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Manifesting Resilience in the Secondary School: An Investigation of the Relationship Dynamic in Visual Arts Classrooms

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Abstract

Responding to the literature on positive adaptability, we investigated caring relationships as they manifest as protective processes in the Visual Arts classroom. Caring relationships between teachers and their students have been isolated as one of three protective factors which help promote resilience and thus positive adaptability. The Visual Arts is one of many constructs that exists as a means of understanding the process of positive adaptability, which includes emotional intelligence, intrapersonal intelligence and resilience. The study examined protective processes surrounding teacher/student relationships in the Visual Arts classroom, through a balance of both intuitive and rational inquiry. Tensions between opposites can be seen throughout the

conceptual layers of the research, from the epistemology of integral consciousness and methodology of narrative inquiry through to the subject of resilience. Integral thinking was utilised as a sustained navigational tool throughout the study and such thinking was also found to be a core skill in generating caring relationships in Visual Art classrooms.

Orientation

The research on the benefits of the Visual Arts vigorous and multiplying. The advantages of an education that is rich in Arts experiences range from academic achievement, social accomplishment, emotional development and economic implications (Cutcher, 2013). A range of research accounts reported in the literature from early childhood through to adulthood, support the value of an education in the Arts and through the Arts (Bamford, 2006; Catterall, 2009; Davis, 2012; Deasy, 2002; Ewing, 2010; Gadsen, 2008; Gibson & Ewing, 2011; Jensen, 2001; McArdle & Bolt, 2013; McCarthy, et al., 2009; PriceWaterhouseCoopers, 2010; Robinson, 2006; Vaughn, et al., Winner et al., 2013). In the context of the research reported in this paper, the matter of emotional development is most pertinent. There is something unique about the Visual Arts classroom; the learning dynamic is one where inquiry, creativity, collaboration, critique and compassion are developed in an atmosphere of captivation, play and pleasure in learning (McCarthy, et al., 2009). These social and emotional qualities are becoming increasingly necessary in 21st century life, and increasingly rare in education, due the growth of standardised testing and the concomitant narrowing of the curriculum (Cutcher, 2013). Yet as this study explored, the Visual Arts classroom is one place in the school where students' capacity for resilience can be actively nurtured through constructive relationships in a climate of creative endeavour and caring interactions.

The ability to withstand or adapt positively to change is a necessary tool to navigate the world in which we live. Many constructs exist as a means of understanding the process of positive adaptability, such as emotional intelligence, intrapersonal intelligence and resilience. The concept of resilience has gained importance in schools as current research suggests that resilience can be fostered as a trait in every child (Knight, 2007). The Visual Arts have also proven to be a successful vehicle to promote resilience (Arts Education Partnership, 2004; Benard, 1997; Corley, 2010; Gasman & Anderson-Thompkins, 2003; Randall, 1997). Caring relationships particularly between teachers and their students have been isolated as one of three protective factors which help promote resilience and thus positive adaptability (Benard, 1997).

Although creativity has increasingly been recognised in the literature by many arts-based researchers (Arts Education Partnership, 2004; Barone, 1983; Corley, 2010; Cutcher 2004; Davis, 2008; Eisner, 1994; Gidley, 2008; McCarthy, Ondaatje, Zakaras, & Brooks, 2004), and

popularised in education circles most notably by Robinson & Aronica (2009), it is still marginalised in a world which supports logical linear thinking. Essentially creative thinking is a necessary step toward integral thinking (Gidley, 2008, 2006), as it provides the necessary opposite for interaction and thus balance. The position taken in the building of this research has been one inclusive of both subjective and objective processes. That is, intuitive, serendipitous and synchronous processes have been valued alongside rigorous collation and acknowledgement of the relevant current literature. We place this research within an epistemology of integral consciousness, one that embodies transcendence through integral thinking.

Contemporary definitions of resilience also embrace the transcendence of dualism through models integrating protective and promoting pathways. New models value these pathways and advocate resilience as an ever evolving combination of risk competence and protective factors (Brown et al., 2010; Kia-Keating, Dowdy, Morgan, & Noam, 2011; Toland & Carrigan, 2011). The concept of resilience has become increasingly important over the last decade (Knight, 2007), and is currently isolated throughout the literature as an essential tool to navigate the complexities of the contemporary world (Brown et al, 2010; Kruger & Prinsloo, 2008). Protective processes are now the new frontier in resilience research and provide the focus for the current research (Luthar & Cicchetti, 2000; Rutter, 2007). Protective processes describe the ways in which protective factors actually manifest and contribute to positive outcomes.

Context

While there is no universal definition of resilience across educational and psychological literature, it is consistently referred to across both domains as a phenomenon and/or a construct (Knight, 2007; Kruger & Prinsloo, 2008; Luthar & Cicchetti, 2000; Rutter, 2007; Swanson, Valiente, Lemery-Chalfant, & O'Brien, 2011). Luthar & Cicchetti, define resilience as, 'a dynamic process encompassing positive adaptation within the context of significant adversity' (2000, p. 543). The contemporary view acknowledges that a capacity for resilience exists in every person before exposure to threat. This view further advocates this capacity can be strengthened through protective factors.

Emphasis on resilience as an innate capacity has major implications for education, particularly when coupled with advancements in resilience research regarding protective factors. Protective factors are those factors which act to prevent or protect an individual from developing a problem, and conversely risk factors cause an individual to be more likely to develop problems in the face of adversity (Sanacore, 2000; Toland & Carrigan, 2011; Waxman, et al., 2003). Current research shows protective factors such as these are more predictive of positive outcomes than risk factors are of adverse outcomes (Benard, 1997;

Brown et al., 2010; Knight, 2007; Kruger & Prinsloo, 2008). This opens up important considerations within education; namely that all students are likely to benefit from activities structured to enhance protective factors. Knight (2007) states, "If it is possible to enhance the protective factors as the research suggests, then it is proposed there is a role for classroom teachers in enhancing resilience for all children and young people in schools independent of risk" (p.545). Thus the developments in resilience research are particularly relevant to schools due to the potential of generating positive outcomes for all students, as they embark on navigating themselves through a contemporary world characterised by change.

Resilience research in education is extensive (Benard, 1997; Bickley & Philips, 2003; Brown et al, 2010; Cesarone, 1999; Doll, 1998; Gasman, 2003; Gilligan, 2000; Johnson, 2008; Masten, 2009; Masten et al., 2008). Current views of resilience in schools aim to capitalise on fostering protective factors to increase student resilience. Although adaptability is an overall process and outcome of resilience, it is not a cause of resilience. It is especially important to note when considering resilience in education that outcomes and causes of resilience are different things. This research focuses on what causes resilience to manifest.

Literature on the protective factors which foster resilience is consistent, ranging only in complexity and depth. Masten (2009) focuses on explicit attachment and social factors in a general sense while Johnson has a micro approach as it applies to teachers more specifically. Benard's (1997) contributions are most relevant to this review as her findings can be located in the context of the Visual Arts classroom. Benard found that three things foster resilience; high self-expectations, caring connected relationships and opportunity for participation and contribution (1997). Although the literature has supported these findings consistently for a decade, Newman & Blackburn state that the literature includes few accounts of specific strategies used to promote resilience (cited in Kruger & Prinsloo, 2008). New strategies derived from research based on the protective factors of resilience are clearly needed; however generating these programs in context specific situations has complications.

It is difficult to measure and identify resilience. Bartlett states that resilience is never directly observed, it is always imputed. Thus, as an empirical concept, there is difficulty in identifying an unambiguous referent to this force/factor of resilience (cited in Kruger & Prinsloo, 2008). Given resilience itself is not observable directly, researchers may look toward observing the balance of risk and protective factors. However they are not static in nature. Resilience is difficult to measure because it is not directly observable; it is contextually dependent and subjective in nature. These aspects of resilience make it difficult to formulate intervention strategies and subsequently direct research to qualitative ends.
The impact of caring relationships with adults (including teachers) positively effecting resilience is a view supported by many (Benard, 1997; Hiew, 1998; Johnson, 2008; Knight,

2007; Kruger & Prinsloo, 2008; Masten, 2009; Masten, et al., 1990; Punch, 2005; Sanacore, 2000; Toland & Carrigan, 2011). The specific components which build caring relationships have been outlined by Johnson (2008) and Masten (2009) in their respective accounts. The relationships between teachers and their students in the Visual Arts classroom as a specific context have been given little attention. Interestingly, research relating to the Arts generally suggests that perhaps the Arts offer something special in terms of close teacher/student relationships. Baker (cited in Deasy, 2002) states "according to researchers, Flinders:1989, Gray and MacGregor:1986 - Good Arts teachers…build their teaching on an understanding and knowledge of their students and their lives to a greater extent than do teachers in other subject areas (p. 146).

This suggests a personable relationship exist between Arts teachers and their students. Arts subjects are inclined to utilise students' individuality to help inform the curriculum as they become "co-constructors of a dynamic education rather than recipients of schooling and shapers of knowledge rather than recipients of knowledge" (Gadsen, 2008, p.34). That is, teachers often set up tasks involving broad frameworks and encourage students to give diverse individual responses. Visual Arts teachers thus have the opportunity to interact with students as individuals and gain knowledge of their students in a holistic way, beyond the walls of the classroom. Baker (cited in Deasy, 2002) further states that "(good) arts teachers focus on those elements of the context that derive from the highly situational personal characteristics of their students, their feelings, thoughts, and life situations outside the classroom (p.146). Knowing students as individuals, and understanding them as people beyond the context of the classroom, form the beginnings of caring relationships. Kim & Schallert describe getting to know each individual student provides teachers with an opportunity to engage in caring relationships with their students (2010, p.1067). Benard (1997) outlines caring relationships as one of three main protective factors of resilience.

A variety of studies have shown Visual Arts based programs to enhance resilience (Arts Education Partnership, 2004; Benard, 1997; Chappell; Corley, 2010; Gasman & Anderson-Thompkins, 2003; Randall, 1997). However, much of this research has occurred as part of community programs and not in educational settings. One study by Prinyaphol & Chongruksa (2008) found tertiary Fine Arts and Applied Arts students to be more resilient than those in other subject areas, suggesting that Visual Arts has something special to offer. Although research shows the Arts enhances resilience, the underlying protective processes require further investigation. Understanding the protective process of caring relationships in Visual Arts classrooms may help educators generate programs to nurture resilience in all students.

Approach

The broader aims of the research involve understanding whether caring relationships in arts-

based learning are protective processes and can thus contribute to both educational and resilience research. The research questions that guided the inquiry are:

- Do Visual Arts teachers nurture caring relationships in the classroom? And,
- What types of opportunities present themselves in the Visual Arts classroom to nurture caring relationships?

This research has been conducted in a way that is congruent with the kind of approach taken in creating artworks, and is mostly subjective. Our creative approach is process oriented, valuing the journey as much as the destination and involves using intuitive and serendipitous processes. Our processes are particularly valuable in exploratory or inductive research where the landscape is unknown, or only just beginning to be discovered.

Given the methodology's underlying themes of context and temporality, an appropriate framework for this inquiry is provided through narrative inquiry (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). We employed purposive sampling (Punch, 2005); teachers were selected based on their secondary school experience and subject area of Visual Arts. Grounded theory techniques (Craig, 2009) informed the initial phase of data analysis, and were used in tandem with the restorying technique typically associated with narrative research. We considered ethics in terms of confidentiality for participants, who are all given pseudonyms in the reportage, namely Lucy, Ted, Sarah, James and Vanessa. We conducted coding during data collection as well as post priori, using Craig's inductive data analysis framework, involving the identification of common terms and then common themes (2009). The three dimensional space associated with narrative inquiry data coding was also used (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). "The narrative inquiry strategies utilised in this project to account for subjectivity have involved maintaining a 'wakeful' approach, keeping a reflexive journal and having a critical friend in terms of a mentor. Wakefulness is a term advocated by Clandinin & Connelly as an overarching evaluative technique (2000) and was considered along with reflexivity (Mills, 2007) as an evaluative tool. Intuition (Hogarth, 2005), serendipity (Foster & Ford, 2003), synchronicity and berry picking (Bates, 1989) as techniques for decision making and information gathering also played an important role in the the generation of this project. The methodology and data collection techniques subscribe to the narrative inquiry method, as the narrative approach values each individual's perspective as a way of understanding the world we live in. Overall, the methodology represents a fluid qualitative framework, aimed at exploring how caring may manifest in teacher-student relationships.

Understanding the world in this way involves understanding that knowledge is not fixed, nor is it viewed from a fixed position, thus context and temporality are important considerations (Cutcher, 2004). This perspective is heavily influenced by the work of Dewey, due to the emphasis on experience as a key term (cited in Archambault, 1964). Creswell refers to this

particular form of narrative as 'Teachers' Stories' (2012, p. 505), a wholly appropriate form given the subject of the inquiry in this case.

The 5 participants were varied in experience, ranging from 5-20 years' experience, and included 2 males and 3 females. The participants were from 4 schools in total, namely 2 private schools and 2 secular schools. We collected data using interviews conducted in informal settings and the interviews were semi-structured in nature. Conversation was initiated through open ended questions and subsequent tangents in the conversation, often brought about by the conversational tone, were also recognised as rich data sources.

The data collected through the interviewing process can thus be seen as a joint reality constructed between the researcher/s and the participant. However in narrative research it is the story of the participant the researcher aims to describe. Cutcher aptly states, '[t]he danger lies in the failure to expose what the informant views as truth' (2004, p.55). Maintaining what can be described as an objective distance is required at certain stages of the research, to balance researcher subjectivity, identified by Clandinin & Connolly as relational tension (2000).

Intuition also played a key role in the confluence of this project, a process increasingly recognised in the literature (Cutcher, 2004; Fook, 1996; Glesne & Peshkin, 1992). Hogarth defines intuition or intuitive responses as being 'reached with little apparent effort, and typically without conscious awareness, [t]hey involve little or no conscious deliberation' (2005, p. 69). Thus intuitive responses are arrived at with little knowledge as to why or how one arrived at that place. This is in opposition to an analytical response where steps to the decision making process can be made explicit (Hogarth, 2005. p.67).

Discovery

Themes that arose from the data include authenticity, students-as-individuals and comfortableness. Participant interviews supported the notion that students-as-individuals were the teachers' first priority. That is, helping students feel comfortable and connecting with them in an authentic way subsequently helped develop the students' artmaking. Thus the relationship between teachers and their students in Visual Art classrooms appears to be intrinsic to the artmaking process, not merely a product of it.

Although a more open notion of truth is in line with the premise of this paper, the idea that authenticity in artmaking involves the notion that artworks are born from a place within the individual that is unique to them, is an assertion that was universal amongst the Visual Arts teachers in this study, as well as their perceived role as facilitator. For example, Ted states, "for us to be successful we need to find a bit of the student in the Art….it's artwork as

personification". Similarly, James says "it's spiritual in essence because the artwork is born out of soul-ish responses". Although various terminologies were used by participants, all referenced this notion of authenticity in artmaking. Teachers describe themselves as aiming to help students reach deeply inside themselves during the creative process, for genuine artistic responses. Vanessa says, "In order to be a great Visual Arts teacher you need to be able to bond with your students deeper than superficial relationships…. Because it makes them make better artworks". The data revealed teachers as having a vested interest in connecting with the inner, deeper levels of their students. They perceived this connection as necessary to facilitate the creation of original artwork.

A variety of strategies are used by the participants to help their students open up and feel comfortable; an important aspect of their teaching practice. The data supported the notion that teachers recognised the need to help students feel comfortable, as a prerequisite for them to engage in relationship building and thus authentic art making. The teachers described students as being fearful and needing to 'open up' or 'loosen up' or just to feel 'comfortable' in order to connect and create. A variety of strategies were described by participants to consciously nurture comfortableness. These included proximity, humour, warm greetings, music, storytelling and art based activities. Teachers also aim to help students value and express their individuality by generating an environment that values difference, through conversations, and through storytelling.

Individual, student-centred programming is at the heart of the creative process as teachers aim to help their students find, express and value the unique parts of themselves. Although teachers use various strategies to help develop students' individuality, the data suggests substantial effort is made to this end. The teachers seem to enjoy this part of their practice especially. By encouraging students to value their individuality, teachers are investing in the students' ability to create original, authentic artworks.

The dynamic between comfortableness and students-as-individuals is multidirectional, in that focusing on the student as an individual helps to generate comfortableness, and comfortableness allows deeper layers of the individual to be reached. The teachers' responses find that connecting with students is an ongoing process, not a target to be hit once. Kim & Schallert's (2010) research supports the notion that relationships between students and teachers are built over time, through a series of moment by moment encounters with each encounter having the capacity to effect the relationship positively or negatively.

The data above have far reaching implications regarding fostering resilience in Visual Arts classrooms. The data overwhelmingly and repeatedly emphasises that relationship building is intrinsic to the artmaking process, so not only does artmaking encourage positive

relationships, it seems that they are absolutely necessary for authentic artworks to be created at all. The key word is authenticity however, as students may choose not to engage beyond a superficial level and create artworks in the same superficial vein. Regarding opening up, Vanessa pertinently states, "Some do, some don't".

Although the aforementioned data suggests many opportunities exist in Visual Arts classrooms to build relationships, the timing regarding the specific strategies seems to be important. The strategies are dependent on context and do not necessarily guarantee any kind of connection with the students, as Sarah states, "If a kid doesn't want to tell you something, they won't". Further investigation into the theme of time revealed a deeper layer regarding relationship building which appears to be reliant on trust, respect and time.

Three aspects of time were particularly important; right timing, enough time and one-on-one time. The data suggests that Visual Arts teachers are aware of eliciting favourable reciprocation in order to build relationships, through their awareness of "right" timing. The data also suggested that prioritising student needs cut into class time, but teachers were willing to arrange their lesson plan around individual student issues. Lastly the independent nature of artmaking seemed to provide the opportunity for one-on-one time between teachers and their students. Thus if "respect tends to flower where there is space for genuine human relationships" (Krznaric, 2011, p.93) then time (right timing, enough time and one-on-one time) is valuable in creating that space.

Storytelling as a means of connecting with students a major tool for relationship building. Both James and Vanessa relate personal stories to their students as a means of making a connection with them, in the hope they will share themselves openly as well. Sharing in this way again shows teachers as consciously eliciting favourable reciprocity (Kim & Schallert, 2011). Storytelling as a tool to build empathy and thus a connection between teachers and their students is supported by the data.

Empathy is related to the theme of respect, and the consideration of how the student might be feeling. Closely related, both empathy and respect have become important in discussions surrounding relational dynamics in classrooms (Kitchen, 2005). Baron-Cohen (2011) defines empathy as 'the ability to distinguish what someone else is thinking or feeling and to react to that person's thoughts and feelings with appropriate emotion (p.10). Empathy is also cited by multiple participants in this study as something that requires discretion. It seems that teachers could easily be overwhelmed with student worries and concerns and some have developed an intuitive triage system, prioritising student needs based on their instinct. For example, Lucy says, regarding empathy towards her students,

> Certain things I do, and certain things I don't at all, it really depends on the student.
> Usually by that stage I'll have judged if they're trying. If it's a constant thing like,
> 'my boyfriend' everyday, there won't be empathy. But…for some reason you know
> if the kids need something more; when the kid needs to be taken outside and told
> it's going to be alright. Its instinct, you can tell straight away.

This data supports Noddings' care theories (2010); she advocates that rules do not work when it comes to empathy and caring. She states both thinking and feeling pathways of assessment assist in directing caring behaviour. Noddings' (2010) views that instinct and intuition play an important role in relation to empathy are supported by the current research. Teachers use their instinct to determine cases they believe are worthy of the time needed to provide empathic support. The data suggests caring relationships in Visual Art classrooms require teachers to have a developed sense of intuition, which is a mode of feeling rather than thinking and an aspect associated with creative, subjective thinking, or emotional intelligence.

The potential for the Visual Arts classroom as a platform for the discussion of complex issues is thus evident. Most importantly however this study shows teachers in Visual Arts classrooms need to balance their intuitive sense with the functional management of their classroom, perhaps now more than ever. The teachers' comments support research into contemporary youth, which suggests situations requiring teacher empathy are increasing (Gidley, 2008).

Teachers cite examples of encouraging students to take risks through the artmaking process as well as exposing them to risk through criticism. In reference to the critiquing aspect of classroom work, Vanessa says, "I want the kids to be resilient, to have a back bone and to be able to take constructive criticism. I'm not one of those teachers who thinks everything is great." Similarly in reference to artmaking processes, James says,

> I don't plan for them to fail, but I plan that they don't succeed all the time. The
> reason is to help them succeed and be resilient in life because, talents will take you
> places where your character can't sustain you.

Thus findings from this study show Visual Arts teachers are explicitly aware of what the Visual Arts has to offer in terms of risk competence; through both artmaking and art criticism. Sarah conveys an explicit connection between risk taking, resilience and creativity when she says,

> Risk taking is the foundation of resilience. It means that you're not derailed by
> failure or unfulfilled expectation, you may even be happily surprised….It's about

being happy to take risks and make mistakes in order to be innovative or creative.

Ted refers to resilience in terms of positive adaptability, when he says, "The idea of the artist is becoming really important; being able to think outside the square, be adaptable and think in new ways. Sarah and Ted both explicitly link the idea of resilience in Visual Arts back to innovation and adaptability. Creativity requires the ability to fail, to understand and expect failure. Overall, teachers talk about wanting students to be resilient to help both in their lives beyond school as well as in their creative processes. Risk competence is shown here to be a proponent for both creativity and simultaneously, resilience. Thus resilience and creativity seem to inform each other in Visual Arts Classrooms in a reciprocal fashion. The data suggests this occurs on two levels; though risk competence and relationship building. These findings suggest that teachers of Visual Arts intrinsically mobilise resilience through the creative process.

Empathy plays a crucial role in caring relationships (Johnson 2008; Masten, et al., 2008; Noddings, 2010). Regarding empathy, two main findings emerged from the data; firstly that intuition is critical for teachers to navigate empathy in the classroom, and secondly that situations requiring an empathic response are increasing in frequency. Essentially this means that teachers need to have a developed sense of their intuition or creative thinking, as well as rational, logical thought to foster caring relationships in classroom situations. Given Visual Arts classrooms seem to be conducive to one-on-one type of interaction, the opportunities for interactions requiring empathy seem to be prevalent. Thus, creative thinking in particular can be seen increasingly as an essential tool with regard to navigating situations requiring empathy in contemporary Visual Arts classrooms.

Overall, creative thinking and the ability to navigate situations in the absence of rule, emerged in this study as being important on a number of interconnected levels. Caring relationships are founded on a teachers' creative thinking ability, particularly with regard to empathy and eliciting favourable reciprocation. Visual Arts teachers' ability to engender caring relationships directly influences the creative thinking capacity of their students, and perhaps their academic and social emotional wellbeing. That is, caring relationships are integral to helping students feel comfortable enough to be creative, to navigate beyond one right answer in their artmaking. The confidence to think creatively directly contributes to students' capacity for resilience. Visual Arts teachers seem to have an extraordinary opportunity to facilitate both resilience and creative thinking in their classrooms. The argument for creative thinking being equal in status to logical thinking in our schools is seen explicitly through the theme of resilience.

Conclusions

In this study we have found an intrinsic link between artmaking processes in the Visual Arts classroom and the development of caring relationships. Essentially, the data shows Visual Arts classrooms as being an extremely fertile arena for nurturing this protective factor. In addition, a link between creativity and risk competence (a propellant for resilience) is also evident. Furthermore, the data shows that it is through the creative process that these tensions (implicit within the resilience construct), inform each other and strengthen both resilience and creativity in an ever increasing way. Teachers play an important role in facilitating these processes associated with creativity and resilience, primarily through their ability to establish and maintain individual relationships with their students.

Although many specific strategies emerged from the data, the strong message from this research is that the implementation of the strategies was not something that could be applied universally. It was dependent on the teachers' sense of right timing, empathy and perceived favourable reciprocation from students, and these elements were navigated by teachers largely through intuitive (creative or subjective) thinking. Given time constraints in a classroom however, a tension also emerged regarding available time to nurture individual relationships and therefore teachers were compelled to be perpetually balancing linear logical thinking with intuitive, subjective type thinking. This is an important finding as it credits the role both types of thinking have in forming and maintaining caring relationships.

We discovered that one of the main dynamics in Visual Arts classrooms revolved around teachers trying to help students understand that their uniqueness is valued; and to have the courage to create artworks from the authentic, individual place within themselves. Visual Arts teachers seem to recognise the need to help students overcome their need to be 'right' and to encourage authentic individual responses in artmaking. In this way teachers build caring relationships to facilitate creativity in their classrooms and thus encourage resilience through the promoting pathway (Kia-Keating et al., 2011).

Furthermore, teachers simultaneously nurture resilience through the protecting pathway by encouraging risk competence (Kia-Keating et al., 2011). The data shows that Visual Arts teachers promote risk competence by encouraging students to see the value in not succeeding all the time. In effect the caring pathway is a necessary avenue taken by Visual Art teachers to support risk competence, to offset linear thinking and engender creativity. Creativity, caring relationships and risk competence thus have quite a strong interrelated connection in Visual Arts classrooms.

Moreover, the data also indicates that a reciprocal and symbiotic relationship exists between resilience and creativity. This is an interesting dynamic whereby the fostering of resilience

seems to build greater trust between students and teachers, their relationships deepen and students are willing to take more risks and offer more of themselves through the creative process. We argue that given the authentic nature of art making described by Visual Arts teachers, this creative/resilient relational dynamic facilitates ever deepening resilience in an ongoing way. Therefore the findings suggest that resilience and creativity may be linked, implying Visual Arts classrooms provide an opportunity for every student to enhance their resilience in an ongoing fashion.

Caring relationships contribute to resilience through the promoting pathway of caring relationships, as well as the protecting pathway of risk competence, which is a process that develops over time. Amongst the many other things the Visual Arts can offer students, it appears that it also may provide an extraordinary opportunity to nurture resilience.

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