their purposes are. The aspect of interest is how the reality of arts teaching within schools compares to the curriculum description.

2.2 Visual art and arts education in the New Zealand Curriculum

Visual art education in the New Zealand curriculum has seen some notable changes over the past century. Art itself was originally viewed as a practice undertaken for economic value and, prior to the 1930s, it was taught as a technical, rather than expressive, area of education (Bell, 2010; Smith, 2009). Fine art was considered a practice not required for the working class, and art in public schools was a utilitarian subject to train students in design and hand-eye coordination. This changed significantly in post-war New Zealand. Primary school art was focused on the development of the individual while secondary schools included art in the new School Certificate of 1945. This was supported by government with specialist teacher and advisor training throughout this period (Bell, 2010; Smith, 2009). The inclusion of this learning area added some balance to a principally academic curriculum although its intention remained largely practical.

By the 60s, visual art education was understood to be a unique learning area, which did not need to be taught for a purpose other than for expression. On a scholarly level, this was an acceptance of “art-for-arts-sake” (Smith, 2009, p. 27). This involved significant changes in thinking and was a precursor of the community art which is present in many towns in New Zealand now. Art was given its own paper in the curriculum for primary education from 1989, containing elements, such as “Knowing How” and “Knowing About” and the meaning of art in all levels of society became important (Bell, 2010, p. 30). Visual art education for every child became significant and learning was prescribed to include the meaning of art rather than simply the development of skill (Bell, 2010; Smith, 2009). With greater context, students were learning to understand and discuss their creative ideas. This was a richly taught period of art education.

The place of art in education was reconceptualised, through the next decade and, in the 2000 New Zealand, curriculum visual art was combined with dance,

drama and music to form 'the arts' (Bell, 2010). In this version of the curriculum, the arts were each organised into four strands: Understanding the Arts in Context, Developing Practical Knowledge, Developing Ideas, and Communicating and Interpreting in the arts. All elements of learning in the arts were covered in a thoughtful way. Bell (2010) argues that there are problems with time, and the means to teach well, when the four disciplines are combined in this way. When four curriculum areas are compressed into one, alongside pressure for complex delivery and assessment of curriculum, the outcome is less emphasis and time spent on visual art (Bell, 2010). However, if these areas were taught as they appeared in the curriculum at that stage, students would gain a good understanding and skill level in elements of the four disciplines.

The current New Zealand Curriculum document takes the teaching of the arts further. It expresses learning in this area as active and emotive and is certainly inclusive of the arts, saying that "learning in, through, and about the arts stimulates creative action and response by engaging and connecting thinking, imagination, senses, and feelings" (Ministry of Education, 2007, p. 20). It also states that, in the area of visual art, "students develop visual literacy and aesthetic awareness as they manipulate and transform visual, tactile, and spatial ideas to solve problems" (Ministry of Education, 2007, p. 21). In theory, these descriptions are laudable and motivating. In practice, discrepancies separate theory from the reality of the arts within teacher education and schools. From personal experience, having taught through this period of time in an intermediate school, the teaching of English and maths was strictly monitored, and continued teacher education was regular in both curriculum areas. The arts were not supported in the same way. This area of the curriculum was covered within the school but the opportunities for individual students were not equal, and this did not appear to be viewed as a critical matter.

The arts have a somewhat complicated role in the New Zealand school system, jostling against other areas of the curriculum within generalist education. A curriculum can be driven by the most direct route to knowledge, through literacy

and numeracy, with a full knowledge of the arts viewed as superfluous rather than essential. However, the arts do have a critical role in education. Research indicates that a richly taught arts programme, inclusive of all four strands, produces greater levels of focus, imagination, judgment and processing (Irwin, 2018). Despite the curriculum prescription, according to Irwin (2018), the Practical Knowledge strand of these subjects is the one which is largely taught by the majority of primary schools. It appears that the purpose of a complete arts curriculum was understood at the stage when it was written but is not generally the practical outcome. Unfortunately, limited education in the arts for the majority must permeate through society, creating a lack of knowledge of the effects of full participation from an early age.

Due to the concerted effort at government level to measure achievement using National Standards, raise literacy and numeracy to meet this bar and then, in turn, test the outcome of these policies, the status of the arts has been affected. Irwin (2018) reports that the curriculum areas not measured by these standards have found their position in the classroom somewhat diminished. The skills learned through the arts are not considered to be as critical to development as those within maths and English. At primary school level, this has resulted in a reduction of teacher education in the arts, meaning emerging teachers have less knowledge and confidence in teaching students in these areas. This is in addition to timetable issues created by the pressure put on schools to meet these government standards (Irwin, 2018). The recent abolition of National Standards may result in an increase in arts focus, however the outcome of this is already present in our primary schools (Wylie, 2018). Critically, the time taken to address this shortfall will mean that there is a generation of children with less than ideal access to this curriculum area. The theory versus reality of arts education is not just an issue within the curriculum, it affects adult learners as well. Accessibility and affordability, as previously mentioned, create additional barriers to participation.

Irwin (2018) studied 124 primary school teachers from 9 schools in New Zealand, to establish the teachers' perceived knowledge and ability in teaching the arts in a National Standards driven teaching environment. The study consisted of an initial survey, with scaled responses and non-mandatory commentary to support answers, followed by semi-structured interviews. Research participants noted that the arts are most often taught by integrating them with other curriculum areas, more often leading to practical knowledge and the development of ideas rather than the skills of understanding, communicating and interpreting in this field. Most concerning was that visual art was used by a few teachers as a reward, rather than as a valued curriculum area to be undertaken by all. Most of the respondents, however, "perceived the arts improve student creativity, imagination, fine motor skills, confidence, communication, problem solving and cognitive skills" (Irwin, 2018, p. 23). This raises the question of why the benefits of a well taught arts curriculum are not widely recognised or seen as a vital area of the curriculum if they potentially have such a positive effect on learners.

Research on the potential benefits of the arts curriculum provides a response at primary level of how the arts may provide both skills and enrichment. Price and Earl (2018) comment on the practicalities of visual art education at this stage of schooling, saying that:

[Learners] have to 'want' to make, that intrinsic motivation that is around a desire to want to communicate with self, or remember something, or explore something. Without that motivation, everything you might set as a task is just an empty skill practice, and they will get bored with that eventually. (p. 103)

It seems likely that a choice to attend a class signals a desire to practise visual art however this raises the question of how practical arts classes can be taught to personalise and extend learning to continue that motivation. Allowing for development of expression and interpretation would potentially provide that interest, rather than instructive teaching where students follow a set of steps with the ideal of producing a lifelike image.

Speaking to the place of visual art in New Zealand secondary schools, where the arts are no longer obligatory, Smith (2000) notes that we need to question the “issues of purposes of schooling itself” (p. 16). Is education simply to prepare students for work, or is developing thinking skills, with an understanding of context and inclusiveness, more important? The focus of education must be considered. Tangible academic results do not predict how students will holistically engage with everyday life. The gap in meaningful arts education, resulting from the focus on National Standards, may drive students to study in more familiar areas where they may believe that success is more likely or valued (Bell, 2010; Smith, 2000). Smith (2000) explains that visual art is largely seen as a non-academic, “‘soft’ option” (p. 17) which is difficult to assess due to its subjectivity and that successful visual art students are often seen as those who can reproduce a lifelike form on paper. Visual expression should be significant, and developing the ideas behind expression as vital as the motor skills for fine art. Expression of creativity is the basic stance of all arts education. Making connections and understanding the constant evolution of art, and its place in society, in order to stimulate creative expression are vital parts of visual art education in both primary and secondary school settings (Ministry of Education, 2007; Price & Earl, 2018; Smith, 2000). The reality of visual art education must be reconsidered.

In the next section, the essential purpose and understandings of the arts in the research literature are examined. Why should the arts be an integral part of our lives, and why is it an irreplaceable area of experience and learning?

2.3 The purpose of visual art and the arts in society

Theoretical research articles about the functions of the arts present a convincing argument that it is a vital element of education. Eisner (2003) asserts that the aim of education is “to transform [biological] brains into [cultured] minds”, and that “two of the most important [factors in doing this] are curriculum and

teaching practices” (p. 341). In order to know about something, it needs to have been experienced in some way, employing vision, touch, movement and sound, the arts are an essential form. He ventures that they are one of the direct avenues through which we can directly and aesthetically communicate with other people. He further states that the arts are irreplaceable tools to develop unique skill sets, express ideas for which there are no words, and produce experiences which are valued in our society for their effect on memory and satisfaction. This is significant early in our lives initially. Our schooling largely drives the way we think as adults, an education inclusive of the arts giving us the potential for greater perspective and understanding (Eisner, 2003). If the arts are marginalised then society will be affected, as Irwin (2018) now reports has happened. Greene (2013) concurs that they provide “the wonder and the beauty” (p.252) and make sense of the world in a way that cannot be standardised. The arts are an important part of a complete education precisely because they are so distinctive.

Understanding the fundamental importance of participation in the arts within education and community is key to raising its profile. Blatt-Gross (2010) notes that the type of expressive and contextual thinking required by the arts allow for different, and more meaningful, learning. This is a significant area of learning which develops important skills not found in other areas of education or training. She theorises that understanding is derived from personal, emotional and cultural knowledge and connections made with subject matter, and that art can communicate a range of ideas and experiences in a way that words cannot. Visual art has a social context in both the creation and in the observation of the final product (Blatt-Gross, 2010). Blatt-Gross (2010) explains that the benefits are true from the perspective of either the artist or the viewer of the artwork. This finds congruence with the curriculum strands and their emphasis on different aspects of interacting with the arts (Ministry of Education, 2007, p. 20). There is learning to be found within all interactions with the arts, be that self expression or communication.

2.4 Skills and their transference through participation in visual art

The purpose of visual art as an activity which creates a unique understanding of the world is important; however the tangible skills developed by participation should be defined. The more clearly these are understood, the more clearly the place of the arts in education can be understood. In this context, knowledge of the skills that may be developed through visual art, and their application, create a greater understanding of the benefits of participation.

2.4.1 Skills developed through visual art

Various research has attempted to identify specific skills developed through participation in visual art with varying results. Dinham et al. (2007) details that the outcome of “Visual Education includes aesthetic understandings and artistic sensibilities; generation of visual and spatial ideas; development and application of skills, techniques and processes; responding to, reflecting on and making informed judgments” (p.79). The idea that visual skills enable us to improve so many aspects of our lives is worth examination. Visual art participation involves producing personal or group artwork and developing techniques and processes in order to do that. Developing visual skills and hand-eye coordination appear to be natural outcomes of such activity, as is improving personal choice about how an artwork may be planned and carried out. This sets the scene for what could be expected of my participants if they are eager to learn how to participate in a series of classes to scaffold their ability to create an artwork of their own.

Angelone, Hass, and Cohen (2016) promote the understanding that visual art participation develops visual literacy but possibly not skills outside of this, saying “Visual artists excel at tasks that involve visual spatial ability” (p. 148). They researched twelve art students at Rowan University, New Jersey, deemed expert artists, expecting to graduate and have careers in the arts industry. These artists

were experts in a wide variety of mediums, including “sculpting, painting, jewelry [sic] making, printmaking, drawing, illustration, and digital media” (Angelone et al., 2016, p. 149). They underwent a series of cognitive testing and their results were compared to a control group of ‘novice’ artists. Visual memory and copying measured visual skill which required encoding and reusing information. Other visual tasks involved less processing and more immediate reactions to what is viewed, such as the identification of whether two pictures were identical. General participant responses to the test conditions were measured by employing two non-visual tasks. The researchers hypothesised that visual tasks would be easier for the experts, who had spent time developing visual skills.

The outcomes indicated a strong link between visual cognitive tasks and visual art education. The expert artists displayed superiority in these tasks compared to the control group, particularly in the tasks requiring deeper processing. The two groups performed similarly in the general tasks (Angelone et al., 2016). This lends weight to visual art education targeting and creating specific skills; the generalised results showing a lack of difference compared to the control group, rather than a lack of skill. The importance of visual art skills may be regarded as having significance in a highly visual age. Another point of note is that, although the research compared the difference between experts and novices in the field, the findings demonstrate that visual skills quite likely improve through visual art practice and the research informs on the range of effects of such skill development (Angelone et al., 2016).

As a specific cognitive skill, memory is linked to participation in visual art in a thorough North American study. Rosier et al. (2013) look at the effects of various exposure and effects on cognition relating to the educational field. They investigated the effects of four different interventions and the effect of these on verbal memory. Eighty students were randomly assigned to one of the four tasks and required to engage in one of the tasks (participating in art, viewing art, discerning shapes or descriptive writing) before responding to a verbal memory test. The research found improvements in memory were observed in those who

were engaged in art participation, using both vision and motor skills in the same artistic task. Following a correlation between drawing and memory, the participants were then subject to a second phase of tasks which showed that influence of mood was not a factor and that “by engaging in a highly creative act, individuals may be able to process information on a deeper level, and then generalize to another task.” (Rosier et al., 2013, p. 5). The link found between visual creativity and memory potentially widens the effect of visual art to thinking skills. This study demonstrates that visual art participation may create learning effects not directly linked to the visual nature of the activity.

My experience of adults who undertake art classes is that the main learning intention is to build skills directly associated with visual art rather than more generalised thinking skills. The use of repetition and skill development in producing imagery, referred to as “scaffolded, meaningful, exploration,” has a place in art education (Price & Earl, 2018, p. 104). Teaching discrete techniques and ideas builds skill, which the learner can then utilise for their own self expression. Visual art is primarily a tool to express memory and experience according to Price and Earl (2018) and, while building skills is a part of the experience, experimenting with how to represent ideas should also be a key objective. If success is interpreted through both creative expression and technique, then achievement may be viewed through a different lens.

2.4.2 Transference and skills developed through visual art

An area of debate within visual art education, and in arts education as a whole, is whether there is the potential to effect greater learning by integrating visual art into other areas of the curriculum to enhance learning. Chapman (1998) considers the integration of the arts in general as enhancing the way that children think in other areas of the curriculum. As a school principal, he notes that skill improvements, such as the ability to analyse, critique or think in an alternative way, are the outcome (Chapman, 1998). This concurs with the hypothesis of Winner and Cooper (2000) who elaborate, saying that potentially

transferable skills within visual art include “focusing, close observation, critical, divergent, or independent thinking, problem solving and problem finding” (p.12), however these skills must be made explicit during instruction to elicit transference.

Nelson and Chandler (1999) describe qualitative research undertaken to discover the outcome of students sharing perceptions of images which communicate information. The students of eight visual art and two science teachers at the University of Wisconsin-Whitewater in America were initially exposed to a mixture of artistic and scientific images as a class in order to encourage discussion about their observations. They undertook various tasks, including viewing differing areas of their locality, ranging from landscape to inner cityscape, and recorded their written reactions to the scenes. Participants kept diaries during the three-week process, recording their thinking in both visual art and science. One participant considered there were overlaps, specifying “opinions, passion, subvert, naming, classifying, inquiry, excitement and data-based theory” (Nelson & Chandler, 1999, p. 46). The same participant stated, "I think [visual] art and science are similar. Curiosity motivates thought and investigation. Experimentation is the problem-solving method. Disappointment and joy are the reactions to experimentation” (Nelson & Chandler, 1999, p. 46). Through the research, a connection is made between these two areas of learning. What the research does not attempt to define is whether they understand the origin of these thought processes to be in visual art or in science. They found that scientific and artistic thoughts simultaneously pervade our visual interpretations and that this may indicate a case for curriculum integration. Both science and visual art may use this type of thinking and further develop these skills when undertaking tasks, recognising that visual art is a curriculum area which teaches students to think critically and motivates learning.

Integration of curriculum areas is one solution around the use of the arts, notably visual art, however there is an alternate approach to the question of transfer in this field. What effects do the arts have, whether it is experienced

separately or integrated with other learning? One study which looks at how the arts can be developed and used in a wide range of contexts is “The Arts and Australian education: Realising potential” (Ewing, 2010). This report looks at the findings of worldwide research on the effects of a comprehensive arts education in schools and other learning environments. Providing examples of social and educative outcomes, the arts are demonstrated as a primary source of experiencing the world. Cognitive benefits are described as profound, with examples of American studies that report notable improvements in outcomes for students in schools where the arts programme is well executed (Ewing, 2010). Previously lacking, this longitudinal study provides information on research demonstrating transfer and reports on the longer term effects of such programmes. Ewing (2010) notes that the longitudinal study referred to has developed a scale of involvement which demonstrates the degree of the causal influence of the arts on academic performance. The distinction is made that “[rich] education in and through the Arts” is vital for the desired benefits on other areas of learning (Ewing, 2010, p. 7). This argument is congruent with the integration issues discussed by Irwin (2018) about ensuring that the arts are taught with depth rather than simply for practicality. The arts may contribute to learning beyond the immediate context, however understanding the unique effects of the arts, visual art in this context, is key to its justification. This is promising for such education in the community since integration with other learning is not often part of the equation.

The conditions attached to the causal influence of visual art are an additional area of debate. The findings of Ewing (2010) suggest that rich education in this area is key. Winner (2007), in a study of previous research on visual art, suggests that engaging in visual art practice probably develops the ability to think and reason as well as the visual skills more directly associated with art. However, she stipulates that the recognition and transferral of these skills requires explicit instruction. Skill development, however, appears equally likely to result from repeated exposure to a rich learning environment.

Studies on specific skill development, integration of learning and transference continue to provide information on this aspect of visual art participation.

Although the studies vary in their scopes, visual art education is largely reported as beneficial to participants' learning. Health is another area in which visual art has assumed a role. The next section examines the literature pertaining to this area of research.

2.5 Social and mental wellbeing benefits of visual art

As a tool within the adult population, the arts have gained popularity beyond the development of skill, assuming roles in health and wellbeing. Walls et al. (2016) explain that "participatory arts are being used successfully to improve wellbeing throughout advanced Western economies" (p. 68). They are perceived as a means to aid communication, and build support structures for social and mental wellbeing. Notably in Australia and the UK, there have been developments in policy alongside research in this field. The result is publicly-funded arts-based programmes in social and mental health. These are reportedly more effective and less costly than previous options. The same level of funding support is not consistently available in New Zealand (Pacific Health Ltd, 2014; Walls et al., 2016). Despite research which shows the impact of the arts on community, there is a lack of reliable support in the health sector.

The research undertaken by Walls et al. (2016) looks at the effect of participation in the arts and its effect on wellbeing. Based in Auckland, New Zealand, the case study involves two groups of youth, aged late teens to early twenties. These groups were involved in arts projects aimed at building skills, confidence and utilisation of support networks, through an organisation called "Express Yourself" (Walls et al., 2016, p. 71). Walls et al. (2016) uses a qualitative research methodology, with visual art participation as a communication tool, to measure the effects of arts engagement on wellbeing. They found that the benefits of

mental wellbeing and strength were felt largely due to the freedom of expression without judgement. Citing a body of evidence from overseas, they propose that research has demonstrated that the arts are an important means of social expression and communication (Walls et al., 2016). The outcome concurs with findings from overseas, which summarise that there is a perception of safety for people in creative groups with others “who share similar life experiences” and that important features of arts programmes are creating personal work whilst building skills (Pacific Health Ltd, 2014, p. 3). The effect of participation in visual art, and the potency of expression, is reiterated in the co-constructivist viewpoint of The Arts in the New Zealand Curriculum (Bell, 2010). While these examples focus on a mostly younger age group, the benefits of an expressive environment are not contingent on age.

Morris et al. (2016) have a perspective relating to both education and social health, asserting that involvement in visual art has a range of medical and rehabilitation benefits. Their Scotland-based research studied a group of stroke survivors aged between 61 and 91, and the primary focus was on health rather than education. The participants took part in a visual art programme and their experiences were recorded afterwards, using semi-structured interviews. The qualitative results of their intervention indicate increases in self-belief and thinking skills, noting that gains indicated from participation in visual art include “problem solving, communication, mental flexibility, attention (and) planning” (Morris et al., 2016, p. 665). Within the art group, defining the participants’ individuality allowed similarities to be identified. The social aspect of the process was linked to the development of skills, demonstrating a relationship between wellbeing and learning (Morris et al., 2016). This study indicates that social networking and social health in this age group correlates to learning outcomes.

In congruence with the social wellbeing aspect of visual art and its effect on learning, Kaimal and Ray (2017) report on the positive effect that art-making may have on self-efficacy in an American study. They looked at thirty-nine healthy adults who ranged in age between 18 and 59. They provided the opportunity for

free art-making in an enclosed environment lasting about 45 minutes. Before and after the intervention, participants were tested for changes in self efficacy and affect. Most participants of all ages, no matter the age, ethnicity or prior experience, showed an increase in both of these measures. This study was performed in a non-contextual scientific environment over a brief time and, as such, does not contain the complexity of qualitative studies. It does, however, provide an alternative and simplified view of visual art participation and its innate social and mental wellbeing effects.

These wellbeing studies, which provide viewpoints from different countries and in various contexts, indicate that there are social and affective benefits to be gained from participation in visual art. The development of skill is demonstrated to be congruent with these outcomes, as shown in the Morris (2018) study, which provides a direct link to my research. The inference is that improvement in self-belief and social health may improve learning. Pursuant to this, the next section examines what information research provides on learning outcomes in informal social contexts.

2.6 Visual art in community contexts

Curriculum studies are useful for understanding how visual art potentially unlocks learning. There is a disparity, however, between the formal learning environment of a school or university, and attending a class in a community centre, where personal goals are more usual. Guetzkow (2002) explores the evidence from research regarding community, and has tabulated the impact of the arts on community and individuals through “direct involvement, . . . audience participation . . . [or] artists & arts organizations [*sic*]” (p. 3). Literature indicates that direct involvement, referred to as participation in my research project, may have positive links to health and wellbeing, cognition and creative skills, as well as having social benefits (Guetzkow, 2002). The article notes that further

research and clarification are needed; however, it suggests that participation in community-based visual art programmes has the potential for positive social and educational outcomes.

Research which seeks answers to the benefits of community-based visual art can cover a range of participants and organisations. Green and Kindseth (2011) discuss the difference between visual art education in an arts rich community environment in comparison to curriculum art within schools, in a qualitative report on the Manchester Craftsmen's Guild. Although the experience which they describe is for secondary school students, community art classes can provide "opportunities for skill building" alongside social interaction and responsibility for personal learning outcomes (Green & Kindseth, 2011, p. 339). Green and Kindseth (2011) claim that "the artistic process is particularly suited to key outcomes of personal growth and interpersonal connection" (p. 338), which indicates an education beyond that of improving practical skills.

Within the visual art class setting, social interactions are inevitable. How we judge our work, and who we look to for confirmation, adds another element to participation in a creative endeavour. As a beginner, group classes, with other participants who also lack experience, can feel less intimidating and allow social bonding to happen more easily (Pearce, 2017). Price and Earl (2018) state that our peers influence our perception of success as much as the teacher, and this highlights the impact of social bonding within a class. Building a shared understanding of self expression as success in the social community of an art class would surely add to this.

The effect of attending visual art classes on everyday activities will obviously vary depending on participants' outside lives. For those who do not work, family and friends will likely be the focus. For those who do work, there is another social forum to consider. Hiltunen and Rantala (2015) approach visual art from both a qualitative and work-based perspective. They look at how art-based projects might change the quality of communication for day to day operational activities

in a workplace. Their study focused on a group of employees, aged between 25 and 55 years, who worked together and undertook five workshops over a period of months. The workshops included drama exercises to compliment the visual art focus. A central finding from their research was that participation in art changes the way we approach tasks by strengthening social bonds and changing the way we communicate. This fits well with descriptions of visual art activity in other community contexts.

The research pertaining to social outcomes from visual art suggests that people build a network of support and camaraderie in the creative atmosphere of such classes. The next section addresses what we know about the ageing population and relevant research on how visual art classes may benefit adults aged over fifty.

2.7 The ageing population

In New Zealand, our ageing population is reaching a critical point, due to factors such as a declining birth rate, the baby boom of the post-war years and an increased life expectancy,. Currently persons of official retirement age, those aged over 65 years, comprise almost a quarter of the working population. New Zealand Statistics project, that this will increase to just under a half of the working age population in the next thirty years, and the expectation is that returning ex-pats from Australia will further increase this figure. The over-fifty age group is the target age group of this study due to our evolving society. Notably, New Zealand's 65 plus population is expected to exceed that of under-15s within five years (Khawaja & Boddington, 2010). This creates a need for an active older population, who are healthier and more mentally and physically capable than at any time in previous history. A sector who can contribute to, rather than depend on, the economy of the country. This does not necessarily mean that the retirement age will increase in the foreseeable future, but a

higher proportion of motivated and healthy mature adults would create less reliance on a diminishing working-age population.

Census information provides information on the currently ageing population in New Zealand. Life expectancy, and healthy, active and independent life expectancies, increased over the period between 1996 and 2013. According to the 2006 census report, the percentage of people between the ages of 60 and 74 rose sharply in the preceding 15 years and women in particular were far more likely to work in that age band than previously, increasing again in 2013 (Statistics New Zealand, 2013; Tang, Boddington, Khawaja, & Statistics New Zealand, 2007). Over two thirds of the 60 plus population live in a place which they own but this the number starts to fall with increasing age. In terms of social health, the average age until which adults currently live independently is 75 years (Statistics New Zealand, 2013; Tang et al., 2007). This would indicate that whilst health in the older population is not currently unmanageable it will become an increasing concern as the over 65 population increases.

The issue of an ageing population is mentioned by Singh-Manoux et al. (2012) who studied a group of participants working in various areas of the civil service in London. Seven thousand employees took part in various cognitive tests over a period of ten years. The finding was that cognitive issues rose significantly in all age bands between the ages of 45 and 70 years of age. Previous studies have not reported age-related decline prior to 55 years of age, however Singh-Manoux et al. (2012) note that their longitudinal study would be subject to the repetitive effects of testing on study subjects, likely to result in a reduced perception of decline. This finding appears quite significant and the ideal focus is on what may change this decline.

In New Zealand, Stephens, Spicer, Budge, Stevenson, and Alpass (2015) compare the results of national longitudinal studies from 2010 relating to ageing in both New Zealand and the United States. New Zealand does not have such a significant decline as is seen in the results from the US, however the research still

indicates an escalating problem. The inherent issue is a decline in cognitive factors, such as memory and reasoning, as we age, and that populations are ageing (Singh-Manoux et al., 2012). Among other factors, educational level and mental challenge appear to be factors which have a noticeable impact on retention of cognition as well as maintenance of a socially and physically active lifestyle (Pike, 2013; Stephens et al., 2015). Mitigating factors on decline are important to understand and act upon, and lifestyle issues are largely within our control. They are certainly worth noting in activities undertaken and perceived changes.

Our ageing population, and the challenges therein, presents a need for solutions. Research on visual art participation suggests that more focused investigation, relating to the older population, is justified. In the next section, research on the effects of visual art education on mature adults is examined.

2.7.1 Mature adults and visual art education

Mature adults appear likely to benefit from involvement in learning, whether or not the purpose includes career prospects, according to Laal (2012). If the learning they engage in improves thinking skills as well as social health, then this may slow the cognitive decline seen with ageing. To learn with either happiness or life enrichment in mind is a goal sometimes ignored (Engel, 2015). In congruence with this, Cohen (2001), a doctor who has spent his adult life as a protagonist for the positive aspects of ageing, believes that the stereotypes of ageing need to be addressed. His belief is that engaging in creativity has a range of positive effects, both on physical and mental health as well as on relationships. Laal (2012) looks at the research and the potential of lifelong learning for older adults. He proposes that education for older adults can have a range of positive outcomes, such as improving memory and thinking skills, increasing confidence levels, generating more social contact and skills, and advancing work opportunities if still employed. He also notes that quality of life is improved by “finding meaning in our lives” (Laal, 2012, p. 4271). These studies

have implications in my research. Participating in visual art classes, with others, are factors which should benefit mature attendees socially and educationally. In a response to finding a plausible link between arts education and its beneficial effects on ageing, Hanna (2006) proposes a case for further investigations being required, and this is an ongoing discussion as reported by Hanna, Noelker, and Bienvenu (2015). For mature adults, the benefits which could result from purposeful creativity appear to affect many important spheres of living and are worthy of investigation.

If learning in and through visual art is beneficial, what mechanism facilitates learning best for adults over fifty years of age? Lawton and La Porte (2013) note, in their study of adults in this age range, that “there are many and varied theories on how adults learn” (p. 314). These span a continuum from an instructivist approach, where learners are expected to listen to a lecturer or tutor and respond by following specific steps, through to that of experiential learning facilitation, where learners are guided and supported in learning activities with minimal interference (Carter, Solberg, & Solberg, 2017). Lawton and La Porte (2013) explain that “transformative or transformational learning theory with its focus on experiential learning seems best suited to arts education.” (p. 314). This type of learning, on the facilitative end of the teaching scale, recognises the body of knowledge brought by mature adults to new learning which they are undertaking and encourages them to learn by questioning and then either confirming or adjusting their understandings (Carter et al., 2017). The creative process enables the blend of experience and learning, and allows for freedom of expression, triggering change. An artistic community context can create reformed views and knowledge, based on social interaction and a mix of prior and new creative experiences. In this context, mature students can access a new and deeper level of understanding (Lawton & La Porte, 2013). The students have life experience which can be transformed to new knowledge.

Cohen (2001) states, “the unique combination of creativity and life experience creates a dynamic dimension for inner growth with aging [*sic*]” (p. 17). This view

of the ageing process provides an understanding that there are benefits which are accessible to those who realise the advantage of their middle to later years of life.

As discussed earlier, direct connections exist between the social benefits of visual art participation and the learning of skills, literature relating to the specific areas of social and skill benefits of visual art for the mature adult is now explored in detail.

2.7.1.1 Social benefits of visual art for mature adults

Studies indicate that retirement can provide the impetus to reengage in creative activities (Cohen, 2001; Reynolds, 2010). Participants report that the social aspects of participation increase self-esteem and levels of confidence, as well as balancing the stress and routine of everyday life (Reynolds, 2010). Learning to communicate ideas and feelings through symbolic expression adds to these effects (Kelly, 1993; Reynolds, 2010). The visual art class is repeatedly described as an activity which engages the mind in a creative way and provides engagement with others. The balance, particularly socially, is important at any age and this is liable to be very relevant to those with a limited social life or who do not have a work routine.

In her research, Reynolds (2010) interviewed 32 women between the ages of 60 and 86, who had become engaged in various forms of visual art in retirement as a hobby. Most had not participated in visual art since school. She reports that the art making is seen as an enjoyable way to continue learning and experimenting as well as providing a diversion from the issues of ageing. Participation creates social benefits within and beyond art groups. Her research is relevant to this field of study and the research which I am undertaking. This qualitative study on wellbeing is an interesting link to the effects of engaging in such activities, and the connections which can be made to my focus of social and educational skills.

To encourage individuals to join a visual art class, they must appeal to newcomers. Wali et al. (2001) researched an informal arts community in Chicago. Their qualitative investigation explores why people in the community are involved in diverse arts activities and what the outcomes are. They found that a common interest has created links between participants despite diversities in background. The location of an activity, coupled with informal admission, is noted as important in encouraging new members. In addition, community locations which were not necessarily arts-based or related to the group's activity appeared "to increase people's comfort about participating" (Wali et al., 2001, p. 221). Increased social confidence and competence was reported as outcomes, as were friendships which traversed the usual social divisions in everyday life, such as age, gender, occupation and ethnicity.

According to these studies, the social elements of participation in a visual art activity with others are vital and enjoyed as important to the outcome for attendees. In addition, the ease of integration into classes or groups is likely to affect attendance. These are important ideas to understand for my research project, and for teaching visual art classes in general. Where a participant feels socially comfortable, they are more likely to benefit from the experience.

2.7.1.2 Skill benefits of visual art for mature adults

There are a few relevant studies on specific skill development of mature adults through visual art participation. An example is the research of Schindler et al. (2015), which gauges the effects of participatory and cognitive art interventions on various groups of adults. The participants were healthy adults, classified as either younger or older, with a portion of the older adults having "subjective memory complaints" Schindler et al. (2015, p. 440). The study was scientific and had various focuses. Does interaction with visual art activity make measurable differences to the brain? Are there age-dependent or activity-dependent differences, and does subjective belief in ability change outcomes? Their

measurements were based on physical changes via an MRI scan and performance on cognitive tests measuring processing speed and visual-spatial cognition. The results showed dramatic change. Although deeper information is not available directly, the scans appear to indicate that both interventions were effective overall.

There were, however, caveats in the changes reported. The first was that cognitive art participants' engagement determined the level of their change. This leads to a possible conclusion that participation in creating art cannot fail to engage thinking processes. All participants showed improvements in visual-spatial ability however the older adults with the subjective memory issues did not improve their processing speed. This indicates that participants' belief in their ability may affect the benefits of interventions. One of the interesting things noted, though, was that cognitive improvements were shown to continue after their trial even after asking participants not to continue art education for a period of time (Schindler et al., 2015). The proposed theory is that possibly once you have been exposed to seeing and perceiving artistically, the benefits continue. The focus of continuing effects on individuals, and how these may be perceived by them, would be relevant and interesting in a longitudinal case study.

The theory behind this is described by Price and Earl (2018), who note that we start to use our eyes differently when we engage in visual art. Participation demands a slower, more controlled use of the eyes and hand-eye coordination. If the art is internally sourced, from memory or expression of feeling, that the hand needs to instead coordinate with that source of creativity. These experiences tie in with White (2013), who says of his own personal experience of taking an art and design course, "I learned that effective art is communication, requiring clarity, organisation, hierarchy of meaning, and an understanding of connotations, symbolism, and emotion"(p. 94). He goes on to express the critical observation and organisational skills which he has developed and now uses on

his surroundings and his past designs, which are an occasional element of his work.

Does engaging in visual art as a mature adult develop skills which build on life experience and create further learning opportunities? Lawton and La Porte (2013) believe so and their learning theory describes how mature adults are able to access knowledge by means not available to the younger generations. Cohen (2001) concurs, stating that age positively increases and fuels creativity if we allow it to happen. It may be that life experience enables deeper learning in a creative environment.

Much of the literature available on learning skills, as noted by Rosier et al. (2013), is focused on children or young adults. Studies which link art with health and wellbeing often discuss a positive link between art and cognition as being a factor in the benefits of art as a therapy (Pike, 2013; Walls et al., 2016). This indicates that further studies are required on adults in this genre. Kazemek and Rigg (1997) note that “the importance of the imagination, images, and the arts and the ways in which they connect to literacy development” (p. 133) is ignored in adult literacy classes. They suggest that learning from and through a wider and creative perspective allows adults to break from their traditional ways of approaching learning and development, whether this is literacy or other growth. Rosier et al. (2013), who report of the link between participatory visual art and memory improvements, note that research is further needed to “assess whether art benefits memory for longer periods or for more complex information or whether long-term engagement in art can have benefits on more applied measures (e.g., tests)” (p. 7).

2.7.1.3 The link between social benefits and developing skills

Social interaction can be an important element of involvement and learning in visual art activities. The social aspect of visual art education and participation appears throughout studies involving mature adults. Scott (2011), who specifies

that new social connections, combined with creative problem-solving and being “hands on” (p. 21), create changes beyond health and wellbeing. She comments that “everyone, from any ability range or age group, can improve levels of cognitive ability, that is, increase their capacity to learn, not just how much they learn” (Scott, 2011, p. 21). This concurs with the findings of Schindler et al. (2015) when they note that greater cognitive change is strongly linked with the degree of involvement by participants, and Lawton and La Porte (2013), who are convinced of the influence on learning which a social and creative environment combined has on mature adults.

Madyaningrum and Sonn (2011) report on mature learning groups around the world. They focus on the case study of a participant in a visual art programme in Montreal, Canada. The programme promotes student-teacher equality and social relationships, as described earlier by Lawton and La Porte (2013). The participant describes how the classes offer the opportunity to socialise as well as learn skills. His greatest gains were learning to share his work, the opportunity to socialise, and learning new skills as well as working with a group when art projects demanded. The programme tutors noted that “enthusiasm and group participation were central to a successful pedagogy, as was providing projects that allowed students to succeed at varying levels of skill” (Madyaningrum & Sonn, 2011, p. 9). Where this study solely focuses on those in retirement, the participant in question is an individual who would have still been in employment if there were not barriers in the nature of his work as a jeweller. The community art class met many of his needs for active learning, as well as for others with less artistic ability, and increased his interaction with others.

Cognitive issues in the elderly, and the potential for cognitive growth through visual art, have previously been the subject of research. In an American study, Pike (2013) notes that “cognitive training (CT) is increasingly used to address cognitive performance among the elderly” (p. 1) using a range of activities as mental stimuli. Pike (2013) builds on art therapy research with her study on ethnically diverse older adults. Her research involved the delivery of regular art

therapy workshops in six different retirement or care centres and communities in Florida. Participants were aged 55 or over. This therapy demonstrated both an improvement in cognitive levels and that the effect continued for an extended period of time (Pike, 2013). While quantitative in nature, this research has relevant implications. There are similarities in the age group studied and the time spent delivering the workshops. Notably, this research focuses on a delivery which is structured to educate the participants in visual art and yet is personal to their individual needs. Pike (2013) asserts that visual art is naturally personal and the social nature along with problem solving and physicality of art therapy are the elements required for cognitive growth. It could be argued that this is as true of most visual art classes which are structured and require participants to actively create art.

2.8 Conclusion and research gaps

The examined research suggests that school children and adults of all ages benefit from participation in visual art classes. Within school, an inclusive and full arts education reports social and educative benefits. Research outside of curriculum education has noted improvements in memory and visual skills, and there is evidence that participation in visual art may be responsible for other cognitive changes. My research concerns healthy mature adults in the over fifty age group. Much of the research on mature adults is focused on retired adults and the social benefits of visual art participation. Whilst this has some relevance, my intentions are to understand the educational benefits of visual art on the age group including and immediately preceding retirement, and how social influences affect learning.

The next chapter describes my ontological beliefs and how the research project which I have undertaken is designed around these. I then present my findings and what these add to current research.

Chapter 3 METHODOLOGY

This chapter, following the review of relevant literature, discusses my theoretical stance as a researcher and how this influenced the project design.

3.1 Project overview

This research project was undertaken to align with my understandings of how we best construct knowledge. It examines the experiences of five participants in a weekly visual art class, which took place over a six-week period. The purpose was to understand the effects of participating in visual art classes from the perspective of mature adults, aged over fifty years.

Most of the research concerning education in the arts, and its effects, concerns curriculum-based education and school-age students or young adults. The research pertaining to mature adults and the arts is almost entirely health-related. I am focused on an educative and social-educative perspective.

To address this, my resulting question is: How do mature adult participants view the effects of a visual arts class in a community setting on their daily lives?

The participants completed an open-ended questionnaire prior to starting the classes, establishing baseline data on their experiences in visual art, and the arts in general. I wrote a weekly journal, as the teacher-researcher, after each class to record personal memory and interpretations of the events and flow of the classes. Finally, a semi-structured interview was held with each participant after the series of six classes had finished.

The next section explains the source of the methodology and methods employed in this research. The methodology of this research is based on my beliefs of how to best understand the causal influence of visual art, and the methods explain the practical application of these.

3.2 Theoretical underpinnings

In this section, I will firstly outline my personal background and how this may impact on the research. This is followed by the theoretical stance from which the research has been designed. I will then describe my approach and the methods which were used in undertaking the research and my subsequent analysis.

3.2.1 My background, beliefs and biases

There were several events over a period of fifteen years which led me to this research. I trained in primary education and came into teaching with a strong interest in visual art, as well as a 'peppered' background in the other arts. As a former intermediate school teacher, I worked with the full curriculum, however the school where I taught was split into academies to account for the preferences of the children who attended. I taught in the arts-focused area of the school. This gave me the experience of teaching a wide range of visual art to children, as was my strength, and an enhanced understanding of the effects of a coherent arts programme in a school environment. My personal enjoyment of the arts, coupled with a desire to widen my understanding of the benefits and nuances of teaching in this curriculum area, led to the completion of a heavily arts-based post graduate diploma in education. It was through this that I began to take a deeper interest in visual art as a means of expression and realised its significance in the curriculum for all learners. I now understand it as a holistic component of education rather than simply as a teaching tool or as an outcome.

Over the following years I have taught visual art to children in the school holiday programmes run by The Arts Village, a community arts centre in Rotorua. I now also co-ordinate and manage calls for artists and the resulting community art projects for the local council body, Rotorua Lakes Council. This has led me to interactions with local artists and others involved in the art community and again influenced my beliefs on the effects of art. My experiences of those in the adult

population who continue to learn and practice visual art in community settings led me to revisit the relevant research and to understand what was missing in my quest for studies on this sector. Anecdotally I had noticed that adults in the over fifty range, who participate in community art either through classes, groups or projects, appear motivated and confident in themselves despite physical signs of ageing. Consequently, there emerged a question regarding the effect of visual art participation on the mature adult population in New Zealand which has not been fully addressed in previous literature.

When I teach, I am interested in the connection between what the learner already knows and what we are learning. In the creation of art, learning can potentially be built on what people already know from everyday life, or previous education, about form and colour, light and shadow, perspective and many other aspects of art. This historical and cultural knowledge, gained from the learner's life experiences prior to a new one, has an impact on how new learning is assimilated (Creswell, 2018). Pritchard (2010) refers to the psychology developed by Vygotsky, describing that learning is best achieved and developed when we test and share our ideas through social interaction. Taking what a learner 'knows' and using that to create new knowledge in a socially-mediated context appears a powerful learning tool. In a classroom, the learner has an array of information sources through which they can learn and others with which to share and discuss their individual pools of knowledge. This learning can then be taken beyond that social context and evaluated against a wider audience's beliefs and understandings (Gagnon, 2001). I believe that there is more than one truth in any social context, and that we broaden our understanding by understanding how other versions of the truth fit with ours.

3.2.2 Ontology, Epistemology and Axiology

My ontological stance is based on there being multiple understandings of reality constructed by different people in the context of an activity (Creswell, 2018; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Although we each have a shared experience, the

viewpoint of each participant, and mine as the teacher, will each be subjective and different as we “bring personal, cultural, and historical experiences” with us (Creswell, 2018, p. 8). A variety of perspectives builds a wider understanding of events.

The epistemology of this paradigm addresses how knowledge and ‘truth’ can be obtained. My belief is that our individual differences mediate our interactions with each other and the activity, and help each other to learn. Each participant and I come with our own opinions and knowledge, and influence each other in what we come to know about our shared activity (Creswell, 2018). Through contextual discussion of the activity at hand, integrated with historical discussion of previous experiences, learning takes place in a social environment. Additionally, I acknowledge my implied authority and actions as their teacher and how this affects learning and the subsequent research interviews. Through the classes, a relationship is inevitably built with the participants and this influences the context in which they give their stories and co-create reality with me.

Finally, axiology concerns the ethical and visible considerations of my research. The axiology of my paradigm is that the participants’ perspectives, gained through interviews and other means, are used in a valuable and ethical way. This end is best achieved by careful transcription and representation of the participants (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Thus, the interview data must be viewed as the primary source of information from the participants as it is gathered and transcribed to directly reflect their opinions. This data is compared to my own journal thoughts, subjectivity and personal understanding. My research design is informed by a realisation that the participants’ responses and perspectives each add to my own understandings and reality of the research itself as well as how I interpret their points of view.

3.2.3 Social Constructivism

The belief surrounding my paradigm is that the relationship between humans and the world surrounding them is a complex one and its effect on them is reliant on both their set of circumstances and on how they prioritise those things. For each participant experience is contextual and they will each build different pictures as a result of their individual histories (Creswell, 2018). I believe that descriptive research and analysis produces an opportunity to communicate the opinion of the participant and understand the context in which the participant experiences the world. It also identifies how this is interpreted by the researcher. Detailed description adds context for the reader who is then able to understand the data with less opportunity for misinterpretation (Creswell, 2018). My principles within this research are that the path to the outcomes must be as clear as possible for the research to be potentially useful to future research and from an ethical standpoint.

The constructivist paradigm has an underlying ontology of relativism, that reality depends on context. If the context changes then the result will also change. Constructivism has an epistemology of subjectivism, that reality is co-created and understood in conjunction with people and the object or activity. This paradigm also promotes a naturalistic methodology, where truth or reality is best created in natural and contextual surroundings, and proposes that results have “trustworthiness, credibility, transferability and confirmability” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011, pp. 98, 100).

Social constructivism emphasises that personal understanding is created through interaction with others, and recognises that social interaction is necessary to build knowledge and that knowledge is reliant on contexts of location and activity (Creswell, 2018; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Individuals’ worldviews are constructed both through their prior experiences and the language through which they have communicated with others. With prior experiences in hand, the participants have built their reality of these art classes, the activity, largely

through social construction with each other and with me as their facilitator. Their realities will also be a reflection of current social interactions with friends and family in regard to the classes and as a result of their personal historical and cultural background (Creswell, 2018). By gathering information from multiple perspectives, including my own, I understand the personal experiences of undertaking such an activity and the possible outcomes of participation.

Listening to the experiences and perspectives of those who participate in a visual arts programme is vital to understanding its potential. Blatt-Gross (2010) argues that the type of expressive and contextual thinking inspired by the arts allow for alternative learning experiences which take account of the participant's personal history and allow them to communicate in a holistic manner and develop skills not found in other learning experiences. The social constructivist paradigm fits well with the nature of the study. "Individuals develop subjective meanings of their experiences – meanings directed toward certain objects or things. These meanings are varied and multiple, leading the researcher to look for the complexity of views rather than narrowing meanings into a few categories or ideas" (Creswell, 2018, p. 8). The social constructivist researcher as an observer realises the importance of environment, the activity and the others who are present. As an interviewer, I ask questions which allow the participant to respond in the way in which they understand their experience, and then probe their response to fully expand on ideas relating to it.

3.3 Methods

Within this section, I describe the methods which I employed to complete the research project. First, I outline the methodology used and how this aligns with my research paradigm, and the approach which I took with this research. I discuss the process of data collection, the ethics, and the research instruments used. Finally, the process of analysing the data is discussed.

3.3.1 Qualitative methodology

My research employs qualitative methodology, which is a term to describe the theory behind a descriptive range of research methods, which include observation of audio and/or visual information, and interaction between researcher and participant, resulting in documenting memos, field notes, and/or individual or group interviews as pertinent to a study (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Harreveld, Danaher, Lawson, Knight, and Busch (2016) explain that these methods have commonalities, noting that “non-linearity is foregrounded” (p. 2). Qualitative methodologies are not simply seeking cause and effect, and making broad statements, but are rather looking to expose a complexity of experiences and outcomes. The participants’ voices in my research should be heard with clarity, and their thoughts and point of view carefully considered and discussed. For this reason, I have explained my background and beliefs to clarify the influences which I bring. Due to the nature of qualitative research, which is entirely humanistic, this transparency is necessary as a researcher’s personal bias affects both the path which their study takes as well as their interpretations of the data (Creswell, 2018).

There is a lack of specific research in my area of interest and, for that reason, this study is searching for depth. Qualitative methodology suits the purpose of this project with its descriptive, exploratory character. Denzin and Lincoln (2011) state that “qualitative research is a situated activity that locates the observer in the world [and] consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible” (p. 3). This type of research describes events, context and participant perceptions.

The data produced from qualitative methods can describe variation, individual experiences, group norms, and describe and explain relationships. The unstructured or semi-structured nature of qualitative methods allows for participant responses which are personally and culturally relevant, and unanticipated (Creswell, 2018).

The authenticity of perceived changes is not confirmed by measurement in this research, rather by the participants' and my responses to personal experiences and observations. These perceptions are of importance in this research due to its exploratory nature. My reflective journal and participants' descriptions provide the opportunity for comparison. Validity is increased where there are commonalities in experience.

Prior to explaining how the research was carried out, I describe the case study approach used and the process of access and ethics.

3.3.1.1 Case study approach

Having described my research paradigm and methodology, I will now outline my research strategy. I have chosen to use a case study approach due to the context of my research. Researching in the variable environment of a community art class, where there is inherently a lack of control over factors such as the time which people arrive and the everyday experiences which they bring in, suits this purpose. My research examines a "contemporary phenomenon in depth . . . within its real-world context" Yin (2014, p. 16). Yin (2014) clarifies that a case study can investigate multiple cases and is pertinent to research where there is an indistinct boundary between the case (or phenomena) and the context in which it develops. In my research, the context affects the case in a way which cannot be clearly defined. This creates a need for various sources of data to build a more coherent picture of events.

Hancock (2017) concurs that "context is important in case study research, and its benefit is an intensive investigation of individuals or groups as well as organizations, events, situations, programs, activities, and other phenomena of interest in their natural surroundings" (p. 16). The case study, resulting largely from the interviewing of participants who took part in the art classes, will comprise "quotes from key participants, anecdotes, narratives composed from original interviews" and, as per the inherent nature of qualitative data, they are

descriptive (Hancock, 2017, p. 16). Case studies are exploratory tools, allowing research to find the reason behind what is observed. They are also explanatory, producing detail which gives depth to their use (Punch, 2014). In my research, the interviews with participants are based on a set of questions but remain open to participants' individual responses to those questions and therefore vary in length and content accordingly. An important factor of case studies is that they "also have a holistic focus," where preservation of the details are paramount to fully understand the case (Punch, 2014, p. 120). Interpretation can wholly continue after data has been gathered and emerging themes can be explored. Punch (2014) sets the case study apart from other forms of research calling it a "more a strategy than a method" (p. 120) due to the importance of organisation of data to keep its authenticity intact. This is a good fit with my social constructivist philosophy, which ethically seeks to give voice to the participants.

By its very nature, the case study involves extended time spent in the environment, as Hancock (2017) describes, due to my role of researcher-as-facilitator. Interactions between and with participants gives me my own perspective of participants. This appears ideal for a case study approach as Hancock (2017) does note that case study does not seek to compare, more "to identify themes or categories of behaviour...or to test hypotheses" (p. 16). Using this approach allows me to seek some commonalities in participants' experiences without a need for direct comparison of their starting points or paths.

With ideas in mind of the possible effects of the classes, I was also interested to see how my ideas and position may change during the research. Remaining open-minded was a priority. As a researcher in Harreveld et al. (2016) notes, "Case study allows theories and concepts to constantly evolve" (p. 66). My case study is a look at the perspectives of five participants and their individual and shared journeys of participation in weekly art classes. The research gathers information on their reasons for attending, what happened for them during the art classes and what its outcomes were for them. In essence, how they view the effects. My task is to construct meaning from the perspectives of participants

regarding the affect of the classes on their everyday lives. That is, why did participants take an interest in attending the classes, what were they hoping to gain from participating, did they notice that anything changed from aspects of their involvement, were there social changes or other changes in the way they approached things, did they feel differently, do they view themselves differently?

3.3.1.2 Location, access, ethics and informed consent

The research was undertaken at The Arts Village, a not-for-profit community arts centre and organisation. Lessons were taught in an art studio, hired for this purpose, and the classes ran for two hours on a weekly basis. All class participants were invited to contact me between classes by email, phone or text, to ask questions or make comments regarding their learning or the research.

I gained access to participants by virtue of the consent forms which they completed. The participants had signed up to the classes after meeting me either at The Arts Village or at 'Art in the Park,' an annual stallholders event organised by The Arts Village. Prior to the first class I explained to the potential participants that I would be undertaking research through this set of classes with those who consented. I explained the purpose of the research, what it would involve, that it was not compulsory – their art class would not be affected by their participation in the research or not – and I answered questions which they had. All eligible class members consented to participating in the research and gave their written consent accordingly. I gave an assurance that their responses would be confidential, and that they would all be given pseudonyms in the subsequent thesis and arising publications.

The Arts Village were aware that I was undertaking research during the year through some of the art classes which I was teaching. I received funding from Rotorua Civic Arts Trust to support the cost of classes and from University of Waikato Alumni to support my study. These sources of funding were not contingent on outcomes.

Ethics consent was obtained through the University of Waikato and confirmed (ref #FEDU029/18).

3.3.2 Research process

This section describes how the research was carried out. The participants are presented, followed by the lesson plan, methods of data collection and descriptions of the research instruments. Finally, the process of analysis and coding are explained.

3.3.2.1 Participants

The participants in this research were self-selecting. The participants were approached within an existing cohort and invited to participate in the research. They were selected in a non-randomised ‘convenience’ sampling manner, based on those who fell within the age range required for the research. Although not a random sample of potential participants, it gives a detailed picture of who this type of intervention may appeal to and why.

Details of the participants engaged in the research are shown in the table below. There were five participants. Coincidentally, all participants were female. Three of the five were below retirement age. Two of these were in employment, one full time.

Participant #	Age Range	Current Situation	Years Since Prior Visual Arts Education	Lives with:
Sue	50-59	Not working (child minding)	35-40	Two daughters, one grandchild
Diane	50-59	Office Worker	35-40	Husband, two daughters

Abbie	50-59	Part-time Worker	4	Husband
Bella	80-89	Retired	65-70	Husband
Isla	70-79	Retired	20-25	Lives alone, family nearby

3.3.2.2 Lesson Plans & Modifications

The lesson plan was developed following a previous series of similar classes taught in the same location. Lessons are designed to give experience of drawing and design with an end-product which is personal to the inexperienced artist. This is to give participants an introduction to creating a piece of artwork which has developed skills and provides motivation through the end-product.

Below is a table describing the lessons as planned, and the actual plan, including the modifications which I made during the process of teaching.

Original Lesson Plan	Modified Lesson Plan
<p><u>Week 1 - Intro & basic drawing techniques</u> Discussion and demonstration of how to draw a face - 'ideal' proportions and 'real' faces Measuring techniques Use of light and shadow Organisation (naming and decoration - ongoing) of artwork folders</p>	<p><u>Week 1 - Intro & basic drawing techniques</u> As planned</p>
<p><u>Week 2 - Basic printing</u> Different types of printing styles (screen, relief) & materials (potatoes, cardboard, wooden blocks & foam sheets) Designing emblems to represent self Discussion of potential design decisions Building print blocks Choosing materials and colours Making trial prints</p>	<p><u>Week 2 - Basic printing</u> As planned</p>

<p><u>Week 3 - Montages</u> Discussion of previous weeks' learning Extension of ideas for art project Printing and adding other techniques of choice to background Drawing own face Constructing montage</p>	<p><u>Week 3 - Montages</u> As planned</p>
<p><u>Week 4 - Montages</u> Discussion of previous weeks' learning Continue with work constructing montage to completion Discussion of outcome</p>	<p><u>Week 4 – Montages</u> As planned *NB montages not completed – will continue in next lesson</p>
<p><u>Week 5 - Still Life</u> Introduce concepts of perspective and light and shadow to improving reality of drawn objects Discussion and demonstration of perspective in detail: vanishing point(s), horizon, small scale versus large scale perspective, etc. Discussion and demonstration of light and shadow with still life objects Construction of still life scenario and practical drawing</p>	<p><u>Week 5 - Montages</u> Discussion of previous weeks' learning Continue with work constructing montage to completion Discussion of outcomes</p>
<p><u>Week 6 - Gift Wrap and Tags, Framing chosen artwork</u> Discuss outcomes of previous weeks and distribute artwork Use of printing blocks to make gift wrap and tags Selection of artwork to frame and wrap with tags</p>	<p><u>Week 6 - Still Life & Presentation of Artwork</u> Introduce concepts of perspective and light and shadow to improving reality of drawn objects Discussion and demonstration of perspective in detail: vanishing point(s), horizon, small scale versus large scale perspective, etc. Discussion and demonstration of light and shadow with still life objects Construction of still life scenario and practical drawing Presentation of montage artwork to art class and presentation of artwork by the art class</p>

Having taught this series of lessons before, I planned these based on experience. As with any class which I teach I expect differences in experience and group dynamics and over a series of six classes I have expectations of making modifications as we reach the later classes. In response to student feedback we decided to focus on quality rather than speed, extending the time spent on the montages.

3.3.2.3 Data collection

The information required about the development of the participants' thinking led to a strategy for data collection. The strategy was designed purposefully to allow for the gathering of different sources of information and points of view at various times (Creswell, 2018). Basic data comprising participants' prior experience and basic details was collected at the start of the classes. Following on from this, journaling of the class flow and my understandings of their progress would provide a reminder of the classes as they happened. Finally, interviews would allow the participants to respond with their thoughts, providing a collection of reactions and perspectives after the classes had finished.

I acted as the researcher and teacher of the classes. This gave the opportunity for some flexibility in my teaching practice as the participants' needs required and gave me the opportunity to journal the lessons as an interactive party.

See Appendix A for the Data Collection Timeline.

3.3.2.4 Questionnaires

Questionnaires were given to the participants to complete, following the consent process, at the start of the first lesson. They comprised of mostly open-ended questions which served not only to determine the age group of the participants, but to understand the basic context and experience which each participant brought with them to the classes. In addition, they provided an opportunity for

participants to share information which they thought was relevant to their involvement in the classes.

The questionnaires were used as a written pre-research interview. They were primarily a tool to ensure that the participants' ages made them eligible for the study and to determine their prior experience of visual art training in the arts in general. The respondents could give as much information as they chose to the open-ended questions and ask questions to clarify what was being asked (Creswell, 2018). These were tabulated and accessible prior to the post-class interviews. The gathered information was shared and checked during the interviews.

The questionnaire can be found in Appendix B.

3.3.2.5 Reflective journal

At the end of each class, I kept a journal of how the class went. The journal was written, or recorded for transcription, less than half an hour after leaving the class. I recorded what was taught in the lesson, what had happened in terms of events of interest as well as general and notable conversations during the lesson. I also recorded how I felt about the teaching and material covered as well as plans for the following week if there were modifications required. As Hewitt (2017) articulates, journals of research comprise an "intriguing combination of routine and mundane happenings alongside more personal thinking" which contribute to the transparency of the researcher's perspective.

The journal was useful through the process of teaching; the reflections helping the direction and verbal presentation of my lessons. This finds synergy with Burnard and Hennessy (2006), who in addition explain the use of reflective journals assisting pre-service arts teachers in analysis of their practice, but also with the "reconstruction of experience"(p. 97). In terms of retelling the events for my purposes, they provide a useful tool to contextualise the data gathered in

the interviews, giving me the opportunity to access my own immediate perceptions when listening to those of participants.

3.3.2.6 Semi-structured Interviews

Finally, I interviewed the five participants, who gave me descriptive information about their visual art class experience and its effect on their daily lives.

There were two options in the way this could be undertaken: either individual interviews or a focus group interview. My choice was to individually interview. My preference for this was that I felt the participants would vary in their experiences and in their ability to communicate these. I wanted each participant to have an equal chance to tell their story (Menter, 2011). The possibility that participants may feel less comfortable in a one-to-one interview situation was mitigated by the belief that I would have enough of a personal connection with each participant to negate this.

The interviews took place in the studio beside the one in which the lessons were held. The reasons for this were twofold. Firstly, there was a convenience factor in that my desk is located here and therefore it was a guaranteed place to hold the interviews at any time participants were free. The other reason was that I felt the participants would be comfortable here. They knew where to find me and we had often taken work through there to dry or store after the lesson and had stopped and talked as a group and individuals there, on our way out of the lesson.

Interviews are used for accessing “people’s subjective experiences and attitudes,” according to Denzin and Lincoln (2011, p. 529). They can uncover what may be otherwise unknown from alternate methods of qualitative research, such as observation. For instance, “participants can provide historical information” and, pertinent to the needs of this project, the information is “filtered through the views of interviewees” (Creswell, 2018, p. 189). The

perspective of the participant is precisely the result sought so this method, combined with journal notes and the background questionnaire information, was ideal for my research needs.

The interview style which I prefer, in terms of interaction with participants and information collected, is semi-structured interviewing. Interviewees are asked a small set of predesigned questions, which are then supplemented in order to probe their responses further. This gives interviews direction and consistency, and yet allows for clarification and analysis of meaning (Menter, 2011). Punch (2014) talks about this interview style in his explanation of “feminist perspectives on interviewing” where he notes that feminist-styled interviewing typically involves a deeper connection with the interviewee and a “minimising (of) status differences between interviewer and respondent . . . enabling greater openness and insight” (p. 148). This is aligned with my personal beliefs that maximising the connection with the participants generates more freedom of response.

The interview questions can be found in Appendix C.

3.3.2.7 Interpretive Data Analysis

The data gathered comprises the questionnaire information, the journal written by me, and the interview recordings. The interviews were transcribed carefully, both in terms of the words recorded and the punctuation used to keep the meaning intact.

The interview data was initially gathered and grouped in direct response to the questions asked of participants in the questionnaires and interviews. This allowed a clear view of the emerging information and following this the data was categorised inductively according to themes which initially became apparent. The information was then read and analysed again, both to clarify themes established and to compare the information given by the different participants.

The process changed to a more deductive process as the information was processed and interrogated (Creswell, 2018).

3.3.2.8 Coding Categories

I decided on codes by initially using the questions to group the interview data.

These questions were asked in the following order:

1. What was your previous experience of visual art education?
2. What prompted your interest in these art classes?
3. What were your hopes when participating in the art classes?
4. What was the outcome for you of participating in the art classes?
5. Has working with art brought anything new to your work community or home life? Social benefits?
6. Can you describe any differences in your life from six weeks ago as a result of attending art class?
7. Can you describe any change in areas, such as?
 - a. Listening ability and concentration?
 - b. Social participation?
 - c. Visual?
 - d. Memory?
 - e. Problem solving?
 - f. Can you describe any other behaviours transferred to home or work?
8. Did others' experience of the classes help you? If yes, describe that experience?
9. Have these classes motivated you to do anything else, art or otherwise? What next?

The interviews were first transcribed and sifted according to the questions. The resulting answers then suggested thematic coding. From three areas of self-efficacy, social changes and mature learning, the following themes and categories emerged:

Self-efficacy and self-concept

Background experiences

Motivations for participation before and during the classes

Changes & outcomes – self efficacy and engagement

Social bonding and growth

In-class experiences

Family, friends and work

Mature learning

Visual/spatial skills

Creative-thinking

Problem-solving and decision-making

Listening, focus and memory

3.4 Concerns, Ethical and Otherwise

The biggest concern for me was to consider and counter the effect of being teacher as researcher, and the potential benefits and detriments this could have. I felt that the positive aspects could be that participants would feel more comfortable to speak their minds in the interviews and the ability to be reflexive in my teaching. These both appeared to be the case. The potential negative was the obvious effect of my influence on both participants and the research itself. While this cannot be entirely mitigated, I have attempted to do so by disclosing my beliefs, acting in an ethical manner, and through honouring the participant's voice.

Chapter 4 FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This research investigates how mature adult participants, aged over fifty, perceive the effects of a visual arts class in a community setting on their daily lives. The literature review surmised that much of the available research on visual art education either concerns its educational effects within formal learning environments or its health and wellbeing implications. Although elements of these studies are relevant, the focuses of my research are the educational and social effects of visual art. As specified in the definition of terms, 'educational' refers to the development of skills which result from visual art practice. Data was collected from research interviews with participants, together with information from initial questionnaires and my reflective journaling of the classes.

This chapter both presents and analyses the exploratory data. These findings and their implications, considered in light of relevant research, are important.

4.1 Introduction

Guetzkow (2002) describes the potential impact of the arts on various agencies, including on the individual by "direct involvement" (p. 3), and indicates positive links to health and wellbeing, cognition and creative skills, as well as social benefits. This complements the scientific and non-contextual studies which suggest that visual art participation creates improvements to memory and visual-spatial ability (Angelone et al., 2016; Rosier et al., 2013). Prior research on visual art participation for healthy mature adults in community settings, sets some useful precedents for social benefits which extend to everyday life, however the information is generally derived from a range of activities and locations and does not have a strong focus on education. Most of this research is in the context of America or the UK (Pearce, 2017; Reynolds, 2010). The existing research suggest that participation in visual art has largely beneficial outcomes for those involved

and provides the basis for a more detailed examination of participant perspectives here in New Zealand.

Emerging themes of this research became clear once the data had been gathered. The initial aims of the research guided the interview questions and their answers, and focused numerous factors. These factors are; on the prior experience of the participants, their social experiences in the group and beyond as a result of the classes, what their interpretation was of their progress relating to learning skills, and the overall outcome for them. There were three resulting themes: changes to self-efficacy and self-concept; social bonding and growth within and outside of the classes; and finally, the participants' perceptions of learning as mature adults. These are investigated in the next section.

This research project presents information from a single group of beginning artists over a period of attendance in a New Zealand context, with a focus of the social and educational benefits of visual art for healthy mature adults. They were all aged over fifty years in order to be included in the research. As noted in the methodology, the participants were each given pseudonyms to ensure confidentiality. To add context to these five individuals, the findings and discussion are preceded by individual descriptions of the participants.

Sue

Sue is in her mid-fifties. She moved from England during her primary school years. Sue is a single mum and is unemployed. She has two daughters, one of whom is a teenager who is at high school and the other works while Sue looks after her child, Sue's grandchild. Just before the research, she started a quilting course and had signed up to a nail art course. Previously, she had not engaged in visual art since she left school.

Diane

Diane is in her early fifties. She works in an office, where she is an events planner. Her job often entails liaison with designers within the workplace. Diane

is married with two teenage daughters, and the family runs a small farm. Her last memory of visual art classes was at school.

Abbie

Abbie is in her mid-fifties. She is married, and has children and step-children who have left home. She works part-time as a cleaner as well as caring for her husband, who has a long-term health condition. She previously signed up to art classes, at the local technical college, four years ago but did not continue.

Bella

Bella is in her early eighties, and is retired. She moved from England with her husband and family when she was in her twenties. Bella has a son and a daughter, who are also both married with children. She lost her other daughter to a long-term illness less than a year prior to the classes. Her son lives nearby and she sees him regularly. She has not attended visual art classes since school but attends dancing regularly with her husband.

Isla

Isla is in her mid-seventies. She moved from England with her husband before they started a family. She is retired and has a son, who lives nearby with his family and visits her daily. Isla lost her husband less than six months before the art classes after caring for him for a number of years. She attended visual art classes as an adult between twenty and twenty-five years ago.

The findings include information gathered in spoken form, which was then transcribed, or directly in written form. The research instruments were the questionnaires, interview questions and my reflective journal. These can be found in appendices B, C & E.

4.2 Themes

The three themes have been separated to provide a clear picture of each. Despite the separation there are connections between the areas which become evident as each one is examined. Self-efficacy and participant perceptions of their learning appear strongly linked. Increased social bonding was identified as a component of learning and self-concept.

4.2.1 Self-efficacy and self-concept

The first theme which emerged from the data concerned the correlated ideas of self-efficacy and self-concept. Both are perceptions of self, and are central to the research findings, however self-efficacy is a relatively narrow view of our capabilities whereas self-concept is a broader interpretation of our identity.

Self-efficacy is defined as a belief in one's ability to successfully complete a task (Bandura, 2012). It is primarily achieved through successful experiences, referred to as mastery, but when tasks are new it can be strengthened by a combination of other factors. These include persuasion by others who are viewed as trustworthy and knowledgeable and being physically able to do the task (Bong & Skaalvik, 2003; Puente-Díaz, 2015). It is a purely cognitive measure, and having low self-efficacy in a task is believed to have no emotional impact on an individual if they are not concerned with their inability to complete it (Davidson & Kanopy (Producers), 2016; Gallagher, 2012). However, self-efficacy has more impact if tied to self-concept through developing skills or working on tasks which we care about.

Self-concept is the result of a larger measure of our response to events. It was originally defined as a stable and generalised view of self; an overall picture (Bong & Clark, 1999; Bong & Skaalvik, 2003). However, this definition has been long debated by theorists and has changed over time. Shaped by self-efficacy, it is now understood to vary according to context, but the theory remains less

defined. Self-concept is viewed as multi-faceted, containing both cognitive and affective self-assessments of ability. The cognitive element is self-efficacy and the affective measure is largely self-esteem (Bong & Clark, 1999; Bong & Skaalvik, 2003). Therefore, an individual's self-concept to an activity is strongly affected by their self-efficacy. If you believe that you can succeed at an activity, then you have good self-efficacy. If you care about succeeding, then it will raise your self-esteem – you will feel good about yourself. As a result, your self-concept surrounding the task will also increase – the success will bring a feeling of confidence (Bong & Clark, 1999; Davidson & Kanopy (Producers), 2016). If an individual does not care about succeeding at a task, then they are not 'affected' by their success or failure and it has no effect on self-esteem and no impact on self-concept. The emotional element of self-esteem distinguishes self-concept from the purely cognitive nature of self-efficacy, and it therefore has a larger effect on the individual (Bong & Clark, 1999; Bong & Skaalvik, 2003). Increased self-concept might be described as the growing feeling of confidence in an individual from the achievement of tasks which they care about.

Notably, the levels of self-efficacy of the participants in my research appeared to increase over the course of the art classes. By the end of the classes, most of them felt capable of creating a piece of art which had personal value to them. Overall, there was a growth in perceived competence to complete the project at hand. What is also central to self-efficacy is that goal fulfilment is more likely if it is seen as achievable (Bong & Clark, 1999). The perception of ability predicts success. The participants each spoke about successful elements of their task and what they worked on to achieve their results.

Self-concept was also seen to improve in most participants. They spoke about the personal effect of involvement in the classes and these affective comments indicate the progress which was made. Increased self-concept was demonstrated where participants make comments regarding an increase in positive feelings or about other people's admiration of their art.

The results of this theme are particularly relevant as participants' perceptions of their learning are central to this research and perceptions of self are a personal measure of the effect of achievement. Feeling able to achieve and being confident in one's own abilities are positive outcomes, and if these can connect with the outcome of active participation in visual art education, then there is a positive association for discussion.

The participants' descriptions of their journey through the classes indicate increased belief and confidence in self. Firstly, the perceptions which they had of their previous experiences with visual art are discussed. These experiences give a picture of participants' self-efficacy in relation to visual art prior to involvement in the classes. The second area of consideration is their motivations to attend the current classes. What prompted them to get involved and what did they anticipate as an outcome? An indicator of changing self-efficacy may be the initial source of their motivation to attend the classes, and whether this changed over the course of the classes. External persuasion can be a source of self-efficacy but needs to be replaced by an individual's personal belief of their capability for this motivation to continue (Bong & Skaalvik, 2003; Davidson & Kanopy (Producers), 2016; Puente-Díaz, 2015). Finally, the participants' initial feelings and motivations are compared to their outcomes. For most there was a difference in self-efficacy and self-concept, so the effects perceived and possible reasons for this are discussed.

4.2.1.1 Prior experiences

For mature adults, as previously noted, former experiences of visual art participation may include school education and any experiences which they have had during their adult lives. There was a fairly even distribution of those whose last visual art classes were at school and those who have made previous efforts to re-educate themselves as adults.

Examples of the participants' experiences in art at school varied. Most had positive experiences at school.

I know at school, primary school, I really enjoyed sewing and the crafts. I remember there, we'd be drawing flowers and what have you. (Bella, 25 June 2018)

I really wanted to further my art because when I was at school, at intermediate, I was always very good at art. (Abbie, 25 June 2018)

I had very good experiences, great art teachers [at school], had a go and just enjoyed it for what it was. (Diane, 22 June 2018)

One participant, however, had a more complicated experience.

Kids used to pick on me all the time when I was at school because I was brought up differently . . . and so I hated going to art because of that. . . . I didn't do anything in front of anyone. (Sue, 22 June 2018)

Sue was initially very reticent during the classes where they had more freedom to express themselves, spending much of her time discussing what was to be done rather than producing work. This comment, which followed the classes, explained her prior experiences and put them into perspective.

Abbie and Isla attended classes during their adult lives, and both found the classes a lot more advanced than anticipated.

I didn't really have a very good experience with that one [summer school class at a local high school three or four years ago] because when I got there, I found it was for credits and it sort of stressed me out. (Abbie, 25 June 2018)

[It was a] massive class, very big class. [I] found it too overpowering because there were girls there who were going back for a refresher and they were way beyond a few of us who were just starting, that wanted to just learn to sketch. (Isla, 26 June 2018)

These experiences were interesting because both Isla and Abbie had returned to visual art classes to educate themselves further. Abbie clearly had positive school experiences but, as an adult learner, indicated her perceptions of not feeling capable of the class' goals and described a feeling of social discomfort due to expectations of the course. Isla described a similar scenario, based on the capabilities which she believed were possessed by most of the class which she attended. This appeared to have affected their self-efficacy and self-concept, in that there was certainly an affective response to their prior experiences. They both wanted to succeed in their artistic efforts.

Despite sharing an outline of the classes, there was a reaction from the class when the first activity was presented.

In fact, all of the group went, "[Gasp] Helen's making us draw a face of a person!" (Diane, 22 June 2018)

This was a beginner art class and I expected that there may be issues with self-efficacy as we started. Because of this, I had planned the class with steps to each process, providing a structure and allowing the class to use it as much as they needed to. At the same time, I felt that it was important to allow the participants to enjoy some creative freedom once they felt comfortable with a task.

I was happy with the way that the session went and felt that even the ones who seemed a little nervous when they came in, became less so as the class continued. My personal agenda is to create a non-threatening

environment in class as I am aware that the participants are not confident in their abilities. (Reflective journal, 7 June 2018)

The length of time since participants' last experience of visual arts did not appear to have a marked effect on their initial self-efficacy. Their interpretation of their previous experience seemed to have a greater effect. A negative memory understandably created some issues for particular individuals; however the ones who had simply not attended art classes as adults overcame any concerns quite rapidly. Reynolds (2010) agrees that older adults who begin creative classes at retirement age can quickly realise an ability for creativity which has lain dormant during adulthood. They all had an interest in these classes, despite over half not attending any prior visual art classes during their adult years, hence signing up and attending. Therefore, if self-esteem was raised in connection with the activity, increased self-efficacy appeared likely to result in increased self-concept.

4.2.1.2 Motivation

The second factor for discussion is the source of the participants' motivations for attending the classes, whether the source of motivation changed over the weeks, and the outcomes of this. The participants' prior experience, as noted, was not recent and it was not always positive. I asked the participants what had prompted them to attend the classes. The motivation for joining this visual art class included a personal desire to succeed in this area but some of the participants needed persuasion from others to convince them that they were capable and should take part.

Meeting you in the park was with my son and he said, "Do it, do it!" . . . I've been [to The Arts Village] before and had a look round and not really pushed myself to come and asked if there was anything simpler. Because I always found everything, when I've looked around it looks wow. . . you know? I thought I'll never get to that. I'd love to but I'd never get there. (Isla, 26 June 2018)

As we were walking past your section [at Art in the Park], [my daughter] says "Oh You can do an art class . . .it might be good for your nail art." And I thought, "Oh well I never thought of that. Oh, come on, we'll go and have a look," and that's how it all started. (Sue, 22 June 2018)

Meeting you at the Art in the Park and seeing what you were capable of doing. It just made me think I wonder if I can do things like that. (Bella, 25 June 2018)

When the opportunity arose, persuasion from me, as a perceived source of knowledge, and from trusted friends or family members prompted action. Sue and Isla, who had each described a negative experience with art education during their adult years, commented on family members persuading them to take the first step. If success has been experienced and the activity is enjoyed, internal motivation is probable. Otherwise, persuasion by others, or witnessing their success at a task, affects an individual's willingness to participate by raising the belief that they can succeed at an activity (Bong & Clark, 1999; Bong & Skaalvik, 2003). Persuasion that they could participate successfully was key.

Once participants had joined the class, however, self-efficacy would now be more dependent on the success or failure of tasks rather than persuasion by others (Bong & Skaalvik, 2003; Schunk, 1991). A sign of self-efficacy is where an individual's source of motivation originates (Bandura & Locke, 2003). If the motivation to undertake a desired activity is persuasion by others, then it follows that personal self-efficacy and self-concept surrounding that activity is probably low. However, if an individual is internally or intrinsically motivated then the opposite is true.

I was aware that others were also feeling some anxiety in week 1 from classroom interactions. I noted this and spoke with the class at that time explaining that artistic experimentation and exploration was the main aim of the classes.

[Participants] spoke about feeling nervous about their drawing skills, with this class appearing to be one where it felt less intimidating. I attempted to allay fears of non-creativity by explaining that this is a class to just try things out and that was the important part. (Reflective journal, 17 May 2018).

The skill required of the participants was purposefully set at a level which did not require previous mastery, and this would likely have also allowed the participants to act on their intentions. Diane and Isla also spoke about the opportunity to undertake a fresh activity.

Doing something that I have never done before - that was a major outcome. I didn't want to feel fearful of participating in an art class . . . [It was the] opportunity to try something different, and to try something new. I really wanted to do that. (Diane, 22 June 2018)

I think that's all I wanted really was just some way of expressing or ... I think just getting out of yourself, getting out of your normal thing and just letting it go. (Isla, 26 June 2018)

Despite the range of participant backgrounds, trying a new and creative activity appealed to them. "Openness to new experiences" is posited as a key to creative self-efficacy and action by Puente-Díaz (2015, p. 177) and this was mentioned as an additional motivation by almost all of the participants.

Intrinsic motivation, the internal "motivation to learn for interest and mastery," can be linked to self-efficacy, as engagement in learning is improved when there is a belief in your ability to accomplish the learning goal (Bandura & Locke, 2003; Morris, 2018, p. 5). In other words, in addition to the activity being desirable, the participants needed to perceive that their goals were achievable for motivation to be internalised and self-efficacy to continue to increase.

Various actions and statements provided some evidence that participants had started to increase their self-efficacy and motivation. In my journal of the third week, I had noted that the class were starting to work on drawing outside the class.

Three participants (Sue, Diane, Abbie) had worked on their print designs at home. (Reflective journal, 31 May 2018)

The prompt for this was the visual diary which had been given out in week 1, however the participants could choose whether they used the diaries in their own time. Motivation to practise away from the classroom indicates intrinsic motivation and greater self-efficacy.

4.2.1.3 Self-efficacy and self-concept outcomes

For most of the participants, there were certainly changes in their perceptions of competence and confidence relating to the classes and themselves. Changes to self-efficacy are demonstrated by statements of increased belief in task competence. Growth in self-concept is indicated by those which involve affective feelings of increased competence or confidence (Bong & Skaalvik, 2003). From initial motivation, there grew a belief of what they could gain through the experience.

When I first started this art class, I thought it's not going to be for me. It's too above what I want to do but then as time went on, I was really enjoying it and I couldn't wait to get here. (It was) more comfortable (in this class compared to school). Like the others were more on a level. Not picky, and that's what it was. They were more positive and not negative, so it was a lot different. And with the others as well, even when we did that face the first time. The difference. I didn't want to miss it. Not that I didn't want to miss out, but I didn't want to miss it. And I think that's

what gave me the motivation I thought "Right, that's it! Everything goes on and I'm going to get ready!" And that's what I did. (Sue, 22 June 2018)

Sue was quite open a couple of weeks back about the fact that she was going to come to learn how to do design for a nail course which she is starting soon, and that she wasn't interested in these classes beyond that goal. She now has commented that she is now enjoying attending the art classes themselves rather than doing them for other purposes. (Reflective journal, 31 May 2018)

I thought, well Jeez, I quite impressed myself when I didn't think I would get anywhere and I thought, "Oh God, it's going to be the worst thing ever!" . . .but it was more so where to start. And that was my problem. (Sue, 22 June 2018)

Sue's explanation of her experience showed a clear progression of her journey. She had not had positive experiences of visual art at school. Clearly, she was motivated to take part in these classes, even through the persuasion of her daughter. She was initially unsure of her capabilities but was surprised by her own progress.

Changes in self-concept were demonstrated in different ways by participants who had been through, or were going through, experiences which had changed their lives permanently. Isla and Abbie spoke with clarity about these experiences and how the classes had been a positive choice for them.

Life has changed . . .[and] since then it's like, well what am I going to do now? And what do I want to do? So, that's been a complete change. So, I'm just going with the flow and seeing what there is for me. So, it's been a big thing. (Isla, 26 June 2018)

Because of being a beginner's class, I thought that would be ideal for where I wanted to start. And, my other purpose of taking the class was to give myself some time out from my home environment," saying that she had "spent many years of just looking after my family and then I thought, time for me now. It's time for me to do something for myself. (Abbie, 25 June 2018)

Discovering an activity which was both enjoyable and an escape from the usual routine seemed to inspire these two participants. Both Pearce (2017) and Reynolds (2010) draw examples of those who have been widowed or have health issues saying that their participation in art classes "strengthened a positive self-image, as well as motivation to continue"(p. 141). A new group of people to try a new activity with, and an identity within that group, seems to be what Isla and Abbie were seeking.

One participant, Bella, who really found the experience quite different to the others, spoke about an improvement in comfort and some motivation to continue, despite expressing a lack of self-efficacy throughout the experience.

(In) the first class I really felt quite overwhelmed with what I had to learn because I hadn't done it before. . . .It was definitely too hard, at that stage, on my mind. So, I think it might have been the second that I thought, "Shall I bother going back?" But I think it was basically more like the third or fourth (when I started to feel more comfortable). . . .You've given me the basics of it all though and perhaps, when things have calmed down a little bit at our house, getting a bit closer to normality than it has been, I think I will have a go. (Bella, 25 June 2018)

Bella continued to attend, which was a positive sign, however she did not appear to leave the classes having experienced a big change in how she felt about her abilities or herself.

Generally, the growth in self-efficacy could be recognised in every other participant. Diane summed up her point of view about an increased belief in her ability to complete the work but also that the experience had been a positive one.

Doing something that I have never done before, that was a major outcome [and another was] producing a picture from those skills that you were trying to communicate to us but the main thing for me was to enjoy it. (Diane, 22 June 2018)

Isla and Abbie, the participants who had felt they were unable to keep up at prior adult art classes, spoke positively about taking part with other beginners. They did not necessarily believe that they were unskilled at the start of the classes, however they responded well to an unpressured environment where there was an opportunity to improve skills.

It wasn't overpowering. It was just come along and have a go, we do different things and I'm open to anything . . . I think it's proven what was inside of me. (Isla, 26 June 2018)

The actual sketching was great because I think I realised when I first came that I had some ability to actually draw but at the end, when I saw what I'd actually done, I was quite amazed. . . . I loved the colour and, actually now in my drawing, I put a lot of colour into it. And that actually reflects on how I'm feeling within myself. Bringing that colour into my picture. (Abbie, 25 June 2018)

From these statements, there were expressions of increased confidence and a feeling of positivity. Abbie and Isla expressed changes to their self-efficacy and self-concept with clarity.

These two participants spoke further about how personal changes had affected their lives outside of the classes.

I think coming along to class and actually meeting people, chatting, learning has been great for me as a person. . . . I've been a lot happier at home, just having that time out and knowing that I'm taking a little bit of my life back. (Abbie, 25 June 2018)

I look at things in a different way. I think when you do something like [these classes] that it changes your perspective or whatever. I look at that [painting on the shelf behind you] and I would have just seen it as a painting but now you look at it in a different way and think, "Oh isn't that gorgeous! I might try that." You know, it makes you look at things in a different way. Years ago, we did go to Paris and we went to the Louvre and that just blew my mind. I couldn't believe that people could paint like that . . .and it still be there after hundreds of years! And I think that originally started me looking at things different[ly] and now, doing this for myself, I can see what I'm doing and how they must've felt when they put pen to paper or paintbrush or whatever. It's a neat feeling. It's a neat feeling. (Isla, 26 June 2018)

The increase in self-efficacy and self-concept expressed in the interviews linked to their original reasons for attending the classes. These reasons could be summarised as either wanting to simply improve their skill level in visual art or wanting to be involved with an artistic activity which added a relaxing, potentially rewarding and complex layer to their life. When the participants verbalised the achievement of these goals, it was a sign of increased self-efficacy and self-concept.

At the start of the classes, I noted that the participants were slightly nervous. They had been motivated to sign up, sometimes with the additional persuasion of family or myself, and they had not met each other previously. Diane, the

participant who described her reaction when asked to draw a face in the first lesson, recognised that the trepidation which she felt was shared by all the participants. Almost all of them then realised that they were more capable than they initially felt, as the weeks passed. The classes contained steps and processes which they could modify according to their wants and needs, and with their growing abilities to process tasks, they mostly completed work which they were proud of.

The drive to continue, and the outcomes which the participants achieved, were linked with the desire to learn and to return to complete a task. There was a sense of increased self-efficacy which emerged as the weeks progressed. A number of successful experiences form “resilient self-efficacy,” demonstrating that success is achieved through persistent effort rather than singular, possibly accidental successes (Bandura, 2012, p. 13). Mastery of a desired task is said to increase self-esteem so the resilience built is likely to also add to self-concept (Bong & Clark, 1999). Producing work with increasing skill seemed to override uncertainty and develop self-efficacy. The participants’ aim was to develop their visual art skills and all, but one participant felt that they had achieved this. They appeared invested in the process which relates to the wider notion of self-concept.

Visual art participation itself may create an increase in self-efficacy and self-esteem, according to research. Kelly (1993) asserts that participation in visual art innately has various beneficial effects on mental wellbeing and self-esteem in mature adults, and balance their everyday life. Kaimal and Ray (2017) concur that both the affective and cognitive aspects of self-concept are strengthened simply through participation in visual art. This contrasts to the two participants in my research whose prior experiences as adults were in classes of mostly experienced artists, and whose self-efficacy appeared negatively affected as a result. It may be that participation in visual art classes of an appropriate level is required for positive effects on affective measures. If classes include attainable

tasks and challenges, then self-efficacy is more likely be strengthened as a result of participation.

If the creative element in visual art makes it a desired activity, then increasing self-efficacy in visual art is likely to also result in increasing self-concept. This was an outcome observed in my research. Once the participants were attending classes, they displayed increasing signs of self-efficacy through the achievement of goals and this did appear to increase their individual self-concept. The cohort's confidence, affected by individual changes, links to the next theme of social bonding. In the next section, I present and discuss the social activity and interactions in the group, and the social effects on their lives outside of the classes.

4.2.2 Social bonding and growth

The next theme of the research surrounded the social effects of the participants' experiences. In this research, the definition of 'social bonding and growth' refers to increasing support from and friendship shown by other people in an individual's social circles. This definition correlates with other research which discusses the increased bonding which can occur within or outside of creative groups, as a result of involvement in such activity (Pearce, 2017; Reynolds, 2010). What emerged, and is of interest in the study, was the growth of a support network and friendships within the group and improved interactions at home and, where relevant, work.

This theme links to the first one of self-efficacy and self-concept, in that social interactions play a role in both. Social modelling of techniques and encouragement by myself and others were important parts of the learning process for the participants (Bong & Skaalvik, 2003; Davidson & Kanopy (Producers), 2016). Within this theme, there are two topics of discussion: firstly, the quality of the relationships built within the group of participants and,

secondly, the effects on relationships outside of the group, with family and friends.

In terms of the social experience itself, there was a bond which grew between the five participants where they talked about their lives outside of the class and sought and gave opinions about their art within the group. The classes also created a topic of discussion with participants' friends and family. Participation in art classes or groups by mature adults gives an opportunity for connecting with others both within and outside of that experience (Kelly, 1993; Pearce, 2017; Reynolds, 2010). Within the supportive environment of the art class, there was positive feedback from one to another about their work and these social relationships progressed over the weeks. The classes provided a source of conversation and difference in their home and work lives. In addition to this, they appeared to provide a place for some of the participants to relax and focus on creativity, which relieved the stresses and boredom of everyday life at home or work. Research points to the influence of creative leisure activity as a source of relaxation and individual identity, as well as enhancing communication with family members, friends and colleagues due to the narrative generated by participation (Kelly, 1993; Pearce, 2017; Reynolds, 2010). The social benefit for the participants and their network demonstrates that creative education has effects beyond the traditional role of career advancement.

4.2.2.1 Social bonds within the group

Prior to the art classes, none of the participants knew each other. They had a huge variety of background life experiences regarding, and separate from, art. Despite differences, there was a commonality which they found within the group. Isla summed up the group dynamic.

We're all so different though, aren't we? We're all very different in our lives but we're just women, all wanting to do something different, I think. I've really enjoyed it. (Isla, 26 June 2018)

By the third week, I had observed an increase in social communication .

It was noticeable that the class support efforts made by others and offer suggestions of their own. This week there has been noticeably more interaction between participants, both at the start and during the class. (Reflective journal, 31 May 2018)

There were examples of how the social interaction in the classroom affected individuals. Bella and Sue spoke about the social aspect of the classes being their primary focus.

I met some lovely people amongst the students as well as feeling very in tune with [the teacher] . . .It did help when I saw what [the other participants] could achieve. And they were all very supportive so that was nice. (Bella, 25 June 2018)

[The outcome of participation for me was] honestly probably more the socialising. Like meeting the others. And talking about where it's taking you. . . .It was more like because they were so easy going. Sometimes you can walk into a class and it can be quite daunting as you might not click with somebody. But I thought we all clicked quite well. (Sue, 22 June 2018)

These two participants lacked self-efficacy at the start of the classes and clearly felt a need to find a social connection with other people which they met within the group. This seemed particularly important to Sue, who had described her school years as quite tough due to her family's emigration to New Zealand and the resulting difficulty which she had fitting in with local children. Art classes were an area of difficulty due to her perceptions of how visible individuals are in this curriculum area. She appeared relieved to have fitted in socially with the others.

This became more than simple socialisation for Sue and Isla. It became a way of exchanging ideas and learning from techniques that they had seen others try.

When I started, I was going that way and painting that way [gestures horizontally] but it was more solid, and I didn't want it solid. But when I saw what Abbie did, how she kind of flicked it, that was where I thought I could do that . . . So, I changed it, I changed it completely, because I didn't go that way [horizontal gesture] I went that way [vertical and diagonal gestures]. (Sue, 22 June 2018)

The class we're in now, we're all about the same level and we don't mind sharing and saying, "What should I do here?" Somebody else will say, "Put that in..." and it's good. (Isla, 26 June 2018)

Bella had a different view of her status within the group. Although speaking highly of the other participants, she compared herself unfavourably to them.

I guess that I'm behind the others that are here, whether that's because I'm older and it's harder when you're older to learn something new. I did enjoy trying to figure out a drawing of my husband's face . . . it was frustrating because I wasn't very good, I don't think, but it was challenging and I liked that bit. (Bella, 25 June 2018)

As a result, she would seek, or be given, advice by the others.

[I] said to Abbie, "What do you think here?" And she said to me, "Well you need to do stronger strokes." That sort of thing. (Bella, 25 June 2018)

These comments show that comparisons were made, and advice given, within the group. As described in the previous theme of self-efficacy and self-concept, students will likely use social comparison to identify ability level and status

within a group if they have little prior experience of a learning area (Davidson & Kanopy (Producers), 2016). The participants in this group mentioned the support they received from and gave to others, and this appeared to be as an outcome of their shared status as beginner artists. They all came to the group with much life experience and yet a lack of self-efficacy in this area. The resulting exchange of ideas seemed to increase their bonds and confidence with each other as well as within themselves.

The cohesion of the group grew from week to week. Discussions with immediate neighbours about tasks became whole group conversations about how they were approaching their artwork, and about their lives outside of the class.

We actually connected . . .we talked about our lives and we talked about who we were and we talked about our families and . . .towards the end of it we were getting up out of our chairs and moving around and going and looking at and learning from each other . . .to an extent . . .and I really liked that (Diane, 22 June 2018).

Diane described the transition from a class who communicated either individually or in pairs, only asking me for help, to a more cohesive effort, where they also helped each other and communicated more freely. There was a progression socially which I had also noted over the middle weeks.

It was interesting to see the interaction between members of the class if I let them think through answers with some encouragement. Others would support efforts made by various members of class and offer suggestions of their own. (Reflective journal, 31 May 2018)

As a group they are gelling increasingly well, [and] seem really happy to see each other and me each week. (Reflective journal, 7 June 2018)

As the participants gained knowledge through their efforts, the conversation changed to the meaning of their work rather than just the process of creativity. Participants had been given a choice of creating a self-portrait or drawing a person who they had a close connection with. This had resulted in different decisions and these were discussed within the class. This choice had relevance for two of the participants.

I'm sure looking at [their art], it made me feel normal. It made me feel about the same level and that I wasn't stupid or . . . The lady next to me (Bella), who had lost her daughter, said "I can't draw my daughter," and I said "Well I can't draw my husband. That's why I'm doing me and that's why you're doing your husband. Don't worry about it." I think seeing people drawing their husband, it sort of affected you, and I thought, "Oh I wish that I'd done that." So, a lot of things it's affected, that need thinking through, you know. But it's definitely opened up something inside of me that wants to carry on. (Isla, 26 June 2018)

Isla in particular spoke about the choice of subject matter and the effect the classes had on her. She felt that there have been changes in the way which she thinks and feels. Reynolds (2010) discusses the effect of creative work on identity, saying that those who have experienced bereavement or health issues find visual art classes useful to both relax and establish who they are as individuals. Isla had chosen to take part in the classes simply for enjoyment and to benefit her as an individual. She spoke about the freedom of this choice.

Since then it's like, well what am I going to do now? And what do I want to do? So that's been a complete change. (Isla, 26 June 2018)

Abbie's experience was also related to her life at home, which involves the long-term care of her partner. She felt that the classes were a source of social cohesion and freedom from responsibility.

My other purpose for taking the class was to give myself some time out from my home environment... You became, you know, you started to have friendships, you know. It was really nice; it was nice to bond with people. (Abbie, 25 June 2018)

On the final night of the classes, I presented them with their portrait work in simple frames to demonstrate what they had completed. Diane's earlier comment about the group's reaction to drawing a face was followed by a comment about the impact of their completed work. The meaning of what they had produced demonstrates the journey which they had been on together.

That person became very personal to us. It wasn't just someone out of a magazine; it was someone personal to us. And so, to communicate that on paper, I felt really privileged to feel that. (Diane, 22 June 2018)

This connected to the comment which I had noted in my reflective journal.

They were all very pleased with result of their work and as they looked at them, one by one, a few started talking about the story behind their prints and choice of portrait, so I encouraged them all to speak about theirs. All different stories and pertinent to their lives: grandchild, daughter, husband, husband (with background story of daughter), self, husband. (Reflective journal, 21 June 2018)

The reactions of this group, described by Diane, when presented with new learning portray the strength of the shared start of the experience. Sue confirmed this when she spoke about the group cohesion and how it was different to the class she remembers as a child, entering a school where friendships were already established, and she was the outsider. The dynamics of a newly-formed group can reduce feelings of anxiety and exclusion, and improve the experience for beginners (Pearce, 2017). Over the six weeks of weekly art classes, the participants bonded socially and helped each other to create aspects

of their work. This happened, as the participants described, both as a result of solving each other's creative issues and also through support of each other when something had happened in their outside lives, as per the findings of Pacific Health Ltd (2014). The end results of their work, although highly individual, were the result of a variety of conversations regarding the direction and the practicalities of their ideas.

The social bonding of the class itself felt congruent with my style of teaching, mature learning, and the social processes which can increase self-efficacy. The participants were taught in a style suited to my philosophical paradigm, which relies upon a constructivist approach that positions the teacher as facilitator. This type of learning has been the backbone of Vygotsky's Social Constructivist Learning Theory where "individuals (...) first make personal meaning (and then) construct shared meaning" with others (Gagnon, 2001, p. 42). I explicitly taught some of the skills, modelling the process, which the participants were then able to use in a social environment to develop their individual work. These mature adults brought their life experience and combined this with the new learning by questioning, adjusting and confirming their assumptions, as noted by Carter et al. (2017). The bridge to meaning constructed through mature life experience and hands-on learning in a social context, as explained by Lawton and La Porte (2013) with their transformative learning theory, "seems best suited to arts education" (p. 314). This aligns with the modelling and persuasion processes described by Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 1977; Davidson & Kanopy (Producers), 2016), where successful outcomes are helped through demonstration and social encouragement. The end result potentially being the creation of new and reformed ideas, and learning, through the social and creative elements of an artistic context.

Most of my research participants, although not all of retirement age, were not working full-time. All of these participants discussed the social aspect of the classes as being significant and referred to the benefits of the discussion of ideas and improvements in relation to their artwork. According to Reynolds (2010),

retired adults benefit “through keeping busy, feeling useful and valued, experiencing mental stimulation and relaxation, and meeting others” (p. 136). Where her study sought the views of participants who did not necessarily belong to art groups and were all in retirement, the comments in her research still bore familiarity. This research demonstrates the impact of a visual art experience on mature individuals in a range of life situations. Reynolds (2010) describes individuals often seeking out a group dynamic, such as attending art classes or more informal groups, for the social aspect. Notably, each week the participants in my research arrived and initially spent time catching up with the others before we settled to work.

Another benefit of the classes, according to participants Isla, Sue and Abbie, was that they provided a welcome change from everyday activities. Theirs were a range of circumstances, from being the caregiver for children or partners through to losing a loved one and having new responsibilities as a result. Reduction of stress is an expected outcome of taking up a creative activity, according to Pearce (2017) and Kelly (1993). These participants each spoke about how the dynamic of the art classes allowed them to try out creative ideas in a place where they could relax and talk with others who they found something in common with.

The supportive group environment was a common theme in the interviews. Sue spoke about the change from her childhood experiences with art, saying that she felt included in the group and able to solve her creative questions in a social environment without judgement. This concurs with Price and Earl (2018), who state that it is our peers who dictate feelings of success or failure rather than the teacher. In addition to this, I noticed a growing discussion regarding participants’ lives outside of the class and this was mentioned in several of the interviews. Sharing an interest and learning about diverse life experiences can add depth to people’s understandings of how others deal with life and create an attitude of greater openness and caring (Pearce, 2017). The participants spoke about how

they would support each other and how the others supported them, and these comments appeared to have importance.

4.2.2.2 Effects on social connections with family, friends and work

An element of the social theme which emerged was the effect on connections with family and friends. The participants all perceived a positive effect on their relationships outside of the class. They spoke about the support for their participation and achievements.

I sent my picture . . .on my iPad . . .to my sister and she said, "Oh wow, sis, you're so clever!" And I said, "Yeah I know!" Even though my son went, "Oh wow!" you know. I said "Yeah, I'm looking at it now and thinking the head's too long, and it should have been a bit more rounded." And he said "Oh well, there you go! You'll change it." (Isla, 26 June 2018)

They think that's wonderful that I'm having a go. Good on you, Mum, sort of thing. So, they are very happy and pleased for me that I'm trying something different. (Bella, 25 June 2018)

Another participant spoke about taking her artwork home straight after the final class.

What I did do last night - and my family did giggle . . .they didn't laugh at me, but they laughed with me - I went home and I said I'm going to do a showing because that's what you do. So we had some dinner and we sat down and I talked about it right from the beginning, and how you presented the six weeks and what it was about and why I went, my reasoning for going, and what sort of skills you were communicating and challenging us on and then I showed them my relief print block, and I talked about that. And then I showed them my first practice piece. Then I

talked about that I had to decide who to draw and my reasons for that. So, they got all that because they didn't really know. Mum was just going to art class. And then I showed them my piece. Well, my daughter [who the picture was of], took a picture of it and immediately texted it to her friends. I thought that was pretty cool because that's the social media that they work in. She said "Look what mum's done! Who do you think this is?" and they saw [my daughter] so I think I did pretty well! [My husband] said, "Oh my goodness!" and we talked about it we talked about my picture and then he said to me, "I'd like to have a go at that! I'd like to try drawing someone." And I wanted to really inspire my family. (Diane, 22 June 2018)

As well as connections made as a result of sharing the work with family and friends, there was also the effect noticed by family on individuals' behaviour.

Yeah, I'm very calm. I'm calmer than what I was. It's cut that other side of me out, and the kids are noticing, the family is noticing. That I've turned that point, that point's come where I'm not dwelling on what has gone. I'll get out my [drawing] book and start doing something. (Isla, 26 June 2018)

Isla had suffered a bereavement in the previous year and found the acknowledgements of positive change important. She had noticed change, and this was being validated by her loved ones.

In social spaces away from home, participants spoke about the effects of the classes on their relationship with work or friends.

Some of my team, our landscape architect and some of our operational people who work in parks and reserves, [are] very talented people, and that's giving me a more positive connection with them. (Diane, 22 June 2018)

I met with a girlfriend yesterday for coffee and I was telling her [that] going out and joining the group, and the feedback that you get from the girls in the group and you, that you're taking part in something, it's something that's growing and it's been . . .and I showed the picture, my photograph and she was like, "Wow!" (Isla, 26 June 2018)

The social benefits outside of the class appeared to be an outcome of others realising what the participants were achieving and their response to that. It provided a point of discussion and a sense of achievement.

In terms of the effect on relationships with family and friends, there appear to be rich conversations which have occurred as a result of the classes. Reynolds (2010) speaks of mature adults who are involved in artistic pursuits as "maintaining reciprocal relationships with friends and family" (p. 139). She refers to those who have involved themselves in this type of learning as enjoying an activity which not only provides a source of conversation with family but also elevates their social status within their personal lives away from the activity (Reynolds, 2010). Mirroring this effect, most of the participants in this research described admiration from their family either regarding their attendance or the work which they produced.

Relationships appeared to be changing for many of the participants as a result of undertaking the classes. All the participants were able to share changes in the way that they interacted with the significant people in their lives. Participants described conversations with family, or within other social groups, about their art class experience and personal changes. They also described taking part in activities related to the classes, such as drawing with grandchildren and sharing work with friends and family. Reynolds (2010) asserts that social and cognitive skills, developed amongst an older population through participation in arts activity groups, have a benefit of creating continued active involvement in life. Others then see the worth of the mature individual as a functioning member of

society. In the same way, for those who work, this idea could translate to potentially connecting the participant on a different level with colleagues who share common interests and motivations. Laal (2012), in his research regarding the potential of lifelong learning, suggests that mature adults, who continue to challenge themselves mentally, can benefit from generating more social contact and skills, and advancing work opportunities if still employed. The source of the changes is believed to occur due to “finding meaning in our lives” through involvement in learning (Laal, 2012, p. 4271). These conversations and activities indicate that the topic of creativity is universally understood and identified by others in a variety of social contexts. It may also be that creativity simply generates another source of conversation.

Diane, the only participant who works fulltime, referred to her ability to communicate over a shared interest in art with colleagues who are involved in design work in her office. This is congruent with research by Hiltunen and Rantala (2015), which looks at the effects of a personnel development programme involving the arts. The central finding from their research was the change felt in culture and communication. The activities brought about a vehicle for change rather than having direct impact on how things were done. Diane described conversations at her workplace about school art experiences, and the artwork she produced in the class. She had previously attended creative events with colleagues to learn and now felt she had more to contribute. She is happy in her work and does not require creative information to do her job but intimated that increased awareness has added depth to her understanding and communication within the workplace. These things have been a profound result of the experience for her. This indicates that creative participation, no matter the level, provides connections with others who also have creative interests.

4.2.2.3 Social outcomes

There appears to be an overarching result of deeper and different communication with others from most participants, whether at work or in their

home life. The combination of a developing social network and a creative activity was perceived as reducing outside stressors or past trauma. What became clear in the conversations with participants was that despite different backgrounds and life experiences, these mature adults found shared understandings in their experiences of life. The classes had a positive social effect both within the group and with others outside of it.

Within the group, camaraderie developed almost immediately and over the coming weeks. Even those who were unsure of whether the classes were helpful spoke about returning because of this. Through interaction with one another help was given and received, benefiting both the people involved. The classes appeared to give the individuals a sense of identity within the group.

Participants spoke about conversations with their social circles outside of the classes regarding their experience and the project which they worked on. It was a source of communication with family, friends and work colleagues. Family and friends can gain insight to the benefits of the creative activity through activity and conversation outside of the class (Pearce, 2017). This appeared to be the case for these participants. Research also concurs that there can be subtle but positive social effects at work (Hiltunen & Rantala, 2015). The perception of creative endeavour appeared to elevate interest both from and in the participants, and their communication consequently.

Participants have identified their perceptions of increased self-efficacy, self-concept and social bonding. There is one theme remaining, which is mature adult learning. What types of learning were perceived as a result of the visual art participation?

4.2.3 Mature adult learning

The third theme, key to the original concept of my research, is the perceived effect of visual art classes on the skills and abilities of mature learners.

Participants did perceive changes to areas of their ability as a result of attending visual art classes. Learning, and its relationship to the other themes discussed, is central to the idea of visual art participation as a viable activity to enable the development of adults in the later stages of their lives. As mentioned, these perceived changes are important findings within themselves and relate immediately to the theme of self-efficacy. With a growing belief in one's ability to undertake and complete a task, there is likely to also be a perceived increase in an individual's skill base.

From the available research, there are a variety of skills which have been measured because of active visual art participation (Angelone et al., 2016; Nelson & Chandler, 1999; Rosier et al., 2013). I sought details from the participants about any changes they noticed and whether these changes had any effect on their lives. This depended on the usual activities of the participants, as did their different perspectives on skills which were noticed or employed in their contexts.

This theme is comprised of four central elements. The first of these are the skills which result directly from visual art education, such as increased hand-eye coordination and fine motor skills. The second is creative ability, the ability to think creatively and use creativity within a task. The third and fourth are skills which are more generalised: problem-solving and decision-making, and listening, focus and memory.

Various aspects of learning were investigated during the study and participants were asked specific questions about any changes to their abilities which they had noticed. They were also asked to comment on any other changes noticed as well as the overall outcome of the learning to give an opportunity to add anything which had not been covered. The participants, with their diverse range of visual art experience and daily activities, shared their perceptions of skills discovered and developed over the six-week period of the classes. There was positive

feedback from the majority about a variety of changes which they, and sometimes their family, had noticed. In response to the interviews, each of the skill areas were described in more detail by the participants and, in doing so, became more significant. 'Creative ability' was an additional area which emerged from the interviews.

4.2.3.1 Visual and fine motor skills

The first skills identified by the participants were those which are strongly associated with visual art, such as visual and fine motor skills. These skills might include visual awareness, noticing and understanding what they were seeing; visual-spatial skills, the ability to translate what is seen into an image; and motor skills, realising hand-eye co-ordination with the use of fine motor skills.

I noted conversations which were started in the classes in the third week and these progressed as time passed.

Third lesson and tonight started with a discussion about the participants starting to take notice about how things they look at are constructed. Faces, trees, looking at proportions and colours of things in their environments. (Personal journal, 31 May 2018)

Comments of interest included those about taking notice of their surroundings, seeing details in their subject matter and an increased ability to draw. Initially, this was a strong focus for the participants because of the nature of the classes. They invariably appeared to surprise themselves with what they were able to achieve.

Well for me, I thought it was very hard because I've never done a face like that before but, saying that, I did I really enjoyed it. And I thought, "Well Jeez, I quite impressed myself!" when I didn't think I would get anywhere and [had] thought, "Oh God it's going to be the worst thing ever!" . . .[and

now] rather than just looking, I look for the art side [of what I see] and I think, "I wonder how easy something like that is to do?" Even like looking at colours, putting colours together . . . Before I would have just thrown them together and not bothered. (Sue, 22 June 2018)

I look at people, and pictures, and I think, "Oh that would be a good one to have a go at drawing." . . . [The classes have] given me more confidence to carry on and maybe look further with the skills that I've learnt through the art class . . . I think I realised when I first came that I had some ability to actually draw but at the end, when I saw what I'd actually done, I was quite amazed. (Abbie, 25 June 2018)

Now I'm better at doing lines 'cause even when I did that heart stamp, that was the first time I've ever done a perfect heart and I was quite impressed, and I thought "Wow!" (Sue, 22 June 2018)

As the weeks passed, I was interested in how they were viewing their own work. Did they believe that they were creating work which reflected their effort, and were they pleased with the outcome?

I asked how they were feeling in terms of progress with their work. All responses were incredibly positive . . . The outcome is that they felt as individuals that they were making huge progress and creating things which they wanted to continue at this pace with . . . Most of the class said that they were amazed that they had been able to produce work of some quality. (Personal journal, 7 June 2018)

The growth of visual awareness and skills was an interesting transition to witness, both in the classes and through the interviews. The examples given are from two women who vastly differed in their experience of visual art before the experience and yet both gained confidence in their perceptions of their visual and motor skill bases through the course of the weekly classes. Following their

perceived successes, they each spoke about continuing with similar experiences and, as Sue's comment indicated, this also signalled that she was taking more care as she saw her own progress.

While visual art practice was noted by participants as improving their fine motor skills, the comments about heightened awareness of surroundings were a salient point in the class, leading me to the comment in my journal. This phenomenon was also repeated in the interviews by the participants. This demonstrated that the participants had an awareness of changes to their thinking and they believed that this continued in their lives outside of the classroom.

We live in a world which has become increasingly visual in all respects. Communication with family and others through social media, as well as expectations of work and public places, demand that we have an awareness of how we use and interpret what we see (Dinham et al., 2007). The speed at which we are able to work with visual information is an important life skill. Angelone et al. (2016) make note in their research that "artists generally need less time to encode visual information than non-artists" (p. 154) and, as a result, perform better on visual tasks. Noticeably, these participants developed a growing visual awareness and inquiry as the weeks progressed. The participants' discussions of what they noticed away from the classroom, and the descriptions they brought back with them, demonstrated coherent thinking. They were applying their new learning to life outside of the classes. They were also starting to critique and improve their work in the classroom. This was a sign that there was a transfer of thought between locations.

4.2.3.2 Creative ability

The second area of this theme is creative ability or creativity. There are myriad definitions of creativity, depending on both context and culture (Cohen, 2001). In this study, I have defined this concept as the use of artistic and imaginative ideas, and ways in which participants worked, to enhance actions. This arose out

of discussions which participants had about the way they usually worked and how this changed as they found a preferred way to work in the art class environment. Different participants had started the classes with a method of working which they developed and used in their lives. A change to the usual way of approaching a task seemed like it was often an unexpected outcome.

I tend to be very task-related. All about task get the task done. And so that worked well for me. You set us a task. You were very clear in your direction. Very clear on what the outcome was - the piece. Picture, colour, relief printing and a face. Awesome - it was great! . . . [However, creating meaningful art] just takes you to that next level of thinking and so that was really outside thinking for me, but I really appreciated that, yeah, and my mind really opened up, so it was really good. (Diane, 22 June 2018)

Diane discovered that, in the context of a visual art class, she could work and think in a less structured way at times. There was freedom to explore. Isla, alternatively, spoke about the general feeling of visual art practice, describing the way she worked during class as meditative.

I think it must be the outlet . . . of being able to just sit and sketch and lose yourself. I think that's all I want really is just some way of expressing or... I think just getting out of yourself, getting out of your normal thing and just letting it go. (Isla, 26 June 2018)

As they were reaching the finishing stages, I noted that the participants spoke about the progression of their work during class.

[The outcomes] created some discussion about changing ideas within their own artwork as they talked with others and considered what they had created. (Personal journal, 14 June 2018)

It was interesting to hear that the process of art-making seemed to alter the thinking in different respects for participants. For some it was a change in their thinking routine, for others the escape which creativity offered. They had tried using their prescriptive ways of achieving tasks and then discovered that they found greater enjoyment and success by changing their focus during the classes. Concurring with the findings of Reynolds (2010), who says “the capacity of art-making (is) to challenge thinking processes and skills” (p. 139) there were changes perceived by participants which they had not anticipated. This research has revealed that visual art processes can lead to alternate ways of working or thinking, potentially leading to new methods of working and learning.

The knowledge of how a task is best approached, and the ability to understand that change may be appropriate due to changing context, is a likely result of experience. A “wisdom acquired with age” is demonstrated by mature learners according to Lawton and La Porte (2013, p. 311), and this gives them the ability to actively re-assess the way they approach tasks when attempting new learning. This is a phenomenon more often realised in a creative environment (Lawton & La Porte, 2013). The participants’ increased involvement in the classes demonstrated changes which have relevance both to transformational learning and to pertinent life skills. The ability to use their experience and skills for discovery in this context may enhance creativity.

4.2.3.3 Problem-solving and decision-making

The third set of skills was problem-solving and decision-making. Where these could be viewed as an area of creative ability, I have categorised them separately. Problem-solving and decision-making in this study are defined as acting on a specific issue found during the creative process whereas creativity, as previously stated, is defined as the use of artistic and imaginative ideas to enhance actions rather than overcome issues.

My natural reaction to problem-solving with learners is to encourage them to think so that decisions and paths taken are their own. After the first, class I noted my approach with the participants.

[When] they ask why their picture does not look right, I ask them which parts they are happy with and which parts are not working for them. Then, we look at whether that part is too big, too small, too light or dark, and how everything works relative to other parts of an artwork. (Personal journal, 17 May 2018)

At this stage the participants were unsure about how to solve any issues perceived in their work. I used questioning to understand what their perceptions were and modelled the way in which I would look at my own artwork.

A week later, I again wrote about how I worked with the participants to encourage problem-solving behaviour in my journal.

I helped members of the class with stages of the process as they required, [however] I try to limit feedback to asking how they think they could approach their problems and ask other members of the class to explain their process. We then discuss which one might work for them or the pros and cons of different solutions. I also talk about there not being only one way to deal with an artistic issue. My motive is allowing them to solve their own problems so they see how they can. (Reflective journal, 24 May 2018)

In the interviews, participants spoke about the stages of their work, describing how they approached problems they encountered along the way. They explained what course of action they took if they were not happy with an aspect of their work or when they were simply trying to get started.

I couldn't work the brush, but I guess that was my challenge, you know? I found it when I was using the brush it was more solid and I didn't want that, like what Abbie did, you know, how you get that streaky effect? Well, I couldn't get that with a brush, but I did with a sponge. (Sue, 22 June 2018)

I thought "Why am I doing that? Why am I doing it that way?" I just didn't like it. The colours were too bright, and they had to be more mellow and more uniform. It did something. It made me think more about what I wanted to put down on paper. (Isla, 26 June 2018)

I had also noticed these changes over the weeks.

[By this last week, the participants could look at their work and] understand which parts they weren't so happy with and discuss what they might do to check what they needed to work on and the effects of changing different parts of their drawings. (Personal journal, 21 June 2018)

It appeared that there were decision-making and problem-solving strategies which were an outcome of the art production process. This result of learning how to approach problems which were initially encountered in class, and a realisation that this could be transferred to everyday life, were mentioned by Isla.

This is helping me now to get my mind sorted. It's not all problems it's just day-to-day running. I'm going to enjoy this part, you know. It's taken a lot of thinking through, but I know that I'm getting there. (Isla, 26 June 2018)

Isla spoke about a friend who had helped her organise her household accounts since she was widowed. She perceived that her attitude to this had changed since starting the art classes and that she was now more independent.

Decision-making was a part of the problem-solving process in the classes. Diane's issue, for instance, was a choice of colour which would influence the look of her whole project. She did not need a complicated solution, but the result of her work would rely on her choice. She realised that she should rely on her instinct when she needed to decide, and then make it work.

It taught me to just make that decision and go with it. (Diane, 22 June 2018)

Either a more complex issue involving how to create an effect or simply having a choice between alternatives can be the problem which needs solving in an art class. When a decision is made, the problem is effectively solved, and a sense of achievement is felt when the result is pleasing or useful. Art is personal and the choices which we make, or another artist makes, will not be necessarily perceived as correct by anyone else. Problem-solving in this context is also personal. If the artist feels resolution, then the problem is solved for them. If the viewer feels the same way, then that is their own outcome. Diane spoke about the pride she felt in her artwork, that she had created something which she felt achieved her own goals, and that she had shown it to her family who shared pride in her achievement. Lawton and La Porte (2013) comment that learners gain confidence to problem-solve in art projects when given the chance to make decisions. With a more open-ended problem, there may be more trial and error involved, and that is the nature of the artistic process (Nelson & Chandler, 1999). Becoming involved in how to create the art which you would like as an outcome involves a series of decisions or problems to solve.

Turning to the research question, how does this finding affect participants' everyday lives? As per the findings, Scott (2011) asserts that involvement in the

arts promotes original thinking to solve problems in a different way. To discover that you can effectively problem-solve in one situation is possibly the opening to doing that in other contexts, and it was encouraging and relevant to hear some of the participants describe that skills developed in the classes were effecting change outside of the activity.

4.2.3.4 Listening and memory skills

The final area which emerged was listening and memory skills. As related areas, they are considered in tandem with one another. The original idea was about improvements in memory however the participants were quite clear that it was their ability to listen which affected their memory of in-class teaching and interaction. There is some evidence that active engagement in visual art produces benefits to working memory and to episodic memory in different contexts. Working memory shows improvement when creatively and actively engaged in visual art, and episodic memory through discussions relating to the meaning in artwork (Perez-Fabello & Campos, 2007; Pike, 2013). Both conditions were met through the artwork produced in the classes. The participants who mentioned changes in this area with most clarity were those who had been through, or were going through, stressful events involving family health. Isla, as previously alluded to in relation to social bonding, had explained why Bella and she chose to draw particular portraits.

The lady next to me (Bella), who had lost her daughter, said “I can’t draw my daughter,” and I said “Well, I can’t draw my husband. That’s why I’m doing me and that’s why you’re doing your husband. Don’t worry about it. (Isla, 26 June 2018)

Bella, Abbie and Isla each spoke about losing the ability to listen effectively, and they felt that these things adversely affected their memories. The way in which they spoke about listening effectively might also be termed as the ability to focus. There were changes over the six weeks which they attributed to attending

the classes. I asked the participants whether they had noticed any changes to their memory, focus or ability to listen. The most common response to this question was in regard to listening.

Listening properly has got to be the first thing. Because sometimes I'd find someone's talking to me and I've heard it but I know that I've not been conscious of . . . my mind's been doing something else . . . It's helped with that. (Isla, 26 June 2018).

Bella spoke with more reticence.

I think, yes, it's made me more aware that I should be listening to every word that I can rather than [simply] absorb the feel of it. (Bella, 25 June 2018)

She discussed this skill in the context of her life away from class. She felt that she had lost this ability and was more aware of the need now, which had led to some improvement.

Only Abbie spoke directly about memory, however, then related it directly to listening.

For memory it's been great because I have had a few problems with my memory lately, so I think it has actually. I think learning to listen and to remember what you've told me about different shading techniques in a portrait, and things like that . . . In general, it's brought something new to my whole life really. (Abbie, 25 June 2018)

In the context of this research, Abbie's perception was clearly about improvements to her listening technique and was likely to have affected her recall due to this. It was certainly evident as the weeks passed that details from

the previous class were being more readily used. During the fifth lesson, I noticed that information was being processed in a different way.

Everyone started, knowing exactly where they were at with the process and what they wanted to achieve. A number of them had done work at home so that they were in a place to get finished this week. (Personal Journal, 14 June 2018)

New information, given to participants in the previous week, was being recalled by the participants, and this seemed to coincide with a few of the participants completing work independently away from the classroom. Explanations for this could range from improved listening and focus to the more frequent practice reducing the length of time for recall. However, one participant who had practised skills at home from the first week, who previously emailed to check teaching points, now simply brought work in to show me. Whatever the reason, progress was evident.

Listening effectively, or focusing, seemed to be the key to the area of memory. The participants had discussed the way they received rather than retrieved information. They felt that if they listened carefully to information, it would be more likely understood and remembered. This response came up with several participants. Curriculum-based research places focus as a recognised area of improvement related to participation in visual art (Irwin, 2018; Winner & Cooper, 2000). In the context of this study, participants felt that they had realised their need to listen more carefully to, or focus on, instructions or guidance and had improved in doing so. Two participants were also quite clear that they perceived memory improvements, one specifying that her family had noticed and commented on her clarity of thinking since taking part in the classes. Rosier et al. (2013) assert that creative tasks can be directly related to memory improvement beyond the task itself, possibly through the unique way in which the mind is engaged during the creative process. The current research fits with

the theory that engagement in creative tasks improves focus and engagement. There was certainly an improvement in that area for many of these participants.

4.2.3.5 Learning outcomes

Participants' perceptions of the skills which they developed altered and clarified the original ideas which I had. The answers given indicated an increase in skills both directly and indirectly associated with visual art, although I retain awareness that these changes are the perceptions of those interviewed.

From initial feelings of concern about aptitude, most of the group spoke about an increase in fine motor skills and awareness of the visual elements of their daily lives. There were also comments regarding use of colour, either directly with the colours available or through mixing these to find a desired outcome. These elements are within the group of skills closely linked with the visual art making process, such as visual-spatial awareness, a greater understanding of colour, and motor skills. Angelone et al. (2016) and Dinham et al. (2007) detail that aesthetic skills and judgments increase with visual art education and practice as well as hands-on skills and processes. This was a hope and an expectation of my findings. I felt that improved visual and motor skills were likely outcomes of visual art practice.

The skills associated directly with visual art practice linked to changes noticed in the way tasks were approached, which became less prescriptive and more creative. The process of art making seemed to allow some of the participants to take more chances with the way they approached tasks. They spoke about a different way of thinking, making creative decisions, and learning to allow their mind to freely explore rather than having a set routine or method.

The process of art-making seemed integral to each of the skill areas mentioned. However, as well as learning practical and creative visual art skills, and practising those taught or developed in discussion with others, the participants talked

about the journey of needing to solve discovered issues and learning to focus and remember ideas and techniques. Decisions largely involved colour or design choices. Issues ranged from representing imagined ideas to colour development and brush skills. Most of the participants appeared to think through their artwork in response to interactions with the others and perceived that the others were both non-threatening to them and were perceived as knowledgeable enough to learn from. The broad nature of the learning relates to Eisner (2003) and his description of the arts as holistic and “aesthetic forms of experience” (p. 343). The interviews revealed the extent of the changes which occurred for these participants as they produced a piece of artwork.

The group changed their approach to problem-solving. Initially they needed some structure to understand how they could identify what they wanted to change in their artwork. As the weeks progressed, the group found that when they wanted to change something about their work, either colour-wise or style-wise, they could think through their problem. The immediacy of decisions to be made also appeared to aid problem-solving. This often involved speaking with other members of the group to share what they were trying to achieve or ask how someone else had created a desired effect. This demonstrates progress in their problem-solving skills and makes connections with the social-bonding theme.

When I spoke with the participants about memory, listening effectively to information dominated the feedback. Although there were comments regarding memory, it was hard to determine examples of how this was an outcome for those who mentioned it. The details from many of the participants were in relation to how they learned to listen and receive information rather than recalling it. The research findings of Rosier et al. (2013) do posit memory, and the transference of this skill, as being clearly indicated in visual art, however memory is a subjective area for discussion. Most participants undoubtedly regarded recall as secondary to initial focus. Notably, focus and listening skills

are arguably closely linked with working memory (Awh, Vogel, & Oh, 2006). Certainly, in everyday life, the ability to focus and listen are an important part of both informal and formal situations. One of the participants referred to her increased awareness of listening to the details of what is being said. The increase in this range of skills as a result of visual art education is another sign of how important learning in this area may be. Further research could refine what has been reported for greater understanding of these findings.

The question of transference is also a topic worth consideration at this point. These findings indicate that skills and self-perceptions were transferred from the art making process to life experiences more broadly. This was not a conversation had prior to the interviews, however some participants were clear about differences in the way they viewed problem-solving or their awareness of greater focus in conversations outside of the classroom. Winner and Cooper (2000) discuss that potentially transferable skills within visual art include “focusing, close observation, critical, divergent, or independent thinking, problem-solving and problem-finding” (p. 12), however determine the employment of these skills must be made clear during instruction to elicit transference. My personal view is that these elements were more holistically taught and determined. When the participants were observing or designing areas of their artwork, or listening to instructions, there was a need to focus and solve individual problems and these skills may have improved due to this.

Overall, the participants’ responses to cognitive skills relate to the research of Irwin (2018), who determined that the arts have a perceived effect on a wide range of personal and interpersonal skills; Dinham et al. (2007) concur with this. Pacific Health Ltd (2014) state that building skills, through the creation of work personal to participants, is an important feature of arts programmes. In mature learning research, Laal (2012) proposes that learning for older adults can have a range of positive outcomes, such as improving memory and advancing work opportunities if still employed, and Reynolds (2010) cites the perspective of the

retired generation when she notes the development of new skills and a reinforced attitude to learning, saying that “the capacity of art-making [is] to challenge thinking processes and skills” (p. 139). Taking the idea of personal growth into a different realm and making the skills developed relevant in other contexts, Wali et al. (2001) make an assertion that the determination to continue a chosen informal arts activity motivates individuals to organise themselves to find solutions and to speak up about their needs and share their intentions. This relates back to the theme of self-concept, with a growth of confidence required as a precursor and enjoyed as an outcome from this type of action.

4.3 Conclusion

The findings and discussion explain the perceptions of five mature participants with varying backgrounds and experiences of visual art, who engaged in six weekly sessions of community art classes. Their individual backgrounds brought different levels of self-efficacy, social expectations and skills which they discussed openly in the interviews. Whilst these areas have been separated in the findings, they can also be discussed in terms of their joint effects. The commonalities and differences in the participants’ learning experiences are both central to the premise of teaching.

Self-efficacy was a dominant theme which appeared throughout the interviews. Self-concept was an integral element of this section, due to the affective nature of attending the art classes. Self-efficacy was seen to improve through the participants’ belief of what they could achieve. Improvements in self-concept were reported through an increase in self-image and self-confidence when achieving tasks. Abbie specifically spoke about the classes making her feel happier in herself, and another two, Diane and Isla, spoke about interactions with others where they talked about how proud they were of their own work. These changes demonstrate that visual art participation, with skills taught at an

appropriate level, increases self-efficacy and creative confidence. Overall, the participants' confidence in their own abilities appeared to increase, with one exception. The participant in question did not report decreased feelings of capability or confidence but firmly felt that she was less capable than the other participants. Her comments linked to the social aspect of the classes in that she reported feeling less anxious as she built a relationship with others in the group.

Every participant in this group mentioned a growing sense of community. Despite differences they found common bonds through a shared interest in art. The classes appeared to both bring the participants' histories to the fore and, for some, create a new perspective of their past. The other in-class social interactions were discussions relating to the progress of their artwork. The focus of their artwork appeared to increase communication through the trust which grew in each other's ideas. The participants grew to trust one another's opinion, resulting in social and friendship bonds and an opportunity to talk about everyday events with a different set of people.

Notably outside of class during and after the conclusion of the classes a few of the participants described how their families had been very supportive of, or felt additional bonds with, the participants due to their new interest. Diane, who works full-time, spoke about a greater level of communication with, and interest from, colleagues who work in design. The changes which she perceived did not necessarily impact her job directly, but enabled friendlier interactions with others at her workplace. Bella shared the interest in, and support of, her attendance, which she had from her family. Isla spoke in detail about the changes in her which had been observed by her friends and family. This concurs with other research which reports an improved social status of mature adults who are involved in the production of visual art (Hiltunen & Rantala, 2015; Laal, 2012; Reynolds, 2010). These interactions with significant others were important, often appearing to increase feelings self-efficacy and self-concept as well as the motivation to continue.

Finally, participants perceived changes to skills and abilities. The skills under discussion include those which could be expected as a direct result of visual art education as well as skills which are more generalised. The perception of increasing skill links directly to the findings of increased self-efficacy. The participants found themselves capable of achieving the tasks, which were an integral part of the art class experience, and this resulted in personal perceptions of increased visual art skills. They also perceived an increase in creative thinking. By seeing others succeed using different approaches to tasks appeared to help them to try an alternative, or develop their thinking. The participants realised the necessity of listening carefully to learn, and for most of them this became easier. The visual art process also involved problem solving, either figuring out how to solve a practical issue or simply deciding and following through on it. The participants' perceived skill growth was diverse and descriptive, and indications of these changes were present in most of the group.

The social aspect of the process appeared to have a marked effect on the development of skills, as well as self-efficacy and self-concept. "Problem solving, communication, mental flexibility, attention (and) planning" are gains indicated by participation in visual art (Morris et al., 2016, p. 665). The participants in my research appeared to increasingly solve practical problems through social interaction between participants, and their increasing confidence, experience and knowledge. Connections between the themes of this research appear reciprocal.

A salient point of this research is that the study ran over the course of only six weeks and the interviews all took place within five days of the classes finishing. This is a short time in which to expect changes as a result of the classes or to assess whether any perceived changes are permanent. Winner and Cooper (2000) makes note of how impactful the duration of a study can be, saying that "one can hardly expect a brief exposure to the arts lasting a year or less, to have strong academic transfer effects" (p. 63). Nevertheless, there were changes perceived by the participants. The fact that these participants were starting

from a point of little prior experience would have made any differences evident. The study's aim was to provide a starting point, and this is discussed further in the in Chapter 5's Limitations.

Chapter 5 CONCLUSION

5.1 Chapter outline

This thesis examines the perceived effects of a weekly visual art class in a community setting on mature adult participants. The background and context of the study were considered in relation to current literature on related research. The place of arts education in the curriculum was discussed along with the health sector's use of the arts and visual art, and the wider purposes of art in the adult sector. Finally, the issues of an ageing population, the potential benefits of visual art for mature adults and the research gaps were outlined.

The methodological aspects of the project and the methods employed were considered in the context of my ontological beliefs, and the design of the project was explained. The themes which emerged from the data were explained, and from these, the findings of the research project were presented and discussed.

This chapter integrates the key findings, discusses what they imply alongside existing research, and makes recommendations for future research.

5.2 Research theory, question and aims

This research explores how active participation in visual art classes might benefit the mature population. The data of interest concerns educational and social outcomes. Specifically, these include the development of skills, both directly and indirectly associated with creating visual art, and the social-educative benefits to the individual from the development of a like-minded community.

The main research question was: How do mature adult participants view the effects of a visual arts class in a community setting on their daily lives?

The aims of the research examine what aspects of learning may be perceived as being affected by the classes and the mechanisms through which this might take place. Although there is research pertaining to the effects of active visual art participation on learning, visual art participation for mature adults, and mature adult learning, there is a lack of research combining these areas.

5.3 Key findings

The findings can be summarised as changes in self-efficacy and self-concept, increased social bonding and perceived growth in skills. These elements have been discussed in detail and this section now examines the key findings.

The first finding of significance in this research was the growth of participants' self-efficacy and self-concept through the classes. This was a finding which emerged from the interviews, and the notes in my journal, rather than being an initial focus of the research. As I grew to understand more of the antecedents of self-efficacy, I became more aware of the changes which they were experiencing (Bandura, 1986, 2012; Bong & Clark, 1999; Bong & Skaalvik, 2003; Davidson & Kanopy (Producers), 2016). By the sixth week, there was a widespread feeling of achievement and, in addition to increased self-efficacy, there was a positive change in self-concept. Belief in the ability to create visual art appears to motivate attendance and this is significant to other benefits of participation in visual art classes and groups.

The next finding was an increase in social bonding between the participants and with others beyond the classes. A key feature was the change in the level of communication between them. The brevity of initial interactions changed as most participants got to know each other, and consulted one another on their artwork. Pearce (2017) and Reynolds (2010) both report that the social bonds

which form through mutual creative interests are important for mature adults, providing meaning and acceptance within this new group. A mutual lack of prior experience brings a sense of acceptance by others in the same situation (Pearce, 2017). This indicates that the feelings of advocacy which were felt by participants are important to explore by the tutor in any visual art class experience.

The participants also spoke about social communication changes outside of the classes. The main reason for the changes was perceived to be that the classes provided a new point of discussion, which gave others an increased perception of the participant's abilities. Activities generated by the participants' increased interest in art, included the sharing of work and participating in art with family. A growth in social interaction is important in mature adults. Improved and more relevant relationships with younger members of the family increases knowledge passed through the generations in either direction, and makes older members feel valued and relevant (Reynolds, 2010). In the context of potentially improving the lives of families as a whole, this is a noteworthy finding.

The third set of findings concerned the learning which took place. Participants perceived increases to visual awareness and fine motor skills. They spoke about using their eyes more in everyday life, noticing visual details about the people and places. In addition, there was a perception of increased creativity, a less rigid, and more liberated way of thinking. Cohen (2001) agrees that visual art promotes original thinking, an outcome of creating rather than reproducing. Several participants spoke about developing a different way of working through the weekly visual art classes and that, despite hesitation, they had better outcomes by working in an alternative way. This appeared to be a result of either slowly changing habitual processes or, for some, relishing the chance to think differently during the class. This freedom may help mature adults benefit as they experience change.

Other findings to thinking skills were problem-solving and decision-making. These were issues or choices between alternatives which the participants came across as they worked. With open-ended problems, participants were often involved in solutions where they engaged in trial and error, and came to accept that this was a necessary part of the visual art process (Nelson & Chandler, 1999). Isla noted that problem-solving in class made finding solutions in her everyday life easier. This comment demonstrates the thinking that success in creative tasks can involve similar processes which we use in other scenarios. This appeared to reduce feelings of anxiety for this participant, which is an important finding.

Finally, the participants perceived improvement to their listening skills. This finding was strongly tied to the need to remember instructions, and perceptions of success varied. Listening carefully seemed key to recall and this response came up with several participants. Isla and Abbie said that they perceived memory improvements. Research posits specific improvements to memory from active visual art participation, theorising that the creative process within the activity is responsible for the effect (Rosier et al., 2013). Perceptions of visual art participation improving the ability to recall information is worth further investigation in a contextual study.

The findings demonstrated that participants perceived benefits from their involvement in visual art classes. As previously indicated, connections were found between the themes discussed and the next section examines these in more detail.

5.4 Connections between findings

Connections between the findings start to emerge from the discussions with participants. Self-efficacy and perceived skill improvements were strongly interconnected. As participants experienced success in activities, they described

an improvement in the belief that they could attempt and complete a similar task. Indeed, the perception of achievement appeared entirely linked to self-efficacy.

The findings also indicate that the participants' belief in themselves as individuals was affected by their bonds as a group. This was indicated by the way some of the participants spoke about what others said to them and what they said about other members of the group. Social interactions within a learning group potentially increase or reduce feelings of self-efficacy, and those of self-concept. Whilst Bandura (1977) reports that mastery has a greater effect on self-efficacy than social persuasion, Bong and Clark (1999) and Davidson and Kanopy (Producers) (2016) note that if a lack of prior experience exists then a reliance on social persuasion is created. By sharing our experiences and supporting others' work, participants built relationships. This appeared to build self-efficacy and self-concept, and validated the work, of those who gave advice and support. The participants were described by each other as respectful and friendly, mostly believing that they were of a similar ability level, however there was a social order which emerged by virtue of one participant who lacked self-efficacy, believing herself to have less artistic ability. This was interesting because her self-concept appeared low, despite good social support from the others.

The social bonding led to an increased level of trust in the opinions of others. This in turn affected most participants' perceptions of their ability to complete tasks and of their ability to solve problems. Some participants spoke about the various stages of the process and the times when they had noticed improvements in the way they worked. There was some consistency with the timing of perceived improvements. Isla, for instance, found solutions to her colour issues in week four, Abbie finally produced a drawing which she was proud of in the fourth or fifth week, and Sue began to work more freely in class and determine how she was going to complete her final work around that time too. These events fitted with an earlier comment from Bella, regarding self-

efficacy, who started to feel less overwhelmed by the classes. Consequently, this change in the middle to latter weeks could be the pattern of improvement amongst many of the participants, meaning that it took approximately a month for the effects of change to be noticed.

The social effects on family and friends were perhaps the most significant area of the findings, making an overall connection between the findings. Bella said that her family were glad that she was trying a new activity. Diane and Isla described enjoyment of significant others' reactions. The social sharing of their artwork, and the reactions to it, were described in detail. The interactions indicate that their families were interested in their progress and achievements, and that there was an increased vitality in those relationships. Some of the participants spoke about changes to the way they engaged with their lives, viewing challenges as less fearsome or looking at the world with more interest. The outcome of these social responses signified increased self-concept and Isla noted that she was keen to continue learning in this area, which would likely promote further development of skill.

5.5 Limitations

The main limitation in this research was a lack of prior published research data which could be obtained pertaining to mature adults and the educative effects of participation in visual art for such a group. Published information on the effects of visual art on mature adults is particularly scant in New Zealand. The outcome of this was that my findings were not wholly comparable in context to other existing published studies.

Other limitations in this research were understood in the planning stages of the research, such as the non-randomised 'convenience' sample method and the limited length of time over which the research took place. The sample fits the

brief of the case study design, looking for depth rather than generalisability and the nature of the information which was sought was able to be understood in the time-frame. These do however provide future pathways for related research. Considerations would be to revisit the questions and ideas over twelve to twenty-four months in a longitudinal study and to examine the potential of mixed methods research to further extrapolate information.

5.6 Lessons learned

The first lesson which I have learned through the process of this research is that, for me as a qualitative researcher, there is never enough recording of information. As I considered my findings and discussion of these, I recognised that I have heard and processed more information than I have recorded through interviews or in my journal and yet I can only report and interpret the information which I have on record.

I have also learned that I would record the information from the research questionnaire differently. Whilst the questionnaires were a faster process, I would either conduct short interviews prior to the research or organise to speak with each participant just prior to the first art class about their previous experience. I think this would have provided more useful information about change rather than relying on accurate unbiased recall at the post-class interview stage. I was satisfied with the outcome of those interviews based on the information which I had at that time, but this would also have provided more focused information to discuss.

Although my timeframe prohibited longitudinal results, in future studies of this kind I would interview participants again after a set time. This would allow me to find out whether a period of further reflection and lived experience had affected their perceptions of the classes and their effects.

My lessons learned in terms of methodology and method are that the perspectives of others can lead down a nuanced and yet unexpected pathway. I was also surprised that the more I understand my research philosophy the more I realise that my approach to teaching can be defined by the same maxim. In this way, my view of how learning occurs has become pervasive in my thinking about both methods of research and the environment which I set up for learners.

I have enjoyed the process of recording the information and find that the breadth of information in the qualitative process adds to my understanding, despite the protestations of those who prefer a scientific research environment. I have found an interest in how individuals can differ in both their background and motivations and yet find commonalities in their experience of the same phenomena.

5.7 Implications and recommendations for future research

There are implications which arise as a result of the findings, and recommendations which are made in regard to these.

The findings, and prior research, indicate that active participation in visual art has a positive personal and social effect on older adults. They also indicate that there are effects on skills and abilities in this age group. Self-efficacy appears rightly connected to perceived development of skills. Social growth appears to increase self-concept in relation to perceived development of skills.

There are two questions which feel unanswered. The first is whether perceptions of skill are entirely accurate. A solution could be triangulating information from a third source, other than the participant and me. This would

provide another viewpoint to add validity to the outcome. The second question is what the effects of a longer period of visual art participation might be. Could the effects of the six-week experience could be maintained and expanded, and do the changes experienced continue if participation is discontinued?

The social outcomes of the classes have had the greatest influence on my understanding and approach. Despite differences between the participants, in terms of their background stories and how they presented these to the other participants, the group bonded well. Many of the participants described conversations which indicated that people in their own social circles were invested in the process, reporting that their family and friends were motivated by their attendance and the changes which they had witnessed. This indicates that visual art participation has social value for mature adults, increasing their interactions and bonding with others in their lives. I would recommend that there is easier access to funding for visual art education for the mature age group. Specifically, this should be targeting the over fifties rather than just the retired population. The social worth of such programmes must be understood, and funding should be adequate to allow for quality of time and resources therein.

The link between social bonding, perceived increases in skill, and self-concept is worth further investigation. Understanding these links would provide important information on how the concerning effects of ageing communities could be mitigated. Local and national government bodies must consider the importance of visual art participation in communities and further research in this field is warranted in the New Zealand context. Future research would benefit from studying the longitudinal effects of visual art classes on mature adults in a community context. To understand whether changes are still occurring as a result of a short set of classes several months later or amplified by continued participation in classes would add depth to these findings. By continuing to follow this line of research there is an opportunity to find out more about the merits of visual art education for the over-fifty age group and potentially provide

information to funding agencies and local government on how our society can benefit.

5.8 Conclusion

The findings indicated that participation in a visual art class in a community setting did affect the mature participants' perceptions of their visual and creative skills, as well as their problem-solving and listening skills. Self-efficacy and self-concept grew and, in addition to this, they perceived that social bonds increased, both within and outside of the class. Conclusions are that visual art classes are beneficial for mature adults, and that these benefits appear to be linked. Self-efficacy and skill development seem strongly interrelated, as are social bonds and self-concept.

This research finds that when we consider visual art education for mature adults, we should be focusing on the social bonds which grow in the classroom as well as the development of skills. This might involve planning for more social elements of learning, such as pre- and post-class catch-up time, which happened naturally with this group. These appear to enhance the self-efficacy and self-concept of the individual, which in turn appear to reflectively boost the growth of skill and communication. To use a tool such as this in the wider community may benefit an ageing population and in turn benefit us all.

APPENDICES

Appendix A: Data Collection Timeline

Week 1

- **Thu 17 May – Lesson #1**
 - Introduce research concept and potential involvement of attendees after they have signed in.
 - Research explanation document given out, Q & A with attendees.
 - Informed consent form explained and signed by participants.
 - Deliver questionnaire to those who choose to complete.

- **Fri 18 May**
 - Tabulate questionnaires.

Weeks 1-6

- **Thu 17 May – Thu 21 June**
 - Teach and Journal lessons (own response to the lessons).

Week 7

- **Fri 22 June – Fri 29 June**
 - Semi-structured interviews with participants.

Appendix B: Questionnaire

Name:

Age Group: 40-49 50-59

60-69 70-79 80-89

The Effect of Visual Art Education on Mature Adults in Community Settings

How do mature adult participants view the effects of a visual arts class in a community setting on their daily lives?

1. a. When did you last attend visual art classes?
b. Describe your memories of those and previous classes.
2. a. Have you been to any other type of arts classes, such as music/dance/drama? **Yes/No**
b. If so, please give details of when and where you did this.
3. What are you hoping to get out of these classes?
4. a. Do you work currently?
Yes/No
b. If so, what type of work do you do and what skills are required?
5. Describe the types of activities do you do in your weekly life at home or elsewhere.

Appendix C: Interview Questions

1. What was your previous experience of visual art education? (see questionnaire to verify info provided)

2. What prompted your interest in these art classes?
3. What were your hopes when participating in the art classes? (see questionnaire)
4. What was the outcome for you of participating in the art classes?
 - i. Has working with art brought anything new to your work community or home life? Were there social benefits?
 - ii. Can you describe any differences in your life from six weeks ago as a result of attending art class?
5. Can you describe any change in areas such as:
 - i. Listening ability and concentration?
 - ii. Social participation?
 - iii. Visual?
 - iv. Memory?
 - v. Problem solving?
 - vi. Can you describe any other behaviours which transferred to home or work?
6. Did others' experience of the classes help you? If yes, describe that experience?
7. Have these classes motivated you to do anything else, art or otherwise?
What next?

Appendix D: Isla interview excerpt

Helen: What was the outcome of participating in the art classes?

Isla: I think it must be the outlet. . .of being able to just sit and sketch and lose yourself. I think that's all I wanted really was just some way of expressing or... I think just getting out of yourself, getting out of your normal thing and just letting it go.

Helen: So what you are trying to say is that it's relaxing to do something different?

Isla: Yeah. My husband passed away last October so since then life has changed because a few years before that he was ill so It was always wheelchairs, walkers,. . . So it was constant looking after, and since then it's like, well what am I going to do now? And what do I want to do? So that's been a complete change. So I'm just going with the flow and seeing what there is for me. So it's been a big thing. Meeting you in the park was with my son and he said "Do it, do it!"

Helen: Has working with art brought anything new to your life? So can you describe any differences to your life in the past 6 weeks as a result of attending the art classes?

Isla: Yeah, I'm very calm. I'm calmer than what I was. It's cut that other side of me out, and the kids are noticing, the family is noticing. That I've turned that point, that points come where I'm not dwelling on what has gone. I'll get out my book and start doing something.

Helen: You mean drawing something?

Isla: Yes. And the kids are enjoying it because they sit and do it with me. I mean they're teenagers but they still love it. They love arty stuff. And then I sent my picture, with the frame that you did, took a picture on my iPad and sent it to my sister and she said, "Oh wow, sis, you're so clever!" And I said, "Yeah I know!"

Helen: So you felt that you achieved something?

Isla: Yeah definitely. Yeah, definitely achieved something.

Helen: So that was part of my next question, which was have you discussed the art classes with anyone at work or at home, in your case at home? Clearly you have. What have you actually said to them in terms of what you have been feeling or what you have achieved?

Isla: Well I met with a girlfriend yesterday for coffee and I was telling her (that) going out and joining the group, and the feedback that you get from the girls in the group and you, that you're taking part in something, it's something that's growing and it's been. . .and I showed the picture, my photograph and she was like, "Wow!"

Appendix E: Reflective journal excerpt

Thursday 31 May 2018 (Class #3)

Third lesson and tonight started with a discussion about noticing how things they look at are constructed. Faces, trees, looking at proportions and colours of things in their environments. One participant (Sue) was quite open a couple of weeks back about the fact that she was going to come to learn how to do design for a nail course which she is starting soon, and that she was not interested in these classes beyond that goal. She now has commented that she is now enjoying attending the art classes themselves rather than doing them for other purposes.

Three participants (Sue, Diane and Abbie) had worked on their print designs at home.

This week was about making the prints from the constructed blocks. I directed them to use scrap paper to make a rough design and try out their prints, then record prints in their visual diaries and then they could start on their final print designs.

We spoke about their confidence in mixing primary colours to achieve different tones and hues. I asked them if they felt confident to do this and there was a variety of responses. They all appeared to have a basic idea of primary and secondary colours so we talked about the colours available and how you can mix different shades and tones using two colours and then adding white or black. I asked if they had colours in mind and we discussed how they might approach order of mixing so that they could fine tune their colours. Mostly they then began to try out mixing colours and asked how they could improve the result if it was not quite as expected.

It was interesting to see the interaction between members of the class if I let them think through how to tackle aspects of their work. It was noticeable that

the class would support efforts made by others and offer suggestions of their own. This week there has been noticeably more interaction between participants, both at the start and during the class.

The trials were good for thinking through what they liked and how they might use or change these ideas for their 'good' piece. Isla changed hers entirely to start creating a very subtle and abstract yet colourful result which she was really pleased with. She has also produced six different prints on her block in the previous lesson so has been working relatively quickly.

I referred to the class as artists during the lesson and this elicited some laughter and a lot of positivity. A few of the class made comments such as , "That's right! That's how we should think of ourselves." Interestingly one of the class had had a non-immediate family bereavement during the week and had called to say she would not make it this week but then came saying that she did not want to miss class because of how it made her feel.

The outcome of this class was that while it was positive I realise that, with this group, deeper learning is more appreciated than getting lots of surface things done (quality rather than quantity). I have had to slow down my expectations of how much is done in each class because, as long as they are happily occupied and progressing, that seems less important to me than personal outcomes. Next week we will be continuing and completing the prints and portraits.

REFERENCES

- Adams, R.-J. (2014). Let's give them more room: Arts partnerships, Arts education and the Australian Curriculum. *NJ*, 38(1), 38-47. doi: 10.1080/14452294.2014.11649571
- Angelone, B. L., Hass, R. W., & Cohen, M. (2016). Skill transfer in visual arts expertise. *Psychology of Aesthetics, Creativity, and the Arts*, 10(2), 147-156. doi: 10.1037/aca0000053
- Australia Council for the Arts. (2014). *Arts in daily life: Australian participation in the arts*. Sydney, Australia: Retrieved from <http://www.australiacouncil.gov.au/workspace/uploads/files/research/arts-in-daily-life-australian-5432524d0f2f0.pdf>.
- Awh, E., Vogel, E. K., & Oh, S. H. (2006). Interactions between attention and working memory. *Neuroscience*, 139(1), 201-208. doi: 10.1016/j.neuroscience.2005.08.023
- Bandura, A. (1977). *Social learning theory*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Bandura, A. (1986). *Social foundations of thought and action : a social cognitive theory*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Bandura, A. (2012). On the functional properties of perceived self-efficacy revisited. *Journal of Management*, 38(1), 9-44. doi: 10.1177/0149206311410606
- Bandura, A., & Locke, E. A. (2003). Negative self-efficacy and goal effects revisited. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 88(1), 87-99. doi: 10.1037/0021-9010.88.1.87
- Bell, D. (2010). Visual arts education in New Zealand: Curriculum, promise and challenge. *Curriculum Matters*, 6, 28-47. Retrieved from <https://search-informit-com-au.ezproxy.waikato.ac.nz/browsePublication;vol=6;py=2010;res=IELHSS;issn=1177-1828>
- Blatt-Gross, C. (2010). Casting the conceptual net: Cognitive possibilities for embracing the social and emotional richness of art education. *Studies in Art Education*, 51(4), 353-367. doi: 10.1080/00393541.2010.11518813
- Bong, M., & Clark, R. E. (1999). Comparison between self-concept and self-efficacy in academic motivation research. *Educational Psychologist*, 34(3), 139-153. doi: 10.1207/s15326985ep3403_1
- Bong, M., & Skaalvik, E. (2003). Academic self-concept and self-efficacy: How different are they really? *Educational Psychology Review*, 15(1), 1-40. doi: 10.1023/A:1021302408382
- Burnard, P., & Hennessy, S. (2006). *Reflective practices in arts education*. Dordrecht, Netherlands: Springer.
- Carter, C. S., Solberg, L. B., & Solberg, L. M. (2017). Applying theories of adult learning in developing online programs in gerontology. *Journal of Adult and Continuing Education*, 23(2), 197-205. doi: 10.1177/1477971417721718
- Chapman, R. (1998). The arts improve student performance. *Education Digest*, 63(8), 58. Retrieved from [https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.waikato.ac.nz/publicationissue/71779428DB584C91PQ/\\$B/1/The+Education+Digest/01998Y04Y01\\$23Apr+1998\\$3b++Vol.+63+\\$288\\$29/\\$N?accounid=17287](https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.waikato.ac.nz/publicationissue/71779428DB584C91PQ/$B/1/The+Education+Digest/01998Y04Y01$23Apr+1998$3b++Vol.+63+$288$29/$N?accounid=17287)
- Cohen, G. D. (2001). *The creative age : awakening human potential in the second half of life*. New York, NY: Quill.
- Creswell, J. W. (2018). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (5th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.

- Davidson, F., & Kanopy (Producers). (2016). *Bandura's social cognitive theory: An introduction*. Retrieved from <https://waikato.kanopy.com/video/bandura-s-social-cognitive-theory-introduction>
- Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (2011). *The Sage handbook of qualitative research* (4th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Dinham, J., Grushka, K., MacCallum, J., Pascoe, R., Wright, P., & Brown, N. C. M. (2007). Visual education - repositioning visual arts and design: Educating for expression and participation in an increasingly visually mediated world. *International Journal of Learning*, 14(6), 77-85. Retrieved from <http://Learning-Journal.com>
- Eisner, E. W. (2003). The arts and the creation of mind. *Language Arts*, 80(5), 340-344. Retrieved from <https://www-jstor-org.ezproxy.waikato.ac.nz/stable/i40072310?refreqid=excelsior%3A096186b187911880f91ee84a30457236>
- Engel, S. (2015). *The end of the rainbow: How educating for happiness not money would transform our schools*. New York: The New Press.
- Ewing, R. (2010). *The arts and Australian education: Realising potential*. Retrieved from <https://research.acer.edu.au/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1020&context=ar>
- Gagnon, G. W. (2001). *Designing for learning: Six elements in constructivist classrooms*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.
- Gallagher, M. W. (2012). Self-efficacy *Encyclopedia of human behaviour* (pp. 314-320). Lawrence, KS: Elsevier.
- Green, J., & Kindseth, A. (2011). Art all day: Distinction and interrelation of school-based and out-of-school arts learning. *Studies in Art Education*, 52(4), 337-341. doi: 10.1080/00393541.2011.11518845
- Greene, M. (2013). The turning of the leaves: Expanding our vision for the arts in education. *Harvard Educational Review*, 83(1), 251-252, 266. Retrieved from https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.waikato.ac.nz/docview/1326778684?rfr_id=info%3Axri%2Fsid%3Aprim
- Guetzkow, J. (2002). How the arts impact communities: An introduction to the literature on arts impact studies. *IDEAS Working Paper Series from RePEc, 2002*. Retrieved from https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.waikato.ac.nz/publication/publications_2036240?accountid=17287
- Hancock, D. R. (2017). *Doing case study research: A practical guide for beginning researchers* (3rd ed.). London, United Kingdom: Teachers College Press.
- Hanna, G. (2006). Focus on creativity and aging in the United States. *Generations*, 30(1), 47-49. Retrieved from <http://ezproxy.waikato.ac.nz/login?url=https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.waikato.ac.nz/docview/212226403?accountid=17287>
- Hanna, G. P., Noelker, L. S., & Bienvenu, B. (2015). The arts, health, and aging in America: 2005–2015. 55(2), 271-277. doi: 10.1093/geront/gnu183
- Harreveld, B., Danaher, M., Lawson, C., Knight, B. A., & Busch, G. (2016). *Constructing methodology for qualitative research researching education and social practices*. London, United Kingdom: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Harris, A., & Ammermann, M. (2016). The changing face of creativity in Australian education. *Teaching Education*, 27(1), 103-113. doi: 10.1080/10476210.2015.1077379
- Hewitt, E. (2017). Building bridges: The use of reflective oral diaries as a qualitative research tool. *International Journal of Research & Method in Education*, 40(4), 345-359. doi: 10.1080/1743727X.2015.1114601

- Hiltunen, M., & Rantala, P. (2015). Creating art-based approaches in working life development: The shift from success to significance. *International Journal of Education through Art*, 11(2), 245-260. doi: 10.1386/eta.11.2.245_1
- Irwin, M. R. (2018). Arts shoved aside: Changing art practices in primary schools since the introduction of National Standards. *International Journal of Art & Design Education*, 37(1), 18-28. doi: 10.1111/jade.12096
- Kaimal, G., & Ray, K. (2017). Free art-making in an art therapy open studio: Changes in affect and self-efficacy. *Arts & Health*, 9(2), 154-166. doi: 10.1080/17533015.2016.1217248
- Kazemek, F. E., & Rigg, P. (1997). '...the sense of soul...goes hand in hand with an aesthetic response': Art in adult literacy. *Adult Basic Education*, 7(3), 131. Retrieved from [https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.waikato.ac.nz/publicationissue/FA612066E0CD4960PQ/\\$B/1/Adult+Basic+Education/01997Y10Y01\\$23Fall+1997\\$3b++Vol.+7+\\$283\\$29/\\$N?accountid=17287](https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.waikato.ac.nz/publicationissue/FA612066E0CD4960PQ/$B/1/Adult+Basic+Education/01997Y10Y01$23Fall+1997$3b++Vol.+7+$283$29/$N?accountid=17287)
- Kelly, J. R. (1993). *Activity and aging : staying involved in later life*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.
- Khawaja, M., & Boddington, B. (2010). Informing the debate on population ageing in New Zealand: The role of Statistics New Zealand. *New Zealand Population Review*, 36, 117-135. Retrieved from <http://ezproxy.waikato.ac.nz/login?url=https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.waikato.ac.nz/docview/1020892431?accountid=17287>
- Laal, M. (2012). Benefits of lifelong learning. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 46(C), 4268-4272. doi: 10.1016/j.sbspro.2012.06.239
- Lawton, P. H., & La Porte, A. M. (2013). Beyond traditional art education: Transformative lifelong learning in community-based settings with older adults. *Studies in Art Education*, 54(4), 310-320. doi: 10.1080/00393541.2013.11518905
- Madyaningrum, M., & Sonn, C. (2011). Exploring the meaning of participation in a community art project: A case study on the Seeming project. *Journal of Community & Applied Social Psychology*, 21(4), 358. doi: 10.1002/casp.1079
- Menter, I. (2011). *A guide to practitioner research in education*. London, United Kingdom: Sage Publications.
- Ministry of Education. (2007). *The New Zealand curriculum*. Wellington, New Zealand: Ministry of Education.
- Morris, J. (2018). Arts engagement outside of school: Links with Year 10 to 12 students' intrinsic motivation and self-efficacy in responding to art. *Australian Educational Researcher*, 1-18. doi: 10.1007/s13384-018-0269-8
- Morris, J., Toma, M., Kelly, C., Joice, S., Kroll, T., Mead, G., & Williams, B. (2016). Social context, art making processes and creative output: a qualitative study exploring how psychosocial benefits of art participation during stroke rehabilitation occur. *Disability and Rehabilitation*, 38(7), 661-672. doi: 10.3109/09638288.2015.1055383
- Nelson, M., & Chandler, W. (1999). Some tools common to art and science. *Art Education*, 52(3), 41-47. doi: 10.1080/00043125.1999.11652871
- Pacific Health Ltd. (2014). *The arts in health: Evidence from the international literature*. Christchurch, New Zealand: Pegasus Health.
- Pearce, E. (2017). Participants' perspectives on the social bonding and well-being effects of creative arts adult education classes. *Arts & Health*, 9(1), 42-59. doi: 10.1080/17533015.2016.1193550
- Perez-Fabello, M. J., & Campos, A. (2007). The influence of imaging capacity on visual art skills. *Thinking Skills and Creativity*, 2(2), 128-135. doi: 10.1016/j.tsc.2007.09.002

- Pike, A. A. (2013). The effect of art therapy on cognitive performance among ethnically diverse older adults. *Art Therapy, 30*(4), 159-168. doi: 10.1080/07421656.2014.847049
- Price, G., & Earl, K. (2018). An interview: Making art as a dialogue with materials, moments and motivations. Retrieved from <https://hdl.handle.net/10289/11657>
- Pritchard, A. (2010). *Psychology for the classroom constructivism and social learning*. Florence, Italy: Routledge.
- Puente-Díaz, R. (2015). Creative self-efficacy: An exploration of its antecedents, consequences, and applied implications. *The Journal of Psychology, 150*(2), 1-25. doi: 10.1080/00223980.2015.1051498
- Punch, K. (2014). *Introduction to social research : quantitative and qualitative approaches* (Third edition.. ed.). Los Angeles, CA: SAGE Publications.
- Reynolds, F. (2010). 'Colour and communion': Exploring the influences of visual art-making as a leisure activity on older women's subjective well-being. *Journal of Aging Studies, 24*(2), 135-143. doi: 10.1016/j.jaging.2008.10.004
- Rosier, J., Locker, L., & Naufel, K. (2013). Art and memory: An examination of the learning benefits of visual-art exposure. *North American Journal of Psychology, 15*(2), 265-278. Retrieved from <http://ezproxy.waikato.ac.nz/login?url=https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.waikato.ac.nz/docview/1353528150?accountid=17287>
- Schindler, M., Maihöfner, C., Bolwerk, A., & Lang, F. R. (2015). Does participation in art classes influence performance on two different cognitive tasks? *Aging & Mental Health, 1*-6. doi: 10.1080/13607863.2015.1114587
- Schunk, D. H. (1991). Self-efficacy and academic motivation. *Educational Psychologist, 26*(3-4), 207-231. doi: 10.1080/00461520.1991.9653133
- Scott, C. (2011). Change your mind. *Teacher, 221*, 20-21. Retrieved from <https://search-informit-com-au.ezproxy.waikato.ac.nz/documentSummary;dn=972679346768916;res=IELHSS>
- Singh-Manoux, A., Kivimaki, M., Glymour, M. M., Elbaz, A., Berr, C., Ebmeier, K. P., . . . Dugravot, A. (2012). Timing of onset of cognitive decline: Results from whitehall ii prospective cohort study. *BMJ : British Medical Journal (Online), 344*(7840) doi: 10.1136/bmj.d7622
- Smith, J. (2000). Research into adolescent art education : an ill-explored territory? *Australian Art Education, 23*(2), 16-22. Retrieved from <https://search-informit-com-au.ezproxy.waikato.ac.nz/search;res=AEIPT;search=FTI=yes%20AND%20IS=1032-1942%20AND%20VRF=23%20AND%20IRF=2%20AND%20PY=2000%20AND%20PG=16>
- Smith, J. (2009). Art education in New Zealand: Historical antecedents and the contemporary context. *Canadian Review of Art Education: Research and Issues, 36*, 19-36. Retrieved from <http://search.ebscohost.com.ezproxy.waikato.ac.nz/login.aspx?direct=true&db=a9h&AN=45342224&site=ehost-live&custid=s4804380>
- Statistics New Zealand. (2013). *New Zealand's 65+ Population: A statistical volume updates 2013 - Chapters 1 to 7*. Retrieved from http://archive.stats.govt.nz/browse_for_stats/people_and_communities/older_people/new-zealands-65-plus-population.aspx
- Stephens, C., Spicer, J., Budge, C., Stevenson, B., & Alpass, F. (2015). Accounting for differences in cognitive health between older adults in New Zealand and the USA. *27*(4), 591-600. doi: 10.1017/S1041610214002579

- Tang, I., Boddington, B., Khawaja, M. A., & Statistics New Zealand. (2007). *New Zealand's 65+ population a statistical volume*. Wellington, New Zealand: Statistics New Zealand.
- Wali, A., Marcheschi, E., Severson, R., & Longoni, M. (2001). More than a hobby: Adult participation in the informal arts. *The Journal of Arts Management, Law, and Society*, 31(3), 212-230. doi: 10.1080/10632920109597327
- Walls, A., Deane, K. L., & Connor, P. (2016). "Looking for the blue, the yellow, all the colours of the rainbow": The value of participatory arts for young people in social work practice. *Aotearoa New Zealand Social Work*, 28(4), 67-79. Retrieved from <https://search-informit-com-au.ezproxy.waikato.ac.nz/documentSummary;dn=590160542886565;res=IELHSS>
- White, T. P. (2013). Art a waste of time? *Harvard Educational Review*, 83(1), 93-95,274. Retrieved from <https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.waikato.ac.nz/results/B752950BE34C4315PQ/1?accountid=17287>
- Winner, E. (2007). Visual thinking in arts education: Homage to Rudolf Arnheim. *Psychology of Aesthetics, Creativity, and the Arts*, 1(1), 25-31. doi: 10.1037/1931-3896.1.1.25
- Winner, E., & Cooper, M. (2000). Mute those claims: No evidence (yet) for a casual link between arts study and academic achievement. *Journal of Aesthetic Education*, 34(3/4), 11-75. doi: 10.2307/3333637
- Wylie, L. (2018, 7 February 2018). National Standards will not be missed, say teachers. *Whanganui Chronicle*. Retrieved from https://www.nzherald.co.nz/wanganui-chronicle/news/article.cfm?c_id=1503426&objectid=11987025
- Yin, R. K. (2014). *Case study research : design and methods* (5 edition.. ed.). Los Angeles, CA: SAGE.