

PART ONE: SETTING THE SCENE FOR THE RESEARCH AND INTRODUCING THE THESIS

1. BEGINNINGS

Philosophy is said to begin in wonder and end in understanding. Art departs from what has been understood and ends in wonder. (Dewey, 1934/2005, p. 281)

Art matters. Children matter. It is my belief that how children experience art matters. It is these basic tenets that drive my current concerns with understanding how young children experience art in their homes, and in early childhood centres and schools. It is also my belief that an appreciation of the ways in which real children experience art will assist teachers and parents in building positive relationships with children based on co-construction and respect. This research, which was undertaken with four young Australian children over approximately one year, aimed to access and make sense of children's perspectives of their art experiences. In this chapter I will contextualise the project by presenting a narrative of my own art experiences and consider how these were re-experienced through this current research. These discussions conclude with an outline of the overall structure of this thesis.

Beginnings remembered and re-experienced

My art experiences

In 2003 I wrote in an exhibition catalogue that "I do not remember a time when I did not paint." Some of my earliest childhood memories are of painting and it is true to say that art is an integral part of who I am as a person. In my adult life, I do not claim celebrity status as an artist, teacher or researcher although I embrace these three roles in life. The ways in which I experience the visual arts has enriched my life, influenced how I experience my physical and social worlds, how I interact with people, react to

objects and make sense of places and spaces. My positive experiences of art¹ have fuelled my drive to help others to experience art in positive ways. Therefore, this doctoral research is a sincere attempt to re-present children's perspectives on art experiences so that people like me, who have a pedagogic interest in art and early childhood, can make empathetic connections between these children's stories and their own pedagogical experiences. I believe that such connections will help educators to scrutinize, refine and improve pedagogy in ways that benefit children in terms of their art education and other learning contexts.

Broadly speaking, I believe that people experience art in complex ways at individual, social and cultural levels. I regard art as a core human experience that adds greater depth and meaning to life's experiences through conscious use of mind, body, spirit and physical resources. As such, art experience is an integration of artistic processes and artistic outcomes. I also see art as an essentially human interaction with one's environment that all people are capable of, to various degrees, when human and physical conditions are conducive to expressive acts. As such, I concur with Ellen Dissanayake's (1992) assertion that art is 'as normal, natural and necessary as other things that people do' (p. 33). From these perspectives, to neglect children's educational experiences of art is to undermine the basic rights of humans to embrace and expand their lives through the arts.

Art education

My personal history of art education is not so much one of formal education as it is of life's experiences. I have been involved in art education all of my remembered life – as a young child who loved art, as the 'arty' one amongst friends and family, as a tertiary student, classroom teacher, art specialist, advisor to schools, parent, lecturer, researcher and artist. While I had supportive family and talented art lecturers during my undergraduate teaching degree my formal art education was scant as I had no opportunity to specialize in art at secondary or tertiary levels. My lack of formal education in art and art history impacted on my subsequent experiences as an art educator and researcher. From a negative perspective, a lack of historical knowledge made it difficult for me to recognize links between contemporary and historical art practices. The absence of formal art training, however, also facilitated an understanding of children's art that was not formally socialized and filtered through the institutionalized Western

1 In this thesis I refer to the visual arts as 'art', while 'the arts' encompasses several arts disciplines including art, music, poetry, drama, dance etc.

histories of art education. Therefore, like the majority of generalist teachers within early childhood and primary school sectors, my understanding of children's art has been derived from personal experiences and from dominant discourses as they related to childhood, art and education. In this respect I have started within the landscape that makes up the practices and beliefs about children's art experiences. However, in order to gain a more conscious understanding of the evolving attitudes, beliefs and practices associated with children's art experience I have explored historical perspectives and scrutinized theories, research and literature about children's art, art education and art experiences (Richards, 2007a). I expand on this in the next chapter.

Art education research

This research is my second significant investigation into young children's experiences of art. The first was a Master of Education thesis that focused on children's drawing self-efficacy (Richards, 2003b, 2009b). That research was sparked by my unease with the commonly held view that children showed artistic decline around age eight, and that adults' negative messages were implicit in this trend. Therefore, I stepped back from dominant adult perspectives and investigated children's self-beliefs about drawing and how these related to messages given and received. While this research is discussed in more depth in the next chapter, the point I will make here is that it also highlighted issues needing further investigation. For example, my observations mirrored other research that revealed that despite moves towards sociocultural teaching approaches, such as scaffolding learning (Berk & Winsler, 1995) and teacher-child co-constructions (Jordan, 2003, 2004), teachers were often hesitant to interact with young children engaged in art activities (Gunn, 2000; Kindler, 1996; Lewis, 1998/99; McArdle & Piscitelli, 2002; Visser, 2006, 2010). In order to be more conversant with the historical circumstances, ideas and practices that have impacted on early childhood art pedagogy, in the next two chapters I will critically review some relevant literature and consider theoretical frameworks that are pertinent to my understanding young children's art experiences as explored through this thesis.

In my earlier research, in addition to puzzling the adult-child relationships, I was aware of how early childhood and school settings provided children with different experiences of physical spaces, social interactions and pedagogic practices. For example, the change in physical environments from early childhood to school settings was accompanied by changes in concepts and constructs of time, space, how children interacted with others, free choice activities, and teaching and learning practices based

on different curricula (Richards, 2003b). I wondered, as that research concluded, how the youngest participants would adapt to the new ways of being schoolchildren, and how the transition would impact on their drawing self-efficacy and their experiences of art.

During the self-efficacy research, in the early childhood setting I was aware of the varying degrees of absorption that individual children showed in their art activities, the types of language they used and their ways of socially interacting through art. These facets of experience varied between children and, to a lesser extent, for one child over a number of artmaking episodes. Upon reflection I categorized children's engagement in art activities under the three broad headings of non-art outcome/goal; basic attention to art outcome; art outcome and art-related interactions as their main goal. At that time, these observations and basic analysis fell outside of the research focus and I felt ill-equipped to analyze them rigorously. Having identified that I lacked the necessary theoretical framework to scrutinize how children *experienced* art, in this current research I looked to some of the art philosophies that considered art as experience and in particular to the writing of John Dewey (1934/2005).

Understanding children's transition between early childhood and school settings in relation to art experience was also important to me as I developed university level units on art education. However, I was aware of gaps in the literature and research that tracked children's experiences over time as they moved through time and experience between home, early childhood and school settings. This was also an emerging interest in early childhood art research and, as I began my field work, some England-based research was published (Anning & Ring, 2004; Ring, 2003). This research, which will be discussed in the next chapter, provided some insights into specific children's experiences across multiple environments. However, unlike the current thesis, the children's voices and perspectives were not central to the data collection or analysis.

Exploring my place within the landscape

Preceding the official start of my doctoral research my pedagogical beliefs and practices were informed by Vygotskian inspired sociocultural-historical theories and the work arising from these (for example, Berk & Winsler, 1995; Bodrova & Leong, 1996; Daniels, 2001; S. Edwards, 2003; Moll, 2000; Rogoff, 1998; Wells, 2000; Wink & Putney, 2002). However, as I undertook a more in-depth look at the literature, research and theory related to children's art, such as the work of Brooks (2002b), Moran and John-Steiner (2002) and Lindqvist (2003), I became increasingly interested in reading the

translated works of Vygotsky (1925, 1931, 1933, 1960, 1978, 1986/1934; 1934). As such Vygotsky's work informed much of my earlier doctoral work and was influential in my approaches to working with children and my choice of research methodologies. An overview of Vygotskian perspectives, as I see them relating to early childhood art, is provided in the next chapter. Also, as seen in Chapter 3, as the research generated increasingly complex and rich data, I expanded my theoretical understanding of the children's art experiences by drawing on John Dewey's philosophies on *Art as Experience* (1934/2005). While these theoretical frameworks are important I am also mindful of honoring the children's perspectives as those of real people, in real contexts, leading real lives. To this end I have structured the findings chapters around their narratives as re-presented through their comments, photographs, artworks and interactions with me and others and through some links back to the relevant literature where I considered that this further illuminated the children's experiences.

In the next chapter I investigate and discuss research and literature in the field of early childhood art and in doing so generate an image of the landscape of early childhood art. I have used the visual metaphor of the landscape in two senses here – as in a landscape painting, and as in one's physical and social being within a time and place. I will explain this further.

Viewing the landscape

When a landscape painting is viewed, it is observed and sensed as a whole. However, such a painting does not issue forward as a complete unit, but rather through a series of transformative processes as ideas and materials synthesize into one. As an artist I create a painting by laying down layers of paint, which I think of as 'layers of information', until a satisfying visual effect is created that feels replete with my intended feeling and meaning. There is also a less conscious saturation of meaning as my cultural and personal identity is played out through the art media. Therefore, just as a single painting may have many layers, so too can it be part of a series of interconnected art experiences and artworks. Understanding how a single painting relates to a larger body of work can often bring a greater understanding of both what is unique and what is common about this artwork and about the artist. The same can be said for understanding a research project, report or event.

Returning to the landscape painting - each viewing of a particular painting may reveal similar understandings of the theme and content, but a person's reactions and impressions change with time and experience. For those who paint, scrutinizing one's

own work generates a form of inner dialogue with the artwork, as the painting prompts recall of the actual experience of painting, while simultaneously adding to the narrative of the painting as new experiences bring new perspectives. From my personal perspective, this evolving artist-artwork narrative leads to innovations to my artworks, production of new artworks and reflections on life as lived. Research in which children commented on their drawings also revealed a 'fluidity and flexibility of children's meaning making' (Einarsdottir, Dockett, & Perry, 2009, p. 219) as drawings generated different comments, or comments generated different drawings. Cox (2005) regarded such transformations as 'central to what a child is quite intentionally engaged in when drawing – the process of decoding and encoding meaning' (p. 123). Furthermore, viewing one's own artwork is not unlike the narrative inquirer's dual research process of inquiry about the experience and being part of the experience (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). This approach to narrative inquiry is discussed in more detail in Chapter 4.

Connecting with visual images has always been an integral part of how I make sense of my experiences. For example, in 2006 when I moved from New Zealand to Australia to work on my doctoral research, as an artist, one of the ways I made sense of my new geographic environment was through painting a series of landscape paintings – both of Australia and of New Zealand. The experience of painting the Australian rural landscape was especially intimate when I painted on location. By painting the landscapes while in the landscape (where I experienced the strong sun, intense heat and ever-present flies) I became part of it and of the social environment. Therefore, although these paintings were primarily of the physical landscape the memories they invoke include memories of people, events, talk, sounds and laughter. Looking at these paintings also brings a remembered sense of body - the stance I held, the movement of hands, the smell of the paints and scent of the eucalyptus. All these things are part of the art experience and the experience of art.

Painting a landscape that was familiar to an Australian friend also brought her new experience as she looked at the familiar through another person's artistic interpretation. Subsequent interactions between artist and viewer transformed the way I experienced the act of painting and the way I viewed the landscape. Also, experiencing the red-brown, flat, dry and vast Australian landscape had the effect of making the familiar New Zealand landscapes newly-strange. For example, when I briefly returned to New Zealand I experienced fresh realisation of colours, light, lushness and forms in what I had regarded as familiar landscapes. These new realisations I later transformed into a series

of paintings. So, while a landscape painting may be viewed and sensed as a whole, it is a creation with historical and temporal dimensions as both the artist and materials transform and past experience is integrated with new experience.

Within this research my personal art experiences, past teaching and theoretical perspectives helped me to forge a degree of intersubjectivity with the child participants and to engage in sensitive interactions and dialogues with them. Also, making the familiar newly-strange was part of my ways of working as an artist and as a researcher. As I recognized how past experiences related to current experiences I explored and challenged what I, and others in my field, have regarded as familiar or unquestionable about young children's art experiences. As I crafted a written narrative of the contemporary landscape of attitudes and beliefs about children's art, I also attempted to understand this landscape as part of a series of transformative processes involving various people, times and places. Like the artist, those who have been involved in forming aspects of the early childhood art landscape (such as children, teachers, researchers, parents and philosophers) have brought diverse dimensions of experience to it – just as I have done when interpreting their opinions, actions, research and writing.

Inhabiting the landscape

There is a second way in which I consider the landscape and this is the sense people have of where they are on the physical landscape, the places they physically and socially populate, their social connections and interactions and their sense of belonging and being part of something bigger than themselves. This is an environment with geographical and built features as well as human features, history, culture and a sense of the future. As such, this landscape is more than just a backdrop or stage for human activity - it can be sensed, and has emotive, social, cognitive, and spiritual qualities.

It can be difficult to make sense of where and how we are situated in a landscape by simply looking around us. However, like the cognitive equivalent of zooming out on Google Earth², stepping back from our immediate environment gives us a clearer view and sense of the surrounding landscape. This viewing can be emotive – such as that I felt when 'googling' my daughter's new home in New Zealand. I found her home by

² Google Earth is a three-dimensional, visual representation of Earth based on the superimposition of images from a variety of sources (<http://earth.google.com>).

beginning with a broad view based on my recognition of cities and landmarks. I then drew on past experience and navigated my way to the small township, literally 'driving' my cursor along highways in an effort to locate her rural address. Once there, I excitedly zoomed in and out, getting a sense of where she lived and where I lived in relation to her. This was also an emotional experience, as I had not visited her home, but having now 'seen' it we had a new socially shared focal point for our conversations. Connecting with visual images was an integral part of how I made sense of my experiences and my relationship to others in the past, and the Google Earth images were far more emotionally satisfying than the street maps I poured over when my daughter lived in London.

The literature and research 'evidence' I will share about children's art is not unlike the montage of photographic evidence that makes up Google Earth. The research data was generated at specific times and places, and as I zoomed out I saw patterns of information clusters and gaps. While I could fill the gaps with more current images, one could only surmise what these areas may have looked like in the past or how future images may differ from current ones. My investigation of the literature, as presented next, also zooms out to see patterns of information and to expose gaps in our understanding of children's art experiences. And, in the findings chapters, this viewing refocuses to zoom in on specific children's art experiences in authentic contexts. Like the aesthetic experience of viewing a landscape painting, or the emotive response to connecting mother and daughter through visual technology, I hope that the visual and verbal narratives of the young children's art experiences will add some new perspectives to the landscape of early childhood art education and experience.

Introducing the thesis structure

This thesis has three main parts that comprise thirteen chapters. The first part, which sets the scene for the research, has begun with an 'autobiographically orientated narrative' (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 41) associated with the research focus. In Chapter 2 relevant literature, research and theories are reviewed and in the third chapter, John Dewey's (1934/2005) philosophies on art as experience are carefully discussed as a theoretical framework for this research. Chapter 4 deals with research methodologies as I discuss my research paradigm, research methods, the development of positive research relationships and ethical practices, data analysis and interpretation.

Part Two, which concerns the data and discussion generated from the first phase of the research fieldwork, begins by introducing the home and preschool settings. This is followed by four chapters that present each child's art experiences at home and preschool: Chapter 5 focuses on Lee; Chapter 6 on Lilly, Chapter 7 on Sophie, and Chapter 8 on Jackson. In Chapter 9, Deweyan perspectives are revisited in light of the children's art experiences explored thus far.

Part Three begins with a preface in which the schools and some the types of art activities are described. Chapter 10 then focuses on Lee's home and school art experiences; Chapter 11 on Lilly and Sophie, and Chapter 12 on Jackson. Finally, in Chapter 13, I pull together some insights gained from this research and present some recommendations and implications for pedagogical practice. Suggestions are also made for further research and an overview of the contributions, strengths and limitations of this research are discussed.

2. EARLY CHILDHOOD ART: LITERATURE, RESEARCH AND THEORY

My personal history as an artist, teacher and researcher underpins my interest in the way young children experience art. The ways in which I make sense of young children's art experiences have also been tempered by both my New Zealand and Australian experiences. Many of the issues that I identified in earlier writing and research about young children's art experiences in New Zealand, such as teacher attitudes and children's self-efficacy beliefs (Richards, 2003b, 2009b), have resonated with my Australia-based research experiences. Furthermore, Australian-New Zealand early childhood research communities have strengthened over recent years and been extended through joint conferences and through joint publications (for example, Keesing-Styles & Hedges, 2007). Of particular interest to some researchers has been the way Vygotskian inspired sociocultural theories have prompted a re-think of taken-for-granted educational practices (Fleer, 2005) and a shift away from 'developmental theory as a basis for curriculum planning' (Nuttall & Edwards, 2007, p. 9). In general, within a sociocultural perspective children are regarded as being born into social and cultural worlds that have defined and evolving histories. As such, a child's growth and development is understood in relation to a child's participation within, and skills and knowledge relative to, his or her community, rather than on the basis of universal descriptions of development (Nuttall & Edwards, 2007).

Likewise, children's art experiences can be understood in relation to the social, cultural and historical narratives that inform children's personal and social lives. Much of the literature that draws on these theories refers to 'sociocultural' theory and when referencing the work of others I have done likewise. However, I believe that it is important to recognize the temporal dimensions of this approach. For, as Cole and Scribner (1978) noted,

Not only does every phenomenon have its history, but this history is characterized by changes both qualitative (changes in form and structure and basic characteristics) and quantitative. Vygotsky used this line of reasoning to explain the transformation of elementary psychological processes into complex ones. (p. 7)

Therefore, in this thesis I have also used the term 'sociocultural-historical' with regards to my understanding of Vygotskian perspectives.

I came to this research with a firm belief that teaching and learning is enhanced when educators adopt sociocultural-historical perspectives to pedagogy and when teacher-learner relationships promote co-construction. My own understanding of sociocultural-historical theories has been informed by the translated writings of Vygotsky (1925, 1931, 1933, 1960, 1986/1934; 1934) with a particular focus on his work *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes* (1978) and *Thought and language* (1962/1934).

In order to shed light on children's art experiences from a sociocultural-historical perspective, and to be more aware of my own history as an art educator, the following discussion scrutinizes, across various times and places, the literature, research, and theories associated with early childhood art. In particular, I journey those paths that formed the historical foundations for my current focus on children's art experiences in their homes, early childhood centres and schools. Although I am not a skilled historian, I have attempted to address sociocultural-historical perspectives by considering the circumstances in which ideas and practices developed. In the service of comprehension some attempt has been made to run a timeline through the discussion, but it is not strictly chronological, for to do so would be to ignore the flow and ebb of related ideas and philosophies. As this chapter reveals snapshots of history, these are collaged together to give some sense of the layers of meanings that have informed contemporary early childhood art education and research.

Mapping historical landscapes of early childhood art

Historical Beginnings

While children's art, artistic development and art experiences are of interest to educators and researchers in the 21st century, this has not always been the case. Indeed, childhood has not always been regarded as a distinct life stage. For example, in medieval times very young children participated in adult society and through to contemporary times child involvement in adult activities has varied across geographical and cultural contexts (Rogoff & Angelillo, 2003; Rogoff, Paradise, Arauz, Correa-Chavez, & Angelillo, 2003). Therefore, 'childhood' is a social construction within a cultural-historical context (Graue & Walsh, 1998).

Concepts of childhood have influenced many social practices, beliefs and attitudes. For example, 17th century families regarded their young children as innocent

and in need of protection. At the same time, from religious perspectives, they were seen as born into original sin, corruptible and in need of guidance. This angel-demon dichotomy has echoed in on-going debates about child-centred learning and adult-directed teaching (Leeds, 1989) and in nature versus nurture models on artistic development (Gardner, 1982).

Historically, as early philosophers and educationalists focused on childhood as an important life stage, specific aspects of children's experiences attracted interest. For example, in England, John Locke (1632-1704) proposed that at birth a child's mind was a blank slate that was filled through experience (Locke, 1690/2004) and Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778), of Geneva, considered stages of childhood in relation to pedagogical practice (Rousseau, 1762/1979). However, children's art was not given serious consideration until many decades later when Swiss artist and educator Rodolphe Töpffer (1799-1846) proposed that children's art displayed their intentional thoughts and had inherent aesthetic qualities. Töpffer's essays, written between 1827 and 1843 and published posthumously, noted that children used both imitation and creative concepts in their art (Leeds, 1989). He recognized that while children were influenced by their physical and social environments, which manifested as imitation in their art, they also took and created new meanings through their art and thus their creative tendencies prevailed over their imitative ones. This recognition of the interplay of social influences and personal creative agency resonates with my sociocultural-historical perspectives.

The way in which Töpffer understood children's art, and his reluctance to publish his work widely during his lifetime, was likely tempered by his own experiences as a teacher and artist. He was a comic artist and 'fearful of damaging his reputation as a respectable schoolmaster, he held back publication of his works for several years, preferring instead to circulate them privately' (Mainardi, 2007, para 2). With regards to children's drawings Töpffer proposed that although they were often 'rough and crude' children's drawings resulted from their thoughtful intentions and deliberations (Töpffer, 1847, cited in Leeds, 1989, p. 98). Indeed, Töpffer saw children's spontaneous creative inventions as closer to the expression of great artists than were the artwork of artists who displayed mere conventional skills (Wilson, 2004). Although his work was widely read in Europe during the second half of the 1800s, Töpffer's respect for children's drawings was not embraced by the art world at that time.

Nevertheless, in the late 19th century, a growing interest in childhood, coupled with moves away from romantic notions of art, proved fertile ground for theories of children's

artistic development. For example, Italian aesthete Corrado Ricci (1858-1934) collected and studied more than one thousand drawings from children in Bologna primary schools. He focused on children's use of logic when drawing and concluded that they drew what they saw as important and made 'with signs the same sort of description that they would make with words' (Ricci, 1887, cited in Leeds, 1989, p. 97). Ricci, and American aesthete John Ruskin (1819-1900), both believed that children's participation in art activities should be voluntary, and that teachers should offer general support but not contradict children's ways of perception through art (Ricci, 1887; Ruskin, 1891).

Around the same time, English psychologist James Sully (1842-1923) theorised about childhood and children's art in relation to the 'civilized' adult world. Sully (1896) stated, 'as we all know, the lowest races of mankind stand in close proximity to the animal world. The same is true of the infants of civilised races' (p. 5). As established aesthetic codes then valued noble themes, perfection and beauty, he believed that 'at no stage in this child-art can we find what we should regard as elements of artistic value; yet it has its quaint and suggestive side' (Sully, 1896, cited in Leeds, 1989, pp. 96-97). Despite such disregard for children's artistic acumen, his published work, *Studies of Childhood* (1896), marked him as the first psychologist to 'discover the meaning of scribbling' (Michael & Morris, 1984, p. 104). Furthermore, when his work was published in Russian, Lev Vygotsky (1896-1934) endorsed Sully's notion that, rather than striving for representation in their drawings, children were 'much more symbolists than naturalists and are in no way concerned with complete and exact similarity' (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 112). However, Vygotsky's work was not influential outside of Russia at that time as it remained within Russian archives until the 1960s.

20th Century Landscapes

In the early 20th century, the notion that children's art provided insights into their thoughts and feelings generated an interest in the taxonomy of children's art. Children's drawings were often classified according to the child's gender and cultural background, and analysis yielded theories of artistic development and competencies. For example, Georg Kerschensteiner (1852-1934) studied artistic ability based on about 300,000 drawings from 85,000 Munich school children (Kerschensteiner, 1905). Amongst other features, Kerschensteiner examined spatial relationships in drawings and concluded that boys were more competent at drawing than girls (Tuman, 1999).

Within the art world, idealistic aesthetic and academic standards had previously excluded serious consideration of child art. However, when the modernist art movements of the early 20th century sought a new aesthetic order the avant-garde embraced the arts of indigenous peoples, peasants and children. Thus, children's art received renewed interest, and provided a source of inspiration for renowned artists such as Wassily Kandinsky and Paul Klee. Some artists collected children's drawings and copied them in much the same manner as they did the paintings of the masters (Pernoud, 2005). As the following discussion reveals, within the Western world, this valuing of the naive style of young children's drawings has endured.

There was also some synergy between art and educational communities when Austrian artist and educator Franz Cižek (1865-1946) exhibited his collection of children's art in a 1908 artists' show in Vienna. Through this event, children's art was elevated above the mere inspirational to artworks worthy of exhibition. Although this event was hailed as significant in changing attitudes towards children's art (Leeds, 1989), it was unlikely that the children's art was attributed back to the individuals who created them, or that the circumstances in which they created such art was acknowledged. Furthermore, the view that children's art was worthy of scrutiny in the art world was not held by all artists, then or now.

Cižek was also renowned for his Juvenile Art Class, which opened in 1897 and was under his direction for 40 years. He claimed to promote young children's natural unfolding talents and free expression, unencumbered by 'wrong' instruction such as vocational or technical training (Leeds, 1989). Cižek's beliefs, about children's natural artistic capabilities, the aesthetic qualities of children's art, and the role of teacher as protector, became widespread through his London-based *Exhibition of Children's Art* (1934-1935). His approaches to art education contrasted greatly with the rigid school environment of his time and provided an influential model for progressive art education movements. Interestingly, retrospective examination of Cižek's teaching styles revealed that, like many of his contemporaries in the child art movements, Cižek's guiding techniques and processes were highly directive (Michael & Morris, 1984; Wilson, 2004).

In terms of theories of artistic development one of the most influential earlier studies was that of Frenchman Georges-Henri Luquet (1876-1965). Luquet studied his daughter's drawings over a ten year period and proposed developmental stages based on a theory of internal mental models (Luquet, 1913, 1927). Luquet proposed that when children scribbled they made links between their spontaneous marks and known objects,

generating 'fortuitous realism'. This led on to deliberate mark-making, although inadequate skills produced 'failed realism'. According to Luquet, drawing developed to display three further characteristics. Firstly, 'synthetic incapacity' occurred where a child drew parts of a drawing in seemingly unrelated placement; secondly, 'intellectual realism' occurred when a child appeared to draw from an internal model rather than from visually available information; and thirdly, 'visual realism' developed when a child was able to draw visually accurate views.

Luquet's stages provided theoretical underpinnings for Florence Goodenough's (1926) drawing-based measurement of intelligence, later developed by Dale Harris (1963) into the draw-a-man test. Luquet's work also informed research into children's development of visual realism in drawings (Freeman & Janikoun, 1972) and although he never intended to create a stage theory (Jolley, 2010) his concepts of internal models were incorporated by Jean Piaget and Bärbel Inhelder (Piaget, 1928; Piaget & Inhelder, 1956) in their subsequent work that linked children's drawing behaviours to their cognitive development. More importantly, in terms of my research, Luquet (1927/2001) observed children's spontaneous art processes and discovered that children used a range of modes of representation that they, rather than adults, gave meaning to. He also generated a theory of duplicity of styles noting that 'children drew differently in schools where there were restrictions, than they did on fences and sidewalks where the situation was quite free' (Michael & Morris, 1984, p. 108). He believed that when a child felt as free to draw in the classroom as outside, then a positive teaching situation was realised (Luquet, 1913). Yet, Piaget and Inhelder's (1956) theories failed to adequately consider the organisational and procedural problems children encountered when drawing (Thomas & Silk, 1990) and artistic development was never central to their work.

Despite art research being subsumed and then marginalised by broader theories of cognitive development, the work of Ricci, Luquet, Cižek, and Sully were influential in the field of art education research and theory. For example, Austrian-born Viktor Lowenfeld (1903-1960) and British-based Herbert Read (1893-1968) expanded theories advocating children's individual self-expression and emotional release through art. They believed that artistic expression was crucial for healthy child development. Reacting to the social circumstances of their times and countries, they both appealed to psychoanalytical ideas in the development of healthy personal functioning. Interested in Freudian and Jungian theories, Read (1943) developed stylistic criteria for classifying introversion and extroversion facets of children's artwork. At that time, when England

was at war, such emotive appeals inspired enduring pedagogical practices based upon protecting children's natural creative impulses from repressive adult influences.

In America, Lowenfeld's work had a similar impact and was seen as the most influential on art education since World War II (Michael & Morris, 1984). Lowenfeld (1947, 1952) posited that each child had an innate creative impulse and that outside influences were detrimental to their creative and emotional wellbeing. He claimed that altering a child's creative output caused emotional and mental problems and, in the two editions of his book *Creative and mental growth* (1947, 1952), he used two case histories to substantiate his theory. He also claimed that children's use of colouring-in books inhibited creative development. Despite evidence suggesting that this claim was overstated (King, 1991) this notion is echoed in contemporary discourses about children's artistic creativity.

Lowenfeld built his theories upon 'European tradition of thought, research, and practice in art education' (Michael & Morris, 1986, p. 131). He lived and published in Vienna, England and America and his theories were extensive, persuasive and long-lasting. For example, by the end of the twentieth century Frances Derham's (1961) book, *Art for the child under seven*, was one of the most highly read Australian early childhood documents (Piscitelli, 2001). Adhering to Lowenfeld's philosophies, Derham (1961) claimed that children should not be urged beyond their natural developmental stage and that adult interference retarded and blocked mental progress. In New Zealand, similar philosophies have been expressed by early childhood educators when criticising school art activities (for example, McConnell, 2000).

A contemporary of Read and Lowenfeld was American philosopher John Dewey (1859-1952) who theorised about education and art (1916/1966, 1934/2005, 1938). Dewey believed that the fine arts and their processes were not isolated from everyday experience and he promoted authenticity of experience and inventiveness with materials. These philosophies, coupled with concepts of artistic self-expression (promoted by Cizdek, Read, Lowenfeld and others) came together to form 'progressive' education in which children's democratic rights and choices were encouraged within a structured, yet hands-off, teaching environment. Within this progressive model, art was seen as contributing towards social progress, but artistic expression was increasingly equated with individuality. As such, this progressive discourse often neglected 'the importance of the social aspects of art' that Dewey considered to be a 'vital part of artistic and aesthetic experience' (Freedman, 2001, p. 39). Dewey (1934/2005) also gave considerable

thought to the nature of art as experience. His theories and philosophies are central to this current thesis and are discussed in more depth in the next chapter.

Another influential academic in the field of children's art was Rudolph Arnheim (1904-2007) whose life and career spanned Germany, Italy, England and America. Combining an interest in the expressive qualities of children's art with Schaefer-Simmern's (1948) developmental theories, Arnheim (1956) focused on children's visual perception and visual thought. He proposed that children's drawings become progressively more complex and differentiated as they realized their drawing intentions and developed aesthetic sensitivity to their drawings.

His work provided the impetus for Rhoda Kellogg's (1969, 1979) collection, analysis and categorisation of vast numbers of children's drawings between 1948 and 1969. Kellogg classified drawings according to pattern and organisation and demonstrated how children's scribbles developed from undifferentiated forms to simple identifiable shapes. These outline shapes were superimposed to become 'combines' and over time progressed to representational drawings (Kellogg, 1969). This formalistic focus on aesthetic qualities of art in terms of elements (such as line) and principles (such as symmetry) appealed to modernist perspectives. However, such approaches to children's artistic development focused on drawing, ignored sociocultural-historical influences on children's artmaking experiences and emerged from the 'pseudo-scientific conception of aesthetics that developed in the late nineteenth and twentieth century at a time when science was gaining currency in application to all areas of social life' (Freedman, 2001, p. 36).

The move away from the expressive qualities of children's art towards the discernible graphic features of drawings coincided with a shift in America from child-centred to discipline-centred approaches to art education. Discipline-Based Art Education (DBAE), which comprised art-making, art criticism, art history and aesthetics (Eisner, 1987), provided a model for art curriculum development in many other countries including Australia, New Zealand, America and Canada. However, the policies and practices that were developed from these approaches were not necessarily welcomed, or indeed socially or culturally suitable for art education in the early years. In my own experience this resistance to the 'push-down' of curriculum was partly due to schools' foci on children meeting performance-based success criteria. Such approaches were often regarded, rightly or wrongly, as working against children's individuality, artistic expression and emotional well-being. Liora Bresler's (1992) research on the teaching of

art education in grades K-3 in three American elementary schools also revealed the 'incompatibility of teachers' views of art with the broader values and goals of the schools' (p. 397). Specifically, 'the open-endedness, self-expression, and creativity,' which teachers highlighted in their views of art, were 'incompatible with school's omnipresent practice of evaluation and the production of accountable results' (p. 411).

As earlier discussion has shown, these views of art have firm historical roots. Furthermore, several researchers have identified these beliefs as educational myths. For example, Elliot Eisner (1973-1974) claimed that, despite contradictory evidence, seven myths dominated art pedagogy in the 1970s. In general, these myths held that children developed best when provided with an extensive range of art materials and given emotional support by teachers who do not talk about, evaluate, or interfere in children's art in any way. The myths held that art education aimed to develop general creativity; that art processes were more important than products; and that children saw the world more clearly than adults. As such, it was argued that children's 'freshness and spontaneity of perception and production' was 'stifled' as children went through school (p. 14). Eisner cautioned that, before effective theory and practice could take place, art educators and researchers must examine their 'beliefs with all the clarity' they 'could muster' (p. 15).

Two decades later, Anna Kindler (1996) also recognized Canadian teachers' reluctance to embrace reform in art education. Acknowledging the complexity of theory-practice relationships she claimed that multiple and contradictory forces, related to educational myths, habits, research and policy, generated a form of professional paralysis for teachers. Kindler believed that educators often held to myths about child development in art and creativity; about natural development of artistic expression; about art processes being more important than outcomes, and about art activity being therapeutic and solitary. She pointed out that, although research seldom supported such myths, habits developed from personal experience informed art teaching practices. At that time, Kindler (1996) noted that Canadian-based early childhood curriculum documents (NAEYC, 1990) failed to recognize the artistic realm and that art education policies were inconsistent and divergent.

In terms of children's early art experiences, of particular interest to this current research is the commonly held view that their artistic expression peaks in early childhood and thereafter regresses. While I hold some scepticism about this claim, the notion can be traced to the modern art movement and to the association made between children's

unfettered artistic expression and their psychological wellbeing. Moreover, young children's drawings have been regarded as art because adult society has regarded them as such, rather than as a function of children's artistic development and expression (Korzenik, 1981, 1995). The notion of the rise and fall of children's natural artistic ability has permeated many aspects of childhood art literature. For example, in research into the significance of children's drawings Howard Gardner (1980) referred to young children's drawings as 'artful scribbles' but noted that older children were 'sinking into the doldrums of literalism' (p. 148). Similarly, Ellen Winner (1993) claimed that 'prior to the age of about seven, children make drawings' that had 'aesthetic properties similar to those of adult artists' works' while the drawings of older children were 'wooden and labored' (p. 32). Such views were based on the view that children experienced a U-shaped curve of artistic development (Gardner & Winner, 1982).

Jessica Davis (1991) claimed systematic evidence for the U-shaped curve when she asked artists to code 500 children's and adults' drawings for expression, by considering balance, line and composition. These drawings were collected from six groups, and results showed that drawings from children aged 5 scored similarly to that of adult and adolescent artists, while drawings of children aged 8 and 11 scored similarly to that of the non-artists' groups. However, the validity of this as a model of artistic development was challengeable. For example, Elizabeth Rosenblatt and Winner (1988) had previously shown that modernist aesthetics influenced artists' preferences for art of the youngest children, and when non-artist judges were presented with drawings from the same groups, they showed no preference.

Nevertheless, in advancing this argument for a U-shaped pattern of development, Davis and Gardner (1993) maintained that 'young children came to school exhibiting a certain form of mastery in symbolic representation that is all too frequently lost throughout the early years of schooling' and that 'the fact that most children do indeed stop drawing sometime in middle childhood is not debatable' (p. 193). However, sociocultural-historical perspectives prompt several challenges. Firstly, while this statement reflected findings from an extensive body of research (in Project Zero³, at Harvard University) the research was bound by the culture and time in which it was conducted and, as such, did not represent children in other cultures, societies or times.

³ Project Zero is an educational research group at Harvard University. Amongst other roles, its mission is to understand and enhance learning, thinking, and creativity in the arts at the individual and institutional levels <http://www.pz.harvard.edu/>.

Secondly, what constituted 'drawing' in the context of their research was not necessarily constant over other contexts or times. And lastly, to claim that their view was 'not debatable' was clearly unproductive for moving forward in art pedagogy and research.

While proponents of the U-shaped curve claimed that it represented a Western model of artistic development, in my opinion what it more clearly represented was the attitudes of a group of artists (socialised through Western art traditions) towards the art of young children. Also, while Davis arranged for the children's drawings to be judged, the children themselves were not visible, nor were their social and cultural contexts, drawing experiences or intentions recognized. As such this research focused on adult perspectives. Additionally, other research with children has shown that children often preferred older children's drawings over their own drawings (Rosenblatt & Winner, 1988), and that young children lacked full control over the aesthetic effects they produced (Reith, 1997; Rosenblatt & Winner, 1988). Moreover, Davis's research and similar appeals to modernist aesthetic values, contributed towards those areas previously identified as educational myths (Eisner, 1973-1974; Kindler, 1996) and did little to rouse early childhood teachers from professional paralysis with regards to art education.

Although I am critical of models of children's artistic development based entirely on adult's aesthetic preferences, such research has been 'stimulated by research in the "aesthetic" rather than the "deficiency" tradition' and an examination of children's drawings has been a 'means of understanding the child's artistic knowledge, rather than as a window on some other form of knowledge' (Rosenblatt & Winner, 1988, p. 4). Nevertheless, such approaches to aesthetic theory have focused largely on the qualities of the children's artworks, and the insights these provided about children's art knowledge. Other aesthetic research has focused on children's responses to artworks in terms of aesthetic preferences (McGhee & Dzuiban, 1993) and metaphoric understandings (Taunton, 1982). However, these discourses were largely framed through the art world and modern art discourses and have limited value in my current research. Therefore, more holistic concepts of aesthetic experience, as articulated through the seminal work of John Dewey will be discussed in the next chapter.

Signposts on contemporary landscapes of early childhood art

The history of early childhood art, as discussed up to this point, underpins the contemporary landscapes of early childhood art. As I have visualised my art research as part of the landscape I have 'looked around' and noticed the signposts that guided and influenced my journey. Some of these signposts indicated places that I travelled through and others that I have stopped at and inhabited as I considered implications for my own research. This section acknowledges those signposted landmarks. It begins with two significant events of the 20th century that roused professional interest in early childhood art education. These were the showcasing of Reggio Emilia early childhood approaches and the publication of Lev Vygotsky's work. While the former attracted a great deal of attention in educational practice, it was less influential on my current research than Vygotskian perspectives. For this reason I examine in more depth early childhood art education research developed around Vygotskian perspectives. I then describe some research-based insights into child-initiated art and purposes for art, teachers' attitudes towards children's art, children's self-beliefs about art and young children's art experiences across homes, early childhood and school settings.

Reggio Emilia

In the early 1970s, the local government of the small North Italian city of Reggio Emilia, under the guidance of Loris Malaguzzi, took responsibility for educating local children aged 3 months to 6 years. Twenty years on, prompted by American interests, educators from Reggio Emilia mounted travelling exhibitions. *The Hundred Languages of Children* exhibitions showcased educational philosophies, teaching practices, children's work and teacher reflections (Rosen, 1992). This, and associated conferences and books (C. Edwards, Gandini, & Forman, 1998) ignited international interests in Reggio Emilia teacher's approaches.

Children attending early childhood centres in Reggio Emilia were involved in extended projects. They were encouraged to express their ideas through various art media on a range of topics relevant to their everyday lives. Children had access to specialist art studios (*atelier*) and to art specialists (*atelierista*) who assisted them to express their ideas through a range of verbal, graphic and other 'languages'. As such, practices associated with drawing and art media were 'so interwoven within the teaching

and learning context' that they became 'part of the fabric of the everyday experiences of children' (Pohio, 2009, p. 12). In terms of contributing towards models of early childhood art education, Reggio teachers' practices provided an important counterbalance to beliefs about teacher non-intervention and also demonstrated that children benefited from vibrant social interactions with skilled art teachers (Gandini, 1993; Rosen, 1992) and from dynamic, even confrontational, interactions with peers (C. Edwards et al., 1998).

While children within Reggio Emilia centres generated many artworks the curriculum did not separate art education from other learning experiences (Hertzog, 2001) and through various art media children became more aware of their thinking and knowledge about a topic (Bodrova & Leong, 1996). This, in turn, positively influenced the quality of children's artistic representations. Nevertheless, even with such startling exemplars of policy, practice and philosophies, Jan Milikan (2010) noted that early childhood teachers have been 'concerned with the interference that the Reggio ideas may have on children's creativity' (p. 22). But, as she pointed out, anecdotal evidence from Italy and Australia 'suggests that children's intensive experience of drawing from observation, or for the purpose of sharing theories or plans, does not appear to inhibit their desire or ability to draw and paint from imagination or fantasy' (2010, pp. 22-23).

Within Reggio Emilia teaching philosophies a stimulating and aesthetically presented environment provides 'provocations' for learning. As such, the concept of the environment as the 'third teacher' (Gandini, 1998) has been expanded upon in early childhood art education (Danko-McGhee, 2009; Pairman & Terreni, 2001). Children also worked alongside adults who were artists (Reggio Children, 2004) and this too has been expanded upon in other early childhood programmes (Kriegler, 2010). Reggio Emilia educators' approaches have also prompted a 'reconceptualisation of practice focused on relationships' (Hatherly & Richardson, 2007, p. 60), which in turn has offered new insights and models of collaborative relationships between children, teachers and communities engaged in art education (J. Wright, Ryder, & Mayo, 2006) and early childhood education (Hertzog, 2001). Publications have also explored children's visual thinking from Reggio perspectives (Kinney & Wharton, 2008; Kolbe, 2000) and in terms of children's art education in their early years (Milikan, 2010; Pohio, 2009; Robertson, 2000; Vecchi, 2010).

Vygotsky's perspective and early childhood art

Another important 20th century event was the publications of works of Russian psychologist Lev Vygotsky (1896-1934). From mid-1920 until his death, Vygotsky developed theories about human psychological functions. However, his work was not widely available in the English speaking world until the 1960s, and even then translations were marred by omissions and misinterpretations (Kozulin, 1986). Nevertheless, his writing informed many areas of research and practice in early education (Berk & Winsler, 1995; Bodrova & Leong, 1996; S. Edwards, 2003; Fleer, 2005; Lee & Smagorinsky, 2000b; Lim, 2004; Robbins, 2005; Rogoff, 1998; Rogoff & Wertsch, 1984), some research in art education (for example, Anning & Ring, 2004; Brooks, 2002a, 2009; Duffy, 1998; Kindler, 2007; Matthews, 1984; Richards, 2010; Sullivan, 1993; Thompson, 2007; Zimmerman & Zimmerman, 2000) and creativity theories (Lindqvist, 2003; Lindström, 2007; S. Moran & John-Steiner, 2002).

Transformation and relationships were important concepts for Vygotsky as he focused on the 'relationships between phenomena and the processes by which those relationships changed over time' (S. Moran & John-Steiner, 2002, p. 4). For example, Vygotsky (1978, 1986/1934) emphasised the social nature of learning, where interactions and emotional attachment between infants and their parents focused children's attention on separate objects and their attributes. Over time, through socially mediated exploration and language, toddlers used objects as tools and they separated actions from objects as ideas stimulated actions. As children solved problems, using their physical actions and perceptions, their thinking continued to be mediated through shared activity and language (Vygotsky, 1978).

Vygotsky (1962/1934) maintained that 'every function in the child's cultural development appears twice: first, on a social level, and later, on the individual level'; that is to say 'first *between* people' and then 'inside the child' (p. 57). From Vygotsky's (1978) perspective, all human psychological development, including artistic development, could be thought of as a series of transformations, where an interpersonal process transformed into an intrapersonal one. As such children's artistic development was not seen as distinct from their innate artistic capacities, 'but as a process facilitated by the challenges which teachers, peers, and materials' offered (Thompson, 1995b, p. 4).

Vygotsky also discussed the 'psychological devices for mediating between one's mental states and processes and one's environment' (D. C. Holland & Valsiner, 1988, p.

248) and considered how people arranged and organized their physical worlds with the aid of tools, and arranged and organized their mental worlds with the aid of symbols (Vygotsky, 1978; Vygotsky & Luria, 1934). Thus, drawing and other art forms could be thought of as symbol systems that involved the use of tools. However, many studies building on Vygotsky's ideas have narrowly defined language as verbal and written communication. But as Lee and Smagorinsky (2000a) pointed out, this 'emphasis on verbal mediation' has been 'a decidedly Western value' (2000a, p. 3).

Vygotsky (1978) proposed that children first used visual signs in the form of gestures and then moved from purely physical gestures to ones that left traces, such as those made when a child strikes paper with a pen. These 'first marks were seen as an extension of a gesture rather than a drawing in the true sense of the word' (p. 107). But, as children developed more control over their marks there was a 'kinship between gestural depiction and depiction by drawing' (p. 108) and general qualities of an object were represented and 'first-order symbolism' developed. Over time, in play and drawing, children developed a system of 'second-order symbolism' (p. 110) where they took their graphic representations to independently denote objects. For example, younger children often named drawings after they were finished while older children named drawings before beginning. Vygotsky regarded drawing and make-believe play as 'a major contributor to the development of written language' (p. 110) and the naming of drawings as 'evidence of the strong impact of speech on the development of drawing' (p. 113). Moreover, 'from a psychological point' drawing was regarded 'as a particular kind of child speech' (p. 112).

Other research has also investigated the links between children's art, thought and language and considered the many ways children expressed pictorial representations. For example, working with Vygotskian perspectives and building on Pierce's semiotic theory (1931-35), Anna Kindler and Bernard Darras (1994, 1997a, 1997b, 1998), considered children's pictorial representational activities within interactive sociocultural environments. As such, they saw 'pictorial representation as a semiotic process' resulting in 'pluri-media (graphic, vocal/verbal, and gestural) manifestations' (1998, p. 148). In making these links between children's early gestural actions, verbalisations and traces they also identified five forms of 'iconicity' that formed a map of children's pictorial development (1994, 1998). They also noted how children's drawings often related to action and motion, rather than to static objects and that realism was not necessarily the ultimate graphic goal (Kindler, 1999). Moreover, it became evident that children usually

employed 'a repertoire of visual languages' and had the 'wit to know when to call on each' (Wolf & Perry, 1988, p. 18).

Vygotsky regarded art as a cultural tool and recognized that important aspects of art, such as the 'absurdities, nonsense, inversions', were very close to aspects of children's play (Lindqvist, 2003, p. 248). This was an important connection as Vygotsky (1978) regarded play as a leading factor in early development and, in older children, imagination was regarded as 'play without action' (p. 93). Vygotsky also noted that children often developed narratives in their drawings that facilitated connection with their thoughts and social connection with others. He also took into account the role of consciousness in development, while recognizing the cultural, social and historical basis of psychological functioning. Relating this aspect of Vygotskian theory to creativity and development, Seana Moran and Vera John-Steiner (2002) proposed that,

A person comes to know about the world not through absorbing – but through transforming – the information received from others' speech and actions; s/he must reconstruct knowledge based on these experiences. Through the transformation of this social interaction and use of cultural tools and signs, a person can free himself or herself from the constraints of the present environment and take control of his or her own future. Past experience influences but does not determine what a person does; s/he can reorganize the way s/he thinks in anticipation of future needs and goals. The emphasis is not on autonomy from others, but in the development of self mastery and a more flexible interaction with others. (pp. 4-5)

As will be seen in the Chapters 5 and 6 of this thesis, I found this sociocultural-historical perspective resonated with how I made sense of aspects of the children's art experiences and sat comfortably with Deweyan perspectives on art as experience. This approach also resonated with my co-constructionist perspectives, in that I believed that a child was both influenced by, and had an influence on, his or her social and cultural environment. In this respect, I concurred with Branco and Valsiner's (1997) assertion that there was 'dialectical movement between the network of social suggestions and cultural constraints, and the active role of the individual in re-constructing' his or her 'specific version and contribution to culture itself' (p. 49).

Another important aspect of Vygotsky's work was that, in contrast to the view that learning followed development, he demonstrated that learning could lead development. As will now be discussed, Margaret Brooks' (2002b, 2005b) research also demonstrated how children's drawing functioned in this way. Underpinning her art research were Vygotskian perspectives that acknowledged children's active co-construction of knowledge, the social nature of learning, the importance of language and the way in

which learning could lead development (Vygotsky, 1962/1934). In addition, Vygotsky's (1962/1934) model of thought and language was expanded to provide a model of visual thought as an intersection of drawing and thought (Brooks, 2002b, 2006).

Brooks (2002a) examined the ways in which her Canadian Grade One children (average age 6.2) used drawing to inform and extend their understanding on a shared topic within project work (Katz & Chard, 1989). Adopting a visual ethnographic approach (Goldman-Segall, 1998; Pink, 2001), Brooks digitally videoed the children's drawing events and discussed these with the children and their families. The children's drawing processes were considered on immediate interactive, structural, and cultural/social levels (Vygotsky, 1978). This research documented how children used drawing as reference points for negotiation of joint social actions and cognitive understanding (Brooks, 2002b, 2005a, 2005b, 2006). The children's drawings also allowed them to bring past experience into new ideas as their drawings acted 'both as experiential and a working document' (Brooks, 2002b, p. 238). Children also dialogued with their own drawings as they responded to their drawings and developed their ideas. The children's handling of objects was also shown to be another 'essential precursor to any in-depth investigation or abstraction' (Brooks, 2002b, p. 223). Overall, it was revealed that there was a relationship between thought and drawing, that drawing could lead development and that drawing assisted children in developing collaborative play experiences. The research data was presented in an 'informative narrative style' with still and moving images that kept the 'temporal sense of the story in the children's learning journeys' (Brooks, 2002b, p. 161). This research also provided contextual information about the children's physical and social environments. For example, the children had high quality art materials, and dedicated drawing spaces that promoted social interactions and dialogic engagement between children and teachers.

Brooks' research influenced this current research in that her use of Vygotsky's theories within art education research expanded my understanding of young children's art experiences from sociocultural perspectives. This research also revealed that visual ethnography and narrative styles were sympathetic with sociocultural perspectives and a viable way to access children's perspectives. This was influential in my decision to employ visual ethnographic approaches (Pink, 2001; 2006) and aspects of narrative inquiry (Clandinin, 2007; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). This is discussed further in Chapter 4.

A further influence was by way of a challenge, in that Brooks deliberately focused on drawing as a means of meaning-making for children, rather than on drawings as artworks. In doing so she had an 'absence of any talk about aesthetic issues' (Brooks, 2002a, pp. 98-99), having noted that aesthetic frameworks often dealt with adult world abstract ideas of beauty (Taunton, 1982) that denied children's actual artistic intentions. The challenge then, in my own research, was to extend understanding about the aesthetic nature of children's art experiences while also acknowledging their artistic intentions. As will be discussed, Dewey's (1934/2005) philosophies on esthetic experience provided useful theoretical frameworks for such considerations.

Child-initiated art and purposes for art

In many ways, the children in Brooks' (2002b) research were initiating their own art actions as they explored and made sense of scientific concepts through drawings. Children's art within project work was also the focus of Susan Griebing's (2009) research. In a two month micro-ethnographic study (Spradley, 1980) Griebing investigated how 17 children (aged 3-5) used the visual arts within project work (Katz & Chard, 2000) in an American early childhood centre. She analysed the types of art children made, their purposes for their art work and patterns of progression. In terms of art types, the children mainly drew and created small paper constructions or collages. These insights into children's three-dimensional constructions, filled a gap in research data as, apart from a few studies related to clay work (for example, Anderson & Yates, 1999; Golomb & McCormick, 1995), or the relationship between play and art (Bhroin, 2007; Ring, 2003), there are few insights into children's three-dimensional art constructions.

Based on established theories of artistic development (such as, Kellogg, 1969; Kindler & Darras, 1998; Luquet, 1913; Wolf & Perry, 1988) Griebing's (2009) findings showed children's progressions from simple to complex art and their ability to generate and use a repertoire of art skills. In making sense of the children's purposes for art, Griebing considered the developmental needs of mastery, belonging, generosity and independence, as developed within inclusive education discourse by Bendtro, Brokenleg and Bockern (1990). In terms of mastery, children used art to explore and to record. In terms of belonging, they used art to enter play, engage with others and to make props. Children also used their art to show affection or to establish a relationship. In terms of generosity, children made art to contribute towards decorations and some other

classroom needs. All of these purposes were seen as contributing towards independence (Griebing, 2009). In terms of expanding pedagogic understanding of the many ways in which children experienced and created art, this relatively recent research sits alongside my current research. However, my research also considers children's home and school art experiences.

Research based around children's spontaneous art has often taken an even wider concept of child-initiated art. This aspect of children's art has a long history of research interest (for example, Kellogg, 1969; Luquet, 1913) and while spontaneous art has often been equated with children's drawings produced in the absence of adult influences, longitudinal studies have provided greater insights into the types of drawings and themes that some children consistently explore. For example, Christine Marmé Thompson's research (Thompson, 1995a, 1999, 2002, 2003; Thompson & Bales, 1991) was based on over 10 years of working with young children in out-of-school art sessions. This research revealed that the interests that young children developed and pursued 'in drawing and in other forms of symbolic play [were] influenced by gender and by culture, by personality and circumstance' (Thompson, 1999, p. 155).

While my current research does not rival such long term exposure to children's art, my hope is that it will offer some focused insights into specific children's spontaneous art experiences across multiple contexts, and their exploration of ideas, themes, and concerns through art, as well as providing insights into the various art media that these children used spontaneously. Such insights are important, for 'the nature and meaning of children's experiences' can be best understood when children are given space to pursue their real interests rather than 'adult conceptions of the interests proper to childhood' (Thompson, 2003, p. 144). Such approaches understand children's art as part of their wider life experiences. As Phil Pearson (2001) argues, rather than studying children's drawings as the 'residue' of practice, 'the only satisfactory way to accommodate all the conditions pertinent to knowing children's drawing is to accept that it exists as social practice' (p. 348). One of my aims for this current research was to contribute towards this wider understanding of children's art while also sharing children's viewpoints.

Adults' beliefs and attitudes about children's art

Sociocultural-historical perspectives have also prompted greater scrutiny of the ways children's art experiences are influenced within cultural contexts. For example, Brent Wilson (2004, p. 321) claimed that 'there is nothing natural about the artlike

activities of children. Art is one aspect of the vast global phenomena constructed within various human cultures.' Recognition of the cultural context of human experiences has also opened up discussion about the many ways in which children experience art in their everyday lives. Of interest to art educators and researchers has been children's visual cultures and the implications this has for art education (Aguirre, 2004; Duncum, 2001; Hamilton, 2008; Kindler, 2003; Smith-Shank, 2008).

An awareness of the ways in which concepts of child art are embedded within cultural practices and history has also prompted some re-examination of models of artistic development. For example, the U-curved artistic development hypothesis, (Davis, 1991; Gardner & Winner, 1982) was challenged by David Pariser and Axel van den Berg (2001) as being representative of Western cultural aesthetic judgements. They undertook similar research that showed that Chinese judges consistently scored drawings by the youngest children below other groups. Other investigations with adult and child judges from Brazil, Canada and Taiwan revealed other models. For example, Canadian and Brazilian 8-year-old children preferred the art of the next-oldest children and produced an inverted U model while Brazilian adults produced an upwardly tilting line. There were inter-cultural differences in judgements of art and the Taiwanese group also revealed intra-cultural differences (Kindler, Pariser, van den Berg, Liu, & Dias, 2002).

Although research projects such as these challenged educational myths, modernist attitudes have dominated Western discourse about children's artistic development. For example, a New Zealand report on primary school students' learning in the arts (C. Holland & O'Connor, 2004) stated:

The aesthetic qualities of the work of the young reappear only in the work of a few adolescents. If we look at the work of young children in terms of modernist criteria i.e. formal and expressive, we find it does rather well. It is vivid, expressive, and creative. The work of children from the age of eight and above is, in contrast, awkward, and constrained by notions of realism. (pp. 35-36)

This report also illustrated the uneasy tension *within* art education between various beliefs and practices as the authors proposed that 'drawing helps children with the challenges in their lives' (C. Holland & O'Connor, 2004, p. 26), while on the other hand they were disparaging about older children's attempts at realism. Thus, this document added credence to the notion that children were naturally artistic when young but that this was somehow lost over time. Messages, such as these, have likely contributed towards Australian and New Zealand early childhood practitioners' reluctance to take on art-related teaching roles and to interact with children engaged in art (as noted

by, Ashton, 1997, 2002, 2008; Boone, 2007; B. Clark & de Lautour, 2007; Gunn, 2000; Lewis, 1998/99; McArdle, 2001, 2003; Peers, 2008; Richards, 2003b, 2009b; Visser, 2006, 2010).

In Australia, Felicity McArdle and Barbara Piscitelli (2002) recognized that disparate messages, within early childhood and art education literature and policy, contributed towards entrenched views about teaching. They examined the layers of ideas that informed Australian early childhood art education in the preceding 25 years and noted that although Nancy Smith (1983) encouraged teachers to observe and develop young children's social interactions, her messages were largely ignored. Whereas, Frances Derham's (1961) book, which championed Lowenfeld's focus on self-expression and natural child development, 'dominated Australian early childhood education' (McArdle & Piscitelli, 2002, p. 12). Teachers' ongoing reliance on this book was not surprising however, as up until 2007 it was promoted through the *Early Childhood Australia* website as 'a practical guide based on thoroughly tested principles' (Early Childhood Australia, 2007).

The mismatch between art educational philosophies and those in other learning areas was also evident. McArdle and Piscitelli (2002) noted that 'the issue of "freedom above discipline" remained as a dominant discourse of art when compared to other curriculum areas such as literacy and numeracy' (2002, p. 13). Elsewhere, English research showed that practitioners regarded drawing as important for children's expression but 'lacking value educationally when compared with the 'intellectual activities' of reading and writing' (Ring, 2006a, p. 196). The privileging of literacy and numeracy was also evident in the *New Zealand Curriculum* (Ministry of Education, 2007) that called for 'teaching and learning programmes' that were 'developed through a wide range of experiences across all learning areas, with a focus on literacy and numeracy along with the development of values and key competencies' (2007, p. 41). With these messages in circulation it was not surprising that there were significant delays in teachers embracing change in early childhood art pedagogy compared to other learning areas.

Children's self-beliefs about drawing and art

In order to build a better understanding of how messages about artistic performance impacted on young children's drawing self-efficacy I undertook research that investigated the relationship between children's drawing self-efficacy and the

messages they gave and received (Richards, 2003a, 2003b, 2003c, 2009b). My research involved 136 New Zealand children (aged 4-9) in one early childhood centre and school. A questionnaire was developed, based on the sources of self-efficacy information (Bandura, 1986) and children's responses to this indicated their drawing self-efficacy levels. Children from both ends of the range were interviewed and some children were observed while engaged in art activities.

Overall, there was a correlation between self-efficacy levels and messages with those with higher self-efficacy giving and receiving more positive messages than those with low self-efficacy. Moreover, it was the children, rather than adults, who provided most of the messages. Indeed, the teachers seldom directly referred to the children's artworks, instead commenting on children's behaviour and technical issues. In the school setting, children critiqued their own and other's drawings based on criteria transferred from other learning activities, such as handwriting.

In the early childhood centre, the children with the highest drawing self-efficacy drew representational drawings, numbers and letters. As also noted in other research (for example, S. K. Wright, 2007), many of the younger children did not differentiate between drawing and writing. Most children associated scribbling with bad drawing and young children were praised by adults when they drew numbers and letters. This positive attention may have contributed to older children's opinions that those who read and wrote well could also draw well (a view that was not supported by the statistical data).

When children had drawing difficulties, those with high self-efficacy attributed this to insufficient practice rather than ability. They also persisted when experiencing difficulties, engaged in art activities more frequently, and for longer periods, than other children. They also enjoyed watching others create art and gleaned ideas for their own artwork, while those with low self-efficacy were more likely to view themselves as inadequate by comparison. These children were also more easily upset by critical comments or drawing problems. As noted below, the findings from this New Zealand research also reflected some international research. For example, in both educational settings, self-initiated drawing episodes included topics associated popular culture such as from television and film (Ivashkevich, 2009; Thompson, 2002, 2003; S. K. Wright, 2007), children deemed certain topics as more suitable for boys or girls (Golomb, 1992; Ring, 2003), children made preferences based on gender-stereotypes (Bosacki, Varnish, & Akseer, 2008; Boyatzis & Eades, 1999; Duncum, 1997; Speck, 1995) and explored gender identities through their drawings and associated talk (Ivashkevich, 2009). Also,

the girls' topics, such as families and animals, appeared to be more transferable to other classroom projects while boys' ones of fight scenes, television characters and cars were not.

In terms of my current research, this self-efficacy research heightened awareness of the ways in which the research participants may be emotionally sensitive to various art experiences and the messages associated with their art performance. While this research has been cited as showing how children's attitudes towards drawing changed with age (Jolley, 2010; Rose, Jolley, & Burkitt, 2006), it looked at different groups of children at each class level, and not the experiences of any individual child over time. Moreover, at the time of the research I sensed that the lively way some four-year-old boys engaged in art as an 'an extension of boys' play' that 'involved a degree of competitiveness, provocation and defining of loyalties' (Richards, 2009b, p. 69), would be discontinued at school. These thoughts contributed to my decision to follow individual children through the transition between early childhood and school.

Three other aspects of this drawing self-efficacy research influenced my subsequent research directions. Firstly, noting teachers' reluctance to interact with young children during art, I suggested that teachers increased their understanding of children's artistic development and the elements and principles of art, with the view of facilitating more focused 'discussion with and amongst children about their art' (Richards, 2009b, p. 147). However, in light of research that suggests that teachers' interpretations of theories children's artistic development has contributed to their reluctance to interact with children through art, I am now wary of offering such advice. Furthermore, a focus on the graphic features of children's art (the elements and principles) was misguided if done so without a strong sense of the children's artistic intentions and experiences. It is this latter concept of art as experience that was largely neglected in my own earlier work and in art research in general. My reading of Dewey (1934/2005) has reinforced for me the importance of understanding children's art as an integration of art action and perception.

Secondly, the drawing self-efficacy research revealed that it was difficult for teachers to understand how children experienced art. For example, there was a low correlation between a child's self-beliefs and what teachers, or other children thought that child believed. Such insights strengthened my resolve to engage in research with children in such a way as to provide a platform for children's own perspectives and experiences – thus providing insights into 'the settings and circumstances' in which

children's 'cultural lives become public in ways that are of interest to art education' (Thompson, 2007, p. 909)

Thirdly, children's specific comments provided interesting insights into the importance of their home-based art experiences and how school-based messages provided a partial view of their art experience. My subsequent interest in Vygotsky's theory that all higher psychological functions originated as actual relations between human individuals (1978, 1986/1934), led me to a deeper appreciation of this partiality, and of how home-based social experiences were fundamental in children's self-beliefs and art experiences. A growing body of research, such as that by Helen Hedges (2007), has also recognized the importance of understanding the 'bodies of knowledge that underlie household activities' and how teachers' understandings of these 'funds of knowledge' (Moll, 2000, p. 258) could be used to bridge children's home, early childhood and school experiences. The term "funds of knowledge" has been used to refer to these 'historically accumulated and culturally developed bodies of knowledge and skills essential for household or individual functioning and well-being' (Moll, Amanti, Neff, & González, 1992, p. 133) and while my current research does not specifically focus on the children's funds of knowledge, it does contribute to this field of inquiry by accessing children's perspectives and by focusing on art experience across several contexts including homes.

Children's art experiences in homes, centres and schools

Alongside research into children's and teachers' art education experiences has been an interest in children's home-based and self-initiated art experiences. Building on the early tradition of research, such as that of Luquet (1913, 1927, 1927/2001), John Matthews' (1984) undertook a longitudinal study of his own children's art experiences. Observations of his three children were supported by cross-sectional and longitudinal studies of other children aged birth to seven. Based on this research, Matthews (2004) proposed that, although notions of 'wholly natural unfolding creativity isolated from cultural context' had declined, the early proponents of such a model 'were not entirely wrong' (p. 272). He also cautioned that some Vygotskian inspired ideas about scaffolding had hijacked and distorted 'key concepts of developmental education' and pedagogy had swung in the direction of the 'social control of knowledge' (p. 273). As a result, he believed, young children's spontaneous art was generally devalued in educational settings.

Home-based art research, where parents were researchers (for example, Hanes & Weisman, 2000; Knight, 2009, 2010; Matthews, 2003, 2004; Pahl, 1999), has shown how emotional bonds between children and parents impacted on children's art experiences. Such research also provided examples of the ways young children used art to facilitate meaningful social interactions, to make sense of experiences and to graphically record imaginary artefacts or events. For example, in Jay Hanes and Eleanor Weisman's (2000) research, their three-year old son drew a healing picture for his sick father, created maps in response to past and future journeys and drew machines with specified purposes. Kate Pahl's ethnographic research with her own children (1999), and with three boys aged between 5 and 8 years (2002), emphasised drawing as a form of literacy. She described children's 'realization of a discourse in one or more semiotic modes' (2002, p. 146) as 'texts' and she used visual ethnography (Sarah Pink, 2001) to analyse these texts and to respond to the visual nature of the homes. Her research revealed that children and adults were often jointly involved in the meaning-making processes, and in their homes children occupied 'contested space' that lay on 'the cusp of mess and tidiness' (Pahl, 2002, p. 146). She also showed how one boy's drawing of maps varied across home and school contexts and suggested that 'transforming artefacts across sites may be something children do that often goes undocumented' (2001, p. 120). My current research helps to address this gap in research data.

Pahl's research informed Kathryn Ring's (2003) English research, which investigated how seven children's drawing behaviours were influenced by cultural contexts and significant others in their homes, pre-schools and schools. Sociocultural theory (Vygotsky, 1962/1934, 1978), ecological models (Bronfenbrenner, 1979), models of children's symbol use (Dyson, 1993) and multiple literacy research (Kress, 1997; Pahl, 1999) provided theoretical frameworks for her research. The research focused on three girls and four boys (starting ages of 3 to 6-years) who were in two parent families. At specified times over three years, annotated scrapbooks of each child's drawings and paintings, and photographs of their play with small objects, were compiled by adults. Adults were interviewed prior and post collection and observations undertaken in the first phase of the research. Adults' discussions generated themes but 'the child's voice was not being 'heard' as parents and practitioner were mediating the child's 'versions' of their drawings' (Ring, 2003, p. 69). Some attempt was made to address this issue but time gaps between drawing episodes and discussions limited successful outcomes.

At home, through their drawings and play the children explored gender identities, significant events involving family and friends, and stories as told by mothers and popular culture. Their ability to create new meanings 'was supported by the playfulness of more able peers' (Ring, 2003, p. 116) and a mother's tolerance of mess, organisation of time and space, control over television, and provision for child-initiated and directed activity all impacted positively on children's play and drawing behaviours. Also, due to safety issues, children with older siblings had more access to art materials and spaces than those with younger ones (Ring, 2003, 2006b).

In the early childhood context children's drawing experiences were influenced the funded 'educational component' in day-care centres (Qualifications and Curriculum Authority, 2000) that prompted teachers to focus on drawing as emergent literacy and to provide worksheets. In terms of child-initiated drawings, Ring (2003) noted that the girls' capacity to draw people was met with approval, while boys' action drawings and 'preoccupation with superheroes' (Anning & Ring, 2004, pp. 110-111)⁴ were not. Ring also noted that the physical and social environments also influenced children's drawing experiences in education settings and in one centre a 'regular pattern of adult directed activities' limited children's spontaneity (2003, p. 118).

In schools, children experienced prescribed art activities once or twice a fortnight, had few individual interactions with teachers (Anning & Ring, 2004), and experienced child-selected art activities in weekly half-hour sessions or as short time-fillers. While Ring believed that children's play with three-dimensional objects supported an evolution to drawing there was no evidence that teachers recognised or supported this link in educational settings. Outside of the classroom environment children sought interactions with same-sex older peers. In the few observations at schools, Ring noted that, in wet playtimes, boys (in the absence of small figure and construction play) drew pictures related to television, Play Station imagery, football, robots and army battles. The girls also re-enacted play of older girls and drew decorative cartoon heroines, video imagery, and showed fascination with hair length and shoe height. In one setting, large groups formed drawing clubs that offered girls a site to explore being female and 'an opportunity to integrate the culture from home communities with their transformed version of the 'official' world of school' (Anning & Ring, 2004, p. 115). Ring's and Anning's analysis considered how boys and girls experienced drawing from a gendered perspective. As my

⁴ Ring's research was also reported on in a book she co-authored with Angela Anning (Anning & Ring, 2004).

current research had male and female participants, I thought that further insights into gender-identity and art might emerge and indeed they did (for example see Chapter 6). However, this was not planned as a major focus of the primary analysis in this thesis. (It may be picked up in subsequent analysis and publications).

Ring's interest in children's meaning-making through art, as understood using semiotic or literary models, was evident in other research (Grigg, 2003; Hopperstad, 2010; Kindler & Darras, 1997a; S. K. Wright, 2007). In terms of my current thesis, Ring's research also provided some insights into how children's art experiences varied across home, preschool and school contexts. It revealed that children's social interactions with others (including parents, siblings, friends, older peers and teachers), the institutional structures (such as curriculum policies, time allocation and teacher attitudes) and the way space was experienced (such as tolerance of mess, safety of siblings, partitioned spaces, play spaces on wet days) all impacted on how children experienced art (Anning & Ring, 2004; Ring, 2005, 2006a, 2006b).

Ring's research also indicated some gaps in understanding young children's art experiences. For example, while this research considered children's play with three-dimensional objects in relation to drawing, little consideration was given to how children intentionally used three-dimensional materials as expressive art media. Also, there were few insights into children's emotive or aesthetic responses to their drawing episodes or the relationship these children had with their art processes or artworks. In a related matter, Ring's research also exposed difficulties associated with longitudinal studies, accessing children's perspectives and photographs as research data. While visual data, such as photographs, were regarded as important research tools, the photography was controlled by adults who mediated and interpreted the child's 'versions' of their drawings – thus providing few insights into children's perspectives. Also, there was a time lapse between taking photographs and discussing these with the children. In my current research I have considered these issues when developing my research methodologies.

Expanding the landscape

While it was not possible to acknowledge all of the research relevant to my current focus, these journeys on the landscapes of early childhood art have identified some of the key themes pertinent to an understanding of children's art experiences in homes, early childhood centres and schools. It was apparent that many ideas pertinent to 21st

century art education had historical origins. For example, my interest in children's art experiences across multiple authentic contexts is not new, in that almost a century ago Luquet (1913, 1927) observed that children drew differently in schools than they did in freer situations. What is perhaps more recent is our interest in understanding children's perspectives on experience, and using such insights to inform our teaching and research practices. Yet, despite positive attitudes towards children and the advance of tools to assist in recording research data, accessing children's perspectives remains problematic. I believe that the key to accessing children's perspectives is the building of positive research relationships with children. This is discussed more in Chapter 4.

Vygotsky's theories about the social nature of learning, and his own sensitive interactions with research participants, provide a good foundation for contemporary research. Furthermore, Vygotskian perspectives have proved efficacious in guiding research approaches, in understanding drawing as a learning tool, and in recognizing the social, cultural and historical influences on children's art experiences. As such, Vygotskian sociocultural-historical perspectives, as discussed so far, underpin my own pedagogical practices and inform this current research.

In terms of theoretical perspectives, it is clear that semiotic or literary models have been prominent in theorizing about children's art. As such, research has often focused on children's drawings in terms of visual literacy and making meaning. Art-based theories have also been influential. For example, theories of artistic development have framed some early childhood art research (for example, Gardner, 1980; Kellogg, 1969, 1979) although traditionally these have tended to focus on a child's artwork in isolation from that child's experiences of art. In terms of expanding the research landscape I believe that the field of research into young children's art would benefit from more studies that have arts-based theories as their theoretical frameworks and child's experiences and perspectives as key foci. This current research attempts to address some of these issues by combining an underlying Vygotskian sociocultural-historical perspective with John Dewey's philosophies on art as experience (1934/2005) and by using research methods sensitive young children's needs and to the arts. The next chapter will explore Dewey's philosophies on art as experience in more depth. This will be followed by a chapter on research processes.

3. DEWEY'S PERSPECTIVES ON ART AS EXPERIENCE

This chapter develops a theoretical framework for this thesis. Through an in-depth discussion of some of the ideas presented in Dewey's text, *Art as experience* (1934/2005), I set the stage for an informed reading of the data. I endeavour to represent Dewey's philosophies with integrity; however, these analyses are selective exercises that aim to support my exploration of young children's art experiences.

All quotes in this chapter, unless otherwise stated, are from *Art as experience* (Dewey, 1934/2005) and the language has been largely unaltered. For example, the word 'esthetic' appeared in Dewey's book, while more contemporary writing favours 'aesthetic'. Apart from honouring the original wording, Dewey's concepts of esthetic experience were not the same as notions about the 'aesthetic qualities' of children's art as discussed so far in Chapter 2 and the variance in spelling is a useful reminder of this. For example, discussion about the aesthetic features in children's art has often been limited to discussion about those graphic features exhibited in their artwork. Also, within Western traditions, that which is deemed aesthetically pleasing about children's art has historical alliances with various art movements that celebrate naïve artistic styles. In some art research aesthetic theory has also been applied to children's preferences for certain styles of artworks or their relationships with the aesthetic qualities of their immediate environment. While these are legitimate concerns, none of these approaches fully represents Dewey's more encompassing notion of esthetic experience that is pertinent to my current interest in children's art experiences.

The following discussion begins with a brief biography of John Dewey, and an introduction to his work in *Art as experience* (1934). Dewey's ideas on experience, esthetic experience and art as experience are then explored. The fourth section considers the nature of art experience, with focused discussion on the relationships between recognition and perception, and between perception and action. It also considers what is meant by art media and subject-matter and the various facets implicated in artistic expression. The chapter concludes with a brief overview of these Deweyan concepts in relation to the current research focus on children's art experiences.

John Dewey: A brief history

John Dewey (1859-1952) was a well-known American philosopher and educator. He received his doctorate in philosophy in 1884 and during his academic career he was a professor at the Universities of Minnesota, Michigan and Chicago. At Chicago University he founded the first department of pedagogy and towards the turn of the 20th century he articulated a pragmatic philosophy. Put simply, these philosophies held that the truth-value of ideas was found in their everyday practical application. His work influenced American educational reform, especially in terms of moves away from authoritarian teaching methods towards pedagogy focused on learners' acquisition of knowledge through experience. In 1904, Dewey took up a professorship at Columbia University where he remained until his retirement in 1930. This did not mark the end of his scholarly career however, as he continued to speak publically. He also published seven major works between 1931 and 1939, including *Art as experience* (1934).

Dewey's book: Art as experience

Shortly following his retirement, Dewey presented 10 lectures on the Philosophy of Art at Harvard University. These lectures formed the basis for his book *Art as Experience*, which was published in 1934 and comprised 14 chapters. Dewey's (1934/2005) purpose was to,

restore continuity between the refined and intensified forms of experience that are works of art and the everyday events, doings, and sufferings that are universally recognized to constitute experience. (p. 2)

Dewey's perspectives highlighted that human experience of the arts was not limited to visits to galleries or the like, nor was it exclusive to those people who produced, critiqued or owned 'high' art. Instead, he claimed that the arts that had the 'most vitality' (p. 4) for the average person were movies, music, comics, newspapers and the like. Thus, Dewey acknowledged both the fine arts and popular culture as part of human experience. These ideas were consistent with his pragmatic philosophies and reflected his belief in a participatory democratic society and the rights of all people to experience a full and empowered life within supportive and interactive communities⁵. Dewey believed in 'the possibility of all human practice to solve problems and to make the world better'

⁵ While much scholarly work explores Dewey's notions of pragmatism and democracy I will not be directly expanding on these ideas.

(Jensen, 2002, p. 171), and within this model art functioned as a means of binding communities together. Dewey (1934/2005) stated that,

Works of art that are not remote from common life, that are widely enjoyed in a community, are signs of a unified collective life. But they are also marvellous aides in the creation of such a life. The remaking of the material of experience in the act of expression is not an isolated event confined to the artist and to a person here and there who happens to enjoy the work. In the degree in which art exercises its office, it is a remaking of the experience of the community in the direction of greater order and unity. (p. 84)

Before expanding on notions of experience and art, it is worth noting that Dewey's concept of community was 'determined not so much by its members having identical beliefs as by their having a fundamental care for one another, shared interweaving narratives, common experiences (which may embrace widely different reactions), and a sense of a common fate' (Alexander, 1997, p. 182). Children lived and developed within such communities, and in the context of this current research, children's art can be seen as the 'remaking of the material of experience in the act of expression' (Dewey, 1934/2005, p. 84) and a valuable contribution to their expression of social, cultural and personal identity.

At the time of publication, Dewey's *Art as experience* (1934) was hailed as providing, 'in unambiguous, honest English', a 'penetrating and perspicuous account of...our experience of the aesthetic' (Prall, 1935, p. 390). For many decades this work informed educational theory, practice and research. Scholars and authors (such as, Aguirre, 2004; Alexander, 1997; Cannatella, 2007; Cuffaro, 1995; Eisner, 1991, 2002; Freedman, 2001; Goldblatt, 2006; Greene, 2007; Higgins, 2007; Jackson, 1998, 2002; Janesick, 2008; Jensen, 2002; Johnston, 2009; Lawrence, 1970; Lim, 2004, 2005) have explored his ideas in relation to art education and aesthetic education. While such works have enriched my understanding of the ways Dewey's philosophies has been interpreted by others, in developing Deweyan perspectives for this current work I have opted to return to Dewey's own words in *Art as experience* (1934/2005). While his 'propensity for musing about issues rather than building a focused analytic case' (White, 1999, p. 91) makes interpretation of this original work somewhat challenging, in 'musing' rather than declaring, Dewey opened spaces for others to make personal connections between his philosophies and their own. In this chapter I do likewise, as I unpack Deweyan perspectives to inform my research into children's art experiences.

Art and everyday life

Dewey's (1934/2005) examination of the nature of art and esthetic experience began with a consideration of the relationships between art and society. He noted that while museums set art 'apart from common life' (p. 7) the arts were actually 'part of the significant life of an organized community' (p. 5). He believed that all people were capable of having esthetic experiences and the distancing of art from everyday life limited people's 'esthetic perceptions', which were 'necessary ingredients of happiness' (p. 9). Thus, Dewey believed that 'the art of human experience' simply could 'not be separated from the human experience of art' (Janesick, 2008, p. 478).

According to Dewey, the route to the 'understanding of art and its role in civilization' was arrived at 'by going back to experience of the common or mill run of things to discover the esthetic quality such experience possesses' (p. 9). He believed that a focus on experience also offered insights into the forces that shaped the arts through human practice:

A conception of fine arts that sets out from its connection with discovered qualities of ordinary experience will be able to indicate the factors and forces that favour the normal development of common human activities into matters of artistic value. It will also be able to point out those conditions that arrest its normal growth. (p. 10)

Thus, Dewey posed two questions about the nature of artistic making and esthetic experience. Firstly, 'how is it that the everyday making of things grows into that form of making which is genuinely artistic?' and how does our everyday enjoyment of 'scenes and situations' develop to that which is 'emphatically esthetic?' (p. 11). He addressed such questions by firstly clarifying what was meant by normal experience and then by examining the place of the esthetic in such experience.

According to Dewey (1934/2005), in its elemental form, 'the nature of experience [was] determined by the essential conditions of life' as, through struggles and achievements, people survived and perhaps thrived (p. 12). In explaining how basic experience became more significant, Dewey provided the following broad outlines: people did not just exist within an environment; so much as have particular kinds of lives because of their environments and the interactions they had with it. As such, environment was understood as human and physical, and as including 'the materials of tradition and institutions as well as local surroundings' (p. 256). However, life was not always an easy progression from one situation to another, for at times people fell 'out of

step with the march of surrounding things' (p. 12). In recovering stability through effort or by chance, a person did not merely return to their former state of being, for in meeting and working through challenges of 'opposition and conflict', their life had been 'enriched' (p. 13) and they experienced growth and development.

It was the human capacity to embrace and grow through interactions with the contrasts of flux and stability that formed the 'drama in which action, feelings and meanings' were one (p. 15). In the normal way of things, people responded to life's challenges by 'reflection' based on their 'working capital in relation to prior experiences' so that individuals and communities could operate 'circumspectly with insight into end and methods' (p. 62). Hence, people transformed conditions of conflict or struggle into more significant experience that had form and structure conducive to a qualitatively better life. According to Dewey,

Form is arrived at whenever a stable, even though moving, equilibrium is reached. Changes interlock and sustain one another. Wherever there is this coherence there is endurance. Order is not imposed from without but is made out of the relations of harmonious interactions that energies bear to one another. (p. 13)

Therefore, experiences that were most empowering for people were those in which challenges were successfully met. Such experience, Dewey argued, was 'the result, the sign, and the reward of the interaction of organism and environment' that, when carried to the full, was 'a transformation of interaction into participation and communication' (p. 22). Therefore, people did not just mindlessly lurch from one situation to another through a series of disconnected and isolated events; rather individuals and communities grew and developed through experience.

Herein lies the sort of experience that Dewey was drawing attention to, for it was 'the participation' that came after a 'phase of disruption and conflict', that bore 'within itself the germs of a consummation akin to the esthetic' (p. 14). In the use of term 'consummation' Dewey signalled the sense of completion and coming together that marked *an* experience. By way of a bridge between these ideas about experience and further examination of Dewey's concepts of esthetic experience, I will respectfully share a contemporary (if somewhat extreme and emotive) example of participation following disruption.

In daily living most people interact within communities that, through various interactions, meet at least their basic survival needs. Through normal activities such as work, education, exchange of goods and services, utilization of community infrastructures and shared civic responsibilities people's needs and wants are catered

for. In other words, people pool their human and physical resources in thoughtful and purposeful ways. However, when normal interactions are significantly disrupted, such as following the series of devastating Christchurch earthquakes (2010 and 2011), even basic practices (such as accessing drinking water, sheltering from the cold, receiving medical care or being in the company of loved ones) became so significant that failure to complete these tasks resulted in emotional and physical frailty and even death. Meeting these essential conditions for life became individual and community priorities and, in the case of the New Zealand earthquake, was supported by national and international efforts.

Thus, in this example, people's normal experiences of life became so disrupted that the rapid return to some level of equilibrium became highly significant and even 'normal' experiences were heightened. Those people involved in meeting such challenges, even on the periphery, were physically, emotionally, socially and intellectually affected by the events and the associated human catastrophes, extraordinary feats of survival and bravery and by the capacity of individuals to band together and move forward. This 'moving forward' was never just a matter of restoring the hitherto status quo, for such a state was impossible. Rather, as small and significant changes interlocked these sustained further change and the lessons learnt from such experiences were consciously carried forward (in time and space) to other pertinent situations. Solutions were also fed forward into society's planning for avoiding and dealing with future disasters. Similarly, those who had experienced similar situations in the past contributed their expertise.

Although an extreme example, the personal and collective efforts of these people to return to a sustainable way of life illustrates Dewey's contention that 'experience in the degree in which it *is* experience is heightened vitality' (p. 18). Returning now to more general discussion, this sense of heightened vitality was also possible in daily life in less traumatic situations, such as in the simple acts of celebrating with friends, watching an exciting rugby game, playing chess or painting a picture. Dewey was clear that such experiences were more than just privately satisfying moments. He maintained that,

instead of signifying being shut up within one's own private feelings and sensations, it signifies active and alert commerce with the world; at its height it signifies complete interpenetration of self and the world of objects and events...it affords our sole demonstration of a stability that is not stagnation but is rhythmic and developing. (p. 18)

In Dewey's view, part of the rhythmic development of experience was apparent as a person's immediate actions built on their past experiences and involved cognisance of future intentions. Therefore, in the most part, human development was not seen as a frantic rush towards some predestined end point, (as many theories of children's artistic development have tended to see realism) but a conscious and reflective process in which individuals, and communities, expanded on their experiences. Nor was one's environment merely physical and social in nature. A person's interaction within their environment, Dewey noted, was also structured by space and time.

Space [is] something more than a void in which to roam about, dotted here and there with dangerous things and things that satisfy the appetite. It becomes a comprehensive and enclosed scene within which are ordered the multiplicity of doings and undergoings in which man engages. Time ceases to be either the endless and uniform flow or the succession of instantaneous points which some philosophers have asserted it to be. It, too, is the organized and organizing medium of the rhythmic ebb and flow of expectant impulse, forward and retracted movement, resistant and suspense, with fulfillment and consummation. It is the ordering of growth and maturation. (pp. 23-24)

Thus, it is in these connections of ordered time, comprehensive space and heightened experience that Dewey positioned human growth and development. He saw this as occurring through varying 'intervals of pause and rest, of completions that become the initial points for new processes of development' (p. 24). In 'fulfilled' interactions, there were also varied forms of 'participation and communication' (p. 22) and 'deliberate expression' (p. 23)⁶. It was within these kinds of understandings that Dewey explored art as experience. And in doing this, he took special care to examine the nature of esthetic experience, contrasting it, for example, with scientific inquiry. To explain these points further I will return to my earlier example.

In the recovery and rebuilding processes following an earthquake, the work of the scientist and engineer became obvious in the building of structures and infrastructures. Thus, their experiences of that time were realised through scientific thought and subsequent action. Not everyone, however, participated in this manner and for some people their mode of participation and communication was found through art and made obvious through artworks. For example, artist Wayne Serb rushed to paint earthquake

⁶ I felt that these perspectives had some compatibility with those of Vygotsky (1978) who regarded growth and development as 'the result of a long series of developmental events' and who recognized the importance of interpersonal participation and communication as 'an operation that initially represents an external activity is reconstructed and begins to occur internally' (p. 57).

damaged building before they were demolished⁷. He said, “making images of the destruction was my way of handling it” (Rowe, 2011, p. 1). His artworks were also seen as performing a wider function in that, having ‘captured elements of that intense experience’, these exhibited paintings then helped ‘the community to share and eventually to heal’ (p. 1). Thus, according to Deweyan perspectives, both scientific and artistic expressions, such as these, required human connection with the problem at an emotional level. Also, in both scientific and artistic modes of working, the products of such work are important to society. Dewey (1934/2005) expanded on the relationship that he believed existed between human experience and the work of an artist, as embodied in their artworks:

The rhythm of loss of integration with environment and recovery of union not only persists in man but becomes conscious with him; its conditions are material out of which he forms purposes. Emotion is the conscious sign of a break, actual or impending. The discord is the occasion that induces reflection. Desire for restoration of the union converts mere emotion into interest in objects as conditions of realization of harmony. With the realization, material of reflection is incorporated into objects as their meaning. Since the artist cares in a particular way for this phase of experience in which union is achieved, he does not shun moments of resistance and tension. He rather cultivates them, not for their own sake but because of their potentialities, bringing to living consciousness an experience that is unified and total. (p. 14)

Dewey contrasted this ‘purpose in the esthetic’, as demonstrated by the artist, with that of a scientist, who, while also caring about resolution of problems, steps from one solution to the next problem. By contrast, artists rest in the problem and do their thinking in the ‘very qualitative media’ in which they work (p. 15). Thus, both forms of thought and action (those of the artist and the scientific) are part of the ebb and flow of life’s rhythms that are ‘spatially’ and ‘temporally patterned’ (p. 15), but the differences are ones of emphasis. For instance, in relation to the example of experiencing a devastating earthquake, the artist rested in the significant experience by way of creating paintings that dealt with themes of destruction and survival, while the scientists moved from providing clean water to elimination of waste water.

While, in these examples, the work of the scientist may seem more ‘real’ or crucial than the work of artists, for Dewey art experience and ‘real experience’ were inseparable. He was critical of the limiting idea that intelligence was identified only with verbal signs

⁷ For a visual image see: <http://www.3news.co.nz/Artist-races-to-paint-Chch-before-red-zone-is-demolished/tabid/423/articleID/229144/Default.aspx>

and words and regarded the thinking of the artist, where they were controlled in the process of their work by their grasp of the connection between what they have already done and what they will do next as one of the 'most exacting modes of thought' (p. 47). This grasp of the relationship between action and thought is at the core of the artistic expression. The nature of art experience will be explored more fully shortly, but at this point it would be useful to pull together some of the discussion threads. Firstly, Dewey did not separate experience, esthetic experience and art so much as point to the ways in which human experience can be thought of as esthetic. As such, his discussions about having *an* experience were relevant to art as experience. Throughout his book he returned to notions of experience as understood through conscious intent and determined action. For example, he stated that 'under conditions of resistance and conflict, aspects and elements of the self and the world that [were] implicated in this interaction qualify experience with emotions and ideas so that conscious intent emerges' and we have an experience (p. 36). While 'distraction and dispersion' can mark mundane experiences 'we have *an* experience when the material experienced runs its course to fulfilment' (p. 36) and participation and communication ensues. What is more, *an* experience (also referred to as esthetic experience) has 'a single *quality* that pervades the entire experience' (p. 38, original emphasis) without sacrificing the identity of the parts.

For Dewey, having an esthetic experience required active participation on the part of the person in that 'that which distinguishes an experience as esthetic' was 'conversion of resistance and tensions, of excitements that in themselves are temptations to diversion, into a movement towards an inclusive and fulfilling close' (p. 58). Therefore, having an esthetic experience was an active rather than passive engagement with experience and as such took a degree of effort. Moreover, there were 'few intense esthetic experiences' that were 'wholly gleeful' (p. 43) as there was a sense of undergoing 'struggle and conflict' (p. 42) as a means of developing and taking in the experience. As Dewey pointed out, the "'taking in" in any vital experience' was 'something more than placing something on the top of consciousness over what was previously known', as it involved 'reconstruction which may be painful' (p. 42). This was not to say, however, that all esthetic experience was painful – indeed much of what people recalled as significant, or experienced through the arts, were joyful and uplifting experiences.

The nature of art experience

In the following discussion I will focus more specifically on Dewey's ideas as I see them in relation to developing an understanding of children's art experiences. I point out here that Dewey's entire book could be seen as contributing to this broad heading, but he seldom specifically addressed children's art experience. Therefore, in selecting aspects of his work I am expanding a Deweyan perspective rather than claiming he wrote at length on this topic. What he did do was comment on children in relation to the 'connection of expression with art' (p. 65). He pointed out that when children learnt that their spontaneous actions had an effect on those around them they performed such acts on purpose (an observation, I feel, that sits comfortably with Vygotskian perspectives on the social nature of learning). Children's deliberate actions indicated that they perceived and acted on 'the relation between doing and undergoing' and that these actions were 'undertaken as a means of consciously entertained consequence. Such transformation', Dewey noted, 'marks every deed of art' (p. 65).

From a Deweyan perspective I find no necessity to enter into the debate of whether some of the products that children produced could be thought of as art. I take the stance that children do produce art, for art is not just the revered artefacts of museums and galleries, or artworks recognized within the adult art world. Art exists in the realm of human experience in a way that can be thought of as an esthetic mode of experience. Dewey referred to the 'live creature' and in doing so encompassed all people regardless of age or other defining characteristics. What was of importance was the way in which a live creature (or in this study, the four young children) experienced life. In terms of art, what was of note was the esthetic nature of such experiences and the special way in which children explored their world in an artistic-esthetic mode.

I will now expand on Dewey's ideas as they helped me to consider the special way in which children had art experiences. I will begin with what Eisner (1998) charged art educators with promoting in students – that is 'an awareness of the aesthetic qualities in art and life' (p. 148). Dewey explored this in terms of the difference between recognition and perception.

Recognition and perception

Dewey (1934/2005) explained that when people's minds were not fully engaged in the experience at hand, they tended to recognize rather than perceive. Disconnection

between past and present experiences meant that perception was 'arrested before it had a chance to develop freely' (p. 54). In relation to the notion of 'taking in' he pointed out that to be perceptive was to be able to carry the past into the present 'so as to expand and deepen the content of the latter' (p. 24). He also explained that, as people, it was when we realize that we cannot achieve easy recognition, that we 'begin to study and to "take in"' and it is at this junction that 'perception replaces bare recognition and 'there is an act of reconstructive doing' as 'consciousness becomes fresh and alive' (p. 54).

This 'act of reconstructive doing' (p. 54) was made possible in artists' work through their capacity to perceive qualities and then translate these, through art media, into visually expressed forms. For example, when painting a self-portrait, an artist does not merely recognize her reflection and thereby render a likeness. Instead, through honed skills of observation and visual perception she 'takes in' and reconstructs her own face on canvas so as to perceive it as a connection of shapes and forms, of colours and lines, of textures and tones. These reconstructions are more than just the external manifestations of paint on canvas, as they involve the artist's mind and emotions. I can relate to this also in terms of my own art experiences of finding New Zealand landscapes newly-strange and, as Dewey asserted, 'old and familiar things' were 'made new in experience' through 'imagination' (p. 278).

As such, 'art expresses, it does not state' (p. 140) and artists develop the capacity to identify those aspects of the experience or objects that are not easily expressed in other non-visual forms. For example, in painting a portrait the artist may communicate the subject's pensiveness or grief. The artist's selection and development was not just an outpouring of emotion so much as a form of expression. Dewey points out that such expression was not mere excitement but 'excitement-about-something' and 'an impulsion' could not 'lead to an expression save when it is thrown into commotion, turmoil' (p. 69). Furthermore, as art aims to express experience 'the work of esthetic art satisfies many ends, none of which is laid down in advance' (p. 140). As such, Dewey noted, 'it is absurd to ask what an artist "really" meant by his product: he himself would find different meanings in it at different days and hours and in different stages of his own development' (p. 113). This phenomenon is often evident in young children's art experiences as they attribute various meanings to their own artworks in relation to their past and current experiences.

But ideas of perception replacing mere recognition are not limited to those moments encapsulated in the work of artists or in the making of artworks. While Dewey

regarded both the expressive objects (artworks) and the expressive acts (artmaking) as aesthetic experience he did not limit their enjoyment as esthetic objects to the world of artists. He claimed that the 'poetic, as distinct from the prosaic, esthetic art as distinct from scientific, expressive as distinct from statement, does something different from leading an experience. It constitutes one.' (p. 88). Therefore, a sense of a perception replacing recognition provides an esthetic experience in itself. Dewey stated,

Art throws off the covers that hide the expressiveness of experienced things; it quickens us from the slackness of routine and enables us to forget ourselves by finding ourselves in the delight of experiencing the world about us in its varied colours and forms. It intercepts every shade of expressiveness found in objects and orders them in a new experience of life. (p. 108)

Hence, in esthetic modes of expressions people move beyond mere recognition to fuller perception. For an artist, there is also the capacity to transform these perceptions, through interaction with the qualitative properties of an art medium, to generate participation and communication in the form of artworks. This is the work of art, and the work of artists through which artworks are created. In the esthetic mode of expression that leads to an artwork the relationship between internal perception and external action is such that they inform and transform one another.

Uniting perception and action

Dewey said that it was unfortunate that the English language did not have a word that adequately stood for a uniting of 'artistic' and 'esthetic', for the active outgoing energy of doing and making (represented by the words art or artistic) could not be separated from ingoing energy of perception, appreciation and enjoyment (represented by the word esthetic). With regards to artistic-esthetic experience, as evident in the artmaking processes, he proposed that,

Moreover, at each stage there is anticipation of what is to come. This anticipation is the connecting link between the next doing and its outcome for sense. What is done and what is undergone are thus reciprocally, cumulatively, and continuously instrumental to each other. (p. 52)

Dewey regarded such artistic-esthetic experience as integral to art experience and as an essential part of any of life's significant experiences. For in 'an emphatic artistic-esthetic experience, the relation is so close that it controls simultaneously both the doing and the perception...Hence the expression is emotional and guided by purpose' (pp. 51-52). As such, 'art, in its form, unites the very same relation of doing and undergoing, outgoing and incoming energy, that makes an experience to be an experience' (p. 50).

Art media and subject-matter

Dewey pointed out that art media was distinct from raw materials in that the materials became a mode for expression (art media) only when they interacted 'with the mind and skill of an individual' (p. 299). This coming together of perception (mind) and action (skill) was evident in the work of an artist and their resulting artworks. While many people expressed emotions and possessed technical skills, the artist also had the 'capacity to work a vague idea and emotion over in terms of some definite medium' (p. 78). In selecting and transforming these perceptual characteristics through art an artist calls upon the media in which they work to recreate these qualities in an artwork. According to Dewey, through sustained interaction, people transformed art and art transformed people.

It means that the expression of the self in and through a medium, constituting a work of art, is *itself* a prolonged interaction of something issuing from the self with objective conditions, a process in which both of them acquire a form and order they did not at first possess. (pp. 67-68)

In art experience the subject-matter is inseparable from the artmaking processes as one informs and transforms the other. In recognizing that artists work with materials in realizing their ideas, Dewey stated,

As the experience of transforming subject-matter into the very substance of the work of art proceeds, incidents and scenes that figured at first may drop out and others take their place, being drawn in by the suction of the qualitative material that aroused the original excitement. (p. 116)

Dewey also pointed out, that it was through our physical bodies and senses that humans gave 'conscious meanings derived from communication and deliberate expression' (p. 23). In addition, as artistic expression integrated the self with media, past experiences were called into 'perception had here and now' (p. 127). As will become evident in the findings chapters, these notions on the interrelatedness of ideas and materials, of physical and cognitive abilities, of past and current experience, are all relevant to an understanding of the nature of children's art experiences.

Artistic expression

Dewey pointed out that expression was not simply an emotional outburst, but the channelling and transforming of self and material through art. Such expression did not just happen so much as become externalized when thought and emotions came together, in what is commonly referred to as inspiration. He claimed that,

when excitement about subject matter goes deep, it stirs up a store of attitudes and meanings derived from prior experience. As they are aroused into activity they become conscious thoughts and emotions, emotionalized images. To be set on fire by a thought or scene is to be inspired. (p. 68)

The emotional aspect of artistic expression was important and when there was too much emotion this inhibited artistic expression. For example, while an artist may have channelled an aspect of their traumatic earthquake experience into an artwork, they would be unable to do so while still under extreme stress. In more everyday circumstances, for children, excessive emotion may inhibit artistic action when they are afraid of ridicule or when they are genuinely unhappy. However, when the impulses associated with emotions of fear or anger are harnessed and communicated through an artistic media (such as art, dance or prose) then expression occurs. As noted earlier, by bringing to bear purposeful energy upon impulses, emotions can lead to expression. For, 'unless there is com-pression nothing is ex-pressed' (p. 69). On the other hand, Dewey noted, excessive action without emotional engagement at a perceptual level resulted in craftsmanship but not art. This may be the case for children when they are involved in adult-directed art-like activities that places high demands on their cognitive or technical skills while making little connection to their emotional lives or personal experiences.

While a demand on the cognitive and technical skills limited expression, Dewey believed other conditions were more debilitating. Specifically, he claimed that, 'the enemies of the esthetic' were,

the humdrum; slackness of loose ends; submission to convention in practice and intellectual procedure. Rigid abstinence, coerced submission, tightness on one side and dissipation, incoherence and aimless indulgence on the other, are deviations in opposite directions from the unity of an experience. (p. 42)

Dewey further claimed that, 'staleness of matter and obtrusion of calculation' were 'two enemies of spontaneity of expression' (p. 73). From this standpoint, artistic-esthetic experience was best achieved when a person simultaneously controlled their artistic actions and their perceptions. However, when external influences forced a wedge between these ingoing and outgoing energies then such experience was limited. Thus, adapting a Deweyan perspective for my current research prompts an awareness of 'the shaping of actual experience by environing conditions' and a recognition of 'surroundings' that are 'conducive to having experiences that lead to growth' (Dewey, 1938, p. 40). As such, a critical reflection on children's art experiences should not only consider the ways art experiences were 'limited by all the causes which interfere with perception of the relation between undergoing and doing' (Dewey, 1934/2005, p. 46), but

also recognize how children's surroundings can promote art experiences that lead to growth. As will become evident in the discussions to follow, some of these 'enemies of the esthetic', and conditions that limited connections between 'undergoing and doing', were applicable to how the children experienced art in their homes, preschool and schools.

Children's spontaneous art has long been of interest to researchers and theorists in the field of early childhood art. Dewey contributed some important insights into the way spontaneous art, and the spontaneous in art, could be understood in context of human experience. He said that 'the act of expression that constitutes a work of art is a construction in time, not an instantaneous emission' (p. 67). He noted that while 'works of art often present themselves to us an air of spontaneity', the 'spontaneous in art is complete absorption in subject matter that is fresh, the freshness of which holds and sustains emotion' (p. 73). Furthermore, he stated, "'Spontaneity" is the result of long periods of activity, or else it is empty as not to be an act of expression' (p. 75). Expression as such then, was a mix of past and current experiences. Dewey believed this to be so, even for young children.

I do not think that the dancing and singing of even little children can be explained wholly on the basis of unlearned and unformed responses to then existing objective occasions. Clearly there must be something in the present to evoke happiness. But the act is expressive only as there is in it unison of something stored from past experience, something therefore generalized, with present conditions. In the case of the expressions of happy children the marriage of past values and present incidents takes place easily; there are few obstructions to be overcome, few wounds to heal, few conflicts to resolve. (p. 74)

Thus, in his view, children's spontaneous art can be understood as occurring, not so much in an absence of outside influences but at the intersection of their past experiences with current actions; in the blending of action and perception as bound together through emotional responses and expressive media.

In a related point, Dewey also explored how the temporal dimension of experience was inherently social and environmental as children were present in current time, while having a history and a future. They experienced life as contributing individuals within environments that were social and physical, that included pre-existing materials and traditions, and that had a sense of a shared history and future aspirations. Thus, the spontaneous art work of children could be understood as more than their mere individual expression, in that 'every culture has its own collective individuality' and this 'leaves its indelible imprint upon the art that is produced' (p. 344).

Brief overview of children's art experience

As I hope the previous discussion has shown, although Dewey made just passing reference to children's arts experiences, his philosophies provide some useful frameworks for understanding the nature of young children's art experiences. Let me conclude this chapter then, by providing a brief overview of some of Dewey's (1934/2005) key ideas as I see them pertaining to my study of young children's art experiences. These points will be relevant to an understanding of children's art experiences, as presented in the findings and discussion chapters. In Part Two of this thesis, they will also be more carefully expanded on, in relation to the children's home and preschool art experiences as presented, in Chapter 9. Deweyan perspectives also informed the way I made sense of the range of art-related activities that the children were engaged in at school, as discussed in Part Three of this thesis, and the level to which such activities could be thought of as encompassing artistic-esthetic experience for the children. However, these discussions are in no way a definitive summary of Dewey's philosophies on art as experience.

- In art experience there is a sense of 'taking in' as mere recognition is replaced by perception. This move involves a person in an 'act of reconstructive doing, and consciousness becomes fresh and alive' (p. 54).
- Through art experience, perception informs action and action informs perception. At its height art experience involves a child in 'complete interpenetration of self and the world of objects and events' (p. 18).
- Children's artistic growth and development can be understood as transformations of 'factors of opposition and conflict' into 'differentiated aspects of a higher powered and more significant life' (p. 13) where past experience is carried into present experience with some sense of future actions. Furthermore, such growth and development is part of the ebb and flow of life and includes times of pause and rest. Thus, artistic development may be best understood over time and with a sense of those experiences that children connect with through their art.
- Children's spontaneous art can be understood as a 'complete absorption in subject matter that is fresh, the freshness of which holds and sustains emotion' (p. 73). As such, spontaneous art is not merely an outburst of emotion so much as an expressive act informed by social interactions, life's experiences and personal interests.

- Art experience has the potential to be transformative, not only in terms of the children transforming materials into art media, but in terms of a transformation of their interactions within the human and physical environment into states of 'participation and communication' (p. 22).

Moreover, to the extent that children's artmaking activities promoted perception over mere recognition, a sense of completion over distraction, and a sense of unifying quality of experience over of fragmented activity, then those activities can be thought of as 'art experience' and in the realm of esthetic experience. Developing an understanding of this through research is important for, from Dewey's perspective,

Esthetic experience is a manifestation, a record and celebration of the life of civilization, a means of promoting its development, and is also ultimate judgment upon the quality of a civilization. (p. 339)

4. RESEARCH PROCESSES

A major aim of this research was to gain an understanding of children's art experiences from their perspectives, as they transitioned in time and experience between home, preschool and school contexts. As such the overall research question was, **'What is the nature of a child's art experiences over time in their home, early childhood centre and school?'**

After reviewing the literature and Dewey's philosophies it became clearer to me that an understanding of the nature of each child's art experiences began with documenting what the children shared about their art experiences while also being cognisant of the physical and social context in which such experience took place. Such an investigation required research methodologies that accessed and documented young children's perspectives, while acknowledging complexity of experiences. In addition, I felt that research processes needed to be consistent with sociocultural-historical perspectives and be relevant to arts-based inquiries. After exploring several research methodologies I became convinced that no one approach fully met all of these demands, but I believed that aspects of two research approaches would fit my purposes. In particular, I explored the way in which narrative inquiry, as expounded by Jean Clandinin and Michael Connelly (2000), was appropriate for making sense of children's stories of experiences. Also, I felt that visual ethnography, as I understood it through the work of Sarah Pink (2001), provided a viable and visual way to engage *with* children through research processes and to document and share the children's artworks.

I begin this chapter with an overview of my research paradigm and then describe and discuss narrative inquiry (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) and visual ethnography (Pink, 2001) in relation to this current research. The chapter then focuses on how participants were selected, introduces the key participants and describes the research sites and timeframes. The next three sections outline how visual ethnographic tools and processes were employed; how positive research relationships and ethical research practices were maintained; and how the research data was analyzed.

Research methodologies

Research paradigm

This research fits within a qualitative and co-constructivist paradigm. Research paradigms are 'belief systems that are based on ontological, epistemological and

methodological assumptions' (Coll & Chapman, 2000, p. 2) and a 'pattern of activities held to be consistent with these assumptions' (Gergen & Gergen, 2003, p. 2). Within any research, these three facets are intimately linked, for, as Steven Krauss (2005) explains, 'ontology involves the philosophy of reality, epistemology addresses how we come to know that reality while methodology identifies the particular practices used to attain knowledge of it' (pp. 758-759).

A major aim of this research was to build an understanding of children's art experiences from their perspectives, as they transitioned in time and experience between their homes, early childhood centre and schools. As such, each child's experiences of art, the sense they made of these experiences, their interactions with others and the environments in which they had such experiences were of central interest to me. As will become evident in this thesis, my research was informed by a co-constructivist paradigm, drew on hermeneutic/interpretive approaches and generated research data through narrative inquiry (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) and visual ethnography (Pink, 2001). While narrative inquiry has often been based around written or verbal 'biographical particulars as narrated by the one who lives them' (Chase, 2005, p. 651), in this research the children's narratives of experiences have been also expressed visually through their photographs and artworks. Before describing the research methods and processes more fully, I will expand on what I mean by a co-constructivist approach.

My research was informed by a co-constructivist approach to understanding human learning, development and experience. In this respect, each child was seen as actively co-constructing their understanding of his or her art experiences within cultural and social environments. Such co-constructions, therefore, were not merely private affairs; instead, from a sociocultural-historical perspective, I recognized that children learnt and developed through interactions with people and objects (Vygotsky, 1978, 1986/1934). I also recognized that a child constructed his or her 'personal culture in the process of living, yet the latter process [was] organised by the social world in which the person' lived (Branco & Valsiner, 1997, p. 37). Further to this, within research processes, interaction between child-participants and the researcher generated both research data and transformed the child-participants' and researcher's experience and understanding of the phenomenon under study. As such, the research data was co-constructed through my interactions with the children. Furthermore, my theoretical perspectives influenced the general direction of such co-constructions and 'the nature of the phenomena under study' added 'specific constraints to the creation of methods' (Branco & Valsiner, 1997,

p. 38). As evident through my metaphor of Google Earth, I also saw such co-constructed knowledge about the children's art experiences as both 'context and time dependent' (Krauss, 2005, p. 259).

Researching with young children, and accessing their perspectives on experience, required carefully conceived research methodologies. As has been pointed out by others, as researchers have moved towards research with or for children 'there has been a growing awareness that while quantitative, survey and experimental studies are necessary, they cannot by themselves provide sufficient information or the insight required to fully capture the nuanced complexity of children's experiences' (Darbyshire, Schiller, & MacDougall, 2005, pp. 248-249). Furthermore, when working with young children it has been important for the researcher to discern 'the significance of what participants say in relation to the research question' (Ellis, 2006, p. 114). Thus, working reflexivity within qualitative research paradigms required me to think about what I found out and how I went about doing this investigation. In the current research, having appropriate research methods and carefully conceived approaches to building research relationships was vital. These aspects are discussed at some length later in this chapter.

While I have stated that the works of Dewey and Vygotsky have informed my work, before expanding on my research approaches I would like to reiterate and clarify the extent to which I have employed and connected their theoretical perspectives within this research. Firstly, in terms of my own research connections with their theories, I have been aware of the way in which the sociocultural-historical perspectives that I brought to this research have underpinned the way I have come to understand how children learned and developed through social interactions and co-construction. These perspectives have been largely informed by my reading of the works of psychologist Lev Vygotsky; in particular his translated works *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes* (1978) and *Thought and language* (1962/1934). At the same time, in recognizing the need for an arts-based theoretical framework, in order to more clearly understand the nature of children's art experiences, I have engaged in a close and critical examination of John Dewey's philosophies as expressed in *Art as Experience* (1934/2005). It was this particular aspect of Dewey's work, and not his wider explorations of education and democracy, that helped structure aspects of my analytical discussions.

Secondly, while the theoretical perspectives of Vygotsky and Dewey, as expressed in these particular works, have provided some very useful frameworks for my own research and thinking about the findings, I have not focused on comparing

connections between their various viewpoints. I have however, read some relevant literature that has done this in relation to some of their wider works and theories. Some writers have seen their approaches to various aspects of education, everyday activities and the social environment as having many disconnections (Glassman, 2001) and connections (Prawat, 2002). And while their ideas have been compared with regards to aesthetic discourses in early childhood setting (Lim, 2004) and constructivist pedagogy (Popkewitz, 1998) it was not my intention to engage in these kinds of theoretical analysis in this thesis (although such analysis in relation to the findings will be possible at a later date). Rather my aim has been to undertake and present this research in such a way that the children's perspectives take prominence in the findings, and to use Deweyan and sociocultural-historical perspectives to inform an understanding of the children's art experiences in such a way that the research findings are accessible to practitioners.

Deweyan perspectives are addressed specifically in the discussions of the children's home and preschool experiences that are presented in Part Two of this thesis. While such perspectives continued to inform the school phase of the research, in Part Three of the thesis, rather than reiterating theoretical viewpoints already drawn out in Part Two, I have chosen to preface this third part by acknowledging and making sense of the plethora of art-related school-based activities. From a co-constructivist perspective, such an approach, I feel, provides some contextual overviews of classroom practices and prompts some recognition that 'the social environment does not "mould" or "shape" the developing human being, but provides the guiding and supportive resources for the person's individually unique construction of one's self' (Branco & Valsiner, 1997, p. 37). This overview of art-related activities then sets the scene for re-presenting each child's experiences of art at home and at school and a consideration of how these experiences sat alongside Deweyan perspectives on art experience (Dewey, 1934/2005). My hope has been that in re-presenting the children's art experiences in these various ways across this thesis, educational practitioners, researchers and parents may engage in an empathetic reading that leads to important pedagogical insights - insights which support them to interact with children, through art experience, in the spirit of co-construction.

Research approaches

Inquiring from sociocultural-historical perspectives

Given the previous discussions, in brief my research sought to co-construct an understanding of four children's art experiences as an aspect of their '*culture in human*

practices, situated in involvement with (and creation of) the multiple contexts that constitute their social worlds' (Moll, 2000, p. 258, original emphasis). Furthermore, I believed that children's development was 'not simply a matter of biological maturation; it [was] immeasurably enriched and extended through the individual's appropriation and mastery of cultural inheritance as is encountered in activity and interaction with others' (Wells, 2000, p. 54). Therefore, my research considered children's art experiences in their homes, preschool and schools, and was cognisant of the way children (and, to a lesser extent, I) engaged culturally and socially with and through the visual arts.

Inquiring narratively into children's art experience

When a colleague introduced me to Clandinin and Connelly's (2000) 'narrative inquiry' in her research with students with disabilities (Ward, 2007), this approach resonated with my pedagogic beliefs and practices. I was also receptive to the notion that 'individuals' lived 'storied lives on storied landscapes' (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 24), having conceptualized my own research journeys in a similar way. Relating this idea to children's art experience, I could see how young children had narratives of experience and how they lived in worlds that had interwoven narratives. Extending this idea to one that involved a sense of inquiry was not difficult, for inquiring narratively was part of my experience as a New Zealand educator. As Sandy Farquhar and Marilyn Flear (2007) pointed out,

Sociocultural theories, narrative-based pedagogies and the valuing of difference are current themes within the early childhood discourse in Aotearoa/New Zealand. New initiatives in curriculum and pedagogy, such as learning dispositions and the development of learning stories for planning and assessment in early childhood centres underline the importance of narrative pedagogies. These fluid pedagogies embrace the idea that identity is created through the stories we narrate and that are narrated about our lives. These stories are seen to be developed at the intersection of relationships, community and culture. (p. 29)

As an approach to research, Clandinin and Connelly (2000) have stated that narrative inquiry aims to understand experience through sharing and re-sharing the narrative of individuals' lives. They argued that researchers working with participants became part of that story and developed reflexive relationships 'between living a life story, retelling a life story, and reliving a life story' (p. 71). As such, narrative inquiry suggested a viable interactive, collaborative and co-constructive way for me to work with children as I listened for their stories of art experiences and retold these with them. This also presented a dynamic approach that could go beyond the children and their

immediate communities as the research story was ongoing and relived, shared and re-shared, within the research community.

Dewey's (1910/1991, 1934/2005, 1938) philosophies were influential in Clandinin and Connelly's approaches to narrative inquiry (Clandinin, 2007; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Connelly & Clandinin, 2006) as their description of the three-dimensional narrative inquiry space considered the personal and social (interactive); place (situation); and the past, present and future (continuity). To illustrate this further, I found Thomas Alexander's (1997) descriptions useful:

Dewey's analysis also reveals another important aspect of community: the inherent nature of time as a lived process. A community allows its members to have a sense of a common past and to anticipate together a common future. [The self] ... is radically temporal, having a sense of past, future, and vital present in which the open future is becoming the determinate past through action and undergoing. Rather than speaking so much of "identity," it would be better if we focused on the self as "continuity," understood here as a process of transformations that nevertheless sustain a coherent narrative. (p. 184)

Thus, for me, Clandinin and Connelly's (2000) description of the three-dimensional narrative inquiry space was not only useful in making sense of experience in context, but also embodied Deweyan philosophies, which were in turn important in my theoretical frameworks. To put it simply, such approaches resonated with my research interest in understanding children's art experiences in relation to people, place and time. In making sense of experience from within this narrative inquiry space Clandinin and Connelly (2000) explained that researchers needed to move '*inward, outward, backward, forward*' (p. 49, original italics):

By inwards, we mean the internal conditions, such as feelings, hopes, aesthetic reactions, and moral dispositions. By outward, we mean towards the existential conditions, that is, the environment. By backwards and forward, we refer to the temporality – past, present and future. (p. 50)

They also explained that, rather than just listening for and retelling stories with research participants, a narrative inquirer must become involved in making sense of life as lived. 'To begin with,' they wrote, 'it is trying to figure out the taken-for-grantedness. And when that taken-for-grantedness begins also to be taken for granted by the researcher, then the researcher can begin to participate in and see things that worked in, for example, ...the classroom' (2000, p. 78). I took this to mean that researchers needed to be conscious of those things that were taken for granted, and then having recognized these things, be able to position themselves amongst them. 'Narrative inquiry,' Clandinin and Connelly (2000) pointed out, also 'characteristically begins with the researcher's

autobiographically orientated narrative associated with the *research puzzle*' (p. 41, original emphasis). Thus, this thesis began this way and also explored historical narrative threads of early childhood art research through the review of literature.

During fieldwork, as they undertook research, narrative inquirers gathered such things as participants' stories, field notes, interviews, photographs, drawings and documents. They then composed 'field texts' from these sources as they interpreted those aspects they wished to foreground in relation to their research focus. Such interpretations were done with an awareness of 'where they and their participants [were] placed at any particular moment – temporally, spatially, and in terms of the personal and the social' (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 95). In turn, these field texts become research texts that could be shared and re-shared with the research participants. As such, the researcher became part of the experiences, and not just outside of them. In terms of this current research, such approaches resonated with my aspiration to undertake research *with* children, and not just *about* them.

Together, these various research processes generated data from multiple sources as ideas, images and experiences were shared and re-shared and meanings were co-constructed. Within this narrative and visual ethnographic research 'validity, in the sense of the strength of an argument' emerged through 'layering the various points of viewing of multiple readers' (Goldman-Segall, 1998, p. 264) as the children and I were co-participants in the research processes. Various points of viewing were also explored as I was receptive to the children's genuine interests and voices - even if these did not always gel with my own. In addition, great care was taken to be 'iterative rather than linear' as I moved 'back and forth between design and implementation to ensure congruence among question formulation, literature, recruitment, data collection strategies, and analysis' (Morse, Barrett, Mayan, Olson, & Spiers, 2002, p. 17). As will be discussed more fully later in this chapter, special consideration was given to the importance of developing and maintaining positive research relationships with children, and reflexivity was employed to explore how knowledge about individual's arts experiences was produced and how various relations of power influenced the production of knowledge.

As noted, through this current research I hoped to build a deeper understanding of how four young children experienced art across three authentic contexts. As Cho and Trent (2006) pointed out, research participants who are 'in a research process that values a recursive validity are involved throughout the inquiry...and their perspectives

are valued both seriously and over time' (p. 334). Researching across various contexts not only valued the children's perspectives but provided fuller connections between what the children told me about their art experiences and what I and others observed. As such, echoing both my Google Earth metaphor and the words of Goldman-Segall (1998), multiple views were layered in 'constellations so that larger, more representative theories' unfolded and new patterns emerged (p. 262).

The contribution that this research's theories and new patterns will hopefully make to the field of early childhood art resonates with Clandinin & Connelly's (2000) perspectives on narrative inquiry in that,

The contribution of narrative inquiry is more often intended to be the creation of a new sense of meaning and significance with respect to a research topic than it is to yield a set of knowledge claims that might incrementally add to knowledge in the field. (p. 42)

Also of importance to my current research was the way narrative inquiry recognized the context as ever present and 'necessary for making sense of any person, event or thing.' Furthermore, 'in narrative thinking, the person in context [was] of prime interest' rather than the 'grand narrative' or 'universal case' (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 32). However, in turn this could generate some tensions 'at the boundaries between thinking narratively and thinking formalistically' (p. 40) in relation to the place of theory in research. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) said that this tension 'often appears as a tension between literature reviewed as a structuring framework and literature reviewed as a kind of conversation...between theory and the stories of life contained in the inquiry' (p. 41). I experienced some of these same tensions, and while I have reviewed the literature and Dewey's theories in separate chapters, I have been careful not to re-define the children's narratives of art experiences too tightly in terms of these theoretical viewpoints. Instead, in Part Two, each child's home and preschool art experiences are shared with brief references to the literature and Deweyan perspectives are more fully explored in Chapter 9. In Part Three, an underlying understanding of Deweyan perspectives allowed me to make sense to the many art-related activities that permeated the Australian school curriculum and to consider how children experienced engagement in these art activities and other forms of artistic-esthetic experience (Dewey, 1934/2005).

Having accepted that narrative inquiry offered some useful research approaches for this current research, I considered the implications of working this way with young children. For example, as a narrative inquirer I needed to watch outward at the experiences under study and turn inward at my own experience of experience (Clandinin

& Connelly, 2000). As such, inquiring narratively with young children also relied on the children's ability to verbalize their stories of experiences and on my ability to engage in those stories through my own experience. As an artist, educator and researcher I felt I was equipped to meet some of these challenges. However, considering the age of the children, and my focus on their art and art experiences, I also identified several issues that may have proved problematic.

Firstly, in general, in order to make sense of young children's stories, a researcher reflected upon their own experience of experience (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) and on dominant theories which informed their understanding of children's art. As discussed, while many of the traditional lenses of inquiry have reinterpreted young children's art experiences through adult perspectives or filtered them through curriculum and political discourse, this research aimed to access and share children's perspectives on art experience. Secondly, narrative inquiry required young children to verbally describe complex experience to others. This concerned me in that art experiences were understood in ways other than just verbal thought, and even for adults, verbal descriptions of art experience can be difficult to access. Therefore, expecting children to describe their art experience through verbal narratives limited how and what they communicated. Consequently, while narrative inquiry offered some valuable research tools, which I planned to employ, I also looked to other models of accessing children's experiences of art. With these points in mind, I considered visual ethnography, and in particular the writing of Sarah Pink (2001).

Inquiring visually with children

Young children's art experiences are soaked through with images, structures, action, feelings and sense. To be forgetful of these, at the expense of capturing the spoken word, would be to ignore the external manifestations of experience, and the internalized experience of experience. Therefore, while employing aspects of narrative inquiry approaches were useful in this research, I also required research methods that made the children's art experiences visible and that supported arts-based modes of communication. Also, my interest in the visual and my capacity to be involved in time intensive research made visual ethnography an attractive research approach.

In general, ethnography recognizes that culture exists in human practice (Moll, 2000), and involves the researcher in extensive contact with participants in authentic contexts. Such approaches are valuable in investigating children's experiences, in representing children's perspectives and in teasing out the 'temporal underpinnings of

different presentations of childhood' (James & Prout, 1997, p. 231). Pink (2001) pointed out that traditionally ethnography involves the researcher's active extended participation in people's daily lives and the generation of data through observations and interviews. This data generation was a process of creating and representing knowledge based on the ethnographer's own experiences. Moreover,

during the 1990s new innovations in visual technology, critical 'postmodern' theoretical approaches to subjectivity, experience, knowledge and representation, a reflexive approach to ethnographic fieldwork methodology, and an emphasis on interdisciplinarity have invited exciting new possibilities for the use of photographic technologies and images in ethnography. (pp. 1-2)

These innovations and paradigm shifts meant that within research, the visual could be engaged in both as a mode of recording data and as a medium through which new knowledge and critiques could be created (Pink, 2001). Thus, in using the term 'visual ethnography' one recognizes both the potential of visual media to inform ethnographic research and for an ethnographic approach to 'support the production and interpretation of visual images' (p. 1).

In this current research I used photographs, which the children and I took, as central focus points for our research interactions, negotiation of shared understandings, co-construction and communication of research knowledge. Pink (2001) suggested that research participants created narratives with and around photographs. It was not just a matter of the ethnographer asking them to provide a response to, or information about the image;

Rather ethnographers should be interested in how the informants use the content of the images as vessels in which to invest meanings and through which to produce and represent their knowledge, self-identities, experiences and emotions. (p. 68)

As such, in the current research children's photographs had the potential to not only provide focal points for interactions and discussions between the children and me, but to facilitate deeper understandings about both the child and their artmaking experiences. With these ideas in mind I explored the ways in which advances in visual technologies had opened up new ways of conveying meaning in the construction of ethnographic descriptions, especially in research with children. For example, when researching with young New Zealand children, Alison Stephenson (2009) noted that the children's own photography provided an effective way for them to share their experiences. In addition, she noted that a researcher's prolonged and sustained involvement in the data-generation period, and a willingness to step back from the

research agenda and be open to the more overt messages, aided in developing a deeper understanding of the children's perspectives.

In order to be aware of the strengths and pitfalls of working with visual methods, throughout the research I scrutinized relevant literature and research (such as Bach, 1998, 2007; Banks, 1995, 2001; Brooks, 2002b; Caillier, 2002; Christensen & James, 2000; Collier & Collier, 1986; English, 1988; Goldman-Segall, 1998; Harper, 2002; M. J. Moran & Tegano, 2005; Papademas, 2004; Prosser, 1998; Ring, 2003). I took special note of the way cameras were used with young children in classrooms (Cook & Hess, 2007; Jorgenson & Sullivan, 2009), early childhood centres (Blagojevic & Thomes, 2008; Einarsdottir, 2005; Lind, 2005; A. Smith, Duncan, & Marshall, 2005; Stephenson, 2009), and art galleries (Cook & Hess, 2007; Fasoli, 2003). I also examined research in which children's own photographs helped build a better understanding of how they experienced starting school (Dockett & Perry, 2003; Kirova & Emme, 2006), aspects of their everyday and working lives (Brown, Lysaght, & Westbrook, 2007; Mizen, 2005), their 'ways of looking at the world and their physical and social positioning' (Orellana, 1999, p. 74) and their experiences of chronic ill health (C. D. Clark, 1999). I will now discuss some of these studies in more detail and in doing so describe some of the insights I gained for my own visual ethnographic approaches.

In one aspect of her Chicago-based ethnographic study, Cindy Clark (1999) gave 36 chronically ill children and their families single-use cameras. After photographs were taken, the cameras were returned by mail and the printed photographs 'autodrove' the interview process from the informants' point of view, thus retaining 'for the child the right to interpret material in her or his own way' (p. 41). Such approaches supported Pink's (2001) assertion that 'photographic interviews can allow ethnographers and informants to discuss images in ways that may create a 'bridge' between their different experiences of reality' (p. 69). Douglas Harper (2002) suggested that successful use of photographs in research processes recognized that photographs evoke 'information, feelings and memories that are due to the photograph's particular form of representation' and elicited a 'different kind of information' (p. 13). Thus, conversations based around photographs generated meaning that was constructed through joint activity that 'involves mentoring by more culturally knowledgeable persons' (Lee & Smagorinsky, 2000a, p. 2). In the case of understanding chronic illness, the children were the more knowledgeable people, and researchers who recorded these accounts needed to be as loyal as possible to the

'context, negotiations, and intersubjectivities' through which they produced knowledge (Pink, 2001, p. 18).

Power relationships exist between children and adults, and between researchers and participants. Therefore, Pink (2001) suggested, ethnographers should be 'self-conscious about how they represent themselves to informants' and 'consider how their identities are constructed and understood by the people with whom they work' (p. 20). As such, I was aware that my art knowledge and interest in children's art experiences could influence the children's experience of art and of the research processes in particular ways. Moreover, within a co-constructivist paradigm I did not wish to be the only researcher so much as a co-researcher with the children.

Returning now to research with children, Lyn Fasoli (2003) took digital photographs while seven 4 and 5-year-old children visited an Australian art gallery. Through analysis of the photographs she considered how children's actions were linked to their 'communities of practice' (Wenger, 1998) and how they experienced artifacts as 'mediated entities' (Wartofsky, 1979). Despite these understandings, such approaches did not access children's perspectives or provide me with insights into how children might use photography. Tina Cook and Elise Hess (2007) described three research projects that did involve children's photography. One English project involved three primary pupils and four secondary students who created a book of photographs of their special school. The second study gathered views and opinions of five young children on various aspects of their life in an English reception class. The third study explored what 12 Danish preschool children understood by the experience of visiting art museums. In all cases the children had disposable single-use cameras, and although it was recognized that adults needed to 'relinquish some of their predetermined research agenda and methods' (Cook & Hess, 2007, p. 31) procedures were structured by the adult researchers. In each case the children took photographs that were then printed by the researchers and discussed with the children. These discussions subsequently 'revealed more in-depth feelings' than the researchers expected from a 'more traditional interview process' (pp. 35-36). These three research projects involved predetermined research agendas with short timeframes ranging from a single art museum visit to seven full-day sessions with children. Thus, while these projects demonstrated children's ability to take and respond to photographs, the children were limited by the number and scope of the photographs taken.

Over a longer period, Marjorie Orellana's (1999) three-year ethnographic research into children's views of their social worlds brought together children's comments with

their photographs; in this case of the spaces they lived in. In one aspect of the research, where the children took photographs at home and/or school, they borrowed Orellana's camera, which used film, or were given a disposable camera. Orellana (1999) noted that, 'the freedom that kids had to take pictures of their "choice" was delimited by the degree of spatial autonomy they had at the time they had the camera' (p. 77). She also pointed out that the children's social relationships and their culturally constructed 'photographic traditions' influenced how, when and why they used the camera. For example, a few children 'seemed to feel they had to "sneak" shots of adults' (1999, p. 80). Thus, relationships impacted on visual ethnographic processes in terms of the children's relationships with others, and with the camera. Orellana discussed how the children's photographs brought new perspectives to what seemed familiar, and as such I felt she illustrated Pink's (2001) assertion that,

Any experience, action, artifact, image or idea is never definitely just one thing but may be redefined differently in different situations, by different individuals and in terms of different discourses...the 'ethnographicness' of any image or representation is contingent on how it is situated, interpreted and used to invoke meaning and knowledge that are of ethnographic interest. (p. 19)

In Iceland, Johanna Einarsdottir (2005) investigated 4 to 6-year-old children's perspectives on playschool (that is, their early childhood centre). In addition to other research methods the children were provided with cameras. One group of 22 children had digital cameras and they showed a guest around their playschool and took pictures of what they thought was important. These children took between 8 and 20 photos each and the most frequently photographed place was the playground. The second group of 12 children had disposable cameras for a longer time period and took photographs of what they wanted to. This second group was unsupervised and the manner in which they took photos varied - some lost interest, others took their photographs quickly while others systematically planned and took photographs. Overall, this group of children took more photographs in private places and in a more playful manner than the supervised children. Both groups talked about their photographs and Einarsdottir indicated that this was very important as without their comments the images alone could be misinterpreted. In my current research, this connection between children's photographs and their comments was central to my interpretation of the children's art experiences.

Sometimes, sharing verbal understandings can be problematic and visual methods have provided important links between researchers and participants. Anna Kirova and Michael Emme's (2006) research was based around a hermeneutic

phenomenological approach (van Manen, 1990) and the idea that 'anything consciously employed as a sign is, logically, language' (Dewey, 1910/1991, p. 170). They used still photography taken by six immigrant children to generate a joint understanding of their experiences of starting in Grade 5 at a Canadian school. The research approach also had aspects of narrative inquiry in that the students retold their experiences and then photographed re-enactments of these. These photographs were 'manipulated and arranged in a narrative format' (Kirova & Emme, 2006, p. 4) with some written text to create a fotonovela. This link between the visual and the narrative was also articulated by Hedy Bach (1998, 2007) in research that deliberately integrated Clandinin and Connelly's (2000) narrative inquiry approach with visual methods. Bach (2007) wrote, 'visual narrative inquiry is an intentional, reflective, active human process in which researchers and participants explore and make meaning of experience both visually and narratively' (p. 281). She also noted that one of the ways in which people told stories of experience was through 'the photographs they take and through the photographs that others take of them' (p. 282).

While I agree with Bach's (2007) view, children's creation of their own photographs can be limited by the restrictions people, places and visual technologies place on them. In many of the above mentioned studies, children used disposable, single-use cameras with 24-26 exposure films, or digital cameras under supervision. While these studies usually documented the strengths and limitations of using photography, one unexplored aspect was the temporal disconnect between the photographic act and the viewing of those images, especially when single-use cameras were used. For example, while Orellana (1999) commented on one girl's disappointment when an object she believed she had photographed did not appear in the actual photograph, the relationship between taking and viewing the photographs has not been fully explored. Also, while several articles extolled the financial benefits of disposable cameras, such devices limited the number of photographs taken, and the children did not experience the image until it was in the hands of the adult researcher. As such, in my opinion, the experience of using non-digital cameras was 'limited by all the causes which interfere with perception of the relation between undergoing and doing' (Dewey, 1934/2005, p. 46).

One study that provided some useful comparisons between single-use and digital cameras was that of Einarsdottir (2005), as discussed previously. However, the children's photographic experiences varied greatly in terms of the social connections

made during and following their photography sessions. It could be argued that, in her research, one group of children was constrained and supported by interactions with an accompanying adult while the other group was equally inhibited and liberated by a lack of this. Despite these ambiguities I believed there was potential to use the digital camera in ways that supported and promoted children's independent photography while also developing child-researcher collaborations. In my research, therefore, I ensured that the four child participants and I each had a digital camera.

As the following discussions will reveal, within this current research the children's photographs were valuable focal points for interactions between the children and me. Throughout the fieldwork phase of the research, the manner in which the data was generated through verbal discussions, photographs and observations, and the way in which open and ongoing interactions with children, families and teachers permitted me to check that the sense I was making from the research data resonated with that of the participants, allowed me to be as 'fair and as forthright as possible' (Goldman-Segall, 1998, p. 261) when crafting research texts. Furthermore, revisiting the digitally recorded photographs and conversations, field and research notes, contributed towards verification processes that incrementally contributed to 'ensuring reliability and validity and, thus, the rigor of a study' (Morse et al., 2002, p. 17). This rigor was carried through to the discussions chapters as theoretical analyses were woven together with children's voices and their photographs. In addition, the voices of parents, siblings and teachers added depth and resonance to research findings and instilled a level of trustworthiness to the research.

Research Methods

This section discusses preparation for fieldwork, ethical approval processes, participant selection, and research timeframes. It also describes the children's use of cameras and how research visits were organized. While this section is written in a logical order, in reality these processes were 'messy' and complex.

Preparation for fieldwork

There were many months of preparation preceding my entry into the research field, which included relocation from New Zealand to New South Wales (NSW) Australia. Once residing in Australia, and prior to approaching potential research sites, I talked with local early childhood educators and academics in order to familiarize myself with local

terminology, early childhood systems, NSW curriculums, the educational qualifications of early childhood staff, the ages at which children attended centres and schools and general expectations surrounding conduct in early childhood centres and schools.

As a newcomer to the geographic region, the people I met, the places I visited, and systems I worked within were unfamiliar to me. During the initial stages I wove a complex network of contacts and people, and established a sense of place and belonging, as I defined, redefined and refined my roles and relationships with people and places. During this familiarization phase, I talked with Judith Bell⁸, who was the president of the preschool association and director of Markham Community Preschool (MCP). Judith provided me with names and contact details of local preschools. She also expressed an interest in being involved in the project, and as we developed a good working relationship, this became my preferred site. I also took the opportunity to talk informally to a local primary school principal to gauge support for the project.

Ethics approval processes

An ethics approval application was submitted to the University of New England's Human Research Ethics Committee. UNE research policies were developed in accordance with the Australian *National statement on ethical conduct in human research* (Australian Government, 2007) and approval was granted (HREC approval number HE06/93). In addition, I completed an extensive ethics 'SERAP' application through a *State education research application process* (NSW Department of Education and Training, 2006c) in order to undertake research in two public schools. Upon successful fulfillment of ethical requirements I was issued with an official letter - SERAP number 2006071. I will now discuss and describe how these ethical requirements were met in the participation selection processes.

Selection of participants

Researching with young children for up to one year across multiple contexts demanded significant time commitments and the establishment and maintenance of positive research relationships. Also, for every main participant there were numerous associated participants such as family members, preschool and school staff, pupils and their families. Consequently, I limited the number of key participants to four. In order to

⁸ Throughout this thesis, all names of people, places and locations are pseudonyms.

have a gender mix, and allowing for the possibility of one or more child withdrawing, I selected two boys and two girls.

Following UNE ethical approval, information sheets for parents and preschool staff (Appendix A) and staff consent forms (Appendix B) were distributed. I attended a MCP Board of Management meeting, to discuss the project and answer questions. Parental and personalized children's consent forms (Appendices C, D, and E) were also sent out to 40 families where children were starting school the following year. In the first week of term two I was at the preschool for the first hour so children and parents could meet me, ask questions or arrange other meetings.

When consent forms were returned I phoned to acknowledge responses and to arrange home visits. I subsequently visited eight homes and spoke with four girls and six boys and their families. Such meetings provided opportunities to clarify the children's rights to decline, issues of informed consent and anonymity. I also asked permission to approach the schools that the children were likely to attend. These home visits were important, in that they provided insights into how each child responded to me, how I interacted with children, how enthusiastic parents and children were to be involved and my own comfort level with the family and theirs with me.

In addition to home visits, I casually observed and interacted with the children at preschool. This provided insights into each child's willingness to interact with me in the absence of family. These visits also gave children opportunities to get to know me, and to talk with their parents about working with me. Amongst the potential participants were two sets of boy-girl twins. Both families felt that inclusion of one twin necessitated inclusion of the other. While the prospect of working with twins was tempting, I had some concerns about ensuring the well-being of each participant as I endeavored to access one child's perspectives. I realized that, as just one researcher, it was going to be difficult to interact with one child at their home, without thereby 'ignoring' the other.

Considerations such as these were explored as part of the selection process. In addition, I considered practical issues such as location of homes and schools, and the days that each child attended preschool. Also of key importance was the likelihood of being able to follow a child through to his/her first term at school. Therefore, following home visits, I contacted the schools that may have later been involved. I followed up initial school contacts with a personalized covering letter (Appendix F) and information sheets for school principals and teachers (Appendix G). I then met with six principals, who expressed support for the project, while the seventh had reservations about children

using cameras at school. I spoke informally with the public school principals, as official involvement was not possible until I provided them with a SERAP letter (Appendix H).

As a result of the various selection processes, two boys (Lee and Jackson) and two girls (Lilly and Sophie) were selected. Lee was a first generation Australia-born Chinese boy, and Jackson, Lilly and Sophie were Australian Caucasian children. The children all lived in Ashtown (NSW, Australia), attended Markham Community Preschool, were in two parent families and had at least one sibling. The following year, they attended three different schools. An overview of the pseudonyms used for participants and places, and the ages of the children and their siblings is in Appendix I.

Once key participants were selected the relevant letters were sent to four participating and 36 non-participating families (Appendices J, K) and to three participating and four non-participating schools (Appendices L, M). In addition, the 70 families at preschool were informed about the research, and consent requested for their child or children to be involved (Appendices N, O). A similar process was repeated the following year for the 48 families associated with the participants' classes at schools (Appendices P, Q), and for the three principals and three teachers (Appendices R, S).

Timeframes

Following the selection of participants and notifications (July – October 2006), the research had two main phases. The first phase related to the children's home and preschool-based experiences. This covered the children's last term at preschool and their summer holidays (October 2006 to January 2007) and included some home-based visits prior to this time. The second phase encompassed the children's home and school experiences (February to June, 2007). This phase included several whole day visits to each school. Final visits to schools were undertaken in late June, 2007. Following a short break, from July onwards I had planned to concentrate on writing and further analysis. However, these plans were significantly disrupted for 12 months after I became critically ill, was hospitalized and had a lengthy period of convalescence. During this time, the children and their families were supportive and we maintained contact.

In July 2008 I returned to New Zealand and my academic position at Massey University. I then worked on my research analysis part time and maintained informal contact with the children. In mid-2009, having composed overviews of the children's research narratives, I returned to Australia and briefly meet with two of the child participants and a parent of another. The fourth family had relocated. These meetings

provided an opportunity to share and discuss my research findings and for the children and parents to give feedback on these. It also provided an opportunity to talk with the children and for us to more formally say our farewells as I 'exited the field' (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Analysis, writing and revisions continued on a part time basis alongside full time employment until the thesis was submitted.

Fieldwork: Children's use of cameras and research visits

In October 2006 each child was given their own digital camera and accessories⁹. Believing that young children were competent problem solvers and learners, I introduced them to the basic camera functions and encouraged them to take photographs while I spoke to their parents about camera use in their homes. Understanding how families used cameras was important as cameras were 'part of a collective meanings system that are products of history' (D. C. Holland & Valsiner, 1988, p. 250) and, according to Pink (2001) understanding how people identified with and used digital cameras in their daily lives helped researchers to support collaborative visual ethnographic partnerships. In this research, although no child had personally owned a digital camera, three sets of parents owned digital cameras and allowed their children to occasionally take photographs.

As will later become evident, once the children had personal cameras, they readily mastered photographic techniques and camera use. The children and I were exploring photographic possibilities through action, and often the children made discoveries before I did. Developing shared and negotiated understandings of research intentions and relationships was important so I did not 'instruct' the children to take specific photos, but instead had several conversations with them about the nature of the project. I discussed how I was very interested in children's experiences of art and how their photographs and what they told me about these, helped me to understand children's art experiences better. The children brought their own knowledge and past experiences to our interactions, both in terms of camera use and in developing an understanding of my research intentions and their part in assisting me. Throughout the research, discussions based around photographs were home-based and through viewing and discussions, the children not only set the pace and direction of the data generation and analysis, but their voices and opinions were listened to and they were visible in the research narratives. I will now provide a brief overview of the nature of the research visits.

⁹ They received a Kodak Easy Share C533 digital camera, rechargeable batteries, 1GB memory card and personalized camera bag.

In the first research phase I visited each child on alternate weeks at preschool or at home. During home visits, each child would place their camera's memory card in my laptop computer and manage a slide show of their photographs, while telling me about these. I digitally saved their photographs in a dated and named file and digitally recorded our conversations. Each child dictated the pace and focus of the discussions and, in order to assist in later matching the verbal comments with the visual images, I occasionally made verbal reference to photograph numbers. I did not take notes during these sessions, instead giving my full attention to each child and their explanations during the sessions and, as soon as possible following our session, I revisited the photographs and audio files and made notes. During our interactions I also asked occasional questions in order to clarify what motivated the children, the social circumstances in which they created their art and how they felt about it. I found that the children responded positively to these questions and over time discussed such issues in course of their own descriptions.

During home visits a parent was nearby and the girls had a younger sister present. Visits usually took place in the afternoons when the children's older siblings were at school. In the second research phase I visited the children at their school and in their homes after school hours or in the weekend. Siblings, and at least one parent, were usually present for those visits.

It was evident that the children's behaviour and interactions varied between home, preschool and school contexts. In making sense of each child's experience I found it useful to consider, from hermeneutic phenomenological perspective (van Manen, 1990), how each child behaved and reacted in various contexts. For example, while a space had physical characteristics, how a child felt within a space (as evident by his/her actions and reactions) was important. Overall, the lively nature of home visits reinforced my impression that ways of being a preschool boy or girl were different to ways of being a family member. Also, at home the children responded to me more as an equal and took decision-making roles. Therefore, being a visitor in children's homes, rather than just interacting with them at the preschool and school, helped to address adult-child power imbalances and contributed to the validity of this study.

From the onset the children were competent photographers, computer operators, orators, decision-makers and organizers. The children used their cameras to record aspects of their lives and art experiences. Over the course of the research our

collaborations resulted in over five thousand photographs and thirty hours of research conversations.

Research relationships and ethical practices

While the use of photography significantly heightened the need for respectful and trustworthy research relationships no person censored or limited the children's discussions or the images that they shared with me. I do not believe that it was just a matter of 'luck', as I had deliberately and carefully worked on establishing and maintaining positive research relationships throughout every phase of the research. González and Moll (2002) noted, for example, that 'the more that participants can engage and identify with the topic, the more interest and motivation is generated' (p. 627) and I kept this in mind as I consciously worked on building positive research relationships. Also, I took on-board Pink's (2001) assertion that ethical dilemmas could be minimized when researchers and participants collaborate.

In my research such collaborations involved the children and I as co-researchers. Yet, as Malcolm Hill (2005) pointed out, few studies have involved children in this way. Therefore, initially I was charting relatively new terrain as I endeavored to foster collaborative relationship with the children through visual ethnography and narrative inquiry. With this in mind I thought carefully about how to develop and maintain positive research relationships with the young co-participants. To these ends I found Elizabeth Graue and Daniel Walsh's work on the 'researcher role as context' (1998, pp. 70-90) and Clandinin and Connelly's (2000) writing on working at the boundaries of research useful in helping me to be conscious of how to develop positive research relationships. As I believe that this was an important aspect of my research methodology I will now describe this in some detail, drawing on examples from the research. Aspects of this discussion on building research relationships have been published elsewhere (Richards, 2009a).

Clandinin and Connelly (2000) claimed that boundaries existed between narrative inquiry approaches and reductionistic and formalistic approaches, where all experience was seen in terms of playing out the 'hegemonies of politics, culture, gender, and framework' (p. 40). Therefore, I needed to be 'autobiographically conscious' of my reactions to my work (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 46) as tensions arose when working at the boundaries of my own narrative history and that of the actual research narrative. Furthermore, Graue and Walsh (1998) suggested that the 'act of research is

conceived as nested contexts, including the researcher's perspectives on research, theory, and in this case, children; the role negotiated with/by the participants; and the relationships that ensue over time' (p. 73).

These ideas about nested contexts (Graue & Walsh, 1998) and working at the boundaries (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) provided a framework of principles that I used throughout the research in order to be conscious of my attitudes, practices and interpersonal relationships when researching with young children. As such, these principles informed my research practices before and during fieldwork. Specifically I considered:

- How and in what ways did my perspectives on children, research and theory impact on research processes?
- How and in what ways were my roles with children and other research participants negotiated and dynamic?
- How and in what ways did relationships develop and change over time and experience?
- When 'working at the boundaries' (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) of personal and research site beliefs, histories and ethics, what tensions arose?

In the following discussion I will reflect on the first three questions and, in each case, describe some of the actual tensions that arose.

Considering perspectives on children, research and theory

A consideration of my perspectives on working with children was crucial in developing positive research relationships. Just as Jessica Ball (2005) believed that research with indigenous communities should benefit these people 'substantially within the foreseeable future' (p. 86) I reminded myself that parents did not share their child's lives with me for my benefit or for a sense of greater good, but in the belief that their child benefited from this experience. Therefore, prior to participant selection I asked myself, "If I were a parent why would I allow my child to be involved in this research; how would s/he benefit from interacting with this person?" These questions brought into consideration what I personally contributed to the research, my views about childhood and children's rights, and how I would develop positive relationships with the child participants. Principally, in considering the above questions, I believed that as the children received my focused attention and had their opinions, feelings and experiences acknowledged I could, and did, contribute to their experiences of interacting with a caring

adult who was genuinely interested in their perspectives. As an adult, I could also respond to their humour and happiness, help them to deal with discomfort or unease, consider their physical and emotional needs, and make sure that no harm came to them. Though not a word often used in research (and certainly not the language used in my official ethical approval procedures), I contributed to the love that each child experienced in his or her social world. I also brought to our interactions my own experience in art and art education, believing that our joint focus on this aspect of their lives would enrich their experience of art and have a positive effect on their art self-efficacy.

Working within a co-constructivist paradigm my research methodology needed to be 'ethical, involve the use of appropriate approaches and fit the purpose in hand' (Abbott & Langston, 2005, p. 39). Like others, (such as, Alderson, 2000; Jones, 2004; Morrow, 2005), I considered children capable of being co-researchers and this influenced how our research relationships developed. Specifically, through visual ethnographic methods (Pink, 2001), I supported the children in maintaining some control over research processes as their photographs and comments generated data and informed my research directions. Furthermore, while I controlled the processes of academic writing, through participatory research relationships our evolving relationships and co-constructions guided the direction of these theoretical journeys.

As well as working across the boundaries of researcher/participant relationships I experienced tensions as research relationships evolved, and joint understandings were negotiated. For example, at my first meeting with Lee's father he challenged the robustness of qualitative research. His doctoral research had been scientific and we spoke for over an hour, comparing qualitative and quantitative methods. By doing so we generated a better understanding of each other's perspectives, and the way the research might unfold. Had I been unprepared for the tensions generated by disparate theoretical positions, I may have found this part of the research process too confronting and have not selected Lee.

Tensions also arose over children's camera use. For example, in response to an article about research methods (Richards, 2007b), an anonymous peer reviewer suggested that young children were unable to competently use digital cameras. Furthermore, some school and early childhood centre policies controlled or prohibited the use of digital cameras. These tensions were positive insofar as they alerted me to aspects of my research that needed thorough consideration. As the four children attended the same preschool, in consultation with the director, I developed a policy on

use of digital photography in the preschool for research purposes. This policy was subsequently modified and included in the SERAP application.

While my research was approved by the UNE Human Research Ethics Committee, I experienced tensions as I considered how my research met NSW Department of Education and Training (DET) guidelines for research in public schools. The SERAP application process used several criteria for approving research including 'educational benefit to NSW government schools and students' (NSW DET, 2006c, p. 9). The proposed research was seen as beneficial to schools if it contributed towards government goals. For example, the first National Goal listed eight points following the statement that 'schooling should develop fully the talents and capabilities of all students. In particular, when students leave school they should...' (NSW DET 1999, p. 1). Thus, as I considered how my research participants experienced the transition between preschool and school, I was re-directed towards considering the children as school leavers. The children's present time of childhood at school, was overshadowed by a theoretical framework that placed the 'importance of childhood in...the future' (James & Prout, 1997, p. 234). The government goals also had overt economic features as they provided a 'basis for investment in schooling to enable young people to engage effectively with an increasingly complex world' (NSW DET, 1999, p. 2). Research approval procedures also required me to consider the NSW Corporate Plan, which listed five goals aimed 'to achieve outcomes that meet the needs and expectations of our partners and lead to sustainable improvements in the social and economic wellbeing of the people of NSW' (NSW DET, 2005, p. 1). Thus, when working at the boundaries of my own research beliefs, narratives and ethics I also considered the legislated beliefs and ethics of the context in which the research took place. As a result, aspects of my SERAP application highlighted educational benefits that were more central to government policies, and the 'greater good', than they were to my personal beliefs about the benefits of art-based research with young children and the importance of interpersonal relationships in research with children.

Role negotiation with and by child participants

My research considered cultural, social and historical aspects of children's art experiences, and recognized the complex funds of knowledge that these children were party to (González & Moll, 2002). I stayed mindful of how the research process and

interpersonal relationships impacted on children's experiences at many levels, and the way humans enact roles that are partly dependent on social and physical context.

My involvement with the children involved three key contexts – their homes, preschool, and schools, and in each of these places, the children enacted various roles. For example Lee, was energetic, animated, gregarious, comical and boisterous at home. However, at preschool he was quiet, serious, and largely solitary. Later, as a schoolboy, he was industrious and introverted. I needed to be sensitive to the changing roles that Lee played, and modify my own behaviour accordingly.

The nature of physical interactions with the children also changed over time and place. For instance, as home-based adult and child interactions were often more physical and demonstrative than those in educational settings, the children related differently to me in each situation. For example, at his home, Jackson organized games for us to play while at preschool or school he did not involve me in his activities. Over time, I also found that physicality tended to increase in terms of playful behaviour, hugs and physical proximity. For example, in the early stages of home-based visits Sophie usually sat next to me. As she became more comfortable with me she sometimes squeezed onto the same chair as me, and on one occasion she sat on my knee and controlled the laptop. For these reasons I also felt it was important to always have at least one parent present as this not only encouraged the children to feel comfortable with me, but allowed me to check that the parents were comfortable with the interactions between their child and me.

Once again I encountered tensions when working at the boundaries in that the way the children and I interacted at home, was not the same as our school or preschool interactions. The school environment was especially different to home or preschool as I endeavored to create minimum disruption, while also helping the teachers. One school was concerned that my focused attention on the research participant/s could cause equity issues and the principal told me that it was important that “no child should feel more important than any other.” To involve the children in the change of my role at school, I talked with them prior to visits, and again after school visits. The children had experienced being schoolchildren and were supportive of my need to act like a school-adult. As an experienced teacher, the classroom teachers often asked me to work with groups or individuals. In many ways, because I continued to visit the research participants in their homes and our relationships continued to evolve, the children were both my supporters and co-conspirators as I enacted this new role. Their acceptance of my new role allowed my active engagement in classroom life, without fear that they felt

sidelined. The children and I also developed subtle interpersonal communication, such as facial expressions, which allowed us to communicate without words.

Thus, far from being established entities, our ways of being for the children and I were negotiated between the various people in the research community and in relation to the place in which such interactions took place. In reality, the children and I supported each other in enacting roles that were appropriate in each context, without violating the overall integrity of our interpersonal and research relationships.

At times in the field, I felt the tension between my role as collaborator with the children, and the expectations placed on us in various contexts, especially at school. For example, over the course of the research Lee used many amusing nicknames and at one stage, he playfully called me “*sweetie-darling*.” However, when I joined Lee and his mother at the school orientation day I suggested that, at school, we called each other by our first names. While I did this to protect Lee from possible embarrassment, I was also slightly uncomfortable about adding to the many voices that encouraged him to modify his behavior to that deemed appropriate for school.

That the children and I could behave in an appropriate manner at school was important to some of the parents, who were concerned about their child experiencing awkwardness or embarrassment. Two school principals also voiced concern about disruption to classroom programmes or additional burdens on teachers. As it transpired, the teachers enjoyed my presence in their classrooms and expressed regret when the project concluded. My previous classroom experiences, especially as an advisor to schools, helped me to adjust to the changing classroom dynamics. Moreover, the children helped me to enact a more teacher-like role when in their classrooms. I believe that this also allowed the children to act more pupil-like if they wished to.

Relationships develop and change

Relationships with children and families evolved over time. In the beginning, I talked with the parents about the importance of allowing the children to take the lead in the discussions. While the parents’ participation in the home-based discussion was not generally verbal, they eagerly looked on as their child showed and discussed his or her photographs. Their presence supported their child, and often a parent communicated with me through facial expressions that prompted me to ask their child to elaborate, or helped me to link together episodes. These types of interactions demonstrated that not

only was I building theories about the children's art experience, but so too were the parents and children.

In society in general, child-adult interactions tend to reflect power imbalances. However, researching with children across a variety of contexts that included the children's own homes, helped to address this. In preschool and school contexts, children become accustomed to a variety of adults visiting and interacting with them. However, these same people did not usually visit their homes with the express purpose of interacting with them. As Virginia Morrow (2005) noted in her research, 'children are always in a structural relationship to the adults around them: as a child of their families, as somebody's son or daughter, or a 'school' child' (p. 160). Therefore, home visits allowed for unique adult-child relationships between the children and me. How this relationship developed depended on each situation, but I was conscious of generating a negotiated role - by acting like neither a childlike friend nor an adult. I achieved this in part by focusing my attention on each child, engaging in his or her banter and humour, and physically engaging in play when invited. All of the parents were supportive of the relationships the children and I built and in many ways, the home environment was a safe space for the children to 'share their ideas without challenge or critique' (MacNaughton & Smith, 2005, p. 115).

I also made it clear to the children and their parents that I would not say anything *about* the children that I did not also discuss *with* them. Likewise, I reiterated to all participants and teachers that I would only hold conversations about the children that I could then freely share with them and their parents. I believed that the overt nature of such conversations added to the integrity of the research relationships and strengthened the trust between participants and researcher.

The dialectic nature of the interactions within the research project meant that relationships developed in subtle yet dynamic ways. Over time, while the children provided greater direction in driving the nature of the visits, we developed research routines and rituals that allowed the research process to flow. I became most aware of the change in relationships, and potential tensions, when on two occasions parents, who were not usually present at home-based research discussions, were surprised by their child's response to me. One parent asked his son to "stop mucking around" – yet playing hide and seek when I arrived had developed as a fun start to our session. Another parent was surprised when I said that it has been a good session with her daughter - although she had been "distractible." However, over the period of the research I had come to

realise that these distractions nearly always related to the overall themes developing around her art experiences.

My active involvement in the children's classroom communities allowed for some continuity between home and preschool research processes. However, the research participants appeared to assimilate ways of being a schoolchild that influenced the choices they made. For example, while the children all eagerly used the cameras at preschool and home, they were reluctant to use it independently at school unless specifically encouraged to – perhaps appraising that adults made the decisions at school. Therefore, tensions at the boundaries of dominant beliefs or behaviours, and research beliefs and behaviours were also an issue for the children as co-researchers.

Just as starting the research project was problematic, so too was exiting the field (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). More than ten months elapsed between first home visits and final school visits. While some home visits continued, I prepared the children for the change of routine. I explained that I would write up their stories and discuss these with them, but I would no longer visit them at school, and my visits to their homes would become less frequent. The children appeared to understand this transition as they talked about me going back to my other home in New Zealand. Thus, as the parents and I supported the children in taking the lead in aspects of the research process, unique relationships developed. The children not only displayed the ability to develop fluid relationships, but they showed an understanding of how our relationship changed and developed over time and experience.

Ethical research, ethical research relationships

In summary then, I believe that ethical research with children was enacted through positive research relationships between those involved. The nature of these relationships influenced the degree of collaboration within the research and the building of positive and empowering relationships with young children was not a haphazard affair. The principles that guided these interactions, which were developed from the writing of Graue and Walsh (1998) and Clandinin and Connelly (2000), included a consideration of how my perspectives on children, research and theory impacted on the research processes; the need to be mindful of the variety of roles any one person can and does play, and to be responsive to the needs of the participants in any given situation. I also recognized that relationships developed and changed over time. While some tensions were experienced as research relationships evolved and joint understandings were negotiated, a

development of positive research relationships was crucial to the integrity of this research with young children.

Data analysis and interpretations

The pulling together of the vast number of digital files, in the form of photographs and hours of conversations, into a coherent re-presentation of the children's art experiences created the 'findings' from this research. Throughout the research, as soon as possible following interactions with the children I viewed their photographs again, listened to their conversations and made notes. Over the course of the research the many digital files were sorted and re-sorted, viewed and re-viewed, listened to again and again. Photographs, and corresponding audio files, were coded and saved digitally in at least two formats and archives. During visits to the preschool and schools I took photographs, as did the children, and I made notes on my observations and interactions with the children. These notes and images contributed additional data to my fieldnotes and research texts, and at times provided focal points for discussions between the children and me. Also, in order to sort and analyse the assortment of data I had several A3 blank drawing book in which I regularly drew and wrote records of events, conversations, file locations of audio excerpts and photographs, as well as ideas and themes as they developed. Small black and white images of a representative selection of each child's photographs were printed and placed in these A3 books. I added additional pages to these field notes throughout the research and keep careful notes of file names and locations. Together the digital audio files, the electronically stored photographs and the written and drawn field notes and texts provided valuable aides in linking together ideas, themes and events over time.

Thus, as the narrative of children's art experience grew it was possible to identify some fluid categories of art experiences based on media and on emerging themes that the children explored. Analysis of data was a matter of both zooming out from the data, so I could see patterns, similarities, differences, connections and relationships with theoretical frameworks, and zooming in to immerse myself in the data in order to reacquaint myself with the images and discussions in terms of a deeper understanding of each child's experiences. It was not possible or practical to transcribe each of the audio files; instead I listened to each file numerous times and made careful notes. In order to be open to 'fresh' insights from past interactions I also copied audio files to a portable

mp3 player and went for long walks while listening to a child's conversations. As such, through these various processes I took care to be thoroughly conversant with each child's art experiences while at the same time avoiding prematurely defining the themes or big ideas they were exploring and expressing. I believe that this willingness to remain open to possibilities as the research narratives evolved, and to allow the children to direct my attention while staying within the scope of the research aims, contributed to the 'trustworthiness' of the research findings. As Morse and associates pointed out, in order to attain optimal reliability and validity 'it is essential that the investigator remain open, use sensitivity, creativity and insight, and be willing to relinquish any ideas that are poorly supported regardless of the excitement and the potential that they first appear to provide' (Morse et al., 2002, p. 18).

Upon the completion of fieldwork, copies of the children's photographs were saved to DVD and given to them and their parents. They were invited to identify any photographs they wanted deleted or cropped, and to give written consent for the remaining photographs to be used for the research and associated publications. Over the course of the research the parents had seen all of their child's photographs and a few judicious deletions had occurred at the time. Consequently, in all four cases, full written consent was given to use the photographs in this thesis and subsequent publications.

My narrative approach and visual ethnographic involvement in their lives imbued me with a 'sense' of the children's experiences, that, while difficult to fully articulate, was a vital aspect of data analysis. While there were more stories than can be told in one thesis there were experiences, or series of events, that had pervading qualities for me that made them stand out from the rest. Dewey (1934/2005) referred to these as esthetic qualities of experience and in the findings chapters – particularly those in Part Two - I elaborate on some of these experiences to generate an 'empathetic participation in the lives' of these children (Eisner, 1997, p. 8). As Tom Barone (2007) pointed out, 'our aim as researcher-storytellers is not to seek certainty about correct perspectives on educational phenomena but to raise significant questions about prevailing policy and practice that enrich an ongoing conversation' (p. 466). One of the challenging issues associated with my data analysis and interpretation of actual children's perspectives was that being faithful to the children's perspectives and experiences was not always 'convenient' in terms of neatly illustrating the points raised in the theoretical frameworks. For example, if I had chosen only those parts of the children's research narratives that most closely fitted my Deweyan perspectives, this may have created the impression of a

tighter and more cohesive thesis. However, one of my research aims was to contribute towards filling a gap in the research on children's art: I set out to share the voices of children, whose own viewpoints and stories have traditionally been marginalized in research findings.

Therefore, in seeking to enrich ongoing pedagogical conversations about early childhood art, while also sharing the children's perspectives, I have showcased each child's art experiences in a series of dedicated chapters in which some links are made to the literature, as discussed in Chapter 2 and to sociocultural-historical perspectives in particular. While Dewey's (1934/2005) philosophies on art as experience are key to my deeper understanding of the children's art experiences, in order to minimize the risk of drowning the children's voices, I have opted to reserve a fuller analysis of his perspectives to just one chapter that follows their home and preschool experiences. This theoretical revisiting of Deweyan theories, in light of these aspects of the children's experiences, is pivotal in this thesis. It acts as a fulcrum that balances the preceding parts with what is to follow in the chapters on the children's home and school-based art experiences and in the conclusions and recommendations. In Part Three, I hope that my discussions of the children's experiences at home and school do raise 'questions about prevailing policy and practice that enrich an ongoing conversation' (Barone, 2007, p. 466) in relation to art education and children's art experiences.

Use of art terminology

Before embarking on the findings chapters, at this point it is useful to clarify the art terminology I have used in describing the children's art experience. In these descriptions I take 'media' to mean the art materials that the children used to generate art – such as pencils, paints, cardboard, paper or wood. The 'format' was the form that their artworks took, such as a flat drawing or a three-dimensional cardboard structure. The 'subject-matter' was not only the subject of the artwork, for example people, but what a viewer brought to the artwork as an interpretation of the way each child transformed materials into media – such as a drawing of a human figure being interpreted as a drawing of a child, mother, or a witch. By a child's art 'style' I mean both those characteristics that set his/her art apart from that of other children's art (their individual styles), and those areas of artmaking that s/he repeatedly explored and developed to the extent that s/he appeared to produce them spontaneously. 'Themes' were generated through the union

of media, format, subject-matter, and style in ways that represented children's broader ideas or interests.

I also found that each child had personal issues and themes that they repeatedly explored and dealt with in increasing complexity. As 'childhood is a time during which many specifically philosophical issues arise that children think about a great deal' (Wartenberg, 2009, p. 14) I personally came to view these reoccurring themes as the children's 'big ideas', and this is the term that I have chosen to use in this thesis¹⁰. In many ways I saw the children's big ideas as philosophical in nature as they made sense of their experiences and their world through their art.

Summary

This chapter draws to a close the first part of this thesis. It has outlined the theoretical paradigms that have informed key decisions regarding research approaches in terms of methods and design with a particular scrutiny of how narrative inquiry (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) and visual ethnography (Pink, 2001) have informed this research. It has, with brief glimpses of data and discussion, described participant selection, ethics procedures, the development of research relationships, and data analysis procedures. Part Two begins with a preface that introduces the child participants and their home and preschool environments, followed by four chapters presenting each child's home and preschool art experiences. Deweyan perspectives are then revisited in light of the children's art experiences.

¹⁰ My use of the term 'big ideas' is not intended to represent how others have used the term, nor does it represent a specific term used by Dewey (1934/2005).