**Exploring matric art students' interpretation of the art curriculum and the socio-political implications of the topic issue at three independent schools in Gauteng.**

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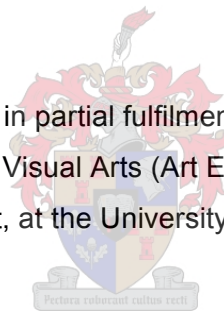
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DECLARATION

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ABSTRACT

This research focused on the experiences and perceptions of 21 matric art students from three independent schools in Gauteng, and the socio-political implications of their given topic for the year 2015. This study is based on the notion that it is the responsibility of art education not only to allow emotional freedom in constructing individual realities, but also to teach structured expression and awareness of underlying socio-political structures through critical engagement. The aim of this research was to explore how matric art students critically engage with the given topic, the influence of their core personality features and subsequent reactions to the curriculum requirements. The research sought to discover new contributions to theories within art education about the critical awareness of art students as well as to provide record of 2015's independent schools' matric art students' experience and some of their art-related ideas about their social environments. The research was designed according to an inductive approach, and used grounded theory as an analytical framework that involved a case study design of one-on-one interviews that were transcribed and coded into overarching themes. The first, topic interpretation and critical engagement, explored the ability of the art students to negotiate through different spheres of social life. Students in general demonstrated a lack of socio-political insight into issues relating to the given topic, choosing rather to interpret them in more obvious ways. The second theme explored how core personality features heavily influenced their formulation of ideas for artworks and even influenced them in lifestyle choices. The presence of the hidden curriculum was indicated as well, as deviation is discouraged both in inner and outer expressions. The third theme considered how curriculum reactions ranged from complete acceptance to being somewhat frustrated at the constricting schedule. The final theme explored how the role of the teacher allows for either freedom to develop critical skills or for students to become dependent on overly involved guidance. It is argued that the responsibility of the teacher is to allow for co-construction, and the ability to know knowledge better and more fully in order to dismantle previous social power relations. Art education is rigorously linked to its students and so current expectations and interpretations of it could benefit future construction of curriculums to more fully prepare students for tertiary education, and even for participation in society as citizens themselves. This study therefore contributed to art education theory on the perspectives of independent schools' matric art students, suggesting that critical training is lacking at present and that, in future, it could possibly benefit society, as education shapes the future potential of these students.

CONTENT

CHAPTER 1
ORIENTATION TO THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Art education, according to Kramer (2001:6), aims to bring about a "synthesis of emotional freedom and structured expression", which may become an invaluable facility as matric art students move from being young adolescents into their roles as citizens in society. Art education could be beneficial to this transition as it explores and encourages creative ideation and activity by allowing students to experiment with emotional implications of topics while simultaneously teaching structured critical analysis.

According to Jean Piaget's constructivist theory, "children should be allowed to construct knowledge that is meaningful for them" (Ozer 2004). This often happens in the context of art education where students are regularly rewarded for constructing views unique to them. I believe that the arts have incredible potential for allowing students, through self-driven discovery, to develop the skills needed in becoming citizens that not only function, but also thrive in society. This belief has served as a driving force of this research. The topic of adolescent experience became an interest to me while completing an honours degree in psychology. The study of adolescent development and the use of alternative therapies (such as art therapy) sparked an interest in how high school students in their final (matric) year experience their art education, and their reactions to the social topics presented to them through curriculum requirements.

In the final (matric) year of high school, art students are given a topic, usually relating to some socio-political phenomenon, and interpretation is expected. The topic for 2015 was *Surplus and Scarcity*. There are minimal criteria as to the specific subject matter of this interpretation, as long as the student can demonstrate critical engagement with the topic. Students must demonstrate an awareness of the topic's implications in society, as well as what it means to them personally. Not only is freedom of expression and emotion important, but also what Giroux (2003:94) describes as "effective freedom in which individuals function as critical thinkers capable of putting existing institutions into question so that democracy again becomes society's movement of self-institution". Students must demonstrate such critical ability by showcasing an awareness of the underlying structures of the topic issue.

This critical engagement with the topic is significant for final year art students. As is shown with curriculum stipulations regarding the recording (in a journal) of specific steps in the process of art-making, critical exploration of the topic forms a large part of the requirements. Students are required to explain what they are creating (for instance, in what format, with what subject

matter), how they came up with the idea, and demonstrate sufficient research into the specifics of their topic, thereby potentially developing their critical skills. Concepts of critical citizenship[1] encourage a continual re-evaluation of the cultural context in which interactions exist, and if left unattended, the individuality of these constructed realities can be lost. Simone Griesmayr discusses how 'cultural context' may become stifling if reconstruction is continually rejected and that "distinction does not simply mean standing out from the mass, but also being able to exhibit such differences strategically" (2004:135). This skill of exhibiting differences strategically is a skill that must be taught through encouraging critical thought and exploration of accepted norms.

Art has long exhibited cultural topics, ranging from the outright absurd to sufficiently subtle, and so has helped keep a record of, change, and even maintain certain realities. The work of high school artists can be regarded as important in indicating the extent to which the socio-political topic has been engaged with at this level. Has the topic been taken superficially or been critically evaluated? Has the individual constructed his or her own reality according to some predetermined pattern, or has some critical influence formed a new way of exhibiting difference?

This individual construction of meaningful knowledge may take on various convictions as to the validity of internal reality. Doolittle (s.a.:2-4) describes a continuum with Cognitive Constructivism on one end claiming complete or very near accuracy when constructing reality, and Radical Constructivism on the other, which acknowledges the objective nature of knowledge that is constructed. Constructivism then, is the attempt at reconciling internal as well as external versions of reality. Although it is later acknowledged that social reality is constructed individually, it does not deny the influence education has on these constructions. Therefore, it is argued, the skill of critical engagement must be taught so that the individually constructed knowledge may function within Giroux's (2003) effective freedom of critical thinkers capable of establishing self-organised societies.

This study is based on the notion that it is the responsibility of art education not only to allow emotional freedom in constructing individual realities, but also to teach structured expression and awareness of underlying socio-political structures through critical engagement. The use of subject matter by high school art students may be a way of illustrating their unique interpretation of IEB[2] art curriculum requirements and internalisation of salient socio-political themes. The purpose of this study was thus to better understand students' engagement with current issues that cause subsequent interpretation of art curriculum requirements, which may be used as an indication of future pedagogical citizenship trends.

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[1] Critical citizenship is defined in this study as consisting of knowledge, skills, values and dispositions that are implemented through critical pedagogy in order to transform citizens and society into becoming more inclusive (Johnson & Morris 2010:92).

[2] Independent Examinations Board

This research attempts to contribute to building theories about the extent to which high school art students engage with global and local salient issues. Giroux (2003:97) emphasises the importance of theory:

> As a resource, theory becomes important as a way of critically engaging and mapping the crucial relations among language, texts, everyday life and structures of power as part of a broader effort to understand the conditions, contexts and strategies of struggle that will lead to social transformation.

Pedagogic research in art education indicates a strong link between real-world experience and the education and subsequent formation of its citizens, with Martin describing that "though citizenship may be treated as a birth right, citizens are made, not born" (2006:10). Outward experience and circumstance may then affect students' engagement with their topics. This engagement may be an indication of how these future citizens are being formed and their opinion on the social reality in which they live.

By examining the chosen subject matter of a few students, inferences may be made as to the extent to which they are able to engage with the socio-political facets of the topic, further allowing us to understand their opinions on social occurrences and the very future of art's role in society. Yùdice discusses what is termed the 'displaced' and the 'hybrid' (2006:159). These are seen to spring from the 'genre' of society, as a type of 're-articulation' of the citizenship provided (Yùdice 2006:159). Each year IEB requirements are structured with the same basic number of hours of effort required, and yet students create unique and heterogeneous artworks and subject matter. Yùdice does not view this as a threat to the current system, rather as examples of the possible next steps that modernity brings to traditions; that this ungovernable untangling process allows society to reform into its future potential (2006:160).

Art education is rigorously linked to its students and so current expectations and interpretations of it could benefit future construction of curriculums to prepare students more accurately for tertiary education, and even for participation in society as citizens themselves. The IEB curriculum is used as a basis for exploration as it aims to fit international standards, in my view being more involved in the progressively global world.

In a context as miscellaneous and culture-orientated as South Africa, the art produced by its citizens is unique, and has served as a map to understanding the experience and insights of its creators. The use of art in therapy demonstrates the vivid connection between creation and consciousness, thus further research in this field, therefore, could only be beneficial in a country striving for growth and development. Greater understanding of citizenship formulation could serve as an indication of future South African societies' trends and perceptions, as art students

develop theory of mind, which "is an essential skill required to develop and maintain social relationships ... its evolution has contributed to the development of society and therefore impacts on citizenship behaviour... [and that] participation in the arts may build inward-looking self-esteem and self-awareness and outward-looking social confidence and connectedness" (Arts Council of England 2014:37).

Exploring the extent to which matric art students at independent[3] schools critically engage with the given topic, the influence of their core personality features and subsequent reactions to the curriculum requirements is the point of departure as a description of the research problem.

1.2 RESEARCH QUESTION

The primary research question of this study was formulated as follows:

How do Gauteng independent schools' matric art students interpret art curriculum requirements and what are their opinions on the socio-political implications of the topic issue?

Secondary questions were:

- How do students critically engage with the topic, if at all?
- Could creative ideation be used as a possible indication of core personality features?
- How do students react to the curriculum requirements?
- What is the role of the educator in creative ideation?

The aim of this research was to explore matric art students' interpretation of art curriculum requirements and their critical engagement with the socio-political implications of the topic.

Objectives of the study were:

- To determine opinions and critical engagement with the exam topic's socio-political issue through discussions of their subject matter
- To determine whether core personality features are revealed through creative ideation
- To determine whether critical citizenship plays a role in curriculum reactions
- To determine what role the art educator plays in creative ideation

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[3] The use of the term 'independent schools' was implemented by the Department of Basic Education (2014:3) as part of terminology used to describe the education system in South Africa. This system consists of public schools, independent schools, special schools and early childhood development (ECD) sites.

1.3 OVERVIEW OF THE RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research followed an inductive approach in which theory may be developed by contributing to findings on the topic. The data may be classified as qualitative in nature and followed a case study design. Instrumental case study design was used as a framework, and interviews were analysed with the intention of exploring critical engagement with the topic and curriculum requirement reactions. Interviews consisted of one-on-one discussions with matric art students from three independent schools following the IEB curriculum in Gauteng. Transcription and coding of data and memos followed grounded theory procedures. A more detailed explanation of the research methodology is given in Chapter 3.

1.4 STRUCTURE OF THE THESIS

Chapter 1: Orientation to the study

The first section of the thesis serves as an introductory chapter and provides the structure of the study. This chapter includes the background of the study, the research question, aims and objectives, and an overview of the research methodology used.

Chapter 2: Theoretical perspectives

Chapter 2 covers all the relevant theoretical concepts that informed the study and serves as the theoretical framework and literature study.

Firstly, the social constructionism epistemology is discussed. The first section also includes a theoretical overview of learning theories in conjunction with social constructionism and a discussion of Edith Kramer's *Art and Emptiness: New Problems in Art Education and Art Therapy*. Secondly, theories within this theoretical framework are discussed, namely The Value of Art Education as Therapy, Critical Citizenship and Globalisation and Education. Lastly, the study is contextualised within specific parameters.

Chapter 3: Methodology

In this chapter a discussion is provided of the research methodology that was followed. The study was inductive, qualitative, and followed an instrumental case study design. Grounded theory was used to code data and memos, which were generated through one-on-one interviews from 21 learners and 3 educators. They were asked to answer questions relating to their experiences of the matric art curriculum.

Chapter 4: Findings and discussion of the empirical investigation

This chapter presents the data collected in the research study, which is configured according to the main identified themes. The emerging themes are subsequently discussed.

Chapter 5: Conclusions and implications

Chapter 5 summarises the entire research project up to that point. Next it brings together all concluding remarks, and discusses the implications thereof. A final conclusion is then provided for the thesis as a whole.

CHAPTER 2
THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This research study explored how art students engage with art curriculum requirements in unique and telling ways, thus contributing to our understanding of the experiences of matric art students at independent schools in Gauteng. It sought to explore the extent to which students are given expressive freedom to construct their own perspectives, as well as the extent to which these same students give structure to the underlying socio-political issues they are asked to engage with critically. In this chapter, Social Constructionism and Other Influences are discussed, as well as theories involved in untangling individual experience, namely The Value of Art Education as Therapy. Then, theories in exploring student engagement with outward interaction are considered, namely Critical Citizenship and Globalisation and Education. The theoretical perspectives follow structures of occurrence. First, the formation of perceptions is considered, then the internal structure of perceptions, and lastly, the outward enactment of these perceptions.

When considering the part education plays in the formation of our future, these categories of interpretation may be significant when building on theories of future citizenship and global trends. The following theoretical perspectives provide the parameters and basis on which a theory may be developed concerning the issues of current matric art students, their educators, and their experiences.

2.2 EPISTEMOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK AND ITS IMPLICATIONS

2.2.1 Social constructionism and other influences

Social constructionism is used to understand the construction of human experience not through accurate reflections of environmental conditions but rather as "specific readings of these conditions" due to social constructions (Willig, 2013:7). The very meaning of construction implies the brining together of various parts to form a whole, and therefore, the innate ability to disassemble these parts in order to possibly understand the implications of each. No construction is considered superior in accuracy, and rather provides clues as to their inner significance. High school art students are asked to demonstrate creative ability by exhibiting a 'reading' of a condition relating to their topic, which may provide some clues as to the social structures that inform these exhibits.

The use of social constructionism encourages multiple perspectives, especially if we are to attempt the unravelling of individual significances. Jørgensen and Phillips (2002:154) justify this premise with their 'multiperspectival research framework' that relies heavily on social constructionism's inherent 'perspectivism', referring to the idea that different perspectives generate "different forms of context-bound, contingent knowledge rather than universal knowledge based on a neutral, context-free foundation" (2002:155). This combination of different forms of knowledge again encourages the idea of a multiperspectival approach, satisfying critical criteria of openness to change and contingency. Jørgensen and Phillips encourage all discourse to be held up against "philosophical premises, theoretical claims, methodology and method" (2002:156) in order to identify what kind of knowledge is being analysed, and thereby clarifying the nature of the knowledge, what we can use it for, and to justify its inclusion. In this context, the use of language through interview, and the subsequently observed choice of subject matter is the main thoroughfare into observing engagement with socio-political themes, and therefore social constructionism would be the most appropriate framework of interpretation.

Gee (2011) states that language is an innate or instinctual ability for humans, with cultural innuendos. I would like to propose another instinctual ability that is infused with cultural significance; that of creative ideation. This ability entails the process by which students receive a topic, and from this draw their own conclusions, make their own realities and create from their core personalities an idea for an artwork that entails many creative details about medium, scale, and composition. Not only are they innately able to communicate through language structures, but also through visuals and emotions and ideas. This creativity forms part of their inherent constitution, and so cannot help but be infused by a quality unique to their inner constructions and opinions. This quality communicates just as well as language and justifies the concurrent use of interview and subject matter choice, as both provide constructed meaning in different mediums and should provide more thorough clues as to the meanings ascribed to social issues that have been dealt with.

When considering this epistemology in relation to pedagogy, it may be viewed as a theoretical base from which assumptions may be made about the process of learning. With consideration of the work by Doolittle (s.a.:1), the learner should be given an active role in his or her own learning progress as knowledge is acknowledged to be specific to the individual who possesses it. However, this individual construction is not the only influence on knowledge. Pedagogical structures inform much of the knowledge available to students, and Bourdieu warns against "the role of the educational institution in the preservation of the social order" (1996:373), and comments that "cultural producers are the primary victims – as well as the primary beneficiaries – of the legitimating illusion" (1996:5). This research has been positioned within the realities of the independent schooling system in Gauteng, and therefore the realities of these students bear

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the mark of privilege. Bourdieu refers primarily to the 'sociology of education' as not a liberating force but as a cultural "stake in the struggle for the monopoly on dominant positions" (1996:5), specifically the part played by 'elite schools'. Whoever then controls or enters into elite education becomes the culture producer, which does in turn influence the process of learning for the next generation.

Another influence is that of the hidden curriculum. The hidden curriculum is, as its name implies, hidden within the overtly stated structures of the curriculum, hidden as covert values and beliefs that are conveyed through observable interactions between the students and teachers. These observations are not written down in the curriculum, but rather exist in body language, tone, expression and conversation. A possible definition of the hidden curriculum is articulated as follows (Kentli 2009:84):

> Giroux (2001) identifies hidden curriculum as what is being taught and how one learns in the school as he also indicates that schools not only provides instruction but also more such as norms and principles experienced by students throughout their education life.

Apple describes how despite the good intentions of reform, effects that may "reproduce or even worsen inequalities" (2009:241) are often hidden, but may be seen by viewing it from the perspectives of those with the least power, saying that "many economic, social, and educational policies when actually put in place tend to benefit those who already have advantages" (2009:242). Apple (1990) further elaborates on this restrictive curriculum by critically examining the fears that contribute to complacency concerning it:

> The prevailing concern today - panic over falling standards and rising rates of illiteracy, the fear of violence in the schools and the perceived destruction of family and religious values – have allowed culturally and economically dominant groups to move the arguments about education into their own arena by emphasizing standardization, productivity, and a romanticized past when all children sat still with their hands folded and learned a common curriculum. Parents are justifiably concerned about their children's future in an economy that is increasingly conditioned by lower wages, the threat of unemployment, and cultural and economic insecurity.

These fears may be the source of a perpetuated social system, from which only critical engagement may escape its cloying effects.

The use of social constructionism allows us to position the research within a view of reality. It demarcates where our data lies. True expression of experience may seem impossible, but by asking pointed questions about personal outlooks and projecting these outlooks alongside creative work, we may glimpse the inner reality constructed by students, and possibly determine the extent to which socio-political issues are engaged with. Constructivism as an epistemology

dictates the view taken on knowledge and knowledge production in the social world as being individually varied, advocating the existence of knowledges instead of one whole knowledge. It forms the research parameters and criteria in order to discover knowledge that is most 'true' and 'correct' according to each participant.

2.3 THEORIES IN UNTANGLING INDIVIDUAL EXPERIENCE

2.3.1 The value of art education as therapy for students and educators

In 2002, the US Department of Education included arts education as a core learning subject in all American schools (Sabol 2010:n.a.). For the first time, art was seen as being equally important to other subjects in order to produce from the education system well-adjusted and productive citizens. Sabol establishes positive links between learning in the visual arts and other disciplines, stating that citizens benefit from art education by becoming more productive, positively affecting quality of life, and improving cultural and communications connections (2010:n.a.). Art students can therefore be regarded as showing considerable promise as future citizens of their societies. By considering this link, it becomes feasible to assume that issues dealt with at the start may inform future opinions and actions in the social sphere. The use of art students as indicators of future citizens could also be appropriate, as they show promising insight and potential.

The theory of art therapy exists both in the creation of artworks and in participation in art class. As the process of art making should involve a critical engagement with the subject matter through the process of journaling the entire process, the subject could ascend simple academia, and include the action of therapy. This could possibly relieve some tension associated with the issues dealt with, and potentially expand the students' own and even viewers' understanding of the underlying socio-political issue. As current students are creating art in an unprecedented time, their issues are relevant and worthy of study, and may even be used to better understand future citizens' outlook and experience.

Art is considered to be a method of revealing the inner way of perceiving, as the dominant process of 'seeing' is brought to the forefront (Pinna 2013:75), which supports using art as a way of conceptualising how another perceives his or her world. Naumburg, the 'Mother of art therapy', based her orientation towards art therapy on Freudian concepts of free association by encouraging verbal descriptions for spontaneous art as a way of "understanding images created in therapy and [as] catalysts to change and grow" (1958:43). Hicks (2004:289) describes how art is used to make sense of the world we inhabit. When exploring the choice of subject matter alongside interviews, perception of meaning is widened as the artwork itself provides new

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avenues of discussion that may be considered alongside reactions to the socio-political issues at hand.

The reality of adolescent experience remains important, and since adolescents are about to become citizens, their growth needs to be positive in order for them to function to their full potential. The adolescent is frequently stereotyped as troubled and difficult, especially in social situations, and so their opinions on social issues may be tainted by this negativity. The use of art students may negate this fact, as the art-making process provides an outlet for exploration and expression of inner conflicts and reactions. However, for some the potential of this outlet seems daunting and it is rebelled against, a phenomenon described by Kramer (2001). She describes an "underprivileged spoiled child" that has internalised much of society's unwillingness to develop a personal statement (2001:10) as being deprived of love, space to play in, and addicted to synthetic gratification with the added difficulty of being resistant to creative thinking as a defence against "unwelcome or dangerous feelings and knowledge" (2001:12).

Kramer describes a process whereby the modern underprivileged child avoids reality by becoming spoilt and disobedient because of a lack of authority, preferring persuasion (2001:12). This resistance in students when engaging with the art-making process and the nature of artistic creation is according to Kramer "always menaced from two sides: primeval chaos and stereotyped order [with] the balance between the two forces never static ... [and that] our modern art-teaching methods were created in a struggle against established academic stereotypes" (2001:6). Her critique of this state of affairs is that these new methods "developed to stimulate creative work, have been perverted into ways of circumventing and avoiding the creative act" (2001:7). It leads to the replacement of these two historically polar enemies into what she calls "stereotyped chaos" (2001:8). This may be illustrated with the IEB art curriculum's emphasis on the 'process' and visual diary record keeping, with fewer marks being awarded for the actual finished product. As art education becomes increasingly structured, Kramer believes that resistance to art has changed into defence against emotional upheaval. She describes how "reality is not censored or falsified but negated and overlooked ... with a preference for amorphous, incoherent expression" (Kramer 2001:12). This could explain certain resistance to art that exists in our society, that of a defence against the reality we would rather choose to deny. She further explains how art may be used to reduce feelings of emptiness and nothingness and how artists may be "alleviated by producing something, however inadequate it may be" (2001:12).

Art education may be used, in Kramer's words, "to help chaotic fantasy develop into imagination, and to revive an atrophied faculty of observation and self-observation" (2001:13). It does not teach something new, which some students will grasp and others not, but could rather awaken

some dormant quality inherent in all. According to Kramer (2001), those who participate in art making have the advantage of knowing themselves better, and being better able to relate to their social environment with more sensitivity.

Malchiodi and Rozum define distinct psychoanalytic and analytic concepts that are seen as having an influence on art therapy, such as transference, being the projection of feelings onto the therapist; spontaneous expression, providing access to the unconscious; amplification and active imagination, providing ways to work with and understand images created in therapy; and object relations as a way of "reflecting early attachments and current relationship issues" (2003:53–56). However, art making is not only fuelled by the unconscious and spontaneous process. It may involve recall, cognitive processing, verbal analysis, and even discovering and altering assumptions governing actions (Malchiodi & Rozum, 2003:57). This showcases the possible advantage of concurrently using the choice of subject matter alongside interview processes, as the subconscious and conscious both partake in forming constructed realities. The inner experience can be understood through the construction of the outer, as it informs the very nature of the construction. Our opinions, preferences and beliefs may be formed sub-consciously as inner workings of our personality, but are exhibited and constructed consciously, and can be considered in both the forms of artwork and answers to questions. Fenwick relates this perspective to learning, as it allows for more extensive consideration of previously neglected elements, such as incorporating the role of the unconscious, internal desires and energies that drive learning, as well as the nature of the relationship "among learner, knowledge, and educator" (2001:28). Most importantly, the inner world is considered alongside the outer, allowing the analysis to be more complete in its understanding of the entirety of influences on the process of learning (Fenwick 2001:28). Art students, then, are constantly negotiating between these two worlds in order to construct and exhibit social issues that may one day inform their roles as citizens.

The process of therapy has the aim of stimulating development and growth. As art education could be considered a form of therapy, the role of the therapist must obviously be considered. Art educators do not only guide their learners academically, but also influence creative ideation and the development of creativity and skill. The extent to which these educators influence their learners is something to consider, as their influence is helping to shape future citizens. Challenging social norms, Freire championed "pedagogical methods that recognised the experience and dignity of students and their culture", by encouraging examination of social understandings and the involvement of the educator in the daily lives of students (Gibson 1999). Freire focused on the student–teacher relationship and the language used by both in his writing: "dialogue is a way of knowing and should never be viewed as a mere tactic to involve students in a particular task" (Freire & Maceco 1995:379). This stance suggests that students are allowed to

become part of the dialogue, in order to rearrange themselves from 'dualistic classifications' to equally legitimate view-holders of this malleable concept of knowledge. However, Freire and Maceco (1995:389) argue that students need to be taught this position by "creating conditions that will enable them to understand the nature of ideologies" forced upon them:

> Teachers who engage in an educational practice without curiosity, allowing their students to avoid engagement with critical readings, are not involved in dialogue as a process of learning and knowing. They are involved, instead, in a conversation without the ability to turn the shared experiences and stories into knowledge.

The dialogue between teacher and student must remain fluid, with the educator being able to differentiate between "dialogue as a process of learning and knowing and dialogue as conversation that mechanically focuses on the individual's lived experience" (Freire & Maceco 1995:381).

In an ideal world, educators would not allow a 'laziness' to creep into creative ideation, but rather become co-creators of a pedagogical environment in which students are able to construct their realities free from fear of uncontrolled emotions and empty seductions (Kramer 2001:11). Mayo describes how "the collective process of praxis "allows teachers to balance their roles between freedom and authority, thereby promoting learning without oppression" (2005:172). The educators then could extend stimulation and expertise to development without becoming too accepting of regression and art with no point (Kramer 2001:12). The 'oppressor' and 'oppressed' are seen by Freire as being not binary, but dialectical, with the aim of social transformation being greater 'coherence' among society's citizens (Mayo 2005:176). The ideal educator–student relationship, then, would be open to any and all communication in ways that encourage without controlling, and assist instead of commanding.

Rubin states that "all human beings have within them a natural tendency toward growth, toward actualising that creative potential at increasingly mature levels" (1978:253). She describes a process of inner conflict that drains inner resources and must be reduced in order to progress from that point, and maintains that art allows people to do so by giving them a medium with which to 'map-out' the crisis and to gain a better understanding of it (1978:253). Rubin (1978:253) also describes art as an opportunity to reflect and to take responsibility for both the process and the final product. The use of art students as an indicator of the potential of citizenry is made more appropriate through theories of art therapy, as it is argued that participating in creativity is highly beneficial.

2.4 THEORIES IN EXPLORING STUDENT ENGAGEMENT WITH OUWTARD INTERACTION

2.4.1 Critical citizenship

Critical citizenship may be defined as resulting from education that focuses on four elements, that of politics/ideology, social/collectivity, self/subjectivity and praxis/engagement that require knowledge, skills, values and dispositions in order to be implemented (Johnson & Morris 2010:90). These form a framework devised by Johnson and Morris (2010) from which "a pictorial representation to contrast the existence of, opportunities for and absence of elements of critical citizenship within the various levels of a curriculum and its materials" can be made (2010:91). This is done "in order to achieve a true critical pedagogy: the emancipation and transformation of students and schools towards a better society" (Johnson & Morris 2010:92).

To be critical of anything there must be consideration of any and all sides of the reasoning. The act of being critical has the rare ability to consider many facets of any single idea. It works with negatives and positives, for wherever there exists a theory, it borders on the negative space it leaves behind with its conjectures. With a critical outlook, we are able to consider the space in its entirety. This is a skill rarely learnt by oneself, but must rather be taught. In modern global times, the skill is invaluable to citizens as they negotiate their way through various injustices, unprecedented situations, and newfound expectations. In order to live peacefully and successfully among other citizens, emerging social members must have the ability to determine for themselves whether to assimilate or rebel.

Citizenship is layered in definition according to the context of its use. The online Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (2011:n.pag.) begins with a broad definition, pertaining to the physical act of being a citizen. Citizenship involves the rights and duties associated with membership of that particular society. This encyclopedia (2011) describes how in history the term was used to discern social standing with the ruling authority, and that in the 1990s new philosophical interest led to a recalibration of the concept. The shifting of territory, and increasing diversity, led to a new grasp of how the concept of citizenship functions and will continue to function in the postmodern world. As with any concept that attempts to blanket a multitude of people, the concept of citizenship is many-layered and complex. It is seen to work in a three-level system, with levels pertaining to its contextual use (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy 2011). The first level is applicable to the legal, political and social nature of the concept; the second to political agents with an active role; and the third with physical daily interaction in a community as a source of identity with all three being interrelated, overlapped, and transformative.

Giroux adds economic layers to the definition of citizenship in a quest to determine the effect of global pressures on it, saying that "if we are to believe the prophets of neoliberalism, it is easier to imagine the end of the world than the end of capitalism" (2003:92). Race has taken a significant step back to accommodate new preoccupations with economic power, social standing, and class. Giroux explains this process "in which private satisfactions replace social responsibilities and private solutions become a substitute for systemic change" (2003:91), as is evident in elite schools where status is attached to tertiary education acceptance and academic accomplishment. Education, however, is not all doom and gloom, as knowledge is still being shared and allowed to develop through each individual interpretation, with the important element being how this knowledge is utilised. Giroux explains how "knowledge can be used for amplifying human freedom and promoting social justice, and not for simply creating profits or future careers" (2003:105), using the shift of race to 'profit' as proof that knowledge can still cause social change in either a positive or negative direction and that no system is completely immune to education's influence.

As the rules of citizenship change with its definition, so too do the roles fulfilled by the artist; as citizenship changes, so must education. Freire (1995:383) describes the aim of critical pedagogy from which critical citizens may emerge:

> In my view, each class is a class through which both students and teachers engage in a search for the knowledge already obtained so they can adopt a dialogical posture as a response to their epistemological inquietude that forces the revision of what is already known so they can know it better.

The way in which art is presented to students must modify as its role in socialisation shifts. Martin describes how art has adapted to the new "professionalization of society and education" (2006:9). According to this view, education is now aimed at "particular occupational ends rather than as an ends in itself" (Martin 2006:6), with art becoming a subject at which an educated person may become a 'specialist'. The relationship between art, education and society has become seemingly pigeonholed into professional life, for commercial gain, and given boundaries concerning theory and practice. However, if the effect of art on society is also considered, the cold efficiency diminishes, with what Martin describes as "public making" (2006:5).

Critical citizenship education is a way of guiding the cycles of artists teaching artists into becoming more inclusive and better informed. If one considers that citizens are 'made', it becomes so much more than having been accidently genetically placed in a physical space. It includes ways of thinking, interacting, believing, and appropriate for modern societies that are becoming increasingly global and without much physical boundary. It becomes all the more important to continually re-evaluate and move into new social spaces. Yùdice (2006) urges

citizens to take the view of being a 'friendly enemy' of society, especially artists. Such an approach could result in estrangement that allows them to act outside of the presuppositions of citizenship, as a type of re-recognition of who they really are within society (Yùdice 2006:160). Nussbaum proposes a solution to this problem. If citizenship is provided alongside what is termed 'liberal education', citizens are 'made' into individuals that "are capable of thinking for themselves, arguing with tradition, and understanding with sympathy the conditions of lives different from their own" (2002:302). Citizenship has the potential to be adapted to be more inclusive, while maintaining the benefits of belonging.

The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy describes citizenship as "interaction in a community as a source of identity" (2011), which supports the idea that core inner constructions will one day inform behaviour and subsequent involvement in society. In order to make this source a positive one, the citizens that make up this greater community must also be well adjusted and able to engage critically with their world. Giroux advocates a 'pedagogy of hope' in which citizens are not only aware of their own inner realities but also how these affect the greater social world, in that "politics of hope must tap into individual experiences while at the same time linking individual responsibility with a progressive sense of social agency ... [so that] individual and social agency becomes meaningful as part of the willingness to imagine otherwise in order to act otherwise" (2003:100, 105). The presence of hope does not doom those already active in society, but rather encourages all levels of citizenry, whether future or current, to take responsibility and act upon principle instead of politics. The ability to imagine otherwise opens up a way of acting otherwise, as anything that remains stagnant for too long may not continue to serve its original purpose. Giroux explains that "combining the discourse of critique and hope is crucial to affirm that critical activity offers the possibility for social change" (2003:101). This may be achieved through many varied avenues, one of which is the use of art. The aim of the subject is to enhance critical citizenship through concepts in art. As students engage with topics, the hope is that the creative ideation, the actual creation and the exhibition of the work would encourage development of critical abilities.

Freire has written extensively on the 'pedagogy of the oppressed', concerning the unequal power structures in pedagogy, and which may be considered as a direct reflection of the broader global socio-political situation. If students are unable or unwilling to engage critically with structures presented through the curriculum, chances are slim of their engaging with 'bigger-and-badder' structures once outside of school. Freire & Maceco (1995:389) acknowledges the new global nature of education and the subsequent skills required by students who must function outside of it:

> Thus, education involves a globalizing practice. It is a practice that does not only involve technical knowledge, but also world knowledge. Therefore, the oppressed need to

develop the necessary critical tools that will enable them to read their worlds so they can apprehend the globality of their reality and choose what world they want for themselves.

Citizenship could then possibly become ever more entangled with globalisation trends, and therefore needs to be considered alongside critical and liberal pedagogy.

2.4.2 Globalisation and education

The topic of this year's IEB art exam (2015) is that of *Surplus and Scarcity*. Some of the artists given as examples are Andreas Gursky, Pieter Hugo, and even a 2015 Oxfam poster. The topic obviously deals with a broad variety of socio-political issues, one of which is the unequal distribution of resources. The emerging global nature of society has ensured that awareness of the full plethora of issues is accessible. Students are not just exposed to the topic at the level of their immediate local environment, but rather to a globe-full from which to pick and choose.

In order to define a concept so widely used as globalisation is no easy task, as pointed out by Giddens (1999:24-26). The world of communications and connections grows ever expansive as citizens become ever more visible to each other. Enwezor and Okeke-Agulu (2009:6) discuss the expansion of African art exposure through globalisation in terms of visibility. The system of globalisation does not serve to create a new nation-state, but rather to make visible those already in existence, simultaneously generating transformation and expanding perception on pluralistic realities.

It is possible that the effects on the circumstances of many populations increase the significance of defining globalisation. Giddens describes how definition was believed to help shed "habits and prejudices of the past in order to control the future" (1999:20), and that "risk is closely connected to innovation" (Giddens 1999:21). The entire concept of globalisation has the potential for as much social injustice as it does for inclusion. With or without definition, striving for standardised civility is still a reality; even in the West, from which globalisation first came, the influence of globalisation is felt (Giddens 1999:22).

Held, McGrew, Goldblatt and Perraton (1999:67) explore the 'global' aspect of globalisation, suggesting that:

> [g]lobalisation can be taken to refer to those spatio-temporal processes of change which underpin a transformation in the organization of human affairs by linking together and expanding human activity across regions and continents.

Giddens believes that globalisation is not only a completely new set of transformations, but that it is in fact 'revolutionary' (1999:28). Economic examples are very popular when discussing the

concept of globalisation. Giddens argues that this is too superficial, describing it as rather more "political, technological and cultural, as well as economic" (1999:28). Multi-directional progress that has possibly never before been understood, but likely existed, is also considered. Giddens describes an upward and downward force, influencing both small and large systems, synchronising the effects on millions (such as the economy) as well as on the individual (such as family values), fortifying its persuasion of 'human affairs' (Giddens 1999:30). Unprecedented gender equality, awareness of institutional control and 'lucky-packet' causes from which to choose and participate in, are just a few examples of unique developments wrought by globalisation. Whether this change is beneficial or not, is described by Giddens as being viewed optimistically and pessimistically in equal measures (1999:99).

Hardt and Negri propose that globalisation has moved to unite a new form of sovereignty "under a single logic of rule" into a global 'empire' (1999:116). The element that is seen as different in this system is the increasing inability to regulate on a national level, which rather seeks to progressively incorporate an "entire global realm" (Hardt & Negri 1999:117). The most distinctive feature of this new world order is the increasingly common appearance of third, second and first world in varied combinations at any given location (Hardt & Negri 1999:117). Globalisation is therefore distinctive in the historical landscape, forming new entities and processes that we have only just begun to grasp.

Guilherme (2010:165) describes how education must prepare students for the inevitable global influence as their future roles as citizens may involve greater sensitivity:

> Citizens for a global democracy need to be aware of the inter-related nature of all aspects of physical, spiritual and cultural life. This means having a deep-rooted understanding of the relational nature of global dependencies, whether we are talking about the ecosphere or the circuits of capital.

Bastos (2009) supports this view by describing globalising education as a development of appreciation for the complexity societies all around the world have to offer, and adds that this appreciation perpetuates the system: the more aware students and citizens become, the deeper the influence of globalisation spreads. Bastos also describes the method of 'global education' as a "socialization of students into international citizenry ... acquiring appreciation of human diversity and cultures and of the complexity of the international system" (2009:261). Education and globalisation are then possibly linked in a propagative manner. Education allows globalisation to manifest within new generations, each with a stronger pull to the 'global village' than the one preceding it.

As is argued with regard to the benefits of defining globalisation, so too must the study be contextualised to clarify the parameters of its implications.

2.5 CONTEXTUALISING THE STUDY

The study existed within very specific parameters as the research question dealt with such a context-specific occurrence: the experiences of matric art students in independent IEB schools in Gauteng.

The broad context of the study exists in shifting global pedagogical practices. As globalisation brings our borders closer together it is essential to standardise educational practices in order to ensure that students have access to the global community, and are not disadvantaged due to their level of education. For this reason the IEB syllabus was chosen. The IEB aims to provide assessment that is on par with international standards. On their website the IEB's vision claims to "advance quality teaching and learning in South Africa through an assessment process of integrity, innovation and international comparability" (IEB 2015). This situates the research in a more accessible context in relation to global research on curriculum and individual experiences of educational scenarios.

South Africa's context in terms of education is fraught with historical sensitivities and underlying equality issues. Since apartheid, many changes have been wrought; however, transformation of an entire society cannot simply come into being, but needs to be built up from its very foundations. Kallaway compares the use of education, first as a carrier of apartheid ideology that spread infection among each new generation, and then as "one of the flagship areas of policy reform" that is even now attempting to inoculate the generations to come (2002:7). Instead of varying the degrees at which it is administered, education in South Africa now attempts to reach all equally – once more state-controlled. Doors were flung open, and although great challenges still exist when it comes to languages of instruction and class discrepancies, at the very least fair education is now much more accessible. The independent schools where I interviewed, however, remain hallmarks of the discrepancies of our past. They have access to more advantageous resources, have better facilities, and tend to have higher pass rates. Of every 1 000 learners in the education system in South Africa in 2012, 932 are registered in ordinary public schools (Department of Basic Education 2014). The vast majority them are not offered the same conditions as those privileged enough to attend an independent school. These independent school graduates are possibly more likely to attend tertiary education facilities, and eventually become citizens with more influence and resources. One may ask, is it not then important to ensure their curriculum adheres to socially responsible practices and training? A great majority of interviewees were from privileged backgrounds, and so are exposed to a

particular set of circumstances. They may be used as an indication of privileged opinion. The recordings of their experiences, therefore, are indicative of this, as discussed in Chapter 4.

The subject of art also attracts mostly female students. Students must choose at the end of Grade 9 which subjects they will take to matric, and from the three classes interviewed, only two students were male. Both showed extraordinary natural talent for performance art and technical skill, implying that if art is not perceived as natural inclination, the subject is dropped in favour of another.

The social realities of these individuals are central to the research, and may stand alone as valid and true for each of them. The research exists within each individual's experience, and cannot exist as conjecture outside of the individual. There is no theory without the participants, and so the research must be clearly contextualised as being integrally linked to the specific insight of those interviewed. In the case studies presented in Chapter 4 these parameters are further discussed.

2.6 CONCLUSION

The theories and epistemology discussed in this chapter are a varied combination of knowledges to consider. However, it is this very multi-perspectivism that allows for theoretical saturation. Andreotti claims that according to critical literacy, all knowledge exists as incomplete, coloured by our own interpretation, and that in order to further this knowledge "we need to engage with our own and other perspectives to learn and transform our views, identities and relationships – to think otherwise. Action is always a choice of the individual ..." (2006:49). Exploration of knowledge alongside action on behalf of the individual allows for even greater understanding to occur, with more thoroughly researched outcomes and much more accurate theorisation. It allows for the gaps in some to be filled by others, to create as complete a picture as possible. Knowledge is not considered, but rather viewed as knowledges that exist alongside, over, under and through each other. As exposure to knowledges increases, so too, may the accuracy of perception increase. This chapter included the theory of social constructionism, and consideration of theories on both inner and outer experiences; emphasising the effect of these theories on the process of education and their positioning among theories of learning. Contextualisation of the study was also taken into account. In the next chapter the methodologies used in the research process are discussed.

CHAPTER 3
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter I introduce and motivate the research methodology used for this study. I also examine the ways in which the research methodology was applied during the research procedure, as well as the consequent ethical considerations, validity and trustworthiness. The aim of this research was to explore matric art students' interpretation of art curriculum requirements and their critical engagement with the socio-political implications of the topic. The research methodology discussed here includes an instrumental case study research design and grounded theory as a framework for analysis.

3.2 DESIGN OF THE STUDY

3.2.1 Research approach and paradigm

Research approach

This research followed an inductive approach in which theory may be developed by contributing to findings on the topic. As the data may be categorised as qualitative, the role of the researcher must be considered in relation to the research. Willig (2013:25) points out that

> [q]ualitative research acknowledges that the researcher influences and shapes the research process, both as a person (personal reflexivity) and as a theorist/thinker (epistemological reflexivity) ... [encouraging] us to foreground, and reflect upon, the ways in which the person of the researcher is implicated in the research and its findings.

By considering reflexivity, Willig (2013:25) describes how an even clearer picture may be painted as to the insights and understandings gathered. With this in mind, the design of the research included a reflexivity section on the part of the researcher as an element in gaining a comprehensive record of the data.

In addition, grounded theory was used to guide emergent themes into a cohesive whole, which Sbaraini, Carter, Evans and Blinkhorn describe as "generally focused on social processes or actions ... [that] shows the influence of symbolic interactionism, a social psychological approach focused on the meaning of human actions" (2001:2). Grounded theory was the most appropriate choice, as its focus lies on building theory "specific to the context in which they have been developed" (Willig 2013:69), thereby complementing the social constructionism epistemology and allowing for engagement with reflexivity. The process of analysis using grounded theory

involved the raw data being transcribed from one-on-one interviews conducted at independent schools with art students in their final year of art. The data was coded according to criteria provided by Sbaraini *et al*. (2011). First, initial coding was completed whereby as many ideas as possible were generated inductively from the raw data; then, central codes were selected from the entire data set according to determined relevance; and finally, through theoretical coding, the final categories were refined and related to one another (Sbaraini *et al*. 2011:5).

Interpretivist paradigm

According to Goldkuhl, "[t]he aim of understanding the subjective meanings of persons in studied domains is essential in the interpretive paradigm" (2012:4). As social constructionism is the epistemology that was chosen for this research project, the interpretivist paradigm was deemed most appropriate, as it supports the concept of individual construction of knowledge that underlies all inductive theory. Goldkuhl (2012:5) explains the parameters of this paradigm:

> The core idea of interpretivism is to work with these subjective meanings already there in the social world; i.e. to acknowledge their existence, to reconstruct them, to understand them, to avoid distorting them, to use them as building blocks in theorizing.

From this explanation, the use of grounded theory, as well as instrumental case study, is clearly appropriate.

3.2.2 Research design

The methodology chosen to guide this research design was the instrumental case study methodology. Baxter and Jack define an instrumental case study type as seeking to "provide insight into an issue or help refine a theory ... facilitating our understanding" (2008:549). By using this methodology as a framework, interviews were analysed with the intention of exploring students' reactions to curriculum and the extent of their critical engagement with the socio-political topic.

Johansson (2003:2–4) suggests that a case, consisting of "a complex functioning unit, be investigated in its natural context with a multitude of methods, and be contemporary", and also that the case study may be considered a "meta-method" because of its ability to relate to another study, and the capacity to illuminate various aspects as needed and build a repertoire. The case study design of this research consisted of cases of individual art students from three independent Gauteng schools that had all been required to meet the same curriculum requirements (IEB). They were interviewed and observed in their respective art classrooms (natural context), and would all be matriculants of the same year (2015).

3.2.3 Sample selection and data collection

Sampling

Participants were chosen based on a combination of purposive and convenience sampling techniques, as schools were purposively chosen from a list of IEB schools and were conveniently situated in relation to my location in Gauteng. Furthermore, this selection was also made based on Gravetter and Forzano's assertion that a "strategy that helps minimize potential problems with convenience sampling is simply to provide a clear description of how the sample was obtained and who the participants are" (2012:152).

Samples were drawn from independent schools in order to observe any trends in curriculums claiming to be on international standards. As society becomes more accessible on a global scale, curriculums that offer internationally recognised examinations and have greater rates of acceptance into tertiary education require consideration in terms of their effectiveness. Independent schools also cater mainly for the economically privileged in South Africa, and so it may be argued that these schools have a greater responsibility to instil in students a socio-political critical awareness, as these students may themselves become citizens with great economic power. Bourdieu (1996:4) asks "if it is fitting to recall that the dominated always contribute to their own domination", could it not be argued or suggested that the dominator actively contribute to the perpetuation of their domination of others? Would it not then be appropriate to attempt a change in the dominator as well? This may be done with sensitive curriculums that have a focus on creating critically aware citizens. This study explored the effectiveness of these independent curriculums in achieving such objectives.

Only schools following the IEB curriculum were considered, as they are the main independent curriculum providers that strive to meet international standards, in my opinion making it more involved in a progressively global world. Then, due to my location, schools were picked that were based in the Gauteng province, namely Johannesburg and Pretoria. Of the six schools invited to participate, three responded positively, namely Heron Bridge College in Nietgedacht, Johannesburg; Beaulieu College in Kyalami, Johannesburg; and St Mary's Diocesan School for Girls in Hatfield, Pretoria.

Participants consisted of matric art students willing to be interviewed within these three schools. First, Heron Bridge and Beaulieu were interviewed in purposive initial sampling, and then St Mary's was theoretically sampled after major themes were extracted from the first two data sets. In all, initial sampling consisted of 12 interviews, and theoretical sampling of 9 interviews, giving a total of 21 interviews.

Semi-structured Interviews

In this research I made use of one-on-one interviews, which Gravetter and Forzano describe as having the following strengths: "efficient to administer with groups ... in-depth information ... [and] unique perspectives on the issues" (2012:216-217).

The initial interview consisted of six open-ended questions, and followed a semi-structured approach to allow for as much data as possible, and in order to gain as much insight into the experience of participants. These questions are:

1. What is the rationale behind your artwork?
2. Could you describe the artwork to me?
3. How did you choose your subject matter?
4. What do you think are the social issues most important to be faced in the future as well as presently?
5. What is your opinion on the curriculum requirements for your final practical?
6. What do you plan to do next year?

Theoretical sampling, according to Breckenridge and Jones, "is continually directed by the emerging theory, following up leads as they arise in the data and progressively focusing on data collection" (2009: n.pag.).In this study it consisted of six questions that were adapted to better suit the main themes identified from the first 12 interviews. These questions were also presented as a written questionnaire instead of a verbal interview. This approach was followed to ensure optimal comfort on behalf of the participant and to allow for more congruence of thought. These questions are:

1. Could you please describe your artwork to me, as well as the rationale behind it?
2. Could the curriculum be set up differently? How?
3. In what ways does your teacher guide you?
4. What is your definition of surplus and scarcity? Where does it exist?
5. What, to you, is an important social issue in today's world?
6. What do you plan to do next year?

Participants were also invited to share any thoughts, feelings, or opinions on the subject with me by email and to indicate if they wished to engage further with the questions. Teachers of the art class were also invited to share their insights and opinion on the current curriculum requirements and the trends observed by them.

3.2.4 Capturing data and ethical considerations

Data capturing:

Interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim, alongside any observations made during the interaction (memo writing). Reflection took place after each recording (through memo writing), and after each school visit. In the fourth chapter of this thesis, data is represented in the form of themes derived from codes drawn from the raw data. Direct quotations are also used to substantiate my interpretations of the findings.

Ethical considerations:

As the participants are human, and young (some still minors), ethical considerations are very significant and have consequences. Informed consent, the right to withdraw, debriefing, confidentiality, as well as the duty of the researcher to protect participants from any psychological harm were strictly adhered to (Willig, 2013:25–26). Clear explanations of the content of the study were first provided, after which permission was obtained that included participant and school permission, ensuring that all involved participated freely.

To ensure confidentiality, each participant was allocated a number with which to keep track of correlating interview transcripts and subject matter content. Also, recordings of interviews were on my personal cell phone that has a code-locked feature, ensuring that no one but me had access to them. As soon as data capturing had been completed, recordings of interviews were deleted. After interviewing participants, I offered to provide debriefing if they so wished and I gave them my email address to which they could send additional thoughts, feelings, and questions. Ethical clearance was obtained for this study from the Departmental Ethics Screening Committee (DESC) of the Visual Arts Department, Stellenbosch University.

3.2.5 Data analysis

Data was analysed according to the suggestion by Willig (2013:105), including "a search for recurrent themes ... as well as grounded theory". Each individual case was analysed for particular or distinctive characteristics. Then, after each case had been considered, themes were found and formed through grounded theory. Willig describes grounded theory as "the progressive identification and integration of categories of meaning from data ... with which to understand the phenomenon under investigation" (2013:70). This is achieved through coding, and subsequent integration of these descriptive categories into "higher-level analytic categories ... [that] actually emerge from the data, rather than being imposed upon it" (Willig 2013:73). After identifying major themes, interview questions were modified for the last group to be interviewed to gain more specific insight into these themes. Sbaraini *et al*. (2011:6) describe how theoretical

sampling takes place after initial purposive sampling in order to stay true to the 'openness' of grounded theory and to reach theoretical saturation. This is done to ensure that the most thorough understanding is achieved according to the identified themes. The grounded theory study design, according to Sbaraini *et al*. (2011) is presented in Figure 3.1.
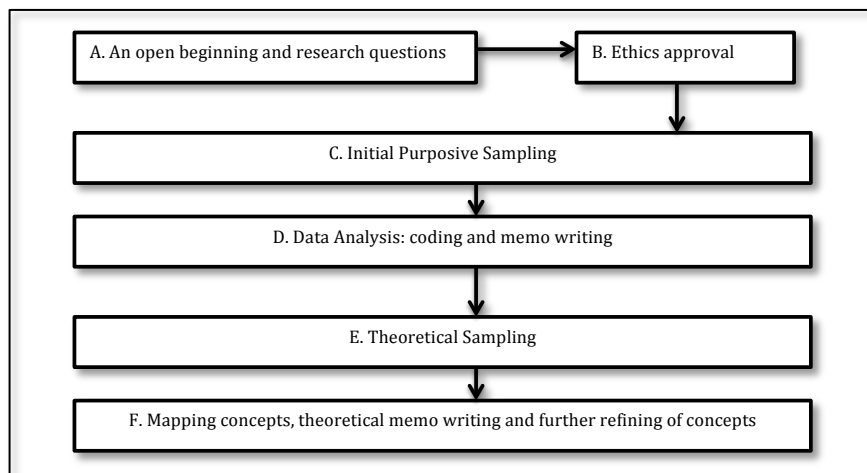

Figure 3.1: Grounded theory study design (from Sbaraini, Carter, Evans and Blinkhorn 2011:4).

3.2.6 Validity

Willig describes validity as being "the extent to which our research describes, measures, or explains what it aims to describe, measure or explain" (2013:24). The data must remain as closely linked as possible to the research questions and aim. The aim of this research was to explore matric art students' interpretation of art curriculum requirements and their critical engagement with the socio-political implications of the topic. By conducting three separate sessions of interviews, and by theoretically sampling the last session, I ensured that the research remained true to its objective of understanding individual experience in these cases. Participants were free to question assumptions and create their own meanings. Furthermore, the research took place in a real-life setting, and it involved researcher reflexivity, which according to Willig (2013:24), awards significant validity to the project.

3.3 CONCLUSION

This chapter included a discussion of the research approach, paradigm and design, it provided information on the sampling techniques employed, the manner of data collection and capturing, ethical considerations as well as data analysis and validity criteria. Overall, the methodology that was used during the study was identified as instrumental case study design following an inductive interpretivist approach. Grounded theory was chosen as the appropriate analytical

procedure. In the next chapter, data that was collected through interviews is presented and analysed according to the above-mentioned criteria.

CHAPTER 4
FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION OF EMPIRICAL INVESTIGATION

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides a discussion of the main themes that were identified during the data collection process through grounded theory (Sbaraini *et al*. 2011:1–10). The data was collected from three separate matric art classes, all of which followed the IEB curriculum. The purpose of the investigation was to answer the following question: "How do privileged matric art students interpret art curriculum requirements and what are their opinions on the socio-political implications of the topic issue?" The objective of the study was to determine the opinions of art students on the social issue of the topic through interpretation as demonstrated in subject matter choice and critical engagement with the topic. Also, if the core personality features were revealed through subject matter choice, reactions to the curriculum and the role of the teacher in creative ideation were considered. In the following section, data is presented under the main themes which emerged after focused and theoretical coding. The identified themes are also discussed.

4.2 PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The IEB curriculum consists of theoretical and practical components. Each year the IEB provides a topic for the matric art curriculum. It consists of the theoretical examination, and three practical art pieces that must follow certain formats, namely a drawing, a year work and an artwork that is purposively linked with the year work that may not be taken home. The theme for all three practical projects is the same. In this case (2015), it was 'Surplus and Scarcity'. All interviews revolved around these 'examination works', and students were asked to explain their chosen subject matter and to relate it to the theme. Interviews were transcribed and coded according to the grounded theory methodology chosen, and concurrent memo taking and theoretical sampling were used to enhance theoretical saturation (Breckenridge & Jones 2009). From these codes, four main themes were identified, and although other interviews were also conducted (from which the themes were derived), only those parts most relevant to the main themes are presented here, as they are the most closely related to the research question. The four main themes are *Topic interpretation and critical engagement*; *The process of discovering core personality features through creative ideation*; *Curriculum reactions*; and *The role of the teacher in meeting requirements and creative ideation*.

4.2.1 Topic interpretation and critical engagement

Topic interpretation was based on the subject matter chosen by students and described to me through one-on-one interviews. The following are answers to the questions 'What is the rationale behind your artwork? Could you describe the artwork to me? and What do you think are the social issues most important to be faced in the future as well as presently?' Interpretations ranged from environmentally themed depictions, to social issues, to the idea of passing time.

Student 5 described her work on environmentalism as follows:

> *It's going to be of a monk and two tigers lying by him, I'm not trying to make a Buddhist comment or anything like that it's just basically humans living in harmony with animals. It's an important issue to me and I strongly believe that like humans corrupt the world basically, and take all the advantages while animals and nature and all that's beautiful gets destroyed. It's basically saying how we must live together in peace.*

Student 1 delved into the social issues of materialism and the surplus of objects we surround ourselves with in the following description:

> *I was just thinking about how in today's society how we all kind of have a lot of things but they don't have a lot of meaning, like we all chasing after technology but like it doesn't really fulfil us, so ja ... Our topic is surplus and scarcity, so I'm drawing a group of people who are sitting in, kind of a garbage dump to symbolise a lot of nothing.*

Student 13 interpreted the topic by combining environmental indications with consumerism (as she labels it) in an interesting way:

> *My artwork is a storyboard of dogs with clothing on them. The clothes have designs based on weather conditions relating to famine and disease. This is to relate consumerism – which is usually seen as something only accessed by the wealthy – to ideas of not having.*

Student 14 described her use of symbols to denote the economic crisis:

> *My artwork is one main drawing of a cheetah that is used to symbolise the underprivileged in South Africa. I contradict the freedom of a wild animal by placing a fence in front of it to show how South Africa is trapping the underprivileged ... The main purpose is to comment that there is so much hidden potential in our society.*

Student 21 related the topic to that of nutrition and its unbalanced existence in our world (even if her bowl turned out not to be empty) by depicting:

The amount of food most people in poverty have daily, and compare it to the audience by showing a beggar with an empty bowl. The bowl has mints in it that are given for free after restaurants, to show the excess in the food intake of other people.

It was found that, generally speaking, the immediate environment in which students interacted tended to have a greater impact on them than that of the broader political and social environment around them. As all the participating schools were private institutions, most students were from privileged backgrounds. When asked to describe a social issue that existed at the time, Learner 1 described an issue prescribed to them in a different subject: "*I think, because of our English [subject], everything we do [has] a lot of gender stereotyping.*" This trend of prescription was inclined to make students think along very similar lines and so their work showed many similarities. As most of these learners came from similar backgrounds, and were therefore supposedly exposed to similar environments, and of course to the same teacher, the issues they engaged with were popular according to schools. The Johannesburg schools favoured environmentalism, while the Pretoria school advocated economics, as expressed by Student 21 (from Pretoria): "*[M]oney is used in excess. Many people struggle to survive while others do not use money efficiently, and as a result a lot of waste is produced.*"

Student 10 (from Johannesburg) described a salient environmental-social issue:

I mean just, going green, I always hear about sustainable living being a big thing. Probably the same, just 'saving the world' stuff. Maybe today its more urgent as it gets worse, but also a lot of new development in sustainable living.

Student 4 shared her own insight into why we have so many issues to choose from:

So obviously we have a lot of political issues, such as corruption, all those things, our economic problems created mostly by our trade unions. The issue of race is ongoing, with contention around it. Social issues, with the continuing gay rights and so on... It's all about the labels we give people. I think you find more issues the more socially aware you are. I think people will always be creating more problems.

Student 8 (from Johannesburg) provided an alternative issue to environmentalism, and interestingly enough described the situation as different in today's world:

I think the main social issues of the future are the ones of equality, any inequality, race, gender, anything is relevant because we're meant to be living in a society that's in an era of equality but it's still inequality in these little pockets. It is something that needs to be questioned, and I suppose also the question of the earth and the environment.

Today, the main issue is getting previous generations to understand what the new generation perceives. Eventually the youth of today is going to come into power with their own ideas and concepts.

Discussion

Each student manages to compose pieces that are unique to their own perspectives and attitudes of the topic 'Surplus and Scarcity', giving us insight into their individualistic ways of interpreting, reacting and understanding. Gee (2011) describes the innate ability of all humans to communicate, and it is argued that creative expression forms part of this ability, suggesting that the way in which we formulate our outward statements are products of our situations and are an indication of the meanings we attach to them. As we live in a country that constantly offers juxtapositions of poverty and wealth, it is easy to understand why most students tended toward the surplus of suffering and the scarcity of compassion. However, how they decided to depict this dichotomy in symbols is so varied as to indicate a certain amount of individual construction of this polarity.

This construction may follow the guidelines set out by their social interactions, as advocated by the social constructionism epistemology (Willig 2013). Each class is presented with the same theme, but with a few variables. The teacher is different in each; the immediate environment, the facilities, the class size, the city in which they reside, and the presence of other fellow students each contribute foundations from which to construct and vocalise realities, giving students multiple perspectives from which to draw (Jørgensen & Phillips 2002). These students, having made it to matric, have strong communication abilities, and had no problem describing their ideas in clear language, but may not yet have learnt to veil their true opinions in misleading descriptions. They may truly see environmental significance in images of monks and tigers, for example. They demonstrated a very literal way of interpreting and exhibiting. The benefit of this rather oversimplified process is close to complete transparency. And what this transparency reveals is that these students are not encouraged to engage with the topics at a deeper level.

Although the individual constructs realities (Willig 2013), guidance is still given by overwhelming influences. Teachers and academic environments are definite sources of such influence, at the very least guiding the thought process of the new generation, and at its worst perpetuating power relations in society. Bourdieu (1996) describes this influence and warns about elite schooling and the emerging culture producers. These students, studying as they are in an elite school, are guided along constructions of culture, which are legitimised by other cultural producers, so that they too can become part of this illusive social order. This rather simple and transparent thought process may showcase a cycle of perpetuating social systems, as there has

been little evidence of critical engagement with the topic. The theme of surplus and scarcity goes much deeper than economic or environmental discrepancies; it is in fact highly political. Being motivated by status or power, instead of principle, is the underlying reason for the existence of surplus and scarcity, in anything from materialistic to environmental resources. It is true that these concepts are completely abstract and very hard to imagine in terms of an artwork, but the theme, Surplus and Scarcity, was chosen for the very reason of encouraging critical development in students. It seems, from these interviews, that they need more encouragement and guidance.

There is evidence of an awareness of the social climate of our country, as students referred to unemployment, inequality and corruption as broad areas of concern when asked about the social implications of the topic. The interview questions did not encourage deep thinking about the social issues of our world, as they had to be done within a set amount of time (usually two hours to interview a class-full of students), and were conducted in the presence of the teacher as per request from the schools' governing bodies. Answers may have been more superficial due to these pressures. Besides the restrictions in time, students felt intimidated to talk to a stranger about a topic they were unsure of. They repeatedly needed to be reassured that there were no wrong answers and that no one at their school would see their answers. Their discomfort may have been due to the fact that they feared their answers would somehow affect their academic progress, or that the teacher would not approve of their opinions, even after reassurances to the contrary. This indicates the position of power the school and the teacher hold over these students, and how the legitimating illusion is possibly maintained.

No time was given for students to prepare answers, and they answered with the first thing that came to mind, which generally tended to involve 'popular' issues that are discussed regularly in school, and most probably at home too. The 'comfort' of these issues further supports the legitimising illusion that exists within elite education systems in order to maintain the social order (Bourdieu 1996). These students have a much higher chance of entering into and successfully completing tertiary education, making them ideal candidates for future cultural producers and beneficiaries of the social order. The fact that they do not even seem aware of deeper socio-political implications may indicate a lack of exposure to critical exploration of social dilemmas, and it may be possible that this exposure is only granted at a tertiary level. It may also indicate an unwillingness to become aware, as these implications relate to issues that are highly emotional. Issues such as power relations and misinterpretations have the risk of damaging the emotional states of these students. For example, the student who predicted a rise in issues as being related to the level of social awareness may be justifying her own lack of awareness by brushing it off as 'looking for trouble', thereby preserving her psychological state and possibly her self-esteem. Matric students, although able to think on their feet and communicate

exceptionally well, have not yet learnt to engage critically with sources of information regarding the social climate they are about to enter as citizens, and it is argued that benefit is lost due to this lack of exposure. Nussbaum (2002) argues the advantage of combining liberal education with citizenship in order to provide students with tools necessary to free themselves from unfair social structures that they may repeat, often unaware.

Not once was reference made to race in relation to the issue of surplus and scarcity, but only to the waste of potential. This may be due to a shift in what is deemed most important in education today. The pressure placed on these students to achieve high grades and to choose profitable careers is immense. The economic implications of their decisions and achievements carry far more significance now than race. Giroux (2003) explains that this is the result of global pressures to replace social action with private solutions and that this showcases education's influence on social processes.

A distinction, however, existed in thoughts on the future and current social climates. References were made to older generations' viewpoints and how they may differ from those of the 'new generation'. Rubin (1978) notes that all human beings strive toward growth and maturity; this deviation from the older generation is not necessarily unexpected, but could possibly be a result of art providing a medium through which issues may be mapped out and understood in more reflective and responsible ways. Yùdice (2006) describes how artists may be viewed as 'the friendly enemy' of society, which allows for a perspective not strongly influenced by underlying socio-political systems, but rather an outsider's perspective, with the potential for seeing more clearly and fairly. The students did not come across as being hyper-aware of their race, or the race of others, but made clear the distinction between themselves and those active citizens that belong to the previous generation. From parents to politicians, the feeling was of exasperation that they could not understand what these young soon-to-be citizens could so clearly see, that of a world where equality exists despite gender, sexuality or race. The student who spoke out about the 'older generation' felt strongly about equality, and how it should not be neglected in the 'pockets' of society he deemed overlooked by current social systems. There is clearly a feeling of camaraderie, and that each person deserves an equal chance of success and improvement. "The future for the youth" is how student 14 describes her perception of the social world and its responsibilities. Giroux attributes such feelings of frustration and disappointment to the failings of democratic systems, and claims that "emptied of any substantial content, 'democracy' even in its current deracinated state appears imperiled as individuals are unable to translate their privately suffered misery into public concerns and collective action" (2003:93). Some intuitive students are aware of the restrictions that maintain the political social order, but they are unable to describe clearly what it is they are aware of. They translate it into a loyalty to their own generation and unsupported loathing of the previous, whether it is justified or not.

Although each question was answered with enthusiasm and conviction, and often with dramatic resolve, the content of these answers tended toward surface issues that are popular in the media, as with environmentalism and even equality, and not the underlying political nature of many social issues. As a generation heavily exposed to social media, it is not hard to guess where these similarities in perception stem from. Held *et al.* (1999) are of the opinion that this similarity denotes the influence of globalisation influence as links that span human activity, as well as the organisation of the affairs of society. Therefore, the effect of globalisation could be considered an influence on how future generations view social issues. Issues that are linked across continents (as with equality) and indicate a discrepancy in social organisation (as with economic difficulties and environmental damage) may become forerunners in social attention over immediate environmental issues, or may only remain so until the local issue becomes popular globally. Many students attempt to do this with their work, using symbols linked to the local South African climate (such as wildlife) with inclusive meanings (those related to poverty), but are unable to achieve the desired effect, probably due to the failings of critical engagement.

The foundation for critical thought exists, as seen in the sensitivity with which these students approach social topics, but lack the follow-through of engagement. For example, the cheetah surrounded by the fence is a fair expression of potential speed and its restriction, but it does not communicate who put the fence there, or if the cheetah is not restricted by much deeper fences. The artist wants to communicate a loss of potential, but rather communicates a harbouring of it instead, missing key elements of the relational nature of the social issue.

The experiences of these students shows an interesting mix of the global and local issues, with references to specific economic difficulties in their own country and also broader human interactions with the natural environment. This may indicate that globalisation has not yet reached its full influence in these classrooms, as students are still engaging with either the local or the global and not with the interaction between the two. Bastos (2009), however, believes that the more aware students become of the complex interlocked nature of society, the more globalisation spreads its influence. Guilherme (2010) further describes how education must prepare students towards this awareness of the 'relational nature of global dependencies'.

Each student demonstrated creative ability by bringing the given topic to life with symbols that hold personal significance and have been constructed in a way that is context-specific (Jørgensen & Phillips 2002). The symbols remain socially constructed, but are referenced to global issues, as seen in the example of the student depicting young people on a garbage heap. Even though the issues students engaged with have far broader impact than their own immediate environments, they were still able to relate them back to inner constructions of their

own meanings, such as the student depicting small 'fashionable' dogs to represent consumerism. Their adaption to this ever-changing world order that moves both large and small systems (Giddens 1999:30) is seemingly effortless, as they manage to have an equal local and global environmental awareness. Guilherme points to "the centrality of youth as an ethical register for measuring the changing nature of the social contract ... and its implications for a broader discourse on hope and the future" (2010:168). The fact that these students seem to straddle the two systems of local and global, and integrate them, may be indicative of their future potential as citizens.

The individual interpretations offered by students on the topic may be constructed socially. The social order could be perpetuated through elite schools that offer the social foundations of these constructions. These students may go on to become future cultural producers, which could become problematic if they have not developed the ability to engage critically with socio-political topics. As the education system becomes more focused on the economic repercussions of achievement, race is demoted as a significant social influence. These students could possibly interpret the failures of democracy as a loathing of previous generations' contribution, and the global effect on education is apparent though not yet complete as the global and local both remain considerations. Through this inner construction of the local and the global, key personality features may be revealed. This aspect is dealt with in the next section.

4.2.2 Process of discovering core personality features through creative ideation

Creative ideation is the process by which students decide on subject matter for an artwork. Students often described this process as being a simple case of taking the first idea that popped up and polishing it until it fit the topic and had clarity. As the process by which these ideas are formulated could be related to psychoanalytic concepts of free association, spontaneous expression and active imagination (Malchiodi & Rozum 2003:53–56), the process of creative ideation may reflect inner structures of personality. Students expressed this process in the following ways as an answer to the question: 'How did you choose your subject matter?'

Student 3 answered with the following:

> *It was quite difficult because it was such a difficult and open topic, but I was kind of looking at an old album one day and actually I want to try like a baby portrait, and I don't want to make this too heavy, because I feel like yes, art that is really heavy is powerful, but I kind of wanted to make it like just me, because I'm not a very depressing, deep, like sombre person, I'm quite like a bubbly, yay ...*

So it does have that element of what we know now is kind of like poverty and all of that stuff, but I just kind of wanted to make it happy. And I'm good at drawing portraits so, I'll do like a 'me reflecting on life type thing' using myself. Because you change so much as you grow up like the core element always stays the same but you still learn so much.

Student 4 was inspired by an Amnesty International ad campaign:

So I'm really into human rights, the UN and all those ... And I saw this and it kind of spoke to my personality. It's just something that stuck with me, it was one of the first things I thought of when I heard the topic.

Student 5 made a drastic lifestyle change after engaging with the topic, deciding to become a vegetarian after researching food-making processes:

Well it started with the whole vegetarian thing, and all of my artwork since then has to do with animals and basically this message. My change in diet started with the topic and I wanted to show how, I've always wanted to be a vegetarian and I've always loved animals, but with the [previous] topic we got, In the Kitchen, I started researching slaughter houses and I watched the movie Temple Grandin, and basically it just made me do it, I took the step and became an activist.

Student 19 described a social occurrence that can be very significant for anyone in high school:

My artwork is quite abstract, looking at surplus and scarcity more figuratively. Basically how in life there are many people who you encounter and how you may not take notice of an individual's emotions in a large group. So in a surplus of people there may be a scarcity of notice from other people.

Student 10 also delved into a personal issue of many adolescents, that of body confidence:

OK, well the topic was scarcity and surplus and I decided to go into the body confidence direction and like what people; what part of themselves people reveal to the outside world. So I'm going to do body moulds and suspend them but only certain parts and so it's like parts are missing. So yeah those are the hidden parts of the body.

I'm doing it with plaster and candle wax.

I think for young people, there's so much pressure in high school. People try to fit in so they don't show who they truly are, also girls quite a lot. They have more body issues and such.

Discussion

Psychoanalytic methods suggest that the understanding of external observable behaviour lies in the understanding of internal processes. It is suggested here that the process may be reversed, and that internal processes may be understood by first observing outward behaviour. By examining art students' conceptualisation of their artwork, we may be able to understand core personality features that have brought them to these perceptions. Malchiodi and Rozum (2003) describe several psychology-inspired concepts that are used in art therapy to reflect inner constructions and attachments, such as spontaneous expression and active imagination. The same principles may be applied here. By using the idea formulated by the students for their artwork, it may be possible to explore their perceptions and reactions to the topic, and infer further their future attributes as citizens, as core features tend to be persistently involved as we develop and age. Sabol (2010) describes how art students may have positive links to learning in other fields as well as positive attributes as citizens, being more aware of and improving connections, which makes the use of art students as participants appropriate when exploring the features of personality and their eventual implications.

These core features may form a vital part of how we interact with the social world around us, even to the extent that some features are repressed and others encouraged. This notion is very well illustrated in the school setting. Personality features relating to timeliness, persistence, consistency and reasoning are rewarded, while features of impulsivity, stubbornness, disobedience and rebellion are punished. Within these interviews it may be possible to infer that most art students are sensitive to the social realities of others, if not accompanied by an acknowledgement of their own vastly different circumstances. Another feature that is apparent is their concern for the environment and the consequences of abusing its resources. These issues may become important as future citizens' priorities. The feature of self-awareness is also showcased through the engagement with themes relating to how the body is perceived. This is possibly a common feature in adolescents as they mature physically. Schooling may suppress and encourage features, through systems of reward and punishment.

Some students are vocal about their personality, as is seen in the first quote. To her, the subject matter must relate to her personality, which does not allow for anything too negative. She wished to portray not only the topic offered, but also a part of herself. Some even allow the art-making process; which includes research into the given topic and its implied personal significance; to influence their lifestyle choices, as was seen with the student who became a vegetarian. Her artwork necessitated research into the food industry, and after witnessing the procedure for the slaughter of beef, her internal constructions concerning the meat industry and even the very act of consuming meat changed to that of a vegetarian. Naumburg (1958) describes this process as

a catalyst for growth, as art is a way of exploring our 'free association', or first instinct, toward daily activities that are often taken for granted, and are exposed through art.

The topic given was broad for a reason, and it was interesting to explore the variety of ideas students came up with. This variety existed in symbols, as discussed above, and was united through theme. As the local and global environments are negotiated, so too are the inner and external worlds navigated by art students as they complete the tasks set for their matric year; the inner when deciding on the content of an artwork, and the outward when relating it to the topic given.

As social constructionism claims, each individual is accredited with the ability to construct knowledge as they internalise it (Willig 2013). It may be possible to examine if these students' constructions have congruency, not only with each other, but with knowledge(s) and the educator, as championed by Fenwick (2001:28). If this congruency exists, it may not be as a co-construction, but a learnt pattern of behaviour. As shown above, many of the students dealt with similar issues, such as being noticed by others and perceptions of themselves and this may influence how they construct the broad social issue of surplus and scarcity.

The inner knowledges of these students may stem from socially constructed realities, but the outer influence of the curriculum must also be explored. Individuals who have also constructed their own realities in specific social environments imbue the curriculum (intentionally or not) with a hidden curriculum of their own observable interactions with students that turn into covert structures that are not written down. They, too, were influenced by the covert structures of curriculums, which were enacted in turn by individuals who were also influenced by the observed covert structures of their own school curriculums. It may be considered a cycle, perpetuating itself, and imbuing the existing curriculum with unintended structures of social control, remaining stagnant in its development. The teacher may have reacted favourably to the vegetarian student's previous year's work which also focused on human interaction with the natural world. This may have encouraged the student's decision to repeat the theme with the added element of her change in diet. This could have distracted her from the underlying political nature of the topic, as environmental concerns can be related to the abuse of power by those in possession of natural resources and not just to cruelty against animals. As Apple (1990) points out, 'the curriculum of the dead', or the hidden curriculum, must be challenged in order to reinstate the concept of hope, and it must certainly be a collaborative effort. Teachers should use their position to encourage more knowledges through collaboration and challenges to superficial explanations for injustices in society, instead of merely allowing easy conversation and surface exploration. This hidden curriculum could perpetuate ideologies that are irreconcilable with a society in which justice and tolerance are valued and true democracy exists.

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Kramer (2001) discusses this isolated, and distrusting society of 'spoilt underprivileged' youth, who may have become so because of perpetuated (and intensified) social structures in which career advancement and uncritical acceptance of institutional practices are the norm. Although understanding that the inner process of creative ideation may indicate core personality features, the concurrent influences in the outer must also be taken into account in terms of its effect on the expression of these core structures. Giroux acknowledges the difficulty of this, by saying that "in the midst of growing fears about domestic security, dissent is now labeled as unpatriotic" (2003:92), indicting the possibility of this hidden curriculum, which preaches social conformity, suppressing some core personality features that indicate 'deviation' as in the concept of critical citizenship. This aspect may be illustrated with the student that was unwilling to delve into what she perceived as negative subject matter. She was determined to keep her art pieces light and 'bubbly', as a reflection of her personality. It may, however, be not a reflection but a deflection, as she remains unwilling (or even unable) to engage with the topic's highly political implications. This may indicate a loss of potential development, as Giroux (2003) describes how knowledge could become an amplifier of human freedom, which includes her fascination with knowing the core self.

One of the biggest decisions faced by all matric art students is that concerning their future career. Choosing a career – or rather a direction of study – indicates a certain level of self-awareness. Only one student interviewed had no idea what she wanted to do next year, indicating a strong trend of awareness. Most students indicated strong creative ability, insight into art making and enjoyment of the subject. And yet, many have chosen a career not in a creative field. One student commented to me that she would have liked to study design but her parents felt a degree in economics would be more suitable. Of those interviewed, only one expressed a desire to study fine arts, and the rest who did choose creative careers either chose architecture or design (interior, visual, industrial, landscape). This may be explained by referring to Martin (2006:9), who describes a 'professionalisation' of the art field, as creative careers become more and more financially stable pursuits, and less 'art for art's sake'. There is, it seems, a reluctance to pursue a career in the arts, seen even in the number of students enrolled for the subject at a high-school level. At St Mary's, student enrolment dropped from 29 students in matric art in 2009 to 11 students in 2015. There seems to be a trend of fading interest in art as a subject, and its merit as a career choice. The fact that art encourages insight, maturity, and development of communication skills seems to be lost in the pursuit of profit, which may be indicative of art's slipping status in society. At the matric level, it is very possible to glimpse the future of the student, and the influence of the education system through their personality and attitude toward the world they are about to enter as citizens.

Psychology-inspired methods may allow us to interpret creative ideation in terms of the core inner features that have given rise to these ideas. The core personality features are arguably persistent throughout maturation, and may be indicative of future potential as citizens. Critical citizenship is a concept that art aims to encourage by allowing artists to see the world as it is, and not as it claims to be. The inner and the outer are brought together in the art-making process, as the influence of the curriculum is considered. The hidden curriculum, which is activated by the current curriculum, may co-construct realities of impressionable students. As deviation is discouraged on both inner and outer plains, the hidden curriculum is allowed to exist. The career choice of students reflects more economic consideration than personal principles, and indicates that art has lost popularity as a viable choice of career. This loss in social standing may be due to curriculum inclusions and exclusions, as discussed in the next theme.

4.2.3 Curriculum reactions

As these students are almost fully legal adults; their reaction to the imposed schedule of a curriculum is an interesting factor to consider. It was expected that they would be opposed to the curriculum, but their reaction was different from what was anticipated. The students' responses to the questions: 'What is your opinion on the curriculum requirements for your final practical?' and 'Could the curriculum be set up differently? How?' are presented below.

Student 4 describes their reaction to curriculum requirements:

> *To be honest I'm not that aware of what they are I just do what ma'am (the teacher) tells me to do (LAUGHS). It would be more convenient to me if I could take both artworks home, but I do understand why we have to keep one here. I wish they weren't so strict on it has to be a drawing, because I really wanted to paint this one. To be honest I think if they didn't give us a mark it wouldn't be a subject, it's very justifiable why they give us a mark. I think they break down how they give the mark very fairly like based on skill and idea and if your visual diary is showing your process you can do quite well because you're showing I actually thought this through.*

Student 10 commented:

> *It's a lot of work, but I understand why. You obviously have to show all your skill that you've collected over high school. I think it's fair.*

Student 2 expressed the following opinion on the topic of curriculum requirements:

> *I think there are a lot of them, but I think they're all necessary. I think it's a topic that's been done to death. Really, because things like scars of society and surplus and scarcity, they're all topics that artists have done over and over and over in all of their*

artworks. I think because they're still thinking in terms of by like 10 years ago, when this was still very relevant when there was a huge blow-up of issues in society. Now it's sort of general knowledge about the issues of society. It's not something you can explore it's something that's already there.

Student 3 answered the question by just speaking about the topic:

I'm quite disappointed about the topic, I find like I could have expressed myself better with a topic like last year which was Self-Other, but like my imagination is quite limited to this, because the brief we got was just about activism and poverty and this, this and this. I feel like it's a good cause, but at the same time, you're an artist now you should be free to express what you want to express. But sometimes you're limited in terms of the topic they give you.

Student 12 expressed frustration – a relatively common feeling – at not having enough time, when asked about the curriculum requirements:

I think it's quite a lot, I would be very happy about it if it wasn't for the other subjects. I wish I could spend more time on it, but it's sort of ... It would be nice to do like a really big work but because you don't have time ...

Discussion

When asked about the curriculum requirements, many students seemed to be confused at first. After I had explained that curriculum requirements consisted of assessments and expectations, many students still could not understand what was being asked. They displayed an ability to explain the narrative of their actions through explanations of their artworks, and yet they were so used to following instructions that they had not yet developed the skill of being critical. As a citizen, the ability to critically negotiate interaction and environment is an invaluable skill.

Many students expressed frustration at not having enough time to complete the artworks as fully as they would want, but none opposed the system of assessment. The curriculum simply does not provide a space in which to question its requirements and structure. These students were not even aware of the term 'curriculum', much less the possibility of a hidden curriculum.

It is clear that there needs to be caution in dealing with the curriculum is needed, as "professional discourse about the curriculum has shifted from a focus on what we should teach to how the curriculum should be organised, built, and evaluated" (Apple 1990). It was observed in every classroom that the curriculum structure cast a shadow over all activities, negatively affecting all role players' attitudes to deadlines and rubrics, with an unmistakeably adverse

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influence on creative ideation, as mentioned by students seeking more time. More academically 'rigorous' subjects may be jeopardised because of this state of affairs; even art does not escape from this situation despite the levels of expressive freedom it offers.

Curriculum requirements are presented as necessities and not possibilities, which according to Apple (1990) contribute to complacency through fear of 'falling standards' and economic insecurity. Kramer's (2001) views on fearful artists are demonstrated here, as students are willingly overlooking reality in favour of 'amorphous' opinions on the curriculum requirements. Students have either never thought of questioning the curriculum, or are too scared to contemplate the chaos likely to follow the breakdown of such a seemingly vital structure. It must be noted that these students function in a haze of pressures from all their academic subjects, social interactions, and future career considerations. They are each individually competing for future academic, socio-political, and economic resources, to which the structure of the curriculum provides clear-cut paths. None seem willing to step from this path in order to consider an alternative. In this the curriculum does students a disservice, for although the path to success seems simple enough within this structure, the reality of the outside world's socio-political situation is anything but simple. Freire (1995) describes how the unequal distribution of power in society is mirrored in pedagogy, and argues that students must be taught how to negotiate these power structures with not only technical knowledge, but with world knowledge as well.

Students from any background will seem oppressed and "spoilt underprivileged" people (Kramer 2001) if they do not have the necessary skills to co-create realities within society. The fact that these students were unable or unwilling to engage critically with the curriculum is cause for concern. If these students could be trained to form critical ability at this level already, the effect on their future potential as citizens could be very positive in terms of social justice and the global community.

It was also interesting to hear the views of the student who claimed to prefer the previous year's topic of 'Self-Other' to the current one because of the perceived level of difficulty of the latter. Both topics are highly evocative of socio-political issues, and both encourage a deeper engagement with perceived realities. It may be easier to view oneself in relation to the other, instead of viewing one's surplus or even scarcity in relation to those with the opposite, but only because of perceived egocentric denial of discrepancy in resources. Possibly because of guilt, it may be easier for this student to acknowledge personal differences rather than material ones, as the topic is interpreted as overly simple. If the student had been able to examine the topic from a socio-political viewpoint, the similarities may have been more evident. The self-other and surplus-scarcity topics both ultimately deal with the distribution of power. The same can be said of the student describing the topic as outdated. She may not be able to view the current social

situation as clearly as the past, for if she did she may see that society still struggles with basically the same problems.

Awareness of the curriculum is very rare, even though it dictates a large part of these students' lives. Fear of economic instability and the possible chaos resulting from the uprooting of the system may be what is keeping students from critically engaging with the curriculum. Power structures evident in education (Bourdieu 1996) may be indicative of broader socio-political structures into which students must move as citizens, making it all the more important for them to have the ability to engage critically with these realities in order to create a new world chosen for themselves (Freire 1995). Because of simplified interpretation, similar topics are misunderstood as being of different orientation and significance. The teacher may have an influence on these misconceptions.

4.2.4 The role of the teacher in meeting the requirements and creative ideation

A large part of a matric art teacher's responsibility is to give guidance to his or her students. As can be seen in some quotes used above, the teacher is involved in deciding what to do with the practical project, what medium it could take, and when and where curriculum requirements should be met. A particular teacher described how through her years of experience, she has come to conclusions about the use of art education as a platform from which students may project themselves with confidence:

> *Through the years I have found it very interesting how students relate, explore, balance and deal with life and art as 18-year-old young people. My motto of 'art is life and life is art' constantly pops up as we deal with themes in practical and theory sessions. A good way to get them thinking, questioning and then personalising issues of different kinds is by referring to current, past and contemporary and conceptual art and artists, in all spheres of creative expression. It is easy to relate to somebody else (the other) and analyse their inspiration/fears/issues/questions than talking about yourself. I find that once the students realise it is ok to express yourself it gives them a platform to dig deeper and deal with the multitude of personal/social/physical and emotional issues. I always try and set a theme that will allow them to go to the levels of 'stuff' that they want to explore, deal with or sometimes just share their experience with you as a caretaker or with their peers, to get some kind of recognition or acceptance through the 'artistic licence' they have in art.*

Another teacher described her impressions of what art education entails in the high-school setting, elaborating on her role as educator:

Today students are free to work in a perceptual, emotive or conceptual way or even combine these approaches as suits their needs. Often a certain stance is required, so students are required to question the status quo, and whatever may interest them. I think art teaching has expanded from a purely perceptual and visually interesting subject dealing with proper use of composition, art elements and principles to a much more sophisticated medium of communication - your issues and views are required, and on any area of life relevant to your chosen topic/subtopic.

Of course it requires a bit more from the art educator. I constantly keep in touch with environmental, social, political, health and other issues as my students often choose rather peculiar areas of interest to deal with. Art has become a very vibrant subject which I love even more. Very intellectual and all-consuming. A dull, shut-off teacher won't do.

Discussion

Fenwick refers to "discourses and their semiotics" as drivers of this teacher–student power relation (2001:40), which may be interpreted as how the teacher (who is in possession of the 'correct' discourse and symbols) teaches students to use the correct manner of communication and engrains those very ideas as most correct. This discourse allows the teacher to assume authority over what Fenwick describes as dualistic classifications within which the learners must place themselves in order to learn (2001:40). Freire (1995) then describes how this dialogue, if the students are drawn in to participate as equals, has the potential to break down such basic classifications, and allow them to engage critically with other ideologies to which they are exposed. These conditions could possibly develop from the 'safe spaces' referred to by the first teacher. However, according to Freire (1995), this dialogue must not slip into conversation; as such conversed experiences are too shallow, too well rehearsed. As Kramer (2001) explains, there exists an avoidance of emotional upheaval, an unwillingness to participate beyond the boundaries of comfort. The topic implies many issues that are emotionally loaded, such as racism, inequality, and social injustice. This avoidance may stem from an unwillingness to risk emotional and psychological damage that may result from seeing the issue clearly, as it could very well implicate their own roles in perpetuating these issues. Safe spaces in which to express and explore these highly emotional issues and as co-create the discourse semiotics used to understand them could possibly eliminate this 'spoiled' nature by making critical thought less frightening.

Therefore, the role of the teacher is one of great responsibility, and as the second teacher calls it, a 'dull shut-off' approach would not be sufficient. As Kramer (2001) explains, art education should allow for 'emotional freedom' while teaching 'structured expression'. This structure must be socially responsible, as well as responsive, and should give students a basis from which to

enter into the world as citizens with the potential to change society for the better. Freire (1995) advocates teamwork among educator and students, believing that the dialogue generated between the two will allow critical response to what is already known, so that it may be revised and known 'better'. As the second teacher mentions, the communication style of students must necessarily become more sophisticated as they engage with topics imbued with global and socio-political significance.

Within art, there must be a certain amount of freedom in meeting curriculum requirements, and Mayo (2005) believes this can be achieved through praxis of the role of authority and freedom. Unlike in other subjects where the answers are either right or wrong, art allows for much more exploration. When this freedom is combined with a teacher that understands the need of young people to express themselves, a very progressive learning environment may flourish. Freire (1995:378) comments on the teacher's role as follows:

> To avoid producing the values of the power structure, the educator must always combat a laissez-faire pedagogy, no matter how progressive it may appear to be ... The better way to proceed is to assume the authority as a teacher whose direction of education includes helping learners get involved in planning education, helping them create the critical capacity to consider and participate in the direction and dreams of education, rather than merely following blindly.

What Freire advocates here is a fully engaged teacher, where the most successful way of educating of students "is to avoid being indifferent" (1995:379).

If the teaching environment described above may be considered as 'less directly involved', one can see the possible benefit of allowing students to accept creative licence in their own development. In these particular cases, teachers may be unaware, or too scared to allow students full freedom in co-creating knowledge, because of the restrictions and expectations of curriculum. It is possible that such teachers hold power over students, using it to ensure they complete their work on time and receive good grades. It is not seen as being done to harm or oppress the class, but rather as a safety net to ensure their passing the subject. Again, the effects of pressure to achieve are seen here.

Classification of the student–teacher relationship clearly shows the unequal power distribution, which may impede the educating of students. They must instead be taught through dialogue, which is fluid and encourages critical engagement. The responsibilities of the teacher are immense, in that the goal of successful teaching is to allow students to have better knowledges than those before, in order to improve these knowledges and bring it closer to reality. It may seem a daunting task, "but we have few choices if we are going to fight for a future that does not endlessly repeat the present" (Giroux 2003:105).

4.3 RESEARCHER REFLEXIVITY

Diane Watt describes a process whereby she kept a research journal, full of personal narrative, reflection, and ultimately, new insights and growth through reflexivity. She explains: "[A] retrospective examination of my own research permitted me to make meaningful connections between theory and practice" (2007:83). She further explains the benefit of memo writing and reflection as allowing thought to become tangible and allowing for further understanding and manipulation, as well as giving the reader an opportunity to view the entirety of the research procedure. In commenting on the benefits of reflexivity, Watt (2007:84) states, "Maintaining a journal during my first study, followed by reflective writing which focused on that work, led to a more sophisticated understanding of not only reflexivity, but all aspects of research methodology." Reflexivity, then, is significant, especially when conducting an inductive investigation, as much of one's own subjectivity is involved in the formation and extraction of theory.

Willig (2013:10) describes reflexivity as requiring "an awareness of the researcher's contribution to the construction of meanings throughout the research process, and an acknowledgement of the impossibility of remaining 'outside of' one's subject matter while conducting research". This section discusses this awareness through examination of the involvement of the researcher.

Throughout the research process researcher reflexivity was achieved through memo taking, after each interview and after each individual school visit. A discussion of these memos will constitute my reflection on my role as researcher in this research project.

School 1

The first school was a daunting task as it was the very high school I had attended five years ago; however, my familiarity with the teacher and setting eased the interview process. Permission was granted easily, and I was able to arrange a time for interviews during art classes, giving me access to all the matric art students. The students demonstrated curiosity after their teacher introduced me as a former pupil. They were eager to participate and required very little encouragement in answering my questions. My memo of the experience is as follows:

> *Each student has their own idiosyncrasies/ideas and most feel strongly about their opinions. I get a sense of frustration from the students, maybe because of where they are in life and the fact that they are so close to being adults but not quite yet? The educator has a definite influence on students, and it affords her a position of power as an independent school educator teaching privileged kids. The topic is received as broad by most students, but is actually formulated in a highly 'leading' way in the exam paper. Many examples are given of specific economic interpretations of the topic, and I find it to*

be rather on the nose. 'Scarcity and Surplus' is meant by the examiners to be taken literally and materialistically because there are real problems in these categories in our world, not negating the need to critically engage with the issues. Students are also restricted in medium, probably to standardise as much of the marking as possible, and yet I feel it to be too restrictive for young artists. The students' opinions on social issues were surprising. I was expecting straightforward interpretations of our social climate, dealing with (because of the topic) the distribution of resources. However, their opinions mostly included issues that directly affected them. Their opinions may reveal their privileged backgrounds.

School 2

The second school was in the same general area as the first (Johannesburg, about 20 minutes' drive apart), and yet the students displayed vastly different interpretive skills. Their teacher was also very different to the first. She had stronger 'presence', and came across as opinionated; the students in contrast were much less outspoken and had less to say than the first group. My memo of the experience is as follows:

As I was invited to interview students during their winter school only three students agreed to participate in the research. Of the three, one boy showed incredible technique in painting. The first student had a rather broad interpretation of the topic, and I feel almost as if the topic was related to the work almost as an afterthought. Originality is very highly valued in this class. Not that the previous class didn't showcase it, but this class's educator made a point of stating it. The facilities are slightly better in this school, with students having access to two classrooms (more space) and power tools. As I was completely new to the school, students and educator, our interaction was a little more stilted than in the first group. Students divulged much less in their interviews, and seemed less enthusiastic than the last group. I was also more nervous interviewing in a strange location, and felt I was imposing on their time to work on exam pieces. Each student interviewed mentioned time constraints, although they appeared to me to be ahead of the other school.

School 3

Because of my experiences at School 2, I decided to present the interview questions as a written assignment in the last school. I felt that my memos after each individual interview did not warrant enough observational material to continue in that fashion. Also, I detected a reservation from the interviewees, and sought to circumvent this with the written questionnaire, which proved successful. Also, with grounded theory's suggestion of theoretical sampling, this method would allow me to collect many more interviews simultaneously. This last school consisted of an all-

female class, with strongly opinionated and organised young ladies. I recorded my observation of them and interaction with them as follows:

Changing interviews to written questionnaires is much better. One student came with answers because of nerves about being interviewed and saying the wrong thing. Insecurities may stem from their youthfulness, or the fact that they have not been asked their opinions often. There is a tangible feeling when talking to a student, that of curiosity and envy on their part – not at all negative, just a sense of excitement at one day becoming themselves university students.

Hesitation exists when it comes to the question of curriculum. I don't think it has ever occurred to them that there might be an alternative. They are so incredibly focused in matric on passing or getting good grades, an alternative must be scary and cause hesitation. They most definitely don't want to endanger what is necessary to furthering their academic careers.

These young ladies are incredibly mature in their pursuit of progress and development, and are quite happy to follow the path chosen for them. They are very practically minded when choosing a creative career also, many choosing architecture.

After recording each memo, I was able to create a general feeling for each group of interviews, and a feel for the group as a whole. As the sample from which data was collected did not include many male students – only two – I do believe this affected the overall tone of my collected experiences. It is disheartening to think not many male students deem art a subject worthy of study.

My presence was generally most influential in the first two minutes of interacting with the students, but I was able to set most at ease with a smile and explanation of what I was doing, especially when I mentioned no one from the school would have access to their answers. However, I still feel the presence of the teacher and the location of the interviews being at each school may have influenced the depth of answers given by students. That being said, all the students I interviewed still approached the task enthusiastically, and were happy to share the content of their art with me.

4.4 CONCLUSION

Data was presented in four different themes with quotes from interviews preceding discussions on each. The first, topic interpretation and critical engagement, explored the ability of the art students to negotiate through different spheres of social life, being the local and global environments as well as inner and external constructions of social issues. Students in general demonstrated a lack of socio-political insight into topics, choosing rather to interpret them in

more obvious ways. Through questions relating to the process of deciding on a topic, students demonstrated how core personality features heavily influenced the first ideas that came to mind, and even influenced them in lifestyle choices. However, the presence of the hidden curriculum may be indicated as well, as deviation is discouraged both in inner and outer expressions. Career choice hinged more heavily on security than expected, with creative field choices showing signs of 'professionalisation'. Curriculum reactions ranged from complete acceptance to being somewhat frustrated at the constricting schedule. The role of the teacher allows for either freedom to develop critical skills or for students to become dependent on overly involved guidance. It is argued that the responsibility of the teacher is to allow for co-construction, and the ability to know knowledge better and more fully in order to dismantle previous social power relations. This chapter is ended on a section of researcher reflexivity where the role of the researcher in the research process is explored, and which includes a reflection on experiences at each school.

CHAPTER 5
CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The research topic was chosen with the aim of gaining better understanding of the experiences and perspectives of matric art students from three independent schools in Gauteng regarding the socio-political implications of their given topic. Drawing from an interest in psychology as well as art education, I chose the topic to gain better understanding of how matric art students at independent schools experience their art education. The research sought to discover new contributions to theories within art education about the critical awareness of art students. It sought to provide record of the 2015 independent schools' matric art students' experience and some of their art-related ideas about their social environments. The research was designed according to an inductive approach, and used grounded theory as a framework. The research was undertaken by interviewing 21 matric art students from independent schools and recording their answers, after which these answers were coded and categorised into four main themes. This research consisted of a sample of interviews drawn from three matric art classes of IEB curriculum independent schools in the Gauteng area. The themes extracted from the data are that of topic interpretation and critical engagement, the process of revealing core personality features through creative ideation, curriculum reactions and the role of the teacher. As the IEB strives to meet international standards, it was argued that it would be appropriate to select schools that follow their curriculum, as the belief in a progressively more global world would support greater integrative practices. A process prescribed by grounded theory guided the choosing of themes.

5.2 CONCLUSIONS DRAWN FROM THE FINDINGS AND IMPLICATIONS
5.2.1 Factual and conceptual conclusions and implications

The process of examining topic interpretations and critical engagement revealed that each student interpreted the given topic according to internal realities that may be constructed socially. The fact that all these students were studying at elite independent schools suggests their privileged backgrounds that may fundamentally support the current social order. As these students are offered many opportunities and are likely to succeed in tertiary education; they may become highly influential cultural producers. This could become problematic, as they have not fully demonstrated the critical ability to engage with the socio-political implications of the given topic. The 'professionalisation' of art has indicated a stronger focus on economic stability and academic achievement than on socio-political issues such as power relations and race. The students also demonstrated a negative feeling toward the preceding generation's contribution,

which may be due to a misinterpretation of the failures of democracy as being the consequence of social systems they perceive as being 'outdated', such as inequality and unfair treatment due to gender, sexuality or race. The effect of globalisation is demonstrated as being not yet fully active as students continue to consider local and not just global environments as indicators of social realities.

Through the use of psychology-inspired methods, creative ideation (the process by which students decide on subject matter for an artwork) may be interpreted in terms of core personality features that are informing the process. These core features may be argued as being constant throughout personal development and may provide clues as to the future potential of citizens. An aim of critical (art) education is to encourage the development of critical citizenship by allowing students to explore concepts underlying socio-political systems, specifically elements of self-knowledge and collective/social values (Johnson & Morris 2010:91). It is hoped that this may open students' perceptions of society. Within the structure of the curriculum, both the inner and outer influences are considered. The hidden curriculum, which resides within the current curriculum, may be co-constructing realities of students and teachers alike. Deviation from the system of education is not only discouraged, but also given no space within which to be explored, and subsequently allows the hidden curriculum to continue existing. As art loses popularity as a viable subject, so too does a creative career choice. Economic considerations carry more weight than ever before, and may have become a primary consideration when choosing a career.

The students demonstrated very limited awareness of the curriculum, being confused even by the term. This unknown or unacknowledged structure dictates vast majorities of the students' time and energies, making it problematic that these students were unaware or unwilling to engage with it. This may be fuelled by fear of economic uncertainty, pressures of academic achievement, and possible chaos resulting from the deterioration of the safe system in which they have functioned for the entirety of their school careers. Education may reflect broader power structures in socio-political systems, as they become more apparent in the teaching environment. The lack of critical engagement becomes a concern, as these students are expected to one day soon fulfil their roles as citizens. Due to this inability to engage fully and critically with the topic, they are in danger of being misinterpreted in terms of personal significance and local orientation.

The student-teacher relationship remains significant, as it is the space in which power is distributed. In the interviewed classrooms, this was perceived as being unequal, which may impede the critical education of students. The argument is made for teaching through dialogue that encourages critical engagement rather than stilted conversation lacking in curiosity. As

such, the responsibilities of the teacher are recognised as being immense. It is argued that the goal of teaching is to allow students to better know current and past knowledges, in order to improve its use and implications. Social structures are encouraged then to not repeat the past, but to better it and create new possibilities.

5.3 FURTHER RESEARCH AND LIMITATIONS OF THE RESEARCH

Further research into the experiences and perspectives of matric art students is needed to determine the true cause and extent of the lack of critical engagement found in this study. A comparison between responses from students at independent and public schools would add depth and significance to the study, and could further explore the reasons behind this avoidance of critical thought. As the South African nation is known for its great variability, a study could be conducted in every province to provide more insight into the social issues to which matric art students are most exposed according to location, giving a broader overview of the state of art education in the country. A separate study could also be conducted on the role of the teacher that would allow for far more scope and richness of recorded experience, as they displayed interesting insight into and observations of their art classes in this study.

Limitations of the study include brevity of interviews due to time constraints, and possible influences of the presence of teachers, peers, and location of interviews in the classrooms. The fact that students were also given no time to prepare, as well as the complexity of the questions, may have influenced the depth of their answers. If the study were to be repeated, I would suggest using a questionnaire format from the start that combined graded questions (answers on a scale) and longer questions that could be taken home and completed in their own time, thus avoiding the discomforts possibly experienced at school and in the presence of the researcher. Another dimension could be added with online chat groups where students could interact with the questions as well as with each other. Such an approach may add depth to the recording of their experiences and perceptions. Sampling should then be approached with more time, as participants would have to be asked to commit to a longer participation period. The process could then follow the entire matric year, recording every aspect of the art-making process, from learning what the topic is to the completion of practical works. A longer study could provide more data to explore and better understanding.

5.4 CONCLUDING REMARKS

This study shows that within independent elite schooling in the Gauteng area, critical engagement is not always encouraged enough in the matric art classroom. Even when the topic given is very socio-political, students do not attempt a deeper exploration of this dimension,

possibly due to a lack of critical training and encouragement, socially constructed norms of conformity, and global pressures on achievement. Although there was an awareness of the inner perspectives that drive creative ideation, the other more restrictive effect of the curriculum was not acknowledged, whether from naivety or an unwillingness to engage with the structure in which they feel safe. In these particular instances, teachers may have been unintentionally over-involved in their teaching, and may have participated in conversation instead of dialogue with students. This may have suppressed some core personality features as the aim of art education thus becomes to pass the subject with a good grade instead of developing critical awareness in order to function and thrive in the social world. These students did showcase sensitivity to the plight of others, and the issues dealt with by their generation, but were unable to recognise the deeper socio-political implications of their own future positions of power and the subsequent unequal distribution of power within society. They preferred to engage with topics popular in the media and in their immediate environments.

Art education has been shown to greatly involve input from students, and is subsequently strongly linked to its students, and so, current curriculum expectations and interpretations may become considerations when constructing future curriculums. Through this, curriculums may become far more effective in preparing students for tertiary education, and even stimulate more effective participation in society as citizens themselves.

The ability to engage critically with social systems may become an invaluable skill as these students move into tertiary education, and eventually into the world as citizens. The ability to view the world for what it is and not what it claims to be may allow them to construct new, inclusive realities that they have chosen for themselves. This ability is not, however, an innate ability. Although the students have demonstrated remarkable talent in communicating clearly and efficiently, they still lack critical engagement with the given topic, and need to be guided along the process so that they may learn it for themselves. Alongside this capacity for communication and sensitivity toward their fellow young people, a critical ability would allow them to interpret underlying power structures correctly.

To think critically should be taught, and its positive contributions may be compounded if it is done in the final year of high school. These independent matric art classes have shown students to be very capable of becoming highly influential citizens in future, and it is possible that including more critical training in the curriculum could contribute to a more effective and fair society. A stagnant system cannot hope to continue being beneficial for all, and so it is necessary for students to be guided along this path of critical engagement. The topic given is so evocative of socio-political issues that it is regrettable that these students have not been guided

to engage with it more. Freire (1995: 397) offers hope, and clarity on the role these students have to play in the very near future:

> The individual, from whom the social is dependent, is the subject of history. His or her conscience is the arbitrary maker of history. For this reason, the better education shapes individuals, that much better are their hearts, that much more will they who are full of beauty make the ugly world become beautiful.

This study therefore contributed to art education theory on the perspectives of independent schools' matric art students, suggesting that critical training is lacking and could possibly benefit society, as education shapes the future potential of these students.

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ADDENDUM A: Consent form

UNIVERSITEIT·STELLENBOSCH·UNIVERSITY
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STELLENBOSCH UNIVERSITY
CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

Exploring matric art students' interpretation of the art curriculum and the socio-political implications of the topic issue at three independent schools in Gauteng

You are asked to participate in a research study conducted by Cheree Swanepoel (BA, BSocSci Hons) from the Department of Visual Arts at Stellenbosch University. The results of this research will contribute towards a Master's degree in Visual Art (Art Education). You were selected as a possible participant in this study because of your involvement as student/educator in a matric art class.

1. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

It is proposed that a study be done on the use of subject matter by high school art students to illustrate their unique interpretation of IEB art curriculum requirements and internalisation of salient social themes. The purpose of this study is to better understand students' internalisation of current issues that cause subsequent interpretation of art curriculum requirements, which may be used as an indication of future pedagogical citizenship and global trends.

2. PROCEDURES

If you volunteer to participate in this study, I would ask you to do the following things:

1. Answer a few questions about your final year artwork.
2. Give me your opinion on certain topics.
3. Allow me to record your interview.
4. Grant me permission to record your subject matter content.

Interviews consist of only six questions and will be conducted in your art classroom. Your answers will be confidential, and no one will have access to them.

5. POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS

There are no potential risks or discomforts.

6. POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO SUBJECTS AND/OR TO SOCIETY

This research may potentially help future educators when setting up art exams, and allow us to better understand the experiences of matric art students.

7. PAYMENT FOR PARTICIPATION

Participants shall not be paid.

8. CONFIDENTIALITY

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission or as required by law. Confidentiality will be maintained by means of a coding system (you will receive a number under which your interview and subject matter content are stored) and recordings of interviews shall remain on my code-locked cell phone until the end of my research, at which time I shall delete all recordings.

You have the right to listen to the recordings, and permission to withdraw from answering questions and to delete recordings if you so wish.

9. PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL

You can choose whether to be in this study or not. If you volunteer to be in this study, you may withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind. You may also refuse to answer any questions you don't want to answer and still remain in the study. The investigator may withdraw you from this research if circumstances arise which warrant doing so.

10. IDENTIFICATION OF INVESTIGATORS

If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel free to contact my course coordinator Dr Elmarie Costandius (elmarie@sun.ac.za)
or myself on 0828773386 (chereeswanepoel@rocketmail.com).

11. RIGHTS OF RESEARCH SUBJECTS

You may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty. You are not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies because of your participation in this research study. If you have questions regarding your rights as a research subject, contact Ms Maléne Fouché [mfouche@sun.ac.za; 021 808 4622] at the Division for Research Development.

SIGNATURE OF RESEARCH SUBJECT OR LEGAL REPRESENTATIVE

The information above was described to me by Cheree Swanepoel in English and I am in command of this language. I was given the opportunity to ask questions and these questions were answered to my satisfaction.

I hereby consent voluntarily to participate in this study. I have been given a copy of this form.

_____
Name of Subject/Participant

_____
Name of Legal Representative (if applicable)

_____   _____
Signature of Subject/Participant or Legal Representative   **Date**

SIGNATURE OF INVESTIGATOR

I declare that I explained the information given in this document to _____ [*name of the subject/participant]* and/or [his/her] representative _____ [*name of the representative].* [He/she] was encouraged and given ample time to ask me any questions. This conversation was conducted in [*Afrikaans/*English/*Xhosa/*Other*] and [*no translator was used/this conversation was translated into* _____ *by* _____].

_____   _____
Signature of Investigator   **Date**

ADDENDUM B: Permission Form

UNIVERSITEIT·STELLENBOSCH·UNIVERSITY
jou kennisvennoot • your knowledge partner

STELLENBOSCH UNIVERSITY
PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

Dear_____

_____
     Name of Educator   **Date**

RE: REQUEST TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AT _____ SCHOOL

I am completing a Master's in Visual Arts through Stellenbosch University.

The working title of my Master's is: South African art education curriculum expectations and interpretations by high school students through case studies consisting of analysis of subject matter and interviews.

The proposed research will take place in the art classroom, while students work on their practical components for their final year artworks.

My hope is that knowledge on the experiences of South African art students may be better understood, and possibly benefit future educators and the formation of future curriculum requirements.

My sample size consists of all willing art students in your matric class, consisting of a six-question interview which I have attached.

Should you require any further information, please do not hesitate to make contact:
     Ms. Cheree Swanepoel: chereeswanepoel@rocketmail.com
     Dr Elmarie Costandius: elmarie@sun.ac.za

Thank you for your time. Please sign below to indicate permission for this research to be conducted at your institution.

I, _____, agree to the proposed research.

Signed: _____

Kind regards
Cheree Swanepoel

ADDENDUM C: Letter from language editor

Ella Belcher
Language Editor and Translator
22 Bruton Place
Heldervue
Somerset West

Member of the South African Translators' Institute
Member of the Professional Editors' Group
☎ +27+21-8550673   📱 083 294 8393
Postal address: P.O. Box 12570 Die Boord 7613 South Africa
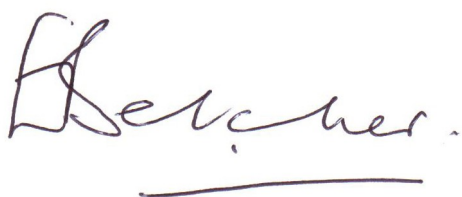
DECLARATION

I hereby certify that the Master's thesis mentioned below has been properly language edited.

Title of thesis

Exploring matric art students' interpretation of the art curriculum and the socio-political implications of the topic issue at three independent schools in Gauteng

Candidate

Cheree Swanepoel (Student number 16474414)

ELLA BELCHER
Somerset West
16 October 2015