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Building Visual Artists' Resilience Capabilities: Current Educator Strategies and Methods

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ABSTRACT

Enrolments in higher education programs in the creative and performing arts are increasing in many countries. Yet graduates of these degrees, who enter the broad sector known as the creative industries, face particular challenges in terms of securing long-term and sustainable employment. In addition, creative and performing artists face a range of mental challenges, caused by such factors as: the solitary nature of much creative practice, critical feedback by audiences and gatekeepers, or the general pressures associated with maintaining artistic relevance or integrity. The concepts of resilience and professional wellbeing are therefore highly relevant to those who pursue a career in creative industries, and while there has been an emerging body of work in this area, to date it has focused on the performing arts area (e.g. music, theatre). Hence, in order to expand knowledge relevant to resilience and artists, this paper sets out to explore the extent to which current educators in the Australian context specifically address these issues within higher visual arts curricula; specifically the areas of illustration, design, film and photography. This was achieved via interviews with seventeen current academics working in these areas. The findings propose that higher education providers of programs in the visual arts consider placing a stronger emphasis on the embedded development of resilience and professional wellbeing capacities.

Keywords: Artists, creative industries, professional wellbeing, resilience, visual arts.

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1.0 Introduction

In the international context, enrolments in creative and performing arts programs in higher education are increasing. For example, recent data from the United States shows that degrees in visual and performing arts increased from 30,394 in 1971 to 93,956 in 2011, an increase of over 200% (National Center

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for Education Statistics, 2012). In the period 2004 to 2007, the number of European students undertaking studies in the arts grew by 14% (Eurostat, 2011), while in the United Kingdom, enrolments in creative arts and design increased by 5% from 2008 to 2013 (Universities and Colleges Admissions Service, 2013). In the Australian context, during the 2009 to 2011 period, the total enrolment load in the broad field of the creative and performing arts grew by 11% and at a higher rate than the general average of 9% (Innovative Research Universities, 2013). While enrolments are increasing, the creative industries sector – an area of employment and creative practice centred on the application and commercialization of intellectual property – offers particular challenges in relation to the establishment and maintenance of a sustainable and viable career (Bridgstock, 2011; Zelenko and Bridgstock, 2014). In fact, while the creative industries sector is recognized as integral to the economies of developed and developing nations (Chapain, Clifton, and Comunian, 2013; Flew, 2014; Flew and Cunningham, 2010), it is characterized by freelance, project-based and sporadic employment patterns (Bridgstock, 2011; Mould, Vorley and Liu, 2013). That is, it is characterized by both underemployment and an oversupply of artists and creative workforce capacity (Ashton, 2014; Bridgstock and Carr, 2013; Jeffri, 2004; Menger, 1999).

In the context of the various issues cited above, and other mental challenges as cited in the literature review below (e.g. Jacobs, 2004; Morton, 2012; Nagel, 2009), there is a demonstrated need for artists to display strong resilience capabilities. This includes the capacity to manage and cope with a range of stresses and stressors (Bayles and Orland, 1993; Bennett, 2009). Latekefu et al. (2013: 65) recently continued this theme in arguing that 'the precarious nature of building an independent freelance creative arts practice are factors which require creative arts graduates to be particularly resilient professionals'. The extent to which these various issues are meaningfully addressed in contemporary higher education curricula, as part of the development of professional wellbeing or resilience capabilities and skills, remains elusive however. This is despite the fact that Moyle (2012:14) for example, argues that in terms of performing arts 'there is a clear and increasing recognition of the importance of ensuring that artists are trained in performance psychology to give them the best opportunity to be successful in their careers'. On the other hand, Moyle (2012:14) also contends that in relation to other areas of the arts, such as visual arts, design, journalism and creative writing, there is 'a potential new frontier for performance psychologists to apply their psychological skills'. Hence, this paper seeks to contribute to this area of research by drawing some preliminary and evidence-based findings in relation to the training and preparation of visual artists at a higher education level in Australia.

To do so, a range of tertiary art educators in Australia were invited to participate in a study using semi-structured interviews. These interviews were designed to capture the educator's perspectives on their students' vulnerabilities, resilience, and any current teaching strategies that participants used to build resilience capabilities. A total of 17 interviews were conducted via telephone, skype, email, or in person with each interview recorded and analysed using abductive reasoning. The findings suggest that although educators found students' resilience capabilities to be important for their future, they were not highlighted in the classroom or addressed through more explicit teaching strategies. As previously mentioned, knowledge related to the development of visual art students' resilience through tertiary education is currently limited. This paper seeks to reduce the knowledge gap in this context by firstly reviewing current literature, outlining the parameters of the study's methodology, and then detailing the analysis and findings.

2.0 Literature Review

As previously mentioned, artists are often vulnerable to various career-related issues including both underemployment and oversupply of the creative workforce (Ashton, 2014; Bridgstock and Carr, 2013; Jeffri, 2004; Menger, 1999). Aligned with the employment and career-related issues for creative and performing artists, are the particular stresses and mental challenges many face on an ongoing basis (Burgoyne, Poulin, and Rearden, 1999; Elias and Berg-Cross, 2009; Jacobs, 2004; Morton, 2012; Nagel, 2009). These issues potentially stem from; the solitary nature of practice in many creative areas (e.g. music, visual arts, writing), the physical stressors associated with the performing arts (e.g. dance,

theatre), the critical feedback that various experts and peers present on a frequent basis, as well as the pressures associated with creating and perfecting work for submission to galleries, exhibitions, competitions, current or prospective clients and other key stakeholders who in many ways act as gatekeepers to current and ongoing success (Bain, 2005; Moyle, 2012).

The often isolated and high pressured nature of being an artist is potentially significant to artist vulnerabilities. Indeed, Jacobs (2004: 7) describes how the performing arts, for example, is ‘an industry given to depression, stress, and other mental-health concerns’. Similarly, in relation to theatre specifically, Seton (2004:2) argues that ‘without appropriate preparation and debriefing, actors may prolong addictive, co-dependent and, potentially, destructive habits of the characters that they have embodied’. Recently, Moyle (2012:12) reinforces this theme, highlighting the various ‘self identity issues that can arise’ with performing artists and also the numerous physical and mental health challenges many face on a daily basis.

Given the very personal nature of the act of creativity, many stereotyped references and descriptions of artists have been presented, including the need to be vulnerable, fragile or even pursue the notion of madness in order to achieve true inspiration (Bain, 2005; Bayles and Orland, 1993; Becker, 2014; Dobson, 2011; Edel, 1975; Elias and Berg-Cross, 2009; Moyle, 2012). These are largely anecdotal perceptions or romantic stereotypes (Jung, 2014), which while traceable back to antiquity, received heightened attention during the Romantic movement in literature, where the creative genius admitted to being ‘clinically afflicted’ (Becker, 2014: 19). This perception has continued throughout western history (Bain, 2005) and may, to some extent, subconsciously influence those embarking on a career in the arts and who feel they need to pursue alternative mental processes or states of mind (Dobson, 2011; Moyle, 2012; Rostan, 1998). In fact, in terms of the link between artistic creation and mental illness⁴, Kaufman (2014: xxi) argues that ‘[m]ost people today still accept this connection as a truth’. Becker (2014: 19) also reinforces this dichotomy in contemporary society:

...scientists, accountants, and engineers are expected to display attributes of objectivity, reason, and emotional stability, [while] for poets, writers, and artists the expectations involve manifestations of intuitiveness, a fanciful imagination, sensitivity, temperament, and emotional expressiveness – in short, a manifestation of a kind of madness.

Moyle (2012:13) cites the recent Hollywood film ‘Black Swan’ as an example of this in the performing arts area, where the depiction of the main ballet character with her multitude of psychological issues and psychotic episodes leads her to ‘lose touch with reality and descend into “madness”’. While Moyle (2012:13) also proceeds to point out how this is ‘an unrealistic and full-blown pathological stereotype of a dancer’, ‘Black Swan’ enjoyed a worldwide box-office of over \$300 million (Box Office Mojo, 2014), hence there is significant potential for audiences to have a reinforced perception that art and creativity can, at times, be linked with forms of madness.

With consideration of artist vulnerabilities, it is possible that art graduates could be better equipped with transferrable capabilities – like resilience – to help them successfully move into the creative workforce. Resilience is defined as not only the capability to recover quickly from adversity or challenges, but to do so to such an extent that the individuals produce positive outcomes and thrive under the experienced hardship (Jackson et al., 2007; Adamson et al., 2012). The concept of resilience is explored in depth in the literature in relation to professional practitioners, and in particular those working in education (Hong, 2012; Le Cornu, 2009; Yonezawa, Jones and Singer, 2011). The importance of resilience has also been studied in other fields, including the defence force (Cohn, Hodson, and Crane, 2010; Reivich, Seligman, and McBride, 2011; Simmons and Yoder, 2013), nursing (Dean, 2012; Gray, 2012; Zander, Hutton, and King, 2010), medicine (Collier, 2012; Zwack and Schweitzer, 2013), occupational therapy (Ashby, Ryan, Gray, and James, 2013), policewomen (Chitra and Karunanidhi, 2013), carers (Cherry, Salmon, Dickson, Powell, Sikdar, and Ablett, 2013) and social workers (Kearns and McArdle, 2012; McFadden, Taylor, Campbell, and

⁴ Debates remain in contemporary psychology about whether mental illness is in fact aligned closely with the act of creativity; this is an area that falls outside the scope of this paper. For further detail, see Kaufman (2014).

McQuilkin, 2012). In these various fields, resilience is seen as critical and essential for sustainable professional practice. For example, those working in medicine, nursing and the military are often exposed to violence, injury and trauma (Seton, 2013), hence resilience and other response strategies are a key part of their training and preparation.

On the other hand, there is a limited body of work that specifically explores the concept of resilience as applied to artists, and further, this relatively recent research tends to focus on the performing arts. For example, Wiggins (2011) explores notions of vulnerability, agency and resilience in musicians, Dobson (2011) questions the use of retrospective biographies in classifying musicians with the 'mad genius' trait and associated mental health issues, and Burland and Pitts (2007) cite the anxieties that many first year higher education music students face when placed in a new and often competitive environment, as well as the potential for well-being issues given the significant differences between the learning systems in high school compared to tertiary level. Other authors include Moyle (2013) who references the importance of resilience for those in dance, and Nagel (2009) who cites a series of actions and activities that have the potential to destroy creativity and promote mental distress. Morton (2012) challenges notions of madness and fear in art-making in general, Gaut (2012) contests the perception that 'irrationality' is a requirement for creativity, while Elias and Berg-Cross (2009) evidence higher rates of mental challenges and problems for visual artists.

As part of undertaking interviews with 40 professional musicians in the United Kingdom, Wiggins (2011) identifies the notion of vulnerability as both a positive and negative influence, given it enables both a connection to the core essence and meaning of the music but also exposure to strong criticism from teachers, peers, and audiences. She also cites the frequency of musicians feeling isolated, lonely and even fearful when having to stand independently of their teachers. In a second study focused on musicians, Nagel (2009) refers to the mental challenges caused by such experiences as negative audience reactions and competition judgements and outcomes. Having moved from a career in music performance to psychotherapy, Nagel (2009: 16) reflects on being a piano teacher and the realization that 'I was also in the field of mental health'.

Morton (2012:81-82), in his short paper, also refers to creative writers in history and how many were in the 'grip of the madness of art'. He goes further however and challenges this notion, dispelling the traditional idea of madness and the fear associated with being an artist, re-contextualizing art-making as a process which requires tremendous determination and passion. Further, he cites the need for 'something more down-to-earth. Call it steeliness. Call it persistence. Call it tenacity. Call it resilience'. Moyle (2013) recently continued this focus on the importance of resilience, describing how 'the most successful of performing artists are not immune from disappointment: they have just learnt how to more effectively manage their response. This is called resilience'.

In their interdisciplinary study involving experts from theatre and psychology, Burgoyne et al. (1999) applied grounded theory in analysing 15 interviews with university student actors. A general theme identified was that the blurring of the boundary between the individual and the character was not explained nor were coping strategies taught in any of the students' training. The trainee actors all reported incidents of emotional stress, typically as a result of a director proposing distressing images and/or scenes as a way of bringing forth the character's required emotional state. For example, one female student recounted how a director asked them to imagine their mother 'hanging from a noose' and which she 'cannot erase' (Burgoyne et al. 1999: 161). Hence, Burgoyne et al. (1999: 171) propose that while academics 'may not feel qualified' in this area, acting pedagogy should include an emphasis on how students cope with the blurring of boundaries in order to reduce the potential for mental distress.

In building on the themes established by Burgoyne et al. (1999), Noble (2011) and Seton (2010; 2013) add to the insights into the particular vulnerabilities trainee actors face when working within the discipline. Noble (2011: 14) describes having many conversations with acting students who at certain points have had to play out 'scenes of horrible violence or sexual extremity' yet without sufficient support scaffolds

or training in how to deal with such emotionally stressful experiences. Similarly, Seton (2010:5-6) describes a ten-week period of observation in which he discovered that many of the actors believed that exposure to the concepts of seduction and rape represented 'a metaphor for the necessary struggle to 'make it' in the industry' (Seton 2010:9). In a follow-up study, Seton (2013) cites the potential for actors to not only be exposed to such traumas in their role, but also in simulations where they act as traumatized patients in nursing/medical training for example. Hence, Seton (2013: 27) cites an example of a college student in the United States who after repeated rehearsals and performances of the rape scene in the production 'A Streetcar Named Desire', had to 'spend time in psychiatric care as a consequence of her deep involvement in this role'.

Elias and Berg-Cross (2009) offer a valuable insight into mental health issues for visual artists, in this case a sample of 54 painters at two colleges in the United States. In their study, they posit three models of the fine artist: the 'visionary artist' who is driven to self-express as an outcome of mental health and periods of great darkness, often living an unhealthy lifestyle; the 'self-actualized artist', who creates for personal release (e.g. meditative, outlet for emotions) and for healthy reasons; and the 'commodity model', where art is for customers and about making money, which is neutral in terms of its impact on health and wellbeing. From their survey data, it emerged that most aligned to the visionary model, half of the sample indicated taking depression medication, there were three times as many smokers compared to the national average, one third struggled with alcohol and/or drugs, while all three identified groups were less healthy than the national average. As a result, the authors argue that 'university counselling centres need to be aware of this relationship and reach out to this at-risk population' (Elias and Berg-Cross 2009: 229).

It would seem most conducive for artists to be better equipped for various realities through education, with tools necessary to build up resilience capabilities and reduce their vulnerability to mental challenges in the workforce. Classroom activities in particular provide art students with safer, more controlled environments (Bridgstock, 2013) in which they can develop an awareness of the challenges they may be vulnerable to. Such activities may include classroom discussions about hardships they can encounter in their professions, which may be better received as anecdotes shared by invited guest speakers, or through industry-related mentorship. Social workers note that this exposure to positive role models is important for building 'a positive, resilient professional identity' (Beddoe et al., 2011: 113). Any support and encouragement that comes from a range of networks (including industry, higher education institution and educator relationships, as well as family and peer relationships) has the ability to build resilience capabilities and help students navigate through various stressors and other mental challenges (Collins, 2008; Creech et al., 2008). Networking also helps visual artists to combat isolation, while encouraging new collaborative strategies for marketing and the promotion of art works (Bain, 2005). By acquiring strong, ongoing networks during their education, art students may be able to secure continued employment with nurturing moral support (Creech et al., 2008; Haukka, 2011; Bridgstock, 2013).

In a nursing article, Jackson proposes that 'to demonstrate resilience, one must first encounter adversity' (Jackson et al., 2007: 3). Subsequently, art students may benefit from growing accustomed to potential failures they may experience in their prospective careers. By creating competitive industry simulations in the classroom, students can experience 'win or lose' scenarios that build awareness of work in their industries, and evoke emotional responses for them to reflect upon (Collins, 2008; Duening, 2008; Bennett, 2009). Honest reflection on their experience may help students recognise signs of anxiety, acknowledge the cause of their response, and consider alternate ways of responding to achieve positive outcomes, all in a safe learning environment (Jackson et al., 2007; Collins, 2008; McAllister and McKinnon, 2009). Furthermore, engagement with creative industries may provide more authentic work experience that indirectly builds resilience capabilities and ensures smoother transitioning of students into the workforce. This can be considered a viable option for higher education institutions (Bennett, 2009; Guile, 2009) that 'are struggling to deliver courses within the constraints of budget and time' (Bennett, 2009: 322).

3.0 Methodology

In the context of the limited extant research relevant to visual artists and the concept of resilience, the research question pursued in this study was as follows: to what extent are professional wellbeing and resilience capabilities currently being addressed within higher education visual arts curricula in the Australian context? In light of limited research in the area of illustration, design, film and photography in particular (Moyle, 2012), it was decided that data would be collected from educators who taught across these four disciplines. An interpretivist/constructivist paradigm was adopted and a qualitative research collection method applied to assess participant views on resilience in tertiary art education. A total of 58 relevant Australian educators who had their information publicly available on the internet were contacted via email and invited to participate in the study. Seventeen responded to this invitation and agreed to participate in semi-structured interviews. Given that not all educators responded to the invitation, locations in Australia and genders are not equally represented in the study. Further details can be seen below in Table 1, which displays the participant's role, their area of education, location, gender and experience in academia.

Participant	Participant role	Area of education	Location	Gender	Experience (years)
A	Lecturer, Academic Relations Officer	Fine Art (History and Curatorship)	Queensland	Female	6
B	Senior Lecturer	Film	New South Wales	Male	10
C	Senior Lecturer, Program Convener	Graphic Design	Queensland	Male	30
D	Lecturer	Fine Art, Photography and Film	Victoria	Male	10
E	Lecturer	Film	Australian Capital Territory	Female	10
F	Course Convener, Assistant Professor	Graphic Design, Web Design, Photography, Film, Arts & Design	Australian Capital Territory	Male	12
G	Senior Teaching Fellow, Head of Directing	Film	Queensland	Male	11
H	Senior Lecturer, Course Convener	Fine Art and Photography	New South Wales	Female	15
I	Creative Director, Lecturer	Visual Communication Design	Queensland	Male	8
J	Lecturer, Visual Effects Advisor	Design, Film and Illustration	Victoria	Male	14
K	Lecturer	Design	Western Australia	Female	6
L	Lecturer	Film	Australian Capital Territory	Male	10
M	Lecturer	Film	Victoria	Male	5
N	Lecturer	Design	Queensland	Female	8

O	Lecturer	Design, Illustration and Photography	Victoria	Male	19
P	Lecturer	Design and Illustration	Queensland	Male	8
Q	Lecturer	Photography and Film	Victoria	Female	15

The interview questions were designed to capture educators' perspectives on art student vulnerabilities, resilience and current strategies that built resilience capabilities. A sample of these questions were as follows:

- As an art educator, what does resilience mean to you?
- Is resilience embedded into your own teaching?
- Do you believe that artistic individuals are more, or less vulnerable to risks or failure?

4.0 Data collection and analysis

Interviews were held in person, via telephone or skype for roughly one hour, although eight of the participants responded to the questions by email, which is considered an adequate qualitative data collection method (Creswell, 2003). To document live interviews, participant responses were recorded upon consent and then transcribed for analysis. Abductive reasoning proved to be a beneficial process to analyse the data, given that the phenomena –regarding resilience in visual art higher education– had not yet been well explained (Walton, 2013). This process of data analysis has been described as a sometimes repetitive 'back-and-forth movement' between inductive observation and hypothesis, and deductive movement from hypothesis to implications (Cohen et al., 2000). Once data had been analysed, it was arranged in both narrative and tabulate form, which is presented in the following findings section.

5.0 Findings

When questioned about students' state of vulnerability, nine of 17 interviewees agreed that art students were more vulnerable than students in other sectors. One participant explained,

...if you study in the field of medicine, you'd expect that at the end of that there is a career pathway and that you're following a career pathway simply in choosing medicine. In the arts, there's not (Participant B).

Film students – particularly actors – were considered more vulnerable (Participants F, G). One film educator emphasised that there were 'always' students suffering with 'anxiety spectrum' like bipolar spectrum or Asperger's (Participant L). When determining whether or not interviewees found resilience to be necessary for the development of art students, it can be seen that the majority were in support of this approach, as summarised below in Table 2.

Participant perspectives of resilience	Participant
Need a lot of resilience to apply for creative jobs	A
Fundamental for survival, and for developing skills needed	B, C
Important part of students' professional development	D, H, K, L, O, Q
Critical for students professional development	M
Important and not talked about	G
A 'really' important quality to help students sustain themselves	F, N
Artists seeking to make a living must develop the ability to bounce back	J
Evident in educational institutions and the industries	P
Everyone needs a resilient mind	E
NA	I

Participants were asked to define resilience, and their responses also represented their perspectives on the relevance of resilience for visual art students. For example, resilience was identified by Participant B as value-based and important for artists to withstand the challenge of 'simply trying to demonstrate what we try to do'. Contextualising both successes and failures was seen as an important contribution towards defining resilience (B, G). This was particularly significant to some participants because artists produce work that can have much personal investment (A, G, O). Some interviewees defined resilience as the ability to be inspired by and interpret rejection through reasoning (G, J, L, N), or to adapt (I) and develop a 'thicker skin' to protect them from criticism of their work (G, Q). Other participants had alternate views on what resilience meant for their students. For example, there were two participants who linked resilience with the ability to meet deadlines (L, P). Participant D described resilience as 'inner drive reasoning', which was mostly derived from persistence; 'If one can persist, something always comes, whether it is a personal or professional breakthrough' (Participant D). Perhaps one of the most accurate definitions of resilience was provided by interviewees F and O, who described resilience as not only the ability to cope, but to also succeed where others have failed by going beyond 'those immediate problems and barriers' (F).

Educators were asked to describe the methods in which they fostered resilience in the classroom. Interestingly, four participants mentioned that they had not used the word resilience in the classroom (A, B, G, J), and five other participants described resilience as more implicitly woven into their teaching strategies (D, F, M, N, Q). These teaching strategies often encouraged students to practise taking risks and explore new possibilities, which are also characteristics of creative thinking and problem solving (C, F). For example, Participant F would provide opportunities to solve complex or 'wicked' problems that 'aren't simplistic and narrow in their application' (F). Failure was seen by many participants as an 'excellent teacher' (J) to build resilience capabilities (M, N), as exemplified in the following statement by Participant C:

Failure in itself, though, is something else. Fail, and fail often, and fail quickly, and LEARN from your failures. Then the bits begin to fall into place is inherent in creative endeavours. Learn to accept it, and move on. Understand it is a means to success.

However, despite its value, failure was also described by Participant N as 'something that is really feared' to the point that students struggle to engage with complex problem-solving:

...it really made me think about how much [students] in the course are expected to bring the right answer, to meet the criteria... Then when they are faced with uncertainty they don't know how to respond because they need to bring the right answer (Participant N).

Participant A expanded on this by describing how educators are disempowered, and unable to put students in uncomfortable learning environments that may foster resilience capabilities; 'We have to do everything to boost their morale and make them happy with their experience here'. This educator offered a variety of alternative classroom activities, which were often applied by other educators in an attempt to work around restrictions provided by other teaching strategies (A, G). These activities are outlined in Table 3.

Other classroom activities suggested to build students' resilience capabilities	Participant
Presentations	A, D, E, F, H, O, P
Peer Feedback	A, E, F, J, L, O, P, Q
Project-based Assignments	A, B, D, E, I, J, L, N, P, Q
Group Work	B, C, E, F, H, J, K, L, N, P
Online, Self-paced Training	E, P
Classroom Discussion	B, D, E, G, H, L, M, O, Q
Guest Speakers	A, B, D, F, H, J, K, L, N, O, P

Mentoring Students	A, B, C, D, E, M, N, O, P
Complex Problem Solving	C, D, F, N, O, P
Reflection	F, M

Participant A used classroom presentations as an indirect means to building confidence and also resilience capabilities by ensuring that they ‘have their own voice in the classroom’. Also, most interviewees felt that building awareness in their students through classroom discussion and sharing anecdotes was valuable. For example, Participant G quite often shared his own experience in the industry, highlighting times of failure and introducing the idea of ‘emotional scar tissue’, which is developed through hardship; ‘I think a lot of it is stories that we tell and for me it’s important that they share experience. Just the fact that we say, “Look, this is how brutal it can be”’.

As can be seen in Table 3, guest speakers were also recommended by many interviewees as an effective way of building up students’ resilience capabilities. According to two of the participants, students can relate better to anecdotes shared by invited guest speakers who had graduated from the same course (H, L). Mentoring students was considered very effective, however participants had mixed views on whether or not it is something that should be incorporated into higher education curricula (B, G, O) or sought by students as a more organic development (D, I, N). Also, it can be seen in Table 4 below that eight of the 17 interviewees felt that in-class industry simulations were also important (specifically, invaluable or effective) for building resilience capabilities in their students. For example, Participant C described in-house design studios as an important and an effective way for industry simulations to help students engage with their community.

Participant perspectives on industry simulations	Participant
Unsure	B
Difficult to implement and/or manage (however, can be effective)	A, F, G, L, P
Invaluable	C, M, N
Effective	D, I, J, Q, K
Depends on students	E
Effective however real industry situations are preferable	O
NA	H

Participant C was also very supportive of simulations that potentially expose students to failure and hence build on their resilience capabilities. However, there were some interviewees who were unsure of the use of industry simulations to foster resilience in art students; ‘It can be hard to arrange an experience that is truly embedded in industry with real risks and real outcomes for even a moderate body of students’ (Participant O). Participant G agreed that teaching students to proactively respond to both success and failure is very important, and explained how his students are required to participate in graduate film competitions, where some students have the potential to fail. Participant F at first expressed doubt that in-class industry simulations could be ethically engineered into ‘pedagogical value’. This opinion was changed however after the educator recalled student-driven exhibition projects that are plentiful in opportunities to foster resilience; ‘It’s such a brilliant, authentic project... People do really need resilience. It never goes to plan and they have to persevere and they have to negotiate through all of these difficult circumstances’ (Participant F). Despite the value of such industry simulations, it was noted that the benefits from any hardship do require time and reflection to be truly appreciated (F, M). Participants were also asked whether or not industry engagements like networking were an important method for building resilience capabilities in students. These responses are summarised below in Table 5.

Table 5. Participant perspectives on industry engagements

Participant perspectives on industry engagements	Participant
Networking events are effective for building resilience capabilities	B, C, D, F, H, J, K, M, N, Q
Networking events are not effective for building resilience capabilities	E, G
Networking events are effective but difficult to implement	A, I, L, O, P
Internships are effective for building resilience capabilities	H, K, M, N, P
Internships are not effective for building resilience capabilities	G
Internships are effective but difficult to implement	A, F, I, L, O
Internships were not mentioned by participant	B, C, D, E, J, Q
Other industry engagement suggested to build students' resilience capabilities	
Study tours	F, H,
Industry mentors	A, D, I, J, Q
Field trips	A, H, N, P

By drawing from the data presented in Table 5, it can be seen that the majority of the 17 participants found networking to be an effective teaching strategy, although some participants did not recognise them as a priority (O, P, D) over practice (D). More 'authentic' industry engagements (for example, field trips and internships) were also viewed as ideal for preparing students for the transition into their prospective workplaces. However, caution was recommended given that interns may be vulnerable to overly challenging tasks (I) and who may be taken advantage of and overworked (M). Participant L questioned whether or not vocational training was the responsibility of higher education institutions:

The industry has always complained about graduates not being 'work-ready' and generally what they mean is graduates aren't quite prepared for the intensity of the work. I don't really think it's the job of universities to teach that (Participant L).

This may be why many other participants did not mention internships or other work experience as a way to build students' resilience capabilities, as seen specifically in Table 5.

6.0 Discussion

While it is important to acknowledge that the data represents a small group of academics from one country only, the findings provide a basis by which to respond to the overarching research question driving this study. That is, in terms of the extent to which professional wellbeing and resilience capabilities are currently being addressed within higher education visual arts curricula in the Australian context, the analysis here proposes that it is only being addressed to a limited extent. It can be observed from the data collected that that the word resilience was not overly familiar, or used explicitly by higher visual art educators who participated in the study. Although educators commonly used classroom activities to prepare their students for employment, there were mixed opinions regarding in-class industry simulations and industry engagements. Also, there was limited referral to reflection as a teaching strategy to build resilience capabilities, despite emphasis on its effectiveness in literature (Collins, 2008; McAllister and McKinnon, 2009). This suggests that perhaps higher visual art educators have not considered the spectrum of possible resilience-building education methods, and that there may be potential for the implementation of additional techniques to foster resilience. At one level this represents a concerning finding, given that in the global context, and as evidenced in this paper's introduction, the sector to which creative and performance students graduate is fraught with challenges, including an oversupply of workforce capacity, changing practices and employment patterns, as well as the need for considerable autonomy and self-management for a viable and sustainable career (Ashton, 2014; Bridgstock and Carr, 2013; Jeffri, 2004; Menger, 1999). Further complicating these broader career patterns and idiosyncrasies are the particular mental and physical challenges that artists will potentially face during their lifetime, and which will require that they display a range of attributes and skills relevant to long-term professional wellbeing, including resilience (Latekefu et al. 2013; Moyle 2013).

At the same time, it could be that some course designers and academics involved in visual arts programs believe that capacities for resilience and professional wellbeing are progressively developed as each individual artist gains confidence and skill in their chosen discipline. This may explain why five participants (D, F, M, N, Q) described resilience as implicitly woven into their education. Thirdly, as mentioned by one participant (A), it is likely that the majority of academics are not qualified in performance psychology and/or career management strategies hence do not feel comfortable broaching such issues (Burgoyne et al. 1999), nor do they have the resources and/or time to work across disciplines with psychology or sports science for example in developing and delivering interdisciplinary curricula. Finally, the evidence provided by one study participant (A) suggests that some academics may feel that they are expected to maintain their students' sense of comfort and happiness. This may hinder any development of resilience in their students given their noted 'fear' and avoidance of failure – the very aspect the literature describes as necessary to build resilience capabilities (Jackson et al., 2007; Duening, 2008). Nevertheless, the common perceptions associated with pursuing a career in the arts, including connotations of 'madness' (e.g. Gaut 2012; Morton, 2012), suggests that it is perhaps time for higher education providers to consider further preparation of art students. Greater emphasis on equipping students with resilience may be what is necessary to respond to a highly challenging, complex and changing career path (e.g. Bridgstock, 2011; Zelenko and Bridgstock, 2014; Menger, 1999; Throsby, 2008).

7.0 Conclusion and future directions

The findings of this research, amidst the broader context of the role and place of artists in society, proposes that there are a range of complicating factors and issues of relevance when considering the future focus of higher education programs in the visual arts. There are not only clear implications of the need for further research in terms of the particular health issues and challenges artists currently face, but this is particularly so for those fields beyond the performing arts, with the latter receiving most – albeit limited – research attention to date. Given that this study's sample size is small and limited to interviews, it can be assumed that the gathered data will only offer insights that the participants chose to report (Cresswell, 2003) and so should not be generalised. There is great potential for future research to expand on these findings. Future research might include new studies involving a wide range of creative practitioners and their methods for coping with the stresses of a creative profession that may be implemented into tertiary teaching strategies. Given the size and growth of the global tertiary education sector, there are also clear implications for governments to consider their policy settings for university education that include transferrable capabilities more closely, such as resilience. Future collaborative research may also involve academics from creative/performing arts, psychology and medicine to further explore education strategies that could better equip artists with resilience to combat mental health issues and challenges they are likely to face. Ultimately, this paper proposes that there is significant potential for new approaches to designing, managing and evaluating higher education curricula in creative and performing arts fields, with an emphasis on equipping every graduate with the necessary skills that supports sustainable professional wellbeing.

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