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Higher degree research candidates' initial expectations in fine art

Abstract:

A range of research studies in the past decade have yielded a much fuller understanding of the nature of higher degree research candidature, student experiences and the changes in this population. Nonetheless candidate attrition continues to be a source of concern and there is still much territory to explore in connection with barriers to progress and their successful resolution. One aspect that is rarely explored is research candidates' initial expectations at masters and doctoral level. Drawing on interviews with fine art masters and doctoral level candidates, this paper explores candidates' recollections of their initial expectations of candidature in a practice-based discipline, and any 'mismatch' or incongruence between their expectations and academic requirements. We found initial expectations clustered under two main areas: expectations about the research degree and expectations about the institutional environment. Suggestions for supervision practice are presented from the findings.

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Introduction

The early twenty-first century is yielding a range of new findings in relation to doctoral candidates. One of these, particularly in the Australian context, is 'diversity'. The candidate population comes from a wide range of backgrounds, and increasingly the group is female, part time and older (Pearson et al. 2011). Along with a growth in doctoral degree types, assumptions are being challenged in relation to workplace destinations (Edwards, Bexley and Richardson 2010), pathways into higher degrees (Kiley 2011), and the extent of differences in candidate learning characteristics (Cantwell et al. 2012a, 2012b). Supervisory conversations around doctorates are being called on increasingly to reflect this heterogeneity (Hammond et al. 2010).

While the production of the thesis, and the processes this involves at masters and doctoral level, continues to be the dominant theme in the supervision literature, other researchers (Gopaul 2011, McAlpine et al. 2012, Pearson et al 2011) draw attention to the existence of influences outside of project and process that impact on the research journey and its successful completion and which, if acknowledged, may help to 'optimize students' learning and development' (Gopaul 2011: 13). These influences range from personal goals and expectations through to lived experiences and responsibilities beyond the academy. As researchers seeking information on how to improve supervision, we were particularly struck by the relatively few mentions in the literature of the expectations that candidates bring to early stages of candidature, compared to what is formally expected of them by the institution.

Lack of clarity between candidate and academic expectations, (McAlpine & Amundsen 2009) and candidate expectations and program (Hoskins & Goldberg 2005), can produce problems that increase the risk of attrition (see also Gardner 2009a, 2009b, Manathunga 2005). Drawing on interviews with fine art doctoral and masters by research candidates about their experiences of candidature in a practice-based discipline, this paper focuses on their recall of their expectations entering the degree, and if they experienced 'mismatch' of any kind.

Literature review

It is doctoral education that dominates the literature on supervision. Doctoral education is a process of development and learning that is much broader than the production of a research outcome (Kandiko and Kinchin 2012) and there is now growing recognition of a need to develop a model for doctoral education and supervision that incorporates learning, intellectual practice, scholarly expertise, technique and contextual expertise as well as attitudinal and personal change (Evans 2011, Halse & Malfroy 2010, Kiley & Wisker 2009, Li & Seale 2007, Maxwell & Smyth 2011, Mowbray & Halse 2010, Trafford & Leshem 2009, Wellington 2012). As Barnacle (2005) and Dall'Alba and Barnacle (2007) explain, 'becoming' doctoral is about integration of knowledge, action and being. The doctoral journey also has dimensions that encompass the emotional and spiritual experiences of the candidate (Dovona-Ope 2008: 29).

Acceptance of this model, however, would require some significant changes in the culture of supervision. Sweitzer (2009), who explores identity formation and the influence of relationships both inside and outside the academy, recognizes most doctoral programs fail to acknowledge students' responsibilities outside the doctorate and any resulting conflict that is experienced. Gardner (2009b: 109) for example found in one institution that lack of success was attributed by faculty to student weaknesses, and that between students and faculty there were substantial differences in understandings of causes of attrition including those related to students' personal problems. She argues that 'without precise understandings of why attrition occurs, faculty may inadvertently pass along misunderstandings not only among themselves but also to their students.' McAlpine et al. (2012) go further and say that when candidates' personal expectations and experiences are marginalised that this amounts to a culture of neglect within the academy. Good advising and good relationships are widely recognised as sources of candidate satisfaction and positive doctoral outcomes. Yet there are also many cases reported where expectations of social connection and supervisor responsiveness are not met (for example see Hoskins and Goldberg 2005, McAlpine et al. 2012, Pearson 2012). McMichael (1992) argued from a study of 22 supervisors and their students the importance of both parties clarifying aims, needs and expectations early in the program and the primacy of the supervisor in facilitating this.

McCormack (2004) identified gaps between student and institutional understandings of postgraduate research that were wide and persistent. Gaps are also indicated in findings by Brew (2001) and Meyer, Shanahan and Laugksch (2005). McCormack (2004) looked at the experiences of three students in depth and the importance of supervisors in assisting candidates to negotiate misconceptions and differences in understandings about research initially and as part of an ongoing process. Graduate students are not necessarily aware of the academic value system and for some it is a struggle to match what the academy requires of them with their own values and expectations (Nyquist, Manning & Wulff 1999). Nyquist et al. found that where students' values and expectations meshed with demands of the academy, these were readily internalized with positive learning experiences. In contrast, they observed negative or disabling tensions that impeded candidacy among students unable to resolve inconsistencies. They theorize 'unresolved expectations' as students experiencing difficulties within a student-institution relationship and therefore, they argue, resolution is both a student and institution responsibility.

Expectations about program, coursework, and policies also play a significant role in student persistence. Hoskins and Goldberg (2005) found that when expectations were met, few students commented or noted them. However when unexpected events or changes took place, particularly in a series, students tended to question if there was a mismatch between their goals and the selected program. They defined *academic match* as 'the correspondence between (a) student goals and reasons for pursuing the degree and (b) the program focus and the curriculum'. *Academic mismatch* is defined as an incongruity between 'what doctoral candidates wanted from the program and what they thought the program was preparing them to do' (Hoskins & Goldberg 2005: 183).

One area of academic mismatch in the study of visual arts doctoral students is manifest in the research of Allen-Collinson (2005) and Hockey (2003). A practice-based research paradigm requires candidates to engage in a dialogue between their art-making practices and their conceptual thinking about art as research, and yet candidates tend to be more familiar with the expectations of art-making and less with the academic expectations associated with doctoral study. A common site of tension surrounding artistic practice is often understood as a candidate's capacity to integrate their artistic practices into their research practices (Allen-Collinson 2005, Hockey 2003). Belluigi (2009) attributes this tension to an imbalance between creativity and critical thinking, explained as candidates' alienation from their desires and a gap between the 'practiced' and 'espoused' curriculum. In practice, Hockey (2003, 2007) and Simmons et al. (2008) found that visual arts candidates generally struggled to address unfamiliar academic requirements. One common reaction to this dilemma among candidates was to avoid the unfamiliar and seek to place the responsibility for it with the supervisor, setting up a high degree of dependence on the supervisor (Simmons et al 2008).

Hockey (2007) linked unrealistic or unresolved expectations with problematic transitions into scholarly practices. In addition, he identified that tensions generated by ill matching expectations became all the more difficult to address if not dealt with at the outset. Visual arts researchers strongly argue that the ability of visual arts candidates to resolve various struggles between art-making and research and between written and visual languages, is fundamental to both the transition to fine art scholarship (Allen-Collinson 2005, Hockey 2003), and to research practice (Macleod & Holdridge 2005, Makela 2007, Prentice 2000, Pritchard, Heatly & Trigwell 2005, Sullivan 2010).

Unresolved expectations have been flagged as a 'warning sign' of students at-risk of not completing their degree (Manathunga 2005). Hair (2006:10) argues that there is a need to make 'explicit the initial expectations of PhD student and supervisor' at an early stage in candidature especially as this is rare. With a small group of supervisors and students in the UK he evaluated an inventory of expectations ('Superqual') and this included interviews with supervisors to identify differences or similarities in expectations across institutional and supervisory 'functions'. The latter included reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy. Few differences were found between supervisors and students, although differences in expectations relating to 'autonomy' were identified as particularly interesting given the instrument had been modified to include such a characteristic as particular to doctoral level study. He also found that the supervisors involved were generally supportive of determining expectations using such an instrument.

Academic mismatch can be reduced with a comprehensive doctoral orientation, handbook, and effective faculty advising and mentoring (Bair & Haworth 2004). A strong doctoral orientation not only outlines program processes, procedures, and academic expectations, but also introduces students to the academic culture of higher education (Wasburn-Moses 2008).

Drawing on interviews with fine art doctoral and masters by research candidates about their initial expectations of candidature in a practice-based discipline, this paper focuses on their recall of their expectations entering the degree to determine evidence of ‘mismatch’ or incongruence between their expectations and academic requirements. From this, suggestions for supervision practice are provided.

Methodology

This paper uses data collected in an exploratory study of the acquisition and development of research skills by fine art research students (candidates hereafter) which sought to identify how candidates approached the dual requirements of a written (exegesis) and an exhibition component in the ‘thesis’. Candidates were recruited from masters (MFA) and doctoral programs (PhD) in two Australian universities (in different states) comprising nine enrolled masters candidates, nine enrolled doctoral candidates and ten completed doctoral candidates (n=28). Nineteen informants were female. Not all candidates had graduated with an initial fine arts degree, some having academic backgrounds in social sciences, humanities, and health. Five were immigrants with fine art degrees from their country of origin. Each informant was assigned a pseudonym and identified by ‘MFA’ as masters degree or ‘PhD’ as doctoral degree. Status was indicated as either ‘C’ (enrolled candidate) or ‘G’ (graduate).

The key areas of interest for the researchers were: how candidates deal with challenges; their understanding of research; their experiences of supervision and feedback; knowledge of examiner requirements; and personal aspirations. The informants were also asked directly about their expectations upon entering the degree. This paper draws out that particular strand and considers their responses in the context of the broader story of candidature at the time of interview.

The in-depth interviews were conducted by telephone by an academic in fine art who was also a practising artist, with another researcher in attendance to monitor recording and to draw the interviewer’s attention to interesting points that needed further exploration. Interviews ranged in duration from 45 to 60 minutes. The interviewers probed in particular for descriptions of learning and an understanding of what was required to achieve a thesis.

The interviews were fully transcribed then entered into *QSR NVivo 7.0*. The text was initially analysed by question and case features, then explored for emergent themes. The three broad categories and seven themes that emerged in connection with candidate expectations are presented below.

Findings

Informants’ recollections of their initial expectations tended to fall into two broad categories: expectations about the research degree, and expectations about the institution. We did not find distinctive differences in initial expectations by degree type among informants, but did find that expectations reflected whether the informant

was a) focused on art-making or b) focused on undertaking research. These expectations are aligned with elements of academic match and mismatch as described by Hoskins and Goldberg (2005).

Common trends in expectations expressed by informants across these groups were associated with adjusting to change and dealing with the challenges connected with their commitment to topic, and their suitability of existing technical and writing skills. The focus of this article, however, is to highlight differences in expectations between the groups.

1a) Expectations about the research degree – with a focus on art-making

One trend in the data was that informants differed in their expectations of the extent to which the degree would provide them with freedom to grow their art. These expectations implied that the university would offer an invaluable form of patronage to further candidates' art practices, and that it was the supervisor's role to provide introductions to galleries, curators, art critics, and to help them into the arts industry.

Several informants saw their candidature as an excellent opportunity to improve or change their practice, to explore new directions and inject new rigour into their art-making.

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. (Dianne, MFA C)

The sense of unfettered freedom to pursue one's own art agenda within the degree is due in part, says one informant, to open-ended guidelines. Hockey (2003, 2007) identifies artistic freedom as being an important indicator of creative identity. That is, to make art is crucial to sustaining and validating the creative self. An artist is likely to identify with being (or becoming) a successful, professional and practicing artist:

[I was] looking forward to time to concentrate on my own work, a freedom from the needs and goals of others, either within family relations or within the workplace... Part of starting the PhD was going through realignment in my life. (Gina, PhD G)

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. (Evelyn, MFA C)

Regarding employment prospects, Penny's expectation epitomizes the strong orientation among candidates to become autonomous artists within a wider network of practising artists, by gaining:

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. (Penny, MFA C)

By comparison, expectations among those informants oriented towards research outcomes straddle both art practice and academic employment potentials.

In relation to the nature and magnitude of the move from undergraduate to a research degree there was a problem with initial expectations because they rarely reflected the academic reality of a research degree and the academic transformation required. Most extrapolated from their previous experience of study or their art practice. Such an over-developed expectation to make art can place candidates at variance with the research culture of the institution.

1b) Expectations about the research degree – with a focus on undertaking research

At a research task level, the research focus was relatively underdeveloped in informants' initial expectations. Very few informants nominated the expectation 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). However, this is evident from a strong expectation among a few to be involved more widely within the academic community beyond the degree commitments. One PhD graduate said she did expect: 'an opportunity to push my own practice ... and to extend a continuing interest in a research topic area.' (Gina, PhD G)

Robyn was one of few who came to the degree with a more explicitly formed expectation of the connection between research and art-making that comprised a more 'in-depth' outcome: 'I became very interested in a more academic approach to art-making ... I assumed that it would bring a higher level of rigour to my work' (Robyn, MFA C)

As a way to deal with her research, Robyn sought to experiment, provoke criticism and let go of old thinking. In this sense, she appears open to the early steps toward becoming an independent scholar, nonetheless in her story her art practice remained foregrounded and she did not indicate any expectation of a further step, namely, that her project would or could contribute to knowledge.

Another doctoral candidate just wanted to soak up the learning process:

I felt that I really owed it to myself to do some original work ... My intentions were to involve myself in the research and be quite open ... and see where they went. (Ken, PhD C)

In the following quote, however, Richard makes the connection that few do at the onset of candidacy, between his art practice and his research:

I expected to engage with a serious challenge, to learn, to explore, to come out with new experiences, and with an expanded knowledge. I suppose it was a body of work ... [this] proved to be quite a beneficial method of explaining my own practice. (Richard, PhD G)

However, he interprets 'expanded knowledge' as *his* personal knowledge, rather than his contribution towards disciplinary knowledge. Silences can be informative, and it is notable that the desire to become an academic researcher was not specified as a personal goal by any informant.

Regarding expectations about employment prospects, Anna is typical of a number of candidates in this study who sought to develop a duality of academic and community commitment through their degree:

I did the PhD to continue my art practice ... that I will somehow get some kind of start in a gallery (and to) continue lecturing in fine art, which would enable me to continue my art practice, and be up to date with what is happening in contemporary art. (Anna, PhD G)

Whereas her first expectation of the degree was to develop her art practice, she also expects additional benefits to her art practice to be derived from a continuing involvement in the institution via employment.

2a) Expectations about the institution – with a focus on art-making

Expectations of artistic freedom were associated with expectations about being included in a supportive community of like-minded people. This theme encompassed expectations of an attractive environment for advancing art practices, support from supervisors, and candidates' participation in that community. This could include the chance to reignite and refocus their practice by participating in a larger art project, or by revisiting and expanding a particular interest.

I was hoping to make art work beyond my present level and on projects that I was initiating ... [I also expected to] apply rigour in an institution environment, through examination of my own practice and through peers and supervisory input. (Brody, MFA C)

Candidates with expectations of freedom to grow their art entered candidature with excitement and optimism. Based on previous experience of undergraduate art studies, one PhD candidate expected 'stimulation' 'enrichment' and

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. (Pat, PhD C)

In Australia very able undergraduate students can opt to do an Honours year that allows them to engage more intensively on a project of their choice and success in this is used as an entry qualification for a higher degree. While Pat expected continuity or a similar culture to that which she had experienced in her Honours year, she received quite a shock when she felt isolation:

I found the shift from doing Honours to doing a PhD really quite tough. I felt quite isolated; it was a much lonelier journey than the way Honours had been conducted: there was much more a feeling of a team effort ... Suddenly, I found myself in my studio ... I was sitting there on my own, going 'Whoa, here I am! What do I do now?' ... I really was on my own. (Pat, PhD C)

The informants with strong expectations relating to art-making indicated that they expected supervisors to take a hands-on role in relation to 'management' of their candidature:

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 ... I was hoping that they would help me conceptually. (Rose, PhD G)

Although informants expected freedom and independence to grow their art, they also expected they could depend on their supervisors to manage the procedural requirements of candidature. With few exceptions, expectations were excessively one dimensional: to increase and validate one's art practice. While 'cutting edge' approaches to an ongoing art practice are viewed as essential to creative arts academic practice, several of these candidates did not demonstrate they understood what was expected of them for the degree. Hence, they looked more to supervisors to scaffold them through the degree requirements, and this in turn added a further layer of tension.

2b) Expectations about the institution – with a focus on undertaking research

A more clearly articulated expectation about the supervision relationship is expressed by informants who held a strong research expectation. One graduate in the study cautioned on the basis of his own initial expectations and supervision experience that:

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 the 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. The student shouldn't expect supervisors to tell them what to do. (Richard, PhD G)

Although many of these informants had positive experiences of supervision, Jayne, a doctoral candidate, talked about her problematic supervisor-candidate relationship in terms of her understanding of what the supervisor should be doing early in candidature. Jane's reflection suggests that she had taken the blame herself rather than perceiving the problem as structural. As a result, she made a plea for a clear orientation about roles and understandings in induction:

I don't know, I may have trodden on toes or threatened someone without meaning to... I think inadvertently, I seemed to have caused problems there, and so in the end with great difficulty I had to make a change ... One of the big problems I think is the orientation into what it is to be a post-grad and what is available for post-grads and what is expected of you. (Jayne, PhD G)

In the following account, Thomas explains how he came to understand what was required to be the autonomous candidate and how this conflicted with his expectations of where the degree would lead:

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. (Thomas, PhD G)

However, another informant felt the autonomy and freedom he had sought in order to explore new dimensions to art practice through a research degree was compromised by the pressure from what he understood to be 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'. (David, PhD G)

Whereas Allen-Collinson (2005) and Hockey (2007, 2003) both identified inhibitors to progress including candidates who feared that research would undermine the credibility of their artistic practice, the above candidate perceived academic culture as restricting both his art and research practices.

A small number of informants expected other very specific opportunities to participate in the wider academic and artistic communities. They nominate wider responsibilities of supervisors, beyond research project supervision. Anna, for example, expected her supervisor 'should':

introduce the candidate to the wider scientific or artistic community to make them basically, to understand what it's 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. (Anna, PhD G)

Jayne expected to contribute to her department's teaching program but experienced exclusion:

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. (Jayne, PhD C)

Conclusions and Discussion

While research students might receive a clear indication of what they are obliged to do as candidates in their institution through induction processes, there is little evidence that much attention is paid to what they bring into candidature from their personal sphere or in terms of expectations, or any indication of them fully

understanding those obligations. Indeed, few studies directly address the need to manage candidate expectations either individually or institutionally with a view to minimizing candidature problems. A notable exception is Hair's (2006) application of the Superqual inventory to candidate and supervisor expectations with a view to identifying differences. Given the growing diversity in the doctoral population and the range of new degrees, a more explicit focus on what candidates expect is warranted.

This paper reports on a study of practice-based research higher degree candidates' experiences in fine art at Masters and PhD level. One goal of the study was to identify the scope of the initial expectations that students had and to determine evidence of any incongruence between their expectations and the academic requirements.

In earlier work on visual arts doctorates, Hockey (2003, 2007) and others (Allen-Collinson 2005, Belluigi 2009) had identified that there was evidence of a mismatch between the intentions of the candidate and the academy. Moreover, more generally, candidate conceptions of the PhD and supervisors conceptions of the PhD have also been found to be very different (for example, Meyer et al 2005).

When we scoped initial expectations of our informants we found they separated into two specific categories: 1) about the degree and, 2) about the institution. Expectations within each category were further separated by: a) expectations about art practices, as a focus on artistic professional development, in that the candidates' desired to make art and grow their art practice both personally and professionally; and b) about undertaking research, as a focus on research in that candidates sought more in depth outcomes, more specifically to gain breadth and depth in academic activity. Typically candidates saw doing a research degree as doing 'more' academic work.

For the majority of informants becoming a researcher was not identified as an initial expectation, or at least it was not one they remembered as important. They all recalled how much it meant to them to gain the opportunity to undertake art and be challenged as artists. The candidate expectations listed above did not match the reality of completing a practice-based research degree – the very structure of which emphasises research and scholarship with art-making as an integral part. It is worth noting that three PhD graduates Jayne, Richard and Anna, as a result of their varying experiences, identified benefit in clarifying expectations about this, as well as the central role the supervisor can play to assist candidates to see how they fit into, and contribute more broadly, in a research culture and community.

A limitation of this study is that the data are based on recollection, and we do not have matched interviews with candidates and supervisors, nor can we track expectations and how they change (although we do draw on candidates and graduates). Even so we found the phenomenon of early expectation was instrumental in shaping candidate experience of the research task and that candidates made links between later concerns and difficulties to their initial expectations.

On the basis of this evidence and in concert with other researchers (for example Gardener 2009a, McAlpine et al. 2012) we argue there is a need to take a wider, or 'whole candidate' approach to pedagogy, including the need to identify and address gaps in those expectations they bring to candidature (Hair 2006). In fine art, it is also clear that supervisors need to acknowledge the tensions candidates experience as a

result of expectations about art-making which this paper and others have demonstrated (Hockey 2003, 2007).

In the literature both supervisors and candidates have been shown to attribute serious difficulties to 'personal factors', and also nominate institution and 'fit' factors (Gardner 2009a). What stood out in our study was that candidates also tended to blame themselves, especially in difficulties experienced with the exegesis or supervision. As McAlpine et al. (2012) have found, candidates' practices of self-blame may be responses to systematic flaws in education and management. The presence of negative responses or disabling tensions among candidates (whether they originate from a mismatch of expectations or from structural sources within the academy) is a signal for supervisor engagement, not denial. There are strong grounds to argue that supervisors should take a more proactive role not only in identifying expectations but in managing the environment to reduce potential for a demarcated or dislocated experience. To address the potential for anxiety early in candidature some researchers have gone so far as to argue at an institutional level that candidates draw on, or be assigned counsellors in acknowledgement of the stresses reported (Pearson 2012).

Higher degree research represents a process of development and learning, but it appears that very often the pedagogy tends toward an 'empty vessel' theory of learning (Kandiko & Kinchin 2012) when in fact candidates bring a great deal from their own background and broader experiences into candidature, including in the case of fine art research candidates their experiences as artists. Fine art candidates as a group are likely to experience mismatch in expectations especially during the processes of their integrating art-making practices into a research practice. As Hockey's research demonstrates (2007), if supervisors know this then they can draw attention to possible problems and offer strategies that candidates can use to resolve mismatch.

The work reported here suggests the need for rethinking the role of supervision, seeing it as a holistically-oriented process that acknowledges 'the outside', specifically candidate expectations, and aims to support them through change as well as in the task. It is as much about who candidates are when they arrive, as the academics they will become.

In conclusion, two implications for supervision practice are evident from the findings. They are the need for attention to (i) how supervisors manage or assist candidates to resolve any limitations to candidacy that are likely to result from ill-informed or predisposed expectations, and (ii) how supervisors encourage or create opportunities for learning and understanding about how candidates can fit in, and contribute to, academic structures and academic community. Ill-conceived expectations and an underdeveloped understanding of art as research among fine art candidates can contribute very early to a sense of isolation and self-doubt, and as Hockey (2007) explains, such things become more difficult to address if not dealt with at the outset.

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