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**Developing a researcher perspective during the course of a fine art research
degree: Issues relating to supervision**

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Introduction

For more than a decade the unique challenges facing Visual Arts researchers have been the subject of debate (Candlin, 2000; Dallow, 2003; Durling, 2002; Macleod & Holdridge, 2004, 2002; Rust, 2003; Strand, 1998; Sullivan, 2006, 2005). Creative practice-based research challenges conventional and presumed ways to legitimately construct knowledge and the clash in paradigms is pronounced in deliberations on funding; research quality; and research degrees. As the language of creativity collides with that of established scientific discourse, research students have been the forefront and it is through the growth in these degrees that the position of creative research is being advanced (Durling, 2002; Marshall, 2007; Morgan, 2001). Students are faced with the complex demands of candidature while also negotiating the shifting sands of a new and evolving research discourse.

The Literature

The research context

Discourses are those cultural narratives that are used to construct preferred versions of truth over others. They are powerful because they are prescriptive and are organized around practices of inclusion and exclusion, structuring both a sense of reality and identity (Mills, 1997) and by extension 'difference'. Academics are constantly testing these 'boundaries' but discourses are many layered, so to challenge one strand may not challenge another. What can be perceived within Fine Art is a fundamental challenge to core beliefs about the reality and identity of the artist taking place within the broader academic discourse and outside of that discourse. Practice-based research in creative fields has challenged structural and discursive approaches to knowledge making and art making.

Macleod and Holdridge (2002) suggest the challenge for practice-based research is to go beyond binaries and opposites—subjectivity of the artist and the objectivity of the scientist, into working out how art informs research and vice versa. They suggest that positioning the practicing artist as subjective, self-reflexive, self-indulgent even, perpetuates a myth of the artist as 'non-academic' (p. 7). Many academic authors have challenged this construction. Candlin (2000) questions what is meant by scholarly, as a more productive approach than to try to fit art practice into the "regulatory forms of academia" (p. 100). Gray and Malins (2004), Marshall (2007) and Sullivan (2005) argue that art practice as research switches the emphasis from art practice as self-expression or object making, to an exercise in knowledge construction: a process of coming to know (Marshall, 2007, p. 24). As Sullivan explains, a goal of practice-based research is to change the way one sees or interpret things, to create new knowledge. Further, if Fine Art academics want to make new knowledge they must open the self to this process which will result in the self coming to inhabit and know the world differently than before (Somerville 2008).

Not only is a discursive language of research in question here, but the visual language of art itself (Macleod & Holdridge, 2004). While the visual is the dominant language of the artist, the written is the dominant language of the academy. Allen-Collinson (2005), Hockey (2003), and Macleod and Holdridge argue that a relationship between these two languages—visual and written, can be extremely productive. Reader (2008) notes, 'relational knowledge emerges simultaneously

between multiple dimensions of experience, the medium and canvas, the process and the disposition of painter . . . are created together in the stage of emergence' (p. 308).

The research candidate in Fine Art

Supervisors act as mediators between the textual cultures of disciplines and candidates enrolled in higher degree programs (Dysthe, 2002; Melles 2007), and it would appear that this mediation is sorely called for in visual arts. Various studies of candidates and supervisors have identified the anxieties faced by fine art research candidates, including those generated by concerns about the impact of writing, research and scientific language on their art practices (Allen-Collinson, 2005; Hockey, 2003; Hockey & Allen-Collinson, 2000). The threat to creative identities is also identified as a concern (Hockey, 2003; Hockey & Allen-Collinson, 2000), insofar as candidates fear that creative art making will become suspended, separated from, or subordinated to research activity—specifically that analytic thought and objectivity would diminish creative powers and creative subjectivity, and so undermine the credibility of art practice. They fear research might break creative engagement or, as Csikszentmihalyi (1990) terms it, flow, thus forcing an artist to break from their creative practice (Hockey, 2007; 2003).

Instead of interpreting the tension experienced by candidates as discursive, Hockey (2007) considers it to be bound up in the way a creative identity takes precedence over a scholarly identity. He defines the tension as a visceral threat to creative identity, a reality shock, manifesting as fear, anxiety or tension (2007). Kroll (2004) refers to it as the schizophrenic nature of producing the artifact and the exegesis. Others (Pritchard, Heatly and Trigwell 2005) describe the phenomenon as culture shock when new candidates enter the unfamiliar in academia from a familiar territory such as design or art practice, i.e. they are confronted by a reality that is beyond or outside a dominant discourse of the practicing artist.

Allen-Collinson (2005) suggests that candidate's abilities to resolve this struggle is integral to their transition to becoming practicing scholars. She suggests that candidates discover research as a creative act that empowers confidence, aids creative output and offers insight into their art making. Candidates begin to occupy a new form of work culture. In this sense, the processes of coalescence between artist and scholar serve to demystify art making which in turn, demystifies a discourse of the practicing artist. Consequently, candidates eventually come to know in very expansive ways their artistic power beyond art-making. Hockey (2003) concludes that both struggle and risk become catalysts for candidates to achieve authenticity, to adopt a new identity without challenging or threatening their creative identity. Once candidates resolve this tension, they discover what Douglas et al. (2000) identifies as a new research paradigm offered by practice-based research in Fine Art. Such research also fulfills a critical, discursive or dialogic function to enable researchers to focus on, criticize, or contest traditional readings and understandings of research. Yet, as Hockey and others have found, candidates exhibit difficulty overcoming the tension to make such a discovery.

The quality and function of supervision

Without adequate supervision research candidature is likely to flounder. There is now a very substantial literature on supervisory role and relationship with the candidate. The supervisor or advisory team is/are expected to induct the candidate into the level of activity and expectations consistent with a research degree and most handbooks acknowledge that the jump in level from undergraduate degree to postgraduate research work is considerable (Wisker, 2005). Several

models for supervisor-candidate working relationships have been proposed, including Clarke & Ryan's assertion that these relationships are methodological in nature and widely influential (2006), Dysthe's differentiation between teaching, partnership and apprenticeship models (2001), and Gurr's 'supervisor/student alignment model' (2001). Zuber-Skerrit and Roche (2004) in a Western Australian study of candidates enrolled in social sciences, sought to determine an effective model for active participation in research. They found candidate ranking of supervisor effectiveness included: communication; relationship; positive reputation; personal attributes and style; nurturing attitude and, knowledge and experience. Other researchers have found varied levels of satisfaction with supervisory experiences and supervision quality (Neumann, 2003; Wisker, 1999; Zuber-Skerrit & Ryan, 1994),

Murphy et al. (2007) in a qualitative study of engineering candidates and supervisors in Singapore sought to find similarities between candidates' and supervisors' beliefs about supervision. They identify 'task-focused' supervisors who value completion, who are more controlling, maintain hierarchal supervisor relationships, and focus on immediate tasks and skills that are developed through tasks. Second, they identify 'person-focused' supervisors who value candidates' holistic development as professionals; as researchers and as people. Murphy et al. describe such supervisors as collaborative, promoting mutual interest and inquiry techniques. They conclude that beliefs about research supervision are closely related to beliefs about teaching and learning. Wisker et al. (2003a) assert that supervisors need to ask students to present and argue the story of the research—the research journey and those supervisory dialogues require logical connections be made and argued through. Supervisors need to be able to deploy various modes of interaction, and to recognize and assist candidates overcome dissonance (Wisker et al., 2003 b). They need to be guides who can prescribe and inform; to be provocative to elicit ideas and action, as well as advisors who will clarify, support and summarise (Wisker, 2005). Clarke & Ryan (2006) describe the supervisor-candidate interaction to construct knowledge processes as an ongoing conversation that is mediated by texts. However, supervisors may also wrestle with traditional conventions of scholarship, or they may be required to work outside their own areas of expertise when supervising candidates with different research areas of interest or expertise in art making (Hockey & Allen-Collinson, 2000).

Studies of supervision in creative arts

Few researchers have published research on the supervisor-candidate relationship where candidates are enrolled in practice-based research higher degrees in Fine Art, apart from the qualitative research of Hockey (2007) and Hockey & Allen-Collinson (2000). Hockey and Allen-Collinson in a study of 50 supervisors in the UK, sought to identify social processes specific to the supervision of practice-based research degrees. They identified that one key issue facing supervisors is the candidates' 'disconnection' and the difficulties encountered in balancing art making and scholarly practices, such as writing and analysis. They found that supervisors provided visual maps for candidates' journeys, as a tool to explore or develop, by making 'connections between students' personal journeys and enhancing analytic capabilities; between creative and analytic practices; to demonstrate differences between academic and creative writing. Further, in a later paper, Hockey (2007) identified institutional regulation, candidates' documentation of research evidence, analysis, academic writing and skills to balance academic and creative work as problem areas for both candidates and supervision. In each instance, he identified supervisors' range of positive reinforcing strategies in response to candidates' problems which tended to threaten the momentum of their work. Supervisors adopted roles to keep candidates on track by identifying continuities between procedures for making and detailed

recording; by encouraging risk taking as normal, or by explaining parallels between learning how to do research and learning how to do art. While Somerville (2008) also offers the point that supervisory processes could be approached with openness to possibilities, not knowing what the endpoint is going to be (p. 213-4). Ultimately, as Allen-Collinson (2005) suggests most researchers in this field concur that candidates should be assisted to conceptualize research as a creative activity from a very early stage in their enrolment.

In summary, the literature suggests that visual arts students will face challenges to their creative identity and to their skills and knowledge that will be difficult to address as they negotiate demands from scientific discourses and new identities as scholars, and to resolve how art informs and creates new knowledge within the shifting sands of a new and evolving research discourse in Fine Art,. The supervisor role in assisting them with this will be of great importance to a successful outcome and an early integration of scholarship and art practice.

This paper will explore the extent that candidates who are enrolled in a practice-based fine arts research higher degree expect their experience to be scholarly and the extent they expect supervisors to mediate or make possible a scholarly journey. Based on what candidates expect of their candidature and of supervision, this paper will identify implications for supervision.

Methodology

Approach and methodology

Thirty candidates from two national institutions of art participated in semi-structured telephone interviews that typically lasted a little over an hour in duration. The sampling was stratified to represent early, middle, late and completed phases of candidature, and because of the team's interest in development of research students in general, drew on both research masters and PhD students¹.

The interviews were conducted by an experienced visual arts academic, based around five core questions that the informants received in advance. These questions were: nomination of the greatest challenges informants faced and how they dealt with them; their major needs at different times in candidature; their experiences of and preference for feedback; their knowledge of examiner expectations and the 'level' of work required; and their personal aspirations relating to the outcomes from their candidature. The interviews were fully transcribed, initially analysed by question, then by emergent themes, case features and attributes.

Findings

Expectations about enrolment in a Fine Arts Higher Degree

Candidates' expectations about their studies will be analyzed under four main themes that emerged from analysis: expectations about candidates' opportunities to advance art making, to

¹ In reporting the data, candidates' responses will be coded to determine the stage of their candidature at the time of interviews viz., 'E' as early; 'M' as middle, 'L' as late stage, and 'C' as completed candidature.

improve skills, to expand employment prospects, and opportunities to participate in supportive academic environments.

Opportunities to advance one's art making. Candidates' personal interests and agendas are evident in their expectations. Enrolled candidates in this study demonstrate strong commitments to their art and mainly expect to advance their art making during candidature. A sense of personal freedom to pursue their own art agenda is evident in several candidates' accounts. This was due in part, says one candidate, to open-ended guidelines. One MFA candidate expected her candidature to allow her to work full-time at art. Another expected the PhD to launch her into to a professional career as a successful painter. That is, she expected to have an exhibition in a commercial gallery lined up by the time she finished her degree. Resources, such as access to studio space drive this expectation of freedom. Two quotations encapsulate this:

I didn't really have many expectations. I guess, my main expectation was that I was going to be able to go on with my own work, without having too much interruption from various other teachers at the school, or being encumbered by other classes or things that didn't particularly interest me (MFA07-M).

Part of starting the PhD was going through realignment in my life . . . expectation of changing my practice; improving my practice (PhD25-C).

Several informants saw their candidature as an excellent opportunity to explore new directions and inject a new rigour in their art making. For some, this meant expanding their technical repertoire and deliberately moving away from their previous art practice and skills. Others expected a chance to reignite and refocus their art practice by taking their practice to a new level by participating in a larger project or by revisiting and expanding a particular interest, for example:

When I started my expectations were broad: I was hoping to make art work beyond my present level and on projects that I was initiating. [I expected to] apply rigour in an institution environment, through examination of my own practice and through peers and supervisory input (MFA15-M).

Candidates expected that the university degree—either a masters or doctorate degree—would address deficits they had encountered, i.e. they sought opportunities that were missing from, or not supplied by, their current art environments:

I did this to be challenged. I could have just kept making work in my studio . . . The Masters does allow for risk-taking that you probably wouldn't [take] on your own (MFA03-M).

Candidates' inquiry remained focused primarily on their preparation for a future as practicing artists. Artistic freedom is an important indicator of creative identities (Bain, 2005; Hockey, 2007), and expressed as central and paramount to individual and collective biography. Hockey (2003) found that to make art is a driving imperative to sustain and validate the creative self and a strong identification with being a professional, practicing artist. With few exceptions, the candidates were focused on art making and not scholarly practice. However, one informant felt the autonomy and freedom they had sought to explore new dimensions to art practice through a research degree was compromised by the pressure to conform to an 'insular and parochial'

academic culture that expected candidates to ‘conform to a mould’ even within the visual arts culture:

[It was] a sensation of, “oh, that’s all very nice, but is it art?” . . . When I entered the community I felt like I had to conform to it. . . . Without structure and returning back to an institution was almost about being, “this is what we see as art, this is what we see as research, this is what you have to do.” . . . And I still think of it conforming to a mould (PhD25-C).

Only very few candidates nominated expectations that research would add a greater depth to their art making, or that the experience offered would validate portfolios that contained new research and original work (Allen-Collinson, 2005). One candidate defined art produced as ‘well-resolved conceptually valid projects.’ For instance, a MFA candidate captured what was to her an interesting insight into greater depth through scholarship:

I became very interested in a more academic approach to art making. . . . I was looking for ways to increase the conceptual aspect of my art making . . . doing a research degree would enhance that or facilitate it at least . . . it is easy after you finish undergraduate [studies] to just go off and make art and not really have a great deal of thought into the actual making. . . . I assumed that by doing something a bit more academic, it would bring a higher level of rigour to my work (MFA19-M).

Opportunities to improve skills: art making or scholarly skills? Candidates expressed a strong expectation that participation in the degree would lead to significant skills development. For many, this would enable them to work successfully as professional artists, and as experience as professional artists ranged across the full spectrum, some saw the degree as a full-blown preparation for independent practice:

My expectations and intentions were to gain a greater level of skill and self-motivation to the point where, when I leave, I am capable of working in my own studio practice and that I will have the personal and artistic skills that will keep me as a solid artist without that structure around me. Also I intend to build a stronger research conceptual base for my work and that I will have the conceptual skills developed to where I get stuck, I don’t need to have someone, a teacher, to actually help me work out my direction (MFA02-M).

For many, exposure to an established art community at the university provided a ‘good fit’ between personal goals as practicing artists and the degree’s potential to provide new art making skills. However, where candidates nominated expectations about scholarly practices in the interview they also highlighted conflicts and uncertainties, as already identified in the research of Allen-Collinson and Hockey (2000) and Hockey (2007, 2003) The connections between art and research, theory, and developing written skills were all cited as problematical areas of their candidature. Not knowing what to expect from a candidature beyond art making expectations, meant that a candidate was likely to have expectations that were too high, too low, or unrealistic about scholarly practices. For example, some expected that the level of intellectual rigour, academic critique and standards would be higher than what was actually experienced. Others blamed themselves for these conflicts and uncertainties, such as feeling intimidated, or they undervalued their own project ideas.

Alongside anxieties about research candidates in this study identified their fear of writing as a glaring weakness among their existing skills. While they expected to improve their written skills, the writing about artwork had proved to be a difficult task for many. For instance, one candidate found that conceptually her art work made sense, yet she had difficulty putting such ideas into a written language. Candidates demonstrated their struggle to learn this new language, of being able to write about theirs (and others) art making and practices. In essence it was a struggle to become bi-lingual, because scholarly practice requires candidates to develop their creative capacity in words as well as in art.

Candidates noted that previous academic experience influenced their expectations about higher degree study. For some it was simply a surprise and not necessarily a bad one:

I thought there was an expectation to produce something that was fairly theoretical, because that had been my experience with papers in the past, particularly with my honours research. But as it has happened, I've realized now that it's okay to have something that is not so much biographical, but certainly a lot more casual, than say a paper that would be written for Art History and Theory (MFA 07-M).

Others did not expect a PhD to be all that different from a Masters or Honours degree and this could be worrying, as the following quotation captures. This candidate did not expect the PhD to be different from a Bachelor Degree until she found she 'had' to do things differently and this led to a feeling of exposure, anxiety and struggle partly of her own making:

It's this thing of you having to steer everything, you have to decide what it is. You have to go out there and get it and put it together. You can discuss with others, and receive some guidance, but essentially it's you, and thinking about it doesn't decide it—its doing it and helping materials you use interact that produce the work. And I had a lot of anxiety about writing it up. I found I had a split personality, the work and the written stuff that I had to produce during this time. I couldn't reconcile the two. And the theory and the interest in [science] were very intrusive. And that was knocked into place by discussing things with the supervisor, and (by) having to solve practical problems of communicating these ideas visually (PhD20-M).

It is interesting here the terms in which she nominated the support of the supervisor; the highly pragmatic way this helped her to 'knock into place' the communicative elements of the work to achieving focus and coherence in the thesis.

Some candidates evinced surprise and pleasure at the value added to their practice from the theoretical component, to discover what Marshall (2007) Sullivan (2005) and others understand as outcomes from practice-based research, to transform perception whereby new understanding and new insight can be generated:

When I first started I thought, well, it's a bit of a stab in the dark, when you first start on something new. When you start you don't know which avenues you are going to go, and because this is quite a personal journey, so many threads came together that I hadn't expected, and I found it really fascinating and amazing that

if I hadn't done that theoretical research, I would never have come to the conclusions that I have. . . . For me it was both equally important: the practical and the theoretical (MFA16-L).

I think the thing that was most important was that I was somewhat skeptical about the idea of doctoral research in an art school, and I've come out the other end quite convinced that some people have an ideal way of approaching education. I think that research is quite good—not for everybody—but for myself, it proved to be quite a beneficial method of explaining my own practice (PhD29-C).

In both of these examples research and theory can be understood as serving art making. Overall, in this study, there remains little in the way of recognition of the scholarly journey.

Opportunities to expand careers and employment prospects Whether candidates already worked as teachers or tutors in academic institutions, or were practicing artists, they expected to improve their employment prospects in some way. For example, one MFA candidate expected to have a 'really strong' portfolio to take to commercial galleries, with the confidence that her work would be acceptable, even though she did not expect to make 'heaps of money' from it. Candidates expected a higher degree and a PhD degree in particular, to give them a competitive edge, particularly those already employed in the university, or who sought employment in the university sector as casual lecturers.

One candidate explained that part-time lecturing would provide financial security to sustain her part-time art practice as well as ensure access to continued up-to-date knowledge about contemporary art. She had expected that supervisors and established staff were likely to provide introductions to galleries, curators, art critics, and help her into the arts industry. The university provided an invaluable source of patronage. In contrast, three informants, all PhD candidates, primarily sought and expected their degree to bring personal satisfaction and not for their advancement as professional artists or as academics. One, an art teacher, sought to be more socially useful as an artist and to come out at the end with enhanced skills. Another saw the enrolment as a good use of time and energy, and a way to fund her interests.

Overall, academic scholarship was not seen as an end in itself, or was sublimated to other ends. This didn't mean research that supported art making wasn't seen to be interesting, there is just very little evidence among informants in this study of candidates who expected to participate in the wider academic, intellectual, or scholarly community.

Opportunities to participate in supportive academic environments. Candidates clearly expected a supportive environment. They expected the university and the wider artistic community to have established links and networks in place so that they could benefit from such structures. Some expected social contact and interaction with staff and students. They expected to engage with like-minded people, who would assist them to push forward and develop ideas, or they expected social interaction. The university provided a place to 'be', very legitimately, an artist. A MFA candidate enthused,

Art school is a wonderful environment because it is the one place where what you do is legitimate. There is a big support group around you, and like-minded people. For a lot of people art isn't work, or it's just an activity or a pastime, whereas at Uni, art is important; it's why you are there and I find that very stimulating and

enriching. It's not actually the piece of paper that I'm after; it's the journey, because I'm 58. . . . I'm interested in the research bit. It's as much about looking into it and learning more than just making the art (MFA23-E).

Some wanted acknowledgement as participants as well as gain other experiences in the academy, such as to contribute to teaching, Yet opportunities to do so seemed limited for some, as is shown in this next experience:

I think it is very important that the candidate comes to learn more accurately how they fit into the widening of the structure, what they can do, and how they can contribute themselves . . . I think one of the aggravating things is that some [candidates] get teaching . . . or lectures . . . and some don't. I think students get caught up in the stuff of whether they are seen as an important candidate or not (PhD18-L).

Others looked to the future and wanted help to build supportive or interpretive communities while they were at university that would extend far beyond their degree in order that they become self-sustaining when apart from the culture of the university:

My expectations and intentions were also . . . to develop networks within that system—either with staff or with colleagues—so that when I finish this MFA I am in my practice and I can actually have a relationship with others (MFA02-M).

Difficult transitions in a pathless land

Candidates spoke of transitions from other levels of study into the higher degree as being difficult or painful. Some even went so far to say that they were terrified, while other candidates said they were lost about what they had to research. The sense of being on one's own without a map or guide is very strong:

I had to work it out myself . . . it was a slow process, because I wasn't very confident when I started off . . . I'm sure doing a PhD . . . in the art field, it's a very speculative area and it's pretty much a pathless land. As people say, it's termed 'the pathless land'. It doesn't have any clear signposts within a certain discipline (PhD06-L).

I was like a blind person: a person walking in the dark (MFA16-L).

I was always very good at theory and in fact I was asked if I wanted to do my research work in theory but I am really a maker. I also felt, I'm in my mid-40s and I won't want to do a PhD when I am in my 60s. I've got this personal thing that it was to prove something: that I could do it and I really enjoy the academic side of things. I enjoy academic life and the research. So it was a painful, but enjoyable challenge at the same time. It's pretty torturous (PhD24-C).

There is also the dilemma created by a candidate's lack of understanding about the system and what to expect from a scholarly community. In the following account, the candidate had difficulty with the institution as a whole; with isolation and with an ongoing concern about life after university:

I didn't know what to expect, but when in the midst of it I realized that I could ask for support: that wasn't a prior expectation. I don't know if everyone knew how to ask the questions to take the advantages of the system. . . . It wasn't always formalized. . . . I expected to be able to discuss and have peers, staff and student there to test my ideas on, hear their ideas, to see how a student sees the art world, just how we would bounce off each other. . . . It felt like I was out of sync with other students. . . . I think a lot were seeing it as a way to stay in the university sector; be employed; do further research; stay where they studied. . . . I was worried about what would happen after but not quite clear how I would manage to keep the level of research going after I finished (PhD30-C).

The tension between being supported and becoming, or being, independent was also in evidence and has implications for the relationship with supervisors:

Art is a very selfish occupation, really. You focus on yourself and you are by yourself a fair bit (MFA 23-E).

This study reveals ways in which candidates' expectations are focused on the familiar—an art making journey within an artistic community, and not on the unfamiliar—a scholarly journey in an academic institution. This tension between the familiar and the unfamiliar confirms what Pritchard et al. (2005) describes as a 'culture shock'. Here, the tensions experienced by candidates are situated between two conflicting discourses: of the practicing artist and of the scholar. This expressed anxiety about facing the unknown, of being 'out of sync', of not knowing what to expect from a scholarly journey, may be compounded by the candidate feeling isolated or at odds with the expectations of research in an art practice-based higher degree. Wanting to have space and do one's own thing alone, however, did not prepare candidates for the isolation they came to feel in candidature, the reasons for which they struggled to pin down – was it just them?

I just sometimes wonder why we're all in our separate studios reinventing the same wheel (PhD01-M).

There are no students who work multi-disciplinary, so that's one area that separates me out (MFA02-M).

I go there [university] to make my work and I speak to my supervisor, but that's really – I work quite on my own . . . I really don't know what other people's experiences are. I don't even know anyone at my stage (MFA03-M).

I think that there is sort of a big weakness in the sense of getting people together. . . . I think that I expected much more support from some of the academics . . . an academic apprenticeship (PhD11-L).

Outside of (regular seminars where people present their work) there is almost no contact at all. But maybe other people have more contact together. I'm not sure (MFA16-L).

The candidate expects that by doing a degree, he or she would sustain an artistic journey, which is by its very nature an isolated journey. In a scholarly community the artistic journey transmutes into a scholarly journey within the wider academy. According to Sullivan (2005) and Hockey (2003) integration will occur for the most successful fine arts candidates. For instance, Hockey identifies three types of candidates: those determined to remain first and foremost focused on their identities as artists, those who undertake research at the detriment of their art, and those who integrate both artistic and research identities (2003, pp. 87-90). Wisker et al. (2003a) identify that strength to continue the journey and to find a path comes from sharing the story. To what extent then, do candidates see both integration and understanding happening through supervision?

The supervisor-candidate relationship – candidates' expectations

The scope of the supervisor-candidate relationship will be analyzed under four main themes that emerged from an analysis of candidates' expectations of supervision: expectations about compatibility and an ability to get along; of supervisors' responsibilities and roles; and the changing nature of the supervisor-candidate relationship. Candidates also identified sites where problematic relationships are like to occur.

Compatibility and ability to get along with each other. Candidates expected to have a working supervisor-candidate relationship, and to be able to get on with each other. They expected compatibility, being able to like their supervisor, mutual respect, and expected it to be an open and trusting relationship. Consistent with Wisker's (2005) parameters of supervision candidates expected both parties needed to be able to work together and to develop a professional relationship with the potential to become peers, colleagues, friends, or co-exhibitors. In particular, they expected supervisors to be reliable and supportive. By and large, candidates expected a degree of synchronicity or like-mindedness to be present within a cooperative relationship. To like, or be able to get along with, a supervisor was seen to be very important, as the following account indicates:

I was really lucky that I had two people that I really liked. They [the university] tried to give me all these other supervisors and I just said, 'no, I would not get on with that person'. Finally, I found one that I would, so that was very important to me. It was vital that I had that support, and they were very supportive, even though they were so overworked. . . . My role was to question some of their ideas. I didn't always take what they said as absolutely true: just most of it (PhD10-C).

Some candidates took these compatibility criteria further because they wanted to work with specific supervisors. Strong compatibility was crucial, i.e. they researched the credentials, interests, and the relevancy of supervisors' theoretical knowledge base of potential supervisors. For others degrees of incompatibility in temperament, skills or interests were not always viewed as a limitation. Overall however, good compatibility and an ability to get along were considered paramount.

Candidates' expectations of supervisors' responsibilities and roles. Candidates expected that supervisors would inform them about university guidelines, policies, practices, and to ensure that candidates fulfilled the requirements for their degree to the best of their ability. One candidate suggested that negotiating the bureaucratic requirements, actually knowing what is going on and how to approach those things is one of the greatest resources from a supervisor. A

supervisor's role was seen, not solely as information-giving regarding university regulations, but also one that pushed a candidate along; helped a candidate develop ideas into something plausible and tangible to fulfill the expectations of the university, and to ensure candidate produced something of quality. According to many of the candidates in this study, the supervisor's role was to help candidates to find the best way to do that.

There was very little indication that candidates assumed that interface with the system was their responsibility. This is counter to Neumann's (2003) finding that one indicator of successful supervisor-candidate relationships is when candidates take responsibility for managing their doctoral commitments. The supervisor as mediator between the system and the candidate was highly valued. Candidates also expected supervisors to monitor progress, to help them manage projects, to pace their work and to manage deadlines. This constituted the support function. Overall the supervisor was noted as a guide and support on multiple levels:

[The supervisor is] like a guide to help a candidate through the post-grad degree, such as current protocols of the academic institution. A good supervisor is someone who is up to date on all the current developments and requirements (of the institution) and can articulate those to the candidate (PhD04-E).

They react to something you are doing; one who has the experience to help you through the process, who can offer guidance when you have problems with research or with your project in general; who can give advice and guidance on how you might deal with those issues: a sounding board for ideas. They are able to offer relevant references, etc., and the supervisor needs to be there to give you the support and guidance that you need in order to work your way through the whole process (PhD22-M).

I thought that the supervisor was there to guide me through the deadlines in many ways, and where I needed to be at certain times in the course. I thought that they were there as a mind; someone to bounce ideas off, and perhaps to make suggestions in terms of other areas I could look at or other ways of pushing it. I didn't expect that they were necessarily knowledgeable in my field or . . . about the technical aspects that I needed, but perhaps to be able to point me out to people that I could gain knowledge from. . . . In terms of how I bring the exhibition together, I expected feedback, visually and conceptually... I was hoping that they would help me conceptually . . . (to) bring the whole thing together, to proof the paper and help me to streamline it (PhD26-C).

Most of the expectations of the supervisor-candidate relationship identified in this research involved practical supervisor guidance on management tasks, rather than an expectation the supervisor will encourage or promote scholarly practice. While candidates expected the supervisor-candidate relationship to be reciprocal, it was always described in a one-sided way, i.e., the supervisor was expected to be candidate-oriented and the candidate was expected to receive support and guidance from the supervisor. Few of the candidates in this study expected their supervisor-candidate relationship to be as Wisker (2005) describes, 'a primary one for ensuring a wealth of personal and cultural issues and experience are addressed, as much as for ensuring that students are guided and empowered as autonomous learners, engaged in a topic sufficient to gain' respective degrees (p. 120).

At what point does dependence on support and guidance from a supervisor give way to independence and candidate's ownership of their research? In other words, when does the adventuring begin? The next three quotations demonstrate how a MFA and two PhD candidates expected their supervisor to take a less direct role and not to drive their work and progress:

[The supervisor is] not my teacher; he's not there to direct my work; I can make whatever I want and he's there to make sure that what I am doing stays within the parameters of my initial proposal (MFA 07-M).

[The supervisor is] to give a candidate directions and not there to do the work for you; to guide you; provide a safety net; to suggest reading material, which mine hasn't done. I suppose they are to be experts in the field that you're writing in, but mine isn't really (PhD11-L).

Students should be aware that at the start that the supervisor should not be driving the project; it should be student-driven and that the supervisor is there to assist and give advice and point candidate in the right direction. Their role is to make the candidate fully aware of what they are to do; of their rights in terms of who they can approach; facilities available. Supervisor is to make sure that the student is given the workplace assistance they need from technical staff; and to provide as much information as they can for students without being excessive (PhD29-C).

In the following quotation an MFA candidate draws on their own resources to develop autonomy:

I hit a brick wall . . . it was at the time I was moving from print making to installation based practice and that was a huge step for me and I did it when I was about a year into my Masters. I realized I just couldn't get what I wanted from a print making format. . . . One of the reasons why I had difficulty, I suppose, is that my supervisor . . . was very much concerned that I was moving into an area that I didn't understand but after taking the six months off, I was able to explain in much more detail, in a draft of the exegesis, which included examples of other artists for the contextual part, how I really needed to move on from print making into an installation base. . . . but never really finding anyone who could teach me, this was a big step and . . . [it] was the major focus or change for me in the program . . . Once I did that both of my supervisors said, 'right, ok, now we understand where you are going and why you want to do this'. They have been very supportive ever since (MFA19-M).

In the next example the role of the supervisor in granting more freedom in direction than the student appreciated was possible is evident, but in fact the student has not accepted the responsibility for the final outcome:

I expected to have . . . three series of contextual art works and 20 paintings – that's what I wrote down . . . I've just taken a completely different approach, with guidance from my supervisor and just been completely fluid. Like just, my supervisor was so happy with what I was handing in, she thought there was a lot more to be gained from reading the personal aspect, whereas I always thought

that that was not substantial enough to base it on. Because why base a thesis on one's self? Who am I to talk about myself for three years? Through a lot of discussion with her, she convinced me that it's actually the best way to go about it, doing this research, because it is essentially my experience of the [nominated topic area] (MFA05-M).

Repeatedly, as this candidate and others show, candidates struggle with dissonance to develop their confidence as autonomous researchers. It is a struggle that can inhibit progress towards scholarly practices.

The changing nature of the supervisor-candidate relationship. Few candidates in the study had explored the concept that the supervisory role might change and roles could come to be reversed. Two informants however, described the supervisor-candidate relationship as a negotiable and adaptable relationship:

I saw it [the relationship] as something that was malleable and you could structure as you and your supervisor saw fit. With me it was quite informal and flexible, but I always felt that there were certain deadlines and expectations that needed to be met at certain times in the course. Within that there were variations and I thought the roles changed as I progressed into a PhD. . . . I really felt that I was left to find my own way with it and [to] come up with my own solutions. . . . At times I felt myself, after a lot of thought, discarding whole areas of advice. . . . It felt like it was my work (PhD26-C).

The supervisor has expectations of you . . . that you're an expert in your field, or you try to become or you try to contribute in a wider field of knowledge, ah in your area, . . . He was there to assist me, but I had to make the decisions . . . it was . . . an adult relationship: it was more like equals, like you know, it was talking to a peer that I respect (PhD12-C).

The importance of the candidate coming to accept that the final work was theirs is important to highlight, as that is a subject of debate across all disciplines.

Three stages to candidature are identified where supervisors perform different roles as candidates' work progress: an orientation stage, a development stage, and a consolidation stage. In the first, or orientation stage, candidates describe the supervisor-candidate relationship as initially more like a teacher/student relationship, where a supervisor helps candidate to focus. This may include the candidate becoming aware of the degree requirements, the supervisor being critical, supportive, and helpful, and challenging candidate's ideas and ways of working. In the second, or development stage, the relationship changes to a peer, equal or adult relationship where a supervisor gives advice and directs the candidate toward independent thought and decision making; to find their own way; to come up with their own solutions; to allow candidates to have their lead. In the final, or consolidation stage, the peer or adult relationship develops, where for example, the supervisor will engage more so in the candidate's consolidation of ideas and work, facilitating the candidate toward autonomy and ownership of the work. As Gurr (2001, p. 90) argues, supervisory approaches need to reflect candidates' growth toward what he terms, their 'competent autonomy'. They need to align their supervisory style with candidates' progression. Further, it may be difficult for supervisors to practice what Somerville (2008) terms an openness to possibilities, not knowing what the end point is going to

be, when candidates face dissonance, or a gap between perceptions and approaches, at different stages of their work (Wisker, et al., 2003 b).

Of all the informants few show a deep and abiding interest in a scholarly study. The following quotation reveals one such occasion:

I referred to myself as the author . . . there was a degree of satisfaction because I could place my work and my theoretical thesis in a global context and that was very different [from other previous levels of study]. . . . I was forced to be informed . . . it was a conscious effort to be aware of what's happening . . . in the interface around the world (PhD12-C).

The candidate knew that for future scholarly work she needed to be well-connected and named the institutions she had contacted. The following accounts from two PhD candidates also demonstrate the importance to a candidate of interaction and engagement with a wider scholarly community, even if the supervisor may not be able to provide it:

Although I had a really good supervisor, he was not perhaps aware of all of the discourse around installation. I had to discover that journey myself . . . If I had someone who had already had that conversation they would have said, 'maybe, you could have a look at this article.' . . . They would have had a greater insight into that discipline, into that way of working. . . . I really felt, that with all of that research, I was really working all of that out myself. You just don't know whether that would make a better body of work (PhD24-C).

The supervisor should . . . introduce the candidate to the wider scientific or artistic community to make them basically, to understand what its all about, to be researching artists, or researching scientists—introducing, networking, starting the whole thing going, apart from the normal responsibility to navigate the candidate's work (PhD27-C).

Both candidates considered their supervisors had limited experience or capacity to promote scholarly development. While candidates said they had had opportunities to participate in conferences, these candidates talked specifically about wanting to link into cutting edge research in their specific fields, which conferences may or may not provide. That is, some candidates had become highly specialized in their specific areas of interest that was beyond the scope and resources available in their host institution.

Finally not all candidates found the open, experienced, scholarly community they expected:

I also find that sometimes . . . there is a lot of keeping it close to your chest. You know there's people I wouldn't even bother asking, 'someone's told me that you found a philosopher,' or someone who has got some really pertinent thing to what I'm doing. 'Can you tell me their name and the name of the book?'. . . . There's still a lack of kind of openness . . . Because I just keep thinking I couldn't be bothered getting a reply that's veiled. So sometimes I just don't bother (PhD01-M).

Problematic relationships

Participants in this study had greater difficulty analyzing supervisor-candidate relations when those relationships were problematic. Often candidates were vague in their descriptions, using such terms to describe the relationship as *'not a perfect relationship . . . [but it] hasn't been the worst'*. Candidates described negative relations with their supervisors as de-motivating and unsettling. In some instances, this could cause a dependent candidate to feel uncertain or immobilized, while in others, a self-confident candidate would find solutions to her or his needs beyond the supervisor-candidate relationship.

Candidates nominated several areas where the supervisor-candidate relationship was problematic, attributing cause to either the supervisor, the academic institution, or to the candidate. Problematic relations included criticism and feedback from supervisors that was not productive or beneficial; instability of supervision caused by high turn-over rate of supervisors; supervisors who promoted their interests and not those of the candidate, and, lack of scholarly credentials by supervisors.

Feedback. Candidates identified negative criticism and inappropriate feedback as difficult to manage. It immobilized them; they became lost and without direction. As one candidate says of negative criticism:

My supervisor was so damningly negative on virtually everything that I felt that there was no hope offered or potential for any of my work. I closed down for a while because I felt at a complete loss to know what to do. It was all criticism and no suggestion on what the possibility was for taking work in another direction . . . it has to be constructive criticism (PhD22-M).

As this candidate suggested, candidates expected to gain direction for their further action from their supervisors' criticism or feedback. Other candidates found supervisors had difficulty giving appropriate feedback, where supervisors were not able, or reluctant, to give direction. This is one PhD candidate's experience:

I don't feel like I ever got any feedback on what was going well. It was always feedback on what was going wrong. . . . I sometimes heard back from other people, my supervisor would say, 'what [my name] is doing is really exciting . . . going really well.' . . . I don't think I got any feedback on the exegesis. One bit of feedback I do remember was my associate supervisor reading the examiners' report and then quite surprised that the examiner called some of it quite poetic and articulate. And he commented on that. That was all (PhD25-C).

University-based problematic relations. A number of candidates in this study had multiple supervisors during the course of their candidature. Several candidates revealed a lack of continuity within their supervision relationship and experience due to a high turn-over among their supervisors. While it was common practice to have two supervisors, the following example demonstrates the unpredictability of supervision when this candidate had four separate supervisors over the duration of candidature:

Sometimes the supervisor is elusive. I don't know if I was lucky or unlucky, but I had four supervisors, not through my doing. The first one left after six months,

and didn't actually tell me. . . . So that was not a good situation. From the four supervisors, I have had good ones and bad ones: I've got one now who is very elusive. I am finishing next month and it would be nice to at least have a reply to an email. But then, I have had a supervisor who was extremely encouraging and who actually helped me have more confidence in my writing and convincing me that I was doing all right (MFA16-L).

One form of problematic supervisor-candidate relationship can occur when a supervisor hijacks a candidate's agenda; wanting a candidate to follow her or his agenda rather than to encourage the candidate to explore and develop his or her own work. The following quotations set this out in no uncertain terms:

Feedback was interesting because at times, it was what I called, 'best practice feedback' (regarding artwork) . . . other times . . . two-thirds of the time, I felt like the feedback was coming from a very strong perceptual viewpoint of the supervisors, rather than being within the context of the research (PhD25-C).

I just want to bounce some ideas with them (supervisors). . . . This week it was quite negative . . . one (supervisor) was questioning why I was bothering to sculpt and that I should be more into drawing . . . he was saying . . . that I'm almost not allowed to change and evolve as I go through this program. This issue has arisen twice now . . . it's totally de-motivated me this week. . . . It's actually his agenda. . . . So I have to spend too much mental time trying to get back to the place of self-belief that I was at before (MFA02-M).

Another form of problematic relationship occurs when the supervisor lacks scholarly credentials. One PhD candidate was explicit about the limitations in her relationship with her second supervisor (also enrolled in a PhD in Fine Art), saying that the individual's content knowledge was different from her area of interest and lacking in technical expertise. She also recognized that the supervisor too was struggling with fundamental understandings about research and dismissed the comment that if they were doing her particular project they 'wouldn't have the problem' she had encountered. She considered it inappropriate that a member of the academic staff without a PhD was supervising PhD candidates: a situation not atypical in Fine Art Schools, but becoming less so.

On a similar theme a PhD candidate believed she suffered badly when her supervisor neglected her due to a commitment to the final stages of their own PhD:

While I was finishing my PhD supervisor was finishing . . . busy with writing . . . I was feeling a little bit lost, and I consulted somebody from a completely different department who gave a talk here in the art school, about something which was kind of relevant to my work, and he was very helpful. He was in philosophy, and I ended up getting more help with the thesis from him, than from my supervisor, who was busy and after completion . . . had to do a show in New York and then there was another show in Europe. And my husband helped me, because he had supervised so many PhD students in [X subject], which proved to be really good, because he gave an incredibly logical structure to my basically artistic writing, which surprised the examiners! That was my experience. I wasn't happy about it but at that stage, I had kids, I had to finish, and I took the view through my

candidature, its up to me and if I want to finish, I finish, and I'll do it on my own, for me, that was pretty much the case (PhD 27-C).

In this instance, the candidate expected the supervisor to be there for her at the end. However, she demonstrates, along with several other candidates, resilience when resources from a supervisor were not forthcoming. In this account, she looked elsewhere beyond the fine art school for assistance among the wider resources available within the academy. This in itself raises an important point about the academy as a resource for students in a way that is rarely explored in the literature, outside of discussions about cross-disciplinary research.

Conclusions and Discussion

Expectations are the focus of this paper: candidates' expectations at the beginning of a research degree, how those expectations may have impacted on their progress to scholarly practices and their relationship with their supervisors. In Fine Arts the experiences of candidates as practicing artists can drive candidates' expectations about art making in their higher degree, especially as art-making is where most see their future. Candidates expected to reinvigorate, or situate their existing art practice within a wider context of artists. There is a sense among some that they are experiencing isolation in their own environment and do not feel they are where the action is. Few interviewed for this study articulated any expectation that they thought they would become, or take on an identity, of a practicing researcher.

Given the nature of these expectations at the outset, they are ill-prepared for academic research 'requirements' and disjunction occurs very early in candidature as they come to grips with the need to write, explore theory, develop research methods and undertake an analytic 'art journey' of interpreting their art and their practices. Like any traveller in a strange land, candidates often no longer know the rules or language of engagement. They expect a familiar environment, albeit more challenging and rewarding one, with lots of the right connections and resources, and instead face a paradigm shift and a set of institutional expectations and strictures. It is so unexpected that this new situation is immediately fraught with anxiety. One common reaction is to avoid the unfamiliar and seek to place the responsibility for it with the supervisor, setting up a high degree of dependence for everything but the art. A refined set of expectations emerged among candidates that include the supervisor negotiating the system and the language of research for them. Candidates' expectations of what is required to undertake a practice-based higher degree in Fine Art, have the capacity to either inhibit, or enable, their progression, especially at significant development stages.

Hockey (2003) in previous research has noted a tendency among candidates to put off the writing. This study found that expressions of struggle with the unfamiliar were frequently expressed as problems with writing or as insecurities about what to do and how to do, and sensations of disconnectedness and being 'lost'. The land is 'pathless'. Candidates at the time of this study found they had to reinvent themselves as a very different kind of artist. Nonetheless, this study also reveals a proportion of candidates willing to trust this new or unknown territory from the outset and who embrace the challenge. There is anecdotal evidence that this is becoming more the case.

The university's provision of the practice-based art higher degree with accompanying studio space, along with the candidates' commitment to free up their time and responsibilities in their own lives to make more art, may suggest to candidates that the university provides for enrolling

artists a form of patronage, which enables candidates to further their art making, with little thought that research is a creative act itself, or that scholarship as Wisker (2005) points out, is also about ensuring a wealth of personal and cultural experiences. Few candidates talk about scholarship, or note that developing scholarship is a prime function of the supervisors' role and in the nature of the research degree. The word scholarship is rarely offered, theory slightly more so and primarily in relation to 'writing'. We did find strong dissonance between theory or writing and making. Of equal interest and entirely unexpected was that the supervisor rarely had any prominence in the interviews in stories about candidature until candidates were prompted.

Candidates in this study expected the supervisor-candidate relationship to be a relationship between professional equals, commanding mutual respect. However, from their perspectives, they seem not to be very aware of the transitions they were required to make, to become creatively literate by developing the scholarly written skills and use of words alongside their skills to be creatively artistic. This study does not and cannot examine this question from the supervisor perspective. However, it does question the skills of supervisors to enable candidates to make the necessary transition. Further, the supervisors' responsibilities and roles to do this may be stymied if candidates continue to expect supervisors to help them reach only their artistic destination.

How do supervisors cope with the responsibility to develop scholarship when candidates are primarily preoccupied with their artistic journeys and their credentials as artists? As this study shows, candidates' main expectations of their supervisors relate to supervisors' management and procedural responsibilities along with supervisors abilities to be their guides, guiding them safely through what is termed a pathless landscape. This study would agree with Hockey that the tension generated by the clash between the artist and research identity is very difficult to address if expectations are not challenged at the outset, and can lead in turn to a set of skewed expectations that continue to operate through the supervisor-candidate relationship.

Candidates often use the metaphor of a journey to describe the process involved in their candidature. The way that the process is supervised, is a critical point to understanding how the candidate makes, or is encouraged to make, those transitions from their initial expectation that their journey will be limited to an artistic journey to it being a scholarly journey. In feedback supervisors will need to be very aware of the need for the genre of discourse that brings the two realms together, so stabilizing the 'shifting sands'.

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