


ARTICLE

Facilitating arts participation for creative ageing: an action research in South Korea

Euna Cho and Woongjo Chang* 

Department of Arts and Cultural Management, Hongik University, Seoul, Korea

*Corresponding author. Email: woongjochang@hongik.ac.kr

(Accepted 5 April 2022)

Abstract

How to promote wellbeing in old age is an issue that is drawing increasing attention as populations age in societies around the world. This study explores arts participation in later life and creative ageing through artistic engagement. We focus on potential participants who have had little prior experience with the arts, examining their journey through artistic activities, and the broader benefits to society of a creatively engaged population. We applied an action research methodology by designing two phases of arts workshops, one focused on hands-on creation activities and the other on appreciation of professional artists' works. This approach yielded the following findings. First, facilitation is key to initiating and sustaining artistic engagement among older adults, in part by helping them adapt to a changing society. Second, potential participants should be centred in discussions on creative initiatives. In particular, still active pre-seniors have much to offer in developing creative ageing initiatives. Third, arts participation for creative ageing goes far beyond the individual; it promotes community wellbeing and contributes to creating social value. Finally, we make an actionable suggestion that 'facilitation for arts participation' be developed as a specialised professional field.

Keywords: creative ageing; arts participation; facilitation; wellbeing; social value

Introduction

'It would be great to start painting. But I'm starting late'. This remark, which came from a conversation with an acquaintance in her fifties, was the starting point for this action research. As researchers in the Arts and Cultural Management field, seeing a pre-senior, a representative of the potential participants who have had little previous experience with the arts, hesitate to begin creative arts participation struck us as a problem. We were inspired to learn more about creative ageing through arts participation, particularly for this demographic group. Assuming that many pre-seniors wish to experience the arts but do not know where to start, we devised an arts workshop to encourage arts participation. When we proposed the workshops to our acquaintance her positive response marked the beginning of this research project.

© The Author(s), 2022. Published by Cambridge University Press. This is an Open Access article, distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution licence (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>), which permits unrestricted re-use, distribution and reproduction, provided the original article is properly cited.

Creative ageing is a new social paradigm to enhance individuals' experiences of getting older (Hanna and Perlstein, 2008; Hanna, 2013). For everyone, regardless of age, arts participation has an immensely positive impact on their lives; for older adults, engagement with the arts can lead to an enriched experience of creative ageing. Yet, in spite of its evident benefits, many people who wish to start creative activities in later life, such as our acquaintance, think it is too late to start. Creative ageing research so far has focused on groups that already enjoy the benefits of the arts through long-term or lifelong artistic activity and thus age seamlessly into the creative ageing paradigm. In contrast, our study focuses on non-artists who are moving into their fifties and becoming pre-seniors or pre-elders. This group, which has not previously been the subject of academic interest, constitutes our 'potential participant group'. We designed some focused interventions to engage them in artistic activity and traced the process of change as they began to undertake and delve deeper into new artistic activities. In this action research we aim to explore the arts participation of a potential participants group; to explore both the initiation and the continuation of our participants' creative activities; and to understand the broader benefits to society of a creatively engaged ageing population. Thus, the purpose of this research is to better understand how participating in creative and arts-based activities can affect the experience of ageing; how older adults' pre-existing attitudes shape their hesitance or eagerness to engage in creative activities; and what benefit creative ageing experiences can confer on individuals as well as society.

To this end, we designed two phases of action research after conducting a literature review in order to develop our research framework. In the first phase, we conducted a preliminary study of participants' backgrounds and aspirations, and used this information to design and conduct daily creativity workshops with participants. Then we modified our framework according to the feedback and our observations. In the second phase, we repeated the reflective action research process by conducting arts appreciation workshops with participants and constructed a working model that allowed us to draw actionable conclusions and consider broader issues of the social good offered by the arts (Figure 1).

Methodology

The methodology of this study, action research, is a qualitative method in which researchers and participants interact, share an experience and seek to understand the meaning of the changes they experience (McIntyre, 2007; I Kim, 2013, 2016). Unlike traditional qualitative research, which deems it necessary to maintain an appropriate distance between researcher and participants, the most distinctive feature of action research is the reduction of the experiential and affective distance between researcher and participants. Thus, rather than the conventional observer and observed roles, the core of action research is in the interactions between the researcher and participants. If necessary, researchers may also actively intervene in the action research process. No strict distinction between the researcher and the participants is maintained (I Kim, 2016). Participation in action research is voluntary and participants are encouraged to understand the overall context of the study's design, purpose and progress.

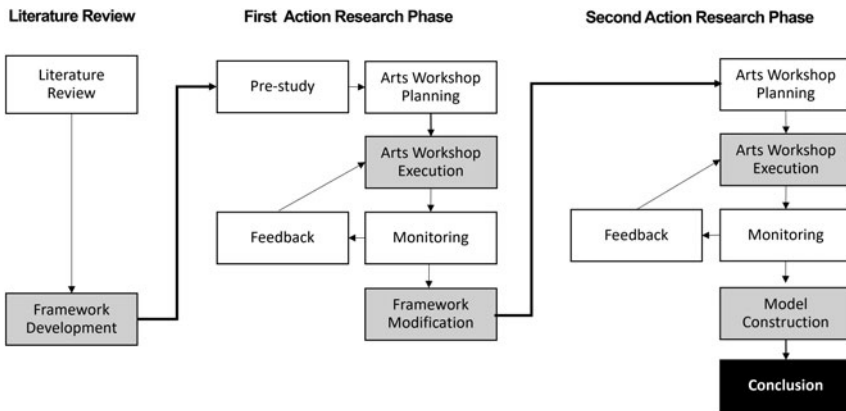


Figure 1. Research design

Action research is described as field- and action-oriented, or a combination of theory and practice. The research process spirals through ‘planning–implementing–monitoring–discovering’ (Park *et al.*, 2017). Stringer (2013) also suggests ‘look, think, and act’ as a framework for action research. Social psychologist Kurt Lewin, a pioneer in action research from the 1940s, started developing the method because he wanted to understand deeply problems occurring in the field and seek solutions (Adelman, 1993; Park *et al.*, 2017). Since then, many studies in the education field have applied action research techniques to improve teaching methods and examine reality at educational sites. The inclusion of teachers as parts of these studies is often necessary to ensure their validity; conditions in these educational settings are not one-offs, rather they are reflective and cyclical.

In this study, we led the participants to engage in arts activities, intervened in the process of arts participation and provided direct feedback to participants. We adopted the role of facilitator to play a leading role in bringing about artistic participation (Baek and Lee, 2012; Lee and Lee, 2015; Ha, 2016). Effective facilitation is key to successful action research, which needs to form a co-operative relationship between researchers and participants. To foster a comfortable rapport between researcher and participants, we recruited workshop participants from our private networks. Throughout the study, we maintained co-operative and friendly relationships by centring the experiences of the participants, prioritising the interaction between participants and researchers, and encouraging mutual analysis of the process as well as the findings.

Since, according to our pre-survey results, many people feel uneasiness with the word ‘art’, one of our primary objectives when designing our action research workshops was to facilitate a narrowing of the sense of distance between participants and art. Memories of artistic activities experienced at home, school or church as a child can mediate the participation in artistic activities in later life (Reynolds, 2012). We designed the workshops around materials and activities that, according to our pre-survey data, were familiar to participants, such as arranging flowers, gardening, quilting, choir singing, bartending and making balloon art. As gardening and floral arrangements were mentioned by more than half of the participants, our first-phase

Table 1. Arts workshop programmes

Workshops	Date in 2019	Programme	Instructor
First phase	27 March	1. Orientation	–
	3 April	2. Arts history lesson	Housewife, former advertising agency staff
	10 April	3. Floral arrangements	Florist, former stock investor
	17 April	4. Craft	After-school arts teacher
	24 April	5. Class presentations	–
Second phase	1 October	1. ‘Kim Whanki from Nature to Abstract Art’ exhibition at Whanki Museum	
	12 November	2. ‘2019 MAAF’ exhibition at Hangaram Arts Center Museum	

arts workshop used a flower theme. Participants in the study were women with an average age of 56.6 years. Among them, the youngest was 49 and the oldest was 66. In response to a survey conducted as part of our preliminary study, ‘how much do you like art?’, participants averaged 6.6 points on a nine-point scale. Thus, they tended to be favourably disposed towards art, though they did not participate in artistic activities themselves.

In March and April 2019, we held the first-phase series of five arts workshops, in which we focused on creative activities on the theme of flowers (see Table 1). Activities in these workshops were facilitated by three different instructors and included classes on arts history, making flower arrangements and collectively crafting the second-phase workshops. In the second phase, we conducted an arts exhibition tour programme from October to November 2019. The places we visited included the Whanki Arts Museum, where you can see the works of Kim Hwan-ki, Korea’s representative monochrome artist, and the Hangaram Arts Museum at Seoul Arts Center, Korea’s most prominent arts centre.

We originally planned for the second phase to be five workshops at one-month intervals starting in October 2019, with no workshop in December. However, in Korea concerns about the COVID-19 pandemic were raised in January 2020 and the third and subsequent workshops were cancelled. Although this resulted in less data overall, we were convinced that the quality of our data from the first two workshops significantly contributed to our study. We followed up with participants individually either remotely or, sometimes, in person and were able to monitor their ongoing eagerness to resume the workshops and further their participation in the arts. We interviewed the individual participants mostly through SNS (social networking service) conversations or phone calls. Beyond this, we provided information about upcoming online art performances or exhibitions and encouraged the participants to attend virtually. For example, we introduced the participants to the YouTube channel of Andrea Bocelli’s Easter performance, ‘Music for Hope – Live from Duomo di Milano’, an event broadcast without spectators at Milan Cathedral in Italy in April 2020. We encouraged the participants to watch this show at their home at a convenient time and to leave a review on a designated SNS group chat. Thus, we were able to achieve a useful level of data saturation through these follow-up contacts.

The data we collected are quite diverse, including pre-survey responses, video recordings and photos of art workshops, written records of researchers' observations, phone records, and instant messages between participants and researchers via SNS. Notably, data collection for follow-up activities conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic was dependent on chatting and video calls through SNS. Furthermore, both open coding and axial coding were performed on the data, and to enable triangulation at all stages of the coding process (Mathison, 1988), the cross-validation of the co-authors of this paper was seriously considered. Data interpretation was based on the analytical framework we derived from the literature review and related literatures. During the action research, the process of data collection, data coding and data interpretation was repeated.

Literature review

From successful ageing to creative ageing

Creative ageing research is an extension of the study of successful ageing (Rowe and Kahn, 1987, 1997; Jang, 2007). In recent years, creative ageing research has focused on the impact of performing creative tasks on the ageing process, with heightened interest in the positive relationship between arts activities and ageing. Ageing is now considered to be a process of determining one's own meaning of life (Wong, 1989; Carlsen, 1995) and adapting to physical, emotional and social changes (Wong, 1989; Oh, 2004), rather than a degradation of body functions. It is critical that older adults, which includes both pre-seniors and seniors (also referred to here as 'pre-elders' and 'elders'), are able to positively embrace the potential capabilities of old age and use them as a resource to connect to productive activities (Carlsen, 1995; Choi, 2014). When ageing adults perform the creative tasks accessible to them, it can reveal the life wisdom they have gained (Fisher and Specht, 1999; Oh, 2004; Choi, 2014; McHugh, 2016). Many factors contribute to successful ageing, such as a life of feeling self-efficacy, a life of satisfaction through the success of children, a life of partnership between a couple, and a life of good self-control (Kim *et al.*, 2005). A deep respect for cultural values also enables older adults to positively conceptualise ageing (An *et al.*, 2011).

Rowe and Kahn's successful ageing model study (Rowe and Kahn, 1987, 1997) is a representative study that has wide academic influence even after 30 years. The three elements of successful ageing that Rowe and Kahn noted are: (a) no disease or disability; (b) adequate maintenance of physical and cognitive functions; and (c) an active life. Rowe and Kahn observe that the path to successful ageing is to keep these three elements in harmony. Their study is considered representative of multi-disciplinary approaches to ageing, including work in biology, neuroscience, neuropsychology, phenomenology, sociology, psychology, neurology, physiology and gerontology. It is also the model study for the concept of multi-dimensional ageing, which necessitates participating in social production activities in addition to maintaining physical and cognitive functions (Jang, 2007).

Cohen *et al.* (2006) and Hanna and Perlstein (2008) published important studies in response to a growing social awareness of the need for creative ageing. The study, 'The impact of professionally conducted cultural programs on the physical health,

mental health, and social functioning of older adults', by Cohen *et al.* (2006) is rooted in medical research that suggests ageing does not lead to the degeneration of the human nervous system. Cohen *et al.* (2006) collected three years of quantitative data on older adult participants while professionally running arts programmes in nursing facilities. Their conclusion that arts participation positively impacts life in old age supports the creative ageing paradigm. There are three implications of his research in creative ageing. First, it is critical in understanding creative ageing to analyse the physical, emotional and social dimensions of elder's lives. Second, the statistical data analysis of Cohen *et al.* (2006) was a quantitative intervention into the creative ageing field in which qualitative research has been prevalent (Larson and Perlstein, 2003). Third, their study is based on observations of an ongoing professionally planned and run arts programme conducted in a nursing home for older adults, which means that many of the participants had considerable artistic experience and existing relationships with the facilitators. This speaks to the importance of the connection between participants and facilitators in our own study.

Meanwhile, in 2008 Hanna and Perlstein published their joint research project, 'Creativity matters: arts and aging in America', which discussed practical issues tackled through creative ageing (Hanna and Perlstein, 2008). Hanna (2013) also discussed the basic concepts of creative tasks and arts participation in old age, and creative ageing through arts participation in the study, 'The central role of creative aging'. Hanna proposes that creative activity can relieve the stresses of ageing and, indeed, sees the creativity displayed in old age as an 'asset'. This suggests the value of breaking away from the traditional view of ageing as loss and deficiency, and embracing creative expressions of the wisdom that often comes with age. Hanna recognises the social capital that can accrue to elders or pre-elders through creative activities as a paradigm shift from understanding older adults as those who consume to seeing them as active participants in the production of social value. At the same time, her research reveals a lack of opportunities and programmes to demonstrate and develop such creativity among older adults (Hanna, 2013).

Categorisation of creative ageing studies: target group, arts activities and benefits

Prior research on arts activities and creative ageing in old age has focused on identifying and confirming the positive effects of arts participation in the latter half of life. Most of these studies were conducted in three main categories: (a) target groups; (b) arts activities; and (c) the benefits of arts participation. Within these categories, existing studies have been centred on a specific area or the relationship between areas, especially between the wellbeing of people in their later lives and the arts activities themselves. The report by Jeffri *et al.* (2007), *Above Ground: Information on Artists III: Special Focus New York City Ageing Artists*, is a representative study of professional artists. For 146 vocational artists aged 62 or older living in New York City (median age of 72.2), they were found to have high artistic maturity, artistic achievement and life satisfaction by both quantitative and qualitative measures.

The first category of creative ageing research, the target group, can be divided into two subcategories: those who voluntarily participate in artistic activities for

pleasure and those who participate in artistic activities for treatment. So far, creative ageing research has focused on the former, or people who have long engaged in artistic activities as vocational artists, amateur artists and arts lovers. In particular, the lives of professional-level amateur artists or professional artists who are actively engaged in creative activities in old age have been investigated (Jeffri *et al.*, 2007; Noice *et al.*, 2014; Gallistl, 2021). More recently, studies that look at older adults who participate in arts programmes for treatment, such as those living in nursing homes or those with dementia, have become increasingly common in creative ageing research (Lowry, 2017; National Institute on Aging, 2019; Robertson and McCall, 2020; Hendriks *et al.*, 2021; Hughes *et al.*, *in press*). The subjects of these studies are mostly groups of older adults attending arts programmes offered by the facility they live in or receiving arts therapy with medical doctors' recommendations. Medical research that collects data from older adult patients through participation in arts activities or research that attempts to achieve therapeutic effects through arts activities is an emerging field of creative ageing research (Cohen *et al.*, 2006; Greaves and Farbus, 2006; Sonke *et al.*, 2009; Lowry, 2017).

The second category, artistic activities, includes vocational artists' old-age creative activities, professional-level amateur artists' activities and various arts participation activities by arts lovers. For example, there are studies of an amateur senior orchestra (MacRitchie and Garrido, 2019), musical tastes (Harrison and Ryan, 2010), textual and craft activities (Kenning, 2015), old-age fandom (Harrington, 2018), arts museum experiences (Thongnopnua, 2015) and a museum volunteer programme (Park and Chang, 2017). The studies of arts programmes in senior centres with therapeutic purposes and arts programmes designed for dementia prevention and treatment (Greaves and Farbus, 2006; Sonke *et al.*, 2009; Lowry, 2017; Dewey and Sonke, 2019; Robertson and McCall, 2020; Hendriks *et al.*, 2021; Hughes *et al.*, *in press*) also fall under this category. Recently, discussions surrounding the need for a professional group specialising in these programmes (Throsby and Zednik, 2011; Dewey and Sonke, 2019; Robertson and McCall, 2020) have also begun.

The last category, the benefits of arts participation, can be divided into two sub-categories: the benefits to the individual (in emotional, cognitive and social expansion) and the benefits to society (in the aesthetic, cultural, social and political realms). Earlier studies have looked at the physical, emotional and social benefits of arts participation on an individual's wellbeing (Cohen *et al.*, 2006; An *et al.*, 2011): physical benefits include both improvements to and maintenance of physical and cognitive function; emotional benefits appear in more significant or improved self-expression and self-realisation; and the social benefits elders experience come through increased contact and connection with others. The systematic literature review of prior research related to creative ageing and arts participation by Noice *et al.* (2014) has also focused on these three benefits to individuals. Meanwhile, the benefits of the arts for society have been actively discussed in the literature, but discussions on the social value of artistic engagement for older adults has focused on theoretical and comprehensive perspectives such as enhanced individual welfare (McCarthy *et al.*, 2001) and productivity later in life (Carlsen, 1995; Jang, 2007; Hanna, 2013; Choi, 2014). Therefore, examining the general benefits that the arts bring to society could be a theoretical ground for exploring older adults'

arts participation and its extended benefits to the community. First, the social value of the arts can be discussed as a spillover effect, effectively spreading out individual benefits into society. This suggests that the increased individual life welfare leads to expanded social participation and the cultivation of a sense of community (Matarasso, 1997; McCarthy *et al.*, 2001; Holden, 2006; National Endowment for the Arts, 2012). McCarthy *et al.* (2001) also looked at both benefits and saw them as components of the ‘instrumental’ value of the arts in their report, *Gifts of the Muse*, in which they suggest a dual frame of the instrumental and intrinsic value of the arts. They also mentioned community-level wellbeing as a social value that can be expected from participation in the arts (McCarthy *et al.*, 2001). From an instrumental point of view, Holden (2006) also discussed the social good, transformative power and broader public value that may arise from the arts. Second, there are some discussions of creative ways in which the arts can contribute to mitigating societal problems, notably social exclusion, through the intrinsically inclusive values arts disciplines often enact (Holden, 2006; Yang and Shim, 2007; Yang *et al.*, 2019). In this vein, Yang and Shim (2007) explained that arts participation could help resolve social problems because the arts can promote personal happiness, along with arts education, health and wellbeing, community cohesion, conscious civic participation, social capital and awareness of place.

Lacunae in extant research

In this literature review, we have identified two lacunae in the body of creative ageing studies. First, previous studies do not investigate the experience of pre-seniors and seniors who were not previously artistically active, focusing instead on people already engaged in the arts. Second, the process of initiating arts activities with potential participants is not discussed. Older adults who do not regularly participate in artistic activities have received little to no attention and, surprisingly, there has yet to be a study exploring the transition of older adults who had never been involved in arts activities but began to show an interest in them as they aged.

Segmentation of the target group for creative ageing

Target group segmentation must be adequately defined in order to set the foundation for an accurate discussion of creative ageing, especially given that we are targeting older adults who do not participate in arts activities. It is the first of three research questions in this study, and it also provides the theoretical basis for including a group that does not participate in artistic activities.

In general, it is essential to set a segmentation variable before analysing results since the final results may vary depending on how the variables have been set (Jo and Lee, 2017, 2018). However, a suitable variable for the target group classification for creative ageing was not found in the literature. We found some research in the tourist field that attempted segmentation of senior consumer groups from a marketing perspective (UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2012; J Kim 2013). In the work of J Kim (2013), which used survey data of senior tourists aged 55 or older from the Korea Tourism Organization, tourist classification had already been applied to a specific group of senior citizens. However, in the field of arts and

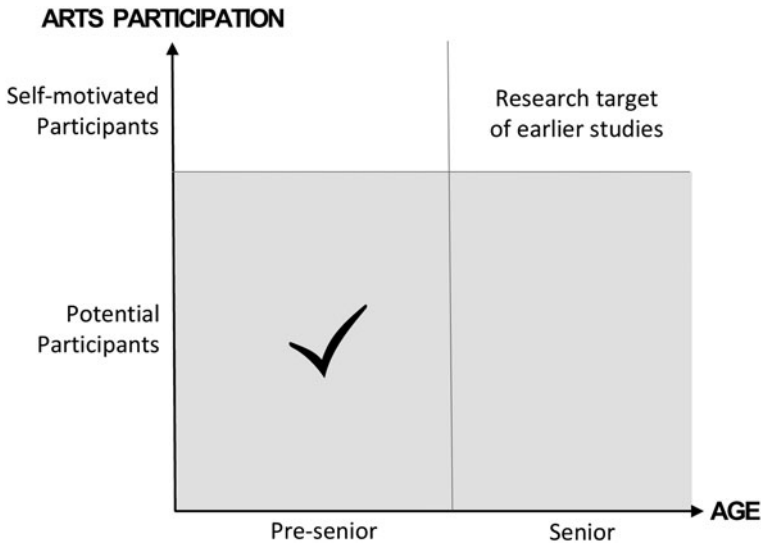


Figure 2. Target segmentation for creative ageing.

cultural management, no attempts to create group segmentation of older adults were found. We found little academic interest in identifying various factors that divide the older adults into subgroups. Any diversity within older adult group classifications from previous studies is limited to gender, age and economic standing. Thus, for future studies, older adults must not be considered a homogeneous group with a single trait (Jang, 2007; An *et al.*, 2011). When it comes to subdividing the target group for creative ageing, it is also vital to select segmentation variables. The stage of life and whether participants wish to or have participated in the arts were the variables of segmentation that we used to classify the target group for creative ageing.

The horizontal axis in Figure 2 considers the age of target groups for creative ageing and divides them into 'pre-senior' and 'senior' (or 'pre-elder' and 'elder'). We added the pre-senior group for the creative ageing target according to the widening age target for the older population. With an increasing social interest in the ageing population, pre-seniors aged below 65 have begun to be distinguished from seniors above that age. However, the classification is not clear, can include people in their forties and fifties, and does not always follow chronological age. Until now, creative ageing research has been focused on artistic activities for people aged 70 or older.

With these stages in mind, our second segmentation variable is introduced – the degree of previous arts participation. The vertical axis of Figure 2 divides those who are self-motivated participants in the arts and those who are not. All populations in later life are regarded as the target group for creative ageing. All within the target group, barring those who voluntarily participate in artistic activities, are defined as the 'potential participants group'. This distinction places the marginalised 'potential participants group' at the centre of research interest, preparing the basis for

expanding creative ageing research on older adults. While earlier studies have only concentrated on self-motivated senior groups, our study looked at the potential participants, particularly pre-senior adults. We contend that the cultural right (Boyer, 2010; UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2012) of everyone to enjoy arts and culture can be the catalyst to bring potential participants to active creative ageing.

The arts participation model

Brown (2004, 2006) presents a five-step arts participation model, which assumes that the level of arts participation increases linearly with the degree of creative control in arts activities. This model provides two theoretical bases for our study: first, an explanation for the progress in arts participation within our potential participants' group; and second, an understanding of ambient involvement, which is when participants experience the arts by chance rather than choice. Potential participants for our study are selected because they are in the ambient participation stage. We can then track their experience as they choose to increase the frequency, depth and diversity of their artistic activities per Brown's model (Brown, 2004, 2006). Brown's theory is useful for framing the transition between the beginning of a participant's artistic activities and any continuations in their journey that deepens their relationship with the arts.

During the arts workshop, we found that Brown's arts participation model did not fit with our potential participants' arts participation. First, when applying Brown's five-stage model, level distinctions are often ambiguous. Thus, we designed a more appropriate three-stage model derived from the five-stage one: (a) potential or ambient participation; (b) appreciation; and (c) creation. Brown also suggested that arts participation proceeds through the stages in a linear fashion. However, the potential participants we worked with demonstrated a dynamic relationship with the stages, often cycling through them reiteratively (Figure 3).

Prior to Brown, McCarthy and Jinnett (2001) presented a different arts participation model of four stages in *A New Framework for Building Participation in the Arts*. Their arts participation model consists of four steps: background, awareness, decision and experience. In this model, arts participation connects pre- and post-experiences into a single flow, beginning with personal and social background factors that predispose individuals to involve themselves in artistic activities. Influenced by personal beliefs and social conventions, participants form an awareness of (or attitude towards) arts participation, which later drives their decision to participate in artistic activities. This decision then leads to the experience of participating in and responding to artistic activities. This cycle, from awareness to experience, is then repeated with other artistic endeavours (McCarthy and Jinnett, 2001).

Hanna (2013) classified the forms of arts participation in old age as: (a) beginning participation; (b) returning participation; and (c) lifelong participation. Beginning participation applies to older adults who start their artistic activities with high enthusiasm for self-expression and artistic creation as they enter their older years. Folk artists are representative since they often explain that they share their values and beliefs through self-expression and by producing new creations. Returning participation refers to those who were involved in artistic activities at a younger age and, having stopped these activities due to personal or work reasons, returned to them in old age. For them, reopening their artistic sides creates

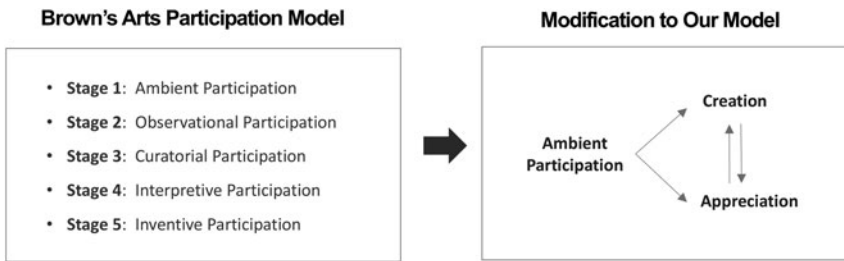


Figure 3. Brown's arts participation model (Brown, 2004, 2006) and modification to our model.

meaning in their lives by allowing them to revisit moments of joy from the past. Finally, lifelong participants have engaged in creative activities throughout their lives, as professional or serious amateur artists. Creative activity is an integral part of their lives, both professionally and personally.

The analytical framework

Our framework for this study uses the three categories of existing research we identified in target groups, arts participation and benefits (see Figure 4). Based on these categories, we segment the creative ageing target population. This enabled us to adapt a modified version of Brown's five-category arts participation model and thereby compensate for the limitations of existing studies, which do not include potential participants. Thus, we derive an analytical framework that will be used for action research with our potential participants as they engage in arts activities.

Findings from action research

Facilitating: a key element in arts participation

Our most significant finding was gained through developing a deeper understanding of facilitation: what a facilitator does, how facilitation works and when it is no longer needed. When face-to-face arts activities halted due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the power a facilitator has to potentiate participants' experiences stood out in stark relief. Ironically, the facilitator's importance only became apparent once they could neither play a facilitating role nor proceed with the planned arts workshops due to participants' concerns about the virus and legal restrictions in Korea on groups larger than four.

Facilitating is essential to focusing participants' engagement in the arts. By understanding participants' interests and past experiences, facilitators link them, rewarding artistic activities in which they can easily engage and immerse themselves. Participation in the arts entails an adaptation to the new environments and conditions of artistic activities. A facilitator performs various roles, such as being the mediator, the discoverer of the issue or the recorder (Ha, 2016). Fostering digital literacy among seniors is a concrete example of a significant challenge through which facilitators can guide participants. In the field of adult education, facilitators play a broad role in fuelling group energy, motivating individual

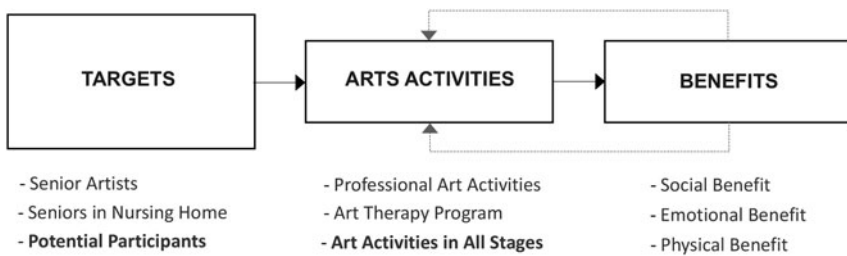


Figure 4. The analytical framework from the literature review.

students, planning strategic programmes, giving effective feedback, problem-solving, analysing demands, forming partnerships, spurring ongoing self-development, promoting learning, *etc.* They are also responsible for eliciting critical reflection among learners (Baek and Lee, 2012). The common denominator is acting as a bridge that encourages meaningful facilitator–participant as well as participant–participant connections.

In this study, the overarching goal of multi-faceted facilitation is to lead to self-motivated arts participation among potential participants. Facilitating arts workshops for potential participants should continue until the participants are able to pursue arts activities on their own. We suggest three roles for the facilitation of potential participants’ arts participation for creative ageing: (a) bridging life and artistic activities; (b) bridging familiarity and change; and (c) bridging occasional arts activity to regular self-motivated arts participation.

Bridging life and artistic activities

The first task of facilitating for arts participation is to bridge the gap between artistic activities and potential participants’ current lives. In this study, certain participants said, ‘I don’t think I can do it [participating in the art workshop] because I don’t have a talent in art’ or ‘I was jealous when I saw other people drawing’. Thus, these participants initially thought that only those with exceptional artistic talents could do artistic activities in old age. That is, despite their admiration for artists, they were not inclined to practise by themselves. To bridge this gap, we designed our first workshop series around the theme of flowers, a common interest among our participants. Through creative activities such as flower arranging we attempted to make the arts more approachable for participants.

The instructors of the arts workshops and the researchers played facilitating roles during the action research. Facilitators needed to understand the experience of old age, as well as participants’ cultures and languages, to empathise with them. It was more important for the facilitators to identify and sympathise with participants and communicate with them than to deliver specific content. All three arts workshop instructors were women in their forties with experience working with adults in their fifties and sixties (*see Table 1*). Paired with excellent communication skills obtained through various experiences in their work and home, these instructors were able to set a comfortable atmosphere and actively communicate with participants to successfully induce lively participation.

Bridging familiarity and change

Potential participants needed to be familiar with modern technology, especially changes in communication methods, information acquisition and processing methods, in order to participate in a full range of arts activities. Berge (1995) categorised facilitation for virtual learning into four areas – pedagogical, social, managerial and technical – and asserted that facilitators should be responsible for assisting participants with the modern arts environment. Advances in digital technology, in particular, posed significant obstacles for many in the participants group. We found that the process of collecting and processing information from the internet was a more substantial challenge for many of our participants than we initially expected. However, our workshop participants were relatively well-adapted to the smartphone environment and used them fluently.

Participants and researchers had little difficulty with communication through social media and delivering helpful information to one other. Nevertheless, participants were not adept at searching for arts participation programmes and registering for the ones they wanted, especially those provided on a first-come, first-served basis. Adapting the way we digitally communicate with society has been a challenge for all of us, and it especially affects not only older adults' arts participation but the quality of life in old age generally. So, adapting to new technologies and social change is both an individual and a societal problem (Berge, 1995; Barnard *et al.*, 2013). One notable benefit for older adults is that arts participation can be an enjoyable way to gain newly required life skills.

Since various quarantine measures for the COVID-19 pandemic have been instituted, a variety of free exhibition programmes and performances have emerged online. We wanted to introduce these programmes to participants and encourage them to participate. While they did not hesitate to accept videos that could be streamed from YouTube, they often were intimidated by online programmes offered through art museums or performing arts centres on platforms such as Zoom or Naver TV. Their intimidation had two aspects: the inconveniences required to set up access to a digital environment (such as online membership, self-certification and installation of programmes), and their fear that even online programmes offered by arts institutions or specialised sites would be intended for professionals or too difficult to enjoy. Thus, the effectiveness of facilitating our workshops fell short during the pandemic, in part due to the hard transition to a virtual environment necessitated by social distancing.

Bridging between occasional arts activity and regular, self-motivated arts participation

Effective facilitation should elicit meaningful and sustained arts participation by potential participants. The second-phase arts workshop series, of which the three scheduled for 2020 were not held due to the pandemic, was meant to continue the role of facilitating artistic activities for our action research participants. Their engagement with the arts was negatively impacted by the lack of facilitatory support and, for many, their self-motivated participation ceased or failed to progress. Since arts activities were not yet established in our participants' daily lives, even simple and accessible online activities remained inapproachable given their virtual nature and artistic unfamiliarity. The technological proficiency these participants had acquired was not equal to doing more than watching YouTube videos.

Even participants who showed the most dramatic changes through the 2019 arts workshops were forced to stop their outside activities, such as the regular drawing course one participant had started taking. During an interview with this participant conducted after halting the art workshop due to the COVID-19 pandemic, she said, 'If I went out for drawing class, I couldn't go see my grandchildren on weekends. I feel relieved when I don't come into contact with others.' COVID-19 halted many of the participants' offline activities, both creative and non-creative, as family and health took priority. The facilitating role for potential participants' arts participation should last for a certain period of time until their arts participation can be a voluntary and sustained engagement with artistic activities while pursuing a balance between existing priorities in daily life and a newly starting artistic endeavour.

Potential participant group: the initiation and continuation of arts activities

By monitoring participants' decision-making processes prior to their voluntary participation in the arts workshops, we found that their expectations of the programme's benefits were key in determining their participation. Just as the benefits of arts participation are divided into social, emotional and physical benefits, so are the decision factors. We found that, initially, the acquisition of social capital and the prospect of socialising with others was the primary driver of decisions to participate in the arts (Reynolds, 2012, 2015; Hanna, 2013). All the participants anticipated socialising during the workshops. One participant mentioned that she was determined to come to the workshop despite her worries about art because the workshop was 'a chance to meet people and spend time together'. On the morning of the art history lecture, the second session during the initial workshop series, a participant had even called to say she would prepare lunch for everyone – handmade dumpling soup. Everyone enjoyed the lunch and expressed their appreciation for the dish, recognising the participant for her cooking skills and enhancing the sense of community and intimacy between the participants. Participation in arts activities in later life is greatly influenced by relationships between family members, relatives and friends, but also broader social relationships (Reynolds, 2012; Hanna, 2013). As shown in Putnam's (1995) research, social capital defined by the characteristics of social organisations, social relationships, norms and social trust that are the basis for co-operation and mutual benefit, affects the decision to participate in art. Social factors, such as relationships with other participants and the formation of social capital, also played an essential role in the workshop experience. Research on the involvement of arts activity programmes in older adults' classrooms also shows that psychological welfare is higher for a group that continues social exchange programmes after being immersed in the programme (Cho and Lee, 2013).

Cultural capital was another motivating factor for participants. As participants gained background knowledge and skills with the workshop content, they accrued cultural capital. During the arts history workshop, participants expressed joy in being exposed to new artworks and appreciated expanding their cultural competency. For example, when viewing the evocative female imagery of a Georgia O'Keeffe painting, participants were impressed by the ability to express a new visual feeling through flowers. The instructor also responded to participants' interests in

gardening by preparing garden stories and using illustrations by Tasha Tudor. Thus, participants learned that daily gardening activities could be artistic and a source of creative satisfaction as well as cultural capital. After the museum exhibition visits in the second phase of workshops, some participants used the exhibition group photo we took together for their social media profile pictures, reflecting their desire to be recognised for their appreciation of the arts.

If these various social reasons initially spurred our potential participants to engage in arts activities, the joyful arts experience fuelled their continued participation. For instance, after completing the first few workshops, the participants showed tremendous excitement for future activities. One participant said that she expected 'her forgotten artistic sensibility to come alive', while another said, 'I want an opportunity to do something'. Expectations of emotional enjoyment from engagement with the arts were an important decision factor. Although growth in social relationships was a decisive factor when participants set their mind to attend the workshops, emotional joys from the activities themselves eventually became a greater priority. Interestingly, this shift's timing varied among participants; some began to find joy in hands-on creative work during the first workshop, while others felt discomfort with the activities in the first stage but later came to enjoy the process. Not surprisingly, the level of enthusiasm and comfort varied among participants.

However, it is worth noting that no one mentioned physical benefits during this study. Perhaps, since all participants were well-functioning pre-seniors in their fifties and sixties with no particular health issues, physical benefits were not relevant to their experience or needs.

Impact: driving change in individual lives and creating social value

Participation in arts activities in later life has a positive impact on the process of ageing by both changing individual lives and contributing to social value. While conducting the workshops, we observed that the vitality individual participants gained from their artistic activities was not restricted to the individual, but affected their families, neighbours and communities. We also saw that the process of facilitating arts participation for the participants could be an opportunity to form inter-generational relationships between participants, facilitators and instructors. Beyond this, effective facilitation helped these pre-seniors adapt to a rapidly changing society, countering social exclusion problems with cultural competency (Holden, 2006; Yang *et al.*, 2019). Through our action research, we found that there are two layers of benefits from arts participation: emotional, cognitive and social benefits to the individual; and aesthetic, cultural, social and political benefits to the society at large (McCarthy *et al.*, 2001; Cohen *et al.*, 2006; An *et al.*, 2011; National Endowment for the Arts, 2012; O'Shea and Léime, 2012; Noice *et al.*, 2014).

As people age, they too often experience a decline in their quality of life and begin to question what their lives mean. However, as our potential participants group went through the process of creative ageing in our workshops, they experienced enhanced wellbeing from a positive re-evaluation of their lives and their relationships with others. The social connections, arts participation and additional emotional support they gained from creative engagement yielded a deeper

understanding of their lifecourses and helped them meet the challenges of old age (Reynolds, 2012; Cho and Lee, 2013). They realised that life with the arts is qualitatively different than life without. Thus, it is crucial for arts facilitators to provide holistic and persistent support to potential participants as they remake their understanding of their lives.

Just as arts participation vitalises individuals (McCarthy *et al.*, 2001), it generates social value by allowing older adults to contribute to a greater social realisation of our human potential. One of our workshop instructors observed, ‘Through arts participation, seniors and pre-seniors can not only raise their own energy level but show us a vision of a community of creative production.’ The enhanced vitality older adults gain from arts participation overflows into a positive influence on their wider communities, and the resulting realisation of human potential in turn leads to the creation of social value and improved community wellbeing. In this sense, pre-seniors are particularly important as they have access to productive resources that enable them to more directly contribute to creating social value. Furthermore, the process of engaging older adults in artistic activities itself can create inclusive value through forming intergenerational relationships and facilitating adaptation to social changes. Thus, promoting creative endeavour through older adults’ arts participation enhances benefit to society at large.

The arts participation model for creative ageing

Based on our literature review and our analysis of our action research findings, we mapped the above processes on to our research framework and constructed the ‘arts participation model for creative ageing’ (see Figure 5). This model maps not only the arts participation of potential participants but also the flow of social value as short-term benefits to individuals lead to long-term positive impacts on the wellbeing of participants’ communities and the wider society. Effective facilitation is critical to the success of this process.

Conclusion and limitations

As peoples’ lifespans increase, we as a society are beginning to pay closer attention to the various ways our later lives unfold. As we have shown here, arts participation in later life not only enhances and revitalises the wellbeing of older adults individually but has positive consequences for society as a whole. One of the action research participants who started a regular drawing class during the second phase of workshops affirmed creative ageing as a positive lifestyle for older adults. She said:

I think creative ageing is a new way of living for older people. Until now, people who do arts in old age have had to be professionals, and even they struggled because it’s hard when they are very old. I think I can do it as long as I have life. Now, it’s time to prepare for old age.

In light of this, we put forward the following actionable suggestions: (a) potential participants should be engaged from the beginning in planning and implementing creative ageing initiatives; (b) the role of the facilitator should be central throughout

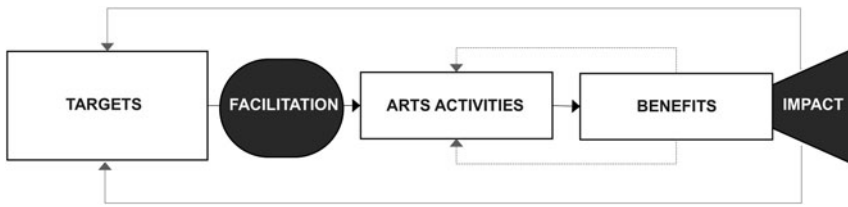


Figure 5. The arts participation model for creative ageing.

the process of engaging potential participants in artistic activities; (c) the multiple benefits to individual, community and societal wellbeing should be taken into account throughout the planning and implementation process; and (d) the growing social consensus around the importance of creative ageing should lead to further studies on all aspects of creativity and wellbeing in later life.

One of the limitations of this study is that we do not explore the physical benefits of arts participation, including both the enhancement of physical activity through arts programmes and cognitive factors such as dementia prevention and treatment (Castora-Binkley *et al.*, 2010; Fraser and Sayah, 2011; Fraser *et al.*, 2015). Our action research participants were all healthy older adults, many in their fifties and sixties, and physical benefits were of less concern for them. The study's primary focus on motivating older adults to engage in artistic activities tended to focus attention on participants' emotional and social responses, and the physical benefits receded into the background. Nevertheless, physical health is a significant consideration for seniors, particularly those living in long-term care facilities, and this aspect of creative ageing merits further research.

When we started this study three years ago, we were concerned about whether we would be able to spark lasting change in the participants through the action research process. However, the changes our participants experienced and the pace of change exceeded our expectations. Participants made dramatic changes to their lives, with some even choosing to undertake serious professional arts education. However, despite these hopeful initial results, cutting short the second phase of workshops due to the pandemic left open the question of the longevity of the effects of the arts workshops. We look forward to repeating and expanding our study once indoor gatherings are again safe.

Looking forward, as social consensus on the importance of creative ageing grows, there are many potential branches of investigation for scholars to pursue. We propose that a specialised field focusing on creative ageing and facilitation is necessary to capitalise on the opportunity to understand creative engagement in the ageing population. As scholars, we have an important role to play in building this understanding and developing recommendations for policy interventions that support creative ageing initiatives.

Financial support. This work was supported by the 2020 Hongik University Research Fund.

Conflict of interest. The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

Ethical standards. All procedures performed in studies involving human participants were in accordance with the ethical standards of the institutional and/or national research committee and with the 1964 Helsinki Declaration and its later amendments or comparable ethical standards. Informed consent was obtained from all individual participants involved in the study. The authors are grateful to the elders and instructors who participated in the workshops.

References

- Adelman C** (1993) Kurt Lewin and the origins of action research. *Educational Action Research* **1**, 7–24.
- An J, Chong Y, Jeong Y, Seo S and Cooney T** (2011) Critical aspirations from studies of successful aging. *The Korean Journal of Developmental Psychology* **24**, 35–54.
- Baek S and Lee H** (2012) Difference analysis of the current level and necessary level for development on the competency of adult education facilitator. *Journal of Lifelong Learning Society* **8**, 59–85.
- Barnard Y, Bradley MD, Hodgson F and Lloyd AD** (2013) Learning to use new technologies by older adults: perceived difficulties, experimentation behavior and usability. *Computers in Human Behavior* **29**, 1715–1724.
- Berge ZL** (1995) Facilitating computer conferencing: recommendations from the field. *Educational Technology* **35**, 22–30.
- Boyer MJ** (2010) *Creativity Matters. The Arts and Aging Toolkit*. New York, NY: The National Guild of Community Schools of the Arts.
- Brown A** (2004) *The Values Study: Rediscovering the Meaning and Value of Arts Participation*. Hartford, TX: Connecticut Commission on Culture and Tourism, Arts Division.
- Brown A** (2006) An architecture of value. *Grantmakers in the Arts Reader* **17**, 18–25.
- Carlsen MB** (1995) Meaning-making and creative aging. In Neimeyer RA and Mahoney MJ (eds). *Constructivism in Psychotherapy*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, pp. 127–153.
- Castora-Binkley M, Noelker L, Prohaska T and Satariano W** (2010) Impact of arts participation on health outcomes for older adults. *Journal of Aging, Humanities, and the Arts* **4**, 352–367.
- Cho Y and Lee I** (2013) A study on participation types and effects of arts activity programs for senior citizens. *Korean Arts Psychology* **9**, 23–29.
- Choi R** (2014) Wise-aging for some scholars in their life history. *Journal of Lifelong Learning Society* **10**, 29–60.
- Cohen GD, Perlstein S, Chapline J, Kelly J, Firth KM and Simmens S** (2006) The impact of professionally conducted cultural programs on the physical health, mental health, and social functioning of older adults. *The Gerontologist* **46**, 726–734.
- Dewey LP and Sonke J** (2019) Professionalizing arts management in healthcare facilities. *Journal of Arts Management, Law, and Society* **49**, 155–170.
- Fisher BJ and Specht DK** (1999) Successful aging and creativity in later life. *Journal of Aging Studies* **13**, 457–472.
- Fraser KD and Sayah AF** (2011) Arts-based methods in health research: a systematic review of the literature. *Arts & Health* **3**, 110–145.
- Fraser KD, O'Rourke HM, Wiens H, Lai J, Howell C and Brett-MacLean P** (2015) A scoping review of research on the arts, aging, and quality of life. *The Gerontologist* **55**, 719–729.
- Gallistl V** (2021) What's it worth? Value and valuation of late-life creativity. *Ageing & Society* **41**, 2599–2614.
- Greaves CJ and Farbus L** (2006) Effects of creative and social activity on the health and well-being of socially isolated older people: outcomes from a multi-method observational study. *Journal of the Royal Society for the Promotion of Health* **126**, 134–142.
- Ha W** (2016) The facilitators' role for deriving social contribution of public culture: the Korea Artist Welfare Foundation's project to support the dispatch of artists. Paper presented at the International Conference on Cultural Contents. December 10, 2016, Suwon, Republic of Korea.
- Hanna GP** (2013) The central role of creative aging. *Journal of Art for Life* **4**, 1–15.
- Hanna GP and Perlstein S** (2008) Creativity matters: arts and aging in America. *The Monograph* **September**, 1–15.
- Harrington CL** (2018) Creativity and ageing in fandom. *Celebrity Studies* **9**, 231–243.

- Harrison J and Ryan J** (2010) Musical taste and ageing. *Ageing & Society* **30**, 649–669.
- Hendriks I, Meiland FJM, Gerritsen DL and Dröes R-M** (2021) Evaluation of the ‘Unforgettable’ art programme by people with dementia and their care-givers. *Ageing & Society* **41**, 294–312.
- Holden J** (2006) *Cultural Value and the Crisis of Legitimacy*. London: Demos.
- Hughes JC, Baseman J, Hearne C, Lie MLS, Smith D and Woods S** (in press) Art, authenticity and citizenship for people living with dementia in a care home. *Ageing & Society*. Available online doi:10.1017/S0144686X21000271.
- Jang H** (2007) The concept and strategy of successful aging on the road to successful aging. *Korean Psychological Association* **1**, 15–30.
- Jeffri J, Spiller MW, Heckathorn DD and Simon J** (2007) *Above Ground: Information on Artists III: Special Focus New York City Aging Artists*. New York, NY: Research Center for Arts and Culture, Teachers College, Columbia University.
- Jo A and Lee H** (2017) A study of market segmentation based on the pursuit of benefits among senior tourists: using a mixture model. *International Journal of Tourism and Hospitality Research* **31**, 33–45.
- Jo A and Lee H** (2018) A study of market segmentation by tourism motivation of outbound senior tourists: using a mixture model. Paper presented at the Korean Management Service Society Academic Symposium. November 28, 2018, Seoul, Republic of Korea.
- Kenning G** (2015) Fiddling with threads: craft-based textile activities and positive well-being. *Textile* **13**, 50–65.
- Kim I** (2013) Arts as a catalyst for the promotion of social capital: art-based action research cases and cultural policy implications. *Journal of Cultural Policy* **27**, 121–142.
- Kim J** (2013) Concerns and marketing points for senior consumers. *Marketing* **47**, 21–27.
- Kim I** (2016) The application of youth culture research and action research. *Forum for Youth Culture* **47**, 143–148.
- Kim M, Shin K, Choi H and Kang M** (2005) Factors affecting successful aging in Korea. *Journal of the Korean Gerontological Society* **26**, 91–104.
- Larson RT and Perlstein S** (2003) Creative aging: a new field for the 21st century. *Teaching Artist Journal* **1**, 144–151.
- Lee Y and Lee H** (2015) The influence of reflective learning on critically reflective work behavior with mediation effect of positive psychological capital. *Journal of Agricultural Education and Human Resource Development* **47**, 123–148.
- Lowry LA** (2017) *Creative Aging in Senior Centers: A Grounded Theory Study* (Doctoral thesis). The George Washington University, Washington, DC.
- MacRitchie J and Garrido S** (2019) Ageing and the orchestra: self-efficacy and engagement in community music-making. *Psychology of Music* **47**, 902–916.
- Matarasso F** (1997) *Use or ornament. The Social Impact of Participation in the Arts*. Bournes Green, England: Comedia.
- Mathison S** (1988) Why triangulate? *Educational Researcher* **17**, 13–17.
- McCarthy KF and Jinnett KJ** (2001) *A New Framework for Building Participation in the Arts*. New York, NY: RAND Corporation.
- McCarthy KF, Ondaatje EH, Zakaras L and Brooks A** (2001) *Gifts of the Muse: Reframing the Debate About the Benefits of the Arts*. Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation.
- McHugh MC** (2016) Experiencing flow: creativity and meaningful task engagement for senior women. *Women & Therapy* **39**, 280–295.
- McIntyre A** (2007) *Participatory Action Research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- National Endowment for the Arts** (2012) *How Art Works, The National Endowment for the Arts’ Five-year Research Agenda, with a System Map and Measurement Model*. Washington, DC: National Endowment for the Arts.
- National Institute on Aging** (2019) *Participating in the Arts Creates Paths to Healthy Aging*. Bethesda, MD: National Institute on Aging.
- Noice T, Noice H and Kramer AF** (2014) Participatory arts for older adults: a review of benefits and challenges. *The Gerontologist* **54**, 741–753.
- Oh BH** (2004) Concept and model of successful aging. *Journal of Korean Geriatric Psychiatry* **8**, 33–36.
- O’Shea E and Léime Á** (2012) The impact of the Bealtaine arts programme on the quality of life, well-being and social interaction of older people in Ireland. *Ageing & Society* **32**, 851–871.

- Park J and Chang W** (2017) The museum senior volunteer program for creative aging: a case at the National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art in Korea. *Journal of Arts Management and Policy* **43**, 97–120.
- Park S, Chang W and Min J** (2017) Cultivating arts entrepreneurship – action research on entrepreneurship in the arts. *Review of Culture and Economy* **20**, 19–45.
- Putnam RD** (1995) Bowling alone: America’s declining social capital. *Journal of Democracy* **6**, 65–78.
- Reynolds J** (2012) Creative ageing: exploring social capital and arts engagement in later life. *Generation Review* **22**, 16–17.
- Reynolds J** (2015) Stories of creative ageing. *Working with Older People* **19**, 33–40.
- Robertson JM and McCall V** (2020) Facilitating creativity in dementia care: the co-construction of arts-based engagement. *Ageing & Society* **40**, 1155–1174.
- Rowe JW and Kahn RL** (1987) Human aging: usual and successful. *Science* **237**, 143–149.
- Rowe JW and Kahn RL** (1997) Successful aging. *The Gerontologist* **37**, 433–440.
- Sonke J, Rollins J, Brandman R and Graham-Pole J** (2009) The state of the arts in healthcare in the United States. *Arts & Health* **1**, 107–135.
- Stringer ET** (2013) *Action Research*, 4th Edn. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Thongnopnua S** (2015) *Arts Museum Experiences of Older Adults* (Doctoral thesis). Florida State University, Tallahassee, FL.
- Throsby D and Zednik A** (2011) Multiple job-holding and artistic careers: some empirical evidence. *Cultural Trends* **20**, 9–24.
- UNESCO Institute for Statistics** (2012) *2009 Framework for Cultural Statistics Handbook No. 2: Measuring Cultural Participation*. Montreal, Quebec: UNESCO Institute for Statistics.
- Wong PT** (1989) Personal meaning and successful aging. *Canadian Psychology/Psychologie canadienne* **30**, 516.
- Yang H and Shim K** (2007) *Social Value of Culture: Focusing on Policy Implications of Happiness Research*. Seoul: Korea Culture & Tourism Institute. Available at www.cultureline.kr/webgear/board_pds/7042/2007_2302.pdf.
- Yang H, Kim H and Yoon J** (2019) *Research on the Value and Impact of Arts: The Review on Major Discourses and Major Researches*. Seoul: Korea Culture & Tourism Institute.