

Facilitating awareness in children from a low socio-economic environment using the art-making process

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- Lee Smith, for editing my thesis.
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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this study, titled 'Facilitating awareness in children from a low socio-economic environment using the art-making process', is my own work and that all the references used or quoted have been indicated and recognised.

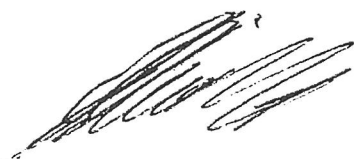
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LANGUAGE PRACTITIONER

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A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of several overlapping, slanted strokes that form a stylized representation of the name 'Lee Smith'.

Lee Smith

PREFACE

In this study, the researcher has used the Harvard referencing system. An article of the study will follow once this study has been examined.

Given the researcher's experience as an art teacher and artist, she is aware of the fact that art is often used as a projective technique in research in therapy. However, the aim of this study was to use art-making as a process for facilitating awareness.

SUMMARY OF THE STUDY

Gestalt theory and Positive Psychology formed the underlying theoretical frameworks of this study. Both Gestalt theory and Positive Psychology adopt a positive outlook towards human nature with the possibility of individuals becoming self-supporting and fully functioning. Both theories also regard awareness to be paramount in establishing healthy self-regulation and optimal well-being. Both Gestalt theory and Positive Psychology provided the link between the concepts, and were also used to describe the main concepts in the study.

A review of the literature shows that children living in underprivileged communities often face many environmental stressors that can impact on their well-being and optimal psychological, cognitive, emotional and physical functioning. When this occurs, children are often not able to meet very important needs. They may have to find alternative ways to 'survive' and protect themselves from certain stressors and cope with their environment. Very often these coping strategies are dysfunctional and certain parts within the child can become cut off or pushed aside, severing healthy contact with the environment. The child may also experience a sense of numbing and lack of awareness of senses, emotions and thoughts. The child is therefore living out of awareness. The literature suggests that the process of art-making can contribute to facilitating awareness, which can enhance self-understanding and possibly lead to a greater sense of well-being. The researcher attempted to explore the kinds of awareness that could be facilitated through the art-making process.

A qualitative research design with a phenomenological strategy of enquiry was used for this study. Seven children in middle childhood living in a low socio-economic community took part in the study. They were between the ages of eleven and twelve years and had suffered some form of environmental stress. They had been subjected to substance and alcohol abuse, violence, death and divorce. Focus groups and semi-structured interviews were used in order to understand what awareness may have been facilitated in children during the art-making process. The data collected were analysed thematically.

The results revealed that the art-making process enabled the participants to experience certain kinds of awareness. The participants became aware of certain emotions and feelings like happiness, enjoyment, calmness, pride and mastery, as well as feelings of anger, sadness and denial. The participants were able to recognise and express positive emotions, but it appeared that the more complex emotions were recognised although not expressed. The most common emotion experienced by the participants was the sense of happiness and enjoyment they seemed to feel as they worked with the different art materials. It appeared that the playful nature of the art-making process kept them engaged and in contact with the process. The participants also became aware of a range of tactile experiences that each art medium offered; clay, paint, collage, hand printing and texture rubbings. These tactile experiences led them to an awareness of feelings and associations.

The findings also indicated that the participants became aware of a sense of agency, as they appeared to have a sense of control and empowerment over the art mediums. This element of control over the art mediums seemed to afford the participants the ability to change what they did not like in their art work. This ability to change things appeared to feed back to, and enhance, their sense of empowerment. Through the findings of the study, as well as from the literature, this quality of empowerment, control and change is important for children in need living in a stressful environment, as it may foster a sense of agency that they may not find from their environment.

Another significant finding seemed to be the participants' awareness of their context in terms of an unavailability of certain environmental resources to fulfil their needs, namely financial resources and nurturing. The participants' awareness centred around basic survival needs, for example lack of sufficient food, but also their awareness of relational needs and challenges, for example overcrowded households, alcohol-abusing parents and divorce.

KEY TERMS

Art-making process

Awareness

Gestalt therapy

Low socio-economic environment

Middle Childhood

Mindfulness

Positive Psychology

OPSOMMING VAN DIE STUDIE

Gestaltterapie en positiewe sielkunde vorm die onderliggende teoretiese raamwerk vir hierdie studie. Beide Gestaltterapie en positiewe sielkunde ondersteun 'n positiewe uitkyk op menswees, met die oorwegende moontlikheid dat individue self-ondersteunend kan word en voluit kan funksioneer. Albei hierdie paradigmas redeneer dat die bewussyn van uiterste belang is om gesonde selfregulering en optimale welstand te vestig. Beide Gestaltterapie en positiewe sielkunde is ook gebruik om die konsepte in hierdie studie te omskryf, en aan te dui hoe hierdie konsepte aan mekaar verwant is.

Na hersiening van die bestaande literatuur blyk dit dat kinders in onbevoorregte gemeenskappe dikwels gekonfronteer word met omstandighede in hulle omgewing wat hulle onder hewige druk kan plaas, en wat 'n impak kan hê op hulle welstand en optimale psigologiese, kognitiewe, emosionele en fisiese funksionering. In sulke omstandighede is dit soms nie moontlik vir hierdie kinders om belangrike behoeftes te vervul nie. Hierdie kinders mag dalk alternatiewe maniere vind om te "oorleef", hulleself te beskerm teen die omgewingsdruk en om omgewingsdruk te hanteer. Dikwels is hierdie hanteringstrategieë disfunksioneel. Gesonde kontak met die omgewing word op verskeie vlakke verbreek. Die kind mag dalk 'n sin van gevoelloosheid en 'n beperkte bewustheid van sintuie, emosies en gedagtes ondervind. Die kind lewe dus buite bewustheid. Bestaande literatuur stel voor dat die kunsskeppingsproses kan bydra tot die fasilitering van bewustheid, wat bewustheid van die self kan verbeter en wat moontlik kan lei tot 'n beter sin van welstand. Die navorser het gepoog om verskillende tipes bewustheid wat moontlik gefasiliteer kan word deur die kunsskeppingsproses, te ondersoek.

'n Kwalitatiewe navorsingsontwerp met 'n fenomenologiese ondersoekstrategie eis vir hierdie studie gebruik. Sewe kinders in hulle middelkinderjare wat woonagtig is in 'n lae sosio-ekonomiese gemeenskap, het deelgeneem aan die studie. Die kinders was tussen die ouderdomme van elf en twaalf jaar en hulle almal is voorheen blootgestel aan die een of ander vorm van omgewingsdruk. Hierdie kinders is aan dwelm- en alkoholmisbruik, geweld, dood en egskeiding blootgestel. Fokusgroepe en semi-gestruktureerde onderhoude is gebruik om die kinders se bewustheid wat

moontlik gefasiliteer kan word tydens die kunsskeppingsproses, te verstaan. Die ingesamelde data is tematies geanaliseer.

Die resultate dui daarop dat die kunsskeppingsproses die deelnemers in staat gestel het om sekere tipes bewustheid te ondervind. Die deelnemers het bewus geword van sekere emosies en gevoelens soos blydschap, genot, rustigheid, trots, bemeestering, en ook gevoelens van kwaad, hartseer en ontkenning. Dit was moontlik vir die deelnemers om die meer positiewe emosies te herken en uit te druk, maar dit wou voorkom asof die meer komplekse emosies herken word, maar nie uitgedruk word nie. Die mees algemene emosie wat deur die deelnemers ondervind is, was 'n sin van blydschap en genot wat blykbaar beleef is terwyl hulle met die verskillende kunsmateriale gewerk het. Dit wou voorkom asof die spelende aard van die kunsskeppingsproses hulle betrokke en in kontak met die proses gehou het. Die deelnemers het ook bewus geword van 'n reeks ondervindinge aangaande die tasbaarheid wat verskillende kunsmedia gebied het: klei, verf, collage, handafdrukke en tekstuurkuns. Hierdie ondervindinge van tasbaarheid het gelei tot 'n bewustheid van gevoelens en assosiasies.

Bevindinge dui ook daarop dat dit blyk asof die deelnemers bewus geword het van 'n sin van innerlike krag, aangesien dit voorgekom het dat dit vir die deelnemers moontlik was om 'n sin van beheer en mag oor die kunsmedia te verkry. Hierdie element van beheer oor die kunsmedia het die deelnemers in staat gestel om dit waarvan hulle nie hou in hulle kunswerk nie, te verander. Dit blyk dat hierdie vermoë om iets te verander terug herlei word na die kind se sin van bemagtiging, wat dan verryk word. Die bevindinge van hierdie studie ondersteun bestaande literatuur en dui aan dat die ervaring van bemagtiging, beheer en verandering belangrik is vir behoeftige kinders in omstandighede van hoë omgewingsdruk, omdat dit moontlik 'n sin van innerlike krag, wat hulle nie altyd in hulle omgewing mag vind nie, kan bevorder.

Nog 'n noemenswaardige bevinding dui op die deelnemers se bewustheid van 'n onverkrygbaarheid van sekere omgewingshulpbronne wat hulle benodig om behoeftes te vervul, naamlik finansiële hulpbronne en koestering. Die deelnemers se bewustheid het gedraai om basiese oorlewingsbehoeftes, byvoorbeeld die tekort aan

genoegsame voedsel, maar ook om verhoudingsbehoeftes en uitdagingen, bijvoorbeeld oorvol huishoudingen, ouders wat alcohol misbruik, en egskeiding.

SLEUTELWOORDE

Kunsskeppingsproses

Bewustheid

Gestaltterapie

Lae sosio-ekonomiese omgewing

Middelkinderjare

Oplettendheid

Positiewesielkunde

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The aim of this chapter is to contextualise this study, to indicate the rationale and problem formulation for the study, to highlight the aims of the study and to outline the research methodology that was used to guide the research.

1.2 CONTEXTUALISING THE STUDY

South Africa is a developing country that can be characterised by extremes of wealth and inequality. According to Schwabe (2004:1), approximately 57% of people living in South Africa in 2001 were living below the poverty line. Today, almost half of South Africans live below the poverty line and survive on just over R500 a month (Anon., 2011). Poverty and social inequality have direct and indirect effects on the social, mental and physical well-being of individuals and families (Walsh, 2003:17).

Growing up in a low socio-economic environment presents with many challenges and environmental stressors that can interfere with the development of healthy self-regulation and well-being. Hackman *et al.* (2010:651) support this assumption and acknowledge that “growing up in a family with low socio-economic status (SES) is associated with substantially worse health and impaired psychological well-being, and impaired cognitive and emotional development throughout the lifespan”. Hackman *et al.* (2010:651) add that compared with children from higher SES contexts, children from low SES contexts present with higher rates of anxiety, depression and prevalence of internalising and externalising behaviours.

However, according to Bradley and Corwyn (2002:377-380), it is difficult to determine a direct relationship between low SES conditions and socio-emotional problems in children, as there are often other factors that co-occur within low SES conditions, for example single parenthood, poor parenting, child abuse, drug and alcohol abuse, aggression and violence. Low SES conditions therefore impact on the well-being of children at multiple levels (Bradley & Corwyn, 2002:371), resulting in possible insecure attachments, diminished self-esteem, aggression, anxiety,

behavioural problems, powerlessness and poor self-regulation (Bradley & Corwyn, 2002:377-384; Hackman *et al.*, 2010:651).

According to Jensen (2009:8), children living in poor neighbourhoods tend to spend a large amount of their time trying to survive within this environment, as they often have unreliable caregivers and fewer supportive networks. Jensen (2009:8-9) adds that within these environments, the capacity for self-determination and self-efficacy can be undermined and possibly result in low self-esteem, a poor sense of mastery, pessimistic attitudes and behavioural problems.

The children who participated in this study live in a low socio-economic community in the Southern Peninsula of the Western Cape. The population consists of approximately 1600 people, about 456 of whom live in backyard dwellings (DiGioia *et al.*, 2012:1). According to the City of Cape Town's 2001 census (Anon., 2001), this neighbourhood comprises a mainly Afrikaans speaking (90.69%), Coloured (96.90%) community, with the highest level of education being Grade 8 to Grade 11. Over 31% of the population are unemployed and, according to the community's social worker, most of the children live without vision and meaning. Many of the adults abuse alcohol and other drugs and can therefore not positively guide the children. Other challenges include geographic and social isolation, teenage pregnancy and idleness (DiGioia *et al.*, 2012:1).

Mendelson *et al.*, (2010:986) claim that children living in low socio-economic environments are often stressed and tend to move through their days in automatic modes of thought and involuntary responses. Being in these automatic states leaves individuals feeling empty and numb, as automatic thoughts dominate a subjective sense of the world (Siegel, 2007:14). According to Oaklander (2007:6-7), children who have experienced a stressful environment tend to protect themselves by blocking their emotions and switching off their minds in order to numb the painful feelings. In situations like these, children tend to live without awareness (Blom, 2006:31-32).

1.3 RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY AND PROBLEM FORMULATION

The term 'awareness' has a wide range of meanings and descriptions. The Penguin Dictionary of Psychology (2001:74) defines awareness as "an internal, subjective state of being cognizant or conscious of something". Roemer and Orsillo (2003:174) describe awareness as a continuous monitoring and focus on current experience. Awareness has also been referred to as the active attentiveness that an individual has toward what is happening and when it happens – a "knowing as one is doing" (Tonnesvang *et al.*, 2010:591).

The ability to be aware of and attuned to oneself and others is a vital component of the self-regulation process that is required for the development and maintenance of well-being (Siegel, 2007:xiv). Siegel (2007:3) explains that being aware of and attuned to oneself means being attentive to "the fullness" of one's experience in the present moment, to focus attention on one's internal world. Siegel (2007:xiv) goes on to say that "attunement" may help to enhance balanced self-regulation through the process of "neural integration", which can promote self-understanding. In this way, the individual can become aware of certain aspects in their mind and can reflect on them in order to make choices and changes possible (Siegel, 2007:5). According to Gestalt theory, all individuals have the capacity to self-regulate healthily if they are fully aware of what is happening within them and around them (Corey, 2005:194).

Awareness is also an integral part of mindfulness, where mindfulness is experienced as a state of awareness of, and attentiveness to, what is happening in the present (Brown & Ryan, 2003:822). Mindfulness has become a very popular concept in Positive Psychology with its use of applying mindfulness-based methods in establishing well-being (Shapiro, 2009:601-607). Many studies have been done in support of the use of awareness and mindfulness-based skills to promote well-being in stressful situations (Brown & Ryan, 2003:822-848; Carmody & Baer, 2008:23-33; Davis & Hayes, 2011:198-208; Miller *et al.*, 1995:192-200). Siegel (2007:5) supports this and maintains that certain applications of mindful awareness can improve negative modes of thinking and redress the ability to regulate emotions. Another method to facilitate mindful awareness may include the art-making process, which involves both concentration and complete absorption in the present (Malchiodi, 2011:1). Coholic (2010:25) posits that art-making, if used holistically, can encourage

individuals to discover and be made aware of their feelings, thoughts and behaviours, thereby facilitating psychological well-being. Findings from a study by Coholic *et al.* (2009:69) suggest that through the art-making process, paying attention and using their imaginations, children gained self-knowledge, connected with their feelings and felt more positive about themselves. Coholic *et al.* (2009:66) performed a qualitative study exploring the benefit of using arts-based group work for developing self-awareness and self-esteem in children living in foster care. The children were encouraged to pay attention, use their imaginations, and explore their feelings, thoughts and behaviours to develop their self-awareness and improve their self-esteem.

It has been found that the art-making process encourages the emergence of the inner world of experience and feelings (Case & Dalley, 2006:69). The process of art-making involves creatively engaging in an activity in the present moment with an increased present cognitive focus (Horan, 2009:199-203). This present cognitive experience encourages the use of all the senses and Blank (2009:14-15) claims that the process can often help access experiences and emotions. The process allows for increased self-expression and could possibly lead to expanded self-awareness and improved mental state.

Coholic (2010:11) claims that using holistic arts-based methods (in other words, paying attention to all dimensions) is not only fun for children, but also naturally non-threatening and inclusive as well as strength-enhancing. Art-making can be used in a mindful way which, according to Coholic (2010:15), can facilitate self-awareness and enhance well-being. By being able to identify and understand certain behaviours and feelings, children may develop healthier self-regulation processes and thus be able to make healthier choices. There is growing literature investigating the use of art and creative activities, for example within the context of health care (Camic, 2008:287-298) and enhancing awareness and fostering cohesion (Newsome *et al.*, 2005:145-157).

Brown and Ryan (2003:823) suggest that when mindful states and awareness are low, individuals engage in more automatic modes of thought, habits, emotions and unhealthy behaviour patterns. Mendelson *et al.* (2010:986) suggest that these

reactions are often a first response to stressful situations. Children living in stressful conditions are possibly more at risk of developing problems with cognitive and emotional regulation because, according to Andersen and Teicher (2009), these conditions can potentially impair the stress response system that underlies regulatory capacities.

For the purpose of this study, a group of children in middle childhood from a low socio-economic environment were engaged in the art-making process. Curl and Forks (2008:164) maintain that the process of art-making requires self-reflection. Children at this stage are intellectually curious and are developing more self-focus (Charleroy *et al.*, 2012:7). With this increased self-focus, the art-making process can be a beneficial outlet for self-exploration and raising awareness (Charleroy *et al.*, 2012:7).

According to Erikson, as cited by Markus and Nurius (1984:149), middle childhood (ages six to twelve years) is the stage of self-development when children's growing interest in gaining knowledge and learning new skills develops into a sense of competency or a "sense of industry". How this period is experienced will determine the way in which children evaluate themselves, either as industrious and adequate or as inferior and inadequate. In order to evaluate themselves, children need to build upon previous self-knowledge against which new information has to be absorbed and interpreted (Markus & Nurius, 1984:150). This is a time when increased self-awareness is directed toward outwardly visible aspects like personal appearance, skills performance and ways of behaving, which all affect children's self-perception and how they are viewed and treated by peers and adults (Charlesworth *et al.*, 2008:186). The importance of peers therefore increases, including the need for peer acceptance and support, which can greatly influence a child's sense of well-being. Children at this stage compare themselves to others and, according to Silvia and O'Brien (2004:477), if they already possess poor self-standards, their self-awareness can lead to self-criticism. The interaction between the environment and the child is therefore crucial (Berger *et al.*, 1996:146), because the child is beginning to establish an identity outside of the family (Eccles *et al.*, 1993:560).

During this stage children develop greater intellectual processes and cognitive skills, which enables them to have a greater understanding of themselves and the world around them (Charlesworth *et al.*, 2008:187). This cognitive development enhances the capacity to reflect on moral conduct and what is right and wrong, but actual moral behaviour is shaped by experiences and the feedback that children receive from their environment (Charlesworth *et al.*, 2008:193). They also experience a range of emotional regulation needs and increasing levels of independence as they spend larger amounts of time away from their families in school, participating in various activities and with peers (Claessens, 2008:12). Children at this age also learn to either express, control, suppress or hide their emotions, depending on the kinds of conditions and interactions that have been present in their environment (Blom, 2006:208).

From examining the literature and from her experience as an art teacher and an artist, the researcher decided to explore the kinds of awareness that can be facilitated in children in middle childhood from a low socio-economic environment, through the art-making process. The following research question was therefore formulated: What awareness can be facilitated in children from a low socio-economic environment, using the art-making process?

1.4 AIM OF THE STUDY

This study explored and described the kinds of awareness that can be facilitated in children living in a low socio-economic environment, using the art-making process. In order to achieve this, a qualitative research design was used to allow the researcher to enter the subjective worlds of the participants in order to discover and understand what awareness had been facilitated in the children. It is hoped that this study will make a contribution towards professionals working with children in need within a community setting.

1.5 THEORETICAL PARADIGMS

The theoretical paradigms underlying this study are Gestalt theory and Positive Psychology. Gestalt theory includes phenomenological and Field theory principles, which guided the process of the study. Both Gestalt theory and Positive Psychology adopt positive assumptions around human nature. Gestalt theory stresses personal

responsibility toward growth and the individual's innate potential (Rhyne, 2001:135), while Positive Psychology focuses on individuals' strengths and what contributes to their optimal functioning (Gable & Haidt, 2005:103-104). Both paradigms also highlight the fundamental use of awareness in obtaining healthy self-regulation for greater well-being (Brown & Ryan, 2003:824; Corey, 2005:194).

1.6 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

An inductive qualitative approach was used to explore, describe, reflect on and interpret the kinds of awareness that children may experience as they engage in the art-making process. A phenomenological strategy of enquiry therefore guided the research. The population in this study consisted of children in middle childhood from a low socio-economic community in the Cape Peninsula. A purposive sampling strategy was used, as the researcher looked for participants who met particular criteria for the study. The sample consisted of Grade 6 and Grade 7 pupils from the local school.

A combination of data-gathering methods was employed in the study to gather data from different sources. These included focus groups using in-depth interviews, one-on-one semi-structured interviews, field notes, and artwork done by the children.

For the purpose of this study, thematic analysis as proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006:77-101) was used to describe the data, identify patterns and themes, and then analyse and interpret what had been gathered. The analysis included the following steps:

- Phase 1: Familiarising oneself with the data
- Phase 2: Generating initial codes
- Phase 3: Searching for themes
- Phase 4: Reviewing themes
- Phase 5: Defining and naming themes
- Phase 6: Producing the report

The researcher used the constructs of credibility and trustworthiness as proposed by Nieuwenhuis (2007b:80) to ensure that the 'truth' value of the study was established.

A variety of strategies was therefore carried out to ensure the trustworthiness and reliability of the study, namely: data saturation, data collected from different sources, use of rich descriptions, researcher reflection, and accurate transcripts.

The researcher further conducted the study in an ethical manner at all times. The ethical considerations used in this study are discussed in detail in Chapter Three.

1.7 REPORT LAYOUT OF THE STUDY

Chapter 1:	Introduction to the study
Chapter 2:	Conceptual framework of the study
Chapter 3:	Research methodology
Chapter 4:	Research findings
Chapter 5:	Integrated summary of the study, conclusions and recommendations

1.8 SUMMARY

In this chapter, the researcher contextualised the study, indicated the rationale for the study, and outlined the research question and aim of the study. The researcher indicated the research methods used to answer the research question and fulfil the aim of this study.

CHAPTER TWO

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK OF THE STUDY

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this chapter is to discuss the main concepts which form the basis of the conceptual framework of this study. The concepts include: a low socio-economic environment, middle childhood, awareness, mindfulness, and the art-making process.

2.2 CONTEXTUALISING A LOW SOCIO-ECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT

It is impossible to understand a person without considering the environmental field in which the person operates, as there is interdependence between the individual and his or her environment (Woldt & Toman, 2005:44; Yontef & Jacobs, 2011:343). This assumption echoes Bronfenbrenner's (1993:37) Ecological Model of Child Development, which asserts that humans do not develop in isolation, and that they must be considered within the entire ecological system in which they live. The children participating in this study all lived in the context of a low socio-economic environment.

Hackman *et al.* (2010:651) refer to SES as a measure of a person's overall status and position within society. SES is a multidimensional construct (Hackman & Farah, 2009:66) and greatly influences a person's experiences from childhood right through adulthood. Bradley and Corwyn (2002:371) concur and posit that research has shown that SES is related to a host of health, cognitive and socio-emotional outcomes in children, beginning in infancy and maintaining into adulthood. Krieger *et al.* (1997:341-344) argue that there is no single factor linking SES and overall health outcomes, and instead one needs to consider a number of interconnecting levels and pathways that may connect the two, including individual, household and neighbourhood levels.

In the same way, there are a host of risk factors present in a low socio-economic environment; these are cumulative in that they are multifaceted and interwoven

(Atzaba-Poria *et al.*, 2004:714). Developmental psychologists like Bronfenbrenner emphasise the need for researchers to study the multiple contexts that influence the well-being of children and their families (Leventhal & Brooks-Gunn, 2000: 310). According to Jensen (2009:7), the problems associated with poverty contribute to one another and can lead to an endless flow of dire consequences. Evans (2004:77) agrees and maintains that the possible harmful impact of poverty on children and their families lies in a number of underlying processes. Evans (2004:77) goes on to say that poor children are exposed to a collection of environmental risks, for example, they are subject to more violence, instability and chaotic, often crowded households than are non-poor children. They also experience less social support and their parents are often less responsive and less involved in their lives. Poor children also have less access to books and experience fewer cognitive-enrichment opportunities (Jensen, 2009:8). Added to this, they often live in more dangerous neighbourhoods (Evans, 2004:77).

Jensen (2009:7) identifies four primary risk factors that affect families living in poverty: emotional and social challenges, acute and chronic stressors, cognitive lags, and health and safety issues. Jensen (2009:8-9) adds that the risk factors occurring in low-income families, like depression, single-parent households, divorce, alcohol and substance abuse, poor parenting and death of primary caregivers, all interfere with the development of children's self-esteem, sense of mastery and optimistic attitudes. Brooks-Gunn and Duncan (1997:62) add that poor children suffer more frequently from emotional and behavioural problems than do non-poor children. Furthermore, according to Evans (2004:77), many studies have demonstrated the harmful effects of low SES on children (Bradley & Corwyn, 2002:371-399; Brooks-Gunn & Duncan, 1997:55-71; Chen *et al.*, 2002:295-329).

Despite the beneficial changes accompanying South Africa's new democracy, poverty still remains a major issue (Anon., 2005:7). According to the Children's Movement (Anon., 2013:1), three out of every five children under the age of seventeen live in poor households, despite the expansion of child support grants (Wadesango *et al.*, 2011:149). Du Plessis and Conley (2007:050-051) give three main reasons for the state of child poverty in South Africa. The first is the legacy of apartheid, where racial discrimination resulted in high levels of inequality. The

second is the high rate of unemployment in South Africa. The third is the growing HIV/AIDS pandemic. Schwabe (2004:1) argues that inequality between rich and poor is on the rise, which suggests that poor households have not shared in the profit of economic growth that has occurred over the last decade.

According to an article on IOL News (Anon, 2012), poorer communities in the Western Cape are plagued by substance abuse and crime. Premier Helen Zille (Anon, 2012) is reported to have said that “drug and alcohol abuse are the key drivers of the social dysfunction and family break-downs that ravage this province”. Children of substance abusers often live in stressful environments which lack the nurturing qualities needed for development, and are therefore often neglected (Guest & Biasini, 2001:549-550).

The direct and indirect effects of poverty on families create parental stress, which could lead to less supportive and involved parenting (Guest & Biasini, 2001:549). The type of attachment that is formed between a primary caregiver and a child will influence the development of the child’s behavioural and social functions, like emotion regulation, arousal and social competence (Sroufe, 2005:352). The quality of parenting experienced will therefore influence the formation of a child’s capacity to self-regulate because, according to Colman *et al.* (2006:422), it is the parent–child interactions that expose children to regulatory strategies. In order for children to grow up emotionally healthy, they need solid, secure relationships with their caregivers, including warmth, guidance and support, as well as a safe and stable environment (Jensen, 2009:15). Brooks-Gunn and Duncan (1997:66) maintain that low-income parents are often less healthy, emotionally and physically. These parents may be overwhelmed and suffer from depression, low self-esteem and powerlessness, as well as an inability to cope (Jensen, 2009:17). As a result, they fail to focus on their children’s needs and to form healthy and solid relationships with their children (Jensen, 2009:17). Most poor children therefore have fewer supportive networks and are more likely to rely on their peers for social and emotional support (Jensen, 2009:8). This is especially true for children in middle childhood, when they begin to spend more time away from the family environment (Berk, 2006:6).

2.3 CHILDREN IN MIDDLE CHILDHOOD

Children develop on a continuum and each child's development is unique (Hanvey, 2002:3). For the purpose of this study, however, the middle childhood phase is described as including children between the ages of six and twelve years. Charlesworth *et al.* (2008:197) point out that children in this developmental phase are increasingly aware of themselves and of others. Due to their continuing cognitive development and subsequent greater capacity for self-awareness, the researcher found this stage of development significant for the purpose of this study. Charlesworth *et al.* (2008:193) and Eccles (1999:33) posit that children in this developmental stage establish a greater ability to reflect on things, and develop significantly greater skills of self-awareness.

According to Erikson's theory, cited by Huston and Ripke (2006:2-8), the most important task in middle childhood is to develop a sense of industry and to master the basic tools and skills needed for adult life. These children start to learn about the wider world beyond the family environment. As a result, they begin to master new responsibilities that will be taken into adulthood, for example, organised games with rules, logical thought processes, literacy skills, increased self-understanding and peer relationships (Berk, 2006:6). Children feel a sense of inferiority if they are not able to master these tasks and their abilities or skills are deemed inadequate.

As children move through middle childhood, their peers have an increased influence on their social behaviour and 'fitting in' is very important (Charlesworth *et al.*, 2008:192). Children in middle childhood can become very sensitive and devaluing of themselves if they perceive themselves to be outside of group norms (Charlesworth *et al.*, 2008:192). Charlesworth *et al.* (2008:197) also point out that children in this developmental phase become increasingly aware that they are evaluated in terms of what they can or cannot do well, and in turn use this as self-evaluation based on positive or negative feedback from the individuals in their environment. Hanvey (2002:6) and Eccles (1999:31) corroborate this and add that it is essential for children in middle childhood to be valued, nurtured and recognised as they attempt to gain competence and autonomy in mastering skills, making independent decisions and forming healthy social relationships outside of the family.

Middle childhood can be a vulnerable period for children, as the family still remains an important influence on their development, despite their move into the wider world. Children in middle childhood therefore continue to be influenced and shaped by their family system, and positive feedback and support become very important to develop their sense of competence as they try to master new skills (Charlesworth *et al.*, 2008:190). Charlesworth, *et al.* (2008:180-181) assert that this phase can be filled with both opportunities and challenges, especially for those children living in low socio-economic communities. Jensen (2009:8) argues that children from poor families often have fewer supportive networks, as caregivers struggle to cope and as a result the formation of positive relationships with their children is hampered. However, should children during this developmental stage be able to gain a sense of mastery over their environment, feelings of self-worth, independence and confidence will possibly ensue (Jensen, 2009:17). According to Sroufe (2005:352), this possible achievement of mastery can influence the formation of children's personalities, which in turn will predict their level of success and happiness in life (Jensen, 2009:17).

During the middle childhood developmental stage, children have the ability to understand their own emotions as well as the emotions of others. They also begin to understand the realities of their outer world and can become troubled by these realities (Berk, 2006:516). Children in middle childhood are able to reflect on their own and others' emotional experiences and to think about situations that can lead to emotional reactions. As a result, children in this phase realise that they are able to either express and control, or suppress and mask, negative reactions (Blom, 2006:208). These negative reactions often occur in children living in low SES families where significant stress is experienced (Jensen, 2009:22). McGuire (2007:142) agrees and posits that children who experience chronic stress or neglect have minimal outlets for emotional expression and therefore often develop emotional numbing. According to Oaklander (2007:6-7), children who have experienced severe stress often block their emotions and shut down their minds in order to protect themselves. As a result, these children may become less aware, which can negatively affect self-regulation and emotional functioning (Blom, 2006:31).

2.4 AWARENESS

Awareness is at the centre of Gestalt theory and is defined as “a form of experience ... of being in touch with one’s own existence” (Yontef, 1993: 144). Phenomenology emphasises awareness in terms of the immediate experience of the here and now and, according to Corey (2005:195), awareness in the here and now is the most significant way of being. Joyce and Sills (2001:27) add that awareness is an imperative quality of healthy living, because when individuals are fully aware they are able to self-regulate and function favourably, to become aware of their environment, to accept themselves and be responsible for their choices (Perls as cited by Sharf, 2011:252). Zinker (1977:96-97) supports Perls’s claim and acknowledges that awareness is important as it facilitates individuals to own their experiences, to be aware of their needs and how to satisfy them, to become more self-supportive and thus able to protect themselves from a stressful environment. Being fully aware allows the mind to judge the nature of thoughts, feelings and behaviours and the preconceived ideas and emotional reactions that are embedded in thinking and automatic responses that create dysfunction (Siegel, 2007:77).

Contrary to the above assumptions, Silvia and O’Brien (2004:475) point out that a large amount of research has connected self-awareness to maladaptive outcomes, which can in fact reduce well-being (Fejfar & Hoyle, 2000:132-142; Mor & Winquist, 2002:638-662). These studies suggest that self-focused attention encourages self-evaluation that can lead to self-criticism, which can be self-destructive (Silvia & O’Brien, 2004:477-478). Self-awareness is therefore not a unitary construct, and according to a study performed by Trapnell and Campbell (1999:284-304), self-awareness involves two independent dimensions: self-rumination and self-reflection. Self-rumination involves anxious attention paid to the self, whereas self-reflection is associated with the “openness of experience” (Joireman *et al.*, 2002:55). For the purpose of this study, self-awareness will be aligned with the constructive aspects.

2.4.1 Mindfulness

Ginger’s (2007:11) description of awareness, “being continuously aware of the ever-changing continuum of physical sensations, emotions, ideas ... and that which I notice”, seems to echo the concept of mindfulness. Mindfulness, according to

Cardaciotto *et al.* (2008:204), refers to “bare attention” and involves a phenomenological investigation into subjective experience (Grossman, 2011:1034). Positive Psychology views awareness as an integral part of mindfulness where, according to Cardaciotto *et al.* (2008:205), awareness forms the behavioural component of mindfulness, as experience is continually being monitored. The other component of mindfulness is that of attention, which focuses on how awareness is being conducted (Cardaciotto *et al.*, 2008:205).

The construct of mindfulness has its roots in Buddhism and other Eastern introspective practices (Brown & Ryan, 2003:822). In the past decade there has been a surge of interest and research into the practice of mindfulness techniques in psychology literature (Davis & Hayes, 2011:198), especially in Positive Psychology, and the ‘use’ of mindfulness-based methods in establishing well-being (Shapiro, 2009:601-607). Siegel (2007:1) considers mindfulness to be a healthy relationship with oneself. Mindfulness can be described as a means of paying attention on purpose to the present moment and observing one’s world, thoughts and feelings in a patient and non-judgemental way, as they unfold (Hefferon & Boniwell, 2011:169). According to Brown and Cordon (2009:64), the nature of mindfulness is inherently phenomenological, in that mindfulness concerns the use of the conscious mind. The mind observes subjective and sensory experiences as they are experienced in the present.

Brown and Cordon (2009:61) mention two primary modes of conscious processing that Edmund Husserl, the father of phenomenology (Woldt & Toman, 2005:66-67) referred to as the natural attitude and the phenomenological attitude. The natural attitude, as indicated by Brown and Cordon (2009:61), is the “default mode of processing”, because what comes into one’s awareness is only held in attention for a very brief time before a cognitive or emotional reaction to it occurs. These reactions are subjective in nature as they are often evaluative, conditioned by past experience and made to fit into existing cognitive schemas (Brown & Cordon, 2009:61-62). In the natural attitude, it would therefore seem that one does not experience reality as it actually is. In contrast, the phenomenological attitude involves a receptive state of mind, where one almost steps back or ‘brackets’ the natural attitude in order to perceive a flow of phenomena as they truly appear (Brown & Cordon, 2009:62). This

intimate perspective echoes Siegel's (2007:xiv) assumption that mindfulness can be viewed as a form of intrapersonal attunement, as a way of becoming "one's own best friend".

2.4.1.1 *Benefits of mindful awareness*

Many studies have documented the benefits of mindful awareness (Carmody, 2009:270), including its beneficial effects on psychological stress (Grossman *et al.*, 2004:35-43), well-being (Brown & Ryan, 2003:822-848; Davidson *et al.*, 2003: 564-570), emotion regulation (Arch & Craske, 2006:1849-1858), self-control (Masicampo & Baumeister, 2007:255-258) and the improvement of relationships with others (Siegel, 2007:6).

Siegel (2007:6) points out that being fully aware can improve the capacity to regulate emotion and counter emotional dysfunction, as well as improve patterns of thinking. Brown and Cordon (2009:70) mention that mindfulness may be related to greater emotional self-awareness, as mindfulness fosters the ability to witness thoughts and emotions. Witnessing and self-observation can encourage accepting and letting go of negative thoughts and emotions, which may buffer the urge to react impulsively or destructively (Brown & Cordon, 2009:71). In this way, individuals may become less reactive (Davis & Hayes, 2011:201). Mindfulness-based approaches have also been successful in enhancing self-regulatory capabilities among disadvantaged youth (Mendelson *et al.*, 2010:985-994). According to a study by Shonkoff *et al.* (2009:2252-2259), childhood adversity could be instrumental in triggering certain neurobiological events that can alter brain development, interfering with healthy emotion regulation (Andersen & Teicher, 2009). The study by Mendelson *et al.* (2010:985-994) found that the mindfulness intervention reduced reactive stress responses like rumination, intrusive thoughts and emotional arousal.

Another successful mindfulness-based approach is the process of 'flow', which Warren (2006:103) describes as a "state of being while doing". Flow is a concept that describes a state of optimal engagement (Wilkinson & Chilton, 2013:6) and has become a popular aspect in Positive Psychology as a means to a 'good life'. Flow can be described as an intrinsically motivated activity and complete involvement in the present moment (Nakamura & Csikszentmihalyi, 2009:195). The art-making

process has also been aligned with the process of flow. Csikszentmihalyi 'discovered' the flow phenomenon as he engaged single-mindedly in the art-making process, and found this experience extremely rewarding. The process of flow seems to work on intrinsic goals and biofeedback structures that focus on subjective challenges and skills, which influences the quality of the experience (Nakamura & Csikszentmihalyi, 2009:196). Art-making, mindfulness and flow are all processes by which a level of consciousness can be attained, which can lead to a greater sense of well-being (Buonincontri, 2009:1).

2.5 UNDERSTANDING THE ART-MAKING PROCESS

From early recorded history, art and art-making have been used to convey and portray a wide range of experiences, emotions and collective histories, and to restore psychological and spiritual well-being (Malchiodi, 2007:ix). According to Kaplan (2000:103), the art-making process is therefore inherently therapeutic. However, Howells and Zelnik (2009:216) assert that the literature on art-making as an inherently therapeutic process is divided. On the one side they posit art therapy, where the process of art-making and the finished art product are used in a form of psychotherapy, and on the other side they posit the art-making process alone as a creative and healing process (Howells & Zelnik, 2009:216). The latter view, that of art-making as an inherently creative and healing process, is the focus of this study.

According to Howells and Zelnik (2009:216), evidence for the value of the art-making process itself promoting health is not that well established. However, Malchiodi (2007:x) argues that there are a number of benefits to the art-making process, including stress reduction, problem solving, powerful emotional release and expression, self-expression and a greater awareness of the internal and external worlds. Furthermore, several studies have illustrated the benefits of the art-making process, for example, facilitating resiliency with homeless youth (Prescott *et al.*, 2008:156-163), exploring empowerment with at-risk youth (Wallace-DiGarbo & Hill, 2011:119-125), effects of art-making on anxiety (Sandmire *et al.*, 2012:68-73) and stress reduction (Curl & Forks, 2008:164-169).

According to Taylor and Ladkin (2009:56-57), the art-making process can be understood as encouraging a different form of knowing via the five senses, and can

therefore be viewed as a different way of approaching the world. This form of knowing can provide relatively direct access to one's felt experience by drawing on the emotional connection with the self. However, Mace and Ward (2002:179) maintain that there seem to be few studies that focus on actually describing how an individual creates an artwork, as the art-making process is a complex one. They claim that creative activity is influenced by a number of aspects, including commitment, motivation, effort and certain cognitive mechanisms (Mace & Ward, 2002:179).

Malchiodi (1999:13) posits that the art-making process includes a creative process and a process of self-expression, where self-expression is communicated through shapes, images and colours in ways that words cannot (Malchiodi, 2007:ix). Oaklander (1988:53) views the act of drawing as a powerful expression of self, which can help establish self-identity. Riley (2004:184) supports this claim and maintains that the "making of marks" brings about self-knowledge. The creation of art therefore involves the person in an emotional process (Malchiodi, 2007:ix).

Dunn-Snow and D'Amelio (2000:48), both practising art educators and art therapists, suggest that the art-making process possesses three inherent stages, namely the encounter stage, the destructive stage and the reconstruction stage. The encounter stage may be initiated in a number of ways, for example, through a directed art task or a free-choice art task. In both situations the child has to solve the problem of a goal or an objective for the artwork (Dunn-Snow & D'Amelio, 2000:48). Dunn-Snow and D'Amelio (2000:49) point out that making the first mark on the page takes courage, but at the same time there is a sense of relief once that step has been taken, and knowing that it has been done well. According to them, this is when the commitment to the process begins (Dunn-Snow & D'Amelio, 2000:49).

The destructive stage leads to and facilitates the stage of reconstruction (Dunn-Snow & D'Amelio, 2000:49). During the destructive stage, the child is faced with the limitations of his/her present way of seeing or thinking about things. This is where the old way of doing things is 'destroyed', allowing for new ideas to surface. The child will have to call on his/her insight and imagination in order to consider new possibilities; this involves an openness to novelty and risk taking (Dunn-Snow &

D'Amelio, 2000:49). The child may wish to start again, or may look to see what another child is doing, or perhaps the child will experiment with the mediums. The art facilitator may encourage the child to turn his/her mistakes into 'happy mistakes', and this, according to Dunn-Snow and D'Amelio (2000:50), involves the use of critical thinking.

In light of the above, the art-making process is also playful and creative and offers a potential space for certain impulses to unfold and develop (Amendt-Lyon, 2001:226). In this way, the art-making process allows for the transformation of something familiar into something novel and unique. According to Malchiodi (2007:67), the creative process in art-making is essentially about solving problems, as it encourages exploration, experimentation and finding new ways of being, which creates awareness, insight and understanding. Creativity also involves pushing limits, taking risks and discarding rules to invent something new (Malchiodi, 2007:70).

Perls *et al.* (1951:245-246) compare the structure and spontaneity of the art-making process to children's play, "in the concentrated sensation and in the playful manipulation of the material medium ... their bright sensation and free, apparently aimless, play that allows the energy to flow spontaneously ...". Malchiodi (2007:6) adds that art-making is often seen as an occasion to express oneself spontaneously, authentically and imaginatively, which can lead to personal fulfilment and emotional transformation.

The art-making process is an active, hands-on activity and involves touching, mixing, moulding and a host of other tactile and sensory experiences, for example, sculpting is a psychomotor experience and involves the senses of touch, vision, sound and movement (Amendt-Lyon, 2001:231-232). According to Riley (2004:184), visualisation is the individual's usual way of knowing the world and through art-making the image can retrieve memories and associations which engage cognitive capacities and self-regulation (Riley, 2004:190). This can enhance emotional intelligence.

Uppitis *et al.* (2008:17) suggest that art-making is essentially an “embodied process” as one cannot make art without using one’s body and therefore being aware of one’s body and oneself. The art-making process therefore involves the integration and use of manual, intellectual, emotional and imaginative faculties (Krämer, 2000:36).

2.5.1 Qualities of the art mediums

Dunn-Snow and D’Amelio (2000:51) suggest that there are certain qualities inherent in the art mediums that can inform the process of art-making. The qualities are referred to as being either fluid or resistive. Fluid mediums are known to enhance emotional experiences and include finger paints, watercolours, poster paints, oil pastels and water-based clay. Resistive mediums tend to require more control and include crayons, markers, pencils, pens, cardboard, wood and stone. Dunn-Snow and D’Amelio (2000:52) add that the tools used in art-making can also inform the art-making process, for example paintbrushes, skewers, earbuds and clay utensils. According to Dunn-Snow and D’Amelio (2000:52), the tool promotes a physical distance between the child and the art material, and the greater this distance, the more cognitive control the child has over the art-making process.

Various art-making mediums include:

- Clay encourages a physical involvement and the sensory quality of the clay offers a link between senses and feelings (Blom, 2006:140; Oaklander, 1988:67). Working with clay encourages a sense of mastery and strengthens self-esteem as it can be bent and moulded into any shape and mistakes can be erased. There are also no special rules as to its use (Blom, 2006:140; Oaklander, 1988:67).
- Collage-making involves sticking pictures and different materials onto a surface and can be used as both an emotional expression and as a sensory experience (Oaklander, 1988:82). The use of ready-made images and materials is also less threatening than having to draw the images.
- Drawing is the process used to depict shapes, forms and images using line (Malchiodi, 1998:26). The drawing process is complex and children usually arrive at their images in three ways: from memory, from their imagination or from life. Some children find it difficult to draw and feel anxious about how to

proceed, especially children in middle childhood, as they strive towards mastering the technique of creating something that looks real and has the correct details (Malchiodi, 1998:21).

2.6 THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN AWARENESS AND THE ART-MAKING PROCESS

Having conceptualised awareness and the art-making process, it is evident that these two processes not only share similarities, but also seem to complement and enhance one another. However, the researcher notes that there has been limited research into this particular area.

According to Corey (2005:195) and Joyce and Sills (2001:27), awareness of the immediate experience in the here and now is the most significant way of being. Awareness is therefore an essential quality of healthy living and well-being (Joyce & Sills, 2001:27). From a Gestalt perspective, the art-making process is an experience of focusing in the here and now on the active movement involved in the art expression, where the individual actively perceives what is going on in the lines, shapes, textures and movement (Rhyne, 2001:147). Goodman (2005:198) posits that moments of mindful awareness are instantaneous moments of clear seeing. The act of clear seeing enables individuals to be aware of what is happening in the here and now. The art-making process is also a 'present-moment' act, and includes being aware of and present to what is revealed in the moment (Hershaft, 2010:23-24).

Farrelly-Hansen (2001:24-25) suggests some similarities between the process of mindful art-making and mindful awareness. These include establishing a heightened awareness of self, reawakening the senses, being fully in the present moment, welcoming mystery, and an openness to new possibilities and novelty. The state of attention and self-reflection in mindful awareness is similar to the mental alertness achieved in the process of painting, as one tends to stay in the subjective now, where images are revealed moment to moment (Virginia, 2005:42). Hershaft (2010:23-24) argues that the more one is able to be in the present, in the "nowness", the more one may be able to be open and to trust. The physiological process of art-making is also calming and, according to Dissanayake (2000:124), can be meditative. Due to art-making's sometimes repetitious work, it can create a

contemplative state that can access remote parts of the mind that are seldom available to busy individuals.

According to Marshall (2007:23-24), focused and mindful art-making is a constructivist, meaning-making endeavour, a process of coming to know. He adds that art-making enables one to see things differently, in a fresher and more meaningful and personal way, through the reflection of the art-making process. In this way, the actual act of making art can assist a “deeper experience of personal presence and connection” (Taylor & Ladkin, 2009:56). Richards (1995:9, 81, 119) sums it up well with this statement: “as the artist creates the work, the work creates the artist.”

Taylor and Ladkin (2009:60) suggest that when one detaches from one’s interior life, a part of the self dies. However, through art-making one is able to draw upon the richness of one’s inner life, allowing one’s inner life to flourish. This process uses awareness in order to gain access to the inner world. According to Robinson (2008:298), by combining mindful awareness and art-making, one is able to attain a clearer understanding of oneself, others and the world. Robinson (2008:305) adds that in order to observe clearly, one needs attentiveness, and with this comes awareness. Robinson (2008:305) consolidates by acknowledging that in the same way that observation requires awareness, so observation also creates awareness.

Art is one of the most important means of learning about ourselves and the world around us. When people create or respond to art, they make connections between themselves and the experiences of others ... It is because art extends personal and public awareness that it is valued as a human activity. (Sullivan, 1994:5)

2.7 SUMMARY

In this chapter, the concept of a low socio-economic environment was contextualised and the phase of middle childhood described. The construct of awareness was defined and the aspects related to it discussed. The art-making process was introduced and the relevant aspects pertaining to its use in facilitating awareness were discussed. Lastly, the relationship between awareness and the art-making

process was considered. The next chapter focuses on the research methodology that was used in this study.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter the research methodology used for this study is discussed. Also included is a discussion of qualitative research procedures, as well as the motivation for using a phenomenological research strategy with focus groups and semi-structured one-on-one interviews. The sample population is described and the methods of data collection and analysis used are discussed. The trustworthiness of the study and the ethical aspects are considered.

3.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT, RESEARCH QUESTION AND AIM OF THE STUDY

In qualitative studies, researchers ask a broad, central question that looks for an investigation into a particular phenomenon, and thereby includes the researcher's aim for the study (Creswell, 2009:129). In accordance with Fouché and Schurink (2011:308), the researcher's main objective for this study was to enter the subjective worlds of the participants (children in middle childhood living in a low socio-economic community) in order to explore and understand what awareness may have been facilitated in them using the art-making process. The research question thus stated: What awareness can be facilitated in children from a low socio-economic environment, using the art-making process?

3.3 RESEARCH DESIGN

A research design is a plan or strategy used to conduct research and is largely determined by the nature of the researcher's aim for the study and problem formulation (Creswell, 2009:3; Mouton, 2001:48-49). For the purpose of this study, a qualitative, interpretive research approach was used. Botma *et al.* (2010:182), Creswell (2009:4), Merriam (2009:13-15) and Nieuwenhuis (2007a:51-52) are of the opinion that the most important characteristics of qualitative research are the following:

- Qualitative research is an in-depth form of enquiry that seeks to explore and/or describe in detail a specific phenomenon and its characteristics.

- The researcher is the key instrument used for data gathering from multiple sources.
- Qualitative research seeks to study phenomena in their natural setting in order for the researcher to explore and understand the meaning that individuals attribute and ascribe to these phenomena in their world.
- The qualitative researcher will thus inductively make interpretations of the data received by looking for patterns of meaning so that a complex, holistic account of the phenomenon being studied evolves.

The qualitative approach allowed the researcher to formulate a rich description, understanding and interpretation of the participants' experiences of awareness during the art-making process.

In line with the qualitative approach to this study, a phenomenological strategy of enquiry, using focus groups and semi-structured interviews, was used to gather data. According to Creswell (2009:11), a strategy of enquiry is a design or type of study that offers a framework within which the research procedures take place. In line with this, "the strategy of inquiry describes the skills, assumptions, enactments, and material practices" that researchers will use when they conduct a research study (Botma *et al.*, 2010:189). As suggested by Botma *et al.* (2010:189), the phenomenological strategy allowed the researcher to discover and relate to the lived worlds of the participants. In so doing and according to Fouché and Schurink (2011:316), this process of discovery enabled the researcher to accurately describe and give meaning to the participants' experiences of their awareness as they engaged in the art-making process. An exploratory as well as a descriptive type of study was therefore also used. Durrheim (2006:44-45) maintains that an exploratory study is used to investigate and "formulate rich descriptions and explanations of human phenomena" in order to generate insights. He goes on to explain that a descriptive study is used to seek and describe phenomena as accurately as possible. As proposed by Botma *et al.* (2010:190), the researcher used the four aspects of phenomenological enquiry: bracketing, intuiting, analysing and describing. These four aspects were utilised throughout the research process.

3.4 RESEARCH METHODS

Research methods refer to how data are collected, analysed and interpreted and needs to be explained in as much detail as possible, so that an exact copy of the study can be done by another person (Botma *et al.*, 2010:311). The research method starts with data collection. In order for the researcher to collect accurate and relevant data, a sample from a suitable population needs to be selected.

3.4.1 Population, method of sampling and sample size

According to Cottrell and McKenzie (2011:125), the term 'universe' refers to all possible individuals who possess the characteristics in which the researcher is interested. In the case of this study, the universe was children in middle childhood from a low socio-economic community in the Western Cape. The population refers to individuals in the universe who have specific attributes that the researcher is interested in (Strydom, 2011b:223). The population in this study consisted of children in middle childhood from a local school within a low socio-economic community in the Cape Peninsula.

Sampling refers to the identification and selection of participants from a population to be studied, and "involves decisions about which people, settings, events, behaviours and/or social processes to observe" so that the sample will be representative of that population (Durrheim, 2006:49). Botma *et al.* (2010:199) highlight the fact that sampling in qualitative research is aimed at finding the most suitable means to obtain rich and dense enough data to help the researcher understand a phenomenon of interest. In order to achieve this, appropriate participants who can best yield appropriate data need to be selected. Participants are therefore selected non-randomly and in settings where these data are most likely to occur. The most common type of sampling in qualitative research is non-probability sampling, which Durrheim and Painter (2006:139) refer to as "any kind of sampling where the selection of elements is not determined by the statistical principal of randomness". Non-probability sampling includes specific sampling strategies (Durrheim & Painter, 2006:139; Whittaker, 2009:35).

For the purpose of this study, a purposive sampling strategy as a non-probability sampling method was used which, according to Cottrell and McKenzie (2011:235),

enabled the researcher to look for participants who could potentially yield a more in-depth understanding of the phenomenon under investigation. During an initial interview with the school's principal, the researcher obtained contextual information regarding the children, and this determined the criteria used for this study. Some authors (Maree & Pietersen, 2007:178; Merriam, 2009:77; Whittaker, 2009:35) refer to purposive sampling as a method of choosing participants for a specific reason, because those participants are most likely to provide the richest information. Other authors (Rubin & Babbie, 2005: 247; Strydom & Delport, 2011:392; Whittaker, 2009:35) see purposive sampling as judgemental sampling, because participants are chosen based on the researcher's judgement.

The criteria used to select the participants from the population included:

- Children in middle childhood aged eleven and twelve, from a school in a low socio-economic community
- Children who can converse in either English or Afrikaans
- Children could be males or females
- Children who have experienced many environmental stressors, such as: living in a single-parent home, witness to domestic violence, witness to alcohol and drug abuse, unemployment and limited resources
- Children will participate voluntarily.

The school's principal and three class teachers were presented with the criteria, from which they selected a possible sample of participants. The final sample used in this study consisted of the following:

- 7 children between the ages of 11 and 12 years, from a school in a low socio-economic community
 - 5 lived in single-parent households
 - 5 lived with adults who abuse alcohol and other drugs
 - 3 lived with adults who are unemployed
 - 3 lived in conditions of neglect
 - 1 suffered the violent death of a primary care-giver
 - all experienced a lack of resources
- all children could converse in Afrikaans and English

3.5 THE ROLE OF THE RESEARCHER

According to Botma *et al.* (2010:232), in qualitative research “the researcher is the measuring instrument as well as the creator of the analytic process”. To ensure the trustworthiness of a study, the researcher needs to maintain a degree of neutrality in order to be free of bias during the research process and when writing up the findings. In line with Malchiodi (2007:x), the researcher in this study was aware of the qualities inherent in the actual act of art-making to create awareness. Malchiodi (2007:x) suggests that the creative process exists within all individuals and that art-making is life enhancing.

The researcher was very aware of her role as researcher and her experience in the arts during the process of data collection, data analysis and writing up of the findings for this study. This experience had to be bracketed in order to avoid researcher bias and the possible use of ‘therapy’. To achieve this, the researcher had to ‘step away’ from her experience of the art-making process and approach the participants with curiosity, from a neutral standpoint. The researcher also consciously attempted to keep the research topic and aim of the study in mind throughout the research process.

3.6 PROCEDURE OF THE RESEARCH

In this section, the procedure that was followed in the research is briefly outlined.

- Access to the population for this study was granted through the principal of a local school within the community. The researcher set up an appointment with the principal and discussed the following: reasons for conducting the research in that specific community, the possible benefits of the research for that community, approval for using pupils in the data collection process, and obtaining written consent to perform the study at the school.
- Permission for this study was granted by the Western Cape Education Department (WCED).
- Criteria for sample selection were determined by the researcher based on the contextual information offered to her by the school principal in an initial interview. These criteria were presented to the principal and relevant class teachers.

- The principal and class teachers presented the researcher with a list of ten names as possible participants for the study, including a pilot study.
- A letter of participation and a consent form were sent home to the parents of the ten pupils.
- Nine pupils returned with signed consent forms. Two of these pupils were considered for the pilot study and the other seven formed the focus group for the study.
- The pilot study was conducted.
- Having obtained consent for the seven children to participate in the five focus group sessions, and after securing a private, unused classroom, the researcher set up an initial meeting with the participants. The researcher introduced herself and explained the objectives of the research study and what was expected of the children. The children were told that participation was voluntary and that they could leave at any time should they choose to do so. They were informed about the use of recording and video equipment, as well as the practical considerations of time and venue for the focus groups.
- Five focus group sessions were conducted. These included a 30-minute art-making activity followed by the focus group, the latter lasting approximately 45 minutes to one hour.
- Four semi-structured, one-on-one interviews were also conducted. Each of these included a 30-minute art-making activity followed by a semi-structured interview session lasting approximately 45 minutes.

3.7 PILOT STUDY

Yin (2011:37) states that a pilot study is done in order to test and refine elements of a study so as to determine whether or not pertinent data can be acquired from the respondents in the final study. For the purpose of this study, the researcher chose to perform a pilot study to establish whether or not the focus group guide would be understandable to the participants. As recommended by Strydom and Delport (2011:395), performing a pilot study allowed the researcher to modify some of the questions in the hope of eliciting more accurate data during the main investigation.

The procedure for the pilot study included the following:

- Permission and consent to perform the pilot study was granted, as discussed in 3.6.
- Two participants were selected according to the criteria used for the main sample for this study.
- The participants engaged in a 20-minute art-making activity.
- An interview was performed using semi-structured questions.
- Closure.

Although the data from the pilot study were not used in the empirical study, the exercise was very valuable and allowed the researcher to prepare for the empirical study. The researcher was also able to make adjustments with regards to the implementation of the art-making process and the focus group guide, so as to ensure that rich enough data could be collected.

3.8 DATA GATHERING

In qualitative research, data are pieces of information that the researcher finds in the environment, and consist mainly of people's direct quotations about their feelings, experiences and opinions; descriptions of activities and behaviours of people; and extracts from certain types of documents (Patton, 2002:4). Data-gathering methods and data relevant to the research study are always determined according to the researcher's theoretical orientation, the purpose of the study, as well as the sample that is selected (Merriam, 2009:86).

3.8.1 Method of data gathering

Kelly (2006:287) and Creswell (2009:178) explain that data obtained from different sources allow the researcher to view a phenomenon from different angles, thereby gaining a richer understanding of it. For the purpose of this study, data were gathered from different sources using a combination of data-gathering methods, namely focus groups, one-on-one semi-structured interviews, field notes and participants' artwork.

3.8.1.1 *Focus groups*

Focus groups are group interviews involving a collective activity of discussion and interaction, and participants are selected according to common characteristics relating to the topic of discussion (Greeff, 2011:360). Whittaker (2009:47) adds that a focus group is a carefully selected group of individuals chosen specifically to provide opinions and experiences on a particular subject. For the purpose of this study, participants were selected because of their common characteristics of age, socio-economic background and their experiences of living with environmental stressors. Botma *et al.* (2010:210) point out that group dynamics are used in focus groups to access multiple viewpoints and richer information. In-depth questions were used in the focus groups to elicit large amounts of concentrated data. In-depth questions allowed for the communication of the participants' "lived experience" (Botma *et al.*, 2010:207-208).

Through the use of open-ended questioning and an in-depth form of interviewing, the researcher encouraged participants to share their perceptions of awareness that they may have experienced as they engaged in the art-making process.

According to Creswell (2009:179), one of the limitations of this type of data gathering is that the presence of the researcher may skew some of the information given by the participants. The researcher was very aware of her power role and the influence that this could have on the participants' responses. The researcher treated each member of the focus group with respect and dignity, and endeavoured to be present in the group, facilitating and not coercing. In line with Greeff's (2011:352) assumption, the children were seen as the experts on their experiences and perceptions of awareness during the art-making process, and were given the opportunity to express themselves freely and to tell their story. A few questions were redrafted as the data-gathering process progressed.

With each focus group, the researcher used the following procedure:

(Before each session)

- The participants and the researcher gathered on the mat as a group to catch up on the day's events and to share an opportunity for eating and drinking.

- The researcher brought the participants into the present moment by asking them to comment on their feelings and thoughts in the present as they were sitting on the mat.
- The researcher presented the plan for the group session.
(Facilitation of the art-making process)
- The participants engaged in a primer activity as an ice-breaker and to initiate the art-making process in the present. These consisted of free-association games and breathing activities.
- The participants engaged in an art-making process lasting 30 minutes. During the art-making process, the children were required to focus on their thoughts and experiences in the present moment, as well as to concentrate on their physical experiences of the art materials and the art-making process.
- Throughout the art-making process, the researcher made field notes of the children's general behaviour towards the art-making process and towards one another in the group, as well as reflections of her own processing.
- The focus group was then conducted, after the art-making process.
- The researcher consolidated the full session by thanking the participants for sharing their experiences and confirming the time for the next art-making/focus group session.

(See addendum D for a detailed explanation of each art-making session.)

In accordance with Creswell (2009:184), the researcher commenced with data analysis at the same time that data were being collected. During this process, the researcher was of the opinion that insufficient data were being collected. The researcher therefore decided to conduct four one-on-one interviews with four voluntary participants from the focus group, in order to elicit richer data.

3.8.1.2 One-on-one, semi-structured interviews

Botma *et al.* (2010:207-208) propose that semi-structured questioning is directed to obtaining detailed information about the participants' perceptions and beliefs around a phenomenon. Greeff (2011:352) explains that semi-structured interviews are suitable when the researcher is interested in personal issues as well as issues of

process. Art-making is a process, which suggests that as the children engaged in the art-making activities, each one experienced an internal process. In this study, the process of awareness was of interest. The researcher used an interview schedule with similar open-ended questions for each interview, altering only the art materials used.

With each interview session, the following procedure was used:

- Each child engaged in a 30-minute art-making activity. Each also engaged in art-making activity before their interview session, so allowing them to get in touch with the art-making experience, as well as their experiences of awareness facilitated through this process. Each participant worked with a different art medium, enabling the collection of richer data across a range of mediums. The art-making process included the *process* of engaging with different art mediums.
- One-on-one interview with open-ended, semi-structured questions around the child's experiences of awareness during the art-making process.
- Closure, thanking the participants for their time and for sharing their experiences.

(See addendum E for a detailed explanation of each art-making session.)

3.8.1.3 *Field notes*

According to Botma *et al.* (2010:217) and Greeff (2011:359), field notes are observational and personal interpretive notes that are written by the researcher during the interviewing process. The notes include accounts of what the researcher feels, hears, thinks and experiences in the course of the interviewing process. For the purpose of this study, the researcher made use of field notes as the participants engaged in the art-making process and according to Creswell (2009:179), the researcher was able to be a "complete observer". As Greeff (2100:359) suggests, the notes consisted of observations as well as the researcher's perceptions of what the researcher thought happened, including possible group dynamics, personal hunches and prejudices.

3.8.1.4 Video recordings and visual material

Video recordings and visual materials include items such as photographs, art objects, video tapes, cartoon strips, maps, computer software and film as an added component of data collection (Botma *et al.*, 2010:221; Creswell, 2009:180). For the purpose of this study and in line with the suggestion of Botma *et al.* (2010:220), the researcher made use of video equipment as a reliable record of what occurred during the art-making process, the focus groups and the interview sessions. The researcher obtained written consent from the parents and verbal consent from the participants to use the video recorder. With the consent of the participants, the researcher also made use of artwork as part of the data collection process. Botma *et al.* (2010:220) highlight the fact that visual material can be inherently interpretive. In accordance with Creswell (2009:180), Botma *et al.* (2010:220) agree that visual material is creative and gives the participants an opportunity to directly present their reality. The artwork allowed the researcher to gain a deeper understanding of the participant's experiences.

3.9 DATA ANALYSIS

Qualitative data analysis refers to the inductive process of making sense of, interpreting and theorising the non-numerical information that was collected during the data-gathering process (Babbie, 2007:378; Botma *et al.*, 2010:220; Creswell, 2009:183; Schwandt, 2007:6; Whittaker, 2009:89). The process intends to transform a large volume of information by identifying significant patterns within the data, and creating a suitable format that best communicates the essence and meaning of the collected data (De Vos *et al.*, 2011:397). There are a variety of analytic methods available to perform qualitative data analysis, depending largely on the theoretical paradigm that is adopted for the research study, as well as the purpose of the research. For the purpose of this study, the six-stage, thematic analysis model of Braun and Clarke (2006:77-101) was used. The model is flexible and fits in with the phenomenological paradigm of this study. Braun and Clarke (2006:79) define thematic analysis as “a method for identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data”. Qualitative data analysis does not follow a linear process, as suggested by Braun and Clarke (2006:77-101) and Whittaker (2009:91-97). The following six phases were used as a framework to guide the researcher in a recursive process through the thematic data analysis procedure:

- Phase 1: familiarising oneself with the data

The raw data that were gathered from the focus groups and the one-on-one interviews were orthographically transcribed. The transcriptions were put into a Word document that consisted of four columns, respectively headed 'researcher's notes', 'transcriptions', 'codes', and 'themes'. The researcher then immersed herself in the data by reading through all of the transcripts three times and making preliminary notes. The active process of repeated reading allowed the researcher to sensitise herself to the material and identify patterns and meanings.

- Phase 2: generating initial codes

Codes identify a feature of the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006:90). The researcher manually coded the data. The participants' own words were used and broken down into their smallest parts. Relevant codes were matched up with these extracts using different coloured highlighters, and placed in the 'codes' column. The researcher then created a new table consisting of three columns, respectively headed 'extracts', 'codes' and 'themes'. The extracts and their codes were then pasted into this new table.

- Phase 3: searching for themes

The columns headed 'codes' and 'extracts' were then sorted into broader potential themes by looking at the relationship between the codes and grouping them accordingly into the themes. According to Braun and Clarke (2006:82), a theme "captures something important about the data in relation to the research question, and represents some level of *patterned* response or meaning within the data set".

- Phase 4: reviewing themes

During this phase, the researcher created a 'thematic map' by refining the themes that were devised in Phase 3 and by going back to the extracts that were coded within a particular theme. In this way the researcher was able to evaluate whether sufficient data would sustain a particular theme, as well as form a coherent pattern within that theme. Braun and Clarke (2006: 92) point out that the data within the

themes should meaningfully fit together and that each theme should be clear and identifiable.

- Phase 5: defining and naming themes

The themes of the 'thematic map' were further defined and refined in order to capture the essence of the themes and the key features of interest. This was done by reviewing the data extracts of each theme again. Finally, each theme was described and a detailed analysis of each was given and integrated into the overall meaning of the data in relation to the research question.

- Phase 6: producing the report

This phase involved the final analysis and write-up of the data analysis chapter.

3.10 ETHICAL ASPECTS

In qualitative research studies the issue of ethical practice is a complex and permeable one, because human beings are the object of study. Mouton (2001:238) claims that ethical aspects in research concern what is right and wrong in the conduct of the study, and conform to generally accepted norms and values so that data obtained is never at the expense of human beings. Different authors (Bless *et al.*, 2006:141-148; Creswell, 2009:87-92; Mouton, 2001:240-245; Strydom, 2011a:115-129; Wassenaar, 2006:66-77) are in agreement about similar ethical principles, which they claim should be ingrained within the researcher, namely avoidance of harm, voluntary participation, informed consent, avoidance of deception or misleading, issues of privacy, anonymity and confidentiality, denial/access of treatment, issue of compensation, debriefing of participants, actions and competence of researcher, and publication of findings.

In line with Botma *et al.* (2010:203-204), Creswell (2009:88-92), Strydom (2011a:114-126) and Wassenaar (2006:67-73), the following outlines the procedure put in place for this study with regards to ethical aspects:

- Permission and ethical clearance to perform this study were given from the North-West University under the ethical number of NWU-00060-12-A1.

- The researcher obtained ethical approval from the WCED for the study to be performed at that particular school.
- Entry into the school where this study took place was made through the school's principal. The researcher set up an appointment with the principal and discussed the following: reasons for conducting the research in that specific community, the benefits of the research for that community, approval for using pupils in the data collection process, and obtaining written consent to perform the study at the school.
- The school's principal and the researcher determined the criteria by which prospective participants were to be selected for the study.
- The school's principal acted as a mediator between the researcher and the participants, and together with specific teachers was given a list of inclusion criteria for prospective participants.
- Prospective participants were given a letter detailing the reasons for the study as well as a consent form, which was taken home, signed and returned to the school. In this way the researcher obtained written, informed consent from guardians, allowing their children to participate in the research study and giving the researcher permission to record and video the interviews.
- The participants were informed that all information divulged during the interviews was confidential and that recording was for transcription purposes only.
- The researcher informed all the participants of the purpose of the research as well as what would be expected of them.
- Privacy of identity of all participants and the institution where this study was performed was maintained, as no names were disclosed in the report.
- Participants were informed that it was a voluntary study.
- The community's social worker was informed of the study and put on standby to provide debriefing for the participants after the study, should they have needed it.
- The interviews were held in a private and comfortable classroom with few interruptions.
- Dates and times of interviews were scheduled and confirmed with participants as well as the principal.

- The researcher treated all participants with respect. The researcher was aware of her role as facilitator, researcher and human being and what these aspects brought to the research.
- The participants were informed that should they experience any discomfort during any of the interview sessions, the researcher could organise for them to receive the necessary support. The participants were also informed that they could withdraw at any stage of the study.
- Data were stored in a secure and private area. The data were collected, transcribed and analysed accurately and rigorously.

3.11 TRUSTWORTHINESS

The constructs of reliability and validity of qualitative data are complex issues because, according to Schurink *et al.* (2011:419), these constructs are unsuitable in verifying the 'truth value' of a qualitative research study. In qualitative research, the researcher is considered the data-gathering instrument that makes interpretations and assumptions about 'reality', and can therefore never capture an objective 'truth'. Nieuwenhuis (2007b:80) suggests that the researcher should rather be looking for data that are credible and trustworthy. Merriam (2009:209) uses the terms 'trustworthiness' and 'rigour' to explore the constructs of validity and reliability in qualitative research. He maintains that to ensure the outcome of these constructs, qualitative research must be conducted in an ethical manner. Merriam (2009:211) adds that in order to establish authenticity in a qualitative study, the researcher needs to make sure that the research strategies used are congruent with the underlying philosophical assumptions of the paradigm adopted in the study. Creswell (2009:190) posits that in order to assure the trustworthiness and accuracy of data, specific procedures for data gathering and data analysis must be used. Botma *et al.* (2010:231-234), Creswell (2009:190-193) and Merriam (2009:213-223) suggest the use of multiple procedures to ensure the accuracy and credibility of findings. For the purpose of this study, the following procedures were carried out to ensure validity and reliability:

- Data were gathered from different converging sources, allowing for information to be cross-checked and authenticated. Merriam (2009:215) points out that data gathered from different sources increases the credibility of findings.

- The researcher allowed for saturation of data as she spent adequate time engaging with the participants to gain an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon and collected enough data until no new data or information emerged. Variations and discrepant information were also looked for, which allowed for more accurate and valid accounts. Creswell (2009:192) emphasises the fact that reality is made up of different perspectives and allowing for alternative explanations of a phenomenon ensures credibility of information.
- While engaging with the participants, the researcher was conscious of reflecting on her own experiences, biases and assumptions and how these would invariably shape and influence the interpretations of the data and the conclusions drawn.
- The researcher arranged a final group session with the participants in order to reflect on and verify that the data collected during the focus groups and one-on-one interviews were accurate, which is regarded as a form of member checking. The data obtained from this interaction were cross-checked with the data collected during the focus group sessions as well as the one-on-one interview sessions.
- The researcher provided rich descriptions for the context of the research and the themes that emerged from the findings to ensure the transferability and dependability of the study.
- The researcher checked and rechecked that all transcripts were accurate and codes were cross-checked against the transcripts to ensure comprehensive meaning and definition for all the codes used.

3.12 SUMMARY

This chapter explained the research process conducted in this qualitative study. The importance of trustworthiness was highlighted as well as the ethical aspects that formed part of the study. The main findings of the study are discussed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The aim of this study was to explore and describe children's experiences of their awareness that emerged through the art-making process. In this chapter the researcher discusses the analysed data, integrating themes and sub-themes with the literature. The chapter begins with a table highlighting each theme and sub-theme (see Table 4.1). Thereafter the results are discussed, integrating quotations, field notes and artwork of the participants.

Table 4.1: Main themes and related sub-themes

MAIN THEME	SUB-THEME
1. Awareness of emotions and feelings	Emotions and feelings such as: 1. happiness 2. anger 3. enjoyment 4. pride and mastery 5. calmness 6. sadness 7. denial
2. Awareness of senses	Senses of touch and sight
3. Sense of agency	Empowerment, control and creating change
4. Awareness of needs	Lack of resources and nurturing

4.2 RESULTS

The results of the study are discussed as follows: under each theme, the researcher states the sub-themes with relevant verbatim quotes. A discussion around the themes and sub-themes follows, using relevant literature to support the findings.

4.2.1 THEME 1: Art-making process facilitating awareness of emotions and feelings

4.2.1.1 Sub-theme: Emotions and feelings such as happiness, anger, enjoyment, pride, calmness, sadness and denial

Table 4.2: Sub-theme and verbatim quotes

Sub-theme	Verbatim quotes
1. Emotions and feelings such as: Happiness	- I feel happy and excited in my gut and in my heart when I do art. - The smooth feeling of the clay makes me happy. - I like the bright colours. Bright colours are happy.
Anger	- I feel angry when ... um ... if I build something, I can build something that happened and I feel angry about it. - Die kwaadheid, kan ek dit op die bladsy skryf en teken wat gebeur en die gedagte uit my kop uitkry. - If I felt angry, dan kan ek die klei so gooi en so maak ... I can do this because the clay doesn't have any feelings.
Enjoyment	- Dit was lekker om die paint te meng. - I enjoy the mess of mixing the colours. - Dit was baie lekker om met jou gevoelens te werk en te teken. - Exciting to see what I could put together.
Pride	I wished that the stuff that I made would go on the TV.

	This is the best tree I have ever drawn.
• Calmness	• The softness of the clay is calming, it helps me to be quiet and concentrate. Focusing on the clay calms you. • If say you stressed or something, if you play with it, then it takes your stress from your mind of thinking about the stuff you did before, because then you don't think about the stuff you did. You can take the clay and press all your stress out on the clay.
• Sadness	• Dis uncomfortable om 'n sad face te maak, because you think of your lost ones and sad things. • That's how it [the clay] feels inside, all soft, not strong and I just want to cry. Sad colours are dull, like black, brown and grey.
• Denial	• Ek wil nie praat nie.

Coholic (2010:25) asserts that art-making helps children to discover their feelings, thoughts and behaviours. Malchiodi (2007:153) supports this assumption by acknowledging the idea that expressing emotions through art is one way to become aware of feelings, as well as a way to begin to identify those feelings that were previously hidden. The participants noticed a range of feelings and were able to verbalise them. Expressing feelings of happiness, enjoyment, pride, calmness and even anger seemed easier for the participants than expressing feelings of sadness. For example, a few of the participants felt that certain colours, like black, brown and grey, were dull, sad colours. Furthermore, one participant described how the clay felt when she used water with it. For her, the clay felt soft and not strong, and this tactile sensation made her want to cry. Another participant made a mask with a sad face (see Figure 4.1). When asked to comment on the experience of making her mask, she was able to verbalise that she felt uncomfortable when she made it because it reminded her of her lost ones and sad things.



Figure 4.1: Sad mask

The art-making process seems to have been very enjoyable for the participants. One participant expressed her happiness and sense of excitement about the art-making process, through her awareness of a bodily reaction. She felt happy in her 'gut' and in her 'heart'. Artz (1994:74) explains that an individual's body can offer detailed information about emotions, which enhances a deeper understanding of an emotional experience.

James (1989:13) maintains that the element of fun is important when working with children, as it keeps a child emotionally receptive. The participants seemed willing to share their stories and the researcher noticed that they spoke freely among themselves. Enjoyment of the art-making process seemed to enable the participants to discover and become aware of their feelings. This appeared to be due to the 'fun' aspect, which may have created a sense of safety for the participants, a safe area to play and communicate.

The enjoyable aspect for the participants was also noticed when they mixed the paint. One participant commented that she enjoyed the mess of mixing colours. Another commented that it was exciting to see what he could put together; he seemed to be excited about creating something new. Malchiodi (2007:65) suggests that art-making allows for the creation of something new, which can promote a sense of satisfaction and personal meaning. This is a creative act and Malchiodi (2007:65) defines creativity as bringing something unique into being. Some of the qualities of

creativity include imagination, spontaneity, playfulness and inventiveness (Malchiodi, 2007:65).

The researcher also noticed that within this 'fun' space, there were times in between the chatter when the participants became quiet and absorbed in what they were doing. They seemed to 'drift into a world of their own', a world which appeared to include only the activity and themselves-in-process, a process of playing, of creating, of thinking, of doing. In support of this, Perls *et al.* (1951:245) claim that an important part of art-making is in the "concentrated sensation and in the playful manipulation of the material medium" and they liken the art-making process to children's play. Goodman (2005:198) assumes that children's thoughts and feelings are very often communicated non-verbally through play. According to Mortola (2006:49), Oaklander describes a sense of play as involving "a courageous willingness to step into an 'as if' experience" and being open to uncertainty. This 'openness' can be compared with the experience of what Nakamura and Csikszentmihalyi (2009:90) call 'flow', which they refer to as an expanded sense of self in an 'extended present'. In support of this view, Waller and Dalley (1992:17) mention Marion Milner's notion of the need for the experience of a non-purposive state, of formlessness, almost that of a day-dreaming state, which both play and the art-making process offer.

Malchiodi (1998:111) mentions that art is a powerful container for emotions and that "to deny that children express emotions through art, would ignore a significant part of who they are and how they perceive themselves and the world around them". When the researcher asked one participant what he became aware of when he made art, he commented that making art helped him to get things out of his head, for example, when he felt angry, he could put what made him angry onto the page and, in so doing, he could "get it out of his head". According to Malchiodi (1998:110), a child may gain some relief from conflicting angry feelings about a situation through art. Malchiodi (2007:ix-x) adds that art-making can convey a wide range of emotions, and in this sense can serve as a way to make sense of, or to clarify, an inner experience without the use of words. A recent study by Malin (2013:13) investigated children's experiences and perceptions of art-making. It was discovered that children used art-making as a way to explore and express emotion, and that the actual making of the art helped them to feel better when they were upset.

The researcher observed how working with clay during the art-making process seemed to give the participants opportunities to become aware of being able to express anger by scratching into, stabbing and throwing the clay. One participant commented, “I felt angry ... dan kan ek die klei so gooi en so maak ... I can do this because the clay doesn’t have any feelings.” As she made this comment, she threw the clay down and then stabbed it with a skewer. According to Sholt and Gavron (2006:70), children are able to engage with clay in an aggressive way because there is no fear of any negative outcomes to the material, due to its pliable and malleable structure.

It was further evident that the participants became very engaged in the process of working with the clay as they hollowed it out, poked it and shaped it. They seemed to enjoy using water with the clay and appeared focused on the rhythmic action of smoothing the clay. The participants commented, for instance, on how they were able to let go of their stress by pressing the clay down with the palms of their hands, pressing all the stress away. Clay seems to encourage a physical involvement and Case and Dalley (2006:140) posit that this physical involvement encourages the release of bodily tensions, which in turn helps with emotional release. Mortola (2006:65) supports this notion by stating that clay is a great medium to use with children who are quite active, as it is focusing and calming. One of the participants explained that the calming aspect of working with the clay allowed her to be quiet and to concentrate, and that the actual act of focusing on the clay calmed her.

Another emotion that was very evident through the art-making process was the sense of pride and accomplishment that each participant appeared to feel. A few of them held up their pictures for all to see and were also able to make positive self-statements about their work. One participant said that her tree was the best tree that she had ever done. Most of the participants asked each other to look at their pieces, reinforcing their need for external approval, and it was interesting to hear the positive feedback that was given. One participant wished that her artwork could be shown on TV. She became fascinated with the camera and acted out an ‘interview session’ with herself, about herself and her artwork. Pembroke (2007:483-485) supports this finding and asserts that art-making is self-enhancing and empowering, in that it enables a feeling of ownership over a very personal experience.

Another 'feeling' that became evident was that of denial, a feeling of not wanting to talk any further about their experiences of awareness when it came to certain feelings. Evidence of this was noticed in comments like "I don't want to talk". This 'denial' of expressing more complex feelings in art-making was also discovered in the study by Malin (2013:13), when some of the participants recognised more complex emotions but were not able to speak directly about them.

Coholic (2010:132) claims that for a lot of children, being able to notice, identify and verbalise their feelings is a very new experience. Not only is it an unfamiliar process, but it can also be a painful one, especially when deep and painful emotions and thoughts are accessed. According to Blom (2006:6-7), children who have experienced a stressful environment tend to protect themselves by blocking their emotions and switching off their minds in order to numb the painful feelings. According to Hansen (2006:79), children with difficult histories often display poor social skills, have a low sense of self and find it difficult to remain in the present. This aspect was very evident in the current study, especially when the participants made 'emotion' masks (see Figure 4.1). When the researcher asked the participants what they experienced and became aware of when they created the masks, she noticed that most participants found it hard to maintain eye contact and often communicated with their bodies turned away. Some did not even respond to questions and simply shrugged their shoulders, while others acted out by laughing inappropriately or lying back on the carpet.

4.2.2 THEME 2: Art-making process facilitating awareness of senses

Arnheim (1969:17-19) asserts that one's senses evolve as a biological means for survival. He further claims that sensory responsiveness is intelligent, because it is an important means of obtaining information for the working of the nervous system. Ramm (2006:67) points out that art-making is a process involving all of the senses as well as aspects of feeling and thought. Art-making is also a hands-on activity and, as Malchiodi (2007:13-14) explains, involves a "bodily awareness" of something as individuals mix, touch, draw, paint, stick, mould and arrange. The researcher noticed that in the context of this study the senses of touch and sight dominated the art-making process, and therefore discussion is focused on these two senses.

4.2.2.1 Sub-theme: Senses of touch and sight

Table 4.3: Sub-theme and verbatim quotes

Sub-theme	Verbatim quotes
1. Senses of touch and sight	• I like the way the clay feels. It feels soft and cuddly. • It feels like a strawberry's inside. • It feels like a baby's face. • It feels like a cerise pink dress. • The clay felt nice and muddy on my hands. When it's dry it feels rough. When it's wet it feels smooth and silky. • The softness of the clay is calming. • The smooth feeling of the clay makes me happy. • Oooh, die paint voel so koel op my hande. • I like mixing colours ... I like the bright colours. • I like brown. • Sad colours are dull colours like black, brown and grey. • Dit voel nie baie goed as die kleure vir my nie werk nie.

Sholt and Gavron (2006:67) claim that touch is one of the primary modes of communication that an infant learns. Touch is also the first sense to develop and infants and young children are dependent on it in order to learn about the world (Field, 2001:8). Working with clay is the ideal medium for exploring the sense of touch (Sholt & Gavron, 2006:67). Clay seems to have an allure and invites itself to be pulled, prodded, pushed, moulded and hollowed out. It is messy, soft and mushy and very sensuous. The participants spent a long time simply 'playing' with the clay and seemed to enjoy the feeling of how the water worked with the clay. This sensual quality of the clay allowed for a strong link between the senses, feelings and thoughts. This was evidenced in the way that a few of the participants were able to describe how the clay felt for them: soft and cuddly, muddy, smooth and silky when it

is wet, but rough when it is dry. They were also able to explain what the feeling of the clay reminded them of: the inside of a strawberry, a baby's face and a cerise pink dress. The participants therefore seemed able to describe both the tactile feeling of the clay and an association between the tactile feeling and an object. This is significant because, according to Oaklander (1988:67), individuals who are out of touch with their feelings and who block their feelings are usually not in touch with their senses.

Another activity which involved the sense of touch was the painting of a tree. The participants engaged with the paint not only through mixing the colours and applying the paint onto the page with a brush, but they instinctively also used their hands and fingers to apply paint by making handprints and fingerprints (see Figure 4.2). They seemed to enjoy the feeling of applying the paint to the palms of their hands and commented on how cool the paint felt on their skin. The researcher noticed that the participants found this tactile way of engaging with the paint playful and messy. Malchiodi (2007:15) posits that the act of creating with one's hands is a powerful act because it becomes "personally meaningful" and unique. The researcher is of the opinion that the act of making handprints was not only a tactile experience for the participants, but also a way of 'making their mark' on the page, which is permanent and therefore empowering.



Figure 4.2: Tree

According to Arnheim (1969:12), it was Aristotle who said “the soul never thinks without an image”. Arnheim (1969:18) advocates ‘sight’ as “a highly articulate medium” and as the cardinal medium of thought. Malchiodi (2007:9) explains visual thinking as a way of arranging feelings, thoughts and perceptions of the world through images and claims that images make up most of a person’s earliest experiences.

The participants used their sense of sight continually as they went about the art-making process. The researcher noticed the care they took in trying to render an image as accurately and realistically as possible. The image had to ‘look right’; for example, one participant appeared very anxious when she started her picture of a tree (see Figure 4.3). She decided to draw the tree in pencil first and was clearly not happy with her attempts, evidenced by a look of dissatisfaction on her face and inaudible mumblings. She decided to paint the tree, but stopped and shook her head, turning her paper over in order to start again. She followed a similar process (see Figure 4.2) but in the end managed to create an image to her satisfaction. Rubin (2005:45) expresses how children of this age (9–12 years) can feel very anxious and frustrated when trying to render things as they really are, and that they are seldom satisfied with their results. Charleroy *et al.* (2012:7) support this and claim that children during middle childhood are very concerned with precision and realism in their work. Their developmental task is to gain a sense of self-competence and mastery in their environment (Hanvey, 2002:6).



Figure 4.3: Tree (1st attempt)

The researcher noticed that the participants spent a lot of time mixing colours when they were painting. They appeared very curious as to the creation of different colours. They often asked one another how they made certain colours and freely pointed out which colours they liked or disliked. The participants were also able to put feeling words to some of the colours, for example one participant commented that for her, sad colours like brown, black and grey were dull, whereas the bright colours seemed 'happy' to her. Another participant explained that he didn't feel good when the colours didn't work for him.

Another art activity involving the sense of sight was the making of self-portraits using collage and mixed media. The participants used their found images to create their self-portraits and to show aspects of themselves. According to Lamy (1986:14), found images hold meaning for an individual as the pictures are purposively chosen and are often things from the 'real' world. Some participants cut out different types of hair, eyes and noses to create their self-portraits. In this way, according to Lamy (1986:14), by using their imaginations, the participants were possibly able to dislocate the 'normal' associations and connections with the original image in order to create a new, unique image for themselves on their page (see Figure 4.4). Malchiodi (2007:68) confirms this and argues that the creative process of this kind of art-making affords the individual a unique opportunity to discover new, playful ways of using what is familiar (the found images).



Figure 4.4: Self-portrait 1

The participants spent quite a bit of time looking through magazines trying to find images that appealed to them. The use of collage seemed fun for the participants as the images and materials were readily available, which appeared to reduce their anxiety around having to create. Rappaport *et al.* (2012:162) concur and suggest that collage is useful to use with individuals who feel they are not competent at drawing. It also allows the user to incorporate reality into their image without having to imitate it.

4.2.3 THEME 3: Art-making process facilitating a sense of agency

The act of creating art, according to Curl and Forks (2008:164), offers an individual the experiences of agency – choice, freedom and power – and “is ultimately a form of self-validation”. The researcher has grouped the experiences of control, empowerment and creating change under one sub-heading, as she feels that they are interrelated.

4.2.3.1 Sub-theme: Empowerment, control and creating change

Table 4.4: Sub-theme and verbatim quotes

Sub-theme	Verbatim quotes
1. Empowerment, control and creating change	• I like it when I can do my own thing. So I can mess up the page. I don't like not having a choice. • It feels like I am in control, because a lot of people want to control you. • I realised I can just be myself when I do the art. • Dit was lekker om vir die wêreld te wys wat jy wil en kan wys ... en wat jy wil nie ook. • When I play with the clay, I can do what I want with it, and I can change it. If I don't like it, I can squash it. • In the clay, the cutting makes a person feel ... maybe when someone says bad things you always keep that in mind, always, and when someone tells you you look ugly, you will always think you look ugly because other

	people are judging you, but what you must do, the frame, it's not about the outside, it's about the inside, so, the outside is ugly, then you must think about the inside, and then I cut it out. The cutting helps bring out the inside, which is the important side and that leaves out the ugly side. • Ek hou van daai neus, ek gaan dit nou uitknip. • Sien, ek kan daai hare hê. • Imagine, hier is ekke!! • Here is my hair!! • Daai is ek!! • Dit voel vir my baie lekker ... as ek ... um ... kwaad is, dat ek dit op 'n bladsy doen, dan wil ek net hê dat dit moet in regte lewe kom. • Vir my kunswerk is belangrik, want ... um ... in die art kan 'n man different kleure gebruik en draw en paint en enige iets doen wat nie exist nie en meer. Ek kan 'n man ook nog uitskribbel. Ek hou daarvan om my eie situasies te maak.
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The researcher was aware of the theme of agency as the participants engaged in the art-making process. The participants often made 'self' statements, for example, "This is me", "I can just be myself when I do art", "I like it when I can do my own thing", "If I don't like it, I can squash it" and "It feels like I am in control". Oaklander (2007:27-28) is of the opinion that by using 'self' statements, children are able to define themselves, which is empowering. Langarten (cited by Hatrz & Thick, 2005:72) claims that the creative process involves acts of self-assertion, which are inherently empowering. Johnson and Sullivan-Marx (2006:309) concur and maintain that art-making is an assertive act, giving the individual a measure of control as well as providing an outlet for creative discoveries. Anderson (1991:1) adds that the empowering quality of art resides in the process of self-affirmation that occurs when producing a piece of art. The artwork becomes the evidence of that individual's ability to create.

A sense of control, empowerment and creating change was also noticed in the way the participants worked with the clay. They were able to shape and manipulate the clay according to their will, break pieces off that they did not want or even squash the clay and start over. This experience of control seemed to be very empowering for the participants, as evidenced by one participant's comment of being able to do what she wanted with the clay, changing the clay and squashing it if she did not like it. Oaklander (1988:67) points out that the clay medium offers no specific, clear-cut rules as to its use and it is therefore difficult to make a 'mistake', allowing the child to experience a unique sense of self while working with the clay.

Sholt and Gavron (2006:68) mention that when working with clay, creating something out of nothing is a meaningful experience, as a product can be transformed into different forms. In accordance with Boshoff (2006:46), this generative process of creating something new enabled the participants in this study to control what they were doing, as they were able to make their own choices. Boshoff (2006:47) believes that this develops self-initiating behaviour, which builds a sense of autonomy in children. The participants physically manipulated the clay, bringing about change in the here and now through their interaction with the clay. While one participant worked with the clay, she also explained what she was doing: she was making a picture frame and she explained that by cutting away the inside bit, she was able to bring the inside out. She explained that the frame, which can be ugly, is not actually the important part, but that the inside is what is important, and what one must think about. So, through the act of cutting and manipulating the clay, she was able to make changes.



Figure 4.5: Self-portrait 2

During the making of the self-portraits using collage and mixed media, the researcher noticed that some of the participants cut out or tore away pieces that they did not want to use. In Figure 4.5, for example, the participant cut out different hair, face and shoulders for her self-portrait. It appeared to the researcher that she was choosing aspects that she wanted to show and discarding those she did not want. The participant appeared to be strengthened by her ability to choose for herself what she wanted in her artwork. For example, when she saw something she liked in a picture, she said, “Ek hou van daai neus, ek gaan dit nou uitknip”; “Sien, ek kan daai hare hê” and “Imagine, hier is ekke!!” She also commented that she liked it when she could do her own thing and be in control. This sense of agency is confirmed by a comment made by Foster (1992:37) when he conducted a creative collage programme with disabled elderly residents, “I make a decision therefore I exist.” This expression of self-validation is further echoed by Moon’s (1994:30) idea of art-making, with each brushstroke and dab of colour saying to the world: “I am here, I am here and I have something to express.”

In a study by Malin (2013:14) which looked at the self-reported intentions in children’s art-making, results showed that some children liked making art as it was a way for them to express their imagination and to create something from their minds that does not exist in reality. This allowed them to make themselves into anything they wanted to be (Malin, 2013:14). This realisation of the possibility of using art-making to create something from one’s mind that does not exist in reality was

evident in the current study when the researcher asked a participant why he enjoyed art so much. He claimed that art-making was important for him because of the way he could change things according to his will, for example changing colours, scribbling a person out, and even creating something that does not exist. Stepney (2001:xv) posits that creative power is one of the definitions for imagination, and that through this creative power an individual's inner world can be translated into something visible through art-making. This ability is empowering as it enables an individual to create anything that they think of, as expressed by one participant when he said he enjoyed being able to create his own 'situations' through art.

4.2.4 THEME 4: Art-making process facilitating awareness of needs

4.2.4.1 Sub-theme: Lack of resources and nurturing

Table 4.5: Sub-theme and verbatim quotes

Sub-theme	Verbatim quotes
1. Lack of resources and nurturing	• This is my mom, my family. My parents got divorced because my father, he drinks, he's an alcoholic. It's difficult. • The clothing is here to say that I like shopping and make-up ... I wish I could go shopping. • I cut out a house because I'd like to show the people my house one day. I wish I had one, my own bedroom. • Ek het chocolate gemaak en ek wens ek kan dit eet. Ons kry nie chocolate nie. • Ek maak 'n burger, ek maak sausage, ek maak 'n hotdog. Ek is altyd so honger. • This is my future house and this is my future child. • My child is gonna be a whitey ... so that he can learn lots of stuff.

Field theory suggests that individuals cannot be understood without considering the context within which they live (Yontef & Jacobs, 2011:343). In the same way, Malin (2013:8) argues that art-making always occurs within a cultural context and is a personally meaningful activity. Malchiodi (1998:43) claims that the process of drawing can offer children a potent means to convey their impressions and responses to their environment. Taylor and Ladkin (2009:56) see art as a way to learn courage, courage to see one's reality but also to recognise possibilities and use courage to realise those possibilities.

The participants appeared to be aware of their basic needs in terms of survival, for example lack of sufficient food. They also seemed to be aware of their relational needs and the challenges that they faced within the context of their situation, for example parental alcohol abuse, divorce, and overcrowded, single-parent households. According to Jensen (2009:8-9), poorer children often come from single-parent homes, are often more exposed to alcohol-abusing caregivers and often live in more chaotic households. Dyson (2008:8) suggests that these aspects may create added challenges and stressors for the children and their caregivers. This stress increases the risk of creating more stress-ridden attachments between the children and their caregivers, which can interfere with the healthy development of children's self-esteem and positive behaviour (Jensen, 2009:8-9).

When the participants were asked to make something out of the clay, they spent a long time making food, like chocolate, hamburgers, hot dogs and pizza. As they worked with the clay, they spoke to one another about what they were making. They also shared some of their 'food' with one another and pretended that they were eating it. One participant commented that she had made some chocolate and that she wished she could eat it because she didn't get chocolate at home. Another said she was making a burger, a sausage and a hotdog and that she was always hungry. The researcher did not ask the participants why they had made food, but she wondered what the relevance of this was in terms of their experiences of their awareness around their lack of nurturing and resources. According to Sholt and Gavron (2006:69), children often use clay to represent food and often engage in the symbolic acts of eating and nourishment.

According to Mehlomakulu (2012:1), the images that are chosen in collage work have meaning for the individual and are often influenced by personal experience and context. This was noticed when the participants made their self-portraits. Some added smart houses, clothes and accessories to their images. For example, in Figure 4.4 the participant added clothes and make-up to her self-portrait. When asked to tell the group about her picture, she said that she had put those things there to show that she liked clothes and make-up, and she wished she could go shopping to buy them. Another participant spoke about how she cut out a house (see Figure 4.6) because she wanted to show everyone the house that she would live in one day. She then went on to say that she wished she had a bigger house, one with her own bedroom. The participants were able to tell the group what they wanted by referring to their collages. During the art-making activity, one participant held up a picture that she'd found of a toddler, saying that it was her future child. She explained that her child was going to be a "whitey" so that he could learn lots of things.

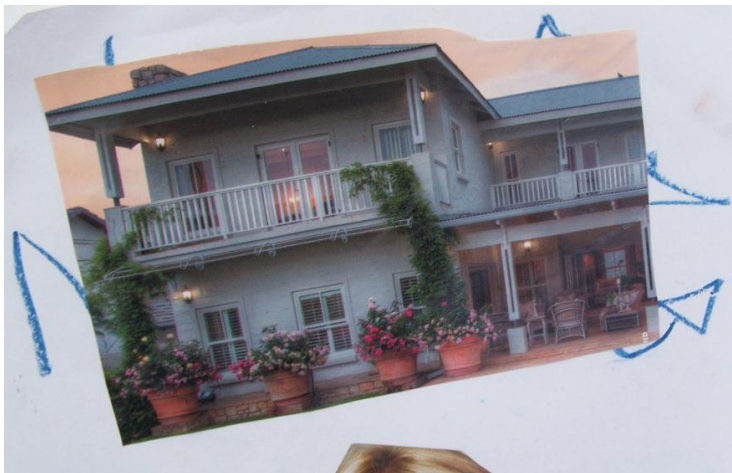


Figure 4.6: House (section of self-portrait 3)

Another participant added images of a family and a house to her self-portrait and commented that they were her mom, her family. She added that her parents had got divorced because her father was an alcoholic. She said that this was very difficult for her. The researcher did not ask her to explain but thanked her for what she had shared. The participant did not wish to have her image shown as part of this study.

CONCLUSION

From the above discussion of the main themes and sub-themes identified in this study, the researcher is of the opinion that the art-making process may have played an important role in facilitating the participants' awareness. The participants seemed to enjoy the art-making activities and were able to share some of their experiences of awareness and of the art-making process. The predominant aspects of this study appeared to be the sense of enjoyment that the participants experienced as well as their sense of pride and mastery in producing tangible images. The next chapter summarises the findings of this study and provides recommendations and possibilities for further research in this area.

CHAPTER FIVE

INTEGRATED SUMMARY OF THE STUDY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the conclusions and recommendations to those working with children in order to facilitate awareness using the art-making process.

5.2 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The main focus of this study was centred on the exploration of awareness that children in middle childhood living in a low socio-economic environment encountered as they engaged in the art-making process.

The underlying paradigms of this study, Gestalt theory and Positive Psychology, formed the framework within which the concept of awareness in relation to art-making was studied. Given the holistic nature of Gestalt theory, the concepts of awareness and the art-making process could not be studied without considering the context within which they appeared – children in middle childhood living in a low socio-economic environment. The researcher was constantly aware of the participants' context as they engaged in the art-making process, as well as during the focus groups and interviews. This allowed the researcher to be in the moment and to bracket her assumptions in order to gain a better understanding of the participants' experiences.

Findings from this study support the literature suggesting that the physical act of creating art provides many positive outcomes. The study highlights the symbiotic relationship between awareness and the art-making process. The participants were asked to pay attention to their senses, feelings and thoughts as they engaged in the art-making process, and then to reflect on these aspects in the interviews. It became evident to the researcher that the participants were aware of and able to acknowledge many aspects of the art-making process, as well as express feelings, thoughts and ideas in relation to their experiences of awareness and to what they had created. A considerably rich source of data was collected. Despite the participants' willingness to express their awareness of feelings of excitement,

happiness, fun and even anger, sad feelings were more difficult for them to acknowledge, and an awareness of denial of complex emotions was evidenced through body language as well as an unwillingness to express verbally.

A significant finding included the participants' awareness of their context in terms of their physical and relational needs. The participants seemed to focus on aspects of food, home, family and appearance. Literature suggests that the cognitive changes in children in middle childhood lead to these children expanding their view of their social world and of themselves. They also compare themselves and what they have or haven't got with others, including their friends, other adults in their environment as well as people 'outside' of their context, as seen in the media and on television.

The findings also indicated the importance of the 'embodied' experience of the art-making process, in that art-making is a physical action of creating as well as a sensual experience of the art mediums. The participants seem to have been aware of these qualities within the art-making process as well as within themselves as they engaged in the process. The physical act of making art was also empowering for the participants as the process required them to make decisions and to exert a measure of control over the art mediums. This sense of self-efficacy is especially important for children in middle childhood as the experience of mastery is critical during this stage.

Children at this stage are also developing the cognitive structures which allow them to think about their behaviour and to see the consequences of their actions. This development provides links in both social and emotional growth which aid in the understanding of cause and effect. The important quality needed for this understanding, is awareness. The literature suggests that during middle childhood the skills for self-awareness develop dramatically as children's ability to reflect on things increases, and herein lies the significance of children in middle childhood for the purpose of this study.

During the course of this research study, the researcher noticed the apparent lack of studies that specifically address the connection between art-making and awareness and the benefit that art-making can have in low socio-economic communities. Most of the research that has been done in this area has focused on the use of art therapy

as a research tool and intervention. The researcher believes that this study gives some evidence of the power of art-making and awareness.

5.3 CONCLUSIONS OF THE STUDY

In light of the above, the researcher has come to the following conclusions:

- In the researcher's opinion, the research question (What awareness can be facilitated in children from a low socio-economic environment, using the art-making process?) has been answered, given the evidence presented in Chapter 4. The researcher asserts that the aim of the study was also adequately met. Ethical conduct throughout the study was maintained and the trustworthiness of the study was ensured.
- The art-making process fostered the emergence of diverse feelings, including happiness and enjoyment, calmness, pride and more complex feelings like sadness. The experience of 'denial' was evident and it seemed that the art-making process facilitated this awareness within the children.
- Because of its direct access to felt experience, to intuition and to imagination, art-making is not constrained by logic or limitations. This experience manifested itself through the children's awareness of their senses and the qualities of the art-making materials.
- Due to the fact that art-making uses various mediums for its process, it allowed the children the opportunity to manipulate these materials in a myriad of ways. This provide the children with the awareness of numerous choices and possibilities.
- The making and creating of art was an empowering act for the children, as it involved decision-making and a unique experience of choice and control, especially for these children who are controlled by their circumstances. The children were made aware of their ability to create through this empowering process, as well as through the tangible finished product. The participants were very proud of their artwork.
- The art-making process facilitated an awareness of context for the children. This is especially significant for children in middle childhood as they start branching out into a wider environment. Due to the continual development of their cognitive functions, these children are able to reflect on many things,

including their own and others' behaviour, feelings and needs. These reflections become important for them and will therefore be reflected in their artwork, as evidenced in this study.

- It is further evident that the art-making process invited aspects of mindfulness due to the inherent qualities of the process itself. These included an openness to novelty, where the qualities of the art mediums allowed the children to experiment; focused attention on what was being created in the present moment, where the children quietly engaged in the process of art-making; and the feelings of calmness and relaxation that the children experienced while working with the clay.

5.4 RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are based on the findings of this study regarding the possible use of the art-making process to foster awareness and well-being in children living in low socio-economic environments. The findings are relevant to psychologists, community psychologists and social workers, teachers, and universities.

5.4.1 Recommendations for psychologists and social workers

- Psychologists, community psychologists and social workers should familiarise themselves with the developmental stage of middle childhood in terms of the art-making process and the benefits that art-making can provide for these children.
- The art-making process may be very useful as a means to help children of all ages express emotions and thoughts that they cannot express in words.
- The art-making process may be a beneficial way for children to explore the use of their senses as they work with different art mediums.
- Workshops on the benefits of the art-making process could be presented to psychologists and social workers to enhance their understanding and knowledge of art-making and the qualities of the art materials. The researcher asserts that for those working with art-making and children, personal experience of art-making is essential in order to fully understand the inherent qualities of the art-making process.

- For psychologists, community psychologists and social workers working in under-resourced communities, art-making is cost-effective as many recycled materials can be used. Art-making can also be used effectively with larger groups, therefore reaching a wider group of children and adults.
- For community psychologists, social workers and significant community leaders, art-making can be a means to create community involvement and cohesion. 'Projects' can involve both adults and children. For example, painting murals can brighten up the neighbourhood and murals can incorporate a positive 'theme' for the community.
- Findings may be used to promote funding for art-making programmes in treatment facilities and communities.

5.4.2 Recommendations for teachers and schools

- The findings of this study can be implemented in the school curriculum, with more focus given to the arts in support of learning.
- Workshops can be presented to principals and deputy principals introducing them to the benefits of art-making for their school on many levels, including learning development in all subjects, motivational murals around the school, implementing creative arts days at the end of each term, and team-building workshops for the staff.
- Workshops can be presented to art teachers to refresh their knowledge and understanding of the inherent qualities of the art-making process, as well as to enhance their knowledge of:
 - children's stages of development in relation to the art-making process,
 - how art-making can address and reinforce the positive qualities of each developmental stage, and
 - how art-making can enhance learning in each grade and subject.

5.4.3 Recommendations for universities

University–community partnerships can be implemented using the art-making process in communities. Psychology, social work, education and fine art students

can play a number of roles within their scope of practice. As part of a practicum module, students can give art-making workshops, hold art-making group therapy sessions and involve the adults in the community in skills-transfer workshops to equip them with the necessary art-making skills to produce an income through painting, sculpture, clay work, beading, mosaic work and crafts.

5.5 FUTURE RESEARCH

The researcher is of the opinion that a lot more research is needed into the art-making process. Future research could include the following:

- An investigation into the use of an art-making programme with adolescents living in a low socio-economic community.
- A more extensive study into the benefits of art-making on self-regulation with at-risk children in middle childhood, in terms of neuroplasticity.
- The use of art-making in enhancing learning across the curriculum.
- An investigation into the use of an art-making programme in poor communities in order to enhance community cohesion.
- Investigating the benefits of implementing mindfulness-based techniques with the art-making process with at-risk teenagers.
- An investigation into the use of the art-making process and journaling in terms of self-reflection, self-process and self-enhancement.

5.6 FINAL COMMENTS

The researcher asserts that this study provided insights into the benefits of the art-making process itself on awareness across a number of areas, including emotions, senses, self-efficacy and context. The researcher believes that this knowledge and the conclusions reached could be beneficial to those working with children of all ages and in all institutions. Furthermore, the researcher believes that this study offers a platform from which to investigate the many levels and benefits of the art-making process itself in more detail, and hopes that the study can be put to good use in order to make a difference to all children.

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ADDENDUM A – LETTER OF PERMISSION FROM WCED



WESTERN CAPE Education Department

Provincial Government of the Western Cape

RESEARCH

Audrey.wyngaard2@pgwc.gov.za

tel: +27 021 476 9272

Fax: 0865902282

Private Bag x9114, Cape Town, 8000

wced.wcape.gov.za

REFERENCE: 20120104-0016

ENQUIRIES: Dr A T Wyngaard

Ms Maria Rousseau
North-West University
Private Bag X6001
Potchefstroom

Dear Ms Maria Rousseau

RESEARCH PROPOSAL: USING THE ART-MAKING PROCESS TO FACILITATE INTERNAL EMOTIONAL AWARENESS IN CHILDREN FROM A LOW SOCIO-ECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT

Your application to conduct the above-mentioned research in schools in the Western Cape has been approved subject to the following conditions:

1. Principals, educators and learners are under no obligation to assist you in your investigation.
2. Principals, educators, learners and schools should not be identifiable in any way from the results of the investigation.
3. You make all the arrangements concerning your investigation.
4. Educators' programmes are not to be interrupted.
5. The Study is to be conducted from **01 February 2012 till 30 March 2012**
6. No research can be conducted during the fourth term as schools are preparing and finalizing syllabi for examinations (October to December).
7. Should you wish to extend the period of your survey, please contact Dr A.T Wyngaard at the contact numbers above quoting the reference number.
8. A photocopy of this letter is submitted to the principal where the intended research is to be conducted.
9. Your research will be limited to the list of schools as forwarded to the Western Cape Education Department.
10. A brief summary of the content, findings and recommendations is provided to the Director: Research Services.
11. The Department receives a copy of the completed report/dissertation/thesis addressed to:
**The Director: Research Services
Western Cape Education Department
Private Bag X9114
CAPE TOWN
8000**

We wish you success in your research.

Kind regards.

Signed: Audrey T Wyngaard

for: **HEAD: EDUCATION**

DATE: 05 January 2012

ADDENDUM B – LETTER OF PARTICIPATION TO PARENTS



Tel: 021 8643593
Faks: 021 8642654

14 March 2012

FACILITATING AWARENESS IN CHILDREN FROM A LOW SOCIO-ECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT USING THE ART PROCESS

You are hereby asked to give consent for your child to participate in a research study conducted by Maria Rousseau from the School for Psychosocial Behavioural Sciences at North-West University.

Your child was selected as a possible participant in this study because she/he is in the Intermediate Phase of a Primary School where the research will take place. Consent will be obtained from your child before the start of the study.

1. REASON FOR THE STUDY

The researcher is completing her Masters in Psychology and as part of the requirements has to do a research study. This study aims to explore the kinds of awareness that may be facilitated through the art-making process. The researcher hopes to empower teachers and social workers to understand and support the children that they work with.

2. PROCEDURES

If you give consent for your child to participate in this study, he/she will be asked to do the following:

- take part in 5 group art-making activities
- be asked a list of questions about his/her experiences of the process, in a group

- these sessions will be recorded.

3. POTENTIAL RISKS

The study will make use of interviews to explore the kinds of awareness that your child may feel. There is the possibility that your child may feel uncomfortable to share information, therefore he/she will be given a choice as to what information he/she wants to share. Should your child experience any discomfort during any of the interview sessions, the researcher can organise for your child to receive necessary support. Your child may also withdraw at any stage of the study.

4. PAYMENT FOR PARTICIPATION

Participants will not receive money for participating in the research.

5. CONFIDENTIALITY

Any information that is obtained about your child in this study will be kept **confidential and private** and will be used only with your consent. Confidentiality will be maintained as your child's name will not be disclosed. The information that is received will be kept safe and stored in a locked file on the researcher's personal computer, which is protected by a password known only to the researcher.

The researcher's supervisor at the associated university will have access to the information and this information will be stored in a locked cabinet at the Centre of Child Youth and Family Studies in Wellington. Interviews with the participants will be videoed for reference purposes and will be destroyed once the research is complete.

The final research report will be published at North-West University.

6. PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL

Your child can choose if he/she wants to take part in the study or not. If he/she wishes to take part, he/she may withdraw at any time without any consequences. He/she may also refuse to answer questions he/she does not wish to answer, but still remain in the study. The researcher may withdraw your child from the study if any circumstances arise that warrant doing so. Your signature as well as your child's

verbal assent will show that you have agreed for your child to participate in this study.

7. IDENTIFICATION OF RESEARCHER

If you have any questions or concerns about the study, please feel free to contact the researcher, Maria Rousseau, by telephone (082 8716180) or email (maria.rousseau@telkomsa.net), or contact the researcher's supervisor, Issie Jacobs, at 021 864 3593.

8. RIGHTS OF RESEARCH SUBJECTS

You may withdraw your consent at any time without penalty. If you or your child has any questions regarding his/her rights as a research participant, contact Ms Rousseau or Mrs Jacobs.

PLEASE SIGN THE ATTACHED FORM AND RETURN TO SCHOOL AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.

MANY THANKS FOR YOUR TIME AND SUPPORT

ADDENDUM C – CONSENT FORM TO PARENTS

PLEASE SIGN AND RETURN TO SCHOOL ASAP

I (*legal guardian*) _____ have read and understand the above information. I (*legal guardian*) _____ am in command of this language. I (*legal guardian*) _____ was given the opportunity to ask questions and these questions were answered to my satisfaction.

I (*legal guardian*) _____ hereby give my consent for my child (*participant*) _____ to participate in this study and for the sessions to be recorded. I have been given a copy of this form.

Name of Legal Guardian

_____ **Date:** _____
Signature of Legal Guardian

ADDENDUM D – EXPLANATION OF ART-MAKING SESSIONS – FOCUS GROUPS

- **Session one – tree**

(Mixed media: paint, drawing, use of texture, collage)

- Imagine you are a tree: make use of any provided art materials to express who you are in any way you choose.

- **Session two – free play**

(Clay: including water and clay implements)

- Just play with the clay freely, experimenting with the water and the clay implements.
- Create anything from the clay.

- **Session three – emotion masks**

(Paper plates and mixed media: paint, crayons, collage)

- Create a face for your mask that expresses an emotion.

- **Session four – paper bag representing outside and inside**

(Paper bags and mixed media: paint, crayons and collage)

- Imagine you are the bag.
- Create the outside (what you show to the world: likes, dislikes, etc.) and then create the inside (your feelings).

- **Session five – self portrait**

(Mixed media: paint, crayons and magazines)

- Create a picture of yourself to show who you are, using all or any of the materials provided.

ADDENDUM E – EXPLANATION OF ART-MAKING SESSIONS – INDIVIDUAL

- **Participant one – feelings circle**

(Mixed media: paint, drawing, collage)

- Draw a large circle on paper.
- The page represents you, filled with emotions and thoughts.
- In the middle of the circle are feelings deep inside you.
- Outside the circle are feelings you show to the world.
- Create a page of yourself showing the different emotions (inside the circle and outside of the circle), using all or any of the materials provided.

- **Participant two – free play**

(Clay: including water and clay implements)

- Just play with the clay freely, experimenting with the water and the clay implements.
- Create anything from the clay.

- **Participant three – free play**

(Same as participant two)

- **Participant four – picture of an animal**

(Drawing and/or paint)

- Imagine you are an animal. What are you?
- Draw/paint your animal.

ADDENDUM F – INTERVIEW SCHEDULES FOR FOCUS GROUPS – Sessions 1 to 5

Focus group 1

- How are you all feeling now that you have finished your artwork?
- How was it for you to create your tree?
 - What made it feel fun, nice? What was it about the paint/drawing that you enjoyed? (Probing question)
 - Can you remember what you were doing in your picture when you felt happy/sad, etc.? (Probing question)
- Tell me about how the paint feels on your fingers.
 - What thoughts were in your head when you did this? (Probing question)
- When you were doing the art, what did you notice? What thoughts did you have in your head?

Focus group 2

- How are you all feeling now that you have finished your artwork?
- How was it for you to work with the clay?
 - What made it feel fun, nice? What was it about the clay that you enjoyed? Tell me more. (Probing question)
 - Can you remember what you were doing to the clay when you felt happy/sad, etc.? Did the group feel the same? (Probing question)
 - Tell me about the feeling of the clay on your fingers. (Probing question)
 - What did it feel like when you smoothed the clay? Poked it? Roughed it? Put water on it? (Probing questions)
 - What thoughts were in your head when you did this? (Probing question)
 - What was it like for you to work with the water and the tools? (Probing question)
- When you were working with the clay, what did you notice? What thoughts did you have in your head?

Focus group 3

- How are you all feeling now that you have finished your artwork?
- How was it for you to make the masks?
 - What made it feel fun, nice? What was it about the sticking/painting that you enjoyed? (Probing question)
 - Can you tell me what you were doing to the mask when you felt happy/sad etc.? (Probing question)
- Tell me about the expression on your mask.
- When you were working on your mask, what did you notice? What thoughts did you have in your head?

Focus group 4

- How are you all feeling now that you have finished your artwork?
- How was it for you to make the bags?
 - What made it feel fun, nice? What was it about the sticking/drawing that you enjoyed? (Probing question)
 - Can you remember what you were doing to the bag when you felt happy/sad, etc.? (Probing question)
- Tell me about your bag.
- When you were working on your bag, what did you notice? What thoughts did you have in your head?

Focus group 5

- How are you all feeling now that you have finished your artwork?
- How was it for you to make the self-portraits?
 - What made it feel fun, nice? What was it about the sticking/drawing that you enjoyed? (Probing question)
 - Can you remember what you were doing to your self-portrait when you felt happy/sad, etc.? (Probing question)
- Tell me about your self-portrait.
- When you were working on your self-portrait, what did you notice? What thoughts did you have in your head?

ADDENDUM G – INTERVIEW SCHEDULES FOR INDIVIDUALS – 1 TO 4

Individual 1

- How was it for you to make the feelings circle? *Hoe was dit vir jou om die gevoelenssirkel to maak?*
 - (What made it fun/difficult? *Wat presies was pretvol/moeilik?*
 - How was it to use the watery paint? *Hoe was dit vir jou om die waterige verf te gebruik?*) – probing questions
- What thoughts did you notice in your head as you did your artwork? *Watter gedagtes het jy in jou kop gedink toe jy jou kunswerk gedoen het?*

Individuals 2 & 3

- How was it for you to work with the clay? *Hoe was dit vir jou om met die klei te werk?*
 - (What made it feel fun, nice? *Wat presies was lekker vir jou?*) – probing question
 - (Tell me about the feeling of the clay on your fingers. *Vertel my van die gevoel van die klei op jou vingers.*
 - What did it feel like when you smoothed the clay? Poked it? Roughed it? Put water on it? *How was dit vir jou om die klei glad te maak? Te steek? Rof te maak?*
 - What was it like for you to work with the water and the tools? *Hoe was dit vir jou om met die water en die gereedskappe te werk?*) – probing questions
- What thoughts did you notice in your head as you worked with the clay? *Watter gedagtes het jy in jou kop gedink toe met die klei gewerk het?*

Individual 4

- How was it for you to draw and paint? *Hoe was dit vir jou om te teken en te verf?*
- What did you notice when you were drawing and painting? *Terwyl jy geteken het, wat het jy opgemerk?*

- (Tell me about the art materials that you used. *Vertel my van die kunsmateriale wat jy gebruik het.*
- Tell me about the colours that you used. *Vertel my van die kleure wat jy gebruik het.*) – probing questions
- What thoughts did you notice in your head as you did your artwork? *Watter gedagtes het jy in jou kop gedink toe jy jou kunswerk gedoen het?*) – probing question