Getting in and out of role

What does the aesthetic work of acting entail and is resilience a central factor in the actor's ability to perform?

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Declaration

I, Julia Grieshofer, confirm that the work presented in this thesis is my own. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the thesis.

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Date: 26/04/2023

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Impact Statement

The demand for psychological support, within the Performing Arts, has more than doubled over the last four to five years with a quarter of BAPAM (The British Institution for Performing Arts Medicine) patients currently reaching out to get seek therapeutic help. Performing Artists are widely recognised as a vulnerable population with particular needs (Brandfonbrener, 2000). The lack of knowledge and clinical awareness of these needs, leads to increased risks for their wellbeing – physical as well as mental health (Collins, Button, & Richards, 2013). Among the sparsely researched sector of the Performing Arts, actors almost never are to focus of study and are famously known as the "forgotten patients" (Brandfonbrener, 2000). This thesis gathered existing research on actors and presented it comprehensively. This revealed large gaps in the knowledge about their work, connected occupational risks, and their physical and mental wellbeing. Even less is known about what therapeutic approaches would work for actors and clinical interventions are not evidence-based but are adopted from other fields. Support is not tailored to their needs, but there is rather an assumption of what works for the public will be helpful for them. These practices lack research-based support and, in fact, often prove unhelpful.

The findings of this thesis challenge set-in-stone assumptions within the field by asking first what the work of the actor is, instead of using theoretical frameworks for the discussion that have existed over decades already. It thoroughly reviews existing research from different fields, including cognitive psychology, psychoanalysis, and neuroscience as well as acting literature, to get a better understanding of the creative work of actors. In addition, participants were consulted, and theories were build based on their voices. Having established 'what the work of the actor entails' it was possible to start thinking about problematic issues and potential solutions.

The findings of this thesis and the literature review having implications for actors, the industry and clinical professionals working with actors. Academic papers, books, and blogs were consulted in the quest to learn more

about the wellbeing of actors. The result revealed polarising opinions that project problems and common struggles onto the actor, the methodology used or the profession itself. While all factors may contribute to poor mental health outcomes, outsourcing the problem will not lead to its resolution. Instead, the findings suggest that a holistic approach should be adopted where all pieces of the puzzle are considered – the actor, this profession as well as the industry. And it lies within a combined responsibility - the responsibility to the industry, the profession, and the actor - to address concerns, provide necessary support and seek help. Only by integrating these parts and addressing problems from all sides better support can be provided and will eventually lead to institutional change.

This thesis proposes that a core of successful acting is the actor's own wellbeing and their resilience. Resilience as a concept sprung to mind because this word is normally associated with success, strength, and accomplishments despite difficulty. But as the discussion within the literature review revealed, the word is often used as arbitrarily as 'acting' is. Different fields have adopted the term and have given it its own spin. Within the psychological field, there is an agreement that resilience is closely linked to attachment styles, reflective capacities, and other factors such as physical and mental wellbeing. This study suggests that there is a close link between reflective capacities, resilience, and wellbeing. Actors may strongly benefit for enhancing their reflective capacities. This has implications for how resilience in actors is understood, how it may interact with their professional success, and how services should be designed to support actors' wellbeing which may lead to performance enhancements. When professional help is offered, careful consideration should be given to the question whether actors are suitably for specific interventions. Resilience was closely linked to protective factors such as environmental, social, physical, and psychological wellbeing. Hence, if actors do not have a stable accommodation, suffer financial hardship, and the necessary support to attend therapy is lacking, other help than therapy may be more suitable for these individuals. These findings are a precursor to research assessing the impact of consultations for all parties involved. It also

evidences the need of other support networks that ought to be set in place, such as support with housing, finances, and social connections.

At a service delivery level, it is the first study to question the clinical practices with actors and encourages the systematic review of these. Alongside the above-discussed holistic approach and the need for other support structures, there is also an urgency to establish evidence-based practices of clinical support within the Performing Arts Sector. The results of this study indicate that reflective capacity is relevant for their wellbeing as well as their professional work, therefore it could be that actors would benefit from receiving therapy tailored to increasing these capacities. Actors may benefit from a shift towards adopting therapy modules other than routinely offered time-limited CPD, such as Mentalization based therapy. It is worth pursuing such reflections in future research to establish the validity of this therapy method with this population and the feasibility of its implementation.

Publications and presentations associated with this theses

Grieshofer, J. *Reflecting on Actors' Mental Health and Resilience*. Published on BAPAM's website on the 16th February 2021. https://www.bapam.org.uk/actors-mental-health-resilience-research-reflections/

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Table of Contents

List of tables

Table of figures

Abstract

Actors' creative work and its connection with resilience is a poorly understood process. This thesis aims to stablish a theoretical framework about actors' creative work in connection with resilience and explore the mechanisms of the acting process and their links to resilience. A comprehensive literature review across multiple databases was conducted to identify studies examining the role of resilience in actors' mental health and creative process. Subsequently, a mixed-methods longitudinal design was employed to explore resilience among a sample of actors, evaluate the influence of wellbeing factors on resilience and reflective capacity, and delineate the mechanisms involved during the acting process. Six self-report questionnaires were administered to gather quantitative data on participants' resilience, wellbeing, and reflective capacity, while semi-structured interviews provided qualitative insights into these domains. This study pioneered a novel approach to understanding the acting process by delineating a four-stage creative arch and identifying the personal resources utilized by actors at each stage. Additionally, it revealed that resilience in actors was influenced by reflective capacity and wellbeing, and documented longitudinal changes following the unprecedented Covid-19 pandemic. The thesis concludes that actors' creative work is heavily reliant on their psychological capacities. Therefore, exploring resilience in relation to the creative process provides a foundation for evidence-based improvement in mental health support for actors. Examining resilience in relation to the creative work broadened our understanding in this respect and demonstrated that building resilience could help actors to function better professionally, even if it does not necessarily improve their mental health as initially stated.

Keywords: *acting, creative process, resilience, reflective capacity, wellbeing, Covid-19.*

Introduction

This thesis explores the creative work of the actor and investigates its potential connections to resilience. Acting normally involves a group of performers who are working together with a director to produce a play that will be performed on stage in front of an audience. Acting can be broken down into three components: the performer, the performance, and the audience (Goldstein, 2019). Within this thesis, unlike in other studies, the focus will be on the performer and her[1] role as a creator in the acting process, and her resilience.

1.1 Theoretical background

Acting can be defined as a pretence to convincingly 'be' someone else for the duration of a performance. Outside the professional realm acting is often seen as a "god-given" talent (Arias, 2019), rather than a skill that can be learned. Contrary to this perspective, actors train often for years to acquire the skills necessary to work on a script and a character in a professional manner. This thesis will explore how actors achieve this in a creative manner.

The word theatre comes from the Greek word "*theatron*" and stands for "a place for seeing" such as a building where a performance is given (Barker, Bay, & Izenour, 2020). Therefore, it is not surprising that when reflecting on the origins of theatre, naturally the Greek spectacles come to mind. The theatrical art, however, is almost as old as humanity itself. Before the written word was introduced, mankind relied on the oral transmission of information and storytellers discovered very early on that information is best retained mentally when it is translated into a tale (Rea, 2023). Theatre is a modern manifestation of this ancient oral tradition (Ali, 2026).

Theatre also has roots in religious rituals. Architectural structures were used as places of assembly where a shaman or priest would attempt to communicate with God. The development of the modern theatrical art brought

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[1] I will refer to both female and male actors as 'actors' but whilst acknowledging either sex, I will use the feminine pronoun (she/her) for consistency throughout.

with it the abandonment of active participation of the audience common in rituals in exchange for passive spectatorship (Rea, 2023). Over decades the theatrical tradition developed from these early manifestations of theatrical spectacles to what theatre is known for today. In the western hemisphere, Greek and Roman theatre are known to be the first manifestations of organised spectacle. These were followed by medieval theatre, the Italian commedia dell'arte, the English Elizabethan theatre, The Spanish Golden age theatre, up to the theatrical traditions of the twentieth century (Barker, Bay, & Izenour, 2020). The history of theatre in the nineteenth and twentieth century describes a period of substantial change and widespread challenge of rules regarding theatrical representation, such as the abandonment of the "fourth wall" with Brecht after which actors could address the audience. This resulted in the development of many new forms of theatre such as modernist theatre, political theatre, impressionist and expressionist theatre, experimental theatre, realism, and naturalism (Rea, 2023).

One of the most important originators of acting theory is Konstantin Stanislavski (1863-1938). It is with him that theatre substantially changed from a representational tradition (in which the actor represents the character physically) to a theatre of realism with a focus on conveying emotional truth on stage. His most famous contribution to acting theory is the development of *'The method of Physical Action'* (1936). It is with him that, arguably, the craft of acting was transformed into a specific skillset that could be taught in drama schools. In an attempt to bring realistic portrayal and sincere acting to the stage at the start of the 20th century, he developed a vocal and physical acting training that encouraged the use of real experiences which he named *'The System'*. This *'System'* focused on 'organic acting … contending that acting devoid of feeling was mechanical' (Tust-Gunn, 1995, p. 10). Methodically, this is achieved by practicing several techniques that all focused on stimulating the actor's emotions. One of these is called the *'emotional memory technique'* where the actor uses the feelings from a personal experience to enhance acting performances. Stanislavski's early work focused a lot on emotional work, while later he shifted his attention towards the body and the physical actions that the character performs. 'Physical acting' refers to active tasks the

19

actor performs as the character on different levels of the play practically speaking and figuratively. For instance, within the Shakespearean play *Macbeth,* the main character's objective is to become King of Scotland and every step that he takes within the play (i.e. the conspiracy with his wife, the killing of the king) would be considered as actions. In relation to the character, the actor would split these bigger objectives into micro-objectives that allow the actor to translate the emotional sentiment of the play into actions that can be performed on stage.

Stanislavski's beliefs regarding emotion and personal experience shifted in his later work. In his later work 'the goal was to evoke the emotion experienced by the actor in a situation which was similar to that in the script, not by targeting the feelings [or the personal life of the actor] directly, but rather by evoking the associated sensory impressions [detached from the original content]' (Tust-Gunn, 1995, p. 11). This was done by discovering the physical behaviour (literally bodily movements) of the character first which could stimulate the emotion they conveyed in the actor. The actor was supposed to imagine the character's experience, rather than draw on his own experiences when playing a part. This focus on the character's experiences or, as Stanislavski called them *'actions'*, led to a change of name of his methodology. Nowadays, his method is known as the *'Method of Physical Actions'* and owes its name to this later focus on discovering core emotions through imagining the actor's circumstances (and literally his bodily movements) given by the script. Actors then identified or 'acted out' the character's truth by behaving as the character might, but not by 'becoming the character' in any deep, psychological sense (McFarren, 2008).

The first adopters of Stanislavski's *'System'* outside Russia were some American actors of the 1920's. They were introduced to *'The System'* by Russian theatre actors who came to the United States to share Stanislavski's early work that encouraged the accessing and use of personal emotions. They adopted Stanislavski's emotional memory technique which urged actors to use a personal experience as a starting point to build an empathic connection between actor and character. While Stanislavski in time found a focus on

personal emotions and memory to be unhelpful, Strasberg famously took up these early aspects of Stanislavski's work and developed his own acting technique, which is now known as *'Method Acting'* (Strasberg , 1987). Lee Strasberg, in a somewhat fanatical attempt to overcome banality and mechanical portrayals in theatre, pushed Stanislavski's method to an extreme, stating that true characterisation came down to explicit and deep use of *'affective memory'* (Tust-Gunn, 1995). That is, he believed that only a personal, emotionally charged memory analogous to that expressed by the character in the script, could create the grounds for sophisticated and genuine character creation. While on the one hand, Strasberg was celebrated for enlightening actors as to how 'to harness the emotion which had previously been quite elusive' (Tust-Gunn, 1995, p. 13), on the other hand, he was scrutinised for the emotional strain he put his actor under '[by] push[ing] and prob[ing them] for large emotional outbursts' (McFarren, 2008, p. 59).

Stanislavski deemed these practices 'a misuse of his emotional memory experiences' (Tust-Gunn, 1995, p. 14). Personal experiences ought to be used only in the beginning to better relate to the character, and only when all other methods failed, he argued. Stanislavski had discovered that the sole focus on emotions led to emotional strain in actors and distorted the experience of character portrayal. Stanislavski 'believed that the correct physical action[2] was the key to evoking the emotion required in a natural manner … This also provided actors with more control, because they could consciously utilize their bodies, unlike emotions, which were more capricious' (Tust-Gunn, 1995, p. 16). These theoretical disagreements caused uproar in American acting circles, culminating in a methodological split: Strasberg's system, Method Acting, pursued the emotional memory technique in depth to stimulate emotions, while Stanislavski's system, the Method of Physical Action, made use of the body and external characterisation to evoke emotion and to give the character a psychological foundation.

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[2] Recall that the actor's 'physical action' refers to the way he attempts to literally move, as well as feel, as the character does.

Most modern approaches to acting derive from a combination of these two approaches. Strasberg's and Stanislavski's pupils developed their own acting methods, such as Michael Chekhov, Stella Adler, Sanford Meisner, Uta Hagen, Viola Spolin, William H. Macy and David Mamet, Anne Bogart and Tina Landau, Augusto Boal, Kristin Linklater, and Jerzy Grotowski (Ates, 2023).

Michael Chekhov (2002) developed a 'psycho-physical approach' to acting wherein the focus is transformation, working with impulse, imagination, and inner and outward gesture. 'The Psychological Gesture' method provides clear, practical tools that help actors work with imagination, feelings and the overall atmosphere of a script. It allows the actor to use archetypal and unconscious parts of herself to develop the character.

Stella Adler's (2000) acting technique focuses on expanding the actor's ability to imagine the character's world and thereby the actor's repertoire, as she held that an overreliance on personal experience in acting was limiting.

Sanford Meisner (1987) emphasised the importance of focusing on the moment of performance, living the performance as though the experiences on stage are real and as if they only exist in that moment on stage. This method seeks authenticity through making use of the principle that acting finds its most truthful expression in the actor's reaction to people and circumstances – the principle of action and reaction.

Uta Hagen (2008) encouraged to concept of substitution; to relate to the character by focusing on the actor's personal experiences to build the character. This differed from Strasberg Method Acting in that he encouraged actors to drawn on their own emotions while Uta Hagen's work focused on finding an emotional equivalent.

Viola Spolin (1999), on the contrary, believed in the power of play and her method focused on the use of improvisation. She developed a series of "theatre games" that sought to help the actor develop the character in imaginary circumstances.

William H. Macy's and David Mamet's (1986) method of 'Practical Aesthetics' does away with the complication of approaches and encourages a simplistic focus on four fundamental pillars: the literal, a want, the action and the 'as if'.

Anne Bogart and Tina Landau (2014) developed another acting method focusing on improvisation by using six different "Viewpoints" to train. It encourages the actors' physical collaboration on stage by using the body's instincts and sharpening conscious awareness.

Augusto Boal (2021) introduced an acting method borrowing from children's games whereby actors are encouraged to freely engage with their body through physical play.

Kristin Linklater (2006) took yet another approach to acting by focusing on the actor's voice. She held that expressing truth lay in the act of meaningful breath alongside a deep physical and imaginative connections. Thus, her method builds on the freedom of the actor's voice.

Jerzy Grotowski (1975) believed that the actor could ascertain human truth by utilising the lived experiences of the body. Based on this he created a highly physical acting method.

Alongside these acting methods several different traditions of theatre developed, such as 'The epic theatre' of Bertolt Brecht (1994), 'The theatre of the Absurd' (Esslin, 2014) as witnessed in plays by Samuel Beckett, 'The theatre of Cruelty' that was practiced by Antonin Artaud (2017) and Peter Brook (1995) and the 'Poor theatre' by Jerzy Grotowski (Rea, 2023).

1.2 How can acting be understood?

Simply put, actors are storytellers, repurposing the ancient tradition of oral communication to narrate a story to an audience. However, as shown above, modern acting is about more than just narrating a story. It entails, on the part of the actor, a 'going through' or 'living out' of the psychological conflicts of a

character on stage. In order to authentically portray human experience, nowadays it is assumed that actors need to get in touch with the core of their inner psychological world, and be aware of parts of themselves that in ordinary waking life might be repressed.

In psychoanalytic terms, actors identify with the characters they play. Identification, in the psychoanalytic field, is a concept that describes the way in which a person adopts characteristics of another person. It is a 'psychological process whereby an aspect of the individual's self-representation becomes modified to resemble an aspect of an object representation' (Auchincloss & Samberg, 2012). The concept is therefore linked to change in self-representation. It plays an important role throughout the development of central structures of the self, such as the development of the ego, the ego ideal, the super-ego, identity, and character. This developmental process starts with simple imitation and matures to specific forms of identification in adulthood, for example taking the form of a wish to either become the loved object by adopting the characteristics of it, or to minimise the pain involved in the loss of an object, by incorporating it. Initially, only a regressive quality was associated with identification, but this understanding was extended to include its capacity to form and enhance the self (Laplanche & Pontalis, 1973), alongside the recognition of the central role it plays throughout the establishment of object relations. Identification, put simply, is the process by which a subjective sense of self forms.

Acting can be viewed as the performance as a whole or the actor's performance. According to Goldstein (2017) when conceptualizing creativity in actors several components must be considered: the process, the person, and the product. Within this study, focus is given to the process and how the actor contributes to this at the expense of a discussion of the final product. The actor's task of identification with a character makes the concept relevant for the current study. When actors, critics, or film and theatregoers describe a performance as 'truthful' or 'aesthetically pleasing', what is meant is that the actor's creative work brings them close to the presumed actual emotional and physical state of the character (Goldstein T. R., 2017). They first envision the

24

character in their mind and then work towards bringing this vision to the physical space of the stage through identification (i.e. becoming the character). Therefore, it is up to the actor to bring creative value to the performance through bringing a vision to life that is as close to a real human being as possible. Psychoanalysts such as Segal (1952), and also Trieman (not an analyst, but a theoretical scholar in the field) (2016), have suggested that the closer any artistic representation gets to real-life emotional experience, the more highly it will be regarded. The actor's aim is, therefore, to portray authenticity when bringing the story of a complex human being to the stage (Bosshardt, 2006). Given that some malleability of self is required to support identification, it is especially interesting to consider the effect of conscious identification by the actor, who must manage this identification with character whilst also maintaining a solid sense of self.

This process of identification makes acting unique within the creative field. Actors, when they perform, are basically the creators of a work of art and the creation itself at the same time. It is possible that no other creative profession requires the same involvement on the part of the creator, and this distinguishes acting from any other profession in the performing arts (e.g. music and dance) or creative industries (e.g. painting). Some art forms, such as dance and singing, arguably involve some identification with the characters being represented, albeit not to the same degree as actors do.

1.3   Difficulties with the creative task at hand

In addition, acting, when compared with other artistic professions, poses several unusual requirements for the performer. A career in acting confronts actors with two principal challenges: coping with the demands of the industry (Maxwell, Seton, & Szabo, 2015; Prior, Maxwell, Szabó, & Seton, 2015; Robb, Due, & Venning, 2016; Robb & Due, 2017; Robb, Due, & Venning, 2018) and handling the acting process itself (Geer, 1993; Burgoyne, Poulin, & Rearden, 1999; Seton, 2006; Seton, 2010; Arias, 2019). While the first has been the focus of research for some time, including from a psychoanalytic perspective

(Blum, 1976), only sparse research exists concerning the cause of difficulties in coping with the acting process itself (Burgoyne, Poulin, & Rearden, 1999).

Exploring the difficulties of the profession in more detail, these can be summarised as follows: a) financial instability (Trueman, 2013; Hemley, 2013; Clark, 2014; Wooding, 2018); b) inequality and industry power dynamics (Williams, Lacasa, & Latora, 2019); c) impact of industry specific risks on actors; d) impact on the actor's lifestyle (Robb, Due, & Venning, 2017); e) unhealthy lifestyle (Martin and Battaglini, 2019); f) lack of stable relationships and living situation (Van den Eynde, Fisher, & Sonn, 2016); g) experience of devaluation, judgment and criticism (Robb, Due, & Venning, 2017); h) problematic combination of Perfectionism and Self-doubt (Ayearst, Flett, & Hewi, 2012; Stoeber, 2014); and i) problems with the work itself that has an impact on the actor's wellbeing (Prior, Maxwell, Szabó, & Seton, 2015; Seton, 2006; Thomson & Jaque, 2012).

Acting is a profession that requires one to be emotional and vulnerable (Love, 2018). As one of the participants within Robb, Due and Venning's (2017) study stated: '[Actors] live a physical manifestation of the description of psychological un-wellness ... Inward looking, reflective, disempowered, emotionally vulnerable' (p.77). Previous literature has indicated that actors are required to 'open up' emotionally and live a life apart from mainstream culture in order to perform successfully (Robb, Due, & Venning, 2017). However, does this go hand in hand with actors being at greater risk than the general population of experiencing physical, emotional, and socio-economic hardship? And what repercussions does this have on the actor's psychological wellbeing?

Research on actors' mental wellbeing is sparse and perhaps driven by mainstream media outlets' headlines which highlight extreme pathological reactions to involvement in the profession. Heath Ledger's death, for example, whipped up excitement and concern (Shepherd, 2017) though this was rather quickly forgotten. That is, mental wellbeing often only becomes an issue when

it is failing and observable manifestations amongst celebrities such as trauma or depression come to the fore (Thomson & Jaque, 2012; Seton, 2006). The fact is though, health and also mental health are not simply the absence of disease, they are rather

> a state of complete physical, mental and social wellbeing … in which an individual realizes his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and is able to make a contribution to his or her community (WHO, 2018, p. 1).

Seen in this way, mental health is the sum of a multitude of factors, including socio-economic status, positive and stable relationships, and a stable living situation. Such factors are external to the actor but impact them directly. The absence for example of a stable living situation could be considered a risk factor for the actor, putting her mental health at risk. On the flipside a stable living situation can be protective of mental health.

In the following section, I aim to present a comprehensive overview of the numerous risk factors that exist within the acting profession that may have a negative influence on actors' mental wellbeing. In highlighting the effects of such risk factors, I aim to break a long-established silence about such risk factors and confront the stigma that is still present within the acting business around mental health issues. I also aim to challenge prejudice that actors are either particularly vulnerable, or must be of very strong character to cope with the demands of the acting profession.

Risk factors that actors face include economic instability, unstable and difficult work environments, and social inequality. Research (Williams, Lacasa, & Latora, 2019) shows that male actors work more, and that power lies in the hand of a few in charge, such as directors who award leading roles. Often, exposure to one external risk factor may trigger a causal chain reaction. For example, an actor's unstable work situation will often result in financial instability. This in turn may lead an actor to experience feelings of helplessness, purposelessness and depression.

Risk factors that impact actors' wellbeing

Whilst my research will be focused on resilience and the creative work that acting entails, it is important to recognise that more general, daily stressors of working in the acting industry can have an impact on actors' wellbeing.

> [M]any of the causes and triggers of mental disorder lie *in social, economic, and political spheres* – in the conditions of daily life (Foundation, 2014, p. 13).

The WHO (2018) states that it is important to explore these social, economic, and political factors, both in the general population and in specific industries. In this introduction I hope to reveal what impact working within the acting industry may have on the actor. The aim of this exploration is to determine *how* this influences mental health and *how* this impact can be safeguarded against.

A Definition of Risk

Before discussing specific risk factors within the acting profession in more depth, it seems necessary to define risk. One is at risk when exposed to adverse or even harmful conditions that increase the probability of a disadvantageous outcome. One can be at risk in a physical sense, as when working on a building site where one must climb, and the probability of getting hurt is higher than for an office worker. Or one can be at risk in an emotional sense, such as when under great pressure, as a soldier who experiences a traumatic event during a dangerous mission. Generally speaking,

> certain population subgroups are at a higher risk of mental health problems because of greater exposure and vulnerability to unfavourable social, economic, and environmental circumstances, which intersect with factors including gender, ethnicity and disability; and lesser access to protective resources (Foundation M. H., 2016, p. 56).

Genetic and biological factors can also have an influence on an individual's mental health and have been explored by researchers such as Furnham (2018) in relation to actors. To regard the poor mental health of some actors

as simply an individual problem, would be to deny that challenges exist within the profession itself and can be mastered if addressed appropriately. This review will focus on the impact on actors of factors within the acting profession itself.

It could be argued that the higher the number of risk factors within a profession, the higher the likelihood of distress of its members. However, protective factors such as stable relationships may counteract risk factors, working as a shield against them. Further, while existing mental health problems may predispose individuals to being very badly impacted by particular risk factors, especially where support within the profession is lacking or inadequate (Foundation M. H., 2016, p. 56), there is little doubt that reducing the number of risk factors and providing support to those affected will limit the damage. The interaction between risk and protective factors and their impact on mental health will be explored in further detail in the following paragraphs.

Problems within the industry impacting the actor's mental wellbeing

A number of external risk factors have been identified within the acting industry (Brandfonbrener A. G., 1992; Prior, Maxwell, Szabó, & Seton, 2015; Martin & Battaglini, 2019). These include financial instability, inequality, and abusive power dynamics. These risk factors are discussed below:

Financial instability

One of the most pervasive problems that actors face is financial instability. The desirability of acting as a profession leads to a saturation of actors who compete for a small number of jobs. As such, many actors struggle financially. A survey by Casting Call Pro (CCP) in 2014 revealed that in the UK only one actor in 50 earns more than £20,000 per annum:

> The survey found that in 2013, 46% per cent of actors made less than £1,000 from acting jobs and a further 30% had made between £1,000 and £5,000 (Clark, 2014).

This same survey revealed that one in five actors are not paid at all for the work they do. Thus, only about two per cent of actors can make a living from their profession. Similar results were found in studies conducted by *Equity* (The Acting Union) in 2013 (Trueman, 2013; Hemley, 2013), and by *The Mandy Network* (an acting job platform) in 2018 (Wooding, 2018). This situation will unquestionably have worsened in the pandemic, which saw theatres and other venues close, and much acting work severely restricted. Thus, economic stability is severely undermined for those within the acting population.

Researchers at Queen Mary University (Williams, Lacasa, & Latora, 2019) more recently conducted an in-depth analysis of the careers of actors, focusing specifically on actors' success and the longevity of their careers. Researchers analysed data obtained from IMDb (Internet Movie Database) on the work credits of all registered actors from the beginning of the records on 17th October 1990 up to January 2016. They discovered that unemployment rates hover around 90% with merely 2% of actors making a living within the profession. The data also shows that many actors are 'one-hit wonders', having careers spanning little over one year. Long careers in acting are, by contrast, extraordinarily rare. It is important to point out at this stage, that fame and prestige are not predictors of a stable acting career; rather the 'continued ability to work' is a predictor of this (Williams, Lacasa, & Latora, 2019, p. 2). The ability to remain active and productive within the profession is something that is supported by having good network connections, or contacts within the field. Periods without work are problematic for this, since contacts may be lost (Williams, Lacasa, & Latora, 2019). Thus, the pandemic and Covid restrictions have had a detrimental effect on the acting profession in that regard.

Relevant to the fact that actors tend to earn very little, is the fact that those on a low income are statistically more likely to experience both common and severe mental health problems. The WHO's Mental Health Survey in 2006 (Mohit, 2006) identified a general association between socioeconomic disadvantage and mental health problems, while the Millennium Cohort Study in 2012 (Johnson, Rosenber, & Atkinson, 2012) showed that those on the

30

lowest income quintile were 4.5 times more likely to experience mental health issues than those in the highest income level. With a majority of actors earning less than 20,000 pounds a year, this means many actors fall into this lowest income quintile. Thus, in terms of mental wellbeing, actors are at greater risk than those who fall into higher income brackets.

The precarious job market and resulting financial uncertainty leads to a chain of consequential problems. First, the lack of acting opportunities means that many actors take on unpaid acting work. There exists a 'huge issue over 'low pay, no pay', and deep resentment within the industry about this (Clark, 2014). This is fuelled, by young actors coming out of drama school who are desperate to get work as they need practical experience (Clark, 2014) and adult actors who report the need to keep working to maintain a high level of skills (Wooding, 2018). The link between activity and career success may explain well why actors are desperate to work, even if work is unpaid.

This external work environment puts individuals under enormous pressure and leads to feelings of helplessness because of dim prospects of success within such a competitive job market. Deep and continuous feelings of helplessness have been linked to depression. In fact, research seems to confirm that actors are generally vulnerable to depression (Wooding, 2018; BBC, 2018). Depression has been found to be much more common among actors in comparison to the normal population (Thomson & Jaque, 2012) (Prior, Maxwell, Szabó, & Seton, 2015). Further, feelings of purposelessness, fear and loss of identity due to a strong personal identification with being an actor are rather common among actors who are out of work (Robb, Due, & Venning, 2017). This can also lead to the emergence of depressive symptoms (DSM_5, 2013). The sum of these conditions poses a psychologically challenging mix of factors that are impacting on the mental wellbeing of actors in face of unemployment.

Inequality and industry power dynamics

Apparently, numerous factors other than a strong work ethic and talent determine career success. Actors in Robb, Alison, and Due's (2017) study reported a discrepancy of power within the industry that played its part. Researchers at Queen Mary University have called these inequalities, 'power-law distribution' (Williams, Lacasa, & Latora, 2019).

The acting business has been described as a 'feudal aristocracy' (Robb, Due, & Venning, 2017) in which power lies in the hands of a few who determine the fate of other industry professionals by deciding who works and who does not. As one actor commented in an interview with the BBC: 'The casting directors are the gateway to the job' (BBC, 2018). It was earlier made clear that only a few actors obtain regular work, or 'the top jobs', while others get very little work at all. According to Williams, Lacasa and Latora (2019) it seems that producers favour those actors who have already obtained big parts, or who are referred via connections made on other projects. This further widens the gap of disadvantage. In this way, career success is heavily influenced by networking and not necessarily acting skills (BBC, 2018). It could of course be argued that these few 'chosen' actors are the better actors, or simply have a better combination of skills required to be successful within the business. Regardless, the fact that only a few do 'make it' intensifies feelings of desperation and helplessness in those who do not (Robb, Due, & Venning, 2017).

Female actors may be especially disadvantaged, as in addition to the above, they may also suffer discrimination and even harassment due to their gender. Research at Queen Mary University (Williams, Lacasa, & Latora, 2019) reveals that male actors are three times more successful than female actresses, with 15357 male actors being employed more than 5 times in their most successful working year, in comparison to only 5904 females. A BBC study reports similar findings:

> Eighty-two per cent of women earn less than £10,000 per year, compared with 69% of men, while 63% of women have a second job outside entertainment to help support themselves, compared with 57% of men (BBC, 2018).

Selection for roles on the basis of appearance and unacceptable behaviour such as harassment and sexual coercion on the part of male colleagues/males in the industry, are also commonly encountered by female actors (Robb, Due, & Venning, 2017). While these researchers talk specifically about women, it is likely that men also encounter similarly unethical behaviours. Actors from both genders are affected by casting criteria and processes which are mostly based on fixed markers such as gender, age, appearance and ethnicity that cannot be influenced or changed. For example, it is well known that most actors are relatively young, and attractive. This combination of lack of agency and being continuously judged on one's personal attributes may create a deep sense of disempowerment and helplessness. These factors may very negatively influence mental health and lead to a sense of reduced autonomy.

> While actors saw themselves as autonomous in the sense of following their chosen careers in the face of criticism, participants' livelihoods were perceived to be in the hands of others, and they perceived themselves as being exposed to constant scrutiny. As such, the impact of societal expectations and the industry culture reduced the level of autonomy actors felt they had over their lives and work (Robb, Due, & Venning, 2017, p. 83).

Autonomy was defined by Ryan (2014) as one of the six basic factors that determine an individual's wellbeing and when an individual's autonomy is diminished consequently the sensation of wellbeing is lowered.

While positive work experiences, self-confidence and self-awareness may help actors to withstand such working conditions, it is unfortunate and frustrating that they cannot do much at an individual level to change the nature of the profession. They instead must decide either to fight to be among the 2% who earn a living, or leave the business. The sense of desperation and dependency this may engender creates the perfect environment for exploitation (Clark, 2014). Profound inequalities facilitate inappropriate behaviour despite a recent effort within the industry to counteract this (Prior, Maxwell, Szabó, & Seton, 2015). Actors often feel that these conditions must

be tolerated lest they be seen as 'difficult', which could risk them losing highly sought-after work within a sparse job market (Robb, Due, & Venning, 2017). There is little doubt that such an environment of dependency and continuous worry impacts actors' general wellbeing.

Problems within the actor's immediate surrounding impacting on their mental wellbeing

Unhealthy lifestyle

Long working hours, dangerous external surroundings and a demanding work environment often impact actors' physical health. Actors may experience physical injuries or develop unhealthy lifestyle habits. In a systematic review of 18 papers, Martin and Battaglini (2019) explored live theatre actors' physical health. They revealed that actors are prone to sustain musculoskeletal and voice injuries; they tend to be underweight due to unhealthy eating behaviours and they often engage in unhealthy behaviours, such as smoking, marijuana use and alcohol consumption. A number of other studies which were reviewed by Anderson (2011) in a systematic literature review found similar results. Long working hours and irregular working patterns prohibit the establishment of daily routines and negatively impact actors' circadian rhythm (Walker, 2017). These findings are relevant given the evidence that shows physical health and sleep has an impact on mental health in other populations (Foundation M. H., 2016).

Research indicates that 19 to 22.4% of acting students suffer from eating disorders and even more are on constant slimming diets (Martin & Battaglini, 2019). Potentially, actors focus on their weight as this is one of few factors they can control (Stoeber & Eismann, 2007). Since there are clear correlations between healthy dietary habits and good mental health (as well as between regular daily routines and sleep cycles, and good mental health) (Chatterjee, 2017), it is probable that poor dietary habits may negatively impact actors' mental health. Adapting working schedules to normal working hours where possible and integrating appropriate meal breaks or even providing healthy

snacks during rehearsal periods may aid the mental wellbeing of actors. Such wellbeing is of course beneficial not only to actors but also to employers, in the long run. Studies among the general population show that safeguarding mental health problems reduces sick leave and unproductive work phases and thus increases the overall productivity and minimises expenses (Foundation M. H., 2016).

Lastly, the frequent consumption of alcohol is a major concern within the industry, with up to 91.1% reporting regular substance abuse (Martin & Battaglini, 2019). This may be partially accounted for by yet another requirement of the industry. That is, to find work and make connections with fellow professionals, actors need to network. A recent study by Queen Mary University (Williams, Lacasa, & Latora, 2019) shows that those actors who have appeared in numerous theatre productions and movies have a higher probability of working in the future. This is because being in work, actors have ready access to other professionals with whom they may work again. Again, actors who are regularly in work are more likely to be re-employed, since they have better professional connections and because producers favour better-known actors at castings. As the chief executive of *The Mandy Network* stated:

> 'As this industry continues to draw criticism for its lack of diversity,
> too many of the meaningful job opportunities are still being
> handed out behind closed doors, while pay levels dictate that only
> the financially secure or those with other income streams can
> really afford to remain in the sector in the long term' (BBC, 2018).

Indeed, networking seems to have a greater influence on career success than actual acting skill (Barabasi, 2018; Fraiberger, Sinatra, Resch, Riedl, & Barabási, 2018). Networking events are of course common within other industries, however because networking often happens in the evening after shows, and simply because it's part of the culture, there is a higher likelihood of substance abuse during such events. Research (Clark, 2014) shows that often actors feel that joining these alcohol-fuelled events after shows is the only way to build networks and find work. Furthermore, alcohol and drugs are often used by actors to help them deal with the psychological demands of their work (Robb, Due and Venning, 2017). While on the one hand alcohol might

help actors to socialise, find work and switch off after performances for a short period of time, on the other it can cause more harm than benefit. In the long-term, regular alcohol use can result in dependency, sleeping problems, suppression of emotional problems and to an overall reduced sense of wellbeing (Foundation M. H., 2016). The decision to consume alcohol and other substances is without doubt a personal one. However, a collaborative shift within the industry towards socialising that does not include alcohol might aid the individual's decision to abstain from its use and abuse.

Lack of stable relationships and living situations

The persistence of financial difficulties and the unstable nature of their work may also cause actors to experience more interpersonal difficulties than those in other professions. In Robb, Due and Venning's (2017) study actors report that they often experience a deep sense of connectedness with their fellow actors. Indeed, a sense of community and belonging perhaps exists amongst acting colleagues especially because they understand the working culture, share common interests and face similar struggles. However, connections made during work are often short-lived and relatively superficial, due to the short-term nature of much acting work (Robb, Due, & Venning, 2017). Rehearsals for a theatre production, for example, usually do not last longer than a couple of months and within the film industry periods of working as part of a crew are even shorter. This means that actors are deprived of the opportunity to build stable, long-lasting relationships within a workplace (Van den Eynde, Fisher, & Sonn, 2016).

Furthermore, any sense of connectedness may be somewhat unreal, 'grown from the deliberate cultivation of an atmosphere of openness' (Robb, Due, & Venning, 2017, p. 80). Actors, in order to portray characters believably, must be open about their feelings with themselves as well as with their fellow actors. A quick connection may thus be created between the cast members as real feelings arise very readily during rehearsals and performances. However, very often this quickly gained sense of intimacy wanes when a job ends, leaving many industry professionals with a deep sense of loneliness. Actors may also

struggle if interpersonal problems with other cast members occur (Robb, Due, & Venning, 2017). It has been shown that bullying and harassment are commonly reported by actors (Prior, Maxwell, Szabó, & Seton, 2015) and the impact of such behaviour on actors' mental wellbeing has been shown in various population samples (Foundation M. H., 2016).

Further, research shows that personal relationships are often as unstable for actors as professional ones. A mixture of money problems, frequent unemployment and unstable routines make it difficult to find and maintain relationships outside the business. Most actors finance their creative work with a second job, and this means they have less time to develop social and romantic relationships outside their working lives (Robb, Due, & Venning, 2017). Frequently, actors do not have a regular daily routine, since when they do work, they work long hours or go on tour. This somewhat limits the opportunity to connect with others. Further, the majority of actors can only afford accommodation by sharing a house with multiple people even relatively late in life (Clark, 2014). This may provide them with opportunities to form meaningful connections outside work, but it may also restrict their capacity to settle down with a partner or start a family. This is especially true for those living in major cities where living expenses are high.

Studies among the general population have shown that friends, family ties and a stable living situation are three factors that significantly influence mental health in a positive way and work as protective factors against mental illness (Foundation M. H., 2016). Actors are far less likely to benefit from such factors that could function as a buffer to protect their mental wellbeing (Robb, Due, & Venning, 2017; Clark, 2014). Instead, they are exposed to a toxic mix of risk factors that clearly have the potential to diminish wellbeing. As such, choosing to pursue acting as a career is likely to have an impact on the actor's lifestyle and, in turn, mental health (Van den Eynde, Fisher, & Sonn, 2016).

Experience of devaluation, judgment and criticism

Despite the challenges, choosing acting as a profession is equal for most to following one's dreams against all odds and living an exciting life apart from the mainstream. This is initially experienced as overwhelmingly positive by most actors. Continuing within this profession gives them a feeling of pursuing something very meaningful in life, a feeling which they would lose if they decided to change profession (Robb, Due, & Venning, 2017). However, it seems the pitfalls increase the longer one works in the profession.

Actors face an extraordinary amount of criticism and judgment both from society and from personal networks. They may be criticised explicitly for pursuing their acting careers. For example, the mother of an actor comments, "My daughter does acting but she's just figuring out what she really wants to do" (Robb, Due, & Venning, 2017, p. 80). In this way, a career choice is dismissed as a foolish, childlike fantasy in a way that may provoke shame in the recipient of the comment. Another actor says,

> It's really hard in a world that's driven by rationalism, economic rationalism, to concretely defend the value of the arts. You feel invisible and you feel less valued for what you do (p. 80).

Another actor discussed in Robb, Due and Venning's (2017) paper reported that most actors will avoid admitting that they work as actors because they feel that to do so will undermine them in the minds of others. This may of course be reflective of the poor sense actors themselves have of what they do, but the aforementioned research suggests it is also linked to common, negative perceptions of those who choose to pursue acting as a career.

Judgment from society is then often accompanied by harsh criticism from other business professionals, such as directors, producers, and fellow colleagues. Due to the above-mentioned abundance of actors competing for work, professional expectations are very high. Often directors point out the painful truth that an actor can be quickly replaced when her work or behaviour is not satisfactory. As such actors commonly feel pressured, diminished, or threatened by those in more senior or powerful roles. Such a situation engenders feelings of demoralisation and humiliation. It is not surprising that

actors often suffer from exhaustion, an inability to switch off and a sense of personal failure (Robb, Due, & Venning, 2017).

A problematic combination of perfectionism and self-doubt

The negative effects of a lack of support and criticism by others are compounded by strong traits of perfectionism in actors (Robb, Due and Venning, 2017) This appears in two forms: either through chasing the "perfect piece of work" or simply as a character trait. Perfectionism is not specifically defined as a disorder within the DSM 5 but rather is seen as a lower order facet of compulsivity. It is, however, a component of a number of different types of personality disorder, research suggests (Ayearst, Flett, & Hewi, 2012; Stoeber, 2014). Even where perfectionism does form part of a personality disorder, merely having this character trait as an actor seems problematic, given the obstacles to success already discussed. The likelihood of actors experiencing emotional distress due to failing to reach their own goals is relatively high. A failure to meet one's own expectations may result in feelings of personal failure and frustration (Stoeber & Eismann, 2007). On the way to striving to meet these expectations, actors may suffer from an inability to switch off, and then exhaustion. Actors frequently feel they are trapped in a psychologically costly profession, commonly experiencing feelings of 'burn out' (Robb, Due, & Venning, 2017).

Actors also report a tendency towards experiencing intrusive thoughts or high levels of self-doubt (Robb, Due, & Venning, 2017). While on the one hand, self-validation is high among actors due to choosing the profession of their dreams, on the other hand, actors experience high levels of doubt and anxiety. Actors are typically very self-reflective (Goldstein T. R., 2009; Thomson & Jaque, 2017) which, generally speaking, is associated with positive mental wellbeing (Foundation M. H., 2016). However, on the negative side it seems that this trend in actors can lead to an over-analysis regarding behaviour and performance, and to ruminations about failures and a precarious work situation. This all stimulates self-doubt and high levels of anxiety. Ultimately, it may also trigger feelings of unworthiness that lead to depression (Robb, Due,

& Venning, 2017). Thus, it is no surprise that studies show a high prevalence of clinical depression and anxiety amongst actors (Thomson & Jaque, 2012; Van den Eynde, Fisher, & Sonn, 2016).

Problems with the work itself that has an impact on the actor's wellbeing

In addition to the factors discussed so far, acting itself is experienced as highly demanding in emotional terms (Robb, Due, & Venning, 2017). In order to portray characters convincingly, actors have to identify with the personality of the characters they play. Many actors spend a great deal of time researching a character and trying to embody that person. Over time actors are literally transforming themselves into the characters they portray using mechanisms of empathy and perspective-taking (Brown, Cockett, & Yuan, 2019). Many experience a sort of blurring between self and character during an identification process, in which they identify with the character to such an extent that the character's personality permeates their personal life and vice versa. In two qualitative studies actors described this phenomenon as 'boundary blurring' (Burgoyne, Poulin, & Rearden, 1999). This might be advantageous in some moments, for example with actors seeing the experiences lived by the character as an opportunity for self-discovery. However, mostly it has a negative impact on the lives of actors. Some experience extreme boundary blurring, which includes a loss of self-identity or an experience of having multiple characters fighting for ownership of the same body (Burgoyne, Poulin, & Rearden, 1999). Dissociative states may result, in which functions such as memory, consciousness, identity, emotion, perception, behaviour, body representation and motor control are disrupted and poorly coordinated. Such disruptions potentially lead to clinical disorders, including dissociative identity disorder, dissociative amnesia, depersonalisation, and states of derealization[3] (DSM_5, 2013).

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[3] Dissociative Identity Disorder: more than one personality state is present at times – also known as multiple personality disorder
Dissociative Amnesia: Impairments of recall of important autobiographical information
Depersonalisation: Periodical sensations of detachment from self and not feeling real
Derealization: Experiences of detachment from the immediate surrounding and sensations of unreality

A powerful identification with a character who is going through a traumatic experience may be particularly disturbing for the actor. Numerous authors (Prior, Maxwell, Szabó, & Seton, 2015; Seton, 2006; Thomson & Jaque, 2012) have warned of the potential of acting to cause vicarious traumatisation. Intense identification with a character may account for the reportedly high number of cases of unresolved mourning and trauma detected in actors (Thomson & Jaque, 2012). Problems with identification may be exacerbated by the fact that actors often lack specific skills (since these are not commonly taught by acting schools (Prior, Maxwell, Szabó, & Seton, 2015)) to de-identify with, or disconnect from a character, and to reconnect with themselves after a performance. This may result in many actors carrying over traits and experiences from the characters they have embodied into their personal lives. The result may be that '[t]raumatic on stage experiences [contribute] to actors' experiences of precariousness by intruding off-stage, in the form of unwanted thoughts, feelings, and nightmares involving content such as suicide, grief, physical violence, and rape' (Robb, Due, & Venning, 2017, p. 82). Especially problematic is when actors themselves have had adverse experiences of any kind in their past and then have to play roles which touch on similar experiences. This may be traumatic, and could lead to a clinical manifestation of trauma and PTSD (Seton, 2006). Unfortunately, there is a general failure within the industry to recognise this danger. On the contrary, as discussed earlier, there seems to be an implicit or explicit communication of *leave it* [your own psychological problems] *at the door* when entering the rehearsal space (Robb, Due, & Venning, 2017).

In some qualitative research carried out by Burgoyne et al (1999) into boundary blurring between self and character, one drama student said:

> In theory, we're supposed to learn this in class, but it's really not what you get taught even when you're taught Stanislavsky method or Lee Strasberg or any of that stuff. You're just really not taught how to attune yourself psychologically and how to get back out of that state. It just . . . sort of happens for most people, and, quite frankly, there are a lot of actors I know who can't get out of roles, who step into a part once they're cast and . . . whenever the show ends, that's when they start losing the personality aspects of their

character in their daily lives (Burgoyne, Poulin, & Rearden, 1999, p. 158).

My own awareness of this 'gap' within acting training, as well as related problems within the acting profession stems from my background in acting. Research shows, that actors often experience problems where either a character intrudes into their personal life or where their own personal emotions or conflicts 'take over' a performance (Burgoyne, Poulin, & Rearden, 1999; Panero, 2019). Thus, an actor may act out personal conflicts on stage or adopt the characteristics of the character she is playing. Daniel Day-Lewis, allegedly, engaged in a dialogue with the ghost of his father when playing Hamlet at the National Theatre in 1989. This performance brought him to a crisis that led him to leave the performance mid-way through and to abandon the theatre completely (Hattenstone, 2003). Heath Ledger also openly reported sleeping problems and major anxiety while performing the physically and mentally draining role of the Joker in Christopher Nolan's The Dark Knight (White, 2017). Participants in Burgoyne et al.'s (1999) research reported adopting the characteristics of one or more of characters in a play they were involved with, which led to a struggle between 'three characters [who were] fighting over the same body' (p. 164). A number of other authors/researchers reported similar difficulties for actors (Burgoyne, Poulin, & Rearden, 1999; Thomson & Jaque, 2011; Thomson & Jaque, 2012; Panero, 2019). All this evidence suggests that actors frequently blur the lines between the self and character in order to successfully portray their roles, and that they can suffer as a result of this blurring. Research (Burgoyne, Poulin, & Rearden, 1999; Nemiro, 1997; Tust-Gunn, 1995; Panero, 2019) shows that most professional actors, when asked, can recall an experience of one, if not both, of these states.

Since an explicitly psychological approach to acting found its way into the theatre with Stanislavski, professionals have 'explained' these problems by linking them either to the pre-existing personal problems of the actor (Furnham, 2018; Furnham, 2018; Nettle, 2005) or to faults in the training method, which insufficiently prepares actors for the psychological demands of

the work (McFarren, 2008; Arias, 2019). Clurman (1975), one of Strasberg's colleagues, was one of the first to explicitly associate actors' struggles during a performance with the personal problems of the performer. He held that some individuals were attracted to the 'Method' because they 'were seeking - unconsciously sometimes – for solutions to inner problems that had previously been neglected' (p. 62). Furthermore, the view is widespread that actors who use 'Method Acting' are particularly vulnerable, demonstrating 'possession syndrome'[4] after performances which might even lead to an alteration of their personality (Davison & Furnham, 2018). Heath Ledger's problems might, for example, have been fuelled by his extreme preparation methods of staying in his apartment or hotel room for months merely sleeping two hours a night, in an attempt to get hold of the emotional state (the schizophrenic mindset) of the character (Panero, 2019).

One might wonder whether limited skill, psychological vulnerability on the part of the actor, or a flaw in the method itself, might have a role to play. Up to the present day, such assumptions are widespread and do even have a theoretical foundation. Furnham (2018) for example points out that certain subclinical personality disorders are more common among actors, leading to the assumption that certain types of personalities are drawn to this profession[5]. Meanwhile, McFarren (2008), Tust-Gunn (1995), Konjin (1997), DePaoli (2015) and Arias (2019) highlight the risk connected with particular approaches to acting, in particular, the Method acting technique. Both Stanislavski and Strasberg's approaches may have their utility but equally they could also be potentially harmful. In other words, there is research to both support the value of, and to highlight the risks of their respective approaches. Crane (2011) in her research, for example, highlighted that practising acting may be even beneficial for the actor, in the sense that it may help the actor to work through particular conflicts or psychological difficulties. As this is not the

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[4] Furnham describes with this term a phenomenon whereby a character infiltrates the everyday life of the actor and the personality to the actor may be altered by this possession.
[5] According to Furnham, who completed a study on personality disorder trait profiles of 214 professional actors, showed that actors scored higher on the following scales: Antisocial, Narcissism, Histrionic, Borderline and Obsessive-Compulsive personality disorder scales. Male actors also scored higher on the following scales: Schizotypal, Avoidant, and Dependent personality disorder scale.

focus of my research however, I merely mention these conflicting opinions to give a better context for the following discussion.

The aim in this thesis is instead to focus on the creative journey of the actor and the role that resilience plays in this journey. In relation to this aim, the evidence presented throughout the next chapter may challenge concerns such as those presented above, or indeed may further highlight these concerns. Certainly the actor's identification with the character can make the task of acting challenging. How do actors cope with having to inhabit and express a multitude of different emotional conflicts with every new character? And how can they identify with and separate themselves once more from the character when needed? Naturally, personal problems on the part of the actor or flaws in acting methodologies may be problematic, but these notwithstanding, most actors struggle with the demands of getting in and out of role again and again. They might even be considered at significant risk of experiencing mental health problems in the course of their work (Tust-Gunn, 1995; Arias, 2019). In light of that, does the actor's resilience play a protective role in this process? I shall begin to explore the role of resilience specifically in helping the actor to do his/her work, in the discussion.

Chapter 1 - Literature review: The aesthetic work of the actor

This chapter will critique the literature that exists on the nature of the actor's aesthetic work. Whilst the chapter will present the narrative literature review that was conducted, it will begin with some reflections on the creative and aesthetic quality of the actor's work with reference to psychoanalytic theory. Because there is not a great deal of psychoanalytic literature on the subject, the wider psychological literature that discusses the nature of acting was surveyed. This adds to understanding of the psychological processes at work when actors perform. Finally, the literature on resilience which shows what is already know about how important resilience is for actors will be looked at.

To conduct this literature review multiple databases and libraries were accessed: PEP-Web, PsycINFO and Ovid, as well as general search engines such as Google Scholar. A series of combinations of key terms like 'actor', 'actors', 'performing artists', 'resilience', 'mental health' and 'creativity' were used. Literature from the fields of psychology, psychoanalysis, neuroscience, and acting was consulted. Literature that discussed the creative process, actors' professional work, and their physical and mental wellbeing was included. Unpublished literature, such as PhD theses, was also searched since such research represents more tentative, but nonetheless important research within this field of study.

Whilst the literature reviewed was primarily psychoanalytic, more general psychological and some neuroscientific literature was also included, as this literature provided particular insight into the creative processes at work when actors perform as well as their mental health. Further, literature on performing artists more generally was consulted, since this was relevant to further an understanding of wellbeing in actors; there are many similarities for example between the work of actors and that of painters and other visual and conceptual artists whose work requires the use of self-regulation and identification in order to create. Literature that spoke about 'actors' within businesses in a commercial or economic sense was excluded. A total of 25

books, 35 PhD theses and 145 papers were reviewed but only 11 books, 7 PhD theses and 84 papers were deemed relevant for this review. The rest served as secondary literature.

1.4   A psychological approach to creativity in actors

As this literature review will explore the creative process of the actor, it is essential to clarify first what creativity is, as far as that is possible. Creativity is a process that cognitive psychologists have researched since the nineteenth century (Trenos, 2014). Even before that however, Aristotle, in c. 335 BC, discussed creativity in relation to theatre in his *Poetics.* He established the first theoretical framework through which to understand the nature of theatre and creative performance. Academics thereafter have disagreed on how best to approach research into creativity, for example on the matter of whether to study the creator of a piece of art, or the creative process itself. Perhaps when the attempt to define the nature of the creative person failed to yield clear answers, researchers turned their attention towards the creative process.

A vast amount of literature exists on creativity, and there are several conceptualisations of creativity, some of which shall be described. Some of the better-known general models of creativity were developed by Hermann von Helmholtz (1898), who identified three stages in the creative process, and MacKinnon (1976), who developed a five-stage model. Both give helpful insight into the creative mechanisms that are part of the acting process. These models were then adapted for acting by Trenos (2014) who stated that whilst acting could be reduced to a simple creative model comprised of various stages, and understanding of the stages of the process could be helpful to understand the creative task at hand.

MacKinnon's model, adapted by Trenos for use with actors, specifies the following stages in the acting process:

> '1. **Preparation:** actors identify the problems they may incur in realizing their roles;
> 2. **Effort:** they work at home and in rehearsal to find solutions;

3. **Withdrawal:** if solutions are not forthcoming, they let the problems incubate;
4. **Moment of insight:** in the middle of the night, on the bus, under the shower a solution suddenly becomes apparent;
5. **Verification of insight:** they take this solution into the rehearsal room and test it, hoping the director will say: 'You hit it today!''

Trenos' model assumes that acting is a creative task, but some may deny that the actor is creative at all, seeing that he is merely bringing to life someone else's creation (i.e. the writer's) (Trenos, 2014). It ought not be forgotten that a central part of modern acting is 'impersonating' a character, which certainly requires creative input (Trenos, 2014). However, it has been argued that not all that passes for art is produced with creative skill. Hanna Segal (1952) for example distinguished between artistic creation that involved 'psychological processing' in comparison to 'simple representation'. She gives the example of an author who must get in touch with his own psychotic experience in order to write about a character who is having a psychotic episode. Thus she is highlighting that inner psychological work *may* be an intrinsic part of the creative process, but she also makes the point that not all creativity involves such work.

This stirs reflections on different approaches to acting, the shift from a traditional to a modern conceptualisation of acting with a naturalistic approach. Over time, theatre has developed from a purely visual representation of a play (in Greek theatre), to a theatre where there was an emphasis on presenting a caricature of the character (Commedia dell'arte), towards a theatre where there is an emphasis on not just 'showing' what the character is going through but actually sharing an experience of embodying the character's lived reality. This ought not to imply that earlier forms of theatre were not creative, however Segal highlighted something very important about 'aesthetic art', which shares a psychological experiences with the audience. In some contemporary theatre, and in other forms of acting, it is with her individuality and originality that the actor develops a character and shares a lived experience that elicits something in the spectator. According to Lewes

(1957) the creative actor is one who speaks through the character in the moment she represents it. The individuality of this act makes it unique and truthful. The actor's insight charms the spectator who is impressed by the actor's originality. Such acting is what would be defined as high quality acting or aesthetic creation in the arts.

In line with the above, it has been argued that acting, therefore, is creative in the sense that the actor requires a combination of skill (e.g. an ability to use acting methods to get into role) and a particular psychological disposition which enables him to take on, or identify with a character, or in order to fulfil the task of 'impersonation'[6] (Trenos, 2014). The question of what this particular 'psychological disposition' and 'psychological work' as described by Segal is, is one of the primary concerns of this research, and shall be returned to in the following chapter.

Factors that facilitate the creative process, in addition to internal psychological work, were further investigated by Runco (2023) who reflected on the role of autonomy in relation to acting. Autonomy, describes the actor's capacity to be self-directed and appears to aid creative expression. According to Runco (2023) autonomy correlates with other factors which aid creativity, such as playfulness, spontaneity, self-actualization and fantasy day-dreaming. All lead to the construction of imaginary worlds. While it may be the case that certain types of personality are naturally more creative, Runco (2023) recognised that creativity can also be learned. For example, he discussed the role of creative cognition (a set of mental processes that aid the generation of novel and useful ideas) in creativity. His exploration of creative cognition has taken several different paths such as studying cognitive processes such as memory or attention (which will be explored later in relation to the actor), creative problem solving, intelligence and language. This means the literature has considered whether and how different aspects of cognition, such as memory or attention,

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[6] Impersonation is Trenos term; given the foregoing discussion about how acting is so much more than impersonation it may not be the most fit term, but it was adopted here to be in line with the rest of Trenos terminology.

have a bearing on one's capacity to be creative. These aspects of creative cognition shall be explored in relation to the actors work below.

Runco (2023) holds that the ability to find problems to solve may be specifically relevant for the capacity to be creative, which seems to drive creativity/one to find a creative solution. Other aspect associated with creativity are imagination, originality, self-expression and innovation (Runco, 2023). In Runco's "Encyclopaedia of Creativity" Thomson and Godin (2020) reflect on the creative process of acting specifically:

> The creative process in acting involves several phases that generally remain consistent, although it may vary slightly depending on the medium and project. Often described with slight wording variations, the three phases include the initial interaction with the project, the script, and sometimes the cast, followed by a rehearsal phase that may vary in length, and finally, the performance phase (Thomson & Godin, Acting, 2020, p. 4).

As can be seen, a great deal of literature addresses the various acting methods, stages and creativity, but little is known about what happens on a creative level in the three stages described by Thomson and Gobin. While it seems unarguable that certain forms of acting are creative, and understanding that some of the requirements for creative acting, the question of how this process of impersonating happens and what constitutes good 'impersonation' remains.

The following three sections will review what the literature has to say about embodying or interpreting and representing a character, it will review the essential psychological capacities required by the successful actor. Finally it will elaborate the potential implications of the psychological demands of acting for actors' mental health, especially where this disposition/such capacities are is lacking or weak.

1.5 A psychoanalytic approach to creativity in actors

The psychoanalytic literature was consulted to gain insights about the creativity involved in acting. In the psychoanalytic field, artistic creation has

been defined in three different ways: creative work as sublimation, creative work as reparation and creative work as working in the transitional space. To not miss potential insights, all the psychoanalytic literature on creativity and aesthetics was reviewed.

1.5.1 Sublimation – or the interplay between primary and secondary processes as the source of creativity

The first attempt to define creativity within psychoanalysis focused on the creator. Freud (1908) initially described the artistic process as one of sublimation, wherein the sexual curiosity of an individual gets diverted into artistic creation. Freud (1911) thought that the psyche is regulated by two principles: the pleasure and the reality principle. What makes us feel good gives us pleasure. Unfortunately, reality restricts whether and how any means of obtaining pleasure is fulfilled. Therefore, if the reality principle judges the wish (for pleasure) as unacceptable, the wish is repressed and the drive that stimulated the wish either finds a substitutive expression or is repressed.

In "Creative writers and daydreaming" (1908) creative writing is described as a form of daydreaming by Freud, in that it is a substitutive fulfilment of a wish (Glover N. , 2009). Accordingly, the creative writer, just like a child whose wishes are thwarted, constructs replacement phantasies in which his wishes are fulfilled. Thus, the artist's wishful phantasy takes shape in the form of his art object, as the sublimation of forbidden sexual wishes. With that Freud locates the artist's creativity in her personality, or more specifically in her neurosis. While Freud assumed that creativity followed similar mechanisms as neuroses, i.e. constitutes a compromise between a wish and the expression of the wish, he saw the sublimation involved in creativity as a healthier psychological process because the outcome of the compromise was not a pathological symptom). The artist 'differs from the dreamer in one significant respect: he is able to find a way back to reality in his creation, and in that way this achievement resembles children's play, where the external world is moulded to certain desires' (Glover N. , 2009). Impulses are turned into art instead of into physical or mental illness.

While Freud (1905d) extensively wrote about sublimation, the concept remained slightly underdeveloped. The initial concept of redirecting unacceptable wishes towards more sociably acceptable ones was developed in 1905. In later publications after 1915, it was viewed as a function of the ego providing a form of defence and as contributing to the desexualisation of libidinal drive energy (Auchincloss, Vaughan, & Samberg, 2012). In several publications Freud (1908b, 1927a, 1930) explored the contributions of sublimation to character formation as well as its relevance for the creation of art and civilization itself. Freud held that libidinal energy was the main component of psychic activity and creative work, therefore Freud (albeit not explicitly) pointed with that to the psychological make-up of the actor (i.e. transforming libidinal energy through sublimation into creative work).

Freud (1906) described drama as a form of suffering, in which the actor is playing out his own neurosis. Drama, he wrote, often involves a fight against a superior figure, and almost always highlights an internal conflict, such as between the ego and the superego. A precondition for the spectator's enjoyment, is him being neurotic as well, Freud argued. Freud thought that art (including dramatic expression) could be considered alongside dreams and other neurotic symptoms. Sometimes it could have a defensive function, and sometimes a pathological quality (Freud, 1908). Abella (2013) writes,

> At a societal level, art is considered by Freud among "the greatest monuments of civilization" and a precursor of psychoanalysis in that it allows a direct grasp of deep psychological truths. However, at an individual level (both for the artist and the audience) it is equated with a pathological functioning in that it carries out a defence against reality (Abella, 2013, p. 58).

Authors such as Hammond and Edelman (1991) also claimed that actors scored significantly higher on neuroticism scales. However, with the development of this field of study, many theorists have overturned this conceptualisation. Even Freud pointed out that in contrast to the neurotic individual, the actor is able to communicate something of her neurosis to the public and the public may identify with it (Freud, 1906). This communication

often finds great appreciation when the public identifies an aesthetic quality in the communication.

Freud's understanding of creativity is limited by the emphasis he placed on its neurotic aspects as well as his focus on analysing the artist that helped support his development of psychoanalytic theory (Glover N. , 2009). He admitted himself that psychoanalysis, at the time, was not yet able to explore creativity fully. In "On the history of the psychoanalytic movement" Freud (1914d) stated that his book on jokes was his most concrete theory that could be used to conceptualise aesthetics and it was the closest he came to delivering a comprehensive theory about creativity.

In the evaluation of jokes Freud (1905c) distinguished three different stages that arise from primitive play: a) the child's delight in games of recognition, such as verbal play, which represent a saving of energy that makes it enjoyable; b) the second phase "jest", making concessions to account for the growing demands of intellect with the sole purposes to give pleasure; c) the third stage is the "joke proper" which is a tendentious joke with a distinct purpose to challenge a person or social inhibitions. There are two forms - the hostile, expressing an aggressive, defensive, or sarcastic attitude, and the obscene, encompassing exposure. Freud, however, did not develop the theory of jokes to offer an understanding of art and aesthetic value.

Ehrenzweig (1967), Gombrich (1966), Kris (1952) and Wollheim (1974) agree that Freud's model of jokes gives a fuller account of the psychic processes involved in the formal aspects of art and its relation to aesthetic pleasure. According to Ernst Kris (1952) the interplay of energies in the psyche conceptualised by Freud's joke theory is relevant to aesthetics. This, however, assumes that the conscious ego is the locus of aesthetics. Ernst Gombrich (1954) held that Freud's understanding of the joke as a preconscious idea that is briefly exposed to the working of the unconscious is what furthered the understanding of aesthetics. The form, or 'the dream-like condensation of meaning that is characteristic of the primary process' (Glover N. , 2009, p. 25), is what determines the aesthetic value rather than the content.

Freud thought primary processes used the same mechanisms at play in dream-work – condensation and displacement. Condensation is described as a mixing of different ideas and concepts in the unconscious – a fusion of ideas - while displacement conceptualises a separating of an idea or image from its original source and displacing it onto something else (Freud, 1900a). In his theory of jokes, Freud associated aesthetic processing with the primary processes and the working of the id. The joke uses these mechanisms to condense, displace and twist the rational structure of language similar to primary processes that create dreams (1905c).

Gombrich (1966) and Kris (1952) spoke about the adaptive, stabilizing aspect of aesthetic experience. An integrated ego is at the foundation of this concept as well as a clear demarcation between conscious and unconscious processes. For these writers, the value of art, therefore, lies in the degree of adjustment to reality, or how much dream-work is able to transform unconscious, repressed and unacceptable content into artistic material and to represent a stable, integrated ego. Only the unconscious ideas which are adjusted become communicable, and their value lies in both the idea as well as the communicable form (1966).

Anton Ehrenzweig (1962), in "A new psychoanalytic approach to aesthetics" held that primary processes are only chaotic from the perspective of rational thinking. He thought that primary processes offer a "hidden order" to those sensitive enough to perceive it, and artists harnessed this skill to create their art. Freud associated no intrinsic value to primary processes or the id, but this changed with later authors such as Rycroft, Milner and Winnicott, who thought exploring primary processes and the interaction with secondary processes would yield insights into creativity and artistic activity.

> The tendency in contemporary British psychoanalysis is to see the two modes as interlocking elements grounding all mental life: the creative force of the primary process as inextricably part of "sophisticated" secondary process thinking (Glover N. , 2009, p. 15).

Ehrenzweig was influenced by developments in the British School, which will be explored in the next section. It remains to say that Ehrenzweig established a three-phased description of the creative process, utilising Freud's early theories, that remains helpful until today:

> First, there is an initial fragmentation of reality, followed by the "manic-oceanic" de-differentiation of these fragments into a receiving womb within the unconscious, and then an eventual re-integration of fragmented reality into the new structure, which may or may not result in the creation of a physical object per se (Glover N. , 2009, p. 20).

The idea is that creative work involves a necessary psychic disintegration (of the self as well as the image of the external world) under the direct influence of the death instinct in the unconscious and the desire to rebuild the destroyed self or object with the help of the life instinct. This concept will be revisited in more detail in the next section. It is important to note that Kris and Ehrenzweig, came to similar conclusions about artistic capacity despite differing in their theoretical opinions. They both hold that using primary processes requires a deliberate return to a childlike (syncretistic) way of functioning, allowing an interplay between two levels of experience.

1.5.2 Symbol formation – or symbolising the character

Modern understanding of aesthetics builds on Klein's writing on aesthetics. Klein (1929) (1958) (1960) mostly spoke about artists in her writing as opposed to actors or other creative professionals, but one may extrapolate from her theorising, applying her ideas to actors. Klein thought that the artistic process resembles the normal course of psychic development in the infant, in that the infant both damages and longs to repair the damaged internal objects. Similarly, the artist creates in order to repair or re-create the once loved but now destroyed object, and to re-build the destroyed internal world.

When thinking directly about acting, Klein (1929) compared the role-play in acting with the role-play of children that she connected to the Oedipus

Complex. In line with Freud's theory of wish fulfilment, she observed that in play, children enact their sexual phantasies by taking the place of one of their parents during play. She believed a similar process occurs when the actor takes up a role and acts it out on stage. Klein (1929) wrote, '[i]n a number of cases it became clear that theatres … [and] ...performances … stand for parental coitus' (p. 101 f). Thus, she is saying that the actor assumes the role of one parent or the other, or becomes part of the couple as part of the performance. Ron Britton (1999), further developed Klein's thinking, suggesting that hysterics identify with one parent through projective identification and act out their role in all manner of places, not just on the stage. In this sense however, the hysteric takes a stage (i.e. assumes the parental role on stage), becoming one of the parental figures and acting out their own desired Oedipus Complex. Otto Fenichel (1946) put it as follows: at the core the actor is an exhibitionist that fulfils his needs through "a certain erogenous" and "narcissistic satisfactions" and who ultimately fears "castration".

The psychoanalytic terms used to describe acting in the paragraph above convey a sense of psychopathology. This may reflect both that acting is potentially viewed from a more pathological stance than other professions[7] outside the artistic realm and that the commonly used terminology in psychoanalysis influences our understanding in that way. Glover (2009) reiterates that Klein saw children's play as highly symbolic - as an expression of the inner world using mechanisms known from adult free association and dream-work. While Freud viewed only dreams as a symbolic discharge and as an alternative to words, Klein held that play had the same quality, separating it from the idea of psychopathology. Phantasy was the main physical outlet of energy and for artistic work this means that the actual physical activity (muscular work) can be by itself symbolic. In fact, the roots of unconscious phantasy can be traced back to bodily processes (Glover N. , 2009). Actors may use similar psychological processes to get into character, such as the

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[7] In terms of the artistic professions, there are still several stereotypes about creativity and madness. The literature has not yet explored whether it could be said that the artistic profession attacks more pathological issues or more issues arise because of the chosen profession. Research (Furnham, 2018) exists that both would support as well as negate this, so mostly likely this widespread opinion just reflects the mental health stigma and stereotypes present on this topic.

mechanisms of play and identification processes to become a character. While actors have concrete methods to work on characters and to get into role, potentially some of there work takes place on a level that is less consciously aware and more subliminal. Probably without being aware of this, they may use mechanisms present in concepts described by psychoanalysis, such as play and identification, to get into role and to perform.

Within psychoanalysis identification[8] plays an important role throughout development. Klein (1988a) recognised that the anxieties present in the first stages of sadism (and early development) activate the mechanisms of identification, alongside libidinal interests. According to her paper "Infantile anxiety situations" (Klein, 1929) anxieties spur creative achievement and working through of these anxieties is the basis of all development and creative achievement. Ferenczi put forward identification as the precursor of symbolism which furthered Klein's thinking (1930), in that she recognised that symbolism is the foundation of sublimation because it is through 'symbolic equation' that content comes into contact with 'libidinal phantasies'. And symbolic equations and identification represent the earliest forms of symbol formation (Glover N. , 2009). Symbolic equation and symbol representation are terms coined by Hanna Segal (1952) which she associated with the paranoid-schizoid position. She refined Klein's work to further investigate what gave high value to an artistic creation or aesthetic value. Within her contributions she emphasised the importance of symbolisation in the creative process, which she argued is born out of the capacity to mourn. 'Symbolisation' is an ability to transform an internal conflict into a symbol in the external world. In line with Klein's thinking concerning reparation of the object, Segal argues that the individual must have the capacity to realise the harm done to the object, the potential loss of the object, and to mourn the object. The acceptance of this potential loss is a pre-condition of the tolerance of depressive anxieties (mature anxieties including the realisation of destruction). Thus, Segal was first to associate mature psychological

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[8] Laplanche and Pontalis (1973) define identification as a psychological process whereby the individual assimilates parts of the other and thereby remodels themselves accordingly. Personality is developed out of a series of identifications with others (usually the primary caregiver at the beginning).

processes (i.e. tolerating depressive feelings is seen as mature as the loss of the object is recognised and mourned) with creative capacity. For Segal, artistic creation is, therefore, much more related to mental health than pathology. Abella (2013) writes that for Segal the artist's creative capacity lies in her ability to create harmony between the internal and external worlds.

> The artist does not withdraw from reality … on the contrary, a
> good artist needs to have "an extremely high reality sense", both
> in order to be in contact with his internal world and to master the
> material and technical aspects of his work (p. 59).

A mature artist's (and by extension an actor's) creation is not simply a pathological product; rather the actor or artist has a highly developed capacity to symbolise (Segal H. , 1952). She must be able to psychologically transform internal material and create a substitutive representation of a wish, object or object relationship, in the external world. Glover (2009) identified these ideas also in Klein's writing who held that symbolism is the basis of the individual's relation to reality and the outside world. The artist's work, then, contains parts of herself, and residues of the psychological work that are part of the act of creation. For Segal, the parts of the actor contained in the work, are processed parts which are representations of the artist, rather than being evacuated, unprocessed parts as would be the case if projective identification[9] was used.

Segal (1957) differentiates between the genuine capacity to symbolise and symbolic equation (Klein, 1930), wherein a creation is felt to concretely represent a part of the self. Her famous example is of a patient who cannot play the violin since the act is equated to masturbation in the eyes of the patient, rather than as a symbolic substitution of it. By contrast, when an author writes a book, she might create a character who is experiencing a psychotic breakdown that represents a psychotic part of herself. In creating the character, the author explores those aspects of herself which may be in part psychotic, and symbolises these through writing (Segal H. , 1974). Following

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[9] The term was first described by Klein (1952) and Laplanche and Pontalis (1973) describe projective identification as follows: it is a mechanism whereby the individual ejects parts the whole self, or part of the self into the external, normally another person, as they are refused within the self. This process happens in phantasy and follows an urge to harm, possess, or control the other or the projected parts of the self. Klein saw projective identification at work in several psychological conditions such as depersonalisation.

Hanna Segal's thought process, art becomes aesthetic when the artist has successfully undertaken such psychological work. Real or mature art and the achievement of an aesthetic experience is only possible when such work has been done. Work that is simply a 'pretty imitation' of a scene or scenario, that circumvents psychological stimulation in the artist as well as in the audience, cannot be considered mature art (Segal H. , 1952).

The focus on psychological processes which replaced 'pretty imitation', also entered the acting profession. With Brecht and Stanislavski there was a striving towards bringing psychological truth to the stage. The actor who simply represented the image of a character was replaced by an actor who worked on the character during rehearsal to discover the character's internal truth. This is how the theatre of 'pretty imitation' became the 'theatre of truthful character portrayal'. The exploration of Segal's writings offers a better understanding of the psychological processes at work when an artist creates and with that provides insight into the creative work of the actor. Central to acting, therefore, is the capacity to symbolise the information contained within a script to create a character in the external world. In "The function of dreams", Segal differentiates between symbolisation and projective identification alongside its meaning for development.

> When projective identification is in ascendance and the ego is identified and confused with the object, the symbol, a creation of the ego, becomes identified and confused with the thing symbolised … giving rise to concrete thinking. Only when separation and separateness are accepted [in the working-through of the depressive position] does the symbol become a representation of the object rather than being equated with the object (Segal H. , 1986, p. 90).

According to Segal only content that is adequately mourned can be symbolised and it is the ability of non-concrete symbol formation that leads to formation of phantasy, dreams, art, play and any other intellectual achievement (Glover N. , 2009). Identification and separation are, therefore, paramount for the actor who has to navigate the process of symbol formation. Potentially, when speaking about actors the term "character formation" could

be used. In acting, as well as in normal life, there will be moments when the mechanisms of projective identification[10] lead to an identification of the self with the object (or character) and the character is confused with the self. It is up to the actor to navigate this process of symbolisation by adequately using the mechanism of the depressive position and working through the internal and external conflicts to harmonise these.

Following Kleinian thinking, creativity required the interplay of the psychological mechanisms described above that require the presence of unconscious phantasy. Freud was the first one to introduce the idea that a part of our thinking is unconscious. Klein built on this by proposing:

> The operation of an instinct is expressed and represented in mental life by the phantasy of the satisfaction of that instinct by an appropriate object. Since instincts are active from birth, some primitive phantasy life is assumed to operate from the very beginning. Phantasies derive from two main sources. Primary phantasies are innate and wholly unconscious; … [and secondly] phantasies are largely of somatic origin, and an unconscious phantasy is a belief (conscious or unconscious) in the activity of concretely felt "internal objects" (Glover N. , 2009, p. 33).

Klein's concept of unconscious phantasy conveys the idea that a mental experience is associated with every somatic sensation which can be interpreted either positively or negatively. Depending on how the experience is perceived the response is either dominated by the paranoid-schizoid position or the depressive position – in the former, individuals are likely to see the experience either as wholly good or wholly bad, while in the latter they are more likely to view it as mixed. At the beginning of life all experiences are perceived on a bodily level and are concretely felt objects. Feeding, for example, is experienced as a passage of ego boundaries. With development, and the onset of the depressive position, phantasy is less connected with bodily sensations and becomes more symbolic as representational capacity

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[10] The term was first described by Klein (1952) and Laplanche and Pontalis (1973) describe projective identification as follows: it is a mechanism whereby the individual ejects parts the whole self, or part of the self into the external, normally another person, as they are refused within the self. This process happens in phantasy and follows an urge to harm, possess, or control the other or the projected parts of the self. Klein saw projective identification at work in several psychological conditions such as depersonalisation.

develops. While Freud distinguished primary and secondary processes, unconscious phantasy is a primary, central activity which means that perception modifies unconscious phantasy at same time as unconscious phantasy changes our perception. And its complexity increases with development (Glover N. , 2009).

Unconscious phantasy is relevant for actors, in that it is the locus of creativity; it is the basis of all thinking as well as creativity and furthers the understanding of how a series of internal structures interact when actors create their characters. Whereas Freud sees creativity (sublimation) as the simple transformation of an instinct, Klein and Segal view it as a complex interplay of reparation, play, unconscious phantasy, and the ability to use the life instinct to symbolise psychic content. Hinshelwood (1989) held that art could be viewed as the internal world introduced by Klein. The inner world (dominated by unconscious phantasy) interacts with the external world – these inner phantasies inform and structure the perception of the external work and determine creativity. This means the quality of unconscious phantasy may determine whether or not an individual can create art and it may determine as well in what form one can create it. If the actor has the capacity to symbolise and harmonise internal and external experiences, the actor may successfully create a character separate from the self. If the actor creates the character as a symbolic equivalent to the self, the public may see projected parts of the self in the character and the projections are determined by unconscious phantasy and how reality is perceived.

1.5.3 The transitional space – a space for play and creativity

Successors of Klein further developed Kleinian aesthetics by expanding the theory or introducing independent concepts. Wilfred Bion, Marion Milner, and Donald Winnicott proposed a more all-encompassing approach to creativity.

In 1962, Wilfred Bion (1962) introduced the theory of thinking in which he discussed the concept of *linking.* He held that what is attacked when mental illness takes hold are the *links between mental contents* and language is used

as a projection of split-off parts instead of using it to communicate (i.e. projective identification is used as an empathic non-verbal communication). Bion (1962) held that sense data needs to be processed to be assimilated and symbolised by the ego. Through the ability to use *alpha function* (what he termed the ability to create meaning) beta elements (unprocessed sense data) could be transformed into alpha elements (suitable for storage and representation). The mother's ability to process sense data (her *reverie*) allows her to modify the infant's tensions and anxieties so that that child can absorb the transformed thought – mother and child form a "thinking couple" and the mother becomes the first *container* for thoughts. With this the child develops this capacity to hold in mind and process sense data herself later in life. The process of transforming sense data into thoughts and these into words were described as a chain of linking processes. One of Bion's (1962) biggest contributions to understand creativity is, therefore, the concept of the *container-contained (i.e. mind and thought)*. The container which the child builds in herself forms the prototype of all thinking and creativity.

This linking process is influenced by the dynamic interactions of the paranoid-schizoid position and the depressive positions and subjected to an ongoing oscillation between fragmentation and integration. Creativity, according to Bion (1962), is the result of appropriate integration nurtured during the depressive position, while the splitting of parts, characteristic to the paranoid-schizoid position, disrupts these links and with that creativity. Where Klein emphasised the negative aspects of the paranoid-schizoid position and the achievement of the depressive position, Bion illustrates the interdependence between the two positions and saw the fragmentation of ideas as necessary to formulate new ideas. The container must be dismantled before it can be reformed. With this he added the importance of external reality as well as the possibility of the psyche's adaptability, which so far had been overlooked by psychoanalysis.

Marion Milner, in *A Life of One's Own* (1934) and in *On Not Being able to Paint* (1950) recognised that creating art required an awareness that allowed the artist to perceive the external with greater enrichment or meaning, grounded

in heightened body awareness and perception of reality (or as she called it a *wider focus*). This deep-rooted sense of connection was accompanied by a sense of fluid boundaries between the self and the world (a *subject-object union*). The meeting between self and other becomes the focus of artistic creation, reflected in the point of interaction with the medium (or chosen artistic method). She described this as an active surrendering of conscious ego control and discursive thought combined with relaxation and the awareness of phantasies relating to it. Like Bion, she suggested a "good" kind of self-loss through fusion may open new realities and reflect psychic creativeness but may also trigger feelings of death in the artist as the conscious mind perceives the ego's surrender to fusion-undifferentiation as dangerous. Milner held that the quality of perception allows a reaching down deeper into the realms of creativity. This culminated in her paper on Illusion (Milner, 1952).

Following Klein's notion of unconscious phantasy having sadistic and aggressive components, Milner described creativity as accompanied by phantasies of ingestion and incorporation whereby part of the external world is taken into the self in unconscious phantasy and reflects the destruction of the external (often loved) object. The skilled artist can overcome accompanying anxieties and bring what he has taken inside herself back into the external world. While Kleinian aesthetics focused on the external recreation of what was destroyed internally, Milner believed that the routes of creativity go back to a period before a loved object was found.

> Milner stressed that creativeness is not simply deployed for defensive purposes (as Freud [with the drive reduction and adaptation theory] and Klein [focusing on restoration] had suggested); it is a condition of subjectivity itself. If a heightened sense of subject-object union is an illusion, then it is an essential one because it helps to give life meaning and is valued for its own sake (Glover N. , p. 171).

A central part of art is the acceptance of illusion and disillusion, which fosters a richer relation to the real world. Whether the work of art was within the psyche or in the external world, creativity requires some sort of fusion. This reflects Milner's struggle with the traditional psychoanalytic approach, that

described states of fusion as manic states. She saw the state of one-ness and self-loss, or the indeterminacy of boundaries, as the basis of all psychic creativity (similar to Freud's oceanic feeling) that allowed a silencing of inner noise, a focusing on the background of experience and body awareness. To enter this state of fusion, a protective framework was required (i.e. a safe space to play) that would guard the individual against intrusion. This leads her to think about frames; the external frame, such as the therapeutic space or the frame of a picture, provide a framing structure, while the inner frame encapsulates the concentrated states of mind or mental productivity. Both Milner and Winnicott highlight the positive aspects of illusion, instead of the regressive nature described by Kleinian literature, and its role in establishing a sense of reality.

It was Winnicott who helped Milner envision her own observations about frames and blurring of boundaries more concretely. For the first time, psychoanalysis recognises both internal and external reality and a "third area" in-between which Winnicott described as the *transitional* or *potential space* – a space where the child is introduced to play and the use of symbols. The mixing of external stimuli with the normally inaccessible internal material of the unconscious forms a creation. Similar to Bion's theory of thinking, Winnicott holds that this type of perception originates in the context of the mother and infant dyad, in those interactions where boundaries between self and other were not yet established and the mother sensed the baby's needs (Winnicott D. W., 1945). Winnicott described this phenomenon as *primary maternal preoccupation*, a state of temporary "madness" during which the mother withdraws from external reality, becomes highly attuned to the infant and by holding his needs in mind supports his temporary illusion of oneness. If the infant has experienced good enough mothering, he acquires the capacity to link internal and external by either investing external experiences with fantasy or by internalising experiences. Winnicott (1953) described this hypothetical space between mother and infant where this processing happens as transitional space – a space between inside and outside.

The transitional space is the basis of creative work, according to Winnicott (1971). Self-discovery and the concomitant ability to create are made possible by the unique nature of free association or the transitional space. Children's play appears to have the same quality. When playing, the individual enters a state in which unconscious thoughts and external stimuli are perceived and intermingled contemporaneously (Winnicott D. W., 1953). Winnicott (1971) saw working creatively as a form of serious play. He wrote,

> [i]t is in playing and only in playing that the individual child or adult
> is able to be creative and to use the whole personality, and it is
> only in being creative that the individual discovers the self
> (Winnicott D. W., 1971, p. 64).

Playing, therefore, is seen as a form of self-discovery which, as the child grows, can also become a discovery of the world. If an actor allows herself to play, it enables her to learn more about herself and the character as an extension of herself.

> In other words, Winnicott viewed the aim of art and other creative
> activities as a person [artist] engaged with the world so that his
> subjectivity transforms objective reality and vice versa (Hagman,
> 2010, p. 20).

This allows for a feeling of real engagement with the world and a dynamic creation of a "new" object, as a new work of art or character for instance.

Townsend (2019), a painter and psychoanalyst, tried to describe the creative process of artists as a trajectory and utilising psychoanalytic theory with a modern approach to art. Townsend (2019) elaborated a model of the creative process in painters building on Milner (1950) and Winnicott's (1945) work. Her framework relies more on the terminology used by artists than psychoanalysis and therefore may provide a helpful reference for thinking about actors. Townsend (2019) identified eleven different phases in the artist's creative process: a state of pre-sense; a stage of research, preparation, and gestation period; a moment that is filled with the occurrence of an idea; a period of working with the Medium; the Artist's state of Mind; Art defined as Playing; Creativity in relation to Aggression and Destructiveness; Spaces and Frames

in the artists surrounding; the Artist's internal Frame; the state of the separation of the work of art from the artist; and recurring themes in different works of art.

According to Townsend (2019), the merging with an object described by Winnicott is reactivated when working with an artwork (or character) to engage with it creatively. When creating a work of art, the artist merges with her artwork to emotionally sense what is required to develop it from an idea to the final piece (Townsend, 2019). The period is characterised by strong identification of the artist with his work. With the progression of the work, the artwork gains more independence from the artist and becomes subject to continuous individuation. To detach the artwork from the artist, some capacity to separate (or dissociate) is needed on the part of the artist. Dissociation[11] allows the artist to separate from the artwork and to establish it as an object separate from the self. At the end of the process, the artwork should obtain 'his own life' (Townsend, 2019). The artwork, while being a newly created object, different from the self, is not a completely separate other but rather an other that was constructed based on an internal register. This is also what brings a piece of art or a character into external reality, Townsend argues, and allows the creator to separate from her creation.

Townsend (2019) described the emergence of an idea of the artwork at the beginning of the creative work using Winnicott's and Milner's theories. First the artist experiences an intuition – an intuitive 'hunch'. The idea emerges from the unconscious mind to the preconscious slowly entering awareness. It may form concretely either before or after having worked with the medium itself. Inspiration is triggered by the external which spurs an internal impulse, the 'pre-sense', or a preliminary idea about a piece of work which is 'not yet a clear image' of the work of art. Second to that, Townsend describes the phase of

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[11] The DSM-5 (2013) defines dissociation as a suspension of integration of functions such as memory, consciousness, identity, emotion, perception, behaviour, body representation and motor control. The DSM-5 lists five different dissociative disorders: dissociative identity disorder (which entails the presence of more than one personality state at one time – also known as multiple personality disorder), dissociative amnesia (impairments of recall of important autobiographical information), depersonalisation (periodical sensations of detachment from self and not feeling real), derealisation (experiences of detachment for the immediate surrounding and sensations of unreality) and other unspecified forms (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). In psychoanalysis it also stands for splitting of objects, but can also refer to separation.

preparation, research, and gestation that encompasses the artist actively working on the artwork and includes periods of frustration. It interlinks with Townsend's fourth phase - 'the occurrence of an idea' - when a clear image of the artwork emerges. Fifth the artist 'works with the medium' and physically engages with the artwork, such as starting to paint. Sixth Townsend discovered that artists developed an 'internal frame' when working creatively and each medium (e.g. a brush, a camera) requires a different 'internal frame'. A new internal frame must be developed for each medium – photography, paining, acting. Lastly, the artist 'separates from his artwork'. With the maturation of the artwork, a gradual separation from the artwork is initiated during which the artist slowly withdraws from the work of art culminating in the artwork establish a life of its own.

Alongside this, Townsend (2019) observed that artists had to mentally enter a state of mind to create – 'the artist's state of mind'. While letting go of daily reality and allowing the self to create through 'the extended self', the 'observer self' is needed to make rational decisions. A dominant 'observer self' may inhibit creativity and a balance between both states is required to create. According to Townsend (2019) the artist needs a 'contained space and specific external conditions' to enter this above-described creative state. For the actor, the theatre or rehearsal space assumes this role alongside the acting crew that is often described as a family. Townsend's study of creativity in artists provides great insight into the functioning of creativity in artists. Townsend, however, failed to provide more depth in her account of the mixture between processed internal content and a present cognitive mind that allows the actor to create his character and later perform the creation in real life on stage.

> As Hagman (2010) said, 'while the artwork's deeply subjective elements may derive from the artist's unconscious, the formal organizing principles stem from the preconscious-conscious systems' (p. 21).

It is the mixture of external and internal content that forms a work of art on a preconscious level. Through the process of taking the external inside,

processing it under the influence of psychic energies and then creating something new in the outside world, is the essence of creation. These mechanisms are far more complex than the concept of 'observing self' and 'extended self' could describe. This oversight may stem from the fact that Townsend discussed painters not actors and the present literature review may have provided a robust overview of these.

1.5.4 Creative inhibitions and the meaning of being creative

Winnicott (1945; 1953) also addressed the problem of potential blockages to creativity. He held that the child's engagement with the world will be blocked if the mother fails to provide the facilitating environment at the beginning of the infant's life. Winnicott, unlike Klein, believed that the ego is not present at birth but develops through the engagement with the mother and the outside world. Where the mother fails to provide a responsive environment, the infant might not develop a coherent sense of self and indeed may experience a sense of lack of self. Winnicott played with the idea that the origin of the artistic drive is a wish to fill an underlying lack of self that has at its origin the lack of good enough mothering (Winnicott D. W., 1971). Winnicott (1971) said that through creativity the individual might discover a self but, despite being valuable and beautiful, the work of art will never fill the underlying lack of self in the individual.

Lesley Caldwell (2011) wrote about the deprived artist and her attempts at dealing with a lack of responsive parenting in early childhood. In the face of early deprivation, Caldwell argues, an individual may attempt to hold himself together by creating an artwork. Holding is another concept that Winnicott developed (1960) to describe the capacity of the mother to hold her child both physically and mentally; to keep her child and its needs in mind and, through this capacity, provide a soothing space for the infant in the outside world. The infant feels held as in safe, content and held in mind. When such experiences are lacking, the infant may develop a capacity to hold herself, for example through thumb sucking or some other form of self-soothing. Caldwell puts forward the idea that during the creative process a form of projective

identification with the mother can be reactivated and the artist can provide the responsive parenting she had earlier lacked, through this identification, or through becoming a kind of mother to herself. Caldwell (2011) writes:

> Art here is the artist's attempt to reproduce (or improve on) the earliest resonant forms made available through maternal responsiveness. The artist's chosen medium provides a continuing encounter with the mother's initial recognitions, a struggle to create a medium more adaptive and responsive to need than the original other, and then, through this medium, to create an object that more fully contains and realizes the artist's self (Caldwell, 2011, p. 1079).

In the book *On Not Being Able To Paint* Milner (1950) observed that when treating one of her patients Susan, Susan would paint in-between sessions which allowed her to bridge the gap and hold herself in the absence of the analyst. This patient also experienced lack of maternal care and for her creating art became a vehicle to process this (1950). When reading psychoanalysis, it may sometimes seem as though aesthetics and creativity are described with a psychopathological lens. However, for both Milner and Winnicott, being able to create is a sign of mental wellbeing as the source of creativity has the same basis as free association and play; or to say it in Bion's words, it is the source of all thinking and linking of mental content. Psychoanalysis struggled to define creativity and aesthetics for a long time because it meant that psychoanalysis had to describe the nature of thinking, how symbols are formed involving unconscious processes and how the individual interacts with the external world to communicate these symbols. The ability to access both primary and secondary process, to symbolise and make adequate mental links is central to the actor. Alongside this, the following psychoanalytic concepts appear central to the actor's work. Actors ought to know how to navigate illusion and disillusion, to contain and hold thoughts and concepts in mind as well as maintain the capacity to play. On top of that actors, as well as other artists, need to navigate the complex stages of creation as described by Townsend and navigate the needs of the creation as well as their own self.

1.6   Empirical Research

After reviewing the psychoanalytic literature, psychological and neuroscientific studies were consulted to expand on the psychoanalytic understanding of creativity and aesthetics. A significant amount of research has been conducted in the psychological and neuroscientific field that ought not to be overlooked. This literature was reviewed to bridge the gap in psychoanalytic literature on acting and actors. Attention was given as well to literature that explored the relationship of mental health to the creative task and potential risk factors of the creative process to the actor's mental health. Previous studies have identified diverse phenomena connected to acting, for example, peak performance and anxiety, theory of mind, empathy, self-regulation, a fluid sense of self, boundary blurring, dissociation, and trauma. These will be discussed below and provide the context for the empirical research presented from Chapter 2 onwards.

1.6.1   Theory of mind, empathy, emotion regulation and how actors use these cognitive skills to act

This thesis concerns itself with exploring the creative work of actors. One of the first common assumptions is that actors are particularly "suitable" for this profession. Numerous studies claim that the actor's personality is more extroverted than that of the average person, making them a better fit for acting. The actor is open to experiences, agreeable, but also neurotic (Nettle, 2005). In comparison to non-actors, actors also showed more antisocial, narcissistic, histrionic, borderline, and obsessive-compulsive personality disorders traits (Furnham, 2018). Questionable with these studies, however, is what came first. Was it their personal characteristics that attracted actors to this profession, or was it the influence of the profession that led to the development of these characteristics in actors? Exploring this question is beyond the scope of this study and is only mentioned here to acknowledge that this study does not focus on the personality of the actor, nor does it claim actors require particular personality strengths in order to act. In the following discussion the creative path of acting is explored.

To start this discussion, it may be helpful to review Goldstein's (2018) writing on acting and pretend play and the potential link between the two. She suggests that acting resembles pretend play on several levels, in that similar cognitive, emotional, and social skills are required for both tasks. The main difference lies in the fact that acting is bound to the 'reality' of a script, unlike pretend play which is freer. Furthermore, in acting there is a striving for authenticity (for realism and naturalism on stage), while in pretend play this is not the case. Goldstein held that actors use a combination of cognitive, social, and self-regulating skills to create their characters, in a way that is however similar to the way a child conducts her play.

On a cognitive level actors need to understand the script, the characters, and the task of acting itself. They need to be able to differentiate between real and fiction and be able to quarantine this real world from the world of the play. Additional cognitive functions required include an ability to switch between tasks[12] and to employ high executive functions to understand the needs of the play and the needs of the self as a performer, and to switch between those. At the same time, actors need to be able to regulate their emotions and behaviour so as not to act impulsively. Other more complex mechanisms, such as memory, language, and the ability to lie, may also be employed, according to Goldstein (2018).

Noice and Noice (1997) explored the actor's creative work in their book *The Nature of Expertise in Professional Acting: A Cognitive View*. They discussed the training for professional actors, psychological research, learning strategies, ability for recall, script learning and how to best approach this. Interestingly, their empirical research focused more on this initial stage of acting – the script analysis. Noice and Noice (1997) observed that, before learning a script actors divide the script into segments (so called *beats*) which demonstrated benefits to memory retention and memory recall. In light of the competitive job market, and high level of effort required to land a professional

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[12] Different tasks include, for instance, self-processing to regulate emotions, using cognitive skills to remember the lines, using awareness of the physical body, and the surrounding to navigate the performance.

acting job (as discussed in the introduction), Noice and Noice (1997) highlighted:

> In a way, the heart of skilful acting technique is the opposite of the type of skill acquired when a musician practices scales or a tennis player works on a serve. The actor is always told not to bring in what was rehearsed yesterday, but to do the scene now – for the first time. The only repetitive practice involved in acting training entails the acquisition of collateral skills, such as strengthening and cultivating the speaking voice by means of vocal exercises, or keeping the physical instrument (the actor's body) in peak condition through dance training, fencing, acrobatics, and so on. This is not to say that actors do not improve by virtue of continued effort. However, the improvement does not come as a result of deliberate practice but of repeated performance. In effect, every performance is a practice session in the creation of spontaneity (Noice & Noice, 1997, p. xiv).

With this Noice and Noice emphasis the validity of experience over practice, in that while practice increases the technical skill (e.g. physical and vocal skill and knowledge), only professional experience aids professional enhancement and acquisition of acting skill (e.g. creative sensitivity to react to actions on stage appropriately). With this they also distinguish practical skills (voice and physical fitness) from emotional skills, on which a concise theory is lacking. The heart of acting skill is to commit oneself to the character in an artificial situation.

> Fine actors are fully aware they are on stage, but they *choose* to immerse themselves in the character's ongoing reality, resulting in behaviour that is exciting, unpredictable, and palpably alive. Perhaps the potential to acquire this ability is not innate but is a result of parental encouragement of fantasy in early life (Noice & Noice, 1997, p. xvi).

While this is an interesting thought, neither their book nor this thesis aim to explore whether acting capacity is innate. Rather the focus of Noice and Noice's research is on cognitive learning strategies when preparing for roles. Two empirical studies by Noice and Noice (1991; 1996) explored different stages of the acting process and described it as a combination of two steps: 1) the in-depth analysis of the script and 2) the rehearsal and performance. Concerning script analysis Noice (1996) emphasised the cognitive exploration

of the sub-text of a script, while rehearsal and performance referred to the state of actively experiencing and reacting as the character. Noice (1991) held that actors relied on cognitive skills such as memory recall and optimal memorizing of the script. Acting involves the analysis and study of a script alongside repetition which allowed the actor later to retrieve lines from long-term memory and respond spontaneously to cues. Novice actors often fail to achieve this skill of recall without hesitation while also conveying an interesting and emotionally complex character. It is the combination of optimal memory recall and embedding emotion in the performance in that specific moment that defines acting skill. While discussing these aspects of acting in detail, Noice and Noice did not give further detail about the specific cognitive skills required to achieve these levels of excellence.

Later it is Goldstein (2009) who describes the psychological skills required by actors more concretely. Among these Goldstein includes social skills, self-regulation skills and emotional skills. Goldstein (2009) emphasises that actors first must 'understand themselves' before they can understand characters and their physical, mental, and social being. Thinking about someone else at such an intense level as actors do, requires a psychological way of thinking about others: a theory of mind.

> Theory of mind is the ability to understand another's beliefs, desires, and intentions. This is related to the concept of cognitive empathy, which is the ability to understand what someone else is feeling, as well as emotional empathy, which is the matching of someone else's feelings, although separate from compassion and sympathy, which involved feeling badly or sorry for someone else (without necessarily matching what they are feeling) (Goldstein T. R., 2018, pp. 161-162).

Simply put, they require refined social skills to understand the character, the world of the character and themselves.

After understanding the character, actors need to work on their ability to self-regulate to become the character. According to Goldstein (2009), self-regulation and emotional regulation are at the heart of character portrayal. The actor subjugates their own behaviour, their physicality, their voice, their

emotions to those of the character, with the aim of developing the character and portraying this newly developed character. Goldstein (2009) described emotion regulation as a central part of acting. By recalling and reusing emotions either from one's past or ones created in fantasy, actors form their characters in the service of portrayal on stage. Goldstein spoke about emotion regulation as an,

> …ability to understand and to control one's emotions. … [it] can occur in more or less adaptive ways. Although emotions are sometimes useful and desirable, there are times when people need to change or modify their emotions, and the strategy they choose to do so can be adaptive or dysfunctional (Goldstein T. R., 2009, p. 8).

When actors use emotional regulation to bring a character to life, they presumably down-regulate their own self and up-regulate the character's self. This is how a 2D character from the script is transformed into a fictive 3D human being.

In addition to the above, Goldstein (2009) further develops her model to include the use of empathy in character creation. In a paper on the psychological aspects of acting, she describes acting as requiring a combination of good theory of mind, empathy, and emotion regulation. To act, actors must first develop a profound understanding of the character – their physicality, their behaviour, and their inner working model (what Noice and Noice (1997) described as practical skill and subject of detailed script analysis). Goldstein suggests that what Noice and Noice described previously is essential to the development of a 'theory of mind' of characters. Goldstein defines theory of mind as follows:

> By theory of mind, I refer to the ability to accurately "read' or infer a person's inner state given knowledge of the person's facial expression, body language, prosody, verbal utterances and knowledge of information available to the person in question (Goldstein T. R., 2009, p. 7).

Acting training urges actors to analyse and understand their characters to facilitate their realistic portrayal. This includes physical and vocal examination

as well as knowledge about the character. Thus, according to Goldstein, actors must both have some theory of mind in order to approach the character in the first place, and through engaging in this type of work may develop an even more sophisticated sense of theory of mind.

Following that, actors work on experiencing the emotions of their characters in order to help them to portray these emotions convincingly on stage. Goldstein defines empathy

> …as the ability to feel another's feelings … [distinguishing] empathy from compassion or sympathy for another person and from prosocial behaviour …[as well as] from the understanding of another's emotions, which is actually a component of theory of mind (Goldstein T. R., 2009, p. 7).

A variety of acting methods emphasise the need for use of empathy by actors, to help them feel the character's inner world. Method Acting, for instance, makes use of real-life emotions to create this connection, while Stanislavski trained actors would rather rely on creating a fictive equivalent. Gallagher and Gallagher (2019), who looked at empathy in relation to actors in more detail, also emphasised the relevance of empathy.

To conclude, it may seem that theoretically speaking anyone who acquires the right set of skills can act. Such skills include the cognitive skills to comprehend the play, memorise the lines, and to understand the meta-representation of fiction and symbolism. Social skills also help the actor to conceptualise the human aspect of the play[13] and emotional and self-regulation skills aid in the creation of a character, to whom the actor lends a body and a voice. Not all of these skills may be required at the same time, but some combination of them is necessary to act. And not everyone may be able to access or use these skills at all. Those who can may be drawn to, and may excel in the profession, whilst others who are less able to, may be drawn to other fields. It is also true that even amongst those who are successful and who earn a living from their

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[13] Within this thesis I often refer to 'the play' or 'theatrical performance', but I also could be speaking of a film, or any portrayal of a character/story, whatever the medium is. Albeit differences exist, most of the theoretical and practical work is independent of the type of performance.

profession, not every actor is seen as an excellent actor, or is felt to 'have the edge'.

The literature presented in the next section would suggest that creating a character and succeeding as a professional actor, requires more than just a good theory of mind, and the capacity to put aside or regulate one's own emotions. Numerous studies reveal that actors also create characters by adopting a fluid sense of self and through blurring the boundaries between self and other. This seems to require additional skills aside from a good theory of mind and an ability to down-regulate personal emotion.

1.6.2 Boundary blurring and how actors make use of it to become the character

This section will explore in more detail what allows the actor to engage with characters successfully and perform them on stage. Research into actors, or acting specifically does not define well what acting actually is. This is somewhat surprising given the multiplicity of different acting styles that exist, and the fact that acting is not a young profession: one would expect that an actor or observer of the profession would have come up with a conclusive definition. Potentially, the diversity of styles and approaches is what makes finding such a definition challenging (Trenos, 2014). Noice and Noice's theory and Goldstein's model of acting, described above, with an emphasis on cognitive skills such as memory recall, theory of mind, empathy, and emotion regulation are helpful as they create a theoretical framework for the discussion that will follow.

The literature reviewed below suggests that the ability to manage fluid boundaries between self and other is a key component in the actor's creative work. The twelve papers presented below explore the 'sense of self' in actors, which appears to be more fluid than in the general population. One study (Crane, 2011) recruited actors and conducted qualitative interviews with them, specifically with the goal of understanding actors' sense of self. The research showed that actors have a particular way of experiencing their self and their

sense of identity, especially when performing. Actors described this sense 'as fluid, dynamic…[and] constantly changing' (Crane, 2011). According to numerous research findings this may be a prerequisite of their profession and/or potentially a direct consequence of working as an actor. Actors may either use or acquire a fluid sense of identity to work with their character.

To facilitate understanding of this concept of fluidity it might be helpful to consider a study by Meyer, Zhao and Tamir (2019) on non-actors which showed that self-processing can be altered. 185 participants were asked first to rate their own personality (rating a set of personality characteristics on a Likert-Scale) between 0 and 100, then another person's perspective (on the same scale), followed by rating their own personality again. Results showed that participants' self-concept seemed to have changed. The researchers concluded that identifying with another person impacts the way participants view themselves, specifically, leading to an adoption of characteristics of others, and abandonment of some of their own. Astonishingly, even after a 24-hour period, this alteration of the self was still present. 'By simply thinking about another person, individuals may adapt their self to take the shape of that person' (Meyer, Zhao, & Tamir, 2019, p. 14).

This study did not involve actors, but it is interesting to consider the implications for actors. It is both interesting and concerning that by spending sometimes a significant amount of time thinking about another person, such as a character one is trying to identify with, one's sense of self can be impacted. Actors do far more than think about another person, they adopt others' perspectives, really get into their shoes. Thus, actors may experience significant and even problematic shifts in their self-experience when preparing for and enacting a performance. Both this study and Crane's (2011) work, which reveals actors' fluidity of self, reveal an essential aspect of the actor's self-experience that may help them to try on or become different characters with ease.

While Crane's study is the most recent study on this subject, there are others that support her claim. A longitudinal study (Hannah, Domino, Hanson, &

Hannah) from 1994 also highlighted how actors' personalities can alter as a result of the acting process. The personality profiles of 14 acting students were compared with those of the characters they were playing. The students completed the Adjective Check List (ADL) (1983) four times – before rehearsal, during rehearsal, during the performance period and after performance. The results were compared to the profile of their characters. Whilst no similarities between the students' personalities and those of the characters were evident when the roles were assigned, the students' personality traits progressively started to blend with those of the character as time went on (Hannah, Domino, Hanson, & Hannah, 1994).

Another study (Timmons, 1945) with 40 college acting students examined the personality changes which took place amongst them from the beginning of the first preparation for up to the final performance of *Hedda Gabler* by Henrik Ibsen. To track any personality changes that occurred, researchers used The Personality Inventory by Bernreuter (1931) before the start of preparations for, and for five weeks after the conclusion of the play. The results showed a decrease in neurotic tendencies and an increase in dominance (in line with the central character of the play) which indicates that acting potentially changes the personality at least for a certain amount of time (Timmons, 1945). This research, therefore, also substantiates the theory that personality is malleable.

Another piece of research (Burgoyne Dieckman, 1991) that explored dynamics observed during a rehearsal period, showed that actors are not only sensitive to the influence of a character on their personality, but also to the influence of colleagues' personalities, to the circumstances of the play. While the ensemble was performing Arthur Miller's *The Crucible*, the group dynamic started to mirror the dynamics at work in the play, becoming a sort of hysterical enactment of the play (Burgoyne Dieckman, 1991). This reflects the views of Nuetzel (1995; 1999; 2000), a professional actor and psychoanalyst who studied acting through a psychoanalytic lens[14]. According to Nuetzel, the rehearsal process and the dynamics that develop within the acting group are

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[14] He tested this theory by participating in a play himself, observing his own behaviour as well as that of colleagues. He interpreted the findings psychoanalytically.

often shown to be enactments of aspects of the play. This phenomenon, Nuetzel argues, also helps actors to get to know their character better.

The processes described above, have been defined by Nemiro (1997) and Burgoyne (1999), as facilitating a 'blurring between self and character'. Nemiro's small study (1997) sought to define the creative process by conducting structured interviews with three actors. It found that the emotional burden of taking on too much of a character's identity, even if the actor can maintain self-awareness, is very great. According to Nemiro, actors often go on stage with 'a fear of going mad and losing oneself in the character's identity' (p. 235).

Burgoyne's (1999) study, which featured eight actors, helped to give this phenomenon a name: 'boundary blurring'. According to the findings of the study a blurring of boundaries between self and other occurs when actors work with characters, and especially when actors use 'Method Acting' techniques to emotionally connect with the character. The actor's mental stability and his ability to control this boundary blurring determines how effectively she is able to create a character. Where this control is ineffective, emotional distress will likely result.

The concept of blurring resembles the process of merging with an artwork which Townsend (2019), in her psychoanalytically oriented study, described. Boundary blurring, or merging with the character, allows the actor to blend character and self temporarily. Experiencing the personality traits of the character, whilst at the same time retaining some sense of self, allows the actor to create or embody the character. It would seem therefore that having a relatively fluid sense of self, as well as a capacity to allow boundary blurring, are both helpful, if not essential, in the initial period when the character is created.

It could be hypothesised that through the usage of self-regulating strategies, as described by Goldstein, actors make themselves or their body available to the character. This regulation of self allows a blurring of boundaries between

self and other. Doing so may be beneficial for their work but may also create problems with their own sense of identity. This point will be revisited in the section on risk factors and the section on resilience, while this section focuses on the creative process itself.

1.6.3 Identification and how actors step into the shoes of the character

This section elaborates how actors identify with their characters. Neuroscientists described the identification process in actors as involving two mechanisms taking place at the same time: a) a deactivation of self-processing and b) an intense form of perspective taking. N. Brown, Cockett and Yuan (2019) discovered through an fMRI study that when actors perform, they deactivate an area of their brain which is responsible for self-processing. 15 actors were asked to answer personal questions while their brain activity was scanned. First, they were asked to answer from the first-person perspective. Secondly, they had to answer from a third person perspective and thirdly, they had to 'enter' the character and respond as either Romeo or Juliet. Results showed that each time the actors had to identify with a character, they had to undergo a process of alienation from self. They 'became' the character instead. Acting was, therefore, described by the researchers as a process that initiates a global reduction of brain activity responsible for self-processing. This led researchers to suggest that acting is an intense form of perspective taking, with a sense of embodiment of another which leads to a state of possession or a 'loss of self' (Brown, Cockett, & Yuan, 2019). This leads them to suggest that acting is more than theory of mind about the self and the character, as previously put forward by Goldstein (2018). It is much more a *becoming* the character, which requires a strong capacity for identification, as described by Goldstein in other publications (Goldstein T. R., 2009).

Alongside this, actors require refined regulatory capacities and a sense of self and other to navigate this process as suggested by a study by Hetzler (2012). Hetzler conducted structured interviews with 31 actors in which he aimed to explore actors' emotional self-experience when acting. Results showed that actors experience a 'split' between their own self and that of the character they

play, whilst they are performing. Thus, they retain both a sense of self and a sense of the character. Emotions on stage were described identical to those in everyday life with the difference that they are brought about by the character in the moment of the performance. This is to say that actors can maintain a level of self-awareness even when identifying strongly with a character. It seems likely, therefore, that actors can to some extent (presumably to varying degrees) differentiate between their own personality traits and those of a character. Again, Goldstein's (2009) research into actors' capacity to self-regulate is relevant. It appears though, that in order to regulate well, actors have to have a good sense of their own self and a good capacity to distinguish this from the character's characteristics. They need an ability to compartmentalise and self-regulate.

Relevant to this self-regulating capacity, is the psychoanalytic concept of the 'observing ego'. The concept describes a helpful self-observing or self-reflecting capacity which may be observed in patients in analysis (Laplanche & Pontalis, 1973). With the development of the structural model, and his first nomination of the id, ego and superego, Freud identified a certain observing agency or observing capacity within the mind (Freud, 1923). Fenichel (1938a) brought this concept to the consulting room by describing the analyst as someone who has to communicate to the 'observing ego' what conflict is expressed by the 'experiencing ego'. If the 'observing ego' functions well enough, it invites introspection that may lead to insight. Impairment of this capacity, on the other hand, may result in psychical disorders like dissociation, depersonalisation, and identity disturbances. Daydreaming, fantasising, intoxication, fatigue and hypnosis merely diminish this function and exposure to high affect (such as transference) may transiently impair it.

This concept sounds similar to what the actors in Nemiro's study (1997) described as the 'third-eye' that overlooks the performance and might aid our understanding of how the actor may 'control characterisation'. Patricia Townsend (2019) described concrete examples of this in her qualitative study of 33 artists suggesting that the artist must juggle two different states of mind - the artist's 'extended self' and his 'observer self'. On the one hand, the artist

must let go of daily reality, and on the other hand, he must maintain enough control over his actions to make rational decisions about his creation. The extended self and the observer self should remain in a certain balance.

Without mentioning the concept of the 'observing ego', Goldstein's understanding of the 'artist's state of mind' comes very close to this concept. The capacity for self-regulation which she describes is central to the process of character building (Goldstein T. R., 2009). Actors, during this process, lower the activity level of the 'observing ego' when they are required to channel intense fantasies about the character they are wanting to become (Thomson & Jaque, 2012; Panero, 2019). At the same time, they need to maintain high levels of self-regulating and reflective capacities to control the mechanism. Somewhat problematically, actors seem to be continuously exposed to high affect laden situations[15] (Seton, 2006) that may result in a suspension of this function. This might explain the frequent occurrence of psychological disturbance that is linked to a failure of the observing ego function (Laplanche & Pontalis, 1973).

The team of neuroscientists mentioned above (Brown, Cockett, & Yuan, 2019) added a scientific explanation to this by showing that during performance, the actor experiences a division of attentional resources. Their study, described above (p. 80), not only examined deactivation processes in the brain but also looked at those processes that were activated during performance. Areas where an activation occurred include the precuneus[16], the pSTS (posterior superior temporal sulcus) and the TPJ (temporoparietal junction)[17]. The areas of pSTS and TPJ aid the personification process, while the precuneus is responsible for managing attention. Given that the precuneus is responsible for attentional orienting, mental imagery, and episodic retrieval the researchers suggested the heightened activity in this area is due to a split of

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[15] With 'affect laden situations' Seton refers to emotionally demanding scenes for actors; extreme examples would be rape scenes or other violent experiences that actors may have to represent.

[16] The precuneus is a brain region which is involved in several complex brain functions; among others the recollection a memory, integrating information on perception of the environment, reactions, imagery strategies, memory retrieval and affective pain responses. Thus, it responds to several cognitive processes (Mendez, 2022).

[17] The superior temporal sulcus, and the temporoparietal junction, are brain regions responsible for activities relating to social cognition, such as empathy and perspective-taking (Sturm, Haase, & Levenson, 2016).

these attentional resources between two levels of experience, that of the character and that of the self.

> This is not simply the "divided attention" of multi-tasking procedures, but a fundamental split of resources devoted to a maintenance of one's identity as a conscious self. According to this interpretation, activation of the precuneus would represent a dispersion of self-related attentional resources, whereas deactivation would represent a focalization or internalization of such resources', as in meditation (Brown, Cockett, & Yuan, 2019, p. 16).

Thus, one portion of the subject's available attentional resources are devoted to managing the self (suppressing the self and opening up to the third person perspective) while another manages the character. Brown et al. (2019) call this phenomenon a double consciousness. Their work may constitute a neuroscientific understanding of what psychoanalysts understand as the work of the 'observing ego'. Within the qualitative studies too, actors are shown to distinguish between 'performer consciousness' and 'ordinary consciousness' (Panero, 2019; Nemiro, 1997; McFarren, 2008) and describe an alteration of their consciousness when performing. Maybe this concept of the 'observing ego' brings us closer to an understanding of which processes are involved during performance.

Down-regulation of self-processing and up-regulating the character traits of the character being portrayed, lead to a split in resources. One cannot direct the same attentional resources at two different tasks simultaneously. Thus, the more space is given to a character, the fewer resources are available for self-regulation. Therefore, the consequence of a deactivation of self-processing in the brain is that the character takes precedence over, or even takes the place of the self.

> Acting might be akin to a deliberate process of possession, i.e. a substitution of the actor's self by the character due to their embodiment of the character (Brown, Cockett, & Yuan, 2019).

Scientifically speaking, the deactivation in the mPFC (medial prefrontal cortex)[18] and the ventral part of the dmPFC (dorsomedial prefrontal cortex)[19] pointed to changes in the brain that are linked to an increase in perspective taking. Identification was described by the researchers as an intense form of perspective taking, whereby the actor is not only role playing but also reflecting about the character. The actor must have a degree of third-person knowledge about the character to fulfil this task. While acting theories emphasise the importance of theory of mind only in the preparatory phase, it may be present also during performance.

Samual Kampa (2018), who conducted research on character immersion, shared concerns about actors assuming this kind of intense perspective taking. In an article he shared on the website 'aeon', he reflects on Heath Ledger's performance in Christopher Nolan's *The Dark Knight*, saying that it is worth keeping in mind the 'agonies actors must pull from their guts' to portray certain characters. But this should not lead to judging immersion as bad per-se. While it is difficult, it does not have to lead to a loss of self. Using a research tool which mirrors the act of pretending, developed by the cognitive scientists Shaun Nichols and Stephen Stich, Kampa explored character immersion in professional actors. According to his model our mind is a collection of boxes and every box represents a model of belief or Belief Box. When actors are immersed in a character, they are exclusively using the cognitive model of the character's Belief Box. Kampa gave the example of Ledger's portrayal of the Joker:

> If and when Ledger was fully immersed in the character of the
> Joker, he consciously thought things such as 'Chaos is beautiful'
> or 'Chance alone is fair,' and he did not consciously think 'I am
> Heath Ledger' or 'I am acting on a soundstage' (Kampa, 2019).

Ledger was only paying attention to the character's Belief Box and not his own. With this, Kampa argues for an abandonment of the notion of 'loss of self' in

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[18] The medial prefrontal cortex is involved in the processing of affection, valuation and decision making (Preston, Molitor, Pudhiyidath, & Schlichting, 2017).
[19] The dorsomedial prefrontal cortex is a brain region providing a conduit between between cognitive control areas and affect-triggering regions which oversee and regulate the generation and regulation of emotions (Helion, Krueger, & Ochsner, 2019).

actors in favour of viewing it as a psychological skill to switch between belief systems. Reflecting critically on Kampa's hypothesis, it could be said that the actor loses touch with her own belief box (i.e. the self) to some extent when in role and his framework may aid our visual understanding of the process. However, Kampa's reflections seem too simplistic. As Brown, Cockett and Yuan (2019) observed, complex mechanisms are at play when actors get into role and perform.

In psychoanalytic terms it might be said that identifying with a character, as previously suggested, is a particularly intense form of identification. Intense identification conveys more explicitly what the neuroscientists have identified as a process of alienation from self and its replacement by an identification with the character. Trieman (2016) makes an interesting but controversial contribution by using the previously discussed concept of symbol formation (where a symbol becomes a representation of a psychological experience) introduced by Segal (1957). He held that artists (or actors) use the mechanisms of symbol formation but reverse this process. Instead of the symbol becoming a separate entity, the identification is so intense that it becomes part of the self. Trieman pointed out that acting might be a dangerous form of enactment, where object-representation is replaced by self-identification due to the blurring of reality and fantasy. Trimean's assumption, however, may not hold true. As Stanislavski already emphasised, the actor's identification with the character ought not to assume the form of 'inner hysteria', or acting 'in a trance' (McFarren, 2008, p. 120). Instead, the actor ought to create character through symbol formation, and where the establishment of the character as its own object fails problems may occur. Despite bringing authenticity to the emotional experience Stanislavski did not consider this type of performance as artistic but rather saw it as a lack of control, exposing both the actors as well as the audience to extreme and uncontrollable emotions that heightened tension and signs of hysteria on both sides (McFarren, 2008, p. 117ff). Thus, there is a need to control characterisation.

While at first Kampa (2018) appears to contradict N. Brown, Cockett and Yuan's (2019) findings, both studies seem to look at the same phenomenon through a different academic lens. One study uses terminology such as deactivation of self-processing, the other uses Belief Boxes to describe the switch between an active focus away from the self to the character. In fact, the theories enrich each other and give helpful insight into the psychological mechanisms at play when the actor identifies with the character. The process, involves a turning away from self-processing in favour of identification with the character, and these mechanisms must be consciously guided or controlled, lest problems arise.

1.6.4 Flow and peak performance in actors

Actors share with other performers the need to reach peak performance levels in which they excel at what they do creatively. Not much research has addressed how actors attain such states and, therefore, the literature about peak performance in all the creative professions has been consulted. While the nature of peak performance is not the focus of this thesis, it is a part of the creative arc the actor follows, making it essential to discuss it.

A recent study (Loveday, Neuman, & Hassall, 2021) investigated the components of the state of peak performance in screen actors. At the time of writing, this is the first study looking into peak performance in actors. The researchers conducted qualitative interviews with five professional screen actors to explore their experience of peak performance. Results showed that reaching peak performance involves two steps with different substages: a) preparation, which precedes performance freedom and b) the peak performance stage itself – being the character.

Researchers held that adequate preparation provides the performer with enough knowledge of the play and the character, such that the performer has freedom in their interpretation of these. Therefore, preparation precedes performance freedom. Preparation of lines, character, and script all aid in the building of character. The performer is also required to experience enough

self-efficacy, which will be described, and to accept that she is not in complete control of her performance. A sense of self-efficacy comes from the confidence the actor gains by having gone through an adequate preparation; it allows them to feel confident in their ability to perform. Accepting one does not have absolute control reflected the combination of preparation and confidence in one's ability to perform and trusting that instead of trying to control what happens on the stage.

The peak performance state includes four other substages: present moment focus, connecting, heightened state and being the character (Loveday, Neuman, & Hassall, 2021). Present moment focus described an optimal performance state that actors experience when in character; connecting referred to the effort of directing attentional resources to the outside (to the set, the circumstance, and other actors); heightened state is how actors described their experience of peak performance; and being the character reflected how actors felt their own self merge with the character during peak performance. Exploring actors' peak performance experiences allows for a better understanding of the pre-performance preparation phase. Understanding this furthers our insights on how identification with the character is achieved.

To explore the psychological mechanisms of peak performance and how actors navigate peak performance, neuroscientific literature on creativity, flow and peak performance was consulted. This will involve a short detour to explore the stress response mechanisms in the body, which is relevant to the broader focus of this thesis. Recent discoveries in the field of neuroscience found that peak performance and stress activate the same neurological brain responses. Storoni (2017), a researcher exploring peak performance in artists, explains that when artists are in this state, the brain functions based on an autopilot system that decides the body's responses to the environment. It is called the 'automatic nervous system' and has two opposing sides: the sympathetic and parasympathetic nervous system. The sympathetic nervous system activates the stress response in the body, while its counterpart – the parasympathetic nervous system – initiates a calming phase after the stressful

situation is over. When a stress response is activated, it also triggers an intense emotional response which cannot be rationally processed and is therefore potentially, and likely, distressing.

During peak performance, the same attentional resources are made available as during a stress response, with the difference that peak performance does not trigger a corresponding intense emotional response as stress normally does. Therefore, athletes, performers, and artists work on a knife's edge between these two systems. One can imagine this is like walking on a tightrope, or balancing a scale, so as not to tip into boredom on the one side or anxiety on the other. Research now shows that apparently one can be trained to enter and remain in a peak state[20]. Storoni (2017) points out that performers and artists learn to control this stress response by enhancing rational processing and controlling the stress response so that the emotional reaction cannot be triggered. According to Storoni (2017) the capacity to do this is dependent on the internal strength of a person and is most likely also determined by the kind of external support environment that is provided to the actor. What is understood by internal strength was not clearly defined within the study, but the study examined the physiological process of stress and those participants' stress responses that were triggered last were defined as stronger. In light of the literature discussed earlier, it appears more likely that what allows individuals to regulate better is a good awareness of oneself and an inherent capacity to self-regulate. Potentially, it could be said that through repetition and rehearsal a template of the stressful situation is stored in our brain making it less daunting and adequate preparation fosters exposure so that when performing the show, the actor can retain the right balance between boredom and arousal.

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[20] While it was previously thought that this automatic stress response could not be voluntarily influenced, Storoni (2017) mentions a study (Koxa, et al., 2014) that shows the opposite. This study explored the voluntary activation of the sympathetic nervous system to initiate proinflammatory cytokine (an enzyme to fight off illness), something which had up to that point been deemed impossible. The team divided the sample of 24 volunteers into two groups. One group was trained in meditation, breathing techniques and cold exposure for ten days, while the other group was not trained and functioned as a control group. After ten days, the participants were injected with a virus, and surprisingly, the first group had fewer symptoms and recovered more quickly than those in the second group. This study therefore provided some evidence that the sympathetic nervous system can be influenced voluntarily.

In light of this it is also important to explore the term flow which was developed by Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi (2018) and describes a state of cognitive arousal. In the 1960s he studied the creative process and described with this a state of complete immersion in an activity (e.g. writing, painting, reading). He held that a balance between boredom (e.g. interest) and mastery (e.g. having adequate skills to fulfil the task) allowed the individual to enter this creative state in which the creative mind then pursues the task (e.g. acting) relentlessly despite fatigue. With this term, Csikszentmihalyi provided researchers with a scientific term to describe what actors call 'being in the moment' or Loveday, Neuman and Hassall (2021) described as 'the present moment focus'. Flow can be seen as a precursor for peak performance by describing the arousal stage, in that artists first enter a flow state which allows them to reach peak performance levels. When the artist improves their skills, their level of mastery improves and with that the level of peak performance. Flow aims to quieten the mind and relieve it of distractions or ruminations, like mindfulness strategies such as meditation and breathing techniques, which are described by Storoni in the study mentioned in the footnote above and also used by actors. Potentially, the reason why actors train in mindfulness is to help them regulate their mind and body better and through that access the state of flow. But one specific aspect makes flow unique. While breathing strategies focuses the mind on body awareness, flow allows the practitioner to lose themselves completely in the bespoke activity (e.g. acting). This losing themselves allows them to access their creative potential at peak levels and leads to optimal arousal.

The insights gathered on peak performance and flow via this detour into the realms of neuroscience add to our understanding of the acting process. It has become clear that actors, when performing, navigate a fine line between optimal arousal and hyperarousal and that what allows them to manage this challenging task well are potentially their own regulatory skills alongside their self-awareness.

1.6.5 Potential risk factors related to the creative process

As has been touched upon above, the actor's creative process may involve several risk factors. For example, the merging between self and character may lead to an experience of loss of self. While working at peak performance levels, actors also bear the risk of experiencing high levels of performance anxiety. A handful of studies have explored such risk factors in actors and described two particular risks in more detail: a) risk of dissociation and b) risk of traumatisation. Performance anxiety is not considered specifically here, because the focus was on discussing potential pathological risk directly related to the creative process and not the performance situation alone. It cannot be denied that there is a close relationship between peak performance and performance anxiety, or again that there exists a fine line between them, but given that there is already a large literature base exploring performance anxiety (Patston & Loughlan, 2014) (Sataloff, Rosen, & Levy, 2000) (Salmon, 1990) (Spahn, Echternach, Zander, Voltmer, & Richter, 2010) (Barlow, 2000) (Osborne & Franklin, 2002) (Walker & Nordin-Bates, 2010), this review will focus on dissociation and trauma.

Dissociation

Thomson and Jaque (2011; 2012) found that actors have a higher tendency than control groups towards developing a dissociative disorder. The DSM-5 (2013) defines dissociation as a suspension of integration of functions such as memory, consciousness, identity, emotion, perception, behaviour, body representation and motor control. The DSM-5 lists five different dissociative disorders: dissociative identity disorder (which entails the presence of more than one personality state at one time – also known as multiple personality disorder), dissociative amnesia (impairments of recall of important autobiographical information), depersonalisation (periodical sensations of detachment from self and not feeling real), derealisation (experiences of detachment for the immediate surrounding and sensations of unreality) and other unspecified forms (American Psychiatric Association, 2013).

Three further studies by Thomson and Jaque confirmed that while dissociation is common amongst both interpreters of the arts[21] (Thomson, Keehn, & Gumpel, 2009)[22] and actors (Thomson & Jaque, 2011; Thomson & Jaque, 2012)[23], pathological dissociation is more common within the actors' group (Thomson, Keehn, & Gumpel, 2009). Furthermore, they found evidence that high levels of fantasy proneness, as well as unresolved mourning, are linked to higher risk of pathological dissociation (Thomson & Jaque, 2011). It could be hypothesised that high levels of fantasy proneness and dissociation facilitate character creation, though an excess may lead to pathological disturbance or even traumatisation. Therefore, dissociation may explain why actors sometimes experience the characters they play as living as multiple characters inside them, or why actors report momentary struggles with depersonalisation or derealisation. When actors work on character and deliberately connect emotions to imagined circumstances, it may even be that they use depersonalisation and derealisation strategies deliberately.

To present an example of what this may look like in practice, I refer back to Nemiro's (1997)[24] qualitative study on boundary blurring. One actor in this study explicitly reported that the characterisation has to be controlled, as 'allowing the character's traits to permeate one's psyche too deeply can be dangerous' (p. 235). This actor developed 'a third, objective eye to watch over the actor-character identity balance' (p. 235). This third eye seems to function like a rational regulatory mechanism watching over the self and the character at the same time, regulating the blurring and separation.

Panero (2019), compared dissociative and flow[25] experiences of acting students to non-actors (participants without professional acting experience,

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[21] Thomson and Jaque's term to describe different performers and not a person looking at a painting.
[22] Sample of 130 artists (generators / interpreters), correlation analysis was conducted between dissociation (DES-II), trauma (TEQ), fantasy proneness (ICMI) and affective states (ANPS) followed by a regression analysis to predict high scores of dissociation.
[23] Comparison study between actor group (n = 53) and non-clinical control group (n = 57) on dissociation (DES-II), trauma (TEQ) and fantasy proneness (ICMI); Evaluation of normative and pathological dissociation (DES-II) in 51 artists (38 actors, 8 dancers, 3 writers, 2 musicians, 2 directors) with consideration of links response during the (AAI) in regard to attachment styles.
[24] Nemiro's small study (1997) sought to define the creative process by conducting structured interviews with three actors. It found that the emotional burden of taking on too much of a character's identity, even if the actor can maintain self-awareness, is very great.
[25] Peak performance is defined by psychologist as a state of 'flow' (Allen, 2001; Martin & Cutler, 2001; Panero, 2019). Flow is described by the researcher Csikszentmihalyi (1975) as the peak of a particular positive psychological state

such as artists) directly after performance. In this research study, participants first completed the DES-II[26], then would perform a monologue which was recorded to analyse the quality of acting (whether it was believable for spectators). Then, at the end of the performance, participants again completed self-report measures on dissociation, empathy, and flow again. The study showed that actors do indeed experience flow states, or peak performance states, while performing and that dissociation may increase throughout the performance. Potentially this means that the experience of flow may leave actors vulnerable to states of dissociation. Self-awareness and self-regulatory skills seem to help actors manage the blurring between self and character, it may also be the case that continuous exposure to a boundary blurring process interferes with those capacities to some extent. Thus, 'rather than establishing an integrated self [following a performance or period of immersion in character], for some actors, their sense of self [became or] remained dissociated' (Thomson & Jaque, 2011).

Trauma

Besides dissociation, boundary blurring can apparently have yet another effect on the actor. Extreme boundary blurring, Seton (2006) argues, can cause 'post-traumatic stress' in the actor. Post-traumatic stress is a reaction to the experience of trauma or other extremely frightening situations. Following a traumatic, stressful experience, the baseline level of the stress response in an individual can become maladapted to a higher baseline and therefore stress is triggered earlier in situations that are not traumatic by themselves (Storoni, 2017). While Seton did not think that actors have more traumatic experiences in their past than the general population, (which in fact does not seem to be the case (Thomson & Jaque, 2012)), he thought that the task of acting itself

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during which the individual has a feeling that everything comes together in regard to a chosen activity. A high level of concentration and a temporarily suspension of self-consciousness is required to achieve a feeling of being one with the activity. This state of flow can occur throughout daily activities or in more demanding situations such as extreme sport. This state may be reached if the skill level with which the task is approached is appropriate. Furthermore, the task ought not to be too difficult nor too simple as otherwise anxiety or boredom arise that divert the attentional resources from the flow state (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990; Csikszentmihalyi, 1996). In order to enter this state of mind actors are urged by theatre practitioners - from Stanislavski onwards (1936) - to stay open to sensory impulses form the body and postpone rational thought for the time of performance.

[26] A scale to measure the level of dissociation.

could be traumatising. When actors embody or portray emotionally intense characters or scenes, as for instance murder, rape, or any other form of violence, this may lead to 'vicarious traumatisation' – a secondary form of trauma. It can be understood as a form of sensitive empathic identification with the victim (Segal H. , 1974; McFarren, 2008). Thus, in the case of the actor, while the actor does not undergo a trauma herself, simply connecting in an empathic manner to a traumatised character may be enough to traumatise her. This phenomenon is often seen in people working with people who have experienced trauma, such as social workers and police officers.

This stage identified various factors which explain why acting can be a psychologically challenging profession, at the very least. There are, therefore, risk factors present that may be mitigated against (because perhaps they can't entirely be avoided). Many of the studies described have limitations, as for example, limited sample sizes, focus on one simple rating scale or a qualitative approach without enough quantitative research to substantiate this. However, as a collective they give significant insight into the psychological mechanisms at play when actors identify with characters. They reveal much about the self-processes involved in the creative process of acting. What remains to be discussed is what allows actors to successfully complete this creative work and how they sustain this psychologically demanding profession long-term.

1.7   Resilience

This study aims to investigate how actors get in and out of character during their working lives as well as understand the specific challenges which actors face during this process and whether resilience facilitates this process. The research presented above suggests that the task actors fulfil when they get into role is psychologically demanding. This demand is likely a contributing factor to the mental health issues that actors are reportedly facing (Robb, Due, & Venning, 2016; Burgoyne, Poulin, & Rearden, 1999). The literature stimulated reflections on resilience and reflective capacity with two papers specifically talking about resilience in actors. The discussion presented within this literature about resilience and reflective capacity will be summarised.

While honouring the vast literature on resilience, attachment and mentalization, the following exploration will be limited to several key papers to move towards a discussion of resilience and mentalization in actors.

1.7.1 A general conception of resilience

In 2013, the International Society for Traumatic Stress Studies considered various definitions of resilience and explored the most effective ways to foster resilience. They concluded that the following definition of resilience was helpful:

> [Resilience is] a stable trajectory of healthy functioning after a highly adverse event; a conscious effort to move forward in an insightful and integrated positive manner as a result of lessons learned from an adverse experience; the capacity of a dynamic system to adapt successfully to disturbances that threaten the viability, function, and development of that system; and a process to harness resources in order to sustain well-being' (Southwick, Bonanno, Masten, Panter-Brick, & Yehuda, 2014, p. 11).

As this quote indicates, resilience is seen as an individual's ability to function in a healthy way after having experienced adverse events. Mental health is maintained or improved despite adverse events, after potential temporary disruptions to normal functioning. Resilience guards against enduring psychopathology; psychopathology may be present at times, but the individual recovers from it (Fleming & Ledogar, 2008; Friedberg & Malefakis, 2018).

Background

This differs from understanding resilience as a psychological trait or personality trait, a conceptualisation that has been long present within the academic field. Jack Block (1961) was one of the first trait psychologists to describe the construct of 'ego resilience' as a personality characteristic. Over the years more sophisticated tools and measures were developed to measure traits associated with resilience. Three main personality types in actors are thought to contribute to resilience (Luthar, Cicchetti, & Becker, 2000): positive

emotionality/extraversion (PEM), negative emotionality/neuroticism (NEM), and constraint impulsivity (CON) (Miller & Harrington, 2011). This, however, represents only one conceptualisation of resilience among countless others. In recent years, resilience has evolved into a multidimensional concept recognising that multiple factors contribute to an individual portraying resiliency (Troy & Mauss, 2011). Thus, while the exploration of traits associated with resilience remains relevant, processes within the individual and factors beyond the individual also ought to be considered.

As seen above, newer conceptualisations within the psychological field define resilience as the ability to withstand physical or emotional distress (Friedberg & Malefakis, 2018). Stress, which has been discussed at an earlier point (Storoni, 2017), is beneficial as a motivator to help one meet goals, it gives energy, and functions as a warning system, preparing the individual for prospective challenges and allowing creativity to flourish (Friedberg & Malefakis, 2018). However, stress may also be debilitating if it surpasses a certain capability threshold leading to paralysing symptoms or psychopathology. It is not the case that resilient individuals do not suffer from pain, or stress – quite the contrary. 'A more accurate idea is that resilient individuals have developed coping techniques and strategies that allow them to deal more effectively with adversity and even crisis' (Friedberg & Malefakis, 2018, p. 83).

While the psychoanalyst Sigmund Freud (1893) was one of the first to write about relevant factors contributing to successful survival and adaptation in challenging and stressful situations, the concept of resilience was introduced by cognitive scientists such as Victor Frankl (1962) who studied trauma survivors having lived through the horrors of surviving concentration camps during the second world war. In recent years an important movement away from seeing resilience as a personal characteristic to conceptualising it as a process was initiated and sustained by cognitive scientists as well as within the psychoanalytic realm. Luther and colleagues (2000, p. 543) described resilience as a 'dynamic process encompassing positive adaptation within the context of significant adversity'. Conflicting attempts to find a common

definition of resilience have hindered the study of the underlying processes. In addition, psychoanalysts such as Fonagy and colleagues (1992) observed 'that resilience could not be thought of as an attribute born into children or even acquired during development. It is the indication of a process which characterizes a complex social system at a moment in time' (p. 233). They thereby challenge an understanding of resilience as a personal characteristic or attribute, instead seeing it as a process that is determined by a variety of influences, environmental, social, and dispositional that vary over time (Fleming & Ledogar, 2008). Southwick called these influences or external factors 'resilience factors' (Southwick, Bonanno, Masten, Panter-Brick, & Yehuda, 2014). To understand Southwick's concept of 'resilience factors', it may be helpful to make a short excursion to neuroscience to better understand their relevance.

As previously discussed, resilience is closely related to stress and to how the body deals with stress. All psychological responses, including the stress response, within our bodies are triggered by hormones and other enzymes. The body functions best in the condition when all these hormones are in homeostasis and at all times aims to return to this state. The effort of the body dedicated towards bringing the body back to its optimal internal state involves a dynamic regulation called allostasis involving a series of hormonal responses in the body. This takes a toll on the body, a 'physiological cost of adaptation to stressors' referred to as "allostatic load" (Feder, Charney, & Collins, 2011, p. 2). Feder, Charney and Collins (2011) argue that factors, such as genetic, physiological, psychological, and environmental factors, may contain allostatic load and may promote resilience. Physiologically, an efficiently functioning HPA axis (that is a well-adapted activation and deactivation mechanism of the stress response) is predictive of resilience. At an environmental level, environmental stability during childhood is a predictor of better stress resistance because early life stress is linked to chronically high levels of stress hormones in the body. Efficiency promoting factors that avoid hypersensitivity or chronic activations, therefore, help the nervous system to return to homeostasis and result in higher resilience. And psychological processes and other factors such as positive emotions, optimism, active

96

coping, social support, and prosocial behaviour can reduce the intensity and duration of a stress response. Thus, self-efficacy is key for regulating the stress response. Overall, it could be said that these factors are highly dependent on individual circumstances, but those with a healthier environment, more balanced physiological make-up and good coping skills are more likely to be resilient (Feder, Charney, & Collins , 2011).

If resilience is seen as a process, it becomes clear that these 'resilience factors' evolve over time and can be adjusted to new situations if old strategies fail to work (Southwick, Bonanno, Masten, Panter-Brick, & Yehuda, 2014). Therefore, resilience can be built over time. While positive influences on the individual may act as protective factors (that promote homeostasis of the nervous system), in so far as they increase the probability of the formation of a resilient self and the maintenance of high levels of resilience throughout life, exposure to negative experiences (any triggers or stressors that disturbed homeostasis) may lower the individual's resilience. Protective factors strengthen while distressing situations weaken a person's resilience level and resilience levels are rarely fixed. If an individual is shaken by a distressing event or repeatedly by many small distressing experiences, resilience may be impaired. But equally the individual may bounce back quickly if the circumstances are favourable.

While it is beyond the scope of this thesis to describe this in more detail, it may be helpful to understand the concept of the allostatic load for the following discussion[27]. This model of stress may trigger a sense of recognition in psychoanalysts, with its resemblance to Freud's pleasure principle (Freud, 1911) whereby an individual seeks pleasure and strives to avoid pain in life and homeostasis ought to be maintained between the two counterparts for healthy functioning. This is not surprising as the first models of PTSD were developed making use of Freud's trauma-affect model (Freud, 1893).

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[27] For those wanting to explore this topic further Southwick and colleagues' book "Resilience and Mental Health: Challenges Across the Lifespan" (2011) may be an interesting resource.

Diverse factors that promote resilience

Within the above section a series of factors were discussed that may promote resilience. These psychological factors are dependent on external circumstances that foster the protective nature of these skills.

Research (Southwick, Litz, Charney, & Friedman, 2011) has shown that one factor that is inextricably linked to resilience is a secure and protected childhood. Such an experience might include: 'healthy attachment relationships and good caregiving, [the learning of] emotion regulation skills, self-awareness and the capacity to visualize the future, and a mastery motivation system that drives the individual to learn, grow and adapt to their environment' (Southwick, Bonanno, Masten, Panter-Brick, & Yehuda, 2014, p. 11). Many of the above-mentioned personal resources are developed during childhood and having experienced healthy attachment relationships is a building block for successful development of such skills. This conceptualisation fits with the research of Thomson and Jaque (2012) which marries resilience with secure attachment in actors which I will discuss in the following paragraphs.

Other factors identified by Fleming and Ledogar (2008) that promote resilience are genetic, epigenetic, developmental, demographic status, culture, and economic status. Social factors may contribute to resilience as well, however, to a smaller degree. These factors represent the external environment of the individual on three different layers: the individual level, the family level, and the community level. So far, three types of factors which are protective of resilience have been identified:

> (i) compensatory factors that counteract the risk directly but independently,
> (ii) protective factors that weaken the impact of the risk,
> (iii) the 'challenge factors' that teach an individual to respond to risk by being exposed to it at a moderate level (Fleming & Ledogar, 2008).

Practically speaking a series of examples in relation to the actors' profession would be (i) the actor's withdrawal from the potentially harmful work environment, (ii) use of de-roling techniques (Robb, Due, & Venning, 2016) that facilitate the separation from the character or a cooling down phase after performance may reduce the risk of psychological harm and (iii) for instance, the exposure to the actor's work during training and rehearsal.

In opposition to these protective factors stand distressing aspects that lower resilience. Often these are referred to as risk factors, as discussed within the introduction. If problems are present within any of the above-mentioned areas (genetic, epigenetic, developmental, demographic status, culture, and economic status) these can also turn into risk factors as they expose the individual to stress (Fleming & Ledogar, 2008).

Research into the high psychological demands of the actor's work have confirmed that actors require significant 'psychological strength' to cope with acting (Panero, 2019; Nemiro, 1997; McFarren, 2008; Burgoyne, Poulin, & Rearden, 1999; Arias, 2019). For instance, Thomson and Jaque (2012) noted that the actor's sustained 'sufficient self-regulation' was necessary to cope with the demands of the work. This suggests that resilience might facilitate the actor's work, or enable him to keep on doing it despite the challenges it brings. For actors challenges may include economic factors (e.g. frequent financial instability / unemployment), a lack of human contact (short-lived friendships due to the often brief periods of employment/false intimacy) and the fact that, perhaps due to prejudice within the profession, actors often do not seek help when they are feeling under stress or emotionally stretched/overwhelmed).

Towards an understanding of the underlying processes of resilience

More recent developments in the realm of resiliency research describe two central processes in resiliency: emotion regulation and successful adaptation. Troy and Mauss (2011) argue that stressful events are highly emotional and therefore, an ability to regulate these emotional responses is central to determine resilience. Benight and Cieslak (2011) add to this by arguing that

on top of self-regulation, self-efficacy is essential as well to allow for successful adaptation.

Adversity and emotion regulation

For the purpose of this narrative literature review it may be helpful to consider life as a series of events, some of which are stressful while others are not. The types of stress experienced also varies greatly within the individual (all greater or smaller stressors experienced by one individual) or between individuals (some people may experience severe traumas in their lives, others daily stressors). Troy and Mauss (2011) describe the types of stressors as minor or major events excluding severe trauma and "positive" stressors (positive life events) from this equation, while accepting that every person is exposed to a series of stressful events in life. Minor events, for example, could include disagreements with a spouse, while major events could be thought of as an unexpected job loss or experiencing a serious illness or injury. Following this model, arguably, every person is exposed to a series of minor or major life events that provoke stress which the individual must regulate. With this the neuroscientific principle described above was translated into cognitive psychology and the principle of homeostasis is to some extent revisited.

While emotion regulation was also proposed as a mediator of stress (stress exposure leads to emotion dysregulation and negative outcomes) (Silk, Vanderbilt-Adriance, & Shaw, 2007; McCarthy, Lambert, & Moller, 2006; Schwartz & Proctor, 2000), most of the proposed frameworks discuss emotion regulation as a moderator (high ability in emotion regulation increased the likelihood of favourable outcomes) (Troy & Mauss, 2011). This is because the model lends itself better to uncover individual differences in resilience and understand situational and individual factors that shape emotion regulation and with that resilience.

Cognitive psychology uses appraisal theories to conceptualise emotion regulation and coping. Central to appraisal theory is the idea that the way individuals evaluate an event determines how they emotionally react to it. This

means, it may not be the event itself that triggers an emotional reaction within us, but our subjective interpretation or perception of the event. With that, our emotional reactions are dependent on our appraisal of events (Lazarus, 1999). Troy and Mauss (2011), therefore, suggest that targeting emotion regulation strategies connected to appraisals should prove effective when working with resilience. 'Cognitive emotion regulation has been broadly defined as changing one's attention to or one's appraisal of a situation in order to change an emotion's duration, intensity, or both' (Troy & Mauss, 2011, p. 32). This definition differs from other non-cognitive approaches that include, for instance, expressive suppression.

According to Ochsner and Gross (2005) two strategies are involved in the management of emotions: attention control (AC) and cognitive appraisal (CR). Attention control describes the ability to selectively perceive internal or external stimuli to regulate the emotional impact. Cognitive appraisal involves to ability to reframe an idea to change its emotional impact. Following Ochsner and Gross (2005) these are the building blocks of emotion regulation. Tory and Mauss (2011) show, based on several studies, that the ability to disregard negative stimuli, helps the individual to experience the environment as less threatening. Both skills are, therefore, essential for emotion regulation. The variety in conceptualisations of resilience mentioned above, reflects the variation of people's adjustment; not everyone reacts to stressful situations the same way. Some experience positive outcomes after having been exposed to high levels of stress, others are vulnerable to negative outcomes after facing minor stressors. This led to the assumption that endogenous factors that protect against negative outcomes must exist and those equipped with these factors will most likely be more resilient. The researchers concluded that emotion regulation may be one of these protective factors.

While relevant to the discussion, this perception of resilience, however, perpetuates an outdated understanding of resilience as a personality trait. Authors such as Connor and Davidson (2003) thought that certain individuals had characteristics that enabled them to better adapt to circumstance. This was called by Block and Block (1980) "ego resilience" describing factors such

as resourcefulness, strength of character, and flexibility of responses to environmental demands. Later these factors were described as protective factors, including hardiness, positive emotions, extraversion, self-efficacy, spirituality, self-esteem, and positive affect. This, however, negates the ability to grow and sees resilience as a quality that one has or does not have (Block & Block, 1980). As Fletcher and Sarkar (2013) rightly argue, all of these factors ought to be considered in relation to their functions.

> Protective and promotive factors should be considered in relation to their specific function and that an appreciation of the nature and array of these factors is critical to understanding and developing psychological resilience (Fletcher & Sarkar, 2013, p. 15).

Positive adaptation through self-efficacy

Benight and Cieslak (2011) further elaborate on the above introduced model. The above-mentioned model holds that the ability to regulate one's appraisal to the situation is essential for resilience, Benight and Cieslak further expand on this by stating that the response to a stressful situation also has an influence on resilience. A series of cognitive resources is required to successfully attend to all environmental demands. Lazarus and Folkman (1984) distinguish between primary and secondary appraisal within their transactional theory of stress. The primary, as discussed above, describes the individual's ability to evaluate the relevance of a specific demand for their own wellbeing – will it lead to positive, stressful, or harmful/challenging outcomes. For instance, 'perceiving adversity as a challenge is a hallmark characteristic of resilience' (Benight & Cieslak, 2011, p. 46). The secondary appraisal allows the individual to evaluate all available resources to deal with this demand. All resources including physical, social, psychological, and material resources and the ability to use them will be evaluated. As a result of this process the individual will use a specific set of coping strategies to deal with the stressor.

It is important to remember that stress is not just a psychological response, but as discussed previously also has a physiological counterpart. When

studying primary and secondary appraisal, Gaab et al (2005) showed that up to 35% of the variance in cortisol reactivity can be explained by appraisal and suggested that seeing a stressful situation as challenging may strengthen physical and psychological resilience. Therefore, the psychological interpretation of the processes happening at a physiological level and the subjective meaning of the event for the individual determine the outcome. This makes the causal attribution of an event important, which refers to the stability, controllability, and generalisability of the stressful event. These factors determine whether or not an individual will be able to cope and adapt successfully after having been exposed to a stressful event. It is the interactive process within the individual, involving a regulatory behaviour through ongoing interactions with the adverse event, that determines the outcome. This is the reason why Benight and Cieslak (2011, p. 47) argue, that 'a sense of control to manage adversity is a necessary condition for resilience'.

To manage the three primary factors (the environment, the person, and the behaviour) that predict future behaviour self-regulation and self-evaluation skills are required (Bandura, 1997). Self-regulation relies on internal and external feedback systems sending stimuli to the self-evaluation centre to determine success or failure of desired goals. To adapt to the desired environmental conditions, individuals alter cognitive and behavioural structures and therefore, self-appraisal plays a central role in resilience. Later publication underline this point by emphasising the relevance sociocultural context (Clauss-Ehlers, 2008; Mahoney & Bergman, 2002; Waller, 2001). Ungar et al. (Ungar, 2008; Ungar & Liebenberg, 2011) challenged the Western understanding of resilience and held that it was important to view positive adaptation from within a cultural frame. The interplay between the three factors – environment, person, and behaviour – is called self-efficacy among cognitive scientists. Self-efficacy is the ability to evaluate one's own cognitive processes and enact a behaviour based on this evaluation (Benight & Cieslak, 2011). These develop out of the interactive feedback loop created by being confronted with successes and failures when striving towards goals.

While it has been discussed previously that several factors may predict favourable outcome and studies show that stress appraisals, attributions, perception of controllability, or general self-efficacy are predictors of stress-responses (Bandura, 1997), only specific self-efficacy predictions have a strong predictive capacity. This is closely related to the abilities one has available to manage a stressful event. As Lazarus and Folkman (1984) stated: when faced with a lack of adequate resources to cope with an event it is perceived as stressful. This understanding of resilience conveys a threshold-dependent approach with the notion of risk and the idea that hardship or suffering are intrinsically linked with difficulty or trauma (Jackson, Firtko, & Edenborough, 2007). This conception misses a central point; positive life events can also be stressful and positive adaptation (such as living up to the new demands of a job promotion) can have a taxing effect on the body (Neff & Broady, 2011).

Benight and Cieslak (2011) expand this classical model by incorporating regulating mechanisms between demand and resources. This lends a three-dimensional nature to the concept of self-efficacy with a dynamic nature where the creation of positive self-efficacy beliefs interacts with and changes over time as and when the environmental conditions change. Therefore, Benight and Cieslak's stated:

> This approach toward understanding the adaptation after exposure to traumatic or stressful events focuses on the mechanisms underlying the process of resilient adaptation and requires monitoring the *levels* of critical components of the coping process and the *changes* in these factors (i.e. demands, resources, context-specific coping self-efficacy, and various aspects of functioning as indices of adaptation … [and] identify dynamic factors that trigger, boost, and maintain effective coping through the utilization and cultivation of internal and external resources. (Benight & Cieslak, 2011, p. 48).

Demands with which individuals are confronted with daily as well as the resources available to deal with them may vary. For instance, externally individuals may suffer from chronic stress caused by work or struggle with internal turmoil resulting from the exposure to trauma.

Similarly, environmental demands differ between individuals and Hobfoll (1989) has identified several categories that may be useful to better understand environmental demands. He grouped these resources into the following categories: a) objects (e.g. house), b) conditions (e.g. marriage), c) personal characteristics (e.g. social skilfulness) and d) energies (e.g. education). Benight and Bandura (2004), alongside Hobfoll, demonstrate the importance of environmental resources for successful adaptation in the face of adversity.

This encompasses the idea of resilience as a process, which was also supported by Luthar et al. (2006) conceiving resilience as the result of positive adaptation to adversity. However, Luthar highlighted that protective factors vary based on contextual or temporal circumstances. Alongside this, scientists (Skinner & Zimmer-Gembeck, 2007) empathised the relevance of distinguishing between resilience and coping strategies. The former refers to an individual's ability to influence appraisal of the event and to maintain normal functions despite adversity, whereas coping involves deploying a reactive strategy to deal with distress to return to normal functioning following the event (Campbell-Sills, Cohan, & Stein, 2006). Therefore, several conceptions of resilience must be read with a critical stance. Fletcher and Sarkar summarise this by stating that:

> Resilience consists of various factors that promote personal assets and protect individuals from the negative appraisal of stressors; recovery and coping should be conceived as conceptually distinct from resilience; and resilience influences the stress process at multiple stages, namely an individual's appraisal of stressors, his or her meta-cognitions in response to felt emotions, and his or her selection of coping strategies (Fletcher & Sarkar, 2013, p. 16).

Interestingly Richardson (Richardson, 2002; Richardson, Neiger, Jensen, & Kumpfer, 1990) categorised resilience research and described three phases of resilience research which led to the development of his own model of resilience. According to him, resilience research focused first on identifying

qualities (e.g. protective factors) that would render an individual resilient; second, scholars conceived resilience in the context of coping with stressors, adversity, change and opportunity; and third, it led to the investigation of motivational forces within the individual that drive self-actualization. The above-presented paragraphs have discussed these first two points, while the third point will be further expanded on by exploring psychoanalytic studies on resilience by Hauser et al. (2007). While a more detailed exploration of this subject is beyond the scope of this thesis, having considered the relevance of existing protective factors external to the individual may prove helpful when discussing the actors' environment within the industry (as described above) and its relationship to their resilient capacities.

1.7.2 Resilience within the psychoanalytic literature

The term resilience tends towards becoming something of an umbrella term rather than a specific description of one phenomenon (Southwick, Litz, Charney, & Friedman, 2011). It seems to encompass many concepts and to be contingent upon many factors. In acknowledgement of this and in consideration of the above presented literature, the concept of resilience will be explored by looking specifically at the psychoanalytic interpretation of resilience.

Psychoanalytic definitions and background

Fonagy et al. (1992) provide the following succinct definition of resilience, 'resilience is normal development under difficult conditions' (p. 233). As they suggest, a resilient individual can adapt to difficult surroundings, and despite facing unfavourable conditions she manages to progress in life.

The term resilience is not a term commonly used by psychoanalysts to describe mental processes. Therefore, Malgarim, Macedo and Freitas (2018) set up a study to explore its meaning within psychoanalysis and their findings are helpful to understand the term 'resilience' in a psychoanalytic context. Malgarim, Macedo and Freitas (2018) conducted interviews with 10 psychoanalysts. Interviews were qualitatively analysed to determine whether

or not a clear understanding of what constitutes resilience could be found and whether other psychoanalytic concepts are more commonly used to describe resilience in a psychoanalytic setting. Researchers concluded that while a coherent concept of resilience seemed not to exist in psychoanalysis, analysts agreed that

a) positive adaption after adversity,
b) a capacity to 'work through' experience, and to 'sublimate',
c) and the ability to 'contain' worked through experiences,

were central to their understanding of what constitutes resilience. Researchers pointed out that 'resilience could be seen as one of the facets of personality' (Malgarim, Macedo, & Freitas, 2018, p. 463) that is developed throughout infancy.

Potentially resilience could be said to exist where there is a good constellation of a stable ego and ego functions. It could be that this is what Fonagy et al. (1992) were intimating when saying that resiliency is reflected by normal development in difficult conditions. Normally a collection of stable ego functions will develop over time, in the context of stable family relations and a favourable environment. To put this into context, the term 'ego functions' as it is understood within psychoanalysis will be described. Psychoanalysis distinguishes between seven different 'ego functions' that form the basis of a stable ego. Among those are the individual's relationship to reality (his sense of reality, the ability to test reality and adapt to it), the capacity to regulate and control drives, the capacity to form and maintain object ties, to maintain accurate perception as well as interpretation of surroundings and a proper coordination of it, management of defensive functions (as intellectualisation, rationalisation, identification, introjection, projection, denial, repression, reaction formation, isolation, undoing, displacement and regression), autonomous functions (perception, motility, intention, intelligence, thinking, speech, language) and an ability to bind and organise drives (Moore & Fine, 1994). Simply put, ego functions are the core of self-regulation, how individuals perceive the world and how they interact with it. To further explore the idea of resilience as a product of development, Klein's (1958) and

Winnicott's (1945) writing on ego development may be helpful to further the discussion. When reviewing the literature on aesthetic and psychoanalysis, these concepts were already described and therefore will be only revisited briefly.

Klein (1958) held that the infant relates to this 'object' based on paranoid-schizoid functions before he passes to the depressive functions. Klein was the first to highlight the importance of the mother's role in development, but it was specifically with Bion and later Winnicott (as discussed further down) that these theories became more refined. As Bion (1962) held, the mother's capacity for reverie is vital in the early days to process emotional experiences for the child and thereby make it possible for the child to think about them. This helps the child to process, understand and relate to reality and to develop this capacity and a mind of its own with time. A good social relationship with the mother and a nurturing environment are at the core of successful development. And potentially already at the beginning of life the groundwork is laid for later resiliency in life. It perhaps goes without saying that the more emotional resources the infant gathers to deal with her experience in the world, and with her emotional life, the more resilient she will become. Research (Southwick, Litz, Charney, & Friedman, 2011) points to the same by showing that a correlation between resources (or protective factors, such as positive relationships) and resilience. This would suggest protective factors such as these have a positive influence on resilience.

Winnicott (1945) argued that the baby's development is dependent on a 'good enough mother' who will create a holding and containing environment. With this Winnicott conveys the idea that an infant has physiological and psychological needs which need to be satisfied by the mother. As discussed previously, it is in a satisfying holding environment that the infant's understanding of itself, and an understanding of the world is born. Through the interactions with the mother the child develops internal structures, which in psychoanalysis is often referred to as the development of the ego. Therefore, the development of the internal structure of an infant is dependent on the mother's ability to think for the child, hold or contain the experiences of the

child in her mind until the child is ready to think for itself. While Winnicott did not explicitly refer to resilience within his writing, it could be speculated that early ego development is at the core of resilience and Winnicott may have had something like resilience in mind. As Malgarim and colleagues write, '[t]he origin of resilience is at the core of the subject's early relationships' (Malgarim, Macedo, & Freitas, 2018, p. 463). If a good enough environment is provided by the mother, the baby can slowly develop a resilient ego, or an ego which can manage the challenges of being alive and in relationship to others. With time several psychoanalysts further developed Winnicott's theories and the first relationships to the caregiver are nowadays often referred to as 'attachment relationships'. So, it may be helpful to explore this theoretical framework in more detail, and to think about the link between attachment style and resilience.

Before diving into a discussion of attachment another study of resilience conducted by Allen and Hauser (2007) will be discussed. Hauser and Allen (2007) followed 146 adolescents with serious mental health concerns for over 20 years (from their adolescence into adult life), interviewing them several times and conducting a narrative analysis of the interviews. The aim of the study was to ascertain what made for greater resilience. The interview technique allowed them to identify certain factors that distinguished the more resilient individuals (n~76), for example those who managed to recover from hospitalization for psychiatric reasons. They used a non-clinical comparison group (n~66). The research showed that a mental health condition in childhood and/or adolescence was not a precursor to mental health problems in later life. Some individuals recovered from illness, while in some cases the mental state of healthy individuals deteriorated. Adolescents who had a drive to search for attachment figures who would help them develop further demonstrated, in the researchers' eyes, greater resilience. Hauser and Allen concluded that resilient individuals are in the first instance able to reflect on the motives, feelings, and thoughts of others, and often value friends and family highly. Depending on how resilience is conceptualised, the methodological choice of studying resilience in individuals recovering from hospitalisation may be problematic. If resilience is seen as a factor influencing appraisal prior to

emotional and coping responses and by its positive, protective impact, instead of as coping after an adverse event has occurred (Skinner & Zimmer-Gembeck, 2007), as previously discussed, then potentially it could be hypothesised that more resilient individuals would not have deteriorated to the point of hospitalisation. This ought not to imply that resilience is equated with mental wellbeing, but it is a factor to consider. In addition to that, the choice of a narrative analysis of interviews may increase bias through both the interviewees who eventually decide to share which aspect of their story they decide to share with the researchers as well as the researchers who are analysing the data with potential preconceptions of the results in mind.

The core findings of this study identified three drives that the more resilient group shared. Hauser observed that resilience in this group was facilitated by attributes such as agency or a *drive to mastery* (that is, the wish to develop and manage or overcome adversity), a *drive of reflectiveness* or an interest in internal processes and a *drive to relate* or recruit relationships (Allen, 2010). The three drives – drive to mastery, to reflect and to relate - seemed to make recovery from mental illness possible and allowed for a better and healthier life. While Hauser's study provides interesting insights into motivational forces that drive recovery, it presents resilience as a coping-oriented process, and it does not explore in more detail this reintegration process. These results are in line with the third wave of resiliency research, as described by Richardson (2002), that focuses on motivational forces within the individual and drives self-actualisation. Richardson et al. (2002) may add to our understanding of this reintegration process. He developed a model of resilience based on the optimal homeostatic state and any disruptions to this state occur if an individual has insufficient resources (e.g. protective factors) as a buffer against adversity. With time a reintegration process is initiated leading to four possible outcomes: resilient reintegration (i.e. through which additional coping skills may be acquired); homeostatic reintegration (i.e. whereby individual remain or seek to return to homeostasis); reintegration with loss (i.e. leading to a loss of protective factors, alongside a lower homeostatic level); and dysfunctional reintegration (i.e. manifesting itself in destructive behaviour such as substance abuse). Also, this model is lacking in that it overlooks the impact of multiple

stimuli affecting the reintegration process and is a coping-oriented model (Connor & Davidson, 2003). However, it, however provides a helpful frame to conceptualise resilience, especially considering Hauser's drive theory that may motivate this reintegration process.

Hauser and Allen (2007), amongst many others, highlight that a secure, positive internal working model of relationships plays a big role in the development of resilience. Again, this research seems to reinforce opinions of other researchers in this field that the ability to work through difficult situations and internal processes combined with the ability to reflect and building relationships is central to the development of resilience. Following this attachment and reflective capacity will be discussed, including a quote on resilience that appears to sum up well the connections between internal resources that make for better resiliency.

> To my understanding, the psychological concept of sublimation has to do with unconscious resources or, more specifically, the ability to mentalize [term explained in the section below] the traumatic situation…. [Furthermore,] I would think in terms of the ego's resources, if we want to use that framework (Malgarim, Macedo, & Freitas, 2018, p. 456f).

Attachment theory, reflective function, and resilience

Attachment theory was described by John Bowlby (1969) in his book on 'Attachment and Loss'. Subsequent publications, such as the two books on Separation: Anxiety and Anger (Bowlby J. , 1973) and Loss: Sadness and depression (Bowlby J. , 1980), further refined the concept over the following years. At its core is the idea that a reciprocal relationship with the caregiver is the route towards normal psychic development. Attachment theory is based on a belief that interactions with caregivers during childhood result in the development of expectations in the child about the nature of interpersonal, emotional interactions throughout life. These expectations have a significant bearing on how the child manages, or behaves in an interpersonal context (Fonagy, Steele, Steele, Higgitt, & Target, 1992).

None of us is born with the capacity to regulate our own emotional reactions. A dyadic regulatory system evolves where the infant's signals of moment-to-moment changes in his state are understood and responded to by the caregiver, thereby achieving their regulation. The infant learns that arousal in the presence of the caregiver will not lead to disorganization beyond his coping capabilities. The caregiver will be there to reestablish equilibrium. In states of uncontrollable arousal, the infant will come to seek physical proximity to the caregiver in the hope of soothing and the recovery of homeostasis. The infant's behaviour by the end of the first year is purposeful and apparently based on specific expectations. His past experiences with the caregiver are aggregated into representational systems that Bowlby (1973) termed "internal working models" (IWM). Thus, the attachment system is an open biosocial homeostatic regulatory system (Fonagy, Gergely, Jurist, & Target, 2002, pp. 75-76).

This quote from the second chapter on Attachment and Reflective Function: Their Role in Self-Organization (2002, pp. 56-131) very succinctly conveys the core of attachment theory and eloquently describes the internal arousal mechanisms alongside the theoretical framework and refers to the regulatory functions within the child that are built through the relationship with the caregiver. This paragraph, specifically, recalls the psychological literature on peak performance, anxiety, and self-regulatory skills that actors use to manage the performance experiences. While the context is different, the core idea of a regulatory function to manage moments of arousal so that homeostasis can be re-established appears to be the same. The understanding of the development of this ability should be of interest to this exploration of acting and resilience as it provides clues about how these regulatory functions may have developed in actors, how it links to resilience and what could be done to further improve such abilities. Using attachment theory as a construct to explore the foundations of resilience seems helpful, as well, as it describes 'the internal working model of relationships' (Fonagy, Steele, Steele, Higgitt, & Target, 1992, p. 235) that enable an individual to cope with adversity.

Attachment theory was later operationalised by the second pioneer of attachment theory, Mary Ainsworth (1978). Exploring attachment theory in more detail may be helpful to understand the internal working model and

thereby clarify where resiliency develops. It may also further the understanding of one paper that I will mention toward the end of this chapter exploring attachment in actors. Ainsworth described four different attachment patterns in children (secure, anxious/avoidant, anxious/resistant and disorganised/disoriented). Based on these she developed a laboratory-based experiment to observe and describe children's internal attachment styles. This is known as the 'Strange Situation' experiment where children would be a) separated from the main caregiver for a brief period, b) the child would be left to play alone in the presence of a stranger and c) at the return of the caregiver the child's reaction would be observed and described. The typical reactions of children with different attachment styles can be summarised as follows: the secure child willingly explores the surrounding in the presence of the caregiver, becomes anxious in their absence and welcomes them back by seeking reassurance from the caregiver after their return. Anxious/avoidant children are less distressed by the absence of the caregiver and seem to prefer the stranger's presence when the caregiver returns. Anxious/resistant children show limited interest in playing, are extremely distressed by the caregiver's absences and remain unsettled even after the return of the caregiver. The fourth group often show undirected behaviour such as freezing, and the wish to escape the situation even once the caregiver returns (Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters, & Wall, 1978). A similar assessment tool using semi structured interviews to be used with adults was later developed by George, Kaplan and Main (1985) in 1985 and is known as the *Adult Attachment Interview* (AAI). To reiterate, expectations of relationship learned in childhood are the foundation for other relationships that are established later in life, and they determine the child's (and later adult's) behaviour towards others.

These attachment styles manifest in childhood and are born out of the relationship with the caregiver. With the development of attachment, the child also slowly builds rational action and thought process to regulate arousal states. The caregiver's response plays an important role in building secure attachment and reflective thought processes. The child, when experiencing an acute affective state, finds an empathic mental response in the caregiver and the representation of its internal state. This representation can be internalised

by the child and form the building blocks of affect regulation (Fonagy, Gergely, Jurist, & Target, 2002). The process resembles Wilfred Bion's (1962a) concept of mental "containment" whereby the mother contains and processes intolerable, unprocessed thoughts for the child which then can be integrated by the child. Attachment as a concept is helpful, therefore, to understand the environmental context where attachment, regulatory processes and potentially resiliency may be developed but does not in itself describe the regulatory functions born out of the first relationship with the caregiver.

This regulating capacity was picked up by modern psychoanalysts who developed the concept of "mentalization" that describes more clearly how this reflective capacity is developed in the attachment relationship with the caregiver or other relationships (Fonagy, Gergely, Jurist, & Target, 2002). Within psychoanalysis a key factor in self-organisation and affect regulation is the ability to reflect about the self and others. "Mentalization" was developed by Fonagy and colleagues (Fonagy, Steele, Steele, Higgitt, & Target, 1992) and defined as follows:

> Mentalization, or reflective function, is the ability to understand the behavior of others in terms of mental states such as beliefs, desires, feelings, and memories; the ability to reflect upon one's own mental states and the ability to understand that one's own states of mind may influence the behavior of others (Auchincloss & Samberg, 2012).

Mentalization has been operationalised as reflective function, and can be assessed using the Reflective Functioning Scale (RF) (Fonagy, Target, Steele, & Steele, 1998) and the Reflective Functioning Questionnaire (RFQ) (Fonagy, et al., 2016). Good mentalizing capacity is determined by the presence of a variety of 'ego functions', such as the ability to distinguish self from the other, the presence of an observing ego, openness to empathy and the ability to form mature object relationships (Fonagy, Steele, Steele, Higgitt, & Target, 1992). Fonagy and his colleagues (1992) have also pointed out that, as mentioned above, a high capacity for reflective function in a mother predicts better reflective capacities in her child. A baby does not, at the beginning of life, have the ability to reflect upon her mental states or the mental states of

others. Instead, she needs the mother to model this for her. This allows the infant to acquire a capacity for reflecting on her surroundings and marks the onset of the development of reflective function in the child. This means that good reflective function alongside secure attachment may be one of a range of capacities that resilient individuals demonstrate.

Such capacities or regulating function have also been linked either explicitly or implicitly by researchers (Goldstein T. R., 2009; Goldstein & Winner, 2012; Goldstein T. R., 2017) to an ability to act well, or to embody and portray a character. When considering acting and resilience, the individual's capacity to reflect, regulate and understand herself and others is in focus. Cognitive psychologists described these capacities as a capacity to reflect and a capacity in self-efficacy to adapt successfully to change. The concept of mentalization developed within the psychoanalytic realm seems to encompass these skills and potentially mentalization is a key determinant of resilience. With this the discussion will move on to resilience in actors.

1.7.3 Resilience in actors

The literature and research reviewed thus far reveals that actors must be versatile in their use of a range of psychological skills as they approach the creative process. Could resilience be a mitigating factor leaving some actors better placed than others to endure the demands of the work? Several studies (Crane, 2011; Thomson & Jaque, 2012) on actors point to the potential relevance of resilience in the discussion but thus far, no explicit study was done to explore resiliency in actors. Research by Thomson and Jaque (2012) was the first to study attachment relationships in actors and addressed the relationship between acting and resilience in their discussion.

Thomson and Jaque's (2012) study investigated mental health in actors in four different ways. It explored attachment style in actors, actors' capacity to mourn past trauma, actors' dissociative experiences and their fantasy proneness. Thomson and Jaque conducted an Adult Attachment Interview with 41 actors and 41 non-artists (participants that were neither actors nor practiced other

performing professions) and gave them three self-report questionnaires[28] to fill out. The results revealed the following: first, actors employ dissociative processes to alter their self-perception, which enables them to become 'Other', or to become a character. In other words, they blur the boundaries between 'me' and 'not me' when they create a character. Second, despite blurring boundaries and despite unresolved mourning issues, which the research showed were prevalent, actors typically maintain sufficient self-regulation to manage the acting profession. Third, Thomson and Jaque hypothesise that family acceptance of creativity allowed for higher levels of creativity, and fourth, that development of an early secure attachment in actors encourages the formation of a resilient self in actors. They argued that secure attachment experiences may lead to the formation of a resilient self in actors (Sroufe, Egeland, Carlson, & Collins, 2005), which would lend support to studies on exploring the link between family acceptance and higher levels of creativity (Lim & Smith, 2008). Secure attachment is also linked to higher levels of mindfulness and low levels of psychopathology (Bernstein, Tanay, & Vujanovic, 2011). Reading this study led me to reflect on whether resilience and reflective capacity may be relevant for actors. Consequently, within the discussion of resilience, attachment, and reflective function, these three factors may have a close relationship with each other.

The study (2012) also showed that while actors are more psychologically aware and present with more secure attachment styles than the non-artists in the control group, actors are also more vulnerable to trauma, dissociative tendencies and have more unresolved mourning issues. Potentially the fact that actors had to portray distressing scenarios at times (which can lead to vicarious traumatisation (Seton, 2006)) is the reason why actors struggle with more unresolved mourning and trauma. They may not be aware that certain content requires more time to process than others or little time is available to do so. This might mean that, at least the actors in this particular study, were

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[28] DES-II (Bernstein & Putman, 1986; Waller, et al., 1996) is a self-report measure with 28 items that evaluates the frequency of dissociation based on the subjects answers; ICMI (Lynn & Rhue, 1988; Wilson & Barber, 1983) measures the level of fantasy proneness based on 53 questions about frequency of fantasy in childhood and the current reality; TEQ (Lauterbach & Vrana, 2001) is a measure to trace exposure to nine different traumatic events by posing 11-items as a self-report measure.

not doing the sort of psychological work that Segal thought artists do when producing aesthetic art (see above) (Segal H. , 1952). But as Thomson and Jaque (2012) said '…despite more unresolved mourning, [actors] may be able to maintain sufficient self-regulation to manage the psychological demands of acting' (p. 367).

The continuous boundary blurring might account for the unresolved mourning and vulnerability to trauma amongst actors as well. It is worth considering whether exposure to continuous boundary blurring (Burgoyne, Poulin, & Rearden, 1999) might lead to increased dissociation and disrupt actors' ability to maintain a consistent self-narrative and thought process. Considering the Winnicottian (1945) discussion on experiences of merging in early life may be helpful to further the understanding of the difficulties with boundary blurring. Potentially actors cope well with merging with a character where they have had a good experience of merging in early life with the mother – they established a good template to do so in the attachment relationship. Within the previous section, possible psychopathological consequences of boundary blurring have been explored (Nemiro, 1997; Burgoyne, Poulin, & Rearden, 1999; Seton, 2006). These may also play a role in relation to resilience in actors. Resilient actors may cope better with the difficulties that the industry confronts them with and therefore are less likely to suffer pathological consequences. Or could it be that those with less resilience may be more susceptible to psychopathology due to a lack of resources that others have developed?

If conclusions from previous studies on resilience are correct, then factors that play a role in resilient individuals are relationships (specifically secure attachment relationships), an internal capacity to self-reflect (often built in childhood and with the primary attachment figure) and a willingness to overcome challenges or work on oneself. The present study on actors (2012) specifically linked secure attachment in actors to resilience, stating that actors in the study typically were well able to maintain mental coherence which is an indicator of coherent identity development (or a stable sense of identity) (Angere, 2008; Kraus, 2006). This was identified alongside a tendency in

117

actors to show more secure attachment patterns than the control groups. The researchers speculated whether the secure attachment led to more mental coherence in the actor group, as Fonagy et al. (2019) have observed in other population samples. Potentially, as within other population samples, actors' self-awareness and self-regulating capacities could be targeted and fostered to improve their overall resilience.

The findings of the study, concerning actors' secure attachment styles and good mental coherence, alongside the discussion of resilience points to actors being relatively resilient (at least in this sample). One could even say that the professional environment actors are working in requires them to face several struggles and adversity (such as dissociation and boundary blurring), and being resilient may support their creative career. Maybe resilience (and with that attachment and learned regulatory skills) helps actors to better regulate the identification process with the character, helps them to get in and out of role and manage the boundary blurring process. These reflections led to further investigating resilience, risk factors to resilience and resilience in relation to attachment and mentalization. In acknowledgement of vast literature on attachment and mentalization (Fonagy, Gergely, Jurist, & Target, 2002; Bateman & Fonagy, 2007; Bateman & Fonagy, 2019) this review only briefly touches on these to contextualise the discussion of resilience. In an attempt to explore the relationship between acting and resilience, the following literature was reviewed, and at this stage later methodological decisions were already being kept in mind.

1.8   Conclusion on the actor's use of reflective function

To conclude this chapter, Hanna Segal's (1952) understanding of aesthetic art is revisited. An aesthetically rich artwork, she claimed, is the result of 'mature' creation that has involved psychological work, including the work of mourning, in contrast with the sensation of emptiness that pure imitation in art elicits. While in the wider literature a variety of concepts are used to describe the various forms of artistic creation, including acting, all acknowledge the same need for psychological work. It is this work that facilitates the creation of a

seemingly "real" character, in the acting domain. The blurring of boundaries between self and other, and identification with character, is also a part of this psychological work. This blurring with character may lead to the onset of psychological struggles such as dissociation, identity loss and trauma, particularly where resilience is lacking. This is what drove the exploration of resilience as a potential protective factor during the acting process. The study that will be presented in the following chapters sought to explicitly consider the relationship between resilience and the creative work of acting. To examine this, the creative process of acting was described first to then investigate the meaning and relevance of resilience for actors.

Reviewing the contemporary psychoanalytic literature and attachment research uncovered that appropriate regulatory skills (which are developed in the context of attachment relationships) allow actors to perform successfully. These regulatory skills are also linked to greater resilience in the actor. A capacity to reflect seems also to aid the identification with and separation from the character that is a part of this work. It has been suggested in this chapter that attachment style influences the actor's work particularly, because the actor leans on her early experiences of object relating when connecting to character. A secure attachment style may then allow for better management of the process of acting, as will the presence of more mature 'ego functions' which also aid good object relating. At this point it may be also worth considering whether these capacities could be developed within acting training. And if this is possible, how would such capacities be developed? So far, no literature has touched on such questions and presents a gap within the literature. While exploring this in detail may be beyond the scope of this study, these questions will be revisited at the end of this study to make further recommendations for future investigations.

This led to reflections on another idea of Segal's (1952). She puts forward the idea that artists have a 'high sense of reality' which aids in the creation of art. This notion of a 'high sense of reality' may be present when someone is well aware of oneself and other mental states as well as their own surrounding. It could be even said that it is an ego function in its own right, aiding as it does

reality testing and adaptation to reality (Laplanche & Pontalis, 1973). Simply put, the development of mature thinking processes (as in reflective thinking which is developed after the onset of the depressive position – see the exploration of Kleinian theory above) leads to a sophisticated awareness of the self and others' internal states, the relationship to others and the consequences if there are ruptures in these relationships. To reflect on oneself and others and deal with ruptures in relationships requires psychological work (a working through of conflicts and emotions related to these). This is the type of psychological work Segal (1952) describes as important for the artist; the artist's capacity to mourn allows him to process psychological content and transform it into art through sublimation. Potentially, Segal's intuition on what allows for mature artistic creation was correct, however more modern psychoanalytic concepts allow for a more accurate description of the process.

My assumption at this point is that acting techniques intuitively try to foster reflective functioning in actors. Each individual's capacity to utilise reflective functioning prior to training will determine how well she will make use of the techniques provided. This may be supported by a study (a qualitatively analysed multiple case study with 8 actors) by Crane (2011). She drew a parallel between acting training and psychotherapy, showing that actors see the exploratory task of characterisation 'as an opportunity for increased self-knowledge and acceptance, resulting in individual growth in the realms of both personal and social identity' (Crane, 2011). This ability may also be aided by therapy. Acuna (2016), in an attempt to find better treatment options for actors who have suffered as a result of their involvement in the profession showed that therapeutic approaches focusing on fostering resilience can also help actors maintain a longer career in the profession. Her qualitative research, which consisted in research interviews with twelve clinicians (psychotherapists) revealed that clinicians need to pay particular attention to their countertransference and to establishing and maintaining clear boundaries between themselves and their actor patients. She noted that such boundaries tended to blur easily, and she connected this to the tendency of actors to blur with the character. Thus, a 'parallel process' was highlighted in the psychotherapy situation. This further supports my assumption that

resilience and reflective function play a protective role in the establishment and maintenance of a successful and psychologically healthy acting career.

To conclude, potentially it is helpful to reiterate what is currently known about the creative process in actors. Psychoanalysts have highlighted that successful sublimation and psychological processing of content is important to add aesthetic quality to the work of art. It was also discovered that often the lines between self and the artwork are blurred to facilitate the creative process. Psychologists then emphasised the relevance of different psychological skills including cognitive skills, empathy, and self-regulatory skills. Neuroscientists, similarly, held that regulating the self/character relationship as well as the arousal process of peak performance are paramount. While the different skills needed to perform have been studied, none of the empirical studies identified in this search attempted to describe the creative process in actors. Only the psychoanalytic literature revealed several clues about this. Furthermore, all the above-mentioned studies have studied actors, but none have involved actors or consulted them directly when formulating theories. Therefore, this study aims to directly speak with actors through qualitative interviews and build an understanding of the creative process of acting with them.

In terms of resilience, only tentative research has pointed towards its relevance for acting. Few papers explore resilience in actors, and those which did have not explicitly studied the phenomenon. And yet, the literature suggests that resilience may be important for the creative process of acting. When exploring the creative process of acting, it may be interesting and necessary to also include an investigation of resiliency in relation to the creative work of actors within this study. The literature review includes explorations of the concept of resilience as it is understood within psychoanalysis and other professions. Given that resilience in actors had not been quantitatively studied before, this study presented in the following chapters aims to explore whether resilience is in fact present in actors and in what way it may relate to reflective and regulatory capacities in actors that are building blocks of the creativity in acting. It should not be forgotten though, that

the decision to explore resilience is based on the initial research question that focuses on the actor's creative process.

Chapter 2 - Methodology:

1.9   Introduction

How actors bring the roles they play to life is a process that remains poorly understood. Acting distinguishes from other forms of art, insofar as the actor must inhabit, or literally embody his artistic creation. In the literature review of Chapter 1, acting has been largely explored as a form of empathy (Goldstein & Winner, 2012), perspective-taking (Goldstein T. R., 2017), emotion regulation (Thomson & Jaque, 2017) and theory of mind (Goldstein T. R., 2009). Yet, the process of artistic creation has been studied almost exclusively on other art forms such as painting and music (Townsend, 2019). Moreover, while psychoanalytic literature provides a helpful lens to further the understanding of the creative process in artists, the research (Noice & Noice, 1997; Townsend, 2019) has predominantly omitted actors and relayed heavily on quantitative methods and psychoanalytic observations.

Within the literature review, the mental wellbeing of performers is rarely mentioned, with only one study identified that explicitly addresses mental wellbeing among actors (Robb, Due, & Venning, 2018). Few researchers are beginning to acknowledge the potential psychological effects of acting on actors and vice versa (Panero, 2019). However, some research exists specifically dedicated to this area (Seton, 2006). There's observational evidence about both the affirmative impacts, such as heightened self-esteem and enhanced reflective capacities (Tust-Gunn, 1995) and the detrimental consequences, including trauma and dissociation (Thomson & Jaque, 2012) that acting can have on actor's wellbeing. Moreover, some authors proposed that there might be a link between perception of wellbeing in actors and their resilience (Thomson & Jaque, 2012; 2017). Nevertheless, psychological phenomena, such as boundary-blurring between self and character (Nemiro, 1997) and its causes, remain understudied.

Acting is a profession bearing many challenges. Among the sparsely researched sector of the Performing Arts, actor's challenges are famously overlooked despite a general awareness of issue leading them to be known as the "forgotten patients" (Brandfonbrener, 2000); actors are often faced with risk factors, psychologically challenging work, and emotionally burdening roles. Risk factors may stem from the profession and affect both their personal as well as their professional lives. For example, actors commonly face significant financial instability; inequality and industry power dynamics; unhealthy lifestyle; lack of stable relationships and living situation; experience of devaluation, judgment, and criticism; a problematic combination of perfectionism and self-doubt; problems with the work itself that has an impact on the actor's wellbeing (Robb, Due, & Venning, 2017). Risk factors can have a negative effect on actors wellbeing (Prior, Maxwell, Szabó, & Seton, 2015; Martin & Battaglini, 2019), therefore it is necessary to explore actors resilience in relation to their physical, psychological, social and environmental wellbeing.

Actors are exposed to challenges at an emotional and creative level. As discussed within the literature review, acting involves navigating boundaries between self and other. When actors fail to regulate themselves as well as their emotions and therefore, fail to contain the processes adequately it can negatively impact their mental health or even lead to dissociation in severe cases (Burgoyne, Poulin, & Rearden, 1999). Better self-regulation and emotion regulation, therefore, seems vital for actors (Goldstein T. R., 2009). According to literature on attachment (Bowlby J. , 1969), the capacity to regulate is built and fostered in positive attachment relationships and therefore, making it an aspect worth exploring. Actors often are confronted with playing emotionally challenging roles, such as rape scenes, violence, or other triggering content. Engaging with these sets of emotions can lead to vicarious traumatisation and influence actors' mental health (Seton, 2006). This has led researchers (Thomson & Jaque, 2012) to propose that resilience could help actors cope and process challenging emotions in a protective way.

Resilience appears to be a concept that by itself functions as an umbrella term often used by scientists to describe other concepts (Southwick, Bonanno,

Masten , Panter-Brick, & Yehuda, 2014). Generally, resilience is understood as a person's capacity to bounce back after having experienced adversity (Southwick, Bonanno, Masten , Panter-Brick, & Yehuda, 2014). In contrast, Fonagy, Steele, Higgitt, and Target (1992) shift the focus away from viewing resilience as an inherent personal trait and, instead, propose it as a developmental process influenced by a range of protective factors, originating in infancy. Nevertheless, while resilience was mentioned as a concept within the literature review, it has never been explicitly explored in actors.

Resilience will be influenced by environmental and social contexts, wellbeing and attachment experiences (Foundation, 2016). The more protective factors, such as stable relationships, a person acquires over the course of their life and are present momentarily, the better their resilience capacity seems to be (Southwick, Litz, Charney, & Friedman, 2011). While normally resilience is believed to be a relatively stable (Connor & Davidson, 2003), the literature (Thomson & Jaque, 2012) suggested that resilience may increase over time.

In modern psychoanalysis, reflective capacity is often connected to a capacity to 'mentalize' (Fonagy, Steele, Steele, Higgitt, & Target, 1992). Secure attachment relationships encourage the development of reflective capacities that help the child to process experiences and adapt to the environment (Friedberg & Malefakis, 2018). And secure environments or stable relationships can foster the development of resilience in infancy as well as in adulthood (Fonagy, Gergely, Jurist, & Target, 2002).

In the context of acting, reflective capacities play a particularly important role. Actors must be able to reflect on their experiences, both positive and negative, in order to learn from them and grow as performers. They must also be able to understand and empathize with their characters' emotions, which requires a high level of reflective capacity. Given that reflective capacities, are considered essential for fostering resilience, it is imperative to investigate their relationship more closely and its potential significance in the acting profession. By understanding the interplay between these two factors, valuable insights

into how actors can develop their resilience and achieve success in their careers can be gained.

By using a mixed methods approach, this study aims to, 1) assess the reflective capacity, resilience and wellbeing of the sampled population in terms; 2) determine the relationship and effect of actors' reflective capacity, wellbeing and on their resilience; 3) assess the impact of Covid-19 lockdown on their resilience, reflective capacities and wellbeing; 4) describe the creative process of acting; 5) determine the personal resources actors use for their artistic creations, and their relationship with resilience.

A set of questionnaires was administered to a sample of 50 actors to assess their resilience, reflective capacity, wellbeing, and personal resources pre- and post-Covid-19 lockdown. In addition, a set of qualitative interviews were conducted to identify actors' perspectives on their approach to role preparation, their experience throughout the entire process, and their insights on the industry. Afterwards a second round of interviews was conducted to evaluate the effect of Covid-19 on actors' work and wellbeing. Alongside the quantitative data, I also gathered participants' individual perspectives about resilience. This was done because different fields have come up with definitions for resilience and there are many ways to conceptualise it.

I hypothesized that a) highly resilient actors would have high reflective capacity and better psychological health outcomes over time; b) health factors and perception of wellbeing will have an effect on actor's resilience and reflective capacity; c) COVID-19 pandemic would have a negative impact on actors' resilience and mental health; d) actors' empathy, fantasy, and perspective-taking are relevant for their creative process, as these concepts were previously found to be relevant for actors to work creatively (Goldstein T. R., 2009). To my knowledge, this is the first study to explore the creative process of acting from the actor's point of view.

This study faced several re-designs. Mostly, these changes were motivated by the Covid-19 pandemic that posed a major risk to the feasibility of this study.

After the literature had been compiled and the first design had been approved the pandemic prevented any in person work which meant that the study had to be redesigned from an observational study to a study that could be conducted only. This also placed mental health at the centre stage as several actors were struggling severely due to unemployment and isolation. It was decided to gather data over time to explore the potential effect of the pandemic on that data and to track changes over time both on a quantitative as well as a qualitative level. It was expected to see changes in mental health and resilience over time.

1.10 Methods

1.10.1 Design

This is an exploratory, longitudinal, descriptive study that used a mixed methods approach, as described by Creswell (2018), to generate an holistic understanding of the creative process of acting, and the effect of resilience on the psychological skills that influence it. This study was organized into four phases spanning from 2020 to 2022 (Figure 1). In total 50 actors were recruited for the quantitative component, and eight for the qualitative component.

Quantitative methodologies are advantageous insofar as a large amount of data can be collected, despite a general percentage of bias of 20% (Creswell, 2018). Qualitative research methods are widely recognised and valued methodologies used 'to generate knowledge grounded in human experience' (Sandelowski, 2004) and explore the content and meaning of complex data sets gathered through interviews, focus groups and other methods of data collection to obtain meaningful and trustworthy results (Attride-Stirling, 2001).

A mixed methods approach helped to quantify resilience, wellbeing, reflective capacity and acting skills. Systematically integrating both methodologies also helped to neutralise the weaknesses and sources of bias of the other method.

Figure 1: Phases of data collection

Phase I - Quantitative component
- 50 participants
- Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale, Toronto Alexithymia Scale, Interpersonal Reactivity Index, Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale, WHO Quality of Life Scale and the Acting Experience Questionnaire.
- September 2020

Phase II - Qualitative component
- Semi-structured interviews with 8 actors
- between 50 minutes to 2 hours
- November to March 2020/1

Phase III - Quantitative component
- 34 participants
- Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale, Toronto Alexithymia Scale, Interpersonal Reactivity Index, Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale, WHO Quality of Life Scale and the Acting Experience Questionnaire.
- September 2021

Phase IV - Qualitative component
- Semi-structured interviews with 8 actors
- between 50 minutest and 2 hours
- November to March 2021/2

Quantitative component

The quantitative component of the study was used to describe actors' resilience, reflective capacity, wellbeing, and the personal resources they use for performance (empathy, fantasy, perspective taking); to determine the relationships between these variables, and to assess how they changed over one year of lockdown. Data collection was carried out during Phase I and III of the study (Figure 1).

Resilience was measured using the Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale, reflective capacity was measured using the Toronto Alexithymia Scale. Wellbeing was measured using two scales: the Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale for self-perceived wellbeing, and the WHO Quality of Life Scale for physical, psychological, social, and environmental health. The Interpersonal Reactivity Index (IRI) to measure personal resources. The Acting Experience Questionnaire measured strategies and steps to get in and out of role.

Phase I involved gathering sociodemographic information and establishing a baseline for participants' resilience, psychological skills, wellbeing, and acting skills. To achieve this, 50 actors were recruited and asked to complete a set of six self-report questionnaires on-line from September 2020 to November 2020.

In Phase III, the same variables were measured a year later, replicating the baseline assessment. During September 2021 and November 2021, 34 of the initial 50 participants were asked to retake the set of questionnaires used in Phase I.

The data from Phase I was collected amid Covid-19 lockdown, therefore the researchers expected that the data may have been impacted by the pandemic and wanted to validate their findings with a follow-up data collection after lockdowns were lifted.

Qualitative component

The qualitative component was applied to generate information on actors' subjective experiences about acting. Data for this component was collected during Phase II and Phase IV of the study (Figure 1).

Phase II used qualitative semi-structured, open-ended interviews to extract participants' perspectives on their approach to role preparation, their experience throughout the entire process, and their insights on the industry. For this phase, eight participants were selected from the initial pool of 50 participants in Phase I. Based on the resilience scores obtained from the questionnaires, they were assigned into two groups: low resilience actors and high resilience actors. Qualitative interviews were conducted online via Microsoft Teams from November 2020 to March 2021. Interviews lasted from 50 minutes to two hours and comprised 12 questions.

During Phase IV, another round of interviews was carried out to assess the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on participant's resilience, mental wellbeing, and their work. The same eight participants from Phase II were invited for interviews from November 2021 to March 2022. These interviews lasted from 50 minutes to two hours and comprised 6 questions.

To quantitatively validate the findings from the qualitative component, a validation questionnaire was designed by the researcher. All 50 participants were asked to complete this questionnaire during Phase III.

1.10.2 Participants

50 professional actors were recruited as participants for this study. In the quantitative component, all 50 actors participated for Phase I but only 34 returned for the follow-up of Phase III. For the qualitative component, eight participants were selected from the initial pool of 50.

Inclusion criteria

Participants were selected based on the following inclusion criteria:

Professional experience: Since the qualitative component involved interviewing participants about specific acting techniques and practices, like

character immersion and development, participants were required to have a minimum of years of professional acting experience within the industry, preferably as recent as possible. The minimum of professional experience was dependant on how recent the professional engagement with acting was. Participants who were currently working as actors needed to have at least two years of professional experience, while participants who had not worked as actors in over six years needed to have at least seven years of experience.

Age: Only participants with ages ≥ 21 years were included, since they are legally adults and can consent to be part of the study on their own. No upper limit was stablished for age since in the UK legislation a fixed retirement age for actors was recently abolished, and actors often practice well beyond the usual retirement age.

Professional training: Professional training was determined as having completed any kind of university degree or further education that trains actors in the specific skill set which they require to perform successfully. It was considered to exclude actors without an acting qualification; however, a vast number of professional actors have no formal acting training, for example in the form of a degree, and acting students often perform prior to or during their time in acting school. Therefore, actors without a degree were included so long as they had at least 2 years of professional acting experience and specifying work experience as a participation criterion, as well as how recently this experience was gleaned.

Resilience (for qualitative component only): Based on their Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale scores, participants in the qualitative component were divided into two groups: high-resilience actors and low-resilience actors. In this scale, the cutoff point for the lowest quartile of the general population is 74, which is the same as the lowest mean. This means that participants with a resilience score of 74 or higher were assigned to the high-resilience group, while those with a score of 73 or lower were assigned to the low-resilience group (Connor & Davidson, 2003).

Anyone who did not fit these inclusion criteria was excluded (i.e. amateur actors).

Sample size

Quantitative component

The sample size was estimated using Cohen's power analysis (1988), to ensure that the study had sufficient statistical power. Then, it was adjusted for dropout rate using an anticipated attrition analysis.

Based on a review of relevant literature (Connor & Davidson, 2003), the expected effect size (EF) was set to 0.5, a moderate effect size (Cohen, 1988). An α = 0.05 was selected, representing a 5% probability of a Type I error; with 1- β = 0.80 (desired power of 80%), indicating willingness to accept a 20% probability of a Type II error. Power analysis was done using the software G*Power (Faul, Erdfelder, Lang, & Buchner, 2007; Faul F. , Erdfelder, Buchner, & Lang, 2009).

The power analysis indicated that a minimum sample size of n=71 participants was required to detect the expected effect with a power of 80% and a significance level of 0.05[29]. The anticipated attrition analysis estimated a dropout rate of 10%, based on previous studies by (Connor & Davidson, 2003). Thus, the estimated sample size was adjusted to n=74.

Although 74 participants were recruited initially in accordance with the estimated sample size, complete data was available only for 50. For Phase III, only 34 out of the original 50 participants returned. The decrease in participation rates was influenced by the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and individual decisions made by participants who chose to withdraw from the

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[29] A g power test was run for different types of analysis and each test required a different power. I based the sample size on the highest requirement - correlations and t-tests.

study. Of interest is, that specifically actors with high resilience scores withdrew.

To confirm that the decrease in participation rate would not affect the statistical power of the study, a new power analysis was performed, this time aiming for a sample size n=25, based on (Howell, 2008), comparing pre to post resilience scores with paired sample t-test after the Covid lockdowns. The power analysis indicated that a sample size n=25 was enough for an EF=0.5, considered a moderate effect (Cohen, 1988), therefore a sample size n=34 was deemed appropriate.

Qualitative component

The sample size for the qualitative component was determined using a quantitative approach for qualitative research, as introduced by Fugard and Potts in 2015 (Fugard & Potts, 2015). This method was complemented by insights from previous qualitative studies on acting which indicated an average of 3 to 5 participants (Burgoyne, Poulin, & Rearden, 1999; Nemiro, 1997), and by general recommendations that suggest 6 to 10 participants as adequate for studies where qualitative interviews are used (Clarke & Braun, 2013).

In their work from 2015, Fugard and Potts (2015) outline a six-stage model for determining sample size in qualitative studies. This model considers prevalence, appearance, instances, power, tool-estimated sample size and actual sample size in relation to other factors, to derive the appropriate sample size. Researchers are prompted to consider the inquires presented in (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Model of six phases to decide qualitative sample size (adapted from Fugard & Potts, 2015)

Phase	Description
Prevalence	• What is the lowest possible prevalence of discovering a theme that is of interest? (Commonly estimated prevalence = 0.2; 20%) • Prevalence can be adjusted by multiplying expected prevalence by probability of theme appearence.
Appearance	• What is the probability of someone having something significant to add to the study actually doing so? (Commonly estimated probability = 50%. This leads to an adjusted prevalence of 10% when 0.2 is multiplied by 0.5)
Instances	• How often should a theme occur in order to count as relevant? (to have any significance a theme normally needs to appear at least twice)
Power	• How high is / would you like the probability to be that you will find the least common theme? (the common value of 80% from the quantitative power analysis is here taken as a reference)
Tool-estimated sample size	• With these parameters one can determine the sample size. In this case one would have a sample size of 29, due to the prevalence of 10%, 2 instances required and 80% power (See table in paper (Fugard & Potts, 2015)).
Actual sample size	• This value should be used as a guide in relation to other factors as volume of material, case selection approach, etc.

Following the model, for this study the power was fixed at 80% and the probability of appearance of a theme at 100 %. This probability aligns with Fugard and Potts' (2015) rationale, which justifies the expectation of full thematic coverage based on the specified inclusion criteria: actors' professional experience and resilience. The adjusted population theme prevalence was then calculated at 50% (0.5).

Table 1: A prevalence table to decide the theme prevalence within the population (adapted from Fugard & Potts, 2015)

Population theme prevalence %	Desired number of theme instances							
	1	2	3	4	5	10	20	30
5	32	59	85	110	134	249	471	687
10	16	29	42	54	66	124	234	343
15	10	19	28	36	44	82	156	228
20	8	14	21	27	33	61	116	170
25	6	11	16	21	26	49	93	136
30	5	9	14	18	21	40	77	113
35	4	8	12	15	18	34	66	96
40	4	7	10	13	16	30	57	84
45	3	6	9	11	14	26	50	74
50	3	5	8	10	12	24	45	66
55	3	5	7	9	11	21	41	60
60	2	4	6	8	10	19	37	55
65	2	4	6	7	9	18	34	50
70	2	4	5	7	8	16	31	46
75	2	3	4	6	8	15	29	43
80	1	3	4	6	7	14	27	40
85	1	3	4	5	7	13	25	37
90	1	2	4	5	6	12	23	35
95	1	2	3	4	6	11	22	33

With a fixed power of 80% and population theme prevalence of 50%, sample size estimated according to Fugard and Potts model was n=5 (Table 1). Since the qualitative component required the recruitment of a group of actors with low resilience scores and another with high resilience scores, the estimated sample size of n=5 was used for each group. To account for potential participant dropout a sample size >5 was pursued during recruitment.

Initially, 12 participants were recruited for the qualitative component, six for each resilience group. However, four participants withdrew due to personal reasons. In total, eight participants were recruited for the qualitative component, four in the low resilience group, and four in the high resilience groups.

Recruitment

A combination of probability and convenience sampling was used to recruit participants. As a recruitment strategy, digital and physical advertising was used to distribute information about the study and invite actors to register as

participants, however Covid-19 lockdown made the recruitment process reliant on digital advertising mainly.

Advertisements were uploaded to job recruitment websites, a recruitment brief was published on the UCL website, and a recruitment email (Appendix) was made to be shared. Professional contacts within the industry, drawn from the researcher's professional network, were engaged and requested to disseminate the recruitment email or share recruitment-related information within their respective professional networks. Additionally, various institutions, including acting schools, theatres, acting job portals, and professional organizations such as the British Institute for Performing Arts Medicine (BAPAM), were contacted to assess the feasibility of distributing recruitment information to their members via email or their website channels. Acting schools refused to take part in sharing recruitment information, but acting job portals, professional contacts, and professional organizations agreed to do so.

Recruitment material focused on mental health as the focus was on recruiting 70 participants for the quantitative part to explore mental health and resilience. A significantly larger sample was needed for the questionnaire phases while the creative aspect of acting was only explored with 8 participants during interviews. Therefore, focus was put on recruiting the bigger sample.

The digital advert and the recruitment email contained a link directing actors to a sign-up form created on REDCap. Once the recruitment link was clicked participants could sign up with their email address to participate in the study. They then received another email with an information sheet, electronic consent form, and a link to a document containing all the questionnaires. This document also included downloadable versions of the Information sheet and consent form. This approach ensured complete anonymity by keeping participants' email addresses separate from their questionnaire responses. Additionally, it minimized the researcher's involvement during recruitment and data gathering, as the system automatically sent email reminders, and there was no direct contact with participants during this process. Data was stored in the Data Safe Haven within UCL.

1.10.3 Procedure

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic the study was conducted exclusively online. Covid-19 posed a risk, both for participants and researchers, thus face-to-face interactions were avoided. Following UK Government guidelines (Barber, Brown, & Ferguson, 2022), the questionnaires were adapted to an online format to avoid personal contact. Interviews were conducted via Microsoft Teams in accordance with Government restrictions. The study timeframe is summarised in (Table 2).

Table 2: Timeframe of the data collection

Data collection method	Timescale	
	2020/1	2021/2
Ethical approval received	September	
Phase II:		
1st Questionnaire sent out	**September**	
2nd round of interviews with participants	**November - March**	
Pilot Interview	10th November	
Participant 1	12th November	
Participant X	16th - Excluded	
Participant 2	19th November	
Participant Y	20th - Excluded	
Participant 3	11th December	
Participant 4	14th December	
Participant 5	21st / 26th January	
Participant 6	25th January	
Participant 7	1st February	
Participant 8	8th March	
Participant Z	12th - Excluded	
Phase IV:		
2nd Questionnaire sent out		**September**
2nd round of interviews with participants		**November - Mar**
Participant 1		25th November
Participant 2		9th December
Participant 3		6th December
Participant 4		12th March
Participant 5		10th December
Participant 6		4th February
Participant 7		1st December
Participant 8		24th February
Data collection completed	Mid-March 2021	Mid-March 2022

This study was designed to recruit participants residing in the United Kingdom, preferably in London. However, due to Covid-19 many of them moved during

the pandemic and relocated to their countries of origin. Therefore, two participants resided abroad, in Canada and Italy.

1.10.4 Materials

Quantitative component

Six questionnaires were used: the Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale (CDRS) of 25 items (Connor & Davidson, 2003), the Toronto Alexithymia Scale (TAS) of 20 items (Bagdy, Parker, & Taylor, 1994), the Interpersonal Reactivity Index (IRI) of 26 items (Davis, 1983), the Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (WEMWBS) of 14 items (Stewart-Brown, 2013), the WHO Quality of Life Scale (WHO QLS) of 26 items (McDowell I. , 2006), and the Acting Experience Questionnaire (AEQ) of 38 items (Hetzler E. T., 2019). All these scales were designed as self-report questionnaires on 5-point Likert scales. The questionnaires were piloted with a professional actress to receive clarifications on the adequacy of the length, understanding and format before sending them out.

The **Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale (CDRS)** (Connor & Davidson, 2003) was used to evaluate the level of resilience and categorise participants into two groups: high and low resilience. The scale has 25-items scored on a five-point Likert scale. This scale can be further divided into four different subsets of resilience with the lowest quartile ranging from 0 to 73, the second lowest from 74 to 82, the third quartile starts at 83 and ends at 90 and the highest quartile goes from 91 to 100. The general mean obtained from testing a general US population was set at 79 for this scale, however it was remarked that studies conducted in different fields (i.e., patients with mental illness) yielded scores which were 3 to 5 points lower (76 to 74) than the US adult population mean. The Connor-Davidson Resilience scale was chosen because of its high psychometric qualities and the relevance of Connor-Davidson's contributions to resilience research (Connor & Davidson, 2003). Previous research (Thomson & Jaque, 2012) has proposed the potential relevance of resilience for actors, but this has remained unexplored.

The **Toronto Alexithymia Scale (TAS)** (Bagdy, Parker, & Taylor, 1994) evaluated alexithymia or a difficulty in experiencing, describing, and verbally communicating one's feeling to others. This scale was chosen to measure reflective capacity, instead of other methods such as the Reflective Function Questionnaire (Fonagy, et al., 2016), because according to the literature (Goldstein T. R., 2009) actors require high levels of emotional awareness, as well as describing and communicating these to act. Alexithymia is a subclinical phenomenon whereby individuals present with a lack of emotional awareness; it is specifically difficult to identify and describe ones feeling and distinguish bodily sensations from emotional arousal. This scale is scored on a 1 to 5 scale and the total is calculated by summing up all items, equivalent to the other scales. Scores that are 51 or lower indicate low alexithymia, whereas scores that are 61 or above indicate high alexithymia. Also, this scale can be divided into four subscales measuring the difficulty to describe feelings, the difficulty to identify feelings and externally oriented thinking (Bagdy, Parker, & Taylor, 1994). The scale also has high psychometric qualities confirmed by several studies (Bagdy, Parker, & Taylor, 1994; 2003).

The **Interpersonal Reactivity Index (IRI)** (Davis, 1983) is a 28-item, five-point Likert-scale questionnaire that measures four subscales of empathy: perspective taking, fantasy, empathic concern, and personal distress. Higher scores on each subscale indicate a stronger tendency towards that aspect of empathy. The IRI was used in this study to measure participants' levels of empathy, fantasy, and perspective taking. Based on the findings in the literature review (Goldstein T. R., 2009), it was hypothesised that these three psychological concepts were relevant for actors to work creatively. The IRI was used to test this hypothesis and to explore the relationship between each cognitive skill and performance phase by analysing correlations between the IRI and the Acting questionnaire. The scales psychometric quality has been confirmed in several studies by Davies (1983).

The **Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale** (WEMWBS) (Stewart-Brown, 2013) was developed to measure mental wellbeing and for the use in evaluations or projects that aim to improve mental health. The scale has 14-

items with five categories that sum up to provide a single score. Using a wellbeing scale allowed to gather baseline data on actors wellbeing and track this over time. This scale was selected because its items are worded positively, which was necessary to avoid causing additional distress to participants during the difficult time of the pandemic. Additionally, the scale covers both affective and functional aspects of wellbeing, making it more comprehensive. Key benefits include its wide use and proven validity in a variety of setting, especially in the clinical field to evaluate interventions; it is used internationally; and can be used with whole populations or targeted groups (Stewart-Brown, 2013).

The **World Health Organization – Quality of Life Scale** short version (WHOQOL-BREF) (McDowell I. , 2006) is a 26-item measure of quality of life in four domains: physical health, psychological health, social relationships, and environmental health. It uses a 5-point Likert Scale in questions such as "How would you rate your quality of life". In addition to mental wellbeing, data on other wellbeing factors was also required, due to the potential for comorbidity. This scale was chosen because it is a well-established scale, that was tested in multiple setting, in different nations with very high psychometric qualities and because this measure allowed the tracking of different aspects of health, relevant to actors, in one measure (McDowell I. , 2006).

The **Actor's Experience Questionnaire** (Hetzler E. T., 2019) gathers actors' experiences of acting before, during and after the performance. The questionnaire contains several questions designed to allow the respondents to describe the relationships they have with the things they. Alongside this, it measures the pre-, during and post-performance strategies. It is divided into five different sections that identify the different stages from the preparation before the performance until after the performance: stage 1 - creating a character, stage 2 - before performance, and stage 3 - after performance. It facilitates insights into the mechanisms of the text analysis, the research and performance phases. It was developed by Eric Hetzler to explore actor's emotions on stage, and he reported high psychometric qualities of the scale. This scale is one of the first scales designed specifically for actors and has

good psychometric qualities therefore it was chosen for this study (Hetzler E. T., 2019). While the original version of the scale has 93 items, a shortened version was used for this project with 42-items, on a 5-point Likert scale.

Validation questionnaire: This instrument was developed to provide quantitative validation for the outcomes of the qualitative component. The questionnaire consisted of a set of questions employing a five-point Likert scale, directly derived from the insights (i.e., themes) obtained in the initial interview. After the first round of interviews, initial themes were identified and to test their validity, themes were formulated as questions such as "Would you say that you use perspective taking before the performance?". Participants were instructed to rate these questions on a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). This was done to gather feedback from actors on the theme and validate their relevance with the wider sample. The questionnaire was based on previous research (Braun & Clarke, 2006) that used a similar instrument to quantitatively measure qualitative findings. The questionnaire can be found in Table 5 of the data analysis in Phase IV - last section.

The scales were chosen based on the perceived ability to appropriately measure the factors that were being explored and because of their good internal consistency (TAS – Cronbach's alpha = .81) and test-retest reliability (TAS = .77, p,.01). All scales were found to be highly reliable in this analysis: the Connor-Davidson Resilience scale, consisting of 25 items, had a reliability of α = .886; the Toronto Alexithymia scale with 20 items, α = .902, the Interpersonal Reactivity Index with 26 scored α = .765; the WHO Health Questionnaire with 26 items had an α = .850; the WEMWBS consisting of 14 items had a reliability of α = .929; and lastly the Acting Questionnaire containing 38 questions showed a reliability of α = .835.

Qualitative component

The interviews were structured using an open-ended semi-structured interview approach with a question protocol (4, 5 Previous studies on acting have mostly relied on non-actor participants (Noice & Noice, 1994; Goldstein, 2009;

Thomson & Jaque, 2012), highlighting the need for actor-centred research in this field. Therefore, this study aimed to involve actors directly in developing a theory about their work. Semi-structured interviews were chosen as the most appropriate data collection method, as they allow participants to freely explore their creative experiences and provide detailed reflections. Open-ended questions were used to encourage participants to share their insights, while also providing a guideline for the interview. Semi-structured interviews were chosen as the most appropriate means of gathering meaningful insights on actors' creative work and wellbeing.

The questions for the qualitative interviews were prepared based on the existing literature (Goldstein T. R., 2009; Paula Thomson, 2017; Panero, 2019; Loveday K. M., 2021) and in consultation with a professional actress to ensure the questions used a familiar non-technical language understandable for everyone, specifically actors. The questions were validated during a pilot interview with a different professional actress. In Phase II participants were asked the following questions:

Table 3: Qualitative interview questions (Phase II)

Interview Questions – Phase II
1. How did you become interested in acting?
2. Do you feel that you are personally suited for acting? Why?
3. Could you tell me about a **recent role** you have prepared for? How did you work on it?
4. How do you **create a character** with emotional depth?
5. Does it help to draw on personal experience?
6. Prior to the performance what are the **various steps you take to prepare** for a role, both alone and during rehearsals. (e.g. is there a protocol that remains the same)
7. How do you manage to **engage and disengage** with a character?

8. Could you describe to me how you **maintain a performance**, i.e. keep up the role, once the play has started? (e.g. do you use image streams, rely on other actors, etc.)

9. Do you judge the **relationship to other actors** on stage as important during the performance and for getting in and out of role?

10. How do you **maintain a clear sense of your own identity**, which is separate from that of the character you are playing? Is it important to do this?

11. Do you do anything after the performance to **separate from a role**?

12. Is it difficult for you to get in and out of role?

13. Can you talk to me about other things that make it **difficult for you to do this job**? (e.g. experiences with the character, emotional reactions to a play)

14. Has this work / profession ever had any **negative impact on your psychological health**? If yes, in what way?

15. Did you have any experiences of the following: a character intruding into your personal life, acting out personal experiences on stage, feeling you are hosting more than one personality in the body, anxiety reactions, intense dreams, emotional flashbacks, etc.)

16. **How do you cope** with these difficulties?

17. Would you say acting is a **psychologically or emotionally demanding work**?

18. What do you think about requests by the director / teacher to draw on personal experience for the creation of a character?

19. Do you think your personal disposition (character) has an influence on how you engage with a role and how well you are able to perform and navigate the external demands of the performance?

20. What do you think **helps you to sustain this work**? Do you think you have to be emotionally strong in order to do the work?

21. Would you **consider yourself to be emotionally resilient**? Why/why not?

In Phase IV these follow-up questions were asked:

Table 4: Qualitative interview questions (Phase IV)

Interview Questions – Phase IV
1) Are there any **particular life events** from the last year that you would like to mention? This might include some points on the influence of the pandemic on your life.
2) How would you assess your **mental wellbeing at the moment**?
a. And could you tell me how you would assess it in comparison to last year?
b. How did you cope with any difficulty?
c. Are there any things that you have learnt from this experience?
3) What is **difficult about your work**?
a. Could you name anything that helped you in your work since we last spoke?
b. Has your approach to the work changed?
4) Last time you told me that you are **particularly interested in using** (both a more traditional approach and more intuitive) **X** (e.g. perspective taking*), **could you tell me more about it**?
a. For example: You talked about doing research writing and creating the story of the character, watch different actors play different characters (getting inspiration). You also said after working with colleagues everything can change. You write intentions. Recording the lines of the character. Wearing the type of dress. **Could you tell me a bit more in detail how you work with that?**
b. Have you trained in **any acting methods** and which ones are you using nowadays? Or have you change career/ trained in another specialty and how has this come about?
c. Last year you **described acting** as sort of X? Is this still valid?
d. You also **describe acting as a X** (e.g. form of muscle memory, where your body knows what to do and fellows a template that has been written before. That gave me the idea of the character

work in rehearsal as creating a sort of frame.) **What do you think about that?**

    e. What do you think about **acting in relation to therapy**. Do you see any connections there?

    f. Last year you talked about a X (e.g. plastic veneer in some actors) – could you describe this experience in a bit more detail?

    g. On a scale from 1 to 10, **how important is acting** for you personally?

    h. On a scale from 1 to 10, to what degree do you think **you are yourself when playing a character** on stage?

    i. Have you ever **thought about empathy, perspective taking and fantasising capacity** as such?

5) Last time we talked about **how resilient you thought you were X** (e.g. dealing well with adversity*) and how important this was in your profession. **Would you still agree with this view?**

    a. Could you describe to me in **your own words what resilience is** for you?

    b. What would you say now about **how resilient you think you are**? On a scale from 1 to 10 now and last year.

    c. And again, do you think **resilience has a bearing on your work**?

6) What **external factors have helped or hindered** your professional work?

The focus of in the interviews was the creative work of actors explored in Phase II. Follow-up interviews were conducted to clarify questions that arose after the data analysis of the first interview. Furthermore, the pandemic had a significant impact on actors' lives as well as their wellbeing. Therefore, it felt important to gather data on this in the follow-up after the first lock-down was lifted and participants started to work again. This help to contextualise the quantitative data gather in Phase III.

1.10.5 Data analysis

The data collected from the questionnaires were analysed and descriptive statistics were used to summarize the demographic variables: gender, age, UK residence, professional training, years of experience, present illness, education, marital status.

The variables gender, UK residence, professional training, and present illness were treated as binomial. Age and years of experience were treated as ordinal variables. Age had four levels: 21-24 years old, 24-35 years old, 35-44 years old, > 55 years old. Years of experience had three levels: little work experience (1-5 years), moderate work experience (5-10 years), extensive work experience (>10 years).

Normality was tested for all the variables used previous to the analysis using normality plots and a test to confirm normality.

All analyses were done using SPSS version 28.

1.11 Description of resilience, reflective capacity and wellbeing in the sample of actors at baseline (Phase I)

The analysis of data collected on Phase I was used to describe actors' resilience, reflective capacity, wellbeing factors and acting skills and to determine the relationships between these variables. To understand how resilience and reflective capacity were distributed along the sample, between and within group comparisons were made.

Differences in resilience between genders and professional training, and relationship between resilience and demographic variables

To determine differences in resilience based on gender and professional training, two independent samples t-tests were conducted comparing actors' resilience scores on the Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale (CDRS) between males and females, and between actors with professional training and without

professional training. Cohen's *d* was calculated afterwards to detect the effect size.

Additionally, Spearman's correlations were used to assess if resilience was related to age, years of professional experience, and education.

Differences in reflective capacity between genders and professional training, and relationship between reflective capacity and demographic variables

To determine differences in reflective capacity based on gender and professional training two independent samples t-tests were used to compare scores on the Toronto Alexithymia Scale (TAS) between males and females, and between professional training and without professional training.

In addition, Spearman's correlations were used to assess the relationships between reflective capacity and age, years of professional experience, and education.

Differences in resilience and reflective capacity between actors and general population

A single sample t-test was used to compare the CDRS and TAS scores of the sample of 50 actors to the scores from samples of the general population. The mean resilience scores in general population samples were taken from the CDRS guide. The mean score representative of a general population completing the Toronto Alexithymia Scale was taken from the paper reviewing the reliability and validity of the scale by Parker, Taylor and Bagby (2003).

Differences in reflective capacities across resilience levels.

Once actors were assigned for the high and low resilience groups, t-tests were conducted to compare resilience scores within both groups by gender (male

vs. female) and professional training (with professional training vs. without professional training).

Then, another independent samples t-test was used to compare resilience scores and reflective capacity scores between actors with low resilience and high resilience.

1.12 Effect and relationship of health factors and wellbeing on resilience and reflective capacity

Relationship and impact of health factors on resilience

Pearson's correlation analysis was used to assess the relationship between resilience, perception of wellbeing, and physical, psychological, social, and environmental health factors. Perception of wellbeing and health factors were measured using the Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (WEMWBS) and the WHO Quality of Life Scale, respectively.

Next, two multiple linear regressions were conducted. The first one, assessed if health factors and perception of wellbeing could be predictors of resilience. The second one assessed if health factors could predict perception of wellbeing.

Reflective capacity, resilience, and perception of wellbeing

To assess the effect of resilience and reflective capacity on perception of wellbeing, two linear models where constructed. The first one analysed if resilience could be predicted from reflective capacity, the second analysed if resilience scores could predict perception of wellbeing scores. A third model, a bivariate regression, assessed the relationship between reflective capacity and resilience.

Personal resources used by actors, resilience and reflective capacity

A Pearson's correlation analysis was conducted to assess the relationships between resilience, reflective capacity, and the personal resources of empathy, fantasy, and perspective taking, obtained from the Interpersonal Reactivity Index (IRI). Subsequently, a multiple linear regression was employed to examine whether personal resources and reflective capacity could predict resilience.

Personal resources used by actors before, during and after performance.

To identify what personal resources actors use for the different phases of performance a correlation analysis was run between the personal resources measured using the IRI questionnaire and four stages of the performance arc: preparation stage (including the rehearsal and initial character research), pre-performance (the moment before going on stage), the performance itself and post-performance (the moment after the performance has ended).

Three linear models were fitted afterwards to assess the effect of all the personal resources on the three stages of the performance proposed by the Acting Questionnaire: character creation, performance, and post-performance. Each model used one stage of performance as the response variable and all the personal resources (empathy, fantasy, and perspective taking) as explanatory variables.

1.13 Changes in resilience, reflective capacity and wellbeing in the sample of actors after Covid-19 lockdown (Phase III)

The analysis focused on assessing the change in resilience, reflective capacity and wellbeing of actors after a year of Covid-19 lockdown, and followed the same conceptual framework as data analysis of Phase I. Given that the demographic factors were not related to resilience or reflective capacity at Phase I, the analysis were not repeated at Phase III.

To conduct these analyses relationships and differences between the variables measured by the scales presented above were explored. In addition, any potential mediators were looked at.

The baseline data collection coincided with the second lockdown over the Christmas period in 2020, while the second data collection was conducted after participants started to return to work by the end of 2021.

Since some participants dropped out of the study or didn't complete the questionnaires, longitudinal analyses were done with only the scores of the participants that returned and completed the study.

Attrition

For Phase III, the sample used for all analysis included 34 of the 50 participants recruited in Phase I. Therefore, an attrition analysis was applied to identify the dropout rate in the general sample and in the high and low resilience groups.

Longitudinal change of actor's resilience, reflective capacity, and wellbeing after a year

To assess changes after one year in resilience, reflective capacity, perception of wellbeing and health factors, paired-samples t-tests were used to compare scores on the CDRS, TAS, WEMWBS and WHOQOL, respectively between Phase I and Phase III.

Longitudinal change of actor's resilience and reflective capacity across resilience levels.

T-tests were used to compare resilience and reflective capacity scores of high- and low-resilience groups between Phase I and Phase III.

1.14 Longitudinal changes in effect and relationship of health factors and wellbeing on resilience and reflective capacity.

Relationships and impact of health factors on resilience and perception of wellbeing

The correlations between health factors (physical, psychological, social, and environmental health), resilience, and perceived mental wellbeing from Phase I were reassessed to determine changes in Phase II. Partial correlations were then calculated to control for the covariance between variables and assess the independence of relationships between them. A Bonferroni correction was made to control for the familywise error rate (the probability of making at least one Type I error in all the tests).

Afterwards, two multiple linear regressions were conducted to assess if health factors could be predictors of resilience and perception of wellbeing.

Then, three models were fitted to examine the combined effect of all health factors (psychological health, physical health, social health, and environmental health) on resilience, reflective capacity, and mental wellbeing, respectively. For this, the overall score of the WHO Quality of Life Scale was used, instead of individual health factors.

1.15 Longitudinal changes in the effect of resilience and reflective capacity on perception of wellbeing

First, a bivariate regression was performed to determine if reflective capacity in actors assessed at Phase I could predict their resilience at Phase III.

Then, to compare the different effects of resilience and reflective capacity on perception of wellbeing at baseline (Phase I) and one year later (Phase III), the same analysis as in the previous year was run with data collected at Phase III.

To identify the effect of time on any potential interactions between resilience, reflective capacity and perception of wellbeing, a multiple linear regression was performed using only the scores of Phase III. Then the model was compared incorporating Phase as a factor to control for longitudinal changes.

Personal resources used by actors before, during and after performance

To determine changes after a year on which personal resources are used in acting, correlation analysis between the Interpersonal Reactivity Index and the various stages of the Acting Questionnaire were reassessed at Phase III to compare the results from Phase I to Phase III.

Then, a series of multiple regressions were conducted to explore these correlations in more detail, none of which were significant: fantasy skills was not a reliable predictor for the creating a character stage as in the previous year.

Personal resources actors judged as important for acting

As part of the follow-up questionnaires, participants were asked about the importance of certain personal resources that they had mentioned in the first round of interviews in relation to different stages of performance. Participants identified three essential skills for performing: imagination, empathy, and perspective-taking. The skills were linked to different preparatory stages in the work, to see whether actors thought different personal resources were important at different time points during the creative preparation. The goal was to get a sense of participants' opinions on the skills used in acting and to support the qualitative findings with quantitative data.

As such the first staged represented the actors' practices before the performance including the rehearsal and any time leading up to the performance. The questions that were asked were the following:

Table 5: Validation questionnaire questions

Questions:
o Would you say that you use your imagination to create your character?
o Would you say that you use perspective-taking strategies before the performance to get into role?
o Would you say that you use empathy to identify with the character?
o Would you say that working on a character goes hand in hand with personal distress?
o Would you say that immersion into the character is achieved by imagining yourself as the character?
o Would you say that immersion into the character is achieved by emphasizing with the character?
o Would you say that you use empathising skills to reconnect with yourself after the performance?
o Would you say that you use imagination skills to reconnect with yourself after the performance?

The second stage was linked to the two personal resources that actors seem to experience during the performance, based on the statistical results: fantasy and empathy.

For the third stage, participants were also asked whether empathy and imagination played a role after the performance to allow the actor to reconnect to their daily life.

Afterwards, participants were asked which of the following steps was relevant for them to explore their relationship with the character: 'preparation of a character during rehearsal', 'engagement with the character before the performance', 'being the character during the performance', 'separating from the character after the performance'.

Then participants were asked three questions about resilience: 1) Does resilience facilitate getting in and out of role? 2) Does resilience enable you to cope with the challenges of the profession? 3) Does resilience enable you to sublimate personal content in the arts?

Figure 3: Quantitative data analysis procedure

Phase I →

← Phase III

Describing resilience, reflective capacity and wellbeing in the sample of actors	Assessing relationships and effect of variables	Assessing the longitudinal change in resilience, reflective capacity and wellbeing
Descriptive statistics	Pearson's r correlations	Independent and paired sample t-tests
Independent and paired sample t-tests	Bivariate and multiple linear regression	Bivariate and multiple linear regression
Spearman rank correlations		

Following this, the study aimed to explore the actors' creative work in more detail. This was done by combining a quantitative and qualitative approach.

Qualitative analysis

Alongside methodologies such as grounded theory, ethnography, and phenomenology, one method that has recently gained more popularity among researchers is Thematic Analysis.

Thematic Analysis helps to identify themes within narratives by analysing texts and trying to identify patterns within the narrative. Braun and Clarke (2006) described Thematic Analysis as 'a method for identifying, analysing, organizing, describing, and reporting' themes found within a data set (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 79) which is what this study aims to achieve.

Both Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) and Thematic Analysis (TA) were considered for this analysis. Braun and Clarke (2020) argue that both types of analysis generate similar output, depending on how each analysis is conducted. Rarely an ideal method can be found to analysis date, the choice of analysis therefore should be motivated by purpose of the project, in that is ought to support the research goals, the approach to inquiry and fits the topic of investigation as well as the investigators. While TA is a method to identify, analysis and report patterns, IPA is often a) guides the theoretical framework; b) is used when the research question is used on personal experience or meaning making; c) uses a small, homogenous purposive sample; and d) the data collected in interviews focuses on a first-person account of the experience (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009). IPA is theoretically bound and focuses on understand people's everyday experiences of reality to gain insight on a phenomenon (Smith J. A., 2019). In contrast, TA is not bound by pre-existing frameworks which allows its use in different settings (Braun & Clarke, 2013). Therefore, one of its biggest advantages is its flexibility and its ability to reflect reality as well as unravel the surface of reality. Braun and Clarke (2020) recommend TA in the following instances, and TA was chosen for this analysis based on these points which were all were relevant for this study.

- The research question is focused on something other than (just) *personal* experience and sense-making.
- The data source is something other than interviews or another method that gathers in-depth first-person accounts of personal experience and sense-making.
- The sample is relatively large (i.e. larger than *N = 10*) and/or heterogeneous – such as when the aim is to capture diversity.
- The analytic focus is solely on identifying themes across the data set, rather than also on the unique features of individual cases.
- The need for research to have 'actionable outcome' with clear implications for practice requires organising the analysis into 'thematic statements' (shared meaning-based themes).
- The analytic interest is on how personal experiences are located within wider socio-cultural contexts (Braun & Clarke, 2020, p. 6).

Interview data from 8 participants was analysed using Thematic Analysis (Boyatzis, 1998).

Figure 4: Qualitative data analysis procedure

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┌─────────────┐     ┌─────────────┐     ┌─────────────┐
│  Thematic   │     │  Thematic   │     │  Comparing  │
│ analysis of │ ──▶ │ analysis of │ ──▶ │    both     │
│    first    │     │   second    │     │  analyses   │
│  interview  │     │  interview  │     │             │
└─────────────┘     └─────────────┘     └─────────────┘
```

Analysis

Table 6: Interview participants' characteristics

Participant Characteristics	Total
N Total	8
Male, N	3
Age (years), range	24 to 65
Ethnicity, N	
White (English/Welsh/Scottish/Northern Irish/British)	5
White (Other White Background)	1
Black (Black British)	1
Black (Other Black Background)	1
Education, N	
Acting degree	6
Not acting degree	2
Experience level, N	
Less than 10 years (mostly at the start of their career with up to 5 years of experience)	4
More than 10 years (all of them had more than 20 years)	4
Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale (CDRS), mean (SD)	
Group allocation, N	
High resilient group	4
Low resilient group	4

In the following paragraphs, I will present a layout of my plan for the data analysis which follows Lincoln and Guba's (1985) 'trustworthiness criteria' and is based on Nowell's (2017) 'Step-by-Step Approach for Conducting a Trustworthy Thematic Analysis.' Alongside these resources, I have used Richard E. Boyatzis (1998) prominent guide, *Transforming Qualitative Information – Thematic Analysis and Code Development*.

Phase 1 (based on Nowell's (2017) approach)

The first step followed by the researcher was the familiarisation with the data set at hand (Nowell, 2017). Each file had to be adequately stored with a dedicated name, date of collection and in an appropriate format like PDF or a Microsoft Word document. This facilitated data management. The data trail was recorded within an Excel spreadsheet including all logs of the raw data, as well as the collection, transcription, and a step-by-step list of initial processing of the data.

At the outset, it was questionable exactly what type of data would be analysed (in that the researcher did not know what participants would say) and, therefore, what would make this data interesting (Braun and Clarke, 2006). The analysis focused on the interview recordings, the coding of the transcripts of those videos and the analysis of the reflective journal entries I recorded after each interview (Thorne, 2000). The findings would be considered in light of the existing literature which had been considered in the literature review that was conducted previously. Because data was collected through interactive means (via video conferencing), I, as the primary researcher, had knowledge of the research data before I began the analysis. Therefore, I documented initial analytic interests and thoughts during the data collection which aided the beginning of the data analysis (Tuckett, 2005).

I then engaged with the data directly by transcribing the interviews, allowing for a close examination of the participants' opinions, followed by detailed readings of the transcripts where I actively searched for meanings and patterns in the participants' answers (Braun and Clarke, 2006). These I

highlighted within the text, making notes in the margins of the transcripts and discussing them with my supervisor. Each transcript was reviewed, and both our perspectives compared to ensure a more faithful approach to the data (Starks and Trinidad, 2007). The emerging theoretical and reflective thoughts were documented during and after these meetings (Lincoln and Guba, 1985).

Phase 2

The first identification of thematic codes within the data set marked the start of the second phase. The researcher had to revisit the data multiple times during this phase, reflecting on, interacting with, and thinking about it (Savage, 2000). Boyatzis (1998) described this as 'sensing and developing a code'. The aim was to simplify the data so that the research could focus on certain characteristics of it, moving from unstructured data to the development of specific ideas about the data (Morse and Richards, 2002).

As suggested by Braun and Clarke (2006), I approached the data systematically, going through each item with full and equal attention to slowly establish different codes with explicit boundaries. I made sure that none of the codes were interchangeable or redundant (Attride-Stirling, 2001) and aimed to develop a hierarchical coding at three levels with higher order codes (parent nodes) that provided an overview, and lower order codes (child and grandchild nodes) which allow for more distinction and differentiation between cases (King, 2004).

This systematic approach allowed me to formulate specific statements about the data that could be further categorised into themes (Creswell, 2014). When analysing the data in greater depth, it became evident that the codes emerging were similar to those themes that are present within the literature. I began to develop a Code Manual (Crabtree and Miller, 1999) that made it possible to organise the data in segments containing similar text fragments. These segments are defined in a codebook preceding a more detailed data analysis (Fereday and Muir-Cochrane, 2006). Adopting this coding framework also aided the development of a clear paper trail of the process of analysis.

The large data set was sorted and organised using the software program NVivo. I had to make sure I maintained an intellectual and conceptualising approach during this phase as software is no substitute for critical evaluation (King, 2004). As I was the only researcher who analysed the data, fortnightly briefings with my supervisor were arranged to strengthen the credibility of the data analysis. Alongside this, I employed reflective writing as I thought about the development of the code structure which would be discussed with peers and my supervisor (Cutcliffe and McKenna, 1999). The dates and times of these meetings were recorded in the Excel Spreadsheet and notes from these meetings were retained within the reflective journal.

Phase 3

The list of codes established using the method above was worked through again during the third phase. Then, it was distilled into a number of relevant themes (Braun and Clarke, 2006). The aim was to create themes that captured and unified 'the nature or basis of the experience into a meaningful whole' (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 362). During this process, initial codes were developed into main themes, and other subthemes. When certain codes seemed not to belong with any theme, it was advantageous to create a "miscellaneous" theme that housed all these codes temporarily (Braun and Clarke, 2006).

I intended to approach my data inductively, formulating themes from the raw data. This allows a closer relation to develop between data and themes, and bears little relation to questions that were asked. But there was a slight shift regarding how I approached the data which will be explained in the next couple of paragraphs. I had read a great deal of literature on the topics of acting, and resilience, which influenced my understanding of the data. I had therefore to be vigilant not to allow these prior conceptions to distort my perception of the data, but instead to allow myself to be guided by the data (Braun and Clarke, 2006).

It should also be kept in mind that a deductive methodology can also be highly valuable, depending on the data and coding situation. While deductive methodologies are in general less thorough with the overall data, aspects of the data can be analysed in more detail using this method (Braun and Clarke, 2006) which I did to analyse the separate themes in more detail. Braun and Clarke (2006) also suggest that using tables, templates, code manuals or mind maps may be useful to organise and get an overview of the data which I used to visualise data better.

King (2004) held that the best way to establish themes was to let the data guide the establishment of codes. The researcher ought to find the right balance between developing enough codes to give the analysis a direction and having too many codes that would restrict the identification of new findings. The aim was to not identify every possible theme in depth but to analyse those themes which seem most relevant to building an understanding of the phenomena. Furthermore, the tendency to be guided too much by the research questions when working with themes should be avoided to prohibit eliminating data prematurely.

While I worked with the dataset inductively, I used the questions given during the interviews as an initial framework to help organise the data. I constructed an initial conceptual framework guided by the interview questions that helped to organise the data and identify the main themes. These main themes were represented by the parent notes in NVivo. However, this initial structure changed progressively, and the emerging themes did not have a close connection with the initial research questions. I consciously worked on abandoning the initial framework and developed themes inductively trying to let the data speak for itself. The rest of the data was approached inductively, developing subthemes without attempting to fit them into a pre-existing conceptual framework. These subthemes are mostly coded as child nodes and grandchild nodes. Both using the software NVivo version 12 and printing the copies and making mind maps of the codes helped with the development of subsequent themes. Miscellaneous codes were retained in a separate node

while diagramming was used at the end of this phase to evidence and examine connections between themes.

Phase 4

During this phase, the established set of themes must be refined (Braun and Clarke, 2006). 'Researchers review the coded data extracts for each theme to consider whether they appear to form a coherent pattern … [and whether] themes accurately reflect the meanings evident in the data set as a whole' (Nowell, 2017). Researchers start to describe the themes and make outlines to get a better idea of what is included in a theme and what is not (Boyatzis, 1998). This is done to reveal initial discrepancies, leading to changes within the coding and thematic framework, specifically in regard to refining existing codes and to coding sections that have so far remained untouched (King, 2004).

This phase led to a review of the whole coding framework. The data was analysed and examined first by the primary researcher (myself), and was subsequently reviewed by the supervisor with the aim of determining a coherent pattern leading to further refinements within the data set. Especially when cross-case analysis was started it became apparent that certain themes were redundant while others were too broad and had to be broken down in smaller themes. The raw data was then reviewed once more to stay faithful to the participants' words.

Phase 5

'During the fifth phase, researchers determine what aspect of the data each theme captures and identify what is of interest about them and why' (Nowell, 2017). A detailed analysis of each theme was written that represents the story of each theme. Furthermore, the researchers started to think about names for all the themes which should be representative of what the theme is about as well as being punchy. In addition to that, themes were refined further, and an analysis was conducted examining how well all the themes fitted in with the

overall story that the data tells in relation to the research question (Braun and Clarke, 2006).

I wrote a detailed analysis of each theme capturing what could be included and what excluded. I also compared the themes to see how well they fitted into the data set as a whole. This analysis was shared and further discussed in debriefings with my supervisor and a second independent coder[30] to assure the validity of each theme and to expose aspects that had been missed so far. The second coder was a content expert studying performing arts psychology which helped to refine the themes further. Following that, I arranged the themes in a way so as to best reflect the data set and edited the names of each theme to allow for a better reflection of participants' words in the theme names.

Phase 6

The last phase of the analysis included a final analysis of the data and the production of a data report. This phase was only started when all prior phases had been completed and themes had been established (Braun and Clarke, 2006). This report can be found below.

The write-up of the report reflects the structured approach with which the data was approached. Every step is reported and clearly communicated above to provide the critical reader with notes or a plan of the methodology, so that they might themselves establish an audit trail. Direct quotes are used to convey the participants' voices, with short quotes aiding the understanding of specific points and long quotes giving the reader a sense of the overall narrative (Thorne, 2000).

It was vital to present the interpretation and my own understanding of the data within the analytic framework. Therefore, I will refer back to the literature review in order to construct new knowledge from the confrontation of the data

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[30] My primary supervisor read all the interview transcripts and reviewed all the themes with me, while the second coder (a MSc student and research assistant) coded all of the interviews independently to validate the coding.

with the literature in the hope of deriving plausible interpretations. This process may lead to the development of new theoretical and practical knowledge within the field (Côté and Turgeon, 2005).

When completing this phase, all four criteria of trustworthiness (see the paragraph below) were fulfilled by assuring the coherence of the argument, determining how the data is used to support main points and the discussion of all relevant data (Côté and Turgeon, 2005). Lastly, I submitted the final analysis to participants, using so-called 'member checking', so that they could evaluate whether the themes were representative of their opinion (Tobin and Begley, 2004).

1.16 Validity and Reliability

In order to ensure validity and reliability, four criteria of trustworthiness established by Lincoln and Guba (1985) must be fulfilled. These criteria include credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Establishing validity and reliability is a conventional approach within the quantitative research domain and Lincoln and Guba developed a comparable approach for qualitative studies using Thematic Analysis.

The four criteria can be defined as follows:

1. Credibility refers to how well the researcher is able to represent the views of the participants in his study and whether these can be immediately identified by the reader (Tobin and Begley, 2004).
2. Transferability entails how generalisable the cases are and whether findings from one study are transferable to other sites (Tobin and Begley, 2004). While the researcher is not responsible for knowing about potential transferable sites, he is required to provide thick descriptions of his methods, which would allow other researchers to thoroughly evaluate his findings for transferability (Lincoln and Guba, 1985).

3. Dependability helps to ensure the internal validity of the data process by requiring the researcher to establish a logical, traceable, and clearly documented data trail (Koch, 1994). The easiest way to assure dependability is to provide detailed audit trails that document all rational decisions and choices made by the researcher beginning in relation to the raw data up to the last edits of the data, including field notes, transcriptions and reflexive journals (Halpren, 1983). A self-critical approach to the data which can be achieved through internal and external dialogue and which is documented within a reflexive journal is central to establishing a trustworthy data set (Tobin and Begley, 2004).

4. Confirmability necessitates that all the interpretations and findings made by the researchers ought to be clearly derived from the data, with the requirement to document how such conclusions have been reached (Tobin and Begley, 2004). This criterion is normally fulfilled when all the above-mentioned criteria have been achieved (Lincoln and Guba, 1989).

In addition to following the above-mentioned steps, an interrater reliability test was conducted. A second researcher with specific knowledge in the field of performance psychology coded the whole dataset independently. Both datasets, the one belonging to the first researcher and the second coder, were compared and discussed in depth. Through this the validity and reliability of the data could be confirmed.

To avoid missing important details, both methodological approaches aimed to cover the whole creative trajectory – from the moment the actor reads the script to the end of the performance run – and follow-ups were conducted. The data analysis from Time 1 was compared to the data collected at Time 2. This allowed the researcher to track differences and similarities over time.

The establishment of the above-presented research questions took a triangular approach in considering prior research and literature on the topic to

formulate these questions. Within the discussion, literature was compared with the quantitative and qualitative findings to put the findings into context.

1.17 Advantages and Limitations

Quantitative Component Advantages and Limitations

Given that this study only used self-report measures the possibility of bias increased slightly. The views presented within those questionnaires are subjective and tied to the participants' perceptions of themselves. Self-report measures are practical and functional, which is the reason why they were chosen for the purpose of this study, but results may not always reflect participants' real capacities.

Subjectivity bias is evident in how the Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale was used for the study's recruitment process, where participants were categorized as having high or low resilience based on their resilience scores. It became apparent that some participants with very high resilience scores also reported significant mental health challenges. This is because resilience is not necessarily the absence of psychological issues; individuals who have faced difficulties and have had to work hard to overcome them can exhibit high resilience (e.g. overcoming sever mental illness). These instances do not negate their high resilience scores; instead, they may have effectively coped with their challenges or managed to function well in life despite a history of severe trauma. This demonstrate that resilience scores are numerical values that do not fully capture participants' complex histories.

Another limitation of the Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale is its assumption that resilience can be accurately assessed at a single point in time. However, as discussed in the literature review, contemporary views of resilience regard it as a dynamic process rather than a fixed trait that can be captured in a single

measurement. The follow-up data collection was implemented to address this limitation and provide a more comprehensive perspective.

These observations have led to my reservations about using self-report measures to assess resilience. They also prompted me to reflect on the concept of resilience itself, as participants may have a different understanding of resilience compared to researchers. For instance, one participant may perceive themselves as resilient after overcoming numerous mental struggles.

Qualitative advantages and limitations

Utilizing Thematic Analysis presented several challenges, including a paucity of substantial literature guiding data analysis, constraints on making claims about participants' language[31], and potential difficulties in ensuring theme coherence. However, its advantages, such as high flexibility, the capacity to examine participants' perspectives, the ability to highlight both commonalities and disparities in the dataset, and the capability to generate anticipated insights while summarizing key features, outweigh these drawbacks (Nowell, 2017).

Before opting for Thematic Analysis, I contemplated using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) to explore this phenomenon. I sought a methodological approach that could capture the intricacies of diverse human perspectives, and Thematic Analysis proved well-suited for this purpose. The emphasis on exploring experiences rather than just phenomena ultimately led me to choose Thematic Analysis over IPA.

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[31] What is meant by this is that the researcher can only track the narrative and what is said, but not how participants speak and their behaviour. No inferences can be made. For example, I had participants that just wanted to talk (triggered by loneliness during lockdown) and rather than answering my questions participants would tell me about their problems. Some participants were not able to respond to my questions which may say more about their reflective capacities than the answers they provided. Others were very defensive. And others again, engaged willingly in the reflective task and provided very insightful comments. This is not tracked by this method of analysis; the only quantifiable measure that may highlight this is the frequency of codes in one interview which was significantly higher in the interviews with Participant 2, 3, 5 and 8 in comparison to Participant 1, 4, 6 and 7.

1.18 Location

This study was conducted in London, United Kingdom, entirely online because of Covid-19 limitation.

1.19 Approval and Consent:

Written consent had to be given before participants could register for the study. Separate consent was sought from participants for each phase of the study: before completing the first round of questionnaires (Phase I), before the second round of questionnaires (Phase III), and before being interviewed (Phase II and IV) the participants were asked to give both verbal and written consent.

Prior to accessing the questionnaires, participants were required to review and acknowledge an information sheet outlining the study's details, and only after doing so, could they provide their consent to participate. Participants have given oral and written consent for research findings, including anonymised quotes, to be processed and used for publication in various forms, such as in this doctoral thesis, in any relevant publications, or at conferences. They were also consenting to their data being collected, anonymised, and processed by the researcher.

Participants were informed that they could withdraw from the study at any point and could request for their data to be deleted completely without them having to give an explanation. Participants were also informed that no monetary compensation would be given for participating in this study. They were however informed that their results could be shared with them and discussed in a one-on-one meeting.

Participants' identities were safeguarded, and rigorous measures were taken to either abstain from collecting or promptly delete and anonymize any personal or identifiable data present within the questionnaires or interviews.

Ethical approval was sought and obtained from University College London's Ethical Committee. Due to the focus on the mental health of participants, the study was categorised as a "High-Risk study" which required the establishment of safeguarding measures to assure the participants' wellbeing. Proactive strategies included choosing positively worded self-report measures and sensitively worded interview questions. Reactive strategies included debriefing following interviews and signposting to supportive psychotherapy organisations in cases where distress was noticeable during the research process. A detailed report of the safeguarding protocol as an appendix for further reference.

1.20 Confidentiality of Data

Following University College London's Data Protection Protocol, this research study was officially registered with a Data Protection Officer, denoted by reference number Z6364106/2020/06/94. In collaboration with the Data Protection Officer, a comprehensive protocol and data flow chart were meticulously established to ensure the utmost confidentiality of participants' data (Appendice).

The bulk of the personal data collected for this study pertained to demographic information, including age, gender, city of residence, and participant contact details. It was agreed that participants' data would either be anonymized or pseudonymized as deemed appropriate or necessary.

Access to participant data was restricted to a select group of four researchers and academics directly involved in the study: the Principal Supervisor (Dr. Elizabeth Allison), the Secondary Supervisor (Dr. Christine English), the Department Director (Prof. Patrick Luyten), and the author. Given the entirely online nature of the study, there existed no physical paper trail containing participant data. Electronic data was securely stored within UCL's protected online storage system known as the Data Safe Haven, which is fortified by three-tier authentication methods to ensure the secure preservation of participants' identifiable data. Sole access to both the REDCap database

(where data was temporarily stored before anonymization) and UCL's Data Safe Haven was vested in the author.

Participants were assigned unique identification numbers to correlate with their contact details if necessary, and the pseudonymized data underwent analysis using SPSS. Although there was the option to export anonymized data from the Data Safe Haven, the author chose to retain the data within this fortified system and conducted all analyses within the secure confines of the Data Safe Haven. For a more comprehensive understanding of the anonymization process, the anonymization protocol can be consulted within the appendix.

Chapter 3 - Quantitative component results

1.21 Description of resilience, reflective capacity and wellbeing in the sample of actors at baseline (Phase I)

The baseline sample collected during Phase I consisted of 50 actors with an average age of 38 years (range 21-65 years). Most participants were (62% female), academically trained (76%) and had more than 10 years of professional experience (48%). Almost all participants had tertiary education (90%) (Table 7).

Table 7: Participants' demographic characteristics

Baseline characteristic	Full sample		High Resilience		Low Resilience		TotalResilience	
	n	*%*	*n*	*%*	*n*	*%*	*High R*	*Low R*
Gender								
Female	31	62.0	12	70.6	19	57.6	17	33
Male	19	38.0	5	29.4	14	42.4	34%	66%
Age								
21-24	16	32.0	5	29.4	11	33.3		
24-35	16	32.0	7	41.2	9	27.3		
35-44	7	14.0	1	5.9	6	18.2		
over 55	11	22.0	4	23.5	7	21.2		
UK residence								
Yes	46	92.0	33	100	29	87.9		
No	4	8.0	0	0	4	12.1		
Professional training								
Yes	38	76.0	17	34	13	26		
No	12	24.0	30	60	32	64		
Experience								
1 – 5 years	19	38.0	8	47.1	11	33.3		
5 – 10 years	7	14.0	3	17.6	4	12.1		
More than 10 years	24	48.0	6	35.3	18	54.5		
Present illness								
Illness reported	4	8.0	1	5.9	3	9.1		
No illness reported	46	92.0	16	94.1	30	90.9		
Education								
Secondary school	5	10.0	2	11.8	3	9.1		
Tertiary	45	90.0	15	88.2	30	90.9		
Marital status								
Single	23	46.0	8	47.1	15	45.5		
Married	15	30.0	2	11.8	13	39.4		
Living as married	9	18.0	6	35.3	3	9.1		
Divorced	3	6.0	1	5.9	2	6.1		

During baseline (Phase I), the average resilience score on the Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale (CDRS) was 67.7 (SD = 14.57), and the average alexithymia score on the Toronto Alexithymia Scale (TAS) was 44.16 (SD = 13.38). The scores for the other questionnaires used are reported in Table 8.

The descriptive statistics showed that of the 50 participants who filled in the questionnaires at Phase I, 33 had a low resilience score $\leq$ 74 and 17 a mean score >74.

Table 8: All scores of all questionnaires in Phase I and Phase II

Measures of Scales	Phase I - 2020		Phase III - 2021	
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*
Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale	67.7	14.57	64.42	16.41
Toronto Alexithymia Scale	44.16	13.38	48.30	14.44
Interpersonal Reflexivity Scale				
Perspective Taking	17.74	4.65	16.80	6.13
Fantasy	17.52	4.67	19.51	6.06
Empathy	18.92	3.45	21.91	4.59
Personal Distress	9.78	5.29	12.05	6.21
WHO-BREF				
Physical Health	12.60	1.79	11.96	2.17
Psychological Health	13.13	1.97	12.58	2.77
Social Health	13.25	3.77	13.27	3.97
Environmental Health	14.53	2.88	13.91	3.16
Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale	44.92	9.94	43.05	12.58
Acting Experience Questionnaire				
Creating Character	37.78	5.24	40.28	5.14
Before Performance	32.91	5.61	34.56	6.10
During Performance	15.84	3.07	16.15	3.16
After Performance	21.71	6.17	21.43	6.17

1.22 Differences in resilience between genders and professional training, and relationship between resilience and demographic variables

Table 9: Overview of differences in resilience between genders and professional training and demographics

Demographics	Resilience capacity		
	n	*M*	*SD*
Gender			
Female	31	68.16	12.38
Male	19	67.15	14.01
Professional training			
Yes	38	65.68	10.88
No	12	74.41	16.69

There was no significant difference in resilience scores between genders $t(48)$= -0.265, p= .793), despite females (N=31, M=68.16, SD=12.38) having slightly higher average scores than males (N=19, M=67.15, SD=14.01). The effect size was small (d = 0.0763).

Actors without professional training (N=12, M= 74.41, SD= 16.69) scored significantly higher in the resilience scale compared to actors with professional training (N=38, M=65.68, SD=10.88), $t(48)$ = 2.116, p= .040. The effect size was moderate (d = 0.6196).

A Spearman's rank correlation coefficient was calculated to test for a correlation between the actors' age and their resilience capacity. No correlation was found between these variables (N=50, rho= -.124, p= 0.389).

Additionally, no significant correlations were found between resilience scores and the tree levels of work experience: extensive work experience, moderate work experience, or little work experience (N = 50, ρ = −0.129, p = 0.370). Similarly, no significant correlation was found between resilience level and education (N = 50, ρ = 0.106, p = 0.462).

1.23 Differences in reflective capacity between genders and professional training, and relationship between capacity and demographic variables.

Table 10: Overview of differences in reflective capacity between genders and professional training and demographics

Demographics	Reflective capacity		
	n	*M*	*SD*
Gender			
Female	31	44.35	14.51
Male	19	43.84	11.67
Professional training			
Yes	38	45.81	13.01
No	12	38.91	13.72

There was no significant difference in reflective capacity scores between to male (N=19, M=43.84, SD=11.67) and female actors (N=31, M=44.35, SD=14.51), t(48)=-0.130, p=0.897. A very small effect size of *d* = 0.0387.

No significant difference between actors with (M = 45.81, SD = 13.01) and without (M = 38.91, SD = 13.72) professional training was found, *t*(48) = -1.581, *p* = 0.121. However, the effect size was medium (d = 0.5160. Despite the not significant difference a small trend for significance can be identified here.

Reflective functioning was not correlated to either age (N=50, rho=0.087, p=0.550), work experience (N=50, rho=0.067, p=0.645), nor level of education (N=50, rho= -0.127, p=0.379) (Table 11).

Table 11. Correlations between differences in reflective capacity and demographics

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	8	9	10
1. Resilience	1.00								
2. A21-24 years	.094	1.00							
3. 25 – 34 years	.089	-.471	1.00						
4. 35 – 44 years	-.232	-.277	-.277	1.00					
5. 45 – 55 years	.	.	.	.	1.00				
6. Over 55 years	-.012	-.364	-.364	-.214	.	1.00			
7. E. 1 – 5 years	.110	.170	.346	-.197	.	-.416	1.00		
8. E. 5 - 10 years	.034	-.153	.217	.003	.	-.075	-.316	1.00	
9. E. over 10 y.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	1.00
10. L. education	-.224	.084	.084	.092	.	-.267	.247	-.178	.

1.24 Differences in resilience and reflective capacity between actors and general population

Actors had significantly lower average resilience scores (M = 67.78, SD = 12.89) than the general population (M = 79.0), t(49) = -6.152, p < .001, d = 0.870 (large effect size) score of the Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale for the general population (Connor & Davidson, 2003).

When compared against the actor's sample (M = 44.16, SD = 13.38), no differences were found t(49) = -745, p = .460 between the mean scores of the Toronto Alexithymia Scale in the general population (M= 45.57) (Parker, Taylor and Bagby, 2023) and the effect size was small *d* = 0.105.

Differences in resilience and reflective capacity across resilience levels.

Table 12: Differences in resilience and reflective capacity across resilience levels

Variables	High resilience			Low resilience		
	M	*SD*	*n*	*M*	*SD*	*n*
Female	80.16	6.89	12	60.57	8.35	19
Male	86.40	8.20	5	60.28	7.61	14
Professional training - Yes	78.60	6.43	10	61.07	8.05	28
Professional training - No	86.85	6.79	7	57.00	6.89	5

No significant differences in resilience scores were found between genders in the low resilience group (M = 60.28, SD = 7.61 for males; M = 60.57, SD = 8.35 for females; t(31) = −0.103, p = .918). Similarly, no significant differences were found in the high resilience group, t(15) = −0.064, p = .128 (M = 86.40, SD = 8.20 for males; M = 80.16, SD = 6.89 for females). Cohen's effect size was small for the low resilience group (d = 0.0363) and large for the high resilience group (d = 0.8239).

No significant difference in resilience scores was found between actors with and without professional training within the low resilience group (t(31) = -1.06, p = 0.297). However, within the high resilience group, actors without professional training scored significantly higher on the resilience scale (M = 86.85, SD = 6.79) than actors with professional training (M = 78.60, SD = 6.43; t(15) = 2.547, p = 0.022), with a large effect size (d = 1.2476).

Actors with high resilience (N=17, M=37.00, SD=3.45) scored significantly lower in reflective capacity compared to actors with low resilience (N=33, M=47.84, SD=11.46), t(48) = -2.916, p = 0.005. In this context, lower scores in the TAS indicate higher reflective capacity. Therefore, actors in the high resilience group exhibited significantly greater reflective capacity than those in the low resilience group with a large effect size of d = 0.871.

1.25 Effect and relationship of health factors and wellbeing on resilience and reflective capacity

Relationship and impact of health on resilience

Resilience was positively correlated with perception of wellbeing (Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale scores) as well as with all the health factors from the WHO Quality of Life Scale (Table 14): physical, psychological, social, and environmental health.

However, only psychological health and perceived mental wellbeing significantly predicted resilience [F(5,44) = 8.946, p < .001; R^2 = .504, $R^2_{adjusted}$

= .448] (Table 13). For every one-unit increase in perceived mental wellbeing, there is an associated increase in resilience scores by 0.410 points. Similarly, for every one-unit increase in psychological health, there is an associated increase in resilience scores by 2.508 points.

Table 13: Relationships and Impact of health on resilience

Effect	Estimate	SE	95% CI		p
			LL	UL	
Fixed effects					
Intercept	9.109	11.188	-13.440	31.658	.420
Physical health	.294	.975	-1.670	2.259	.764
Psychological health	2.508	1.089	.313	4.703	.026
Social health	-.008	.484	-.983	.967	.987
Environmental health	.256	.649	-1.052	1.564	.695
Personal Perception of MH	.410	.235	-.063	.882	.088

Table 14. Zero-order correlations between physical, psychological, social, environmental factors, resilience and personal perception of mental health

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Resilience	1.00					
2. Perception of Mental W.	.690**	1.00				
3. Physical Health	.497**	.697**	1.00			
4. Psychological Health	.676**	.824**	.592**	1.00		
5. Social Health	.506**	.502**	.431*	.493**	1.00	
6. Environmental Health	.506**	.601**	.589**	.618**	.455**	1.00

Note: *p < .05; **p < .01.

Table 15: Relationships and Impact of health on perception of wellbeing

Effect	Estimate	SE	95% CI		p
			LL	UL	
Fixed effects					
Intercept	-12.661	6.853	-26.464	1.143	.071
Physical health	1.136	.596	-.064	2.336	.063
Psychological health	2.253	.605	1.035	3.472	<.001
Social health	.865	.279	.303	1.427	.003
Environmental health	.151	.412	-.678	.981	.715

Regarding perception of wellbeing, only psychological health (β= 1.711, p = .014) and social health (β= 0.81, p = .005) were identified as significant predictors in this model [$F(4,45)$ = 21.456, p < .001; R^2 = .656, $R^2_{adjusted}$ = .625]. The fitted model can be seen in Table 15. For every one-unit increase in psychological health, perceived wellbeing is expected to increase by 2.253 points, and for every one-unit increase in social health, perceived wellbeing is expected to increase by 0.865 points.

Reflective capacity, resilience, and perception of wellbeing

Resilience was found to be a strong predictor of perception of wellbeing, [$F(1, 48)$ = 34.266, p < .001, R^2 = .417, $R^2_{adjusted}$ = .404], accounting for 41.7% of explained variance. For each one-unit increase in resilience, mental health is expected to increase by .498 points. The standardized β coefficient (β = .645) further confirms the relationship between resilience and mental health

Reflective capacity was found to be a significant mediator between resilience and mental health [$F(2,47)$ = 29.025, p < .001; R^2 = .534; $R^2_{adjusted}$ = .553]. After incorporating reflective capacity scores to the model the explained variance increased by 11.7%. The confidence interval evidenced a range from .204 to .536 for resilience (β = .370) and a range from -.460 to -.141 for reflective capacity (β = -.301). The standardized regression coefficients are β =.480 for resilience and β = -.404 for reflective capacity, showing a slightly stronger

effect of resilience scores in comparison to TAS. With every unit increase in mental health, resilience will increase by .370 (β) points and reflective capacity will decrease by .301 (β) points.

Personal resources used by actors, resilience and reflective capacity

Participants' perspective taking, fantasy, and empathy were not found to be significant predictors of resilience scores [$F(4,45)$ = 3.718, p = .011; R^2 = .248; $R^2_{adjusted}$= .182]. While, as previously shown, reflective capacity contributed significantly (β = -.471, p = .002), all the other variables did not: perspective taking (β = .210, p = .632), fantasy skills (β = .398, p = .312) and empathy skills (β = .626, p = .351).

1.26 Personal resources used by actors before, during and after performance

The correlation analysis showed that the performance stages correlated with many personal resources (Table 16). Preparation stage had a moderate, positive correlation [r(50) = .355; p = .016] with fantasy skills. Pre-performance stage showed moderate positive correlations with reflective capacity [r(50) = .331 at a p = .025] and fantasy skills [r(50) = .355; p = .016]. The performance stage, correlated with two skills: fantasizing [r(50) = .474; p < .001] and empathizing [r(50) = .411; p = .005]. Post-performance was strongly correlated with fantasy [r(50) =.444; p =.002] and moderately correlated with empathy [r(50) = .312; p = .037].

Table 16: A zero-order correlation table showing correlations between personal resources and performance phases

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	8
1. Perspective taking	1.00						
2. Fantasy skills	.098**	1.00					
3. Empathy skills	.466**	.391**	1.00				
4. Preparation stage	-.015	.334*	.208	1.00			
5. Before performance	-.260	.355*	.145	.428**	1.00		
6. During Performance	.231	.474**	.411**	.381**	.267	1.00	
7. After performance	.357	.444**	.312*	.369*	.317*	.512**	1.00

Note: $^*p < .05$. $^{**}p < .01$.

A multiple regression analysis revealed that only fantasy had a consistent effect throughout the four stages of the performance process: In character creation stage ($F(1,44)$ = 5.521, p = .023, R^2 = .111 and $R^2_{adjusted}$ = .091), for every one-unit increase in fantasy score, there was a 0.066-point increase in the scores of character creation.

Fantasy significantly influenced performance stage $F(1,44)$ = 12.724, p < .001, R^2 = .224; $R^2_{adjusted}$ = .207. This indicates that 22.4% of the variance in the strategies used during performance was explained by actor's use of fantasy. The regression coefficient was β = .305, 95% CI [0.132, 0.477]. This means that for every one-unit increase in fantasy scores, there is an expected increase of 0.305 points in the score of during-performance strategies.

Fantasy scores also influenced performance quality in the post-performance stage. $F(1,44)$ = 10.568, p = .002, R^2 = .197; $R^2_{adjusted}$ = . This indicates that 19.7% of the variance in performance quality was explained by fantasy skills. The regression coefficient was β = 0.573, (95% CI [0.217, 0.928], with a 95% confidence interval of 0.217 to 0.9. This means that for every one-unit increase in fantasy score, there is an expected increase of 0.573 points in post-performance scores.

1.27 Conclusion

In summary, the following conclusions can be drawn from the analyses presented above:

1. In the sampled population, resilience is not a gendered trait and both female and male actors have the potential to be resilient. Actors without professional training were significantly more resilient than those without training. Moreover, within highly resilient actors, those without professional training scored significantly higher than those without. In

addition, resilience is not dependent on age, years of work experience and education.

2. Reflective capacity is not a gendered trait, and is not dependant on professional training, age, work experience, or education.

3. In comparison with the general population, actors in this study's sample are significantly less resilient. However, their reflective capacity was found to be comparable to that of the general population.

4. There is a significant effect of resilience level (high and low resilience) on resilience and reflective capacity. Additionally, actors classified in the high resilience group were significantly more resilient than those classified in the low resilience group. Moreover, highly resilient actors exhibited significantly greater reflective capacity than those in the low resilience group.

5. Resilience was positively correlated with personal perception of wellbeing and with physical, psychological, social, and environmental health. However, only psychological health and perception of wellbeing were found to be predictors of resilience in the sampled population. Psychological and social health were also found to be predictors of perceived wellbeing.

6. Resilience is not associated with personal resources: empathy, fantasy and perspective taking.

7. Resilience is a predictor of perception of wellbeing, and reflective capacity is a mediator between resilience and perception of wellbeing. In addition, reflective capacity is a predictor of resilience.

8. Among the personal resources examined, empathy and fantasy were the only ones that exhibited correlations with various performance phases. Specifically, fantasy was found to be positively correlated with character creation, pre-performance practice, and performance itself. Moreover, fantasy skills demonstrated a consistent effect across all performance stages, suggesting their potential significance for actors' creative endeavors. While empathy also showed associations with certain performance phases, it was fantasy skills that emerged as the most consistently influential factor throughout the entire process.

1.28 Changes in resilience, reflective capacity and wellbeing in the sample of actors after Covid-19 lockdown (Phase III)

This chapter presents the results of the follow-up analysis that was conducted after one year, during Phase III.

Attrition

For Phase III, 14 participants did not fill in the questionnaires and other two participants had to be left out from the study due to personal reasons. The overall attrition rate from Phase I and Phase III was 28% (14/ 50 participants). The differential attrition rate between high and low resilience group is 38%. The analysis showed an attrition rate of 9% for the low resilience group and 47% for high resilience group. Therefore, the high-resilience group sample size used for the analysis was N=30, while the sample size for the low-resilience group N=8.

Most of the participants that dropped out were female, with a split of 9 females and 4 males. With regard to age, the dropout was as follows: 6 younger than 25, 4 between 24 to 35, 2 between 35 and 44, and 1 over 55. With this leaving 10, 12, 5 and 10 in the respective groups. Slightly more participants with less work experience dropped out, with 6 between 1 to 5 years, 3 between 5 to 10

years and 4 over 10 years of work experience. This is representative of the sample distribution that initially showed 19, 7 and 24 in the respective groups.

1.29 Longitudinal changes in actors' resilience, reflective capacity, and health factors after a year

Table 17: All scores of all questionnaires in Phase I and Phase II

Measures of Scales	Phase I - 2020		Phase III - 2021	
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*
Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale	67.7	14.57	64.42	16.41
Toronto Alexithymia Scale	44.16	13.38	48.30	14.44
Interpersonal Reflexivity Scale				
Perspective Taking	17.74	4.65	16.80	6.13
Fantasy	17.52	4.67	19.51	6.06
Empathy	18.92	3.45	21.91	4.59
Personal Distress	9.78	5.29	12.05	6.21
WHO-BREF				
Physical Health	12.60	1.79	11.96	2.17
Psychological Health	13.13	1.97	12.58	2.77
Social Health	13.25	3.77	13.27	3.97
Environmental Health	14.53	2.88	13.91	3.16
Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale	44.92	9.94	43.05	12.58
Acting Experience Questionnaire				
Creating Character	37.78	5.24	40.28	5.14
Before Performance	32.91	5.61	34.56	6.10
During Performance	15.84	3.07	16.15	3.16
After Performance	21.71	6.17	21.43	6.17

The analysis revealed a slight decrease in CDRS's resilience score from Phase I (N = 34, M = 69.15, SD = 12.90) to Phase III (N = 34, M = 64.42, SD = 16.41), although this decrease was not statistically significant (t(37) = 1.32, p = 0.19) and had a small effect size (Cohen's d = 0.320).

When comparing mean scores on the Toronto Alexithymia Scales between Phase I (N = 36, M = 42.47, SD = 13.22) and Phase III (N = 36, M = 48.30, SD = 14.44), the increase was not statistically significant ($t(35)$ = -1.832, p = 0.075) and had a small effect size (d = 0.305).

The analysis of the paired-samples t-tests showed no significant in the scores of the other questionnaires between Phase I and Phase III (Table 18).

Table 18. Results of the paired-samples t-tests between health factors

Health data	Time 1		Time 2		t tests		Cohen's d
	M	SD	M	SD	t(33)	p	d
Physical wellbeing	12.84	1.50	11.96	2.17	1.83	.07	.471
Psychological wellbeing	13.45	1.94	12.58	2.77	1.37	.17	.363
Social wellbeing	13.72	3.95	13.27	3.97	.48	.631	.113
Environmental wellbeing	14.88	3.03	13.91	3.16	1.41	.16	.313
Personal perception of wellbeing	45.79	9.76	43.05	12.54	.93	.35	.243

Longitudinal change of actor's resilience and reflective capacity across resilience levels.

For Phase III, the group with low resilience (N = 30) had a mean score of M = 58.96, SD = 13.27, while the high-resilience group (N = 8) had a mean score of M = 84.87, SD = 9.44. The mean reflective capacity score (Toronto Alexithymia Scale) in the low-resilience group (N = 28) was M=51.50, SD=12.36, and in the high resilient group (N = 8) was M=37.12, SD=16.41, with a strong effect size d = 0.989. The lower the score on the TAS the higher reflective capacity will be.

Table 19: Longitudinal change of actor's resilience and reflective capacity across resilience levels

Variables	High resilience			Low resilience		
	M	SD	n	M	SD	n
Resilience Phase I	82.71	7.64	14	61.25	7.60	24
Resilience Phase III	60.35	17.99	14	66.79	15.31	24
Reflective capacity P. I	35.92	14.56	14	45.63	10.65	22
Reflective capacity P. III	45.92	12.76	14	49.81	15.51	22

At Phase I participants' mean resilience score for actors in the high-resilience group (N=14) was M=82.71, SD=7.64, and for actor in the low-resilience group (N=24) was M=61.25, SD=7.60. For Phase III the high-resilience group (N=14) scored at M=60.35, SD=17.99, and low-resilience (N= 24) at M=66.79, SD=15.31). Cohen's d showed a small effect size d = 2.816 at Phase I and a small effect size at Phase III d = 0.385.

When comparing resilience scores in the high-resilience group between Phase I and III, a significant decrease was observed $t(13)$ = 4.714, p < .001 with a large effect size d = 1.260. The resilience scores for the low-resilience group showed no difference between Phase I and III, $t(23)$ = -1.550, p = .135 with a small effect size d = 0.316.

Regarding reflective capacity there were no significant differences in scores between groups, and little change over time. For Phase I the high-resilience group's (N=14) mean score for reflective capacity was M=35.92, SD=14.56 while the low resilience group's (N=22) score was M=46.63, SD=10.65. For Phase III the high-resilience group (N=14) increased the mean score to M=45.92, SD=12.76, and the mean in the lower resilience (N=22) group changed to M=49.81, SD=15.51. Keeping in mind the scoring of the Toronto Alexithymia Scale this means that reflective capacity decreased over time in both groups.

No differences were found in reflective capacity between Phase I and Phase III in the high resilient group $t(13)$ = -1.689, p = .115; d = 0.451, nor in the low-resilience $t(21)$ = -.883, p = .387; d = 0.188.

Relationships and impact of health factors on resilience and perception of wellbeing

While significant correlations were found between resilience scores and perception of wellbeing [r(34) = .690] and psychological health [r(34) = .676, p < .001], after controlling for all other factors using partial correlations no significance was found.

A moderate, positive correlation between resilience and environmental health factor was identified [r(34) = .506, p = .002], and after controlling for a partial correlation, it remained significant [r(34) = .559, p < .001].

Another moderate correlation was found between social and physical health [r(34) = .506, p = .002]. After performing the partial correlation was performed, it remained significant [r(34) = .584, p < .001].

The only significant change that was identified between Phase I and Phase III reflects the relevance of social health and physical health. At Phase I the correlation of social health was [r(50) = .379, p = .007] while at Phase III this correlation is [r(34) = .506, p = .002].

A weak correlation was found between physical health and resilience [r(34) = .497, p = .003]. A partial correlation showed that the correlation coefficient between resilience and perception of wellbeing increases when controlling for physical health [r(34) = .551, p < .001].

Table 20: Correlations between Perception of Wellbeing and all health factors (Phase III)

Variable	1	2	3	4	5
1. Perception WB	1.00				
2. Physical health	.697**	1.00			
3. Psychological h.	.824*	.592**	1.00		
4. Social h.	.502**	.431**	.493**	1.00	
5. Environmental h.	.601**	.589**	.518**	.455**	1.00

In Phase III perception of wellbeing positively correlated with: psychological health [r(34) = .824; *p* < .001], physical health [r(34) = .697; *p* < .001], environmental health [r(34) = .601; *p* < .001] and social health [r(34) = .502; *p* < .001].

Psychological health had a strong association with participants' perception of wellbeing [r(50) = .717 at p < .001], as did social health [r(50) = .590 at p < .001], physical health [r(50) = .575 at p < .001] and environmental health [r(34) = .566 at p < .001]. This would suggest that the various health factors stand in relation with the perception of wellbeing.

From all health, factors, only psychological health was a significant predictor of resilience in actors [F(4, 29) = 7.411, p .001, R^2 = .505; $R^2_{adjusted}$ = .437]. The model accounted for 43.7% of the variance in resilience. Specifically, psychological health significantly predicted resilience with a beta coefficient of β= 3.038 resilience (p = .013, 95% CI [.704, 5.372]), meaning that a one-unit increase in psychological health was associated with a 3.038-unit increase in resilience.

Psychological and physical health were found to be significant predictors of perception of wellbeing, [$F(4,29)$ = 21.846, p < .001, R^2 = .751; $R^2_{adjusted}$ = .716], and it accounted for 71.6% of the variance in mental health. Psychological health (β = 2.714, p < .001) and physical health (β = 1.735, p = .022) were significant predictors of mental health. Specifically, a one-unit increase in psychological health was associated with a 2.714-unit increase in mental health, and a one-unit increase in physical health was associated with a 1.735-unit increase in mental health. Social health and environmental health were not significant predictors of mental health in this model.

The combined effect of health factors combined were found to be predictors of perception of wellbeing [$F(1,32)$ = 54.550, p < .001, $R^2_{adjusted}$ = .619; R^2 = .630]. The model explained 63.0% this variation in mental wellbeing. A one-unit increase in the WHO Quality of Life Scale overall score was associated with a 1.029-unit increase in mental wellbeing (B = 1.029, 95% CI [.745, 1.313], p < .001).

Health factors also significantly predicted resilience, [F(1,32) = 27.107, p < .001, R^2=.751; $R^2_{adjusted}$ = .442]. This means that approximately 44.2% of the variation in resilience could be predicted by the combined health factors.

Specifically, a one-unit increase in the WHO Quality of Life Scale overall score was associated with a 1.206-unit increase in resilience (β = 1.206, 95% CI [.734, 1.677], p < .001).

Similarly, health factors were also predictors of reflective capacity [$F(1,32)$ = 35.066, p < .001, R^2=.523; $R^2_{adjusted}$ = .508], and the model accounted for 50.8% of the variance in reflective capacity. Specifically, a one-unit increase in the combined health factors was associated with a 1.063-unit increase in reflective capacity (β = 1.063, 95% CI [.698, 1.430], p < .001).

1.30 Longitudinal changes in the effect of resilience, reflective capacity and perception of wellbeing

The model was significant ($F(1,34)$ = 14.881, p < .001, R^2=.304; $R^2_{adjusted}$ = .284) and explained 30.4% of the variance in resilience. Specifically, the model showed that for every one-unit increase in reflective capacity, resilience decreased by about 0.641 points (β = -0.641, 95% CI [-0.979, -0.304]). However, when controlling for baseline resilience, reflective capacity was no longer a significant predictor of resilience ($F(1,34)$ = 0.242, p = .626, R^2= 0.077; $R^2_{adjusted}$ = -.022). However, when controlling for Phase, the TAS was not a significant predictor, $F(1,34)$ = .242, p < .626, $R^2_{adjusted}$ = -.022. R^2 is set at .007 with the unstandardized B at -.093 and the standardized regression coefficient Beta at -.084.

During Phase III, resilience was found to be a predictor of perception of wellbeing. The model was significant ($F(1, 32)$ = 29.018, p < .001, R^2= .476; $R^2_{adjusted}$ = .459), and it accounted for 45.9% of the variance in perception of wellbeing. Specifically, the model showed that a one-unit increase in resilience was associated with a 0.502-unit increase in perception of wellbeing (β = 0.502, 95% CI [0.312, 0.692]).

For Phase III, resilience, and reflective capacity both increase mental health, with reflective capacity having a stronger effect. The model was significant ($F(2,31)$ = 31.281, p < .001, R^2 = .669; $R^2_{adjusted}$ = .647), and it accounted for

64.7% of the variance in mental health. Specifically, the model showed that both resilience (β = .284, 95% CI [.099, .470], p < .05) and reflective capacity (β = -.459, 95% CI [-.680, -.239], p < .05) were significant predictors of mental health.

The Phases had no effect on the model. No statistically significant relationship was identified in the variation in perception of wellbeing based on Phase [$F(34,83)$ = .720, p = .856, $R^2_{adjusted}$ = -.198.]; the R^2 between participants was .509 and showed, therefore, that 50.9% of the variation in perception of wellbeing is occurring between participants. While the combined variance of Phase and between subjects was significant, $F(32,83)$ = 2.397, p = .005, $R^2_{adjusted}$ = .462, R^2 = .793, only the change of R^2 between the two models gives an indication of the change between models over time. This means around an additional 28.3% (R^2 = .283) of the variance can be explained by the added factor of time which was significant, $F(2,32)$ = 21.858, p < .001, $R^2_{adjusted}$ = .462. The confidence intervals helped to identify the interval for the slope to predict perception of wellbeing based on resilience at B = .343, p = .002 and reflective capacity -.347, p = .005. This indicates that when perception of wellbeing goes up by one unit, resilience increases by .343 points and reflective capacity by .347. Thus, when there is higher resilience and reflective capacity, there is also higher mental wellbeing scores.

1.31 Personal resources used by actors before, during and after performance

The correlation analysis showed different results to the previous year, with none of the correlations between personal resources and performance stages being significant. In comparison to the previous year, no significant correlation was identified between creating a character and fantasy skills [$r(34)$ = .274, p = .218]. Before performance practices did not correlate with 'empathy skills' [$r(34)$ = .139, p = .448] and fantasy skills [$r(34)$ = .142; p = .437]. Also the during performance showed no relationships – fantasizing [$r(34)$ = .300; p = .095] and empathizing [$r(34)$ = .256; p = .157]. And after performance showed

no strong correlations either – fantasising [r(34) =.019, p = .917] and empathy [r(34) = -.072, p = .697].

1.32 Personal resources actors judged as important for acting

Most actors (63.6%) agreed that 'imagination' (i.e., fantasy) is important for creating a character. They were less sure about the role of perspective taking (45.5%), but they strongly agreed that empathy is essential (61.4%). Furthermore, they did not believe that working on a character causes personal distress (31.9% disagreed) (Table 21).

Table 21: The questions asked on the relevance of actors' practices when working on a play

Relevance of actors' practices when working on a play

Question	Strongly agreed	Agreed	Neutral	Disagreed	Strongly disagreed
Would you say that you use your imagination to create your character?	0	28	3	1	0
Would you say that you use perspective taking strategies before the performance to get into role?	9	11	8	1	1
Would you say that you use empathy to identify with the character?	18	9	8	0	0
Would you say that working on a character goes hand in hand with personal distress?	5	2	10	9	5
Would you say that immersion into the character is achieved by imagining yourself as the character?	8	18	3	2	1
Would you say that immersion into the character is achieved by empathsizing with the character?	8	13	7	4	0
Would you say that you use empathizing skills to reconnect with yourself after the performance?	2	8	15	0	2
Would you say that you use imagination skills to reconnect with yourself after the performance?	3	3	14	7	5

■ Strongly agreed ■ Agreed ■ Neutral ■ Disagreed ■ Strondly disagreed

Actors judged fantasy to be relevant during performance with 59.1% of participants agreeing. This was more strongly supported than empathy, which only had 47.7% support.

Most participants (34.1%) were neutral on whether empathy helped them reconnect to their daily lives after a performance. Similarly, most participants (31.8%) were neutral on whether they used imagination in such a way.

Table 22: Question on the relevant steps when creating a character
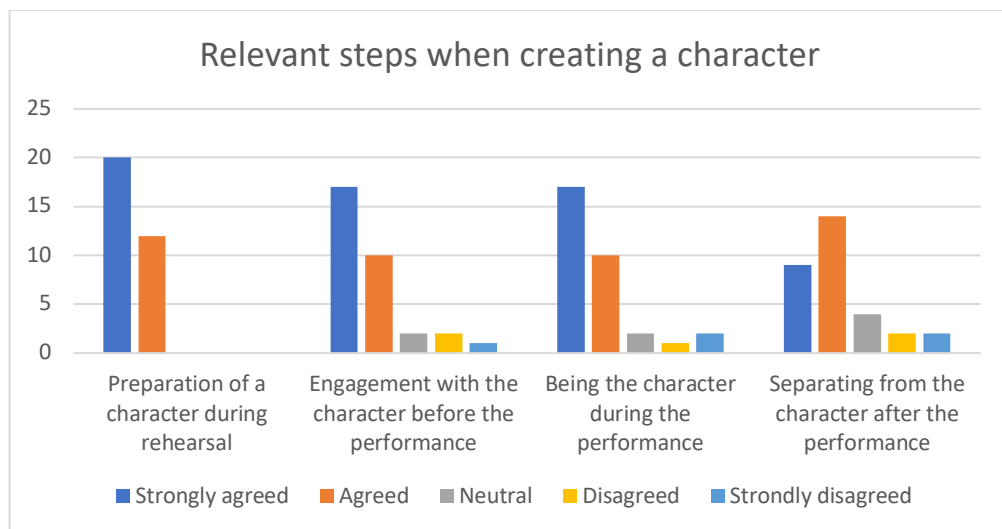
The division of the performance act in four stages, was supported by most participants. The preparation of a character during rehearsal was the most supported stage (72.8%), followed by the separation from the character after performance (61.3%), and then the development of a deep understanding of the character (61.3%). The least supported stage was the use of personal experiences to inform the character's performance (52.3%).

Table 23: Questions on the role of resilience
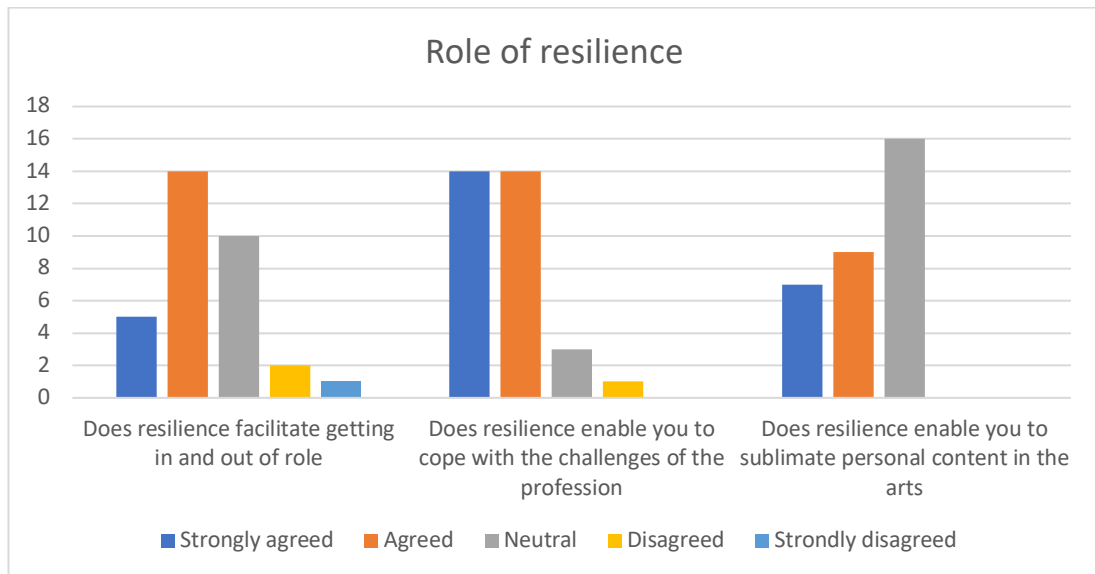
Participants' answers to the three questions about resilience varied. For example, 43.2% of participants thought that resilience was potentially relevant for getting in and out of role, while 63.6% agreed that resilience helped them to deal with the challenges of the profession. Responses to the last statement on sublimating personal content in the arts were inconclusive, with 36.4% remaining neutral and 36.4% agreeing.

1.33 Discussion and Conclusions

The findings of the follow-up analysis are summarised below.

1) Resilience, reflective capacity, perception of wellbeing and health factors were comparable between Phase I and Phase III

2) Resilience scores in high-resilience actors decreased significantly from Phase I to Phase III but remained comparable in the low-resilience actors. Reflective capacity did not change over time.

3) There is a statistically significant difference in resilience and reflective capacity between the high resilient and low resilient groups. This means

that grouping participants into these two groups had a meaningful impact on their CDRS and TAS scores.

4) Resilience correlated with perception of wellbeing, psychological, environmental, social and physical health. However, only psychological health significantly predicted resilience.

5) Psychological, physical, social and environmental health were significantly correlated with participants' perception of their perception of wellbeing. However, psychological and physical health were the only significant predictors of perception of wellbeing. This suggests that actors' perception of their mental wellbeing is impacted by their psychological and physical health, but not from other health factors.

6) Over time, reflective capacity is an important factor for resilience, but its effect on resilience is indirect.

7) Resilience and reflective capacity both increase perception of wellbeing, with reflective capacity having a stronger effect. In other words, people with higher resilience and reflective capacity scores tend to score higher on perception of wellbeing.

8) Another regression controlled for change over time in resilience, reflective capacity and perception of wellbeing and revealed a significant regression showing that around 28.3% in the variance could be explained by the factor time. Thus, as expected perception of wellbeing seems to change in parallel to resilience and reflective capacity – when resilience and reflective capacity increase perception of perception of wellbeing will increase as well.

9) There has been a change in the relationship between psychological (empathy, fantasy, perspective taking) skill and performance stages over the past year. In comparison to the previous year, none of the correlations and regressions were significant at Phase III. This lack of

statistical significance may have been due to the slightly smaller sample at Phase III.

10)Actors value imagination, empathy, and fantasy in their work, and that they support all four stages of the performance process. However, their views on the relevance of resilience to their profession vary, and they are inconclusive on the topic of sublimating personal content in the arts.

Chapter 4 - Thematic Analysis: The creative arc and acting

Introduction:

The qualitative data collection gathered data through interviews with 8 participants during Phase II and IV. The interview sample consisted of 8 actors with an average age of 39 years (range: 21-65 years). Most participants (62.5%, or 5 participants) were female, academically trained (100%) and had more than 5 years of professional experience (80%). All participants had tertiary education (100%). The descriptive statistics showed that of the 8 participants who filled in the questionnaires at Phase I, 4 had a low resilience score $\leq$ 74 and 4 a mean score >74 (see Table 24). Participants were purposefully selected to assure equal numbers of resilience levels and to be able to compare potential differences between groups.

The interviews were held in 2020 and 2021. These interviews sought insight into the actors' creative work and resilience. The literature review had revealed a research gap on theory building of the actors' creative process that rarely involved actors. Through these interviews, this study aims to change this by gathering actors' insights and views about the creative process of acting. The literature suggested as well that resilience may be relevant to actors, but to date this has not been explored through research. It is hoped that, by gathering participants views on resilience and what resilience means to actors, more insight can be added in this area.

Initially, only one round of interviews was planned for the year of 2020. But the period of this study coincided with the Covid-19 pandemic which impacted participants' lives significantly. The performing arts sector was closed for almost two years and participants barely worked in 2020 and 2021. Not recognising the global shut-down of the creative sector would be a great oversight of the impact on the actors' profession and the impact on their lives, replicating actors' experiences of oversight from the public during the pandemic. The awareness of these devastating consequences for actors and

the unique insight this period may provide on how actors cope in periods of great difficulty motivated a more detailed exploration of these difficulties through a follow-up interview. It also allowed the researchers to clarify questions that emerged during the analysis of the first round of interviews.

The data set was analysed using Thematic Analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006) following Boyatzis' (1998) model of pursuing the analysis in six phases: a) familiarisation with the data, b) first identification of thematic codes, c) establishing a list of codes, d) refining the list of themes, f) writing a detail analysis of each theme, and e) the refining of the final analysis and writing up a data report. To ensure validity and reliability, Lincoln and Guba's (1985) four criteria of trustworthiness (credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability) were adhered to. In light of this, a second coder blindly analysed the data set after the initial coding by the primary researcher. Following this, the codes were compared and discussed. The interrater reliability was at 82% and both coders largely agreed on the coding of the data set. Where differences arose, the differences were discussed which mostly led to both coders agreeing on a code. Where finding a common agreement failed, a third, independent coder (the principal researcher) was consulted. Consulting a second coder presented both advantages as well as disadvantages. The coder was approached because of her background in psychology and performing arts medicine research and being a professional musician as well. The second coder was able to provide an independent opinion which greatly enriched the coding experience as well as the following discussion. This provided rich insights, however, as the coder was not an actress herself, she lacked insight into the creative process in actors and was not aware of the literature discussed in Chapter 1, which resulted in several disagreements in the coding. These were resolved through in-depth discussions with the principal researcher.

The interviewing procedure progressed without major difficulties. Participants were eager to participate in the interview phase and were able to offer very interesting insights. During the follow-up analysis, a concerning disclosure was made by one of the participants which presented the only major concern. This

distress, however, was resolved by following the safeguarding protocol which had been established previously and can be read in the Appendix.

Table 24: Final score of all questionnaires for all participants in 2020 and 2021

Measures of Scales	.		.		.		.	
	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	P8
Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale								
Phase I	45	95	74	56	83	46	55	74
Phase III	59	75	66	41	51	64	72	68
Toronto Alexithymia Scale								
Phase I	38	32	31	68	27	43	43	49
Phase III	59	24	35	53	56	36	73	77
Interpersonal Reflexivity Scale								
Phase I								
Perspective Taking	4	20	17	15	22	20	21	23
Fantasy	24	22	20	22	24	17	12	22
Empathy	17	22	19	24	17	14	16	21
Personal Distress	21	4	9	17	9	14	12	11
Phase III								
Perspective Taking	12	23	20	20	26	17	12	21
Fantasy	16	26	22	19	27	22	24	28
Empathy	17	26	24	23	28	18	24	27
Personal Distress	19	6	10	13	10	18	8	9
WHO-BREF								
Phase I								
Physical Health	13.71	14.29	12.57	10.86	15.43	12.00	13.71	12.57
Psychological Health	13.33	14.00	12.67	11.33	16.67	11.33	10.67	14.00
Social Health	10.67	10.67	12.00	4.00	20.00	14.67	13.33	20.00
Environmental Health	16.00	13.00	17.00	4.00	18.00	15.00	11.00	16.50
Phase III								
Physical Health	8.00	8.00	10.00	12.00	11.43	12.57	8.57	12.57
Psychological Health	7.33	12.00	7.50	10.00	9.33	15.33	10.67	9.33
Social Health	8.00	12.00	8.00	13.33	17.33	18.67	8.00	14.67
Environmental Health	8.50	17.50	12.00	12.00	13.00	18.00	12.50	12.50
Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale								

Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale								
Phase I	38	59	49	27	58	49	36	51
Phase III	28	35	40	39	27	45	33	24
Acting Experience Questionnaire								
Phase I								
Creating Character	42	44	40	43	42	45	30	45
Before Performance	44	28	34	40	33	36	21	34
During Performance	18	22	16	15	20	18	12	16
After Performance	16	34	22	37	22	34	22	24
Phase III								
Creating Character	28	42	41	32	35	48	46	41
Before Performance	20	27	24	23	25	31	39	37
During Performance	13	17	16	14	17	13	22	18
After Performance	13	20	22	18	25	19	32	16

These following two chapters present the results of the qualitative data analysis. Within the first chapter the themes on the actor's creative process will be presented while the second chapter focuses on resilience.

Year 1

1.34 What is the aesthetic work of the actor?

The analysis of interview transcripts resulted in the identification of nine themes - six describing the process of acting while the remaining three help us to understand the actor's role in relation to this arc. First, the themes, presented in a table below (Table 25), will be presented before defining them in greater detail as part of the subsequent results section. The analysis resulted in the identification of nine themes: a) first inspiration; b) preparation

and exploration; c) establishing a connection; d) working on the play; e) the frame; f) the separation; g) self-regulation; h) becoming the character; and i) the actor's creativity. The nine themes were divided into three categories; a) the creative arc; b) the actor; and c) acting. The themes are presented in the order in which they arose during the analysis rather than in order of importance. Attention is given, however, in the right-hand column, to how often a particular theme arises.

Table 25. Thematic analysis table with frequencies showing themes and sub-themes

Overarching Themes	Sub-themes	Frequency of codes	
		n^a	N^b
The creative arc			
1) *First inspiration*	1.1 Given the script	4	3
2) *Preparation and exploration*	2.1 Learning the lines	9	
	2.2 Working with the text	10	47
	2.3 Doing research	22	
	2.4 Working with colleagues	6	
3) *Establishing a connection*	3.1 Channel of empathy	10	50
	3.2 Starting with yourself	17	
	3.3 Strategies to connect	23	
4) *Working on the play*	4.1 Physical and vocal preparation	6	26
	4.2 Emotional preparation	7	
	4.3 Exploration phase	5	
	4.4 Identification and pursuit of objectives	3	
	4.5 Input by the director	5	
5) *The Frame*	5.1 The Frame	5	17
	5.2 Entering and exiting the frame	12	
6) *Separation*	6.1 Leaving the play and the performance behind	32	32

The actor				
7) Self-regulation	7.1 Letting go	8	14
	7.2 Keeping control	6	
8) Becoming the character	8.1 Blending between character and self	15	77
	8.2 Mental wellbeing of the actor	18	
	8.3 A healthy distance	44	

Acting				
9) The actor's creativity	4.1 Using empathy to relate to the character	6	
	4.2 Using imagination to create the characters world	7	17
	4.3 Using perspective taking to identify with characters	3	
	4.4 Using fear to perform	1	

1.34.1 First Inspiration

Figure 5: First inspiration

First inspiration
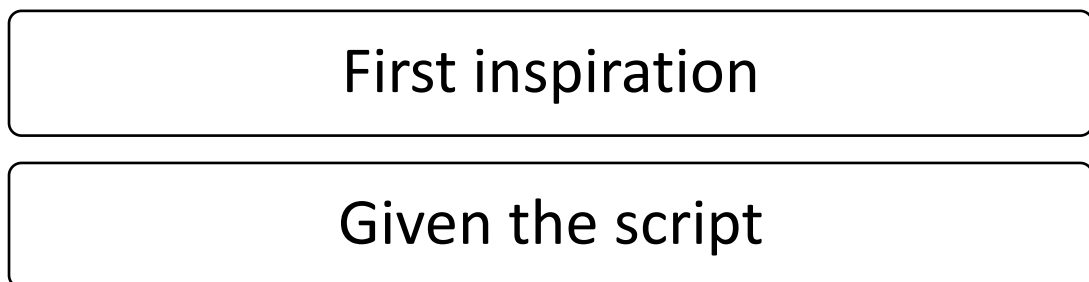
Given the script

Given the script

The actor's initial engagement with the piece they are tasked with interpreting begins when they receive a character brief and the script. The actor may already know the play, but in most circumstances, the first time the actor learns anything about the part is when they are given the script. Participants did not report much about this phase as for them this phase is rather straightforward.

> The first step is, you go into the rehearsal room and then you are given the script. (Participant 3)

1.34.2 Preparation and Exploration phase

Figure 6: Preparation and Exploration phase

Preparation and exploration

| Learning the lines | Working with the text | Doing research | Working with colleagues |
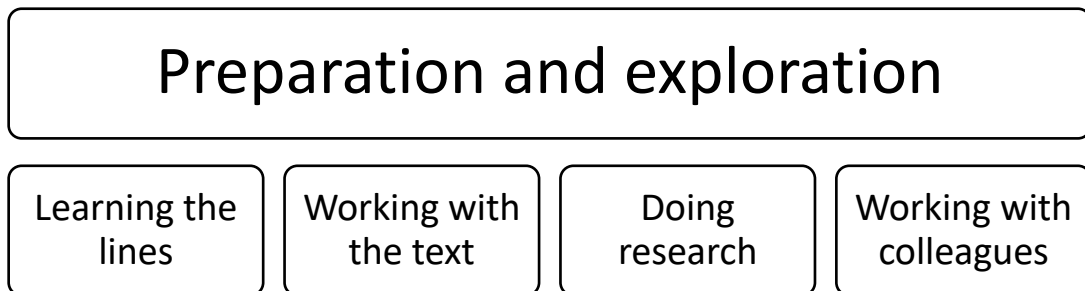
After the actor has received the script, a phase of preparation follows. Depending on the individual preferences of the actor and the acting method used, each actor may approach the work differently. The chronological order that follows was simply chosen to help the reader follow the development of the discussion and does not always reflect the steps that the actors choose.

Learning the lines

Often, the first thing an actor does when preparing for a role is learn their lines. Some actors reported that they cannot learn their lines alone (away from the rest of the cast), as it is only within the rehearsal space that the cast forms the finished product together and the words are associated with meaning. Therefore, lines are often learned neutrally without any meaning associated at first. Here, there is a clear aim to discover the final product organically, instead of relying on a preconceived idea. There is an emphasis on flexibility.

> I play the emotion of the lines with the other character and through that rehearsal period the character starts to develop. (Participant 2)

Others, however, read the script and note next to their line 'what is my intention here?' (Participant 6). For example, a character may be happy in one line and then his mood changes in the following line. The lines are then learned with these intentions in mind.

Working with the text

Either during or after the process of learning their lines, the actor engages in sophisticated exploration practices, these usually consist of different stages. Actors normally first work with the text, then begin the process of researching aspects of the play or the character and exploring the text with colleagues during the co-reading phase.

Most of the actors emphasised that the character should be 'built from the text upwards' (Participant 2). What is meant by that is that the actor must analyse the text to identify details about the character that can be extracted from the text. How this is done depends on the preferences of the individual actors. Normally, this initial preparation is done alone. Some examples may illustrate how this can be approached:

Participant 2 normally works on two different aspects to ground himself in the story. He works on how he could inhabit the environment of the play (the script in the mind of the playwright) and how the character would come to interact with other characters.

Participant 5 adds to this:

> I ground myself in the story – time, place and the overall arch.
> What does the writer want to tell us? First, I look at the world of
> the piece, with that, the intention of the writer and the overall
> intention of the character that is contained in that. (Participant 5)

To do this for the whole script, they break up each scene into different sections and look at the objective for each section and the overall scene. They explore,

> what the character wants, why they want it, what obstacles are in
> the way, what else is at stake and how she is going to get it –
> verbally, physically, and emotionally. (Participant 5)

Most of the participants in this study worked in a similar way, albeit all had individual approaches to the task. For instance, Participant 6 reads the lines of her character and writes down what the character is saying about themselves. Then, they would look at what other characters say about this

specific character and ask their fellow actors during the rehearsal phase what they thought about that character. They also look at facts and eventually write a list of all these things. That helps them to get to know the character (e.g., a Disney character vs a character from a Shakespeare play) and write a list of characteristics (e.g., kind and heart-warming vs. calculating and malicious intent). This is done for both internal and external characteristics which often can be opposing and provide interesting conflict. Participant 5 calls this working on the 'world of the character'.

Doing research

This stage of working with the text is accompanied or followed by a phase of research. To get a more concrete sense of the character, actors expand their knowledge of the character that has been derived from the text, by searching external sources for inspiration. This includes researching the character online (especially if this character is a real person), reading what is written about them, watching video footage of them, or watching other actors perform this character, making observations and drawing upon previous knowledge of that person's behaviour.

> If you're playing someone who is a real-life person, you can take their characteristics. Read what is written about them, watch video footage and let this inform your body and voice. (Participant 8)

An example would be a character played by Participant 8:

> As a military professional […] this character had a different way of "carrying himself", a different way of relating to friends and of inhabiting the space around him.

This information gathered through research informs the physical, vocal, and emotional work the actor will do on the character later on, for example, when he works on grounding (a technique to define the centre of gravity that the character has) and discovering a 'different centre of gravity'. In the case of Participant 8, a military professional might have a lower centre of gravity, giving him a steadfast appearance, while a fairy's centre of gravity would be higher up in the body making her appear light on her feet.

205

Based on the information gathered, actors normally create a timeline for their characters. That is to say, they look at the given circumstances and those which led up to the moment where the play starts - normally starting from the character's birth. Information that cannot be discovered through research is created by the actor's use of his imagination. This helps create a backstory that gives life to a complex and multifaceted character. As Participant 5 describes:

> I think about the character's lines. Why does the character react in that way? What happened in their childhood? I think about key moments on the timeline of their life [only those that matter for the play].
> Then I make a vision board for the whole play. And I use other techniques (like their animal character – [a method whereby the actor uses the characteristics of an animal (e.g. a cat or dog) to develop the character]) to get to know the character better. I look at what their inner attitude is – who the character is and think about how they move. (Participant 5)

Working with colleagues

Alongside the phases that centre on individual work, actors also work with their colleagues throughout rehearsals. Normally, the co-working phase starts with co-reading the script. Participant 4 said it's the time to 'discuss the play, the relationships and status with colleagues. … [you] do individual work and then bring it back to the collective.' This also includes discussion of the character with the collective as mentioned above by Participant 6. All stages mentioned within the process of working on a play are reiterative, that means at times a linear progression along the presented arch might occur. Often actors go through the aforementioned steps in the order described, one by one. But at other times the character or circumstances require a deviation from this order. The steps presented above could be seen as building blocks that the actor uses as required. Often, actors go through these phases at the same time, choosing to prioritise one over the other depending on the play. At times they must go back to a particular one depending on what happens throughout the rehearsal process.

Participant 8 stated that character formation is an ongoing process that goes on throughout the rehearsal period and is borne out of a combination of individual work and collaboration with colleagues.

> After each rehearsal I would have notes on my script; I go home and look at the script – what do I need to do? Do I need to work on something physical, or the voice, or [something] psychological? Is it knowledge based and I need to do research on history, etc. It is important to be open and be able to change and shift [your previous perception that emerged from your individual work based on what happens during the rehearsal]. (Participant 8)

1.34.3 Establishing a connection to the work

Figure 7: Establishing a connection to the work

Establishing a connection

Channel of empathy	Starting with yourself	Strategies to connect

A channel of empathy

Having established an understanding of the play and the characters in it, actors work on connecting with the piece as a whole. They speak of 'having to connect to the character' (Participant 3). In an emotional sense, the way they achieve this is through empathising with the character. The intense preparation beforehand aids this process and helps the actor relate to the character. The majority of the actors interviewed stressed that self-awareness facilitates a deeper connection with the characters they portray. Participant 8 explains why that is so.

> [To discover the] emotional depth of the character, you have to understand your own emotional depth – you as a person [need] to understand the human quality in the character and identify those human qualities that you can connect with your own human qualities. There is a channel of empathy. A connection with you as

207

a person to the character who is a person that you identify with emotionally. (Participant 8)

Participant 8 further elaborates that he has seen actors struggling with roles. He hears comments such as: 'I don't like this character'. Participant 8 felt that while this may be the case, as an actor, it is the nature and requirement of the job to identify the human qualities in a character and then to connect with them – even when playing a character that you personally find objectionable. Participant 2 furthermore felt it is the actor's job to find something within his or her character to connect and work with, even if the character is appalling. Participant 8 went on to say that a human quality he identified within a particularly unpleasant character he played was loneliness. While he obviously had never committed crimes such as the character (e.g. murder) and naturally could not create such an experience solely for research purposes, he instead would think of moments when he felt very lonely. This made the character more approachable and allowed him to establish a channel of empathy that helped him connect with the character. In that sense the actor uses her own emotions as Participant 2 stated, but not his own experiences. Participant 3 further elaborates:

It's coming from us, but it's because we're relating to that character as opposed to…drawing on an actual experience that has happened. If that makes sense emotionally. (Participant 3)

Participant 4 mentioned also that it is important not to judge the character, even if this character is a serial killer. While one may not identify with or agree with some characters, judgment hinders the empathy process. According to Participant 2 and 4, such attitudes stem from a lack of self-awareness on the part of the actor and an unwillingness to get in touch with and portray these emotions. Participant 2 describes the attitude of some actors trying to distinguish between themselves and the character on stage:

I am not that [an objectionable character], and I want the audience to see me [as such], instead of showing them a part that can relate to that character. Therefore, I am trying to hide from the audience that I contain within myself a secret part that … can relate to any of those emotions. [Basically, I am showing to the

audience that I am 'presenting' this character for the purpose of the play]. This is where we cease to have truth. (Participant 2)

Starting with yourself

What potentially became apparent in the situation described above, is that when developing a connection to the character, actors usually start with themselves and then 'build the character on top'. All the participants highlighted that the best place to start is by playing characters that are similar to oneself, simply because it is easier to find aspects that one can connect with. As Participant 3 said:

> It's not until you get to a certain level [of experience] that actors do play different roles. Often because you relate to the character, or you might look like them or might have tendencies like them, that's the easiest way to connect. It is a huge skill to take on any different roles and it to be believable. (Participant 3)

Difficulties and limitations regarding this process are rather common. Participant 6 comments that especially if a character has had a particularly painful past or journey within the play, it is psychologically very demanding to relate to them and work with that. Participant 4 held that this was one of the reasons why drama schools usually encourage students to play roles that are the exact opposite to your own character – or roles involving difficult emotions. This way, students develop a broader repertoire and familiarise themselves with difficult personalities and learn how to handle them in a safe space before entering the industry. Participant 6 said more serious and dramatic characters are more difficult because these may not be characters one normally experiences in life. However, as an actor it is more interesting to work on such roles, he suggests: to explore something new and encourage yourself to think about things with which you are unfamiliar. Participant 8 adds to this, saying that acting is, psychologically speaking, a very demanding job. He feels that his own capacity to handle these demands daily, is dependent on

> what side of the bed I get up. […] I have a psychological flexibility to be able to empathise with different characters and experiment with parts of myself to fit a character. (Participant 8)

But psychologically speaking, as he suggests, this is harder on some days than others. For all actors, much depends on their own emotional state on a given day. Another limitation to identifying with different characters that Participant 1 and Participant 7 mentioned are personal preferences, characteristics, and insecurities, such as preferring theatre over television work, product endorsements, voiceovers, and bigger engagements. Participant 1, for example, pointed out that she finds factors associated with TV work very difficult and therefore abstained from applying for TV work. And Participant 7 said:

> It may well mean that I don't apply for some work which I could do because I would feel awkward doing it. [But] what really limits any character choice is age. (Participant 7)

With that, Participant 7 highlights a problem that all actors discussed. The actor must always fit the casting brief, to some extent, and the decision about who gets the role is largely based on external characteristics rather than skills. Also, often only limited roles are available for a certain look despite the recent efforts towards colour blind casting (main characters who are overweight or from a BAME background) and, as Participant 8 said as well,

> I don't have a choice [which roles I get]. It is the agent's and the producer's choice. (Participant 8)

Strategies to connect

Besides the above-mentioned empathising strategies, actors often have a repertoire of methods they use to connect with a character. All acting methods currently taught to actors aim to help the actor connect with the character physically, vocally, and emotionally. Stanislavski's Method of Physical Action is, as the name suggests, specifically focused on the body and aims to uncover first, the physicality of the character, before working more directly on their emotional makeup. Strasberg however put more emphasis on developing the main emotional arc first and thought that the physicality of the character would develop naturally based on the emotional content. Many different techniques have developed based on this initial dichotomy (such as those of Stella Alder

and Michael Chekhov), which gave birth to a conflict between an 'inside-out' (first the emotion then the physical) and 'outside-in' (first the physical and the emotional content follows) approach. Alongside these initial methodologies, some of the most used strategies nowadays include Meisner's technique of using the imagination and precise objectives to work on the character and Michael Chekhov's 'Psychological Gesture' – a method which encourages the actor to connect emotionally to the character using his imagination. The conflict between these different methods persists to the present day, and borders on rivalry.

The participants within this study were very opinionated about which acting method is the healthier approach and about which works best. Participant 1 held that the only way of connecting to a character is by immersing oneself fully – using real life experiences and living as this character '24/7'. Thus, she used strategies commonly used by 'Method' actors following Strasberg's Method Acting approach.

> I just continue. I dress as the character the whole time also outside work. I stay in the character for the whole time even when going out to the pub (I wore my feather costume to the pub). I carry on as the character and have not much interactions with others [not even with my family]. (Participant 1)

This may work well for some actors portraying some characters, but not for others. Participant 6 mentioned specifically that 'becoming' difficult characters such as Lady Macbeth could become very exhausting, or even dangerous. She held that, while she never had problems becoming any character and had 'loved' them all,

> the mix between [portraying] a demanding character and the stress that comes from performing in front of people can wipe you out. (Participant 6)

Especially when the actor does not establish boundaries around the character and continues this character in real life, this can bring stress into the actor's personal life. This can become 'too overwhelming', as Participant 6 and Participant 1 admitted. Participant 1 was the only actor in this sample who

used Method Acting, while the others either used Stanislavski's, Meisner's or Chekov's approaches, or a combination of these. Participant 2 further emphasised that using personal experiences, as in Method Acting, is 'not healthy'.

Actors distinguish between completely immersing oneself in the character or using personal experiences similar to those experienced by the character (as is common among 'method' actors) and what they call "recalling emotions". Emotional recall refers to what has been described above in the Introduction as a way of empathising with a character. For instance, before going on stage a method actor would recall a personal memory to fuel the performance and would potentially bring this memory to mind each time before going on stage. Participant 1 reported doing this when she recalled a time when she was attacked. It really helped her to use that experience as part of a performance, but it also was very hard emotionally; exceptionally distressing. By contrast to Method Acting, actors using emotional recall may think back to a personal memory which is similar to a specific emotion that the character feels, but the emotion becomes detached from the original memory and is instead connected with the character. In this way, the actor does not exactly use a personal experience on stage. As Participant 2 said:

> It is not to draw on but to recall your own emotions and what you would feel in a similar situation. (Participant 2)

Participant 8 further adds to that:

> If you rely on that [using your own experiences], you are not activating your imagination! Then you rely on something you have experienced. It's more powerful to be able to step out and just imagine what it would be like if … - like Stanislavski's "Magic if". [Especially,] if you play a character where you struggle to find those identifying factors, imagination is key. [And] I would rather be able to live through the character by exploring my imagination [than] by constantly exploring myself. (Participant 8)

212

1.34.4 Working on the play

Figure 8: Working on the play

Working on the play

Physical and vocal preparation	Emotional preparation	Exploration phase	Identification and pursuit of objectives	Input by the director
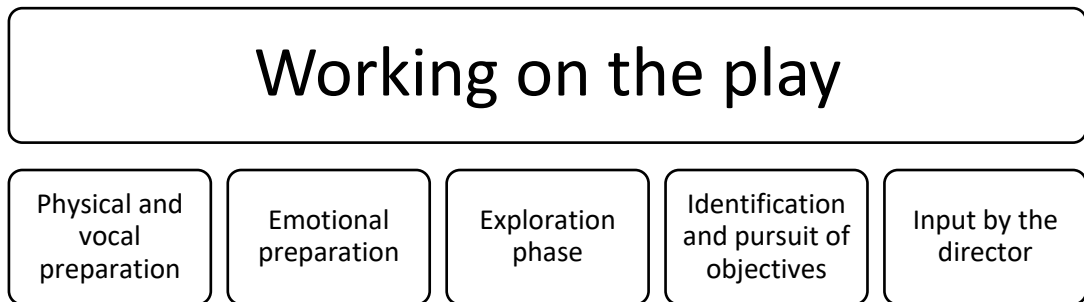
Following this stage (of emotional identification with the character), actors move on to work directly on the body. They work on bringing this initial connection to life in a practical sense – working on themselves physically and vocally, as well as emotionally. These stages are usually interchangeable and largely depend on the preferences of the actor when it comes to deciding with which to start. Often, it depends on the methodology followed by the actor. Other times, it is influenced simply by practicality – what works for the actor in the moment with a given character. The order of the sub-stages within this stage is flexible.

Physical and vocal preparation

After having established an initial connection with the characters, actors work on bringing this connection to life physically during the rehearsal phase. As Participant 3 said:

> You start taking on the character physically. If you already have got the base emotionally and mentally then physically it's a bit easier to navigate. (Participant 3)

Participant 8 also mentioned that theatre work makes it slightly easier to discover the character physically as the work happens in person with a group over the period of the rehearsal time. One has the luxury of discovering the character over time. By contrast, actors must complete this work on their own when they work in TV or film. Actors also use different methods to approach a character physically. Participant 1 said she 'completely immerses herself' in

her character. Participant 4 used 'yoga and work on the chakras to find a connection with her body [and that of the character]'. She also mentioned that breath work can be very effective. For example, 'imitating nervous breathing or despair will trigger a physical response in the body'. Participant 6 held that 'a costume doesn't make the character', but it can be helpful to understand the personality and physicality of the character if the way of dressing is very different to your own. Participant 8 described all of this in more detail and explained his physical and vocal preparation when playing a character:

> [A lot of work went into] how to change and manipulate myself physically to feel suited to [inhabiting the character]. […] [It was] useful to [work with] Michael Chekov's psychological gesture [to find the physicality of this character]. […] I had to learn the language of the lines and the musicality of the voice. There's a lot of vocal exploration – making sure that that's aligned to my characters choices. And 1 to 1 work with a vocal coach. (Participant 8)

Emotional preparation

As mentioned above, participants spoke about acting as a form of empathising with the character or taking the perspective of another to relate to the character. The material from the preparation phase and the initial phase of connecting is now used to build the emotional pillars of the character. 'A healthy curiosity in others' experiences of reality' helps this process.

The preparation - including research, creating a background story, a timeline of the character's life and the environmental setting - functions as the base on which the emotionality of character is built. The emotions that were identified when empathising with the character are further developed into the central emotional pillars of this character – the basic conflict the character is going through over the course of the play or film. Participant 6 explains this using an example of when she played a character in a wheelchair.

> The last character I worked on […] was a character [with a physical disability]. [It wasn't given in the story line why this was the case], so I had to think about it … and I created an entire story

in my mind. … I'm against those methods [where] you have to [break your leg to get a sense of how it may be to be disabled]. No, I don't think that. I think trying to connect with the character and thinking about the life of this character can be really helpful. (Participant 6)

On a more individual level, participants develop their own strategies that work best for them to develop the character's internal life. Several participants spoke about using Stanislavski's method - understanding emotionality of the character through the physical body[32]. Method Acting inspired approaches often use real life experiences to relate to the character. Meisner followers understand acting as 'living truthfully under imaginary circumstances' and aim to find a way to empathically connect to a character in a fictional setting. Overall, actors interviewed as part of this research suggested they mixed these techniques, as one method might work well for one character but not for another.

Exploration phase

As part of their work, actors must also explore and experiment. As mentioned previously, it is not possible to have experienced every human emotion. This is where imagination, exploration and experimentation are key.

The work starts with the cast members as a group. Participant 4 explained that games are used to encourage play and listening among cast members, bringing actors into the here-and-now and to a place where they suspend judgment. This helps them detect and later utilise moments that naturally develop during the rehearsal for the development of their part in the play. Additionally, improvising a scene is helpful in opening an actor's mind to different perspectives that had not been considered previously. It encourages thinking outside the cognitive realm. Again, it aims to add interesting aspects to the final product.

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[32] See Introduction: By discovering first, the physical body (posture and behaviour) the actor will be guided towards to the emotions of the character through the emotional response associated with the muscle memory and certain postures / behaviour.

Also, on an individual basis, actors use exploration techniques to discover the character more. Participant 8 for example, described how he used 'Experiential research' to expand his own palette of experiences so that he could better connect with the character. He emphasised that research in this sense is not the same as Method Acting, albeit the line between the two is very thin. The distinction is potentially that Participant 8 used a predetermined timescale and framework in which to do his research. To understand the character better, he decided he would inhabit and go through the same experiences as the character did for one night. He could then make use of his experience at a later point. There is a clear separation here between work and private life. By contrast, Participant 1 did not separate the personal life from her work, nor did she make a distinction between herself and the character. She continued to 'work on' her characters within her personal life and inhabited them on a daily basis. In order to not 'lose' the character, she remained in character all of the time, whilst preparing for a performance. While there is a clear functionality for the actor in both approaches, it would appear evident that a clear separation between work and private life may prove helpful for the individual in maintaining a healthy and fulfilled life outside of acting work. This is especially true when considering acting to be a job akin to any other – one that should not 'take over' the life of the worker.

The identification and pursuit of objectives

Following the actor's identification with their character, as described above, actors work on identifying and defining clear objectives for the remainder of the acting process. Participant 2 eloquently summarises why this is essential:

> In a scene, the character has a) a want b) a need and 3) a desire. [These are the objectives of the character that an actor can identify.] Sometimes there is a barrier [to these objectives]. And I, with my skills, must surmount that barrier [must solve the conflict for the character]. … Acting is the need to get something and the playful actions taken to get that need satisfied or overcome barriers. [This creates] tension [a conflict which makes the play interesting]. (Participant 2)

Identifying these three objectives is key to understanding the character and understanding his or her role within the play. This is what fuels the conflict which the character must resolve, and therefore, how they interact with others during the play. On a daily basis, humans face conflict, and this is the type of tension that resonates with us when played out in front of us. This is what 'draws us in' to the performance.

Actors have different strategies to identify the objectives of a performance. Participant 7 mentions that, similarly to when making a job application, he writes a list of precisely defined objectives. He writes a list of things that the character is trying to do and how he as an actor can achieve that. He concentrates entirely on these objectives. He said:

> I don't concentrate on an emotional state, but on intentions and needs. Those will generate the emotional statements on stage. [As Meisner said]: you pursue your objectives purely in the light of what other people are trying to do to you. (Participant 7)

This is yet another method that actors use to understand the internal world of the character. At the same time, it provides the opportunity to reconnect with his own internal world before occupying the role of the character again. Participant 7 continued by saying that, before going on stage, he revisits these objectives. He looks at his paper notes to remind himself where he has to be in the scene and what the character wants. At times, he even writes these notes on his wrist or ankles where he can see them during the course of the play to keep on track.

> Playing a scene with only the objective of that scene right there in front of me keeps it alive and your mind doesn't go places. (Participant 7)

Input by the director

The director, as well as the fellow cast members, come into the picture as soon as rehearsals start, or the actors go to the film set. It is a reminder that a play is not an individual creation but is usually a team effort. The actor is part of a team of actors guided by the director. This team is surrounded by other teams,

working on the production, costumes, make-up, and so on. The creative scope of the actor is, therefore, limited by external factors, as well as by the play itself. An actor cannot deliver what they want, but ought to fit the objectives of the producer and with that the objectives of the director who has a clear vision regarding what should be produced. Ultimately, what is being produced is what the audience wants to see and will make money. Hence, having the skill to understand the directions given by the director and act on them is important. Participant 8 made an interesting comment that was not made in this context, but nevertheless, supports this point:

> The way I see theatre is storytelling – which is a bit utopian and idealistic. It is a money-making machine – multibillion dollar/pound industry and you are a tiny little cog in the wheel even if you are famous. (Participant 8)

The individual is part of an overall production, though he may have personal objectives. The objectives of the character and the overall objectives of the production have to co-exist alongside each other. It is important to keep in mind as well that the director's job is to keep all of these objectives in mind and guide the actors on the path to fulfil them. He helps the actors to discover the objectives of the character but is also responsible for meeting the overall objectives of the production. At times, this task gives rise to conflict within the crew. As Participant 2 put it:

> You have to placate them [the directors] and I developed an ability to do this. The note is there because you are not doing it right. They want you to try something and you as a professional puppet should be willing to go there. I don't mind trying things as long as it is within the scope of ordinary reality. (Participant 2)

There was a similar consensus among the other actors. Often it is not easy to receive feedback from a director, but such input can be helpful. For example, Participant 5 mentioned that she finds it very helpful because the director may have other experiences than her and can show her other ways to approach a scene. Participants 3 and 8 concurred and further made the point that the relationship between actor and director is strongly aided by mutual trust. This includes the trust to be open to explore something and to trust that if an actor

is uncomfortable with a suggestion, it will be communicated. Participant 8 phrased it the following way:

> I welcome them [inputs by the director] if I am stuck. But they need to come from the right place (the director, not the producer) and with the right intention (to help the actor on the creative journey). [There are three different] sacred relationships between the actor and another actor, the [actor and the] director and the [actor and the] audience. The boundaries of [these] sacred relationship[s] have to be respected. [It can shift into an] abuse of power – flirting with the status of the director and actor which creates tension. You got to trust that you're going to bring the best out of each other. It's a fragile relationship and we can't afford to mess that up. It's the responsibility of actor – to say what they are comfortable with – and of the director - not to abuse that hierarchal status. (Participant 8)

1.34.5 Self-regulation

Figure 9: Self-regulation

Self-regulation

Letting go	Keeping control

In this context, it is crucial to reiterate that creativity and stage performance arise from an actor's willingness to make themselves available to the creative resources within them. So far, the analysis has focused on the actor's preparation trajectory, where he or she is occupying one character. Solely focusing on that, however, would neglect the role of creativity the actor uses in playing these characters.

Actors need a creative potential to perform which depends on personality and varies strongly between individuals. To work within the creative industry, the artist needs to be able to make use of this creative side of themselves for their work.

219

In addition, actors face another hurdle. Unlike in other creative professions, the actor's body becomes their means of creation and the medium by which they carry out their task and perform. This medium is not neutral. To use an analogy, the actor is not a white wall on which a character can be simply projected, she comes in with her own personality and background. Arguably, this is what makes the portrayal of every character unique. Practically, however, this means that actors must be able to let their own personality move (for the duration of the performance) to the background to give rise to the personality of the character. This is a skill that is trained over years.

Actors seem to have developed self-regulation strategies to use different aspects of themselves as they hone their craft. They rely on two different aspects of self-regulation: a 'letting go' to daily reality to engage creative potential and a 'keeping control' system that navigates the performance. In the following sections, these will be explored further.

Letting go

Creativity plays a vital role in the creation of a play; external input (e.g., by the author, director, actors) is added at every stage culminating in the final product – the play. To contribute to this process, the actor also draws on her own creativity when working on the play and the character during rehearsal and when performing. Opening the mind to creativity is a struggle that every creator must face. The judgment of whether the performance is of high creative value or not is based on the actor's ability to "let go of reality" for the duration of the performance and exist "in the moment"; not getting lost in the thoughts and worries of her personal life, or indeed, having to think about the next line. She must react on stage naturally, as if they are living the performance for real. Participant 7 elaborates on this as follows:

> Your energy levels are very high, and you have to watch the other
> people on stage in order to be pushed in the right direction. You
> can't go on stage and give a pre-planned performance.
> (Participant 7)

Along with the sensation of "being in the moment" the participants emphasised the high energy levels which are evoked during the performance. Participant 7 already mentioned this in the quote above. Participant 8 adds that the experience on stage resembles the sensation of "ritualistic electricity" taking hold during the performance.

> The actor is a vehicle in a storytelling process that dates back 2000 years where everything was passed down through words and remembering; remembering, mis-remembering, re-framing and then re-telling, that is a ritual. [And it is this] *ritualistic electricity* which is intoxicating throughout the whole performance and keeps us in the space, keeps that sort of electricity going. There is something that keeps you in and contained with your audience that is more than the three lines that you got to say. (Participant 8)

One participants used to describe their experiences of performing as follows.

> [The performance is] a trance like experience. It's like when you're in a dream, you don't know what you are about to do, but you're still aware of how you react – you have your values and principles. You don't know what you're about to do, but there is an understanding that it is going to happen. There is inevitability. (Participant 2)

This shows that the mind of an actor diverges from normal functioning for the purpose of her work. The actor's mind seems to expand beyond the usual processes to indulge with the creative, irrational side of the mind.

Keeping control

At the same time, the mind of the actor must also be cognitively hyperactive to navigate the performance and bring it towards its pre-established aims and objectives. Participant 7 gave the following example:

> There always has to be a sense of identity. A little voice in your head which goes: "You need to think about your articulation. If you stand here any longer you won't be able to get out of the door. There is a bloody great shadow over there. You walked out of the light." (Participant 7)

The actor has an internal conversation within herself in order to stay mentally active, reminding them of the objectives of the scene and being perceptive of what is happening externally. Participant 5 distinguished this state strongly from daydreaming, as daydreaming entails a switching off. Whereas on stage actors are mentally, permanently active. She explains:

> You're on all the time. There is always somebody talking. I have that internal conversation with myself to just always be responding as that character is. Not daydreaming – not switching off. I have an internal conversation really, whilst also concentrating on what's going on externally. You don't want to be thinking so much that you forget to speak when you do need to. It's being mentally and externally [perceptive], but not too hyper aroused. (Participant 5)

Acting is a balance between arousal and relaxation on stage. Rehearsal should make the actor feel confident enough to play the character on autopilot. Participant 7 skilfully furthers the argument by bringing up the necessity for the actor's mind to be active on both the levels of creativity (as explored above) as well as the cognitive level concurrently. What seems to allow for a temporary suspension of some of the cognitive function is the preparation beforehand during rehearsal. It allows this dichotomy of the mind to shift onto a more subconscious level. The knowledge is accessed automatically without having to actively think about it. This is similar to other learned activities that have been stored on a pre-conscious level, such as driving a car or playing a musical instrument.

> There is a partial sense of identification and a degree to which it is conscious. For example, if one is ill, one is aware of it at some stage, but you batter on - get your temperature down, do the necessary – and then suddenly forget about it. (Participant 7)

The actor has to "let go" and extend her experiences in order to indulge the creative side of the mind. At the same time, actors have to work hard on creating a frame of mind that contains the performance as well as allowing her to navigate the trance experience on stage towards pre-established objectives. According to what the participants said, this capacity to use the

mind and the body in this way is a skill that must be trained and distinguishes the professional actor from the amateur – as stated by Participant 3.

> It is the difference between having a technique and being a professional actor, in comparison to someone who is just feeling it on that day. […] I also need to be aware enough, to be aware of myself and others [you either could get lost or hurt someone] and to replicate what I am doing. Coming in with a plan, making sure you stick to that aim. (Participant 3)

This ability becomes subconscious, just like driving a car, and can get more difficult or disappear completely once the actor is out of practice. This is the main reason, besides money struggles, why the Covid-19 pandemic, long periods of unemployment, and other long-term interruptions, like injury, can prove a serious problem for actors. Participant 7 mentions:

> I now have been inactive long enough [due to Covid] for this to become more difficult to recognise. The more you do it and the more frequently you do it, the less conscious that becomes. (Participant 7)

Lastly, it was added that this "control mechanism" is irrelevant to achieving a high-quality performance, and for the audience to enjoy a given scene. It has more to do with the wellbeing of the actor and her relationship to fellow actors. As Participant 2 explains:

> [You do not have to have a remaining sense of identity] for the audiences' sake and the scene. For your own sake yes. "Because if we stop realizing that we're living imaginatively then you lose control – control of the scene, your emotions, lose trust of your colleagues." – You lose the idea of play. …
> That is the essential part of yourself that you need to keep, the inevitability that it will always return, that you will always return to who you are. (Participant 2)

1.34.6 Becoming the character

Figure 10: Becoming the character

Becoming the character

| Blending between character and self | Mental wellbeing of the actor | A healthy distance |
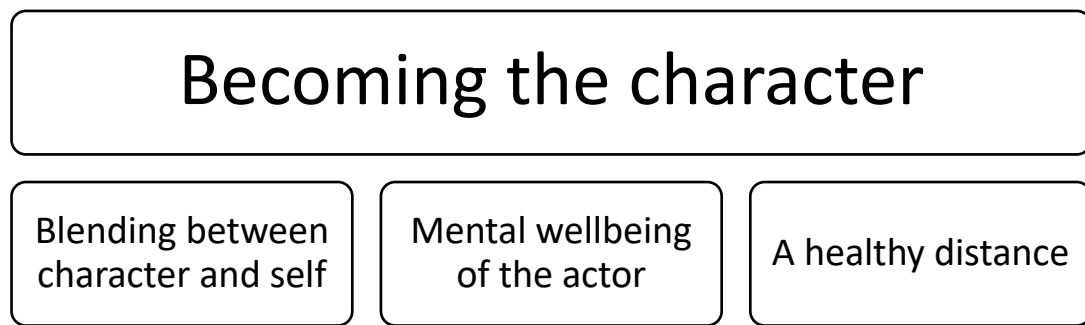
The creative process previously described provokes a unique self-experience in actors which is different to their daily selves. First of all, the discussion with the participants has highlighted that actors, when performing, 'lend' their bodies to the character, as described by Participant 8:

> When I am playing, I think it's important to be as healthily close to the character as possible. … If my body is an actor, [I am] the vehicle and the characters kind of inhabit that for the hour-and-a-half or two. (Participant 8)

At the same time, actors must also downregulate certain aspects of their own identity so that the character's identity is what shines through to the audience. Participant 8 continues:

> When playing a character as an actor, you are enhancing some parts of yourself, and you are hiding other parts of yourself … in order to be able to fit the parameters. (Participant 8)

Essentially, actors, at least while preparing for or when in a performance, become less identified with the combination of traits and modes of being which they normally think of as themselves, in order to become someone else temporarily. This is in order to get in touch with their creative self, to make their body available to the performance and inhabit someone else's body – the character. The participants described their experiences and their emotions in varied ways and, to illustrate the language used, I will present the following excerpts:

> 'Emotions are like water; they come and go.' (Participant 5)
> 'We are acrobats of emotions.' (Participant 2)

'Me and the character are an amalgamation of the two.'
(Participant 5)

Participants spoke about working with and having to deal with emotional content. In order to perform successfully, the emotional life of the character must be processed and refined. Only after having worked with the palette of 'raw' emotions required by the character several times and in some depth, following many rehearsals, can the actor distil the emotions that she must portray. Therefore, a working with and processing of emotions is necessary for the actor's work. One can see that the potential of being personally overwhelmed is present, as noted by participant 6 in relation to a scene she played with a partner.

> I was a mess because I was crying and screaming and was overwhelmed by rage. Because the fight is so well written; that fight was so well written that it is very relatable to me because it seems like a normal fight between a couple. Then the second day, I was a little more calm and then the third, the fourth day I started to become more comfortable and then at the end it was fine. [Therefore,] my suggestion is to act the scene a lot of times with your partner, or if it's a monologue by yourself, until you become so comfortable with the scene that you're able to show the emotion without being overwhelmed by that. (Participant 6)

Within the world of acting, different methods have been developed to make emotions accessible for actors. Overall, this work is highly emotive, but these strategies help them access, frame and contain the experience. Common steps that actors take when working on a new play are: reading and analysing the script, rehearsing, playing games involving the character, doing improvisations, experimenting with each other on stage, and writing to process the content. Participant 3 explored this last point in greater detail.

> When I'm learning something, I like to write things down and understand it rather than just feel it … almost like though as if I'm processing it. (Participant 3)

This process manifests itself in one specific skill that actors are trained in during acting school, and which is further refined over the duration of their careers. They become "acrobats of emotions" (Participant 2) refining the

awareness of their own internal worlds and how to make use of these for their characters. Participant 8 gave the best metaphor.

> Acting is a "fluctuation" – it is like an ebbing and flowing. [He distinguishes this from boundaries, by saying] with boundaries I understand a wall (something that is fix) but this not the case in acting. It is a constant flux. (Participant 8)

Blending between character and self

During interviews, actors brought up how thin the line between external reality and fiction can be at times. It is rather common for personal experiences to find their way into the rehearsal space while assembling a character. It may be that as there is a tendency for the personal to blend with the professional, actors require strategies to safeguard against this conflict. Enactments may happen within the rehearsal space or may find their way into the private life of actors and analysts alike. Participant 5 refers to a confusion of emotions:

> I've had moments where I confuse my character's emotions for my own (I end up fancying co-stars). I confuse the character's emotions for my own in terms of if they are in love with someone, I think I am in love with them as well. Even though I am not because I don't even know them. Sometimes this leads to severe headaches. (Participant 5)

The intensity of this sort of experience varies from situation to situation, and actor to actor. Participant 2, for example, described a situation where the play essentially took over his private life, and the relationship of the characters on stage played out amongst the personal lives of the actors involved:

> I started dating the actress who played [my character's love interest].. It was stupid… Because we got into a situation whereby life started imitating art, started imitating life. … We never spoke about it, but subconsciously as actors we knew that the conflict that would be born out of our relationship off stage, would feed the growth of us as actors. And [we believed that] … because we were kind of contained in that bubble it wouldn't be all that bad outside of work, but the reality of the situation was, it was. And it started to have a negative impact on both of our personal lives. ... It's an example of me not being professional, not leaving the work

226

where it is. (Participant 2)

All participants interviewed remarked that such behaviour was a diversion from "professional behaviour." Interestingly, most participants could describe witnessing behaviour similar to the case highlighted above. Such situations may rarely be raised during an actor's training but the skills to deal with them are acquired over time through the development of a 'professional attitude.' For instance, Participant 7 mentioned that he now recognises potential triggers when reading a script for the first time.

> Generally, I don't draw on my own emotional experiences. I find it very unhelpful when directors [encourage you to] draw on emotional experiences of their own. If I look at something on a page and think "Oh God, that happened to me once" then you got to pay attention. (Participant 7)

Participant 6 said that often she needs a bit of 'alone time' after a performance to disengage from the character. This was her way of dealing with such overlaps and she also mentioned a couple of other strategies used by her colleagues:

> Sometimes it happens to me that when the rehearsals are over that I continue acting like that character (for 15 minutes or half an hour). It is especially difficult if you play a certain character to come to an end. I try to be by myself for a bit. Some smoke cigarettes. I listen to music, go outside, drink a coffee. I usually try to be by myself and go for a walk for 30 minutes, then I become myself again. Others meditate or do breath work or yoga. (Participant 6)

Essentially participants spoke about transition work. However, the strategies they mention do not always work and, at times, content or triggers may surprise the actor. Participant 6 brings an example of this.

> I always do my best not to make characters get over my mental capacities. Once I was playing an extra. I dressed and played this role as I was in High School. It made me go back to how I was […] I had flashbacks of my own teenage past while playing that role. (Participant 6)

Besides these emotional experiences, actors also reported that overlaps between the character and self manifested on a physical level. They mentioned that this was rarer, but that it did happen. Participant 7 gave an example:

> The character never influenced me to a point that it "imprinted itself on me". But [I] had an experience where I played a man with [a speech impediment] and developed a [speech impediment] of my own. (It manifested itself in moments of stress throughout the next two years.) This intense connection was unusual. (Participant 7)

Apart from that, several participants reported that difficult experiences in their past could also be 'triggering'. These had an influence on their work, especially when performing roles that engaged with similar emotional experiences.

Mental wellbeing of the actor

General wellbeing plays a decisive role in how actors work on their characters and how they handle the psychological challenges that arise during the course of a performance. Participant 4 held:

> How you get into character has a knock-on effect on your mental health. Coming in and out [of character] is relating to your mental health – how badly or goodly [sic] you think of yourself. (Participant 4)

Participant 6 elaborates on the difficulties of performing if there is an emotional trigger:

> The mix between a demanding character and the stress that comes from performing in front of people wipes you out. […] A lot of colleagues think that you can't really connect with a character if you put a "boundary" like I do. That's not true, we call it acting for a reason – this doesn't mean it's boring or superficial. You can still connect and understand the character without necessarily putting your mental health in danger. It is very important to learn to separate from the character. (Participant 6)

All participants shared this view.

A healthy distance

All participants emphasised the importance of maintaining "a healthy distance" from the character.

> If you are not careful and you are playing lots of different characters all the time, you don't really know where the place of operation is centrally. You don't know where you are. You lose the sense of "But this is actually who I am". (Participant 8)

Here, Participant 8 sums up something previously noted. After playing a character in a particular profession over the course of several months, he felt compelled to join the same profession for a number of years. Therefore, it is important to have "a centre point of operation" as he called it – a good awareness of oneself and one's own concerns.

Participant 7 mentioned that even when going backstage, he must consciously revert back to himself, making a distinction between the performance and being on stage to being backstage or inhabiting his personal life.

> If playing a part with substance with gaps in the middle, I don't try and stay in character off stage - this is exhausting and reminiscent.… If I am off stage, I might as well take a breath and tie my shoelace. (Participant 7)

Many of the participants also spoke about 'de-roling' practices that help them disengage from a role after a performance. Often, the term "de-roling" was not used, as it is not commonly used within the industry. This is a term that has found its way from psychology into the field of the performing arts. Only Participant 7 actively used the term during the interview, as he learnt the term from outside the acting industry. He elaborated on his experience of using these strategies in an acting context, but said he felt they were not always relevant. For him, the de-roling practices have been replaced by tasks like taking of the costume or taking the set apart, creating distance from the show. Participant 5, in comparison, actively uses de-roling strategies without calling them that. She mentioned that she had been taught these techniques by an acting professional. She said:

229

> I tell myself: I am not my character. This is not real. My name is X.
> (Participant 5)

1.34.7 The frame

Figure 11: The Frame

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│                                               │
│               The Frame                       │
│                                               │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────┘

┌───────────────────────┐  ┌───────────────────────┐
│                       │  │  Entering and exiting the │
│      The Frame        │  │         Frame          │
│                       │  │                        │
└───────────────────────┘  └───────────────────────┘
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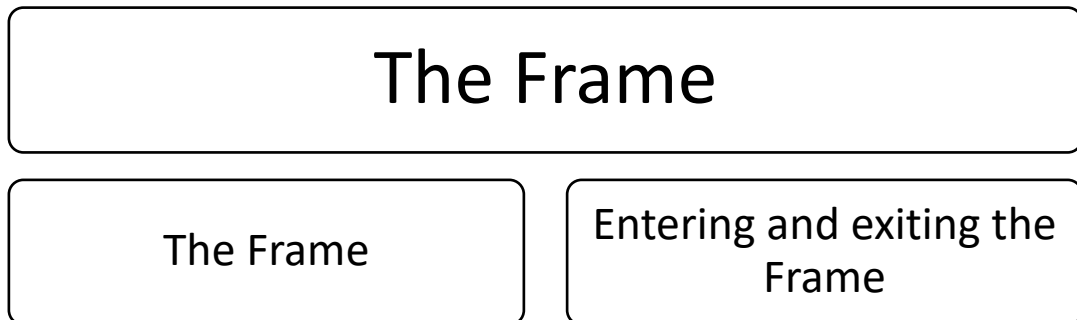
Implicitly, the notion of space has been present from the beginning, such as the rehearsal space, or the performance space, or the space where the character is left. But this concept has not yet been explicitly considered.

All participants implicitly talked about spaces and frames. Occasionally, there was an explicit reference to these terms. The most concrete mention of a frame was made by Participant 8.

> When you step on stage, you step into a space that is completely
> different [to the normal reality]. It's a space of mutual relationship
> with the audience – a 100% relationship. This enables you to keep
> up the performance. It feels like there is an invisible sort of barrier
> – a frame. (Participant 8)

This barrier functions like a frame that contains the performances within this space. Based on participants' descriptions, the theatre space (the stage and/or backstage) appears to serve as the physical manifestation of this frame. Participants' accounts suggest that entering the theatre space triggers a mental shift in actors, marking the transition into the performance frame. Actors also distinguish between external frames (e.g. theatre) and internal frames (e.g. the memory of what was rehearsed) and how one behaves differently when accessing creativity when in these frames. Participant 7 explains this using his experiences after the performance.

> I call it cognitive dissonance. When you leave a rehearsal, or a
> performance and you feel hypersensitive.
> It is rather odd to then exist in the common / normal daily reality. It
> feels like an overstimulation of the senses. Two, three, four hours
> [in a performance] is a long intense and intensive interpersonal
> exchange; you're examining other people much more intensively
> than you are used to doing in common civilization; and you're
> absolutely absorbing it (an all in vs. nobody lets you do it outside –
> that feels odd). You feel hypersensitive.
> It is the simple distinction of that change and how to mark it. You
> have to change how you look at people and how they look at you.
> A change of gear, as I call it. (Participant 7)

With that, Participant 7 makes a clear distinction between the time and the experiences on stage to common reality. A different way of behaving and interacting is required - a frame of specific interpersonal skills. Actors build a specific frame for every play during the rehearsal period – both externally (in the theatre, with the stage setup, alongside colleagues) and internally (a frame that contains the play, the character and a roadmap for the play). Participant 5 made an interesting comment along these lines.

> In your preparation, even though you should forget your
> preparation once you start acting, there is a certain preparation
> you don't need to forget, what you want from the character and
> like things to do with the scene. (Participant 5)

A sophisticated preparation creates a subconscious template that can be followed during the performance, guiding the actor towards pre-established aims and objectives. When the actor finds herself in an emotionally aroused state, the frame built during the rehearsal period creates an invisible barrier (a container) or 'roadmap,' which helps the actor to navigate the performance. This, in combination with his use of imagination, replaces the need to turn to real-life memories on stage.

Furthermore, preparation ensures that every actor knows what to expect within a scene from herself and her fellow colleagues, so preparation also safeguards against confusion between self and character. As Participant 5 elaborates:

That's, I think, the difference between having a technique and being a professional actor and someone who was feeling it on that day. Because if I don't maintain a sense of myself and I'm just playing the character, I could really hurt someone. … You've got to remember how to safely do a manoeuvre because it's about respect to other people it's not just you in the scene. (Participant 5)

Apart from that, participants emphasised the necessity of specifically keeping the character in their head as a frame for their mental wellbeing.

I always do my best not to make a character get over my mental stability. It's very important to me to maintain a clear mental stability during a rehearsal, during a show, and that's something I always try to do. Because I know that the line where you go healthy / not healthy can be really thin. So, you have to be really careful and I'm always trying to be careful. (Participant 6)

This frame contains the performance; it allows the actor to re-engage with the play and repeat the experience, performance after performance. It provides a subconscious structure that guides the performance towards preestablished aims and objectives; and it safeguards the actor against overlaps between the character and the self.

Entering and exiting the Frame

Among performers, it is also very common to do warmups before every rehearsal and performance. While naturally it is important to warm up the voice and body to make them ready for the performance, warmups may have an additional function. Participant 5 recalled a memory from her training.

We were running around; everyone was sweating and then the teacher was like: 'This is how you need to be before you go on stage'. Because when you're out of breath that is when you're the most focused which is why exercise helps to distress and calm your mind. You can't think of anything else except for your physical condition in that moment. So that's why that helps. (Participant 5)

Simply said, physical exertion puts the actor into the right state of mind. Listening to what participants said, it appears that "getting themselves ready" to perform is a skill that can be practiced. But without regular practice (i.e.,

being able to perform) the actor loses the ability to function at peak performance levels. Indeed, the voice, body, and mind require regular exercising to retain high quality levels. Every participant highlighted in some form that the most difficult part of acting is "awaiting the work" (Participant 2) and "not practicing" (Participant 8) because one "gets rusty" (Participant 7). Participant 8 added:

> Continuous practice and exposure is needed. Once you are removed from it, you are quickly accelerating away from it (like in space – just touch an object and it just keeps going away). And all of a sudden it is too far away. (Participant 8)

While the knowledge of how to get into role remains, practice is essential for performers. An ability to allow play and engagement with fellow actors is essential. Playful behaviour is only reached if all the participants are open and engaging, so that a 'bouncing off of each other' can occur. Participant 5 spoke about the difficulty of remaining open throughout the performance and mentioned little tricks that she uses to centre herself.

> Sometimes it can be hard because the mind wants to be busy. Because, when the mind is busy, you can just see in an instant when someone's eye shifts and they are no longer listening or they're thinking about something else. So, I've used techniques like breathing - while [you're breathing] you're listening to other person speak - [and it] reminds you of the present moment and brings you back [as does] looking right in the person's eyes. (Participant 5)

Consistent practice of role transitions is essential for an actor to maintain their bodily, vocal, and mental preparedness. Also, while it is possible to train the body and voice by oneself, it is rather difficult to practice acting alone. In solitude, the multiple stimuli and action-reaction movements as described by Participant 5 cannot be replicated as such. And with this, the frame starts to fade. Alongside entering the frame, also the ability to exit it must be learned.

1.34.8 Separating from the role and the performance

Figure 12: Separating from the role and the performance

> ## Separation

> ## Leaving the play behing

Understanding that the performance is different to daily life helps us to follow the participants' reflections about the moment after the performance or the end of the run of a show. While not all of them elaborated greatly on this, some made simple statements such as Participant 2:

> There is an understanding that you're not playing anymore once the play is over. When you are on stage, you know that you are having a game, when you are off stage, the game is over. (Participant 2)

The narrative among actors was very clear in distinguishing these experiences. Once the show is over, there is an end to the game; an end to a particular arousal state; and an end to experiencing an emotional story that is not theirs. Participant 6 said:

> The great thing about a show is, it's over – you can go and eat pizza with colleagues, hug your colleagues and talk about the show. (Participant 6)

This stepping away from the performance, having completed it, was described with a sense of relief by the participants. This process of stepping away, however, happens more quickly for some than others. Some may be able to simply step away and forget what was, but most participants pointed out that they were left with a remaining arousal, or a sense of estrangement from the 'real world' for a period of time after the performance. Participant 7 spoke about cognitive dissonance and a 'change of gear' that is needed, as follows:

> It is very difficult shifting in and out of emotions when going on and off stage. In order to make sure that "the change of gear" is

completed, you're investing – it takes a lot of practices! That's why not practicing or playing is detrimental. You get rusty! (Participant 7)

The difficulty of engaging with and separating from this frame is often encountered even by actors with self-developed coping strategies. Most of them focus on creating distance from the performance, and on returning their focus to the self and relaxation. Among the strategies that actors used are the following: taking off the costume, going home to relax, sitting by oneself, listening to music, having a hot bath, stretching or doing yoga, practicing self-care, having alone time, showering, smoking a cigarette, taking a walk or calling a friend or talking (as oneself, not the character) to colleagues. One point that almost all participants mentioned was the need to focus on self-care and alone time; and the best way to achieve that was by taking a walk to enable decompression time and a return to focus on the external by forgetting about the performance. Participant 8 describes this very eloquently:

> During a four-week run I tend not to have huge disengaging practices, as it is still ongoing. [One is] taking off the clothes and putting my own clothes on; that is me going out. [Another is] come off stage and do a big sigh. [Thirdly,] isolation to get rid of the night, like walking home instead of taking the tube. It is decompression time to disengage with the character over that half an hour. Looking at buildings, the sunset, letting that influence you and through that you are sort of ingesting that external stuff and the internal stuff is dissipating. A little exchange. (Participant 8)

What Participant 8 shared, reflected what other participants did after the performance, which differs from what happens at the end of a show. Participant 8 says that he is then much more focused on "closing that chapter".

> At the end of the show the script goes into a script box and that's where it stays. (Participant 8)

Phase IV

In Phase IV, interview questions focused on mechanisms and personal resources used by actors to perform. This resulted in one main theme (i.e. driving components of the performance) with several sub-theme. Some questions sought to clarify several comments made during the first interviews. These clarifications were used to enhance the understanding of the themes identified in the first round of interviews reported above. The remaining questions explored topics such as the mechanisms and personal resources to perform. The theme will be explored in the paragraphs below.

1.34.9 Acting

1.34.10   Driving components of the performance

Figure 13: Driving components of the performance

Driving components of the performence

| Using empathy to relate to the character | Using imagination to create the character's world | Using perspective taking to identify with characters | Using arousal to perform |
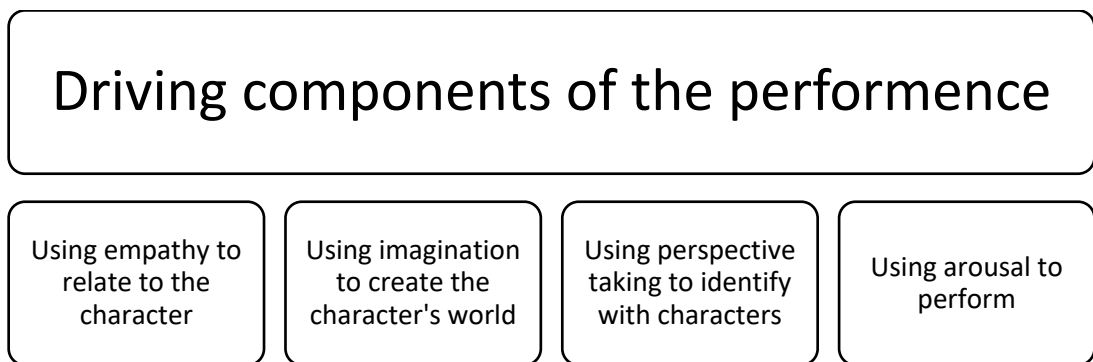
During interviews, participants were invited to reflect upon the essential personal resources used by actors when performing. The use of these resources seems to allow a play or performance to come together. Each of the resources identified appears to be an essential pillar in bringing any performance to life.

Empathy

Empathy is to understand the character. (Participant 5)

Empathy was the first skill that was mentioned by all participants as essential for actors. Participants mentioned that empathy is vital to relate to a character

and to successfully portray that character. Participant 8 mentioned that this can be particularly helpful if a character is very different from yourself.

Participant 8 reported that it is very hard to relate to repulsive characters for example, as one must overcome one's feeling of instinctive repulsion, and try to look beyond the actions and understand the character at an emotional level. Following that one must try to establish a connection to the character that will aid with the portrayal of the character. No matter whether one has had prior experiences that may help one understand the character better or not, empathy is key at this stage to help the actor relate to the character. Especially if the actor does not have a personal history she could draw on, the skill of empathy is essential to establish a connection. According to Participant 4 empathy can also stimulate curiosity to research the character more.

> I think definitely the more empathy you have the more you have passion to research the character and world of the character. (Particiapnt 4)

She saw empathy as an eagerness to discover the character in more detail. She held that this was the safest, healthiest, and most enjoyable way of getting to know a character and the world of the play. This ties in with the previous discussion on different acting methodologies used to get into role.

Empathy, therefore, appears to be essential in the first phase of the actor's creative journey. It helps them to establish the first connection with their characters and the setting of the play. This is the first pillar on which actors can build.

Fantasy (or imagination)

> Fantasy is to imagine the character in the first place. (Participant 5)

As well as empathy, participants discussed the use of imagination in their work. They reported that this skill is just as useful as empathy and helps to push the initial connection to the character a bit further. Participants explained that imagining the characters in fantasy was useful for the craft. It allows the

creation of an image of the character in your head that you can reconnect with at a later point. Important to keep in mind, though, is that this image can change anytime. It is not a fixed image, but a helpful aid - like a walking stick - to support the performer during her artistic creation.

Participant 6 said that she imagines her characters all the time while pursuing her daily routines, like shopping. She creates real stories for them and imagines how they would carry out certain tasks such as shopping. In this way she is adding detail and depth to the character that goes beyond what could be achieved just through reading and learning a script. She said that using imagination is,

> very helpful to have a specific image of a character in your mind, but you have to understand that a character can always change … because an idea of a character in your mind can be completely different from the idea of a character in the mind of another actor. [One might add, 'or the idea of the playwright and the director'.] (Participant 6)

Use of imagination is helpful in the sense that it creates a more detailed, tangible depiction of a character that is better to work with than just words on a page. Also, by thinking about details such as specific mundane behaviours like shopping adds a human touch to the character.

It should not be forgotten, though, what Participant 6 mentioned about change (the need to be flexible about how one views the character). Other participants, such as Participant 4, second this saying that:

> you ought to stay loyal to the playwright or loyal to the script; when they say imagination, it's not that you create without any information you are just building on that basic. (Participant 4)

The idea behind this is that the script is the basis of the creation, and each cast member adds to this creation to build the play. So, what is achieved during the rehearsal period, is the creation of a character and a play which is as close as possible to the playwright's depiction. This is achieved through the combined creative process of the cast and the director who compare ideas of

characters and the play and finally create something that resonates in some way with everyone.

Participant 8 expands on that, stating that imagination uses similar pathways in the mind to remembering. He said that each time a memory is recalled, the memory is slightly different. Memory is thus influenced by imagination and vice versa. Thus, there is little scientific support for the usefulness of using real memory over imagination for acting. This perhaps supports the sense that use of imagination is an important part of the creative work of the actor, much more so than remembering lines or the director's view of the character.

Acting coaches also recommend working with the imagination over using personal experiences. Firstly, this safeguards actors in an emotional sense from bringing their own – potentially upsetting – experiences to the character. Secondly, it is a more reliable creative source for the actors as well. Participant 3 explained this as follows:

> If I'm upset about something that happened to me one day, I might not be upset about it anymore; and I can't re-create that emotion. So, if you can use your imagination to get you there, you're never going to not have that [problem]. (Participant 3)

Thus, the actor creates his own palette of experiences to use when playing from a mixture of experience and use of imagination. For the actor, this may be somewhat equivalent to the painter's colour palette that he uses for painting.

Interestingly, Participant 8 also pointed out that creation in the imagination is important for establishing a relationship between the actor and his work.

> There is the idea that the creation in the imagination is actually a relationship between you and the work that you're creating, a relationship or a love affair for a certain amount of time. And I think maybe that's why a lot of actors get "Blues" after they've done a six-month run in the theatre. Because this love affair has to come to an inevitable end, which they knew all along anyway, but hoped it never would. (Participant 8)

Perspective Taking

> Perspective taking is to step into the character's shoes.
> (Participant 5)

The last of the three pillars of personal resources that actors use is perspective taking. While the first two (being empathic and using one's imagination to create a character) appear to be central in the initial parts of the actor's creative work, perspective taking is used once the character is performed. As Participant 5 stated, "it is a taking on the shoes of the character" and performing it on stage. In some sense it is an enactment of a situation that had been built beforehand using empathy and imagination. Participant 5 describes this as follows:

> Empathy and perspective taking come hand in hand because I can't step into the shoes [of another] if I can't empathize. Feeling for someone so much that I can [relate to them]. (Participant 5)

Participant 8 expanded on this by saying that all three of these skills form a triangulation. For example, when he is playing a real person, he could look up this person on the internet, research what this person looks like and what the behaviours or attitudes are. He would work on the voice and the physicality in order to match this person but there always remains an imaginary element to it. Actors then have to work with imagination to create this character and may need to fill gaps in their knowledge about the character. That will make the subsequent performance a unique creation.

> There has to be a sense of imagination when you are about to play a role. If you step into it, it's imagining yourself as that person which is also about perspective taking in that moment. (Participant 8)

Participant 8 continued to describe that at this stage the task of the actor is not to focus on the actions of the character. Rather she must assume those actions and work on what they mean internally to the character. What is the internal conflict that is driving the character and the story forward, she must ask himself. This is an internal process where the actor must use her own skills to create the character. This is the process actors described as perspective

taking. Participant 8 gave an example of how he would work on this practically when shooting a film which may give the reader a better understanding of this process and show how perspective taking differs from empathy. As will be shown by the extract below perspective taking is a more active process that secures the internalising of a character, whereas empathy is more a mental exercise to understand the character. Participant 8 spoke below about preparing for a character he played:

> When I was filming [this character] any free time, I would [use to] go and walk in the countryside and I would just talk as the character out loud. So, … I would talk about all the different perspectives that this character had. … I would discuss out loud my feelings about their mother as me or I would discuss about how [someone] doesn't call me back when I want her to call me back. … And yes, you could look at it and go "but you're a psychopath" because you know you're obsessive, ineffective. But, if you're going to step into the person's shoes, connect with the feeling of "she's not calling you back", you're being rejected and how that feels, [you have to do such things]. (Participant 8)

Fear (or arousal)

The last component that will be explored, which some participants cited as an important component of becoming the character, is fear or arousal. Thus far, the only themes that have been presented are the ones mentioned by all the participants, but this feeling was discussed explicitly by only one participant (Participant 8). Other participants, however, referred to it implicitly. Fear or arousal, however, is a central component of live performances. Most performers, if they are asked, can give an example of how performance anxiety impacted their performance. Often it is associated with negative results, such as black outs or freezing on stage. But fear also has a stimulating function that is essential for performers to reach peak performance.. Participant 8 described it as follows:

> I think it's helpful for the actor to have a little bit of fear and I guess that is nerves and "using nerve". (When actors say, "Oh yeah, no, it's good to have a little bit of nerves, keeps you on edge.") … It is genuinely useful on a sort of psychophysiological way, the fear …

can be a fuel for the actor because it drives their objective and it informs the inner conflict without fear, we're just walking through life like a bunny rabbit with rainbows and flowers. (Participant 8)

The participant further explored the concept of fear in relation to peak performance in athletes and makes links to the performing arts. He watched a documentary on peak performance featuring Mike Tyson. Apparently, Mike Tyson experiences training and the fight against his rival boxer in a state of petrification, imagining that "the other fighter will come and beat me if I don't defend myself". According to Participant 8, a similar fear is evoked in the actor when he goes on stage. The actor fears that the audience may not believe the performance and be dissatisfied with it, and this may have repercussions on the performer. And during rehearsal, just as for athletes during training, the actor is building up confidence. And when the performance comes around this build-up of adrenaline is released and can be useful for the performance.

1.35 Conclusion

The qualitative analysis of the interviews resulted in the identification of nine themes on acting based on the data in year one and year two. Eight themes discovered in 2021 focused mostly on the exploration of the creative process. The remaining theme described acting in more detail. This first six themes form a conceptual arc that aims to give a better understanding of the creative process actors go through, step by step. While the remaining three describe the role of the actor in relation to the arc and mechanisms actors use to create. While this arc may give the impression of having used a deductive approach to create a conceptual frame, this order was in fact established inductively based on participants' words. When describing their preparatory work, participants described these phases step-by-step. These themes and the sub-themes are meant to give a structural idea of what happens when actors perform and will, therefore, be presented in a table for referral.

The conceptual arc of creativity in actors

The following themes (see also The analysis of interview transcripts resulted in the identification of nine themes - six describing the process of acting while the remaining three help us to understand the actor's role in relation to this arc. First, the themes, presented in a table below (Table 25), will be presented before defining them in greater detail as part of the subsequent results section. The analysis resulted in the identification of nine themes: a) first inspiration; b) preparation and exploration; c) establishing a connection; d) working on the play; e) the frame; f) the separation; g) self-regulation; h) becoming the character; and i) the actor's creativity. The nine themes were divided into three categories; a) the creative arc; b) the actor; and c) acting. The themes are presented in the order in which they arose during the analysis rather than in order of importance. Attention is given, however, in the right-hand column, to how often a particular theme arises.

Table 25. Thematic analysis table with frequencies showing themes and sub-themes) were discovered in relation to the creative work of acting. The order that they have been placed following the analysis could be viewed as an arc - a step-by-step description of the creative work of the actor when preparing a performance. This concept can be understood as "the creative arc".

First inspiration

The first step in the preparatory work of the actor is represented by the first encounter with the material. This is normally the moment when actors are given the script and they read it for the first time.

Preparation and exploration

A preparation and exploration phase is initiated during which actors spend time working on and with the material in an analytical way. The character and the world of the play are discovered in the words of the script. The character is built from the text upwards, and actors take several steps to do that. For example, (i) they learn the lines; (ii) work with the text by analysing the text to find out more about the character; (iii) they do research about the period or

243

background of the play, the intention of the characters, and what is contained in those intentions to ground themselves in the time, place and overall arc of the play; (iv) they work with colleagues during the rehearsal, read and discuss the script and characters together (what does the character want, why they want it, what are the obstacles / stakes, and how is the character going to get what they want - verbally, physically and emotionally); (v) they elaborate on how to best inhabit the environment of the play and the character and (vi) how the character would come to interact with other characters.

Establishing a connection

Actors work on establishing a connection with the material. While the previous phase involves analytical work this phase focuses more on trying to establish an emotional connection, requiring emotional work. Participants mentioned that the easiest way to establish such a connection is through starting with oneself. By that, actors did not mean to play oneself, but rather, they said it was important to understand one's own emotions to understand others (i.e., the characters') emotions. Each character had human qualities and it was important to understand those and be able to establish a connection to those. It is about relating to (or recalling) hose experiences and not drawing on an actual experience that happened to fuel the emotional side of the character. The goal is to establish a 'channel of empathy' to the character, and this required psychological flexibility to experiment with parts of oneself to fit a character. This is where actors use a series of acting methods to experiment and where boundaries must be established between the self and character.

Working on the play

Actors are working on the play to bring this preparatory work to the stage. Actors work on five interchangeable and iterative steps to fulfil this task: (i) a physical and vocal preparation; (ii) an emotional preparation; (iii) exploration and experimental work; (iv) the identification and pursuit of objectives and (v) adopting input by the director. For example, Participant 8 first worked on finding the right physicality for the character he played, experimenting with grounding exercises, and then working on finding a way to incorporate the

emotional stance of the character. To understand the emotional depth of the character it is also helpful to identify the objectives of the character - his wants, needs and desires - and pursue those throughout the play. In addition, the actor's vision of the character, the director has a vision of the overall play. It is his job to keep that in mind and guide the actors in their individual work towards a unified performance. And, therefore, also the feedback of the director must be adopted and incorporated by the actors.

The Frame

Actors spoke about spaces and frames describing the performance space as different and separate to normal life. For example, Participant 8 held that the stage was a different, separate space encapsulated in a sort of invisible barrier - a frame. This space is entered physically but also mentally. Participant 7 described it as a mental change of gear which helped the actor reach peak performance levels. This frame can be entered and exited physically as well as mentally. For example, the actor enters the physical space of the theatre which creates a helpful frame for many performers and made it difficult for them to work from home during the pandemic (i.e., lack of ability to connect and disconnect from work). On a mental level, actors often practice warm-ups and cool-downs to engage and disengage with the high energy levels required for the performance. The ability to enter and exit these frames in the mind is refined with continuous practice and a lack of that will impair such capacities. This mental frame also encapsulates the creative work of the actor described above and distinguishes the professional actor from the amateur - they have a technique to work creatively.

Separating from the play

The actor separates from the play, the creative work, and the performance. After every show, the actor must step away from the character and once the run of the show is complete, the actor must also conclude the project in her mind. The idea of a frame and a physical space already suggested the idea that after every rehearsal and performance the actor goes through a

separation process. For some actors this ending is not explicit, it is rather an understanding that after a performance one is not playing anymore, the show is over. Others mention that activities such as taking off the characters clothes and putting on one's own clothes, leaving the theatre, remaining alone for a while, and going for a walk helped them to disconnect. Separation is also important for the conclusion of a play. Participant 8, for instance, always puts the script in a script box at the end of a show. The practice helps to distinguish the fictional play from real life and helps actors to establish boundaries between the self and the character. Where these boundaries are not in place, amalgamations between the fictional and real may occur. The actor may mistake characteristics of the character for her own or bring personal issues to the stage. Working on separation throughout the performance period is, therefore, vital for the wellbeing of actors.

The creative actor

Seven, actors must tap into their own creativity to carry out the creative work described above. In comparison to other professions the actor's artistic creation is not independent from the character. Instead, the actor brings her own self to the stage. The actor is the vehicle which the character inhabits for the duration of the play. And yet, it is paramount that the actor disconnects to some extend from his own self for the period of the play and remains "in the moment" to react on stage as if she was living these fictional circumstances for real and channel high levels of energy to reach peak performance and enter a flow state (to organise psychic resources so as to experience optimal performance). This means being mentally and externally perceptive, but not hyper aroused. At the same time, the actor needs to navigate the performance – the actor must keep the objectives of the play in mind, the lines, the position on stage to avoid standing in the shadow, tripping over cables, or bumping into co-workers, and so forth. The knowledge gathered through the preceding preparatory work is stored in the pre-conscious mind and the actor is only partially aware when accessing this knowledge and navigating the space. The actor has a continuous internal conversation to appropriately regulate their behaviour in accordance with the given parameters. It becomes a subconscious skill to down-regulate certain aspects of the self and up-regulate

others. This regulatory process may fail at times and actors forget their lines or confuse their own self with that of the characters which may have an adverse impact on their mental health.

Acting

Lastly, a handful of questions were asked to clarify certain statements of participants on their perception of acting and to explore what is happening on a psychological level when actors perform. The last theme was discovered during the follow-up phase when participants were asked to describe what was happening for them on a psychological level when performing. According to actors' experiences, they use four personal resources to work creatively: empathy, fantasy, perspective taking and arousal. Empathy helped actors to understand the character, fantasy allowed them to imagine the character, perspective taking facilitated the stepping in the characters shoes and arousal gave them the physical energy to reach peak performance levels. The combination of these four factors is a central part of the actor's ability to perform.

These themes summarise the findings from the qualitative phase in year one and year on acting.

Chapter 5 - Thematic Analysis: Resilience in the eyes of actors

This chapter will address the data gathered on resilience with the same 8 participants (see Table 24). This section will focus on resilience and reflect mostly the questions from the one-year follow-up. The questions asked during the follow-up interviews focused more closely on resilience, participants' emotional state at the time of the second interview, and their experiences in the preceding year because of the global Covid-19 pandemic. Some questions were also aimed at clarifying whether the same acting methods were used as the previous year or whether their approaches had changed in any way. The relevant answers were integrated into the discussion of the preceding chapter.

The first interviews gathered data on participants' experiences of the first lockdown (due to interviews coinciding with this period) and their professional careers at that point. Most of the participants had been working during the summer before the first interview with the hope that the pandemic would end soon. The UK had 'reopened' to some extent during the summer following two lockdowns. Later came a third lockdown, around Christmas 2021, followed by a fourth in early 2022. Participants' experiences, as recounted during their second round of interviews (at the end of 2021), revealed their struggles, frustration, desperation, and exhaustion during this period, as well as the difficulties they encountered getting back to work post-pandemic.

The Thematic Analysis yielded six noteworthy themes connected to resilience. Within the qualitative interviews, participants were asked what resilience meant to them; whether they thought being resilient was relevant or beneficial to their work as an actor; and whether they themselves considered themselves as resilient. This resulted in a discovery of six interesting themes on how actors understand resilience and what factors either facilitate or hinder resilience in their line of work.

1.36 What role does resilience play in enabling the actor to do this work?

The Thematic Analysis yielded six noteworthy themes connected to resilience. First, the themes, presented in a table (Table 26) below, will be presented before defining them in greater detail as part of the subsequent results section. The analysis resulted in the identification of six themes: a) resilience through the lens of the actor; b) resilience to deal with the creative work; c) resilience to tackle the challenges and risks of the profession; d) the negative; e) the positive; f) what is resilience. The six themes were divided into three categories; a) resilience as defined by actors in the first year; b) participants' experiences over the past year; and c) resilience as it is defined by actors in the second year. The six themes are presented in the order in which they arose during the analysis rather than in order of importance. Attention is given, however, in the right-hand column, to how often a particular theme arises.

Table 26. Thematic analysis table with frequencies showing themes and sub-themes (Time 2)

Overarching Themes	Sub-themes	Frequency of codes	
		n^a	N^b
Resilience			
1) *Resilience through the lens of the actor*	*9.1 (no sub theme)*	*8*	*8*
2) *Resilience to deal with the creative work*	*10.1 Being resilient to handle difficult emotional experience*	*4*	*8*
	10.2 Acting as coping in the absence of resilience	*1*	
	10.2 The resilient self guides the identification process	*3*	
3) *Resilience to tackle the challenges and risks of the profession*	*11.1 Business difficulties* *11.1.1 Instability* *11.1.2 Competition*	*28*	*89*
	11.2 Interpersonal difficulties *11.2.1 Problematic behaviour of others* *11.2.2 Fragile support network*	*21*	
	11.3 Psychological difficulties	*21*	

	11.4 Coping strategies and resilience
	    11.4.1 Building internal strength
	    11.4.2 Prioritising needs and wellbeing
	    11.4.3 External support and regulating thoughts
		19	

One year later			
4) *The negative*	*1.1 Loss*	*18*	*52*
	1.2 Anxieties about Covid-19	*10*	
	1.3 Loss of work	*10*	
	1.4 Financial strain	*14*	
5) *The positive*	*2.1 Success or Retraining*	*55*	*101*
	2.2 Connecting	*12*	
	2.3 Mindset shift	*34*	
Resilience			
6) *What is resilience?*	*3.1 Being flexible and not dependent on the external*	*1*	*14*
	3.2 Being resourceful despite difficulty	*4*	
	3.3 Reflecting about experiences leading to growth	*1*	
	3.4 A sense of pursuit despite challenges and criticism	*5*	
	3.5 Remaining positive despite difficulty	*3*	

1.36.1 Resilience through the lens of the actor

Figure 14: Resilience through the lens of the actor

Resilience through the lens of the actor

The answers given varied but there was consensus on the nature of resilience and the role of resilience in the acting industry. All agreed that being resilient had a significant influence on their acting career.

While the literature defines resilience as an "ability to bounce back from adversity", actors saw resilience within an acting context different. It was described as: "being flexible", "being adaptable", "being strong" or "being resourceful". Overall, the notion of dealing with difficult situations still holds true under this lens, but the contribution of the participants indicates that actors focus less on the aspect of 'bouncing back from difficulty' and more on their own capacities when describing resilience. Because difficulties are ever-present in all aspects of their lives, there was a focus on developing strategies to handle adversity rather than bouncing back from adversity. This is also the reason why this section starts by discussing actors' definition of resilience. It will further a better understanding of the topics that follow; the risk factors and difficulties within the industry that must be dealt with; the skills actors developed to deal with these; and aspects of the work that are conducive to their wellbeing and resilience.

Participant 8 gave a lived example of what resilience means within the particular line of acting work that he chose:

> Being resilient goes hand in hand with being resourceful. […]
> [Y]ou're doing a job, which is probably one of the most unstable
> and not financially rewarding. Doesn't pay… very rarely pays, and
> you have to make your life work. So, in order to be resilient, I've
> had to adapt, be flexible. […] I didn't want to get a full-time job that
> would take me outside of being able to audition. And being
> resilient in that way, in order to make sure I could audition. That I
> had, that I could put in the time to the craft and to the work.
> (Participant 8)

Participant 8 conveys what it can mean to be an actor and what skills are required to be an actor. Notably, he does not mention skills that refer to the craft itself. This observation holds true for the other seven participants. The difficulties they face have less to do with lack of skill in the craft itself, but more with the nature of the industry. For instance, financial struggles are very common. The reasons for these difficulties are diverse, in terms of financial instability, it is a mixture between the desirability of the job which leads to market saturation; underpayment by the employers; and external difficulties

that make it difficult to get roles. Therefore, the central idea that was communicated by the participants focuses on being able to adapt to difficult circumstances created by this type of work. As Participant 8 said: being flexible, adaptable, and resourceful.

Because of the nature of the industry, there is a need among actors to be strong. This was repeated continuously by different participants. "Yes, 100%", said Participant 2. "You need to be emotionally strong" said Participant 3. Participant 7 said, "it is [not] absolutely necessary, but it [the industry] is damn not so easy [to deal with]". Participant 2 extended this necessity of strength to the craft itself by saying that the task of acting is also such that it requires a lot of personal strength.

> To be a good, healthy, and successful actor, you have to be of an extremely healthy mind because you need to be able to take on these emotions, show them, be truthful and take them off again. If you are healthy, it is not all that difficult to draw a separation between where the day starts and where the day ends.
> (Participant 2)

The same need for personal strength is relevant in relation to the nature of the industry. The industry could be described as brutal, functioning on a kind of Darwinian 'survival of the fittest' principle. This topic was also touched upon by the other participants. Participant 6 explained this in more detail:

> You have to be strong. If you're shy, if you have a very delicate mental health or you're super sensitive it's very tricky. I'm not saying that this job is not for you because you can totally learn not to be this way, but this job is so demanding that you have to learn to be stronger because you get rejections all the time, every day.
> (Participant 6)

Virtually all participants mentioned that their strength built up over time through a combination of their own personality and the exposure to difficulty. For example, participants mentioned that their personal backgrounds helped them to be resilient. Among participants, there is also a consensus that resilience is built over time within the acting industry. Performers tend to learn to deal with

the problems that they face, and if this does not occur, the probability of succeeding in the profession is very low. As Participant 8 said:

> To be an actor, you have to have an emotional toughness or to be robust emotionally because you got to take a lot of hits, got to keep getting up, you got to dust yourself off and you got to keep going. And I think that takes certain mental toughness which is learned – you have to get hurt to get tough. (Participant 8)

Participant 8 elaborates on this in greater detail, saying it took him years to find an agent after finishing training. But even once an actor feels they are slowly acquiring a professional standing, they must be prepared to take hits. He shared a concrete example.

> I auditioned for the main role in a [major film]. And I got down to the last two. And I cancelled a holiday [to be available when the filming would take place], and I met the producer because they were coming over [to the UK] for two days […] [I was extremely excited, all was arranged] and then probably three weeks before I am due to fly out, it went a bit quiet. And I haven't received a contract yet. It all just had been arranged verbally. … And then another week went by and then another week. And I said to my agent 'next week I am meant to be flying [out] to do this film – what's going on?' And he's like, 'I'll keep pestering them.' And when he got back the next morning, he said I haven't heard from them, but he read [elsewhere] that the [role] was going to be played by [another actor]. So, they didn't even tell me. … The producer decided to go with someone who has a name because then you can get some box office return on it, and I wasn't told a thing. That was when I learned it because that hit me hard. (Participant 8)

As such, one major factor that participants described as omni-present is rejection. All participants mentioned that learning to deal with rejection helped them build continuity and longevity within this career. Different participants found different ways to deal with this, which will be discussed in greater detail below. Therefore, alongside being able to handle difficulty, actors need to be 'persistent' and not get disheartened when being turned down by a casting director, as this is considered a part of the job. Within their narrative, there was a lack of clarity regarding how resilience may facilitate the work of an actor, but the search for themes gave an interesting insight on this topic.

1.36.2 Resilience to deal with the creative work

Figure 15: Resilience to deal with the creative work

Resilience to deal with the creative work

| Being resilient to handle difficult emotional experiences | Acting as coping in the absence of reslience | The resilient self guides the identification process |
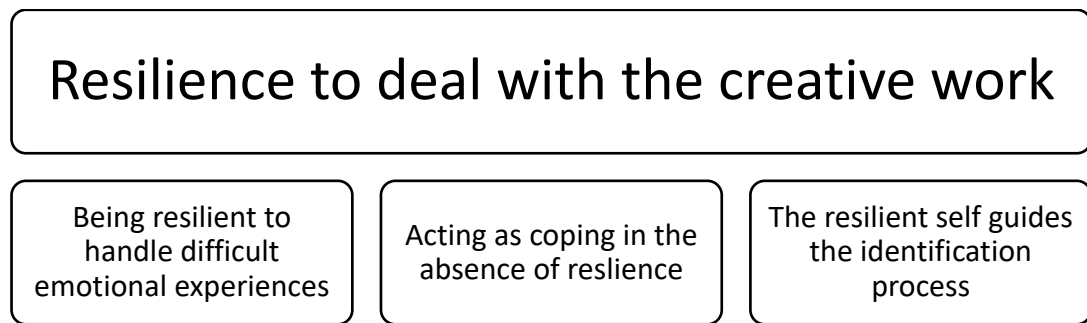
The Thematic Analysis aimed to identify what role resilience plays in enabling the actor to do his artistic work. As shown by the analysis, resilience is a major factor in helping the actor to cope with the practical difficulties that they encounter within the industry as laid out above. Alongside this, acting itself involves challenges that are not discussed in the literature and often are not talked about within the industry: there is a 'veil of silence'. Analysing participants' interviews, it is clear that resilience also influenced how actors handle their work and whether they experienced challenges relating to the artistic process. Three main themes became evident: a) resilience as a handling of difficult emotional experience b) acting as a means of coping in the absence of resilience and c) resilience as helping to navigate the artistic process.

Be resilient to handle difficult emotional experiences

As previously discussed, it is evident that acting is an emotionally demanding profession. It was determined that in order to give life to the character, actors must engage with the emotional world of the character which is not always a simple task. Often, characters have a difficult and emotional past and present self, especially when the play or film is a drama. Actors must engage with this emotional background and bring it to life through engaging their own emotions; this is very demanding as Participant 6 said:

> With a complicated character […] [they] are very demanding, complicated and exhausting. The mix between a demanding

254

character and the stress that comes from performing … wipes you out. (Participant 6)

Participant 6 mentioned that in order to play a character, a strong identification with that character must occur on a personal level. She emphasised that she tends to play comic roles and said that should she ever have to play a more dramatic character, she would be worried what impact this may have on her personal life and her mental health. Similar concerns were also raised by other participants, and are reflected in the lines below by Participant 6:

I'm afraid that someday I'm going to have to play a character or do a show that is going to take such a toll on my mental health. Then I'm going to have to do something about it. […] I think that if one day I'm going to play a character that is going to be so impactful on my mental health, I'm going to have to go to therapy because that's the only thing [that] can fix that. (Participant 6)

Handling these emotional experiences can be very demanding. On top of that, actors, unlike other artists, use their own self to deliver the artistic work they create. Therefore, they bring their own emotional past with them onto the stage – whether they are conscious of it or not. It is not surprising that this is difficult for actors. Individuals universally encounter challenges throughout their lives, with the nature of these challenges varying based on personal experiences and characteristics. These past difficulties often shape a person's present identity. Therapy facilitates self-understanding and enhances awareness of these challenges, enabling individuals to effectively navigate past dynamics in the present. The difficult job for actors is then to navigate this journey alongside the demands of the play. And this is the point where mental wellbeing in actors starts to play a role.

As discussed in the section on 'Mental Health in Actors,' previous personal experiences can exert emotional strain on actors when portraying roles that resonate with their own experiences. Participant 6 explained when playing a character that went through a similar situation as herself (i.e. including the same outfit and mannerisms of her past self) led her to experience flashbacks on stage. Not everyone has had difficult experiences in the past, but it is worthwhile mentioning that this can have an impact on actors.

255

The interviews also revealed that several participants were neurodiverse or had learning difficulties. These traits were not clinically measured within this study, instead participants reported previously diagnoses. While it is beyond the scope of this study to explore this in more detail, it is worthwhile bringing this to the reader's attention as none of the existing literature has covered neurodiversity within the performing arts industry so far. Judging from the participants' accounts, also this had a significant impact on their work.

Participants also drew direct links between their mental wellbeing and their artistic performance. Among the topics mentioned are depression, overthinking, perfectionism, and anxiety. Participant 3 gave a concrete description of this:

> I will always want to be the best, not necessarily better than everybody else, but the best version that I can give. But on the flip side of that - because I can be quite hypercritical - it may be difficult for me… I sort of over analyse everything. (Participant 3)

Participant 3, on various occasions, mentioned that hypercritical thinking and perfectionism made it difficult for her to experiment as an actor; to fail and take constructive criticism on-board. This is deeply counterproductive in an industry where the individual is permanently exposed to criticism, rejection, and failure, and must actively learn from those experiences.

Acting as coping in the absence of resilience

As debilitating as mental health difficulties may be for actors, this study showed that they do not determine success or failure within the industry. Acting, it seems, can also be beneficial to deal with mental health difficulties.

In some cases, acting even functioned as a coping strategy to deal with existing mental distress. Whether these coping strategies are "healthy" remains up to the reader to judge. Participant 4, for instance, explained that she likes acting as it is a way to tell stories that otherwise do not get told.

Similarly, Participant 1 reported that for her, living without acting during the lockdowns was incredibly difficult because acting was the only thing in her life that made her happy.

> [If I am] not acting … then I'm not, I'm not, I'm not happy. So, I have never been very happy at all. [Due to Covid all has] been cancelled, so that's affected my… because I can't see and feel when… When I can do it again. (Participant 1)

These examples illustrate that there is the potential of acting giving an emotional benefit for actors, although no absolute conclusions can be drawn. Conversely, several participants emphasised that acting was just a job for them. This suggests that there is scope for further research.

Some participants reported that acting, for them, is a vehicle to sublimate unhealthier or destructive impulses in a constructive way. Participant 2 mentioned that from early on he had the skill to put on different personality types or attitudes and use that to his advantage. Now, he uses these skills within the theatrical context.

> [When growing up,] it was easy for me to… I don't want to say manipulate others who didn't grow up in the same kind of environment, but I was able to put on different coats very early on in my life, so that I could get what I wanted or kind of get out of trouble. And then when I realised that there was, you know, a name for this or a job that I could do in a healthier way. And using the things that I've just [always] been doing since I've grown up, I suppose that's when I really started considering becoming an actor. (Participant 2)

The resilient self guides the identification process

What remains to be discussed, is how actors handle themselves while performing. Participants spoke about their difficulty disengaging from a role and the impact it has on their private life. This struggle seems to reflect a general difficulty on the part of the participants to maintain clear boundaries between the self and the other.

In terms of problematic identification with the character, participants spoke about difficult experiences with the character. Many participants feared a character having a big impact on them. More specifically, it was mentioned that working with a character influenced their mental health. Actors observed issues, such as adopting features of the character, a continuation of the character after the performance, identity crises and the impact of exhausting, mentally draining roles. Participant 6 mentioned that she often continues to act like the character after the performance has ended, not for an entire day, but for up to an hour after the performance. As such, there seems to be an issue regarding the identification with the character that can be problematic. In her opinion, this is what makes it difficult to play certain types of roles as it is difficult to separate yourself from the character after performance.

> When you play a certain type of character during rehearsal, it's difficult to then just be like: "OK, Now I am coming to an end. I'm not [the character] anymore. (Participant 6)

Alongside Participant 6, four other participants reported similar experiences regarding the identification with the character. Occasionally, this had a significant impact on their personal life, as can be seen in the following two examples. Participant 8 undertook a new profession after performing a play where that character worked in that field.

> If you're doing a production and you're doing it for a long time, then that's a long time that you're pretending to be someone else. And then that is very unhealthy. And that happened to me once. … We did a six-month tour, and I was playing with [people working in a particular profession] on stage. I was living with them, going to the pub with them, by the end of that, or after six months I called my agent said that I was going to quit acting. I quit and I went to join [the same profession]. Because I thought that, that was what I should do because I've been doing it for six months … [a]nd I felt part of a collective identity. I felt part of a group. (Participant 8)

While not all participants reported difficulties with the identification process, all participants experienced challenges with retaining a clear sense of self when working with characters.

1.36.3 Resilience to tackle the challenges of the profession

Figure 16: Resilience to tackle the challenges of the profession

Resilience to tackle the challenges and risks of the profession

| Business difficulties | Interpersonal difficulties | Psychological difficulties | Coping strategies |

| Instability | Competition | Problematic behaviour of others | Fragile support network | | Building internal strength | Prioritising needs and wellbeing | External support and regulating thoughts |

Resilience also positively supports actors in dealing with the external factors of working as a performer. Participants mentioned that, beyond what has already been discussed, the greatest difficulty is being exposed to challenging factors within the acting industry. These are: difficulties with the business side, interpersonal difficulties (i.e. with fellow actors, directors rather than those outside of the industry), and psychological difficulties (i.e. explicitly connected to the demands of the profession). The participants also discussed coping strategies and how these interacted with their resilience. All participants empathised and discussed these in detail, showing how much these factors influence their professional lives.

Business difficulties

This section is divided into two parts which are both concerned with struggles of the business side of being an actor.

Instability

The first - *instability* - was mentioned by each participant multiple times and reflects mostly the financial struggles of being an actor and the impact of this on their lifestyle. Accordingly, participants mentioned that for most of their working lives, actors spend their time "waiting for the work". As Participant 2 explores:

> Waiting for this work is challenging … because you can't just not practice. Even though I'm not getting paid right now … it's not like I can just take nine months off and then walk back onto a stage and [have the same artistic skills as before] … unless I practice. But, in the very nature of that practice, there is absolutely no feedback! Whatsoever! There's no monetary feedback. [And] I don't think COVID-19 and the times that we're living in now present much of a difference emotionally for actors who were out of work before. (Participant 2)

This has a significant impact on their financial situation, with many having to find a second job to be able to make a living. It was mentioned as well that studying and pursuing an acting career is a privileged career choice that can only be pursued if a third party (e.g. such as a supportive family, or a second job) is providing financial support. Participant 4 talked about this in detail:

> I'm torn between, like, how to manage [acting and auditioning] along with my life. Because I've got a job that I work four days a week. … I need that money to pay my rent so it's about how you manage that. I don't have the answer today I'm still exploring…. You've got to be 100% ready and committed to be able to go down that road and stable enough, not just in your mind, but in your life. To be able to do that. Then if you do get the part … you have to quit your job. Unless you are with the company that says you can work zero hours. […] [Otherwise, when the] show finishes … then you've got to do it all over again. (Participant 4)

Actors face a significant problem with monetary renumeration. Voluntary roles or low payments are the norm, which deepens their financial struggles. Participant 3 said:

> A very big issue is the fees that are being offered and being accepted. Because it's like the chicken and the egg. Is it the people that offer them to blame? Or is it the people that are

accepting the low fees? … I've even been that person. Because
when you first graduate and you are new to the industry, you don't
know anything because those things aren't… I don't think they're
even taught at colleges, never mind at universities. The business
side of being a performer. [Therefore,] people taking advantage of
people and being taken advantage of. And it's… yeah it gets, gets
on my nerves. Because I'm just one voice and I feel like I can't do
anything other than point it out when I see it. (Participant 3)

Competition

The second struggle actors face is high competition. Participants spoke about
how limited availability of roles created a major problem. Participants
specifically spoke about this in terms of limited job availability, narrow role
choices, lack of professional connections and business skills to succeed in the
professional environment. Alongside the lack of available job options, actors
are also faced with a lack of variety of roles – as can be seen in this extract
from Participant 6.

I mean, this job is so beautiful that's why so many people want to
do it. […] I would like one day to be a musical actress. [For my
vocal range,] there are few roles for musicals, and they are usually
not played by girls my age. I would like for the musical industry to
write more [characters with my vocal range]. (Participant 6)

Furthermore, the industry is still dominated by typecasting and casting being
based on intrinsic bodily features (e.g. age, body shape, gender, ethnicity)
which makes it even more difficult for actors to find work. This was explored
by Participant 3:

[After an audition,] people say: "Oh, you know, it could have been
because of your hair, your height…" And people think that's a
good thing. But actually … it's different if you go for an interview
that you haven't got the skills on the CV. Rejection is still hard, but
it's less likely to be personal than if you're bringing your whole self
into that room, because you're the product. If they don't want you
and you're like OK... (Participant 3)

Apart from that, the acting industry is dominated by the prevalence of
networking as a means of finding work. Thus, roles are often assigned to
colleagues, actors that have previously worked with a director or producer or

professional, or who were referred by friends. This makes it difficult for those lacking those connections to find work. Participants 6 and 8 explore this as follows:

> Working within the industry and networking is not really something that I enjoy doing at all and also something that I wasn't aware of during my training. This is an aspect that needs to be considered. I just worked on the craft of being an actor. I didn't think of anything else. I didn't realize that there was anything else that needs to happen in order for you to be able to actually practice your craft and to get paid for it so. (Participant 8)

> I think one thing that makes this job really difficult is recommendation. If you audition and the director has to choose between the daughter of his good friend, the famous actor and me, the director is going to choose the daughter or the actor. And that's a thing that I see happening all the time in theatre. And … it's kind of frustrating because I think to myself, no matter how good I try to be, there's always going to be one … guy or a girl [that] was recommended and I'm not going to get the role. (Participant 6)

Interpersonal difficulties

Among interpersonal difficulties, participants mentioned the following categories: problematic interpersonal behaviour on the part of others and fragile support networks.

Problematic behaviour of others

Participants talked about problematic interpersonal behaviour as being exposed to the temper of co-workers; being dependent or submitted to judgment by others; and being taken advantage of.

Participants spoke about the short-lived environment of acting – having to adapt to new circumstances and a new production crew every time a new role is taken. Due to the intimate working environment that is common within the business, there is a requirement to have a good relationship with fellow actors – creating a level of intimacy quickly, but also having to let go quickly after the

production is over. The participants described this as a "superficial" intimacy, and a factor which contributes to actors struggling to regulate their own emotions and handling emotional difficulties that arise with colleagues. This is especially the case if these emotions take the form of anger. Participant 7 mentioned this briefly:

> [C]ontrol of temper in the working environment [is one of the factors with which I struggle a lot]. I'm one of those people [who is] quite confrontational [so] it's quite difficult to get along. (Participant 7)

Alongside this, actors spoke about difficulties regarding gossip, competition, and judgment by others. While participants spoke about dealing with gossip from friends, family, and colleagues, it was specifically pointed out that within society there is a general lack of respect for the profession. This results in gossip and judgment that actors must deal with in their immediate surroundings. As such, Participant 1 mentioned that she rejects film roles out of fear of drawing too much attention to herself and not being able to deal with the resulting gossip from acquaintances. Also, within the working environment she faces judgment and confrontation with others. This can be especially problematic when colleagues start to criticise their fellow actors (e.g. "give unrequested feedback") or develop a hostile relationship with a colleague. Lastly, Participant 3 spoke about her frustration that performers, especially young performers, are often exposed to the will of others - to those with more power or status - taking advantage:

> [One difficult side of being an actress is dealing with] the business side of being a performer - like you are a business and how to balance those "books" and how to know your worth. Because you just learn the actual content of how to be a good dancer, how to be a good actor or whatever it might be. So yeah, it's sort of a bit of an infestation of people taking advantage of people and being taken advantage of. It gets on my nerves. (Participant 3)

Fragile support network

In terms of relationships, participants raised that the biggest problems they face is building connections with colleagues and dealing with personal relationships who are not part of the profession. This is reflected in problems of partners who lack in understanding and trust especially when intimate scenes with colleagues are required. Often, actors are troubled by guilt over letting loved ones down as the acting career is prioritised. The career often makes them feel lonely, but at the same time they do feel unhappy without acting which provokes feelings of being stuck. Participant 2 said the following about romantic relationships:

> [Often partners claim to accept intimacy on stage outside the relationship,] but then the reality hits and … they're not able to get over that in that academic threshold … and then the relationship breaks down. … That puts an added strain on you as the actor, because then you have to start questioning yourself. Questioning whether there is a way that you can approach the work [in a way] that … is able to placate both the work and your relationships, your personal relationships, and then that starts to become detrimental, because then your work suffers and then you stop telling the truth. (Participant 2)

Participant 6 spoke about this in relation to family:

> [While being very supportive of my acting career, my family] couldn't understand how I could [prioritise acting over them at times. On one occasion, I had to go to a rehearsal for a show [instead of going to an important family event]. … But just like any normal job you wouldn't ask a doctor … not to go to the hospital on Sunday. … So why do we think that acting is so different? It's not taken seriously. We have to be the first to treat this job [as a] job, because if we don't, then how can we pretend that other people do? (Participant 6)

Psychological difficulties

Participants commonly spoke about psychological difficulties connected with their work, such as mental health struggles and a sense of exhaustion. Among the topics that were mentioned by participants are a sensation that being an actor meant one was a "vehicle for art". Choosing this profession comes with

a pervasive "doubt of being good enough" due to "constant rejections" resulting in a sense of "sacrifice", "damaged self-esteem" and "loneliness". As a result, many actors arrive at a point where they see themselves faced with the265uestionn of whether they would be better off leaving the profession. Participant 8 made this same point:

> I think one of the biggest frustrations for me is the [not belonging.] … [D]edicating [a] portion of my life to making myself a vehicle for art, for storytelling … that's been my passion … and I'm not in control of that because it's a casting director or director or producer that is going to say yes or no. […] All of the stuff that is completely outside of my control. [The h]ardest thing to do is relinquish needs to be able to control something. There have been definitely times in the journey where I felt I'm not in control of anything. I'm just free flowing and praying that someone is going to give me a chance. (Participant 8)

Coping strategies and resilience

While every actor that enters the profession must face the above-mentioned difficulties, every individual finds a unique way of dealing with them. Speaking to participants it became clear that actors often develop coping strategies to handle adversities. The themes that emerged from these discussions can be divided into four sub-categories: building internal strength, prioritising needs and wellbeing, external support and regulating thoughts. These themes are linked with resilience.

Building internal strength

Participants presented different approaches to cope with adversity and how to approach the work. For instance, it was mentioned by Participant 4 that "establishing a healthy routine" was incredibly important, which would give structure to the life in the absence of work. Participant 8 mentioned this as well:

> When I first started in acting, I never even heard of [mental health] as being something to look after […] At all! Only in the last four years – five years maybe. And it was all a bit too late then, really. I mean, now it's good, I do practice stuff. I've got my little daily

Headspace meditation, for 10 minutes when I get up in the morning. And I've got [a] book which is just a quote and half-a-page, something to meditate on throughout the day, which is really nice. Being a bit healthier in terms of going running and realising the importance of being outdoors in nature [...] But trying to go to one of the nice parks and get a bit of green and a bit of vitamin D. I think that's really, really important! (Participant 8)

When these pillars, that help sustain an overall sense of wellbeing are removed, exhaustion and burn-out are the consequences. Participants mentioned that the longer they worked within the industry the less they were able to cope and adapt to change.

Prioritising needs and wellbeing

Alongside this, it was said that "creating space for themselves and their needs" besides work, created a possibility for recovery from stress. For example, Participants 1 and 2 mentioned that for them it was beneficial to speak to friends about problematic feelings in order to process them. Participant 6 emphasised her need to be alone for a while after dealing with the character to create a space to learn about her own emotions alongside those of the character. This is explored with a great deal of insight in this extract:

[You have to] learn about your feelings, your emotions and yourself, if you want to play a character nicely and not in a superficial way. (Participant 6)

Actors had to give themselves time to create this this space for reflections. Some relied on others to cope or used acting as an externalisation of their own problems (i.e. a space in which to work through their own problems). This can be seen in the words of Participant 7:

[When speaking about work problems] I have to be careful, not [to] overburden [my family]. I may occasionally ring a friend or try somebody else in the cast. I have never gone to the union for help. In many ways, I wish a lot more people would. (Participant 7)

External support and regulating thoughts

Participants saw acting as their priority but recognised the necessity to "establish alternatives" that would create a stable base in their lives. Participants spoke specifically about a second job that would yield a monthly income to pay rent and other expenses. However, the value of supportive friendships, family, and peers should not be underestimated. In fact, it was mentioned by all participants that "having people to remind you of your worth", "who ground and support you" helped to maintain a sane working basis. Participant 6 mentioned this:

> [A]nother thing that I think is really important, we [should] teach actors and actresses is to have a great relationships with friends and family. Because when one day a character will be too difficult for you to play and you are going to have to take a break from acting and your family and your friends will be there for you, not your fans. (Participant 6)

Lastly, Participant 3 mentioned that when facing rejection, it was helpful to maintain a positive mindset (e.g. "One 'no' is one step closer to a yes"). Furthermore, to be successful, participants deemed it important to believe in one's skills, in addition to hard work and luck. Accordingly, participants with a better capacity to manage their own expectations and hopes had better chances of dealing with difficulties. Participant 8 put it like this:

> I managed very badly at the start. Sometimes to be honest I struggle now, especially if I get very close to a role and I don't get it. Because what happens is, you start thinking about what that can enable you to do. So, if you are going to get a good role in a TV series or something, it's like OK: 'This could lead to more work. This is a really good amount of money. This means I'll be able to pay off this credit card. It means you know. I can put X amount toward the deposit on a house, … .' And if you get really close to it and they only drop you very close to the start date of when you're meant to be filming. … [Y]ou sort of pray and hope and you try and be optimistic about it … and if it doesn't happen you feel even worse. (Participant 6)

In addition to that, reminding yourself of your passion for the work and approaching each audition remembering to enjoy the acting itself helps to sustain the work in the long run.

Year 2

During the first round of interviews actors started to provide their own definition of resilience (see theme 1) when asked whether they considered themselves as resilient. Naturally not all actors shared this without being asked directly. Therefore, actors were given this specific question during the follow-up interviews to gather a concrete and more detailed understanding of how actors defined resilience for themselves in relation to acting. The results are presented within the following themes.

1.37 The past year

1.37.1 The impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic

The following discussion outlines the impact of the Covid-10 Pandemic on actors in three themes. While many of the difficulties were already present prior to the pandemic, it is clear that the global pandemic exacerbated these problems.

1.37.2 The negative

Figure 17: The negative

The negative

| Anxieties about Covid-19 | Loss of work | Financial strain |
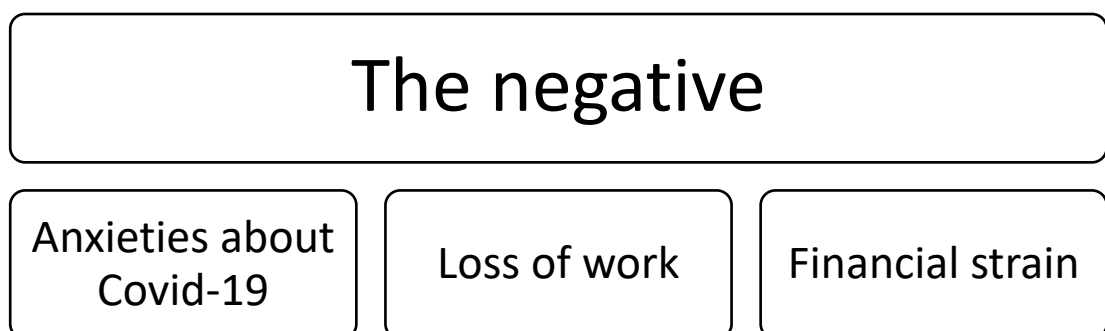
Anxieties about Covid

The Covid-19 Pandemic presented specific struggles for participants. For some, this involved taking on additional caring responsibilities and juggling the resulting demands on their time and attention with work. This made it difficult for them to focus on much outside of their home environment. Similarly, some participants reported a level of personal strain caused by the limited availability of performing work. This exacerbated a feeling of helplessness in the face of the global pandemic. Participant 4 described how she felt in the following way:

> Last year just has been a fight for survival. I just have not had the motivation to do anything. (Participant 4)

Many relied on partners or family members with a stable income when between jobs. Even when employment was secured, it was often nevertheless a stressful experience accompanied by a generalised anxiety about contracting the virus.

> There has been background anxiety about whether I am being contaminated and also the fact that my contract is pressuring me [to continue working, despite the risks]. The general advice used to be not to do a test, because if I test positive there is no cover. … So, we are sort of renegotiating our power relationships and everybody is pretending to be more powerful than they are. Nobody really has much power. (Participant 7)

Loss of work

The experiences shared by Participants 4 and 7 are representative of difficulties encountered by many of the performers who worked during Covid-19. All participants in this study lost work because of the pandemic. This includes cancelled theatre work because of social distancing rules, postponed film shootings abroad because of travel restrictions and crew changes due to restricted numbers of actors on set (e.g. one participants' character was shot as a silhouette). While there was a push for projects to be produced after the lockdowns were lifted, Participants 7 and 8 suggested that it would take a couple of years for the acting industry to recover from this extended shut-down. Participant 8 said:

> I think there has been a backlog of projects that had already been cast before the pandemic. So, there is a resurgence where they had everything ready to go, they were just waiting for the green light and everything to be safe enough. So, I think that is part of why there is not a huge amount of work out there. And agents probably rather you go and do dailies on TV or play theatre for Equity minimum wage. … But [not everyone can afford] to do that. (Participant 8)

There was a consensus among participants that the nature of work changed little following the pandemic – work just became more difficult to find.

Participant 6 said:

> This [job] is hard, but I can do it. I'm strong, I can do it. But … I wish I wouldn't have to … to take all these rejections and all these insults and all this fatigue in this job. I wish it was easier. (Participant 6)

Participant 5 continued:

> And that feeling of: Oh my God, I'll never work again. (Participant 5)

Interview data revealed that actors describe a constant 'waiting game' when awaiting work, as well as needing to battle rejections and hoping for another job to materialise. Participant 3 shared that this makes it impossible to plan; to see whether your work is good; and plan how to achieve your goals. The hopelessness of the situation combined with general pandemic related difficulties led to a mixture of negative feelings, such as demoralisation, deep-seated exhaustion, and frustration.

Financial strain

The already precarious financial situation of many performers got even worse during the pandemic because of an absence of work and an absence of government support. Many of the participants just felt forgotten and said that this type of job was not seen as a "real job" (Participant 6) by the government. Up to £600 was promised to performers but most participants did not receive that support. Instead, many of the participants relied on the support of third

parties (e.g. "parents" and "supportive partners") to get them through periods without work.

To maintain a high level of skill, professional performers took on unpaid work to continue practicing. Participant 6 observed that barely any paid jobs were available during Covid. This meant she had to take on unpaid amateur productions in order to get practice:

> I have to say in the past couple of years the shows where they
> paid me - maybe 10 jobs where they paid me. (Participant 6)

Others were more fortunate which was influenced also by their geographical location (i.e. living and working in a capital city in comparison to more rural placed). But often even that is not enough. Participant 5, for example, despite being offered a big role with a secure income, was not offered enough monetary compensation to be self-sufficient.

> I still live at my family's home, a big goal of mine has been to
> move out and potentially move abroad. … The money I've earned
> from this movie it's good money, but I'm one who likes to pay off
> other things first [like credit cards, bills, new head shot photos]
> and… it's just all these other complications. (Participant 5)

Participants stated that it was difficult to earn enough money to stay self-employed and pay all the required items needed like headshots and showreels. Participant 2 emphasised "acting does not allow you to live a good life with others"; it takes up too much time and does not allow one to progress much. It was described by Participant 2 as a selfish, "masturbatory" profession, and this realisation led him to change career.

1.37.3 The positive

Figure 18: The positive

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│                                                             │
│                      The positive                           │
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└─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┘

┌──────────────────┐  ┌──────────────────┐  ┌──────────────────┐
│   Success or     │  │  Connecting and  │  │  Mindset shift   │
│   Retraining     │  │   Networking     │  │   and Coping     │
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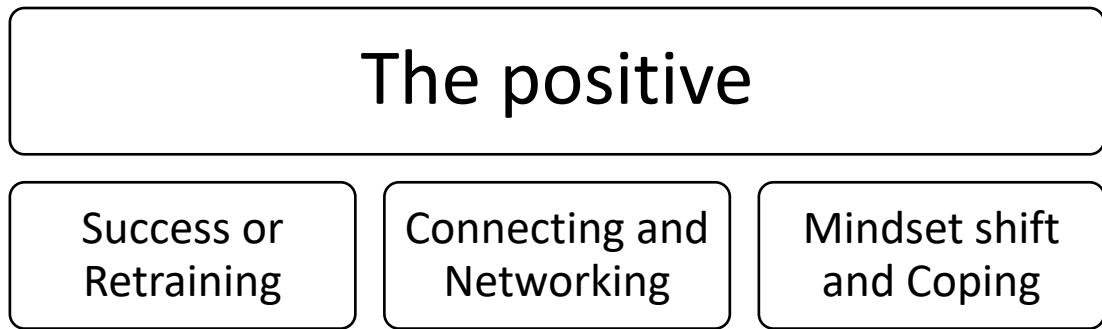
Success or Retraining

Previously, acting had played a central part in the lives of most of the participants. During the pandemic, however, there was a general shift in importance from acting towards other things. In addition, the financial strain made it necessary to find other sources of income. Participants also realised that there were more interesting or important aspects to life than acting. Nevertheless, several participants reported that acting still had a place in their lives, such as Participant 8 who said, "it is still integral", but the pandemic had forced them to broaden their horizons.

Participant 1 said:

> I don't think it [acting] is the most important thing in the world. It's not that important. I know it is important, but I would quite like to be a [new chosen profession]. (Participant 1)

Because of the lack of available work almost all the participants considered or started re-training in another profession. Some participants completely changed profession and took up work outside the performance industry, while others simply switched to another profession in the performing arts (e.g. directing and teaching drama). Participant 8 made a conscious decision when entering another profession that he would expand his skill and repertoire and therefore make himself more employable.

> [I chose this profession because it] could be beneficial to me as an experience (as in skill building). I think part of me joining [this profession] in a way was also because I also get a lot of

breakdowns for [these] roles so to be like, well, I am [this role also outside acting], so you can't take that away from me. (Participant 8)

Some participants did not mention changing jobs, most likely because these had previously had careers in different fields and could fall back on these. Participant 3 was the only participant who did not talk about changing profession; instead, she pursued intensive training in acting during the pandemic.

Connecting and networking

Alongside this, actors reported a shift in the importance given to connecting and nurturing relationships with important others. This included a focus on connecting with others on a personal as well as professional level. For example, participants spoke about reconnecting with family members, getting married with significant others and the importance of supportive relationships. In regard to their professional work, connections established before the pandemic were vital for getting and maintaining work during the pandemic. Participants 6, 7 and 8 shared that what had been most helpful on a professional level over the past year was having good professional contacts and keeping these contacts alive. Participant 8 described it as follows:

The things that have helped me are the people that I've met, in [the sense] the contacts that I've made and [who have been] giving me repeated work and championing me, I would say. (Participant 8)

Mindset shift and Coping

The difficult circumstances explored above led many participants to re-evaluate their priorities in life. In contrast to the lockdowns in autumn and winter, the first lockdown was experienced by most of the participants as a "slowing down" (Participant 3) and a "time of reassessment" (Participant 2) which was mostly welcomed at the time.

> I've really enjoyed it just personally because it gave me a chance to slow down to do all those things that are on that "To Do List" and never get done. And I didn't feel that external [pressure] which is possibly non-existent; that pressure to be working, to be achieving, to be succeeding, to be doing things, being a successful performer and human being because nobody was doing anything, like my industry was closed so I didn't have that guilt. I just spent all my time training. (Participant 3)

This does not erase the difficulties experienced by participants throughout the second half of 2020 and 2021. Participants were able to adapt and learn from the difficulties and shared what helped them over the past year.

Participant 3 held that it was important to her to "validate emotions" during these difficult times and allow herself to feel them. Participant 4 expanded by saying that "being more reflective about myself and others helped me not to spiral out of control". Participant 6 saw herself as being "more realistic". Participant 8 stated "it has been a process of letting go … I don't care that much anymore if I don't get a role", and Participant 7 said that the difficult life circumstances had helped him to "improve his optimism". Participant 3 added another interesting point by stating that "taking responsibility is important [and] choosing not to be the target of bad treatment or misfortune but focusing on myself". The slowing down in combination with facing challenges led to shifts in participants' mindsets. Participant 6 described this shift very eloquently:

> I used to think that I had to become an actress before being 25; then before being 30 years old; life was short, and I have to do things now; that I have to save money because the future never knows what holds. So, I have to be careful, and I have to work hard and do a lot of things because there's little opportunity. [Then I realised] life is actually really, really long and it doesn't make sense to live in this world without enjoying the things that I have in life; and just because I have to save. I am privileged in my life because I, at least, have a mom and dad that always loved me; always support me in any way … So, I have to learn to appreciate a lot of stuff and so I'm trying to enjoy life a little bit more. (Participant 6)

1.37.4 Resilience

Figure 19: What is resilience?

What is resilience?

| Being flexible and not dependent on the external | Being resourceful despite difficulty | Reflecting about experiences leading to growth | A sense of pursuit despite challenges and criticism | Remaining positive despite difficulty |
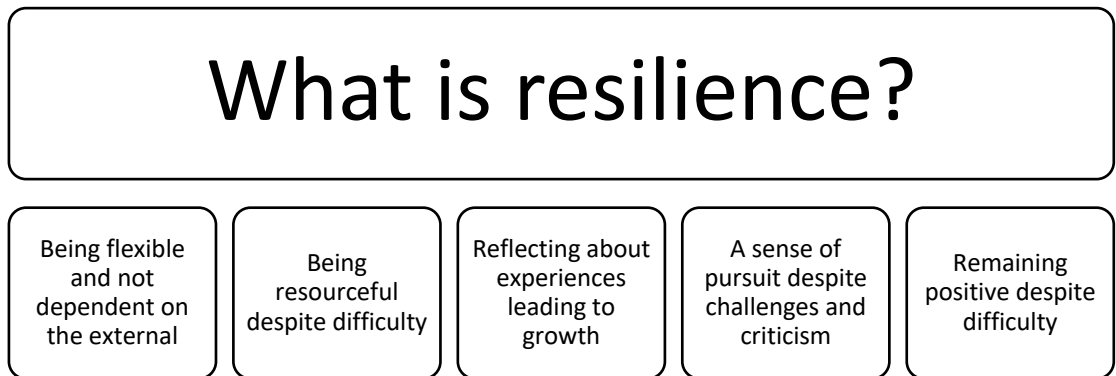
1.37.5 What is resilience?

One of the main aims of this study was to explore whether resilience in actors helps them to carry out their work. Starting from early 2020, the world has been faced with challenges that no one could have predicted. Due to this unexpected period of difficulty, it was important to gather how participants conceptualised resilience after having gone through a sustained period of significant difficulty. Participants were therefore asked about their opinions on resilience after having lived through the pandemic.

Participants described resilience in five different ways: being flexible and not dependent on the external; being resourceful despite difficulty; reflecting on experiences leading to growth; a sense of pursuit (wish to keep striving) despite challenges and criticism; and remaining positive despite difficulty. These descriptions reflected both their personal experiences during the pandemic as well as their professional ones. Each definition will be presented in more detail, in the following paragraphs.

Being flexible and not dependent on the external

The first word, that participants connected to resilience was 'flexibility'. Flexibility, to them, meant being flexible with one's choices and not making success dependent on external circumstances, such as obtaining work.

At the time the interviews were conducted, few acting jobs were available. Hence, participants said it was essential to think outside of the box, pursuing alternative careers or different jobs within the creative sector. While working creatively is not the same as acting, it secured work and a stable income in times of difficulty. Through a flexible approach to work, both Participant 7 and Participant 1 found ways to use their creative skills for work outside the performance industry (e.g. at children's parties or open storytelling). Several other creative professions that required limited or no physical contact, such as recording audiobooks, writing plays, teaching and directing, were pursued by Participant 2, Participant 3, Participant 6, Participant 7 and Participant 8. Participant 6 shared that it gave her the opportunity to try a skill she never found the time to exercise previously. Participants stated that it was important to not make oneself dependent on the external and to look beyond the usual to make oneself more employable. Participant 8 spoke about his experiences:

> You have to be a bit careful because you have to be flexible. It's not about putting the blinkers on and just doggedly following blindly this one ambition [e.g. acting for screen] where other things could be open to you within the industry. Not taking these opportunities because you only want to be a film star …. Theatre is a very, very viable pathway into creative success. I'm not talking about acting success in film and TV, but creative success. And if you want to be a performer it doesn't matter whether it's on film, TV, theatre, radio. I think you have to balance resilience with flexibility. (Participant 8)

Flexibility, however, has its limits when it encounters issues with feasibility. For example, work on Zoom was not popular among the participants in this study. This was mostly because of difficulties establishing an appropriate connection with fellow actors online. In addition, Participant 7 shared that working on Zoom as an actor was exhausting, unnatural and disadvantageous for his mental health.

Being resourceful despite difficulty

Participants spoke about resourcefulness in connection to resilience. Being resourceful, as described by participants, encompasses the ability to provide

for oneself personally and professionally, and to find and adopt alternatives if necessary.

Participants spoke about resourcefulness in relation to their jobs but also in their personal lives. When speaking about their creative careers, participants spoke a lot about having to be resourceful for their creative work. By this, they meant that to work in the creative sector, one must establish supportive pillars that will allow you to pursue this career. Most of the participants either had help from their family and/or partners to help them through periods of unemployment; or they found other work in-between acting jobs to support themselves. Participant 8 mentioned that in the previous year he chose not to live in paid accommodation to allow him to devote the necessary time to the acting craft. This example is presented to show how participants thought about the need to find alternatives where acting work was not forthcoming; alternatives that allowed them to maintain a good and stable quality of life despite difficulty. Participant 7, spoke about these influences in his life.

> I must be thinking about more stuff at once, so I must be coming up with more ideas; I must be responsive to more influences, so I must be doing better work. (Participant 7)

Many of the participants in this study also used the pandemic as a time for skill building or for training in a profession other than acting. Several found ways to use their creative skills in other professions and make use of new skills acquired in other profession, for their creative work.

Reflecting about experiences leading to growth

Resilience was also linked to the ability to reflect upon oneself; to learn from one's mistakes, and consequently to keep growing personally. Participants said that to be resilient, one also needs to have personal insight into one's experiences. To deal with countless rejections that are common in the creative profession, actors must reflect on the setbacks and evaluate which feedback to take on board and what to put behind. Participant 3 explicitly spoke about her experiences as an actress and what she thinks about feedback:

> If you don't reflect, you are not able to do something better or do something differently. I assume you just keep doing the same. … I like that because only then you can move forward and be better. (Participant 3)

Interview data revealed that participants often seem to equate resilience with career longevity and employability. This is not surprising, since for most actors a measure of strength is remaining in the business despite difficulty. "Career longevity" seems to be the best measure for career success. Thus, a capacity to reflect, learn and grow from one's mistakes is essential. It eventually will make actors more employable.

A sense of pursuit despite challenges and criticism

Participants spoke about resilience in relation to continuing to pursue chosen objectives or goals despite difficulty. With that, participants referred to many challenges and adversities that they have gone through throughout their career. The objective or goal for many actors is to remain in the creative profession and for that they must overcome a lot of barriers. This includes rejections after auditions, financial struggles, difficult work environments, lack of industry connections and so forth. And participants said it was important to keep goals in mind despite these difficulties. Participant 8 phrased it as follows:

> I would say resilience for me is pursuing a chosen objective or goal despite challenges and adversity and being able to overcome the challenges and the adversities. While still having your perspective on your goal and not letting it change it. (Participant 8)

Another barrier to continued success in acting, that participants cited, is self-doubt. Frequent rejections often have an impact on actors' self-esteem (Participants 1, 6 and 7 reported this during interview 1). This contributed to feelings of failure and a worrying impulse to compare oneself to colleagues who may get fewer rejections or who at least handle rejections better. Resilience, then, includes persistently pursuing one's own goals and choices despite the challenges, recognising that hard work is needed to build success and not expecting to simply receive a role outright. Participant 7 explained it like this:

> [Resilience] is to be less worried about what others are thinking of the failure. So, stop trying to look at yourself and I think that sort of comes out right. (Participant 7)

Participants also reflected on the shift of expectations that one has at the beginning of one's career compared to later stages of one's career. Often, participants enter the profession with a sort of naivety about what to expect. Firstly, participants stated that "acting schools were not preparing them enough for the business sides of acting" (Participant 4). There are warnings that competition is tough, but words of warning can never replace personal experience and, therefore, actors often learn after having entered the profession what it takes to be successful in it. Participant 5 described this as a "recalibration of expectations". Initially, one may feel very distressed about not getting roles, but this should not stop one from trying again. With each rejection it gets easier. You may even develop strategies, such as Participant 8, to not get too "hung up" on securing a particular role. Actors reported ripping the script apart and throwing it into the bin after finishing an audition tape to avoid going back to it or being reminded of it when seeing it again. It also allows them to create a distance from the pursued goal. Participant 8 reminds us of this:

> I think resilience has a major impact on the actor's longevity in the industry. You hear stories all the time of actors who have had a year or even two years where they have nothing [no acting jobs]; no luck on their side. I think that's part of the industry … teaching that I have to [have] resilience and persistence. People starting their careers need to understand that this is an important aspect of being an actor; the work is being resilient. (Participant 8)

Remaining positive despite difficulty

Lastly, participants linked resilience to a mindset shift - as explored above in the section on Mindset. Closely linked to what has been explored in the section above on "recalibration of expectations", participants spoke about the need to perceive difficulty with more optimism. Participants emphasised that approaching life and work with a more positive mindset helped them to better deal with difficulties. The important difference between these two is that with "recalibration of expectations" participants learnt about the nature of the

industry and what to expect. This should be differentiated from the theme on mindset, as this pertains to a change in participants' way of looking at the world. It is more about shifting one's attitude than learning about external conditions. Participant 6 shared a fitting example:

> I think it's being able to always view your life, your job and your experience in a positive way, which is very difficult, especially in acting. Because, if you get rejected during an audition, the first thing you do is cry yourself to sleep. That's not going to be helpful [though]. I'm not saying that you are not supposed to cry or feel sad. It's normal. But at the same time, you have to learn that it's just a rejection and that's fine. Maybe next time you're going to get the part. You have to learn this mentality at the beginning. (Participant 6)

1.38 Conclusion

This analysis presented six themes with several sub-themes. These themes were split into three categories covering three different topics: resilience, one year later, resilience in the light of actors. The first topic focused on describing resilience, the second established how participants coped after one year giving them complete freedom to express their thoughts, and the third topic made further enquiries into participants understanding of resilience.

Resilience

Resilience was discussed briefly and the discovery of two themes at baseline was the result. Participants were asked about the perceived relevance of resilience for their work during year one.

Actors described the relevance of resilience for their profession in the following way which was different to the definition of resilience as 'an ability to bounce back from adversity'. For actors, it was important to nurture the ability: (i) to be flexible; (ii) to be adaptable; (iii) to be strong; and (iv) to be resourceful. While the ability to deal with adversity still reflects the underlying narrative it focuses

more on how to deal with adversity. Participants held that these "abilities" were vital to surviving in a harsh industry presenting many challenges.

Challenges

Among the challenges that actors reported were the following: artistic, business, interpersonal and psychological difficulties and resilience apparently helped actors to deal with those challenges.

Artistic difficulties

On an artistic level, actors often describe difficulty handling the emotional experiences involved in playing the character (e.g., working through traumatic content such as rape, loss and murder). Participants said that it helped them to guide the identification process with the character (i.e., maintaining boundaries) and at times the fictional world presented a welcomed refuge for some from the real world (e.g. "I am not happy, if I am not acting").

Business difficulties

In regard to business difficulties, actors spoke extensively about the major role that instability played in their lives due to waiting for work, not being financially remunerated and adapting to the unordinary work patterns (e.g., phases of intense work followed by unemployment, touring, etc). Large proportions of their lives are spent managing this instability. Competition presented another issue, in that limited job availability, narrow role choices and the lack of business skills or professional connections were factors actors had to manage for career success.

Interpersonal difficulties

Handling interpersonal difficulties was also relevant for actors in that they had to: (i) deal with problematic interpersonal behaviour by co-workers; (ii) often lack proper support networks due to absence, short-lived employment or unsocial working hours preventing them from curating friendships; (iii) having to nurture relationship solely to maintain industry connections and establish

an appropriate professional network; (iv) being dependent or submitted to judgment by others and being taken advantage of.

Psychological difficulties

Actors also spoke about having to deal with mental health difficulties and exhaustion. This manifested in the sensation that being an actor meant that one was only "a vehicle for art". Pursuing this profession resulted in several challenges that had to be accepted, such as (i) facing constant rejections; (ii) a permanent, pervasive questioning whether one was good enough; (iii) a sense of sacrifice; (iv) a damaged self-esteem; (v) and loneliness.

Coping strategies

To deal with these difficulties, participants had developed a series of coping mechanisms which they shared willingly. Some actors managed to carve out time to establish healthy routines (i.e., eating healthily, maintaining a constant sleep schedule, meditating, etc.) which reflected an attempt to build internal strength. Effort was made as well to prioritise needs and wellbeing by working on creating space for themselves as well as their needs, such as speaking up about problems, making time for their friends and self-care. Lastly, emphasis was placed on establishing external support and increasing well-regulated thinking by: (i) focusing on people who had a grounding effect; (ii) having people to remind one of one's worth; (iii) finding alternative incomes streams or asking for support from parents and friends; (iv) and regulating one's thoughts and keeping a positive mindset in the face of criticism and rejections.

One year later

The follow-up interviews focused on assessing how participants were holding up after a very challenging year. Therefore, participants were offered time to describe how they perceived life one year later. This did not directly answer the pre-determined research questions but given the pandemic and its connections to wellbeing, it was pertinent to investigate these difficulties and allow participants to express their views before speaking about their resilience.

They also provided insights into the mental wellbeing of actors and how challenges have affected their professional work. Topics that were reported during this phase included: anxieties about Covid-19, loss of work, financial strain, success, or retraining, connecting and mindset shifts. The study period autumn / winter 2021 to autumn / winter 2022 coincided with an eventful year, a pandemic as well as several lockdowns. As a result, participants had a lot to report: positive as well as negative events.

The negative

Many spoke about loss, specifically in regard to loss of work. Loss was often mixed with anxieties about Covid-19, in terms of having to choose whether to earn money and risking contracting the virus or staying at home. This loss of work resulted in significant financial strain.

The positive

But for many, this upheaval did not mean that life stagnated. On the contrary, almost every participant reported significant changes in their lives. Potentially, this was because this population was forced to adapt financially speaking and had to find other sources of income. According to the reports from participants in this study, they were not supported by the furlough scheme, and it forced them to "broaden their horizons", so many changed jobs.

These changes, however, were not restricted to their professional work but were also reflected in their relationships with others and themselves. Several participants reported that acting was not as integral as before. Participants became more aware of personal relationships and how beneficial they were for them. More importance was given to connecting and nurturing relationship with loved ones as well as maintaining professional connections that could refer work via word of mouth. Overall, these changes were accompanied by a change of mindset and a re-evaluating of priorities in life. Participants focused on slowing down and reassessing their lives. They spent time on (i) validating emotions; (ii) thinking more reflectively about themselves and the world; (iii) focusing on seeing the world more realistically; (iv) engaging in a process of letting go; (v) taking responsibility and (vi) viewing the world more positively.

Resilience

Besides this, the concept of resilience was discussed with participants. While participants clarified during the first year why resilience may be important within their profession, they were asked during the follow-up analysis what it meant to them to be resilient. This came from the reflection that it may not be right to simply apply a general, theoretical concept to a specific population like actors but rather let actors explore how they would describe resilience.

As many definitions have been established to describe resilience, it was hard to simply adopt terminology from the field of psychology and psychoanalysis to a new field of research. Therefore, participants were asked about their definition of resilience. Participants described being resilient the following way: (i) being flexible and not dependent on the external (e.g. taking jobs outside your comfort zone); (ii) being resourceful despite difficulty (e.g. finding other sources of income); (iii) reflecting about experiences leading to growth (e.g. to reflect on and evaluate feedback); (iv) a sense of pursuit despite challenges and criticism (e.g. holding objectives in mind and not letting adversity divert these); and (v) remaining positive despite difficulty (e.g. a recalibration of expectations). These experiences related both to personal as well as professional experiences.

This concludes the presentation of the qualitative data analysis and represents the end of phase four.

Chapter 6 - Discussion and Conclusion

Chapter 6 discusses the finding of this project in line with the research questions: a) What is the creative work of the actor and b) What role does resilience play in enabling the actor to do this work? The discussion will focus first on addressing the actor's creative work providing a helpful conceptual framework for the discussion of resilience. This will be discussed alongside the findings of the literature review and put into context with reference to the literature.

1.39 What is the aesthetic work of the actor?

This study found that the creative, preparatory work of actors can be divided into sequential phases and the combination of these form 'the creative arc'. The work normally starts when the actor receives a script and ends with completion of a play, show, film, or TV production. The arc, as proposed in this study, represents a conceptual framework that describes all stages in-between these two time-points. The stages of the arc, preparation, pre-performance, performance, post-performance are based on the Thematic Analysis of the interviews with participants in Phase II and IV. In addition, this study identified actor's capacities to use imagination, empathy, perspective taking and arousal[33] to create characters and to act. Different creative stages require different capacities. Below, these findings will be discussed under the light of existing literature on the acting process.

1.39.1 Literature

This project explored the creative process of acting. It is commonly accepted that to portray a character convincingly, an actor must 'take on' that character

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[33] The term arousal was chosen based on participants' words and the discussion presented within the literature review on peak performance. In my writing I intend that the term arousal be interpreted as 'maintaining an optimal level of arousal'. Harnessing high levels of energy is needed to perform successfully, while negative consequences may occur where arousal turns into anxiety.

for a period of time. Chapter 1 provided insights into the mechanisms of this identification.

Classic psychoanalysis described acting and artistic creation as a form of sublimation (Freud, 1908); a process whereby internal conflicts are worked through, and they manifest externally as a work of art instead of a pathological symptom. In the book on jokes, Freud (1905c) elaborates that the interplay between psychic energies is essential for creativity. Primary processes allows the artists to create by using condensation (a mixing of different ideas) and displacement (the displacing of ideas / emotions onto something else). Secondary processes then help the artist to reintegrate ideas that had been exposed to the primary processes. Contemporary British psychoanalysis (Glover, 2009) holds that creative work requires a level or psychic disintegration under the influence of psychic energies, which can then be reintegrated in another format. The understanding of these processes is one essential part of artistic creation.

Klein (1933), expanding on Freud's thinking, recognised that symbolism was the foundation of sublimation because through this, content is exposed to 'libidinal phantasies'. 'Symbolisation' (i.e. the ability to transform internal conflicts into an external symbol), therefore, is essential for creativity. Segal (1957) divided symbolisation into two forms – symbol equation and symbol representation. Depending on the artists ability to work through internal content, the external symbol becomes either an impression of the internal content or it can also become an equation of the same. Klein's (1929) thought that artistic creation involves psychological process typical for the depressive position, whereby the individual becomes capable of recognising others as whole objects with the potential of triggering ambivalent feelings and not just as parts that are either entirely good or bad as is the case in the paranoid schizoid position.

Segal (1952) held that it is the capacity of mourning which allow the artist to hold whole objects in mind and, therefore fosters the ability to re-build an object internally and externally. A connection between the artist and the

artwork (i.e. actor and character) is created through identification. Ron Britton (1999), held that it was by identification and projective identification that one obtains closeness with an object. Identification involves a psychological process whereby the individual assimilates parts of the other and thereby remodels parts of themselves accordingly (Segal, 1986). Projective identification, in comparison identification, is used to eject parts of the self that are unwanted into another. The former is more present within the depressive position and the latter within the paranoid schizoid position. Through this it was established that, symbolisation, identification and an ability to internally work through content are essential concepts for creativity.

Bion (1962) further developed Klein's concepts. He held that thoughts occurring in the paranoid-schizoid position are unprocessed sensory data (i.e., alpha function) that ought to be contained by an external object (i.e. mother/container) or by the individual. Containing it facilitated the processing of data and allowed its reintegration. This reintegration leads to thought processes typical for the depressive position. In adult life, he proposed that the individual oscillates between both positions; disintegration (e.g., paranoid-schizoid processes) is necessary for the reframing of thoughts and allows new concepts to be reintegrated (in the depressive position). Where the capacity to process and integrate this data fails, the links between mental contents remain broken. Therefore, one of Bion's (1962) most relevant contributions, which is also key to creativity, is the concept of the container-contained (i.e., mind and thought). The container which is built from infancy is the prototype of all thinking and creativity. It contains disintegrated thoughts and the oscillation between fragmentation and reintegration allows the artist (or actor) to create.

Milner (1950) added that creating art required a 'wider focus' that allowed artists to perceive the external with greater enrichment and meaning, grounded in a heightened body awareness and perception of reality. The connection to the external is accompanied by a sense of fluid boundaries between the self and the world (a subject-object union). Milner (1952) believed part of the external world is taken into the self; the skilled artist can work

through the accompanying difficulties and bring what was taken inside back into the external world. This state was dominated by a state of fusion, a loss of self and a loss of boundaries. Classic psychoanalysis would have seen a problematic manic state, Milner (1950) recognised its relevance for psychic creativity but added that a protective framework was required to contain this temporary state of disintegration and fusion.

Winnicott (1971) work on identification and play furthered Bion's understanding of the container by expanding on the relevance of the external environment on the capacity to think and process content in the individual. According to Winnicott (1971), during infancy babies are restricted to nonverbal communication and needs are communicated through nonverbal cues which the mother can interpret. A blending of boundaries between mother and baby (or an intense identification between mother and baby) facilitates this. This identification is subject to continuous individuation; the baby learns that it is a separate being to the mother and starts to slowly move away from the mother. For the first time, psychoanalysis recognises the external world having a direct influence on the internal world. Winnicott (1945) envision a third space (i.e. the transitional space) between mother and infant where the infant is introduced to play and the use of symbols. The transitional space allowed the mixing of external stimuli with normally inaccessible internal material forming new creations. Through the mother the infant learns to create and later in life the individual can enter this creative space also in the mother's absence. Winnicott presents children's play as an example where this can be observed. This makes Winnicott's contributions on play and the transitional space particularly relevant to this research.

Townsend (2019), a painter and psychoanalyst, described the creative process of artists as a trajectory. Her framework relies on the terminology used by artists rather than psychoanalysis and therefore provides a helpful reference for discussing the findings of the present research despite the focus on actors in this study. Townsend (2019) identified eleven phases in the artist's creative process: a State of Pre-sense; a Stage of Research, Preparation and Gestation period; a Moment that is filled with the Occurrence of an Idea; a

Period of Working with the Medium; the Artist's State of Mind; Art defined as Playing; Creativity in relation to Aggression and Destructiveness; Spaces and Frames in the Artists surrounding; the Artist's internal Frame; the State of the Separation of the Work of Art from the Artist; and Recurring Themes in Different Works of Art. The findings of this research show that similar stages can be identified during the actor's creative work.

Psychology uses different terminology to psychoanalysis to describe the creative process. They refer to cognitive, social and self-regulatory skills (Goldstein T. R., 2018) including use of empathy (Goldstein & Winner, 2012), perspective taking, and the deactivation of parts of the brain that are responsible for self-processing (Brown, Cockett, & Yuan, 2019). Cognitive psychologists discovered a set of relevant cognitive and social skills that actors require to work. Goldstein (2018) held that actors required: a) cognitive skills to understand scripts, characters and task related to acting; b) cognitive skills to differentiate between real and fiction, while holding the fictive reality in mind separate from the real world; c) high executive functions to understand the needs of the play and the needs of the self as a performer to switch between these; d) regulatory skills to regulate their emotions and behaviour and; e) complex mechanisms such as memory, language and an ability to lie. At a cognitive level, Noice and Noice (1991) also identified the abilities a) to cognitively explore the sub-text and complete an in-depth analysis of the script, alongside b) the capacity to engage with a state of actively experiencing and reacting as the character during rehearsal and the performance.

1.39.2 How can acting be conceptualised?

The creative frame that will be presented in the following incorporates the voices of actors and uses their views of acting to describe the creative process.

Figure 20: The creative arc and the actor

The creative arc and the actor

Six sequential phases

Establishing a connection

Working on the play

Becoming the character

Preparation and exploration

The Frame

Two tasks - One mind

The actor´s creativity

First inspiration

The Separation

**Three processes
taking place at the same time**
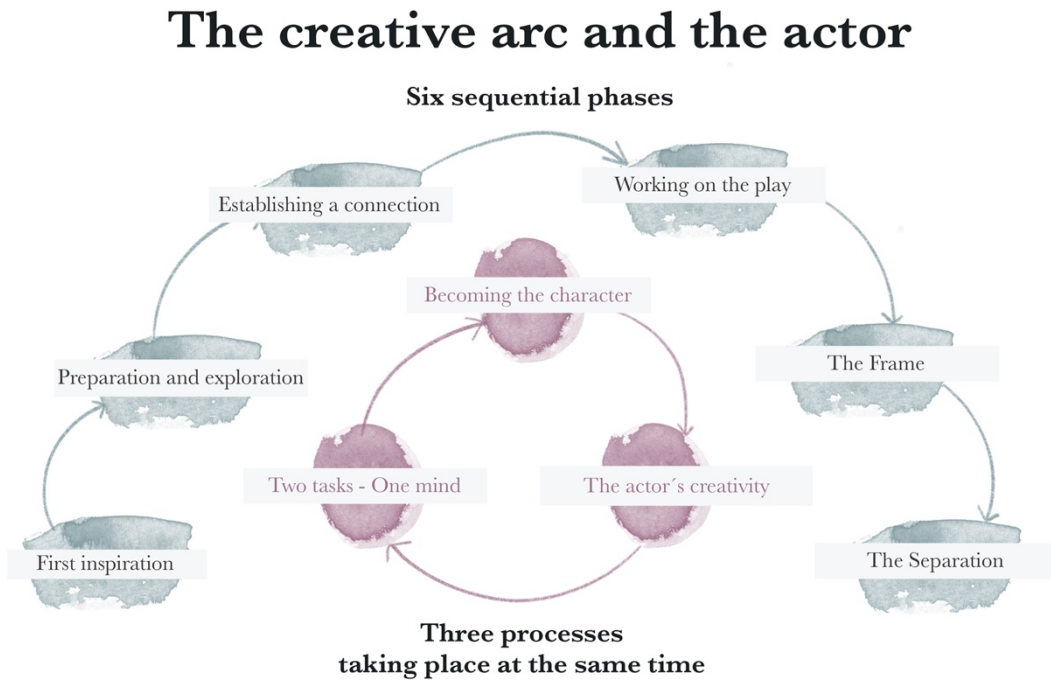
The six sequential phases

The actor's preparation period – the 'creative arc' – that has been described within this study contains eight components relevant to the performance: six practical phases describing the preparation (which could be summarised in three stages) and three components describing the nature of the actor's creative involvement (Figure 20).The practical phases refer to the preparatory work done by actors prior to the performance. They include an inspiration phase; a preparation and exploration phase; an establishing a connection to the work phase; a working on the play phase; the performance phase; and a phase of separating from the role. The other three components concern the actor's creative involvement in creating a character.

Figure 21: The creative arc and the practical phases of acting in detail
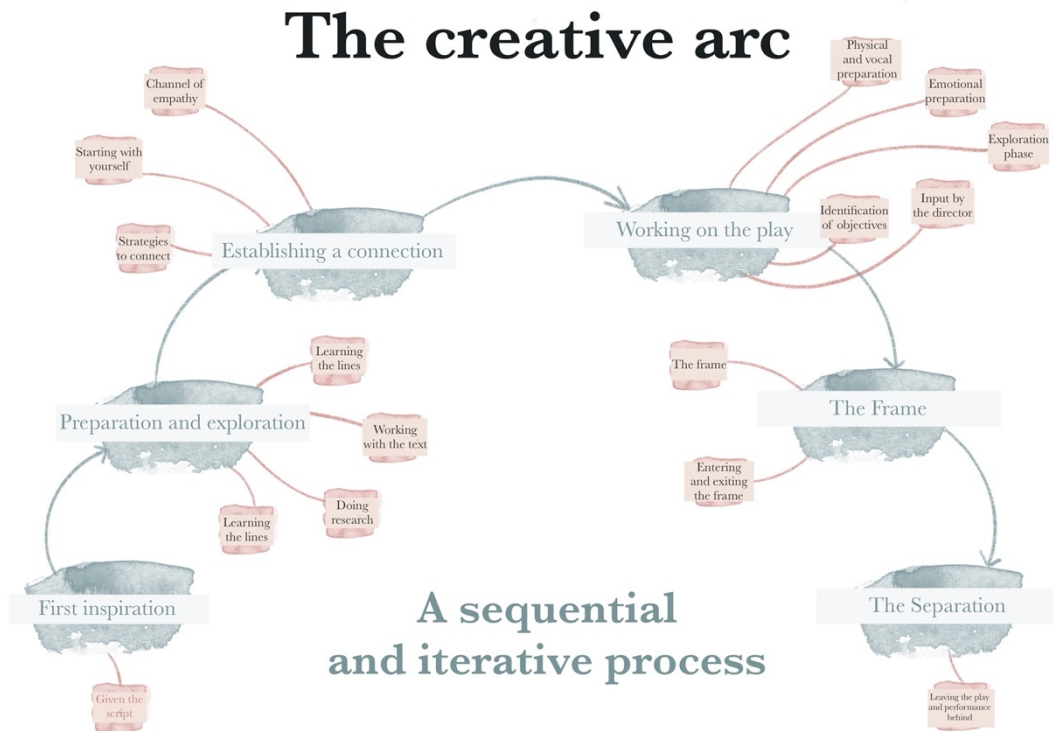
The first steps of the preparatory work of actors (Figure 21) are:

First inspiration

First, the actors are exposed to the material. For instance, the actor is sent the script and reads it at home. Normally actors read the script multiple times and analyse the text in-depth after having received it. This prompts an initial image of the character and the play in their mind. Therefore, this stage was named the **'first inspiration'** phase. It is usually characterised by the actor's first exposure to the material of the play, film, or TV series.

Townsend (2019) spoke about the relevance of this initial idea. Townsend described the emergence of an idea of the artwork as an initial intuition or intuitive 'hunch'. This could be understood as an inspirational exchange between the external and the imaginary; the artist is inspired by something external which spurs a creative internal impulse. The idea slowly becomes accessible by emerging from the unconscious to a pre-conscious state. When actors are exposed to the script and read about the character, a concrete

image of the character slowly emerges. Patricia Townsend (2019) would define the resonance of something external with something internal as the 'pre-sense'; a preliminary idea about a piece of work or a 'not yet clear image' of the work of art. Such a pre-sense may help the actor when reading a script for the first time and initiate the creative work in the actor's imagination. Through subsequent familiarisation with the character and the play the actor creates an image of the character in the mind.

While Townsend concept is helpful to discuss the creative ideas, the psychoanalytic interpretations lack depth as her worked focused on Winnicottian theory. Freud (1908) argued that creativity is the external manifestation of an internal conflict; a conflict that was worked through and therefore, could be expressed externally in a creative form. Glover (2009) discussed that creative work is the result of an interplay between primary and secondary processes whereby psychic energies spur a structured psychic disintegration and push for psychic reintegration which manifests in the form of the artwork. Klein's (1929) writing about the paranoid-schizoid position as well as the depressive position, become helpful to understand these states of integration and disintegration. Bion (1962) held that throughout life the mind oscillates between integration and disintegration and working through disintegrative states leads to psychic growth, thinking and is the source of all creativity. If the creative person can reintegrate the disintegrated parts and is able to create an external representation of the internal conflict through 'symbol formation', as described by Segal (1957) and Klein (1933), the artist (or actor) has successfully worked through the internal conflict and expressed it externally in the form of an artwork.

Preparation and exploration

As the name suggests, during this phase, actors normally focus on exploring the material and are preparing on a cognitive level. A series of steps are taken to familiarise oneself with the play and the characters within it. For example, participants spoke about the relevance of doing research, discussing the play with colleagues, and learning lines. They also spoke about, reading about the

292

history, culture, and traditions of the play. This is all preparatory work. Actors also research the character, watch other actors perform the character they play and create a timeline (read about traditions of the time period) and background story for the character. This goes together with working on the script and picking out anything that needs further exploration, either alone or in rehearsal.

Noice and Noice (1991) observed that actors spend a lot of time on developing strategies for memory recall, analysing the script and conducting research. Goldstein (2019) held that actors require cognitive skills (e.g. memory recall and optimal memorising) to understand the script, to analyse the sub-text and to memorise the lines. Actors divide the script into segments (so-called beats) which aids memory retention. Participants shared that the intense engagement with the script marks the start of the 'period of preparation and exploration' which is initiated alone and carries on until the play has taken form (e.g. reading and analysing the script in rehearsal). At home actors prepare by analysing the script, memorising lines, and conducting research about the character and the play. During rehearsals the actor explores and makes notes about points requiring further investigation outside rehearsal. After rehearsal actors further explore these prompts. Not all discoveries are useful for the production, such as the background story, but preparation helps to build character depth. The script remains a central part throughout the rehearsal period.

While the stage of preparation and exploration is different for actors in that actors heavily work with the script and work towards preestablished aims, Townsend's (2019) conceptual framework describing the second stage of artistic creation may add further depth to the discussion. Townsend conceptualises the second stage as a phase of preparation, research, and gestation. During this phase the artist prepares the material, conducts research, and manages moments of frustration. This overlaps with Townsend's fourth phase ('the occurrence of an idea') describing the moment when an artist establishes a clear image of the artwork. For the artist this idea can establish itself either before or after having worked with the medium (e.g.

293

the artwork such as a painting) itself. Townsend's phases correspond to the 'preparation and exploration' phase identified in this study. It could be said that the actress medium is the script which she uses to create a character. Through this intense involvement with the script the actor creates an image of the play and the characters in her mind. The building blocks to build this internal world are found in the external world (such as the script and the result of intense research) as well as within the actress herself (creative ideas of the actress).

Establishing a connection

Over decades, actors have developed various strategies to connect to their work and this is where different acting methods often define the approach an actor takes to accomplish this task. Independent of the methodology used, actors often start by exploring themselves, trying to uncover through self-reflection who the character is and establish what it is going through on an emotional level. The actor seeks to recognize similarities and differences in the character's traits, finding common ground while identifying gaps in experiences or knowledge. Using empathy, they relate to aspects of the character and aim to find something that resonates with themselves; this establishes a connection between character and actor.

The "Establishing a connection" phase distinguishes from the "Preparation and exploration" phase in that the latter reflects the preparation on a cognitive level which is usually followed by preparation on an emotional level. These phases are interchangeable, meaning one can be done before the other or they can be done at the same time, but often actors prefer to follow a systematic approach as presented here. Usually, this preparatory work is done alone and then discussed or tested during rehearsal. This completes the initial preparation work on the play. Finding an emotional connection is usually one of the most difficult parts for the actor, especially if the character is very different from the self and/or comes from a different time period. Actors then help themselves by thinking about how this character feels daily and by comparing personal experiences to the characters experiences which helps

them to empathise with the character. Through this they can create an emotional template of the character in the mind.

Goldstein (2018) described acting as a combination of skill in theory of mind, empathy, and emotion regulation. She held that self-regulatory and social skills were of vital importance for the actor's work with empathy being the most important component of the actor's work. Goldstein saw empathy as an essential building block of character creation, as it allows the actors to get to know the character. Working on experiencing the emotions of the character helped actors to portray the emotions convincingly on stage. Goldstein's findings hold true according to the participants in this study. Empathy was seen as the most important factor to establish an emotional connection to the character. Oftentimes, actors make use of improvisation - acting out scenes which furthers their understanding of the character's personality (Noice and Noice, 1997). It is possibly at this stage that a clear idea of the character is shaped in the actor's mind.

A potential link between the "Establishing a connection" phase and symbol formation can be observed. The continuous exposure to the material allows the actor to ingest external content and transform it into a symbol along the lines of symbol formation Segal (1957) and Klein (1933). Both Freud (1906) and Segal (1952) wrote about the elaborate process of sublimation which artists practice when creating their works. Supposedly, the preparation and extensive work with the character serve to help actors successfully symbolise the content on a psychological level.

Working on the play

This phase encompasses the period of rehearsal where actors engage more intensely with the material by working on themselves physically, vocally, and emotionally to develop a character. Actors also work together with the director and their colleagues to identify and pursue important objectives within the play. Basically, the character is brought to life during this phase and is moulded into a three-dimensional personality. The earlier preparation informs this phase

and helps to form a multi-faceted character. The character's personality is established first and then brought to life through physical, vocal, and emotional efforts. This is how a theoretical concept comes to life during rehearsal through the combined efforts of the creative team – actors, directors and staff working to support them. For example, actors work on how the character would "carry themselves" and explore different centres of gravity. Grounding exercises help with this. Alongside this, actors work on their tone of voice, language, and the character's emotions. The theoretical and cognitive preparation deeply enriches this phase.

Townsend (2019) described this phase as 'working with the medium', where the artist starts to physically work with the artwork. For example, the artist may pick up a brush to paint or use a camera to take photographs. This could be compared to an actor who works with the body, the space, and fellow actors in rehearsal. The actor experiments to try and bring the image of the character to life in the external world. To navigate this, actors actively use strategies such as acting methodologies. Professional actors typically learn a palette of acting methods by the end of training which help them achieve their creative goals. The choice of method depends on personal preference. Sometimes, actors even switch between methods. For example, one method may work for one role but not another, so they choose the method that best suits a particular role. As such, several actors who were interviewed described themselves at one time as Method Actors, then as Meisner Practitioners and then as followers of Michael Chekov's Psychological Gesture. The choice is personal. The most common methods in the Western hemisphere include Stanislavski's System – and its derivatives (Stanford Meisner, Stella Alder and Ute Hagen) – and Lee Strasbourg's Method Acting.

Goldstein (2018) very eloquently described that actors must build a profound understanding of the character – their physicality, their behaviour, and their inner working model. Following her theoretical framework actors use 'theory of mind' strategies to achieve this. It refers to an ability to accurately read or infer people's inner state based on their physical and vocal expressions or other information provided. This would mean that actors build a 'theory of mind'

for their characters on a physical, vocal, and emotional level, and possess an ability to empathise and relate with the character which facilitates this process. Alongside this, actors require a fluid sense of self to help them adopt the characters personality (Meyer, Zhao and Tamir, 2019). Through self-regulation they blur the boundaries between self and other (i.e. character) (Burgoyne, 1999) to identify with the character (Goldstein, 2009; Brown, Cockett & Yuan, 2019). What is seen within the psychological literature as 'a fluid sense of self' or 'boundary blurring' may simply be the concept of identification, an assimilating of parts of the other and a remodelling of the self.

From a psychoanalytic perspective this process could be described as an identification process. Klein (1929), Segal (1952) and Britton (1999) furthered the idea that a connection between the artist and the artwork is created through identification based on the re-building of a destroyed internal object internally. Britton (1999) held that through identification as well as projective identification the artist (or actor) obtains closeness with the object. During the identification process, the individual assimilates parts of the other and through this, remodels parts of themselves (Segal, 1986). Trieman (2016) held that the actors identification process is so intense that it transcends the psyche to manifest itself on a physical level. This is how actors assimilate parts of the character which allows them to "become" the character on stage. This reflects a more traditional psychoanalytic approach, while Townsend (2019) based her writing on modern British psychoanalysis, specifically Winnicott's (1971) and Marion Millner's (1950) writings. She holds blurring boundaries between self and other helps to establish a connection with the artwork. Using Winnicottian theory, she elaborates that the artists must become one with the artwork for a period of time to sense the needs of the artwork. This resembles the first identification process between mother and infant whereby the mother can sense the needs of a baby at the beginning of life. While her theory is lacking and incomplete in parts, as only selected psychoanalytic literature was reviewed this provides a helpful theory to conceptualise identification in actors. Milner (1950) also emphasised the relevance of a sense of fluid boundaries or a subject-object union. This capacity alongside the skill to perceive the

external with a wider focus, take it in and turn it into a creative work of art internally, allowed the artist to create.

Neuroscientists Brown, Cockett and Yuan (2019) reported that actors appear to use an exaggerated form of perspective-taking to become their characters. According to their fMRI study actors deactivate an area of their brain which is responsible for self-processing when they perform. This led the researchers to suggest that acting is an intense form of embodiment of another which leads to a state of almost possession by that other and a loss of self. The cognitive neuroscientist Rhonda Blair (2008) explains the acting process with reference to mirror neurons in the brain. This may be helpful to understand the heightened use of empathy skills by actors at this stage. Blair explains that the use of mirror neurons in the brain make imitation and empathy possible.

> Mirroring and simulation types of neurons may be at the heart of some aspects of creativity, particularly in terms of imitation and possibly empathy. The nature of the arguments between Plato and Aristotle regarding the power of imitation and of watching gain fresh strength, and Diderot's eighteenth-century discussion of the actor's paradox and the superiority of the actor without feeling requires reconsideration. Further, these findings finally and definitively set aside the tired acting binary of "inside-out" vs. "outside-in" (Blair, 2008, S. 14).

As such, Blair assumes that mirror neurons allow the actor to imitate and assimilate herself to an image that has been taken from the outside, such that she comes to embody it. Several theoretical frameworks have discussed what happens on a psychological level when actors work with their characters, and based on the presented analysis I would suggest that there is a consensus throughout all fields that identification is at the core of the actor's work.

The Frame

In the context of character creation, identification, and self-regulation, the actor needs to maintain awareness of both the preparatory work undertaken and the character that has been constructed. If the actor is not able to do so, she will not be able to identify with her role. It could be said, that the actor must hold this information (e.g. the lines, the characters' physical placement(s)

throughout the scene, and the characters objective) in mind to reconnect with it when performing, thereby, creating an internal frame. The actor reconnects with this frame prior to the performance to access the information. Actors, in this study, responded that doing warm-ups before rehearsal were helpful to reconnect with memory and reaching an adequate arousal state to perform. To re-engage with this internal frame, actors also rely on a safe external environment. Theatre creates an external frame space by giving actors a sense of external structure to explore. Being physically in the performance space is also helpful to reconnect with the material (e.g., participants spoke about physical memory). Because of the relevance of these internal and external structures, the theme was named '**the frame'**.

Winnicott (1960) introduced the notion of the mother holding her child both physically and mentally, satisfying the infant's need for affection and addressing basic bodily requirements, fostering a sense of safety. Bion (1962a) extended this idea with the concept of containment, emphasizing that during infancy, the mother assumes the responsibility of thinking for the child. The mother processes and holds the infant's thoughts, facilitating their eventual reintegration by the infant. Drawing parallels, the actor's cognitive processes involve the assimilation and integration of thoughts about the character, akin to the mother's role in Bion's containment concept. In addition, Townsend's (2019) observed that artists cultivate an 'internal frame' unique to each creative medium, necessitating distinct skills. For instance, a photographer and a painter, both artists, operate within different 'internal frames' due to the distinct demands of their respective mediums.

Similarly, an actor must develop a distinctive cognitive framework for each character, holding this frame (represented by the preparatory work) in mind and reconnecting with it during performances. This parallels the adaptive internal framing observed in other artistic disciplines, underlining the cognitive flexibility required for effective artistic expression across diverse mediums.

Alongside an internal frame, the relevance of the external environment was highlighted by participants who mentioned the importance of the environment

and its ability to contain. Townsend (2019) made similar observations. According to her, artists need a 'contained space and specific external conditions' to enter a creative state (i.e., peak performance). For the actor, the theatre or rehearsal space assumes this role alongside the acting crew that is often described as a family.

The idea of a frame can be found already in Segal's paper on aesthetics (1952). An aesthetic experience, in her opinion, has its origins in experiences of beauty and wholeness and ugliness or destruction. She argues that an aesthetic work of art is produced when the artist can mourn his own destructiveness, tolerate the anxieties of the depressive position and, despite his immense guilt, repair and re-create an object he had formerly destroyed. Then an aesthetic experience is evoked within the spectator or the audience when they view the art. The destruction and recreation occur, Segal (1952) argues, both internally and externally, and finally manifest in the form of an artwork. Segal believed that theatre was based on this structure explaining that Greek Tragedy 'reversed the depressive position', in the sense that a whole, integrated world was destroyed in the course of a tragic play. The 'ugly' content was contained by the play and the theatre, whose structure enabled something beautiful to emerge.

Adela Abella (2010) the frame of an artwork need not be confined to the painting itself; it can extend into the external world that surrounds it. This perspective can also be applied to actors and their performances. Even if a performance is profoundly unsettling, the presence of an external element creating a framing context, reminiscent of classical theatre, can provide a sense of containment. This framing element may manifest as the exhibition venue, the theatre space, the actor's physical presence, or the audience. The existence of such a frame enables a secure interaction with the artistic work. This containment frame is instrumental in fostering creativity for actors, as physically inhabiting this frame facilitates the transition into a creative state of mind.

Alongside a frame, Winnicott's envision a transitional space (1971). Initially this is a space between mother and infant which allows the infant to relate to an external object and facilitates creation and development. Winnicott described it as a transitional or potential space where creativity, play and free association are possible. It is a space in between the subject and objected, not fully inside nor outside; allowing creativity to flourish while at the same time creating a container. Therefore, it can also be seen as a creative space where the subject can relate creatively to objects in the external work and create new thoughts (i.e. artworks) under the influence of both internal and external input.

What Winnicott calls the creative space, performance psychologists describe as the concept of peak performance. While the concept of peak performance predates this research, and originated in the field of sport psychology, it is relevant also for performance psychology. It encompasses the 'being in the moment' or 'entering a flow state' which actors report as essential to work creatively. As explored in Chapter 1, actors share with other performers the need to reach peak performance levels to excel on a creative level (Loveday, Neuman, & Hassall, 2021). Entering peak performance levels allows the actor to make use of attentional resources that are not available during normal functioning.

In a state of peak performance, the same neurological pathways are activated in the brain as at times of stress. Individuals who achieve states of peak performance make use of the energy that is released without being triggered by the emotional responses of the stress response (Storoni, 2017). Therefore, to perform successfully, actors must physically reach the peak performance stage, engage with their creative resources, and reconnect with the image of the character they created. Potentially, the combination of holding the character in mind, being relaxed enough to enter the creative space and managing physical arousal to reach peak performance levels will lead to a successful performance.

The Separation

Following each performance, the actor encounters multiple concluding moments, ranging from the closure after every rehearsal to the ultimate culmination when a project concludes. This aligns with a separation process involving farewells to fellow actors, the crew as well as the character. As with every phase of life it is important to acknowledge this transition period and the need of an appropriate conclusion. For example, participants spoke about the importance of taking a shower or going for a walk after performing. Some even have rituals for the conclusion of performances, such as putting scripts into a script box.

When reviewing concepts of identification across all theoretical frameworks it can be noticed that identification is normally followed by separation. Marion Milner's concept of illusionary merging (1957) illustrates how artists blend with their work, reminiscent of the initial merger observed between mother and infant, characterized by a temporary dissolution of boundaries between self and other. Winnicott (1960) held that the identification with the mother at the beginning of life is followed by gradual individuation. Through this identification process the infant builds its own identity, and with development, it becomes its own self, separate from the mother. Consequently, identification naturally leads to progressive individuation, and a failure in this process can potentially contribute to psychopathology (Burgoyne, Poulin & Rearden, 1999; Thomson & Jaque, 2012).

Segal's (1952) held that in artistic creation, the art object, is not the self. She implied that the artist ought always to be able to differentiate herself from the artwork. The same must be said for the actor, at least, if she is to remain psychologically healthy. The character is only a small part of the actor, and the actor must in the end distinguish clearly between what belongs to her and what belongs to the character. It seems important, therefore, that after a performance the actor separates from the character and reconnects with the self. If the actor cannot do this, one may assume that there are potential implications for the actor's mental health.

Within Townsend's (2019) last chapter she borrows Winnicott's thinking to describe an artist's need to 'separate from their artwork'. Accordingly, the artist first merges with the artwork to sense what the artwork needs. A loss of boundaries between the self and the prospective artwork is the consequence. With the maturation of the artwork, the stage of merger is followed by a slow separation during which the artist slowly withdraws from the work of art. Townsend compares this to the individuation and separation process between mother and infant. With development, a process of separation unfolds that cumulates in the artwork obtaining its own 'life'. Once this process of separation is complete, the work has been finished. The same could be said about the actor - a separation from the character must take place after every rehearsal and performance as well as at the end of the show. If this is not the case, it may have negative consequences for the actor such as dissociation or depersonalisation.

Actors embodying a character do not experience dissociation from the self; instead, they effectively suppress aspects of the self to execute their performance successfully, as elucidated by the findings from a 2019 fMRI study (2019). According to this research, actors temporarily set aside their personal identity to focus on portraying the character, akin to how a mother may intermittently prioritize the baby's needs over her own (Winnicott, 1960). This suspension of the self may coincide with a diminished awareness or the processing of information at a pre-conscious level.

While actors intuitively talked about character in the third person, most of them did not mention a separation process outright. They, however, could give examples of separation strategies after being prompted with the question (e.g. putting the script in a script box or going for walks after a performance). Perhaps actors simply do not think too much about separating from their work (i.e. they do not have time, or they do not see it as useful) and despite a lack of awareness, actors did not see themselves as the character and a clear sense of differentiation between self and character remained.

The interviewees emphasised, however, that differentiating between self and character was important. As Burgoyne, Poulin and Rearden's (1999) study showed, permanently facing boundary blurring may lead to problems with dissociation (2012) and specifically, struggles with dissociative identity disorders, dissociative amnesia, depersonalisation, and derealisation. Actors literally lose themselves in the character. Previous studies, like Robb, Due and Venning (2016), Seton (2006) and Furnham (2018), have shown that actors struggle with mental health issues such as depression, anxiety, vicarious trauma, substance abuse and identity issues. The possibility that those difficulties follow from the challenges presented by coming in and out of role remains to be studied. Potentially, even a co-morbidity could be identified in the sense that those actors less able to regulate the identification process may be more vulnerable to problems arising from the identification process.

The Actor

While thorough preparation is essential, achieving a high-quality performance also hinges on the actor's skills. Not all performances are particularly creative, and might not be seen as aesthetic in that sense. For example, actors that just regurgitate their lines fail to do any creative work which results in a flat representation of a play or a character that could have multiple layers. It is usually the performances that elicit an emotional reaction in the spectator that are recognised as aesthetic or creative. The actor has put in work on their part to captivate the audience. The discussion within the literature revealed that creativity originates within the actor, who must process and elaborate content to achieve creative excellence. Thus, there is a requirement for the actor to have or acquire skill sets to bring a performance to life.

According to this study, the actor needs to fulfil three tasks to successfully portray the character (Figure 22): the actor must become the character on stage (using mechanisms such as fantasy, empathy, perspective taking and arousal); the actor has to self-regulate to navigate the performance; and the actor has to hold the performance in mind.

Figure 22: The creative actor and his creative involvement
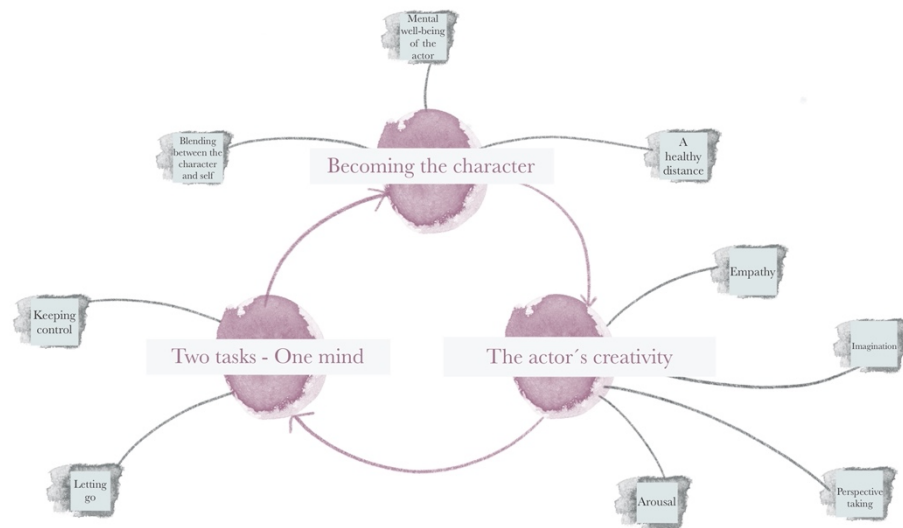
Becoming the character

The actors' creative work focuses on lending their body to a character during the performance and on identifying with the character. Participants used several examples to describe this phenomenon and stressed that the better they get to know the character the easier it was to identify with a character. Therefore, it was easier to relate to characters who had similar experiences as the actor. If that was not a given, it apparently helps to artificially create the experiences of the character. Naturally, it is not possible to re-create every experience (e.g. committing murder). This is where imagination and experimental work is very important for the actor.

Acting training normally equips actors with a set of methodologies that can be used to get the desired result. Actors work on getting to know the character to identify with it. Actors do experimental research which helps them to better understand the character. However, the actor's agency and choice of what acting strategies to choose from should not be underestimated as these

influence how the character is eventually portrayed. This agency and choice of the actor makes every performance of a character unique, even if the character is played multiple times by different actors. While this point summarises the creative arc phases with a focus on the actor's capacities, the influence of the actors skills and choices on the performance, justify for this to be a separate theme.

Self-regulation

The next step for the actor is to navigate this experience of identification by regulating themselves and their engagement with the external world. Engaging with the character and the actors' own creative resources while consciously navigating the performance at the same time is a challenging process. Actors in this study reported that the capacity to self-regulate is important to successfully lead the performance towards pre-established aims. Participants distinguished between self-processing (e.g. where am I on stage?; and accessing the creative potential) and character-processing (e.g. how would I react as the character in this moment?). In regard to self-processing, actors cast an observing eye on the performance allowing the actor to manage the logistics of the performance (e.g. remaining in the light or in frame and following the objectives of the performance). In terms of self-processing actors also need to regulate themselves to access their creative potential which is helped by the preparation strategies mentioned above and things such as warm-ups. Character-processing entailed the deliberate establishment of the character's personality, requiring actors to temper their own behavioural traits and empathize with the character's characteristics.

Sustaining this conscious distortion while navigating the practical aspects of the play demands concentration, and actors noted the beneficial role of repetition in achieving this delicate balance. Participants referred to the necessity to have a memory of the performance to which they can reconnect, such as a memory of the play, the lines, the physicality, the locations on stage, the objectives, basically everything that is required to bring the show to life. This establishes an internal frame as discussed above. Actors held that the

better their memory of the play was, the easier it was for them to regulate their performance on stage. This may be because this knowledge migrates to a pre-conscious level of awareness which frees up the actor's mind to focus on the stimuli and actions on stage.

Neuroscientists and psychologists have highlighted the relevance of self-regulation skills to achieve a successful identification with the character. According to the findings of the study presented above (Brown, Cockett, and Yuan, 2019), the actor's mind is exposed to a split of attentional resources. While playing a character the actors must suppress their normal reality, including personal resistances, and must enter a creative space, remaining open to the character they are attempting to create. The proposed idea of actors having a double consciousness would explain why actors speak about experiencing a split in their mental functioning. One part is responsible for managing the self (which include down-regulating characteristics of the self and navigating the performance space), while the other is responsible for the character (upregulating the characteristics of the role and engaging with the creative potential). Potentially, self-regulation, as discussed by Goldstein (2009), helps actors to navigate this experience. Therefore, the actor's level of skill and success in character portrayal depends to some degree on his ability to regulate her self-experience and the character-experiences.

Townsend (2019) noticed that artists had to enter, what she called, 'the artist's state of mind' to create. This state of mind is only active while the artist is involved in the creative process. It differed from common descriptions of Flow in so far as it described a split of attentional resources. Flow state (Csikszentmihalyi, 2009) describes rather a level of immersion in an activity. It does not take into consideration that actors must maintain a level of conscious awareness. There is a need for gestation that helps the actor to internalise the character, and to make decisions on stage such as following the objective of the character as well as respecting fellow actors. Without appropriate control the performance may be 'dropped' (i.e. the actor may miss a line), logistical problems may occur (e.g. the actor may walk out of the light or forget to go on/off stage) and even physical health risks may be posed to the actor or her

307

colleagues (e.g. the actor may trip over the props on stage or walk over the edge of the stage). The artist needs to be able to let go of his daily reality and enter a creative state of mind that facilitates creation – 'the extended self', while also requiring an 'observer self' that can make rational decisions on stage. The 'observer self' ought not to be dominant, otherwise the artist's creativity is inhibited. Only when both are in balance can the artist (or actor) decide whether his creation is fruitful and corresponds with his initial idea (Townsend, 2019).

The actor's creativity

Participants described four psychological mechanisms relevant for acting. The ability: to imagine, to empathise, to take someone's else's perspective and to reach and maintain optimal arousal (or so-called peak performance). To remain truthful to participants' words, empathy and perspective taking will be discussed separately. They, however, may be closely related the concept of mentalization, discussed within the literature review, which encompasses very well all aspects that actors must do to relate to their character. Mentalization is the ability to understand one's own and others' state of mind and with that understanding intentions and affects. Actors also have to keep their own as well as others mental states in mind to regulate their intention and affect based on the needs of the play.

With the statistical analysis of the questionnaires a set of relationships was evidenced between personal resources and different phases of the preparation work. Empathy and fantasy were the only ones that were associated with various performance phases. Specifically, fantasy was found to be positively correlated with character creation, pre-performance practice, and performance itself.

While correlations were significant for both variables, only the use of fantasy (or imagination) was evidenced as having a strong correlating relationship with before performance strategies such as warm-ups. This may indicate that the practices used by actors prior to the performance activate fantasy and

potentially reflective thinking. This presumably helps actors to imagine their characters during rehearsals, to further develop them and to reconnect with them mentally to bring this character to life.

The qualitative component of this study revealed that reflective capacity helps actors to think about the characters and to build the characters personalities in their mind. During interviews, participants stated that use of imagination is relevant at the beginning helping actors to imagine and think about a character. This was further substantiated by the data of the follow-up questionnaires, where 64% of participants judged the relevance of imagination as very important. From these findings one can assume that a combination of those skills are used by actors in the rehearsal phase.

This confirms suggestions prominent within the literature that imagination and Theory of Mind are relevant for actors (Goldstein, 2008; Goldstein, 2009). The literature showed that actors spend significant time on preparation before the performance. Goldstein (2018) holds that actors use a combination of cognitive, social and self-regulatory skills to understand the scripts, create characters and fulfil the task of acting. She observed that they needed to distinguish between real and fiction, as well as contain an imaginative world of the play in the mind which required high executive functions on a cognitive level. It may be that by using Theory of Mind, as suggested by Goldstein (2009), in combination with imagination actors can reflect about the character and build an imaginative world internally.

During the performance

Results of the statistical analysis evidenced that when performing, actors actively use fantasy and empathy. As before the performance, use of fantasy remains relevant for actors alongside the use of empathy. Both were evidenced through strong correlations with this phase. During the interviews, actors explored the central role of use of empathy which allowed them to establish a connection between themselves and the character, and to rediscover this connection during every performance. The relevance of those

skills for actors was also shown by the follow-up questionnaires. The use of imagination and empathy were felt to be very important during this stage, with 59% of actors citing the importance of the use of imagination, and 48% citing the importance of the use of empathy.

The literature suggests that acting requires a combination of cognitive skills including but not limited to empathy and fantasy. Noice and Noice (1997) held that to act actors must successfully develop an understanding of the character (their physicality, behaviour and inner world) first, before they can successfully relate to them. Goldstein (2009) described emotion regulation as a central part of acting helping actors recall and reuse emotions either from their past or created in fantasy. Through empathy actors are able to use these regulated emotions for their character on stage (Goldstein, 2009). It, therefore, seems accurate to assume that actors create an image of their character in their mind with which they reconnect through empathy during the performance to reconnect with the character. This confirms that a strong capacity to use imagination helps the actor to imagine the character and therefore to embody the character and to stay 'in role', while use of empathy allows actors to reconnect emotionally to the emotions and the personality of the character.

One aspect that was not captured by the questionnaires but was evident in the interview data, was the importance of fear right before going on stage and during the performance. Participants also described fear ahead of a performance as 'performance anxiety'. While such anxiety can assume debilitating forms, participants spoke about its vital importance in relation to heightening their energy before going on stage. This resonates with the findings of a recent study (Loveday, Neuman, & Hassall, 2021) on peak performance detailing that peak performance consists of two different stages (i.e. preparation and being in character). To get into character heightened levels of focus, attention and energy are required. This heightened state of energy was described by Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi (2018) as Flow – a state of cognitive arousal. For this arousal state to be activated, the same brain mechanism are stimulated as with anxiety, therefore resulting in a close connection between the two mechnisms (Storoni, 2017). This suggests actors

activiate peak performance stages before and during the performance to perform at their best.

After the performance

Use of fantasy and empathy, perhaps surprisingly, continued to be active after the performance. Also, during this phase fantasy was the only variable with a very strong correlation while empathy showed a moderate relationship to this phase. However, this suggests that the use of fantasy and empathy is not as straightforward as flicking a switch; instead, actors must actively regulate these elements to prevent them from becoming burdensome in the course of

Goldstein (2009) assumes that actors require strong capacities to regulate emotions but also to regulate the self. The actor must regulate their body, their behaviour, their voice and mind to fit the requirements of the play while at the same time navigating the logistics of the performance. An ability to regulate appears essential to guide the performance towards it pre-established aim as well as to conclude the play. Numerous researchers (Timmons, 1945; Hannah, Domino, Hanson, & Hannah, 1994; Burgoyne Dieckman, 1991; Nemiro, 1997; Burgoyne, 1999; Crane, 2011; Meyer, Zhao and Tamir; 2019) report on the phenomenon of boundary blurring which suggests that when third-person perspectives are assumed the self-concept adapts by assimilating to the other person's perspective. This alteration does not simply end when the activity is complete, but research showed that the influence of the other persons perspective on the self is still traceable even after 24-hours (Meyer, Zhao and Tamir; 2019). This would explain why both fantasy and empathy remained active even after the performance, and future research could shed more light on this aspect of boundary blurring.

Contrary to what the correlation analysis reported, most participants did not think use of fantasy and empathy continued beyond a performance. An explanation for the observed discrepancy, might be that actors simply do not psychologically contemplate the aftermath of a performance, as supported by interview data: when prompted, actors would reply with "it does not matter" or

"the end of the performance marks the end of you playing the part". When actors were pressed, however, it became evident that many needed time to decompress after a performance in order to deal with overstimulation, to self-regulate and return to regular (or non-professional) functioning. This would align with the requirement to have good self-regulation skills, as mentioned above (Goldstein, 2019), as well as the necessity to have external strategies or coping strategies (e.g. switch off by taking a walk) to support the inherent regulator skills.

This study has outlined six distinct phases that encompass the preparatory work of an actor. These phases, collectively, form the structural framework or arc upon which an actor's preparation is built. Regardless of the specific methodological approach employed, all actors engage with these phases to varying degrees. The practical nature of these phases underscores their fundamental role in the acting process, as they provide a structured and systematic approach to preparing for a performance. The structure is also guided by the nature of the task and by the requirements placed on the actor to fulfil the task in a practical sense. In the above-mentioned phases only the preparatory work and the conclusion of the performance have been discussed but not the moment of the performance itself. This will be discussed in the following section.

1.40 What role does resilience play in enabling the actor to do this work?

The second research question this study sought to explore, was whether resilience could help actors carry out their creative work. This question was explored through a series of self-report questionnaires that were analysed statistically in SPSS. Alongside this, I gathered participants' thoughts on the relevance of resilience to them as actors. The discussion of these quantitative results will be presented in the following paragraphs.

Before engaging with the discussion of statistics, it may be worth highlighting why I started to reflect about the relevance of resilience for actors. When reviewing the literature on actors' creative processes, I started to realise that an important part of acting is the capacity to identify with a character and to regulate identification processes. Problems may occur if this process is faulty, as previously discussed. Also, within psychology and psychoanalysis identification issues are known to be a common source of problems which is why I started to read about these. But it was specifically one study (Thomson & Jaque, 2012) that explored attachment patterns in actors and highlighted the potential relevance of resilience, that led me to further explore this. Based on the findings of the literature review, I hypothesised that anything that supported actors in managing the identification process better would help them have better mental health outcomes. Psychoanalytic theory suggests that identification is a central part of early development and, through secure attachment relationships, infants learn how to relate in intimate relationship and identify with a primary caregiver. This supports the development of a relationship template in the mind of the infant, which is then used for any future relationships, including relationships with the character. In addition, positive experiences with the primary caregiver also help to build a reflective and resilient self. These are two factors that are seen to positively support future development and the development of relationships by fostering reflective adaptive behaviour and perseverance when something has not worked out straight away. And, as resilience and reflective capacity are factors that can be explored with scientific methods, and are seen as important also in other fields (most therapeutic methods in some way help to increase self-reflection), I decided to explore these factors in more detail. In the following paragraphs I will present what I have learnt about resilience and reflective capacity in this study.

1.40.1 Quantitative component

The analysis of quantitative data showed that when exploring mental wellbeing in actors, various factors need to be taken into consideration, since it is the combination of various factors that together constitute good mental health

outcomes. This research revealed strong correlations between mental health, general health factors (comprising physical, social, and environmental health), resilience, and reflective capacities. At a later point I will also comment on whether good general health, mental health, resilience, and reflective capacity have a bearing on how well actors could carry out their acting work and on whether resilience seemed to be relevant to this. However, it also revealed that other factors, such as demographic ones, did not correlate to mental health generally, or resilience specifically. Nor did these factors seem to have a bearing on how well actors were able to carry out their work.

Demographic factors

In the sampled population, actors of all ages, with all levels of work experience, and independently of their gender, can be resilient. These results confirmed prior findings that propose that gender and age are not assumed to be determining factors for resilience (Goldstein, 2018). However, actors without professional training were more resilient than those with professional training. While it is still unknown whether more resilient actors choose not to follow professional training or if not being professionally trained increases the resilience level of actors, having professional training could potentially have a protective function for actors. Future research should focus on the relationship between professional training and resilience in actors to better understand the effect.

The influence of professional training on an actor's resilience level may be attributed to the development of a specialized skillset. While often perceived as an art form, acting is also a craft that can be learned through training. This training equips actors with the necessary tools to manage emotions and navigate the demands of performance, fostering resilience in the face of performance-related stressors. For instance, research by Storoni's (2017) and Loveday, Neuman and Hassall's (2021) suggests that states of peak performance activate the same attentional resources as in stress response. This stress response activates the para-sympathetic nervous system and therefore prepares the body to respond to an expected threat. While this stress

response is crucial for survival, heightened levels of anxiety or panic can be detrimental to on-stage performance. Nonetheless, actors learn to manage these experiences effectively and even utilize them to enhance their performance.

This suggests that actors navigate both sympathetic and para-sympathetic nervous system responses during performance, and indeed learn to engage with these responses constructively, without being too disturbed by these intense emotional responses. As one of the interviewees noted, actors learn to "use the arousal process" to their advantage. Performers themselves describe this experience during the interviews often as 'being in the zone', 'being in the moment' or as a 'flow' experience. Storoni (2017) suggested that this state is achieved by enhancing their rational processing and thus creating a 'harness' that inhibits a triggering of the emotional response.

Acting institutions train actors in methodologies that exploit their capacity to manage different attentional resources using 'double consciousness' (Brown, Cockett, & Yuan, 2019). This training equips actors with the ability to regulate their emotional responses and fosters resilience in the face of performance stressors. Conversely, untrained actors may struggle to develop these skills independently, potentially leading to increased stress and diminished overall wellbeing.

Resilience and reflective function in actors

When compared to the general population, the average resilience scores amongst actors were lower, but the average reflective capacity was comparable. Furthermore, actors' resilience scores and reflective capacities remained stable over time.

When comparing actors' resilience scores from this study to average scores from different population samples, the mean score of the actor sample was closer to the mean score of the psychiatric outpatients' sample at 68.0 (Davidson, 2022). This observation suggests that the resilience levels of

actors may mirror a trend observed in other populations as well. Actors scored lower than the norm and closer to psychiatric patient samples. This pattern is commonly observed when examining correlations between acting, creativity, neuroticism, and depression and would suggest that such comorbidities may be prevalent within actors (Furnham, 2018).

Previous research has suggested that actors may be more resilient than the general population (Thomson and Jacque, 2012), however, the specific circumstances of the studied population may have influenced the contrasting finding of this study. Social and environmental factors have an impact on psychological health and resilience (Foundation, 2016; WHO, 2018). Actors often face circumstances that may expose them to more risk factors and fewer protective factors than the general population (Robb, Due, & Venning, 2016). Indeed, interviewees reported experiencing regular financial hardship. Given that the industry and professional circumstances of actors negatively impact wellbeing it is plausible that this impairs their overall resilience.

Actors may experience lower resilience due to the inherent demands of their profession. Actors are regularly challenged emotionally due to the nature of their work. To perform, actors must engage with the emotional state of the characters they portray. This demanding task can have negative psychological consequences for the performer as evidenced by higher levels of boundary blurring (Burgoyne, Poulin, & Rearden, 1999), dissociative disorders (Thomson & Jaque, 2017) and unresolved trauma or mourning (Seton, 2006) compared to the general population. While this does not necessarily mean that actors universally struggle with mental health issues, it does suggest that the emotional demands of their profession may contribute to a decrease in psychological health and perception of wellbeing, and thus result in lower resilience levels.

While resilience was shown to remain stable over time, the unprecedented conditions of Covid-19 pandemic may have influenced the no-significant decline observed, by causing stress on psychological health. It was found that in the studied population, psychological health and perception of wellbeing

were predictors of resilience. Thus, mental health stress may have led to feelings of anxiety, depression, and hopelessness, which can make it difficult to cope with challenges and setbacks and reduce resilience. In addition, actors were stripped of their normal surrounding (without income many participants had to find housing arrangements and enter other professions; most did not qualify for the furlough scheme), of their work (leading to an existential crisis – "How can I call myself actor, if I can't act?") and their supportive network (isolation triggered loneliness in many participants that were interviewed), which can affect the perception of wellbeing.

The reflective capacity of the actors' sample was comparable to the general population's at baseline, and showed a slight increase during the follow up. This suggests that acting as a profession does not have a deleterious effect on reflective capacity in actors, as has been suggested by other authors (Goldstein & Winner, 2012). However, the subtle increase in reflective capacity observed among the actors during the pandemic warrants further investigation to determine if this trend is unique to actors or reflects a broader societal response to the pandemic's unprecedented challenges. Additionally, longitudinal studies with larger and more diverse samples are necessary to establish whether actors have lower reflective capacities than the general population and to elucidate the underlying factors contributing to any potential disparities.

Resilience, health factors and personal perception of wellbeing

While resilience demonstrated positive associations with personal perception of wellbeing and various aspects of overall health, including physical, psychological, social, and environmental health, only psychological health and perception of wellbeing were identified as significant predictors of resilience in the studied population. This confirmed the hypothesis that psychological wellbeing and a positive self-perception play crucial roles in fostering resilience. The analysis done after the pandemic, however, revealed that physical and psychological health were predictors of resilience.

All the factors examined – physical health, mental health, social factors, and environmental factors – were found to correlate with resilience. Similar results have been found before within other populations samples (Foundation, 2016). Good physical and mental health, supportive relationships and healthy living circumstances can be seen as protective factors that safeguard actors' wellbeing. These findings not only further our understanding of the multifaceted concept of resilience but also shed light on the factors that contribute to self-perception of wellbeing in actors.

The study found reveal a shift in the predictors of wellbeing among actors after the COVID-19 pandemic. While psychological health and self-perception of wellbeing were identified as significant predictors of resilience at baseline, physical health replaced perception of wellbeing as a stronger predictor during Phase III. This shift could be attributed to the impact of the pandemic, which may have led actors to prioritize objective measures of wellbeing, such as physical health, over subjective self-perceptions. This suggests that the pandemic may have heightened the importance of physical health in fostering resilience among actors.

This study also showed that resilience seemed not to be adversely affected by physical poor health. While these results (the fact that resilience did not seem to be adversely affected by this) were puzzling, these contradictions may have to do with the participants own perceptions of health and whether they were willing to declare having physical or mental struggles at the time of completing the scales. The fact that resilience seemed not to be adversely affected by illness may be anomalous because participants may not have declared certain things and there may be limitations in relation to the scales used.

Resilience and its relationship to reflective capacity and personal resources

Resilience was associated with reflective capacity, and perception of wellbeing, but not to the other personal resources (use of empathy, fantasy and perspective taking). This means that while all health factors showed an

association with resilience, only psychological health appears to have a significant impact on resilience.

Reflective capacity was found to be a predictor of resilience, confirming previous research that suggested that resilience may involve the capacity to reflect (Thomson and Jaque, 2012; 2017). The literature also suggests that resilience is strongly influenced by the early attachment relationship with the mother and the psychological capacities that are nurtured in that relationship – the capacity to work through, to sublimate, and to mentalize traumatic situations (Malgarim, Macedo, & Freitas, 2018). The concept of resilience was also linked by researchers to the concept of mentalization and with the development of 'ego functions' and mature psychological development (Hauser & Allen, 2007). Researchers questioned whether, besides the above-mentioned (physical, mental, social and environmental health) protective factors, resilience as a concept may involve the capacity to reflect about oneself and others. Accordingly, it could be said that to be resilient is to have a good reflective capacity; to be able to mentalize about oneself and others; and to make use of these reflective capacities. Further investigation into this matter, potentially through a randomized controlled trial with one group of actors receiving mentalization-based therapy, another receiving short-term psychotherapy, and a control group, would be particularly insightful.

If resilience indeed benefits from enhanced reflective capacities, it underscores the importance of fostering personal development on a psychological level for actors. Strengthening reflective capacities could potentially lead to improved mental health and better preparedness for challenging periods throughout their careers. Further research is warranted to elucidate the precise nature of the relationship between resilience and unconscious psychological resources and to develop interventions that can effectively enhance resilience among actors.

Contrary to initial hypotheses that resilience might be associated with the use of fantasy, empathy, and perspective-taking skills, the study found no significant correlation. This suggests that resilience may not be directly linked

to conscious personal resources but rather may draw upon unconscious psychological resources, as proposed by psychoanalysts (Malgarim, Macedo, & Freitas, 2018). While a relationship was observed between reflective capacity and the use of empathy and perspective-taking, this connection was not replicated for resilience. This implies that resilience may not be directly dependent on these skills but rather may operate through less conscious psychological mechanisms. If this is the case, furthering personal development on a psychological level is perhaps important for actors.

Mental health and its relationship to resilience and reflective capacity

Resilience is a predictor of perception of wellbeing, and reflective capacity is a mediator between them. Moreover, resilience and reflective capacity were significant predictors of changes in perception of wellbeing over time. However, the predictive power of reflective capacity appeared to increase over time, while the predictive power of resilience decreased. This suggests that reflective capacity may play a more important role in maintaining mental health during challenging periods, such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

Perception of wellbeing, resilience, and reflective capacity were also compared over time with a regression analysis. According to this study, if mental health increased by one unit, reflective capacity increased by .347 points and resilience by .343 points respectively. This leads to the conclusion that these two slopes run almost parallel in comparison to the analyses conducted separately. The reason for these discrepancies are unclear at this point but I hypothesise that it may be a direct result of the pandemic – more reflective capacity was necessary to process the experience of a global pandemic. This leads to the conclusion that higher resilience and reflective capacity contribute to higher mental wellbeing.

Over time, reflective capacity is an important factor for resilience, but its effect on resilience is indirect. Reflective capacity can also be seen as a mediator in the relationship between resilience and mental health and at times reflective capacity may have a greater influence on mental health than resilience. If

resilience is a consequence of reflective capacity, then the mediated effect of reflective capacity on mental health remains .315 points (B = .315). According to this study, resilience and reflective capacity could function as protective factors in actors and contribute to better overall mental health. If these results hold true in future studies, it may be valuable to rethink the therapeutic approach with actors to focus on increasing their reflective capacities through mentalization based therapy options instead of CBT. Or offering training in reflective thinking as part of their training, rather than a therapeutic intervention.

Use of fantasy, empathy and perspective taking during performance

Actors' perceptions of the personal resources and processes involved in their craft are complex and multifaceted. Fantasy emerged as a widely recognized skill for character creation, while the roles of perspective-taking and empathy were less clearly defined. Actors acknowledged the importance of empathy in their work but expressed uncertainty about its impact on post-performance transitions. The division of the performance act into distinct phases received general support, with character preparation, separation from the character, and deep character understanding garnering the most endorsement. However, the use of personal experiences to inform character performance elicited mixed responses. Actors' views on the relevance of resilience varied, highlighting its potential benefits for role transitions and professional challenges. The concept of sublimating personal content in the arts remains inconclusive, warranting further investigation.

Participants' perspectives on resilience

Participants often disagreed with specific scientific terminology (e.g., fantasy skills, they encouraged the use of imagination). IN contrast, the term resilience was, in fact it, welcomed. Nevertheless, at times participants struggled to come up with a clear definition of resilience. For that reason, and driven by curiosity their perspective on resilience, they were asked to define the term in

their own words. The objective was formulate a definition of resilience that fits their unique experiences and their understanding.

Participants' view of resilience was: a) being flexible and not dependent on the external; b) being resourceful despite difficulty; c) reflecting about experiences leading to growth; d) a sense of pursuit despite challenges and criticism; and e) remaining positive despite difficulty. These conceptualisations of resilience strongly reflect what had been discussed in the previous pages. To give context, however, I will mention a couple of examples. The first point strongly reflects the permanent level of uncertainty that actors very often experience. In an industry where getting securing roles is the exception rather than the rule, actors should always have backup plan (e.g. a second job) and remain flexible in their career choices, role choices, and life in general. Being resourceful signifies the capacity to use what you have to always find a way and closely links to the previous point. The third point highlighted the importance of self-reflection, growth and success was dependent on this in so far that one had to learn from mistakes. Then acting was described often as a passion that gave meaning to actors' lives and that is what fuelled their motivation even in difficult circumstances. Lastly, a positive outlook on life and the career was seen as important. As an actor many rejections had to be endured, therefore not taking these rejections too personally but focusing on the path and not the destination as well as seeing it as a learning opportunity helped actors to remain in the industry.

Participants saw resilience as an essential part of working professionally as an actor. They held that resilience helped them to deal with the creative work as well as tackling the challenges of the profession. On a creative perspective actors thought that resilience helped them handle difficult emotional experiences (with the character) and manage the identification process with the character. Furthermore, they mentioned that sometimes acting was also a refuge which helped them to cope when resilience was low. In this study, actors' opinions support the role of resilience essential role in enabling them handle character identification.

In terms of the professional industry, actors held that resilience made it easier to endure business, interpersonal, psychological difficulties and fostered the development of coping strategies. This suggest that resilience is important for professional actors and has a unique place in their lives. They may not specifically speak about resilience, or consider themselves resilient, but the profession requires of them endurance when facing difficulty. Artistically resilience is important to deal with the creative process of acting, professionally resilience helps them to deal with the difficulties of the industry, and personally it supports them to remain resourceful in the pursuit of a profession that challenges them in countless ways.

Conclusion

The quantitative component of the study showed that resilience and reflective capacity are crucial factors for actors' wellbeing and creative work. Resilience is a trait that can be developed and strengthened regardless of individual characteristics or circumstances (age, gender, years of experience). Reflective capacity, proved to be intertwined with resilience. Moreover, evidence was found that actors' reflective capacity and resilience can be affected by their psychological and physical health.

COVID-19 burden on actors' health and wellbeing proved to be impactful and was probably responsible for changing the way health influence resilience. The pandemic's multifaceted impact on actors' physical, psychological, social, and environmental wellbeing likely influenced their ability to cope with stress, adapt to change, and maintain emotional stability, all of which are key components of resilience.

This endless cycle of anticipation often led to disillusionment and the realization that the elusive stability they sought might never materialize. The COVID-19 pandemic merely exacerbated this already precarious existence, extending the waiting period from weeks to years.

The pandemic did not introduce new challenges to the acting industry; it merely amplified existing ones. Actors have long grappled with uncertainty, financial instability, and the constant pressure to perform. The pandemic simply intensified these stressors, making them more acute and pervasive. This study aimed to explore the psychological impact of these challenges, and the pandemic served as a stark reminder of the inherent precarity of the acting profession.

The qualitative phase of the study revealed that actors perceived their profession as a perpetual state of waiting (described by them as 'choosing the profession of acting' as 'choosing a permanent state of waiting'); constantly anticipating the next audition, success, payment, feedback, financial independence, and a potential life-altering breakthrough. This endless cycle of anticipation often led to disillusionment and the realization that the elusive stability they sought might never materialize. The COVID-19 pandemic merely exacerbated this already precarious existence, extending the waiting period from weeks to two years. This encapsulated a problem that has always existed within the industry: actors have long grappled with uncertainty, financial instability, and the constant pressure to perform. The pandemic simply intensified these stressors, making them more acute and pervasive. This study aimed to explore the psychological impact of these challenges, and the pandemic served as a stark reminder of the inherent precarity of the acting profession.

The findings of this study have implications for the wellbeing and performance of actors. Resilience-building interventions could enhance actors' wellbeing and performance. Fostering reflective capacity may improve actors' resilience and wellbeing. Developing fantasy skills could benefit actors' creative work.

1.41 Limitations

Limitations of the study design

While providing interesting results this study also had a number of limitations. First, the study had to be redesigned due to Covid-19 to an online format eliminating the initial format of an observational study of actors at work in an in-person context. The study was adapted to an online format with self-report questionnaires which facilitated the delivery of the study online. In addition to this, the pandemic also must be seen as a factor with major impact on this study. The results gathered from this study at least hint to the possibility that the pandemic shifted the factors that influence actors' resilience and perception of wellbeing. The findings on resilience, wellbeing and reflective capacity therefore should be treated as indicative only; follow-up studies would be needed to confirm potential effect of Covid-19 on these factors. It must be said, though, that the timing of this study was unique.

Using self-report measures increased the probability of bias in this study. The questionnaires often reflected more the subjective opinion of the participants than their real state of wellbeing and resilience. In fact, follow-up interviews often revealed that the data gathered during the quantitative phase did not match with the participants' real state of wellbeing and resilience. The scale that produced the most contradictory data was the Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale, even though it is one of the most validated and reliable measures of resilience; a handful of participants had very low resilience scores but when speaking with them they seemed to underestimate their own capacities while others seemed to strongly overestimate their resilience capacities. Further, measuring resilience at one time-point only would deny the development of resilience over time (seeing resilience as a process). The follow-up study aimed to measure resilience over a period of one year to counteract this limitation, but it should be kept in mind that this study was the first trying to explore resilience in actors and future studies should aim to focus on exploring resilience in more detail with a closer focus on its progressive nature.

The mixed methods design chosen for the study prevented a more direct exploration of reflective capacity and attachment and their relationships to resilience. The Reflective Function Questionnaire (RF) (Fonagy, Target,

Steele, & Steele, 1998) is, the gold standard for exploring reflective capacity alongside the Adult Attachment Interview (AAI) (Main, Kaplan, & Cassidy, 1985). While using these scales would have provided a more direct measure of reflective capacity, it would have also required the researcher to conduct the Adult Attachment Interview (AAI) and significantly changed the scope and length of the study. Therefore, other scales were chosen to track resilience (The Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale) and reflective capacity (The Toronto Alexithymia Scale). This decision highlights the trade-offs that researchers often face when designing studies. Despite this limitation, this study provides a basis for subsequent research on acting, resilience and reflective capacities. Future studies should use a more direct assessment tools to measure reflective capacity and attachment, thereby gaining a more nuanced understanding of their influence on resilience in actors. Using methodologies such as the Adult Attachment Interview (AAI) (Main, Kaplan, & Cassidy, 1985) and the Reflective Function Questionnaire (RF) (Fonagy, Target, Steele, & Steele, 1998) would provide valuable insights into these interrelationships.

Limitations due to difficulties with participant recruitment

Participant recruitment and retention presented an expected challenge while conducting the study. When the study was advertised and recruitment emails were sent out, over 200 participants signed up, yet only 70 participants completed the questionnaires. This low completion rate persisted despite sending multiple reminder emails, with only 50 participants completing all questionnaires in Phase I. Furthermore, only 34 of these participants completed all questionnaires in Phase III, highlighting the difficulty in maintaining participant engagement throughout the study. Participant attrition in Phase III may be attributed to the increased demands of work commitments as lockdown restrictions eased. Actors who were interviewed reported that with lockdown being lifted many had secured work and had little time to spare.

The reduced sample size in Phase III may have introduced attrition bias into the data analysis. Comparing baseline data to follow-up data revealed that the decrease in participants influenced the average resilience scores of the overall sample. Notably, the high resilience group experienced a significant decline in participants, with nearly half dropping out. This reduction can be attributed to both attrition and a shift towards lower resilience scores in Phase III, leading to a reallocation of participants to lower resilience groups. This discrepancy in group allocations could potentially impact the study's findings. The majority of the participants who dropped out were female, aligning with the overall sample trend where more females initially enrolled in the study (31 females versus 19 males).

A possible barrier appeared to be that participants ought to share contact details of an emergency contact during recruitment before being able to complete the questionnaire. During the ethics approval process, concerns were raised about conducting a study that explored mental health during a global pandemic. While the researchers refrained from collecting any personal data such as names, this requirement did impact the study's anonymity.

The lack of financial renumeration offered to participants could have been another barrier in the recruitment and retention. Due to the self-funded nature of the study, financial constraints limited the ability to offer financial compensation. Recognizing that arts research is often driven by passion rather than financial incentives, the decision was made not to offer financial remuneration. However, this decision may have involuntarily aligned the study with a common problem within the industry – lack of financial renumeration for work. Three participants pointed this out and this may have contributed to participants refusing to complete the questionnaires.

Another factor that could have limited the recruitment of actors was the discrepancy between their willingness to complete a questionnaire compared to siting through an interview. It was expected that actors would prefer the shorter task of filling out a 15- to 20-minute questionnaire, but the opposite was true. While recruiting enough participants for the quantitative part of the

study was challenging, participants willingly attended interviews. In fact, all participants that were asked for interviews agreed and none dropped out. Moreover, more participants requested interviews, but the sample size was met with 8 participants, and as follow-up interviews were conducted the saturation point was reached already with 6 participants. The effect of the global pandemic might have contributed to this pattern; participants may have been unwilling to spend more time than necessary alone in front of a screen, but the prospect of talking with someone about a topic of passion which was taken from them for the time being spurred excitement and commitment. One participant even pointed out that these interviews provided a temporary sense of containment during a very unsettling period.

The limitations regarding recruitment for the quantitative component led to one part of the study being slightly underpowered. The estimated sample size for Phase I (baseline) was not met, but it was met for the follow-up during Phase III. However, this means that the quantitative results from Phase I should be interpreted care.

Limitations of data analysis

The study explored wellbeing in actors and was developed by a researcher who is herself a professionally trained actress. While this was helpful to develop the study and understand participants' opinions and experiences, it also could be seen as a limitation and source of bias with regards to the Thematic Analysis. To mitigate this, the researcher engaged in regular discussions with supervisors, maintained a reflective journal, and employed a secondary data analysis conducted by a research assistant with experience in studying performer wellbeing. This multifaceted approach aimed to minimize subjective interpretations and ensure the objectivity of the findings.

In addition, the chosen method of analysis (Thematic Analysis) was experienced at times as a limitation. While it was the best method to discover patterns in narratives, which was the scope of the first research question on acting methodology, analysing an interview transcript methodically was

experienced as a restriction to a psychoanalytically trained mind. It prohibited the interpretation of language, behaviour, and omissions, which at times revealed more about the participants' state of mind than their actual words. And with that it restricted how the participants' wellbeing, resilience and mental capacities could be analysed.

1.42 Implications

The present study was an inductive study that aimed to uncover preliminary findings on the creative work of actors, their wellbeing and resilience. With little literature covering this topic, conducting this study felt like slowly bringing a bit of light into the dark, but it also was very challenging at times as nothing similar had been done before in this field of research – studying the mental wellbeing of actors with a psychoanalytic lens. For this reason, I relied on literature from neighbouring fields such as psychology and neuroscience and used well-established methodological approaches to assure a steady progress. However, in many ways the findings of this study are innovative and unique.

Marking a significant breakthrough, this study introduces the 'creative arc' - the intricate process actors navigate as they create. The psychoanalytic and psychological literature offered major help when interpreting the findings and creating a descriptive model of this creative process. This is the first study to research the mechanisms of creativity in actors from quantitative and qualitative perspective, paving the way for a deeper understanding of the creative process, through acting and psychoanalysis. But not only this, the exploration of the nature of creativity was continued at ground level, that is to say, it is less theoretical or speculative about the nature of creativity, than revealing of the process actors actually go through when performing their craft.

Previous studies about the personal resources used during the creative work of actors were speculative and lacked direct input from actors themselves. This study breaks new ground by directly exploring the personal resources used by actors, adopting both quantitative and qualitative approaches to gain a comprehensive understanding of their experiences. While some of the

findings were expected, such as that actors relying on the use of fantasy, empathy and perspective taking when carrying out their creative work, it also uncovered rather novel findings including the unexpected role of 'fear' as a driving force in an actor's creative engagement. This discovery was facilitated by the direct involvement of participants in the research process, allowing them to share their experiences, opinions, and feedback on preliminary quantitative results.

Our study underscores the relevance of all wellbeing domains (physical, social, environmental, and psychological) in fostering resilience among actors. These findings represent a significant step towards developing a more informed approach to promoting wellbeing among performers.

This study also revealed unique risk factors and challenges faced by actors, highlighting the critical role of resilience in navigating these obstacles and maintaining mental wellbeing. For instance, the findings suggest that resilience enabled actors to handle their creative task and to deal with difficulties posed by the industry. Consequently, future research should focus on these challenges and explore potential mitigating factors that could safeguard actors from psychological and other forms of harm. According to this study, all wellbeing factors (physical, social, environmental, and psychological) are relevant to fostering resilience. Finally, the results of this study may be the first step towards adding to a better-informed approach to wellbeing in actors.

Given that a significant link between resilience, reflective capacity and mental wellbeing was found, this may also lead to reflections about the therapeutic work that may be done with actors. The standard therapeutic offering of the NHS and BAPAM (The British Association for Performing Arts Medicine - where the researcher in this study has worked during the pandemic) is six sessions of CBT to anyone suffering with mental health difficulties within the creative profession. While all therapeutic approaches encourage the use of reflective thinking, some do so more than others. For instance, CBT with its structured approach would be seen on one end of the spectrum while

psychoanalysis with its principle of free association over a long period of time, probably would be located on the other end; with many others therapeutic approaches in-between. While reflective capacity was relevant for actors' wellbeing, it also seemed to play a role during their professional work. The creative work required reflecting about oneself, one's internal world as well as reflecting about other to develop character. Potentially, offering therapeutic approaches with a greater focus on increasing reflective capacities such as mentalization based therapy may prove more advantageous to acting patients than other therapy methods. It would be interesting to explore this in more detail in a follow-up study in the form of a randomised controlled trial where different therapy methods are offered to subgroups.

With that, I will leave the reader with a handful of recommendations based on the insights of this study. For venues and institutions, such as theatres and drama schools, it would be of vital importance to increase their educational offering on the potential physical and mental health risks within the acting business. Just as important would be having a professional health worker or therapist on site to deal with any occurring issues; best would be an informed practitioner who has previous experience of working with this specific type of patient both on a physical and mental level. Concluding, I would say that acting is not a risker profession than others; it just has particular needs that ought to be attended to.

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Appendices

Thematic Analysis – table with example quotes

Discourse and dimension	Example quote
First inspiration	
Given the script	"The first step is, you go into the rehearsal room and then you are given the script." (Participant 3)
Preparation and exploration	
Learning lines	"We read the script and sign next to the line 'what is my intention here'." (Participant 6)
Working with the text	"I ground myself in the story – time, place and the overall arch. What does the writer want to tell us? First, I look at the world of the piece, with that, the intention of the writer and the overall intention of the character that is contained in that." (Participant 5)
Doing research	"If you're playing someone who is a real-life person you can take their characteristics. Read what is written about them, watch video footage and let this inform your body and voice." (Participant 8)
Working with colleagues	"After each rehearsal I would have notes on my script; I go home and look at the script – what do I need to do? Do I need to work on something physical, or the voice, or [something] psychological? Is it knowledge based, and I need to do research on history, etc? It is important to be open and be able to change and shift [your previous perception that emerged from your individual work based on what happens during the rehearsal]." (Participant 8)
Establishing a connection	
Channel of empathy	"[To discover the] emotional depth of the character, you have to understand

	your own emotional depth – you as a person [need] to understand the human quality in the character and identify those human qualities that you can connect with your own human qualities. There is a channel of empathy. A connection with you as a person to the character who is a person that you identify with emotionally." (Participant 8)
Starting with yourself	"It's not until you get to a certain level [of experience] that actors do play different roles. Often because you relate to the character, or you might look like them or might have tendencies like them, that's the easiest way to connect. It is a huge skill to take on any different roles and it to be believable." (Participant 3)
Strategies to connect	'If you rely on that [using your own experiences], you are not activating your imagination! Then you rely on something you have experienced. It's more powerful to be able to step out and just imagine what it would be like if … - like Stanislavski's "Magic if". [Especially,] if you play a character where you struggle to find those identifying factors, imagination is key. [And] I would rather be able to live through the character by exploring my imagination [than] by constantly exploring myself.' (Participant 8)

Working on the play

| Physical and vocal preparation | "You start taking on the character physically. If you already have got the base emotionally and mentally then physically it's a bit easier to navigate." (Participant 3) |
| Emotional preparation | "The last character I worked on in a musical, was a character on a wheelchair. [It wasn't given in the story line] how she went on [sic] a wheelchair, so I had to think about it … and I created an entire story in my mind. … I'm against those methods [where] you have to become the character: 'If the character is on the wheelchair, then you have to break your leg or walk on the wheelchair for a week, for a month to realize how a character really feels.' No, I don't think that, I think trying to connect |

	with the character and thinking about the life of this character can be really helpful." (Participant 6)
Exploration phase	"For an ex-convict part, I got myself arrested and locked in a cell overnight. To see what it felt like. (My friend worked as a police officer and did me a favour.) I found that really fun and helped me form the character. But I don't take it as a necessity." (Participant 8)
	"I don't concentrate on an emotional state, but on intentions and needs. Those will generate the emotional statements on stage. [As Meisner said]: you pursue your objectives purely in the light of what other people are trying to do to you." (Participant 7)
Identification and pursuit of objectives	"You have to placate them [the directors] and I developed an ability to do this. The note is there because you are not doing it right. They want you to try something and you as a professional puppet should be willing to go there. I don't mind trying things as long as it is within the scope of ordinary reality." (Participant 2)
Input by the director	"When you step on stage, you step into a space that is completely different [to the normal reality]. It's a space of mutual relationship with the audience – a 100% relationship. This enables you to keep up the performance. It feels like there is an invisible sort of barrier – a frame." (Participant 8)
	"In your preparation, even though you should forget your preparation once you start acting, there is a certain preparation you don't need to forget, what you want from the character and like things to do with the scene." (Participant 5)
Framing the play	
The Frame	"It is very difficult shifting in and out of emotions when going on and off stage. In order to make sure that "the change of gear" is completed, you're investing – it takes a lot of practices! That's why not practicing or playing is detrimental. You get rusty!" (Participant 7)

Entering and exiting the frame

Separating from the play

Separating from the role and the
performance

Discourse and dimension	Example quote
Self-regulation	
Keeping control	"There always has to be a sense of identity. A little voice in your head which goes: "You need to think about your articulation. If you stand here any longer you won't be able to get out of the door. There is a bloody great shadow over there. You walked out of the light." (Participant 7)
Letting go	"It's [the performance is] a trance like experience. It's like when you're in a dream, you don't know what you are about to do, but you're still aware of how you react – you have your values and principles. You don't know what you're about to do, but there is an understanding that it is going to happen. There is inevitability." (Participant 2)
Becoming the character	
Blending between the character and the self	"Sometimes it happens to me that when the rehearsals are over that I continue acting like that character (for 15 minutes or half an hour). It is especially difficult if you play a certain character to come to an end. I try to be by myself for a bit. Some smoke cigarettes. I listen to music, go outside, drink a coffee. I usually try to be by myself and go for a walk for 30 minutes, then I become myself again. Others meditate or do breathing work or yoga." (Participant 6)
Mental well-being of the actor	"How you get into character has a knock on effect on your mental health. Coming in and out [of character] is relating to your mental health – how badly or goodly you think of yourself." (Participant 3)

Discourse and dimension	Example quote

Resilience through the lens of the actor

| (No sub-themes at this stage) | "The first step is, you go into the rehearsal room and then you are given the script." (Participant 3) |
| | "Being resilient goes hand in hand with being resourceful. You're living in one of the most expensive cities in the world – London - you're doing a job, which is probably one of the most unstable and none financially rewarding. Doesn't pay… very rarely pays, and you have to make your life work. So, in order to be resilient, I've had to adapt, be flexible. I remember … I squatted in a warehouse for a year and a half. Because I didn't want to get a full-time job that would take me outside of being able to audition. And being resilient in that way, in order to make sure I could audition. That I had, that I could put in the time to the craft and to the work." (Participant 8) |

Resilience to deal with artistic difficulties

Being resilient to handle difficult emotional experiences	"With a complicated character like Lady Macbeth … [they] are very demanding, complicated and exhausting. The mix between a demanding character and the stress that comes from performing … wipes you out." (Participant 6)
Acting as coping in the absence of resilience	"[If I am] not acting … then I'm not, I'm not, I'm not happy. So, I have never been very happy at all. [Due to Covid all has] been cancelled, so that's affected my… because I can't see and feel when… When I can do it again." (Participant 1)
The resilient self guides the identification process	"If you're doing a production and you're doing it for a long time, then that's a long time that you're pretending to be someone else. And then that is very unhealthy. And that happened to me once in 2015. … We did a six-month tour and I was playing with real soldiers on stage. I was living with them, going to the pub with them, by the end of that, or after six months I called my agent said that I was going to quit acting. I quit and I went to join the Royal Marines. Because I thought

that, that was what I should do because I've been doing it … [a]nd I felt part of a collective identity. I felt part of a group." (Participant 8)

Resilience to tackle the challenges of the profession

Business difficulties	"[Waiting for this work is challenging … because you can't just not practice. Even though I'm not getting paid right now … it's not like I can just take nine months off and then walk back onto a stage and [have the same artistic skills as before] … unless I practice. But, in the very nature of that practice, there is absolutely no feedback! Whatsoever! There's no monetary feedback. [And] I don't think COVID-19 and the times that we're living in now present much of a difference emotionally for actors who were out of work before." (Participant 2)
Interpersonal difficulties	"[While being very supportive of my acting career, my family] especially my father, they couldn't understand how I could [prioritise acting over them at times. On one occasion, I had to go to a] rehearsal for a show [instead of going] to my father's birthday. … But just like any normal job you wouldn't ask a doctor … not to go to the hospital on Sunday. … So why do we think that acting is so different? And it's not taken seriously, but that's also a thing that we as actors have to do. We have to be the first to treat this job [as a] job, because if we don't, then how can we pretend that other people do?" (Participant 6)
Psychological difficulties	''I think one of the biggest frustrations for me is the [not belonging.] … [D]edicating [a] portion of my life to making myself a vehicle for art, for storytelling … that's been my passion … and I'm not in control of that because it's a casting director or director or producer that is going to say yes or no. And they might say no, because I've got no hair, they might say no because I'm too tall, they might say no because I've got a too big nose. All of the stuff that is completely outside of my control. [The h]ardest

thing to do is relinquish needs to be able to control something. There has been definitely times in the journey where I felt I'm not in control of anything. I'm just free flowing and praying that someone is going to give me a chance." (Participant 8)

Coping strategies

"[A]nother thing that I think is really important, we [should] teach actors and actresses is to have a great relationships with friends and family. Because when one day a character will be too difficult for you to play and you are going to have to take a break from acting and your family and your friends will be there for you, not your fans." (Participant 6)

Discourse and dimension	Example quote	

One year later

Negative life events:

Anxieties about Covid-19

"In the context of children's parties or working in pubs there has been background anxiety about whether I am being contaminated and also the fact that my contract is pressuring me [to continue working, despite the risks]. The general advice used to be not to do a test, because if I test positive there is no cover. … So we are sort of renegotiating our power relationships and everybody is pretending to be more powerful than they are. Nobody really has much power." (Participant 7)

Loss of work

"I think there has been a backlog of projects that had already been cast before the pandemic. So, there is a resurgence where they had everything ready to go, they were just waiting for the green light and everything to be safe enough. So, think that is part of why there is not a huge amount of work out there. And agents probably rather you go and do dailies on TV or play theatre for equity minimum wage. … But I am at an age where I can't afford myself to do that." (Participant 8)

Financial strain

"I still live at my family's home, a big goal of mine has been to move out and potentially move to Paris. … The money I've earned from this movie it's good money, but I'm one who likes to pay off other things first [like credit cards, bills, new head shot photos] and… it's just all these other complications." (Participant 5)

Positive life events:

Retraining

"I don't think it [acting] is the most important thing in the world. It's not that important. I know it is important, but I would quite like to be a vicar." (Participant 1)

Connecting

"The things that have helped this past year were my family and friends." (Participant 5)

Mindset shift

"I've really enjoyed it just personally because it gave me a chance to slow down to do all those things that are on that "To Do List" and never get done. And I didn't feel that external [pressure] which is possibly non-existent; that pressure to be working, to be achieving, to be succeeding, to be doing things, being a successful performer and human being because nobody was doing any anything like my industry was closed so I didn't have that guilt. I just spent all my time training." (Participant 3)

Discourse and dimension	Example quote
What is resilience	
Being flexible and not dependent on the external	"You have to be a bit careful because you have to be flexible. It's not about putting the blinkers on and just doggedly following blindly this one ambition [e.g. acting for screen] where other things could be open to you within the industry. Not taking these opportunities because you only want to be a film star …. Theatre is a very, very viable pathway into creative success. I'm not talking about acting success in film and TV, but creative success. And if you want to be a performer it doesn't matter whether it's on film, TV, theatre, radio. I think you have to balance resilience with flexibility. (Participant 8)
Being resourceful despite difficulty	"I must be thinking about more stuff at once, so I must be coming up with more ideas]; I must be responsive to the more influences, so I must be doing better work. (Participant 7) "If you don't reflect, you are not able to do something better or do something differently. I assume you just keep doing the same. … I like that because only then you can move forward and be better." (Participant 3)
Having reflective capacity to grow	"I would say resilience for me is pursuing a chosen objective or goal despite challenges and adversity and being able to overcome the challenges and the adversities. While still having your perspective on your goal and not letting it change it." (Participant 8)
Pursuit despite challenges and criticism	"I think it's being able to always view your life, your job and your experience in a positive way, which is very difficult, especially in acting. Because, if you get rejected during an audition, the first thing you do is cry yourself to sleep. That's not going to be helpful [though]. I'm not saying that you are not supposed to cry or feel sad. It's normal. But at the same time, you have to learn that it's just a rejection and that's fine. Maybe next time you're going to get the part. You have to learn this mentality at the beginning." (Participant 6)
Remaining positive and active despite difficulty	

Discourse and dimension	Example quote
Driving components of the performance	
Using empathy to relate to the character	"I'm not anything like this character. But you have to empathize to any little human aspect you can find about them and connect to that. So, I empathise with his feeling of loneliness and not being understood by society. Maybe that's a catalyst for some of his actions. I don't empathise with his actions; but could empathize with this idea of possibly feeling lonely in a society that he feels rejects him. Or his mother never gave him the love that he needed." (Participant 8)
Using imagination to create the characters world	"[Using imagination is] helpful to have a specific image of a character in your mind, but you have to understand that a character can always change … because an idea of a character in your mind can be completely different from the idea of a character in the mind of another actor." (Participant 6)
Using perspective taking to identify with characters	"Empathy and perspective taking come hand in hand because I can't step into the shoes [of another] if I can't empathize. Feeling for someone so much that I can [relate to them]." (Participant 5)
Using arousal to perform	"I think it's helpful for the actor to have a little bit of fear and I guess that is nerves and "using nerve". (When actors say, "Oh yeah, no, it's good to have a little bit of nerves, keeps you on edge.") … It is genuinely useful on a on a sort of psychophysiological way, the fear … can be a fuel for the actor because it drives their objective and it informs the inner conflict without fear, we're just walking through life like a bunny rabbit with rainbows and flowers." (Participant 8)

Scores of all participants on all questionnaires

Table I: Questionnaire score results for all participants in 2020

Participant ID	Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale - Phase I	Toronto Alexithymia Scale - Phase I	IRI - Perspective Taking - Phase I	IRI - Fantasy - Phase I	IRI - Empathy - Phase I	IRI - Personal Distress - Phase I	Physical Health - Phase I	Psychological Health - Phase I
1	75	23	10	14	13	3	14.29	15.33
2	45	38	4	24	17	21	13.71	13.33
3	75	38	19	21	16	15	10.29	14.67
4	76	49	11	17	16	6	13.14	14
5	69	38	20	17	17	13	13.14	13.33

6	86	22	26	14	18	7	14.86	15.33
7	53	48	18	19	17	7	11.43	9.33
8	58	33	18	9	16	3	10.86	10.67
9	96	24	27	19	23	4	16	16.8
10	61	60	19	21	23	14	10.86	14.67
11	56	68	15	22	24	17	10.86	11.33
12	56	64	23	6	20	5	13.71	15.33
13	59	40	12	12	15	7	13.14	15.33
14	80	27	18	10	16	3	13.14	14
15	65	63	14	14	21	17	12	13.33

16	69	53	16	16	24	15	13.14	12.67
17	61	35	11	12	17	4	12.57	13.33
18	69	43	17	22	17	5	13.71	12
19	70	60	15	18	20	7	11.43	14
20	57	33	20	13	21	8	12	12.67
21	81	60	20	13	24	9	13.71	14.67
22	53	46	19	12	20	14	10.29	10.67
23	17	27	22	24	17	9	15.43	16.67
24	73	30	12	9	13	13	13.14	13.33

25	95	32	20	22	22	4	14.29	14
26	63	43	14	18	12	12	14.86	12
27	69	28	21	16	22	6	9.14	12.67
28	63	55	17	15	17	15	13.14	14
29	76	42	15	16	19	6	15.43	16
30	46	43	20	17	14	14	12	11.33
31	67	46	17	19	18	10	12	11.33
32	55	43	21	12	16	12	13.71	10.67
33	68	49	23	22	21	11	12.57	14
34	76	40	18	21	20	8	14.29	14.67

35	93	29	16	22	18	0	14.29	16
36	88	22	26	20	24	5	10.86	16
37	65	59	8	15	15	16	12	14.67
38	78	68	20	24	22	6	11.43	10
39	56	51	22	17	22	9	13.14	12
40	51	63	13	24	24	26	9.14	9.33
41	74	58	18	23	18	13	11.43	12
42	88	37	16	14	16	3	15.43	15.33
43	60	41	21	20	24	7	13.14	12
44	74	31	17	20	19	9	12.57	12.67

45	70	46	22	24	21	13	12	12.67
46	52	40	14	15	13	12	14.86	11.33
47	71	73	17	24	23	11	13.14	12
48	44	58	25	23	24	19	9.14	9.33
49	63	41	20	21	20	9	10.86	13.33
50	58	48	20	14	17	7	8.57	10.67

Social Health - Phase I	Environmental Health - Phase I	Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale - Phase I	Acting Questionnaire - Creating Character - Phase I	Acting Questionnaire - Before Performance - Stage I	Acting Questionnaire - During Performance - Stage I	Acting Questionnaire - After Performance - Stage I
14.67	14.5	54	45	34	12	20
10.67	16	38	42	44	18	16
12	13	50	35	44	13	23
8	15.5	39	35	34	18	20
14.67	16.5	49	35	29	17	26

14.67	19	52	33	28	11	14
10.67	12.5	35	33	28	15	18
8	11.5	38	30	19	10	8
20	19	69	41	31	19	29
14.67	14.5	43	28	37	16	31
4	4	27	43	40	15	37
10.67	11.5	49	34	30	12	9
8	18.5	45	42	39	11	17
13.33	15	48	28	28	13	17
13.33	15	37	45	32	17	21

14.67	15.5	49	44	37	19	24
17.33	14	52	36	37	13	18
12	15.5	49	38	28	16	22
13.33	14.5	42	31	36	19	27
16	15.5	49				
16	16.5	39	38	35	17	
6.67	14.5	27	39	30	15	22
20	18	56	42	33	20	22
14.67	17	52	34	33	13	12
10.67	13	59	44	28	22	34

16	14	39	32	31	15	25
10.67	17	42	38	24	19	18
13.33	15.5	49	36	28	13	16
14.67	17.5	49				
14.67	15	49	45	36	18	34
13.33	14.5	38	40	38	11	21
13.33	11	36	30	21	12	22
20	16.5	51	45	34	16	24
16	15	53	37	35	17	25
20	19	68	45	25	14	23

20	20	46	38	36	20	28
12	10	46	36	31	15	23
16	12.5	33	39	39	20	14
13.33	13.5	42	39	34	21	25
8	11	21	31	33	13	20
16	12	50	44	40	18	23
12	17	68	36	34	17	26
14.67	11	44				
12	17	49	40	34	16	22
9.33	11.5	41	35	29	19	21

13.33	15.5	39	37	36	18	19
4	11	28	45	39	15	26
16	13	35	46	40	19	23
12	13.5	41	29	23	12	12
13.33	13	42				

Table II: Questionnaire score results for all participants in 2021

Participant ID	Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale - Phase III	Toronto Alexithymia Scale - Phase III	IRI-Perspective Taking - Phase III	IRI - Fantasy - Phase III	IRI - Empathy - Phase III	IRI - Personal Distress - Phase III	Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale - Phase III	Physical Health - Phase III
1	31	53	4	26	25	24	35	10.86
2	59	59	12	16	17	19	28	8
3	67	55	17	19	20	6	53	13.71
4	69	36	19	14	23	5	57	14.29
5	77	33	21	24	26	16	52	13.14

6	66	51	13	18	21	10	42	13.71
7	84	27	21	12	26	6	60	14.29
8	58	61	2	14	17	22	45	13.14
9	42	53	19	19	21	16	35	11.43
10	66	32	19	19	25	7	58	12
11	41	53	20	19	23	13	39	12
12	72							
13	96	25	27	24	26	4	70	16.57
14	63	43	17	23	24	10	52	13.14
15	19	74	9	10	12	14	15	9.14

16	66	48	19	26	26	7	48	9.71
17	68	41	15	16	20	9	40	10.86
18	66	36	12	11	14	6	61	13.71
19	80	72	16	8	19	16	38	9.71
20	62	54	19	14	22	10		
21	70	41	12	16	18	9	42	11.43
22	90	37	28	28	28	12	65	15.43
23	51	56	26	27	28	10	27	11.43
24	60	48	14	16	18	16	37	13.71
25	75	24	23	26	26	6	35	8

26	77	50	14	12	17	1	42	12
27	71							
28	59	53	17	21	21	13	35	13.71
29	64	32						
30	64	36	17	22	18	18	45	12.57
31	62	59	7	20	19	20	43	9.71
32	72	73	12	24	24	8	33	8.57
33	68	77	21	28	27	9	24	12.57
34	39	65	10	28	27	28	24	10.29
35	100	29	17	14	12	17	56	15.43

36	41	64	26	28	28	19	36	9.14
37	66	48	22	28	28	7	43	12
38	67	41	21	13	21	9	49	11.33
39								
40								
41								
42								
43								
44								
45								

46

47

48

49

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Psychological Health - Phase III	Social Health - Phase III	Environmental Health - Phase III	Acting Questionnaire - Creating Character - Stage III	Acting Questionnaire - Before Performance - Stage III	Acting Questionnaire - During Performance - Stage III	Acting Questionnaire - After Performance - Stage III
12	10.67	14.5	50	45	23	24
7.33	8	8.5	28	20	13	8
15.33	12	14				
12	16	14.5	35	25	15	19

14.67	16	15	48	45	20	24
13.33	8	15	36	33	17	22
15.33	20	18	39	33	11	16
13.33	9.33	10.5	36	34	16	22
12.67	9.33	15	39	30	17	21
14.67	13.33	15	37	34	18	21
10	13.33	12	32	23	14	18
16	18.67	18.5	45	34	21	25
10.67	10.67	13	42	36	16	20

7.33	6.67	8				
14	13.33	12.5	41	38	15	24
12	16	6.5	42	42	17	32
16	10.67	18	35	35	13	22
11.33	13.33	11.5	47	41	21	16
16	18	12.5	42	43	11	27
17.33	18.67	18.5	46	45	16	24
9.33	17.33	13	36	35	17	25
9.33	9.33	14	40	32	12	12

12	12	17.5	42	27	17	20
14	8	14	38	34	12	21
12	13.33	14	39	34	13	30
15.33	18.67	18	48	31	13	19
14	10.67	9.5	41	32	17	17
10.67	8	12.5	46	39	22	32
9.33	14.67	12.5	41	37	18	16
8	9.33	14.5	33	29	14	8

17.33	20	20	40	36	20	32
9.33	17.33	12	47	39	17	27
12.67	13.33	13.5	37	30	16	15
13.33	17.33	17	41	35	15	27

Recruitment Email for Interview

Re: Invitation to an Interview – UCL research study on Mental Health and Emotional Resilience in Actors

Dear: (*Name*)

Following your participation in the first phase of the research study on mental health and resilience in actors, I am writing to **invite you to a in person interview**. As stated before this study is conducted by the department of Psychology and Language Science at the University College London.

Participation includes **two interviews** both of the duration of **1 hour.** One interview will be done in the **coming weeks** while the other will be held in **one year's time**. These interviews will be done online via the video chat function of Microsoft Teams. I will list bellow all possible time slots that are available for interviews. If you agree to participate in this phase of the study, you either can choose one hour within the given time slots or get in touch with me to agree on a time that may suit you better.

Times: Monday from 8 am to 9 am and from 12 pm to 7 pm

Tuesday from 8 am to 9 am and from 12 pm to 7 pm

Wednesday from 8 am to 9 am and from 12 pm to 7 pm

Thursday from 8 am to 9 am and from 12 pm to 7 pm

Friday from 8 am to 9 am and from 12 pm to 7 pm

Appointments during the weekend are available upon request

Initially, we will agree upon a date and time for the first interview. Once closer to the second interview I will contact you again with possible time slots for the second interview.

During the interview we will talk about acting in more detail. For instance, I will be asking you to describe to me how you prepare your roles and to what extend this preparation differs in regard to different plays and characters. I will also ask you whether your work has affected your mental wellbeing so far and if so in what way.

Our decision to invite you to an interview is based on the results of the resilience scales that you have completed during the online survey which have been either relatively high or low. I will be able to go into more detail about these during the interview.

The general inclusion criteria for the interview phase are identical to those of the questionnaire phase.

We interview students or professional actors who:

- have more than 2 years of acting experience
- are older than 21
- are residents of the UK
- have recent professional acting experience
  - Senior actors who have 7 or more years of experience within the profession: I would expect your last professional engagement no more than 6 years ago
  - Younger professionals with less than 7 years of experience: I would expect your last professional engagement no more than 2 years ago

To communicate your interest of coming to an interview please respond to this email and indicate your availability for interviews.

If you would like additional information about the study, prefer to discuss alternative time slots or have any questions or queries, please contact me either via email on julia.grieshofer.17@ucl.ac.uk or give me a call on +4369917073935.

Thank you for your consideration, and once again, please do not hesitate to contact us if you are interested in learning more about this by the Ethical Committee approved project.

Julia Grieshofer

PhD candidate in Psychoanalysis

University College London

CONSENT FORM FOR PROFESSIONAL ACTORS IN RESEARCH STUDIES

Please complete this form after you have read the Information Sheet and/or listened to an explanation about the research.

Title of Study: Getting in and out of role: What does the aesthetic work of acting entail and is resilience a central factor in the actor's ability to perform?_____

Department: __Division of Psychology and Language Science _

Name and Contact Details of the Researcher(s):__ Julia Grieshofer; e-mail: Julia.grieshofer.17@ucl.ac.uk

Name and Contact Details of the Principal Researcher: Elizabeth Allison; e-mail: e.allison@ucl.ac.uk

Name and Contact Details of the UCL Data Protection Officer: Alexandra Potts data-protection@ucl.ac.uk_____

This study has been approved by the UCL Research Ethics Committee: Project ID number: 18115/001_____

Thank you for considering taking part in this research.

The person organising the research must explain the project to you before you agree to take part. If you have any questions arising from the Information Sheet or explanation already given to you, please ask the researcher before you decide whether to join in. You will be given a copy of this Consent Form to keep and refer to at any time.

I confirm that I understand that by ticking/initialling each box below I am consenting to this element of the study. I understand that it will be assumed that unticked/initialled boxes means that I DO NOT consent to that part of the study. I understand that by not giving consent for any one element that I may be deemed ineligible for the study.

	1.	I confirm that I have read and understood the Information Sheet for the above study. I have had an opportunity to consider the information and what will be expected of me. I have also had the opportunity to ask questions which have been answered to my satisfaction and would like to take part in (please tick one or more of the following):
	2.	PHASE 2: I would like to take part in (please tick one or more of the following): **Face-to-face interviews (or virtual interview due to the current Covid related restrictions)**
	3.	I understand that I will be able to withdraw my data at any time without giving a reason and without prejudice or it affecting any benefits that you are entitled to. If you decide to withdraw your data will be destroyed unless you agree otherwise. (16.1)
	4.	I consent to participate in the study. I understand that my personal information – *e-mail addressed, phone number, data on age, gender and mental health -* will be used for the purposes explained to me. I understand that according to data protection legislation, 'public task' will be the lawful basis for processing, and 'research purposes' will be the lawful basis for processing special category data.
	5.	**Use of the information for this project only permitted to the researchers that take part in this study which includes Elizabeth Allison, Christine English, Patrick Lutyen and Julia Grieshofer** I understand that all personal information will remain confidential and that all efforts will be made to ensure I cannot be identified. I understand that assurances on confidentiality will be strictly adhered to unless evidence of wrongdoing or potential harm is uncovered. In such cases I may be obliged to contact relevant statutory bodies/agencies.

	I understand that my data gathered in this study will be stored anonymously and securely. It will not be possible to identify me in any publications.
6.	I understand that my information may be subject to review by responsible individuals from the University or monitoring and audit purposes.
7.	I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving a reason without being affected by it.(10.2)
8.	I understand the potential risks of participating and the support that will be available to me should I become distressed during the course of the research. (10.3 - PIL)
9.	I understand the direct/indirect benefits of participating.
10.	I understand that the data will not be made available to any commercial organisations but is solely the responsibility of the researcher(s) undertaking this study.
11.	I understand that I will not benefit financially from this study or from any possible outcome it may result in in the future.
12.	I understand that I will not be financially compensated for the portion of time spent in the study. Instead, I will receive information about my result of the data submitted and about the general outcome of the study; this won't change if I choose to withdraw.
13.	I agree that my anonymised research data may be used by others for future research. [No one will be able to identify you when this data is shared.]
14.	I understand that the information I have submitted will be published as a report and I wish to receive a copy of it. Yes/No
15.	I consent to my interview being audio/video recorded and understand that the recordings will be: - stored on UCL servers using specialized software before the transcription. - destroyed immediately following transcription. To note: If you do not want your participation recorded you can still take part in the study in the first phase of the study.

16.	I hereby confirm that I understand the inclusion criteria as detailed in the Information Sheet and explained to me by the researcher.	
17.	I agree that my GP may be contacted if any unexpected results are found in relation to my health and/or mental health. (Please provide the name and contact details from your GP or from a therapist or support group.) (16.4)	
18.	I am aware of who I should contact if I wish to lodge a complaint.	
19.	I voluntarily agree to take part in this study.	
20.	I understand the use of information for this project and beyond. I understand that, personal data that will be collected includes demographic data (on age, gender, city of residence, contact details – e-mail address and phone number) and data on acting education and work experience. And I understand that this data will be deleted at the end of the project.

I would be happy for the anonymised data I provide to be archived at UCL.

I understand that other authenticated researchers will have access to my anonymised data. | |

If you would like your contact details to be retained so that you can be contacted in the future by UCL researchers who would like to invite you to participate in follow up studies to this project, or in future studies of a similar nature, please tick the appropriate box below.

	Yes, I would be happy to be contacted in this way	
	No, I would not like to be contacted	

_____   _____

_____

Name of participant   Date   Signature

_____   _____

                            _____

Researcher   Date   Signature

<u>Participant Information Sheet For Professional Actors</u>

UCL Research Ethics Committee Approval ID Number: 18115/001_

YOU WILL BE GIVEN A COPY OF THIS INFORMATION SHEET

Title of Study: Getting in and out of role: What does the aesthetic work of acting entail and is resilience a central factor in the actor's ability to getting in and out of role?_____

Department: _Division of Psychology and Language Science_____

Name and Contact Details of the Researcher(s): Julia Grieshofer, e-mail: julia.grieshofer.17@ucl.ac.uk; Dr. Christine English, e-mail: c.english@ucl.ac.uk _____

Name and Contact Details of the Principal Researcher: Dr. Elizabeth Allison; e.allison@ucl.ac.uk_____

1. Invitation Paragraph

You are being invited to take part in a PhD research project on acting and emotional resilience. Before you decided to take part, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what participation will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Participation is completely voluntary, and you may withdraw from the study at any point. Ask us if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information before giving your consent. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part. Thank you for reading this.

2. What is the project's purpose?

This study is looking at **psychological processes that actors use to act** which may account for certain psychological difficulties actors face when performing. Secondly, the study will explore what role **resilience** plays in regard to the **actor's work**.

The process of acting confronts actors with peculiar demands, especially in regard to mental health which only recently has become a priority. For instance, problems in form of intrusions by the character into the personal life of the actor and personal conflicts that take over performances are very common. Unfortunately, there is a lack of scientific knowledge on **personal resources on how to attune to a character and withdraw afterwards** which is why we are conducting this research. We are also interested in whether **resilience plays a role during this process**. (15.8) Therefore, the research aims to describe the psychological processes involved during performance in more detail and investigate what role resilience plays within this process.

3. Why have I been chosen?

Participants will be recruited based on their **age** and their **work experience**. (15.1)

I limit the lower age limit for participation **to 21** while there won't be an upper age limit. The lower age limit allows you to have engaged with or finished drama school as well as it allows for having acquired first professional acting experiences.

Given that I will ask you about the techniques that you as an actor use prior, during and after performance – to get into role, to remain in role and to disengage from it – the main inclusion criteria is **having acting experience**. I would expect that you to have worked **at least 2 years** within the industry prior to participating in the study.

This professional acting experience should preferably be as recent as possible. This means, if you are a senior actor with more than 7 years of professional acting experience, I would expect your last professional engagement to lie no more than 6 years in the past. Whereas, younger actors (who have less than 7 years of acting experience) last professional engagement should be no more than 2 years ago.

4. Do I have to take part?

It is entirely up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you do decide to take part you will be given this Information Sheet to keep (you can download a hard copy of this electronic version) and you will be asked to sign a Consent Form within the next step. You can withdraw from the study at any time without giving a reason and without prejudice or it affecting any benefits that you are entitled to. (15.4) You can also withdraw from the study after the data collection has been already completed, if you wish to do so. However, you would have to inform the researchers before or right after you have been informed about the results of the research, because after that personal data will be deleted and your data will not be identifiable anymore. If you decide to withdraw you will be asked what you wish to happen to the data you have provided up that point.

5. What will happen to me if I take part?

The project is designed in four phases that will evolve over 1 year. To better understand what will happen to you during the research, I will explain shortly the main structure of the project:

During the initial phase 74 participants, (2) both male and female equivalently, will be recruited to fill out five different questionnaires. Based on the result of the questionnaires eight participants will be chosen for face-to-face interviews of the duration of one hour in phase two. (15.5) During phase three and four this same structure will be repeated after one year to validate the data (i.e. the same 74 participants will be asked to complete the same set of questionnaires, and the same 8 participants who were selected during the first round of interviews will be interviewed once more).

Thus, you will be asked to **complete a questionnaire** of the duration of 15 to 25 minutes. This questionnaire includes six scales (on quality of life, quality of mental health, resilience, perspective taking, emotional processing and acting) and is fairly easy and quick to fill out as most questions in the scales are designed as rating scales from 0 to 7 and you have to indicate how much you agree or disagree with the statements. (15.5) This means you simply need to indicate how much you agree with a statement on a scale between 0 to 7. You will be asked to fill out the questionnaires twice, once at the beginning of the research and then the same questionnaires will be repeated after one year. For this no in person contact is needed and it can be done online. If you do not wish to be contacted for the follow-up interviews you can indicate that at the end of the questionnaire.

After you have completed the questionnaire, you may be asked whether you would be willing to participate in two one-hour **interviews** in addition to filling out the questionnaires. One interview will take place at the beginning of the research and it will be repeated just as the questionnaires at the end of the research. This interview may be done either in person or via the phone. The interviews would preferably be held in person within UCL, thus living in London would be an advantage.

Travel expenses will not be reimbursed.

6. Will I be recorded and how will the recorded media be used?

(15.11) You will only be recorded, if you agree to come to an interview but not if you only fill out the questionnaires. If you come to an interview, the procedure will be the following:

Before the interviews you will be asked for your consent to record the interviews. These audio recordings of the interviews made during this research will be used only for analysis and for transcription. The recordings will be safely stored on UCL servers, and the original recordings will be destroyed immediately after they have been transcribed. No other use will be made of them without your written permission, and no one outside the project will be allowed access to the original recordings.

7. What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?

The topics that I intend to discuss involve, among others, personal opinions about health and acting, therefore you may feel uncomfortable to discuss those in an unprotected environment. To secure a private setting and shield you from unwanted interruptions, I will arrange a private room within UCL. While if the interview is via phone or video call you will have to organise this yourself. (15.13)

The process of interviewing may raise awareness of difficulties in dealing with your work and/or already present mental health issues. This may lead you to experience unexpected and/or unpleasant feelings. If this should be the case, we will offer a debriefing to talk through your experiences if you wish to do so. (15.9)

Interviews will be either held over the video chat with Microsoft Teams or face-to-face at UCL. If you find the questionnaire or interview phase upsetting a de-briefing can be offered after the interview. (15.14)

(15.2/3/7) In case that you experience upsetting or distressing feelings during the questionnaire or interview phase you can contact me to arrange an individual debriefing. During this debriefing we would talk about the study in general, and in particular about the aspects that you found distressing. If necessary, I will provide information on mental health services that might be able to assist you further at a later point and can also help you making contact with them.

Here I will provide names, addresses and short descriptions of these mental health institutions in case you feel you would be interested in seeking professional assistance without my help.

Names of institutions:

Psychotherapy options:

British Psychotherapy Foundation

Address: 37 Mapesbury Road, London NW2 4HJ

Phone: +44(0)2084529823

Website: britishpsychotherapyfoundation.org.uk

This organization provides psychodynamic and psychoanalytic psychotherapy.

This is a more intensive form of therapy than CBT and focuses more on interpersonal and intrapersonal issues than on behavioural ones. A range of schemes with reduced-fees are available for those with low fee incomes, if one is prepared to attend intensive psychotherapy or psychoanalysis.

The Inner City Centre for Psychotherapy

Phone: +44(0)2072471589

Website: icclondon.org.uk

There are numerous locations throughout London. A reduction is offered on daytime weekly sessions and there is no specific time commitment in terms of therapy duration as it is the case within other institutions.

The London Clinic of Psychoanalysis

Address: 112a Shirland Road, London W92BT

Phone: +44(0)207563 5002

Website: psychoanalysis.org.uk

You can attend via self-referral; the first consultation takes place usually over one or two meetings to evaluate whether psychoanalysis is suitable for you. Following the consultation sessions you may attend up to 5 times a week. Low-fee sessions may be arranged for those with low-income.

IESO Health

Phone: +44(0)1954230066

Website: uk.iesohealth.com

This is a free therapy service organized by the NHS and is conducted via internet. You can self-refer if you are living in Camden and are registered there with a GP.

Westminster Pastoral Foundation

Address: 23 Magdalen Street, London SE1 2EN

Phone: +44(0)2073782000

Website: wpf.org.uk

Low-fee both short- or long-term individual therapy options are available, as well as group therapy. From Monday to Saturday. Clients can choose between

psychodynamic psychotherapy and cognitive behavioural therapy. Low-fee sessions may be available on weekdays.

Minister Centre

Address: 20 Lonsdale Road, London Nw6 6RD

Phone: +44(0)2076446240

Website: minstercentre.org.uk

The Minister Centre offers numerous therapy options as low-fee, integrative, open-ended individual psychotherapy. Sessions are usually administered by senior trainees who are under supervision.

Association for Group and Individual Psychoanalytic Psychotherapy

Address: 1 Fairbridge Road, London N19 3EW

Phone: +44(0)2072727013

Website: agip.org.uk

This institution offers long-term psychoanalytic psychotherapy, expecting patients to stay in therapy for two years. Low fee analysis may be available upon request.

The Bowlby Centre

Address: 1 Highbury Crescent, London N5 1RN

Phone: +44(0)2077005070

Website: thebowlbycentre.org.uk

The Bowlby Centre offers psychoanalytic psychotherapy and attachment-based therapy that focuses on attachment issues to others. Upon request low-fee therapy may be available.

General help for managing distress:

Think CBT

Phone: +44(0)1732808626

Website: thinkcbt.com/london

This is a time limited and low-cost CBT therapy service that is administered by BABCP-accredited therapists in diverse place across London. They offer help

for all kinds of problems as anxiety, depression, OCD, low self-esteem, etc. This service provides flexible evening and weekend appointments.

Anxiety UK

Phone: +44(0)8444775774

Website: anxietyuk.org.uk

This service offers therapy options face to face, via phone or video call to help with anxiety from Monday to Friday. Among the techniques used are CBT, hypnotherapy and counselling. The payable fees depend on your annual income.

8. What are the possible benefits of taking part?

Whilst you will not receive any immediate material benefits for participating in the project, it is hoped that this work will provide a space where you may safely reflect about your work and the personal resources connected to it. (15.10)

Furthermore, this study will reveal new understanding about the creative work actors are involved in, which will be shared with the participants at the end of the research. Potentially, indications may be given about which psychological strategies seem to work better to help actors engage, maintain and disengage

from a role and what may aid the actor psychologically speaking to sustain the work.

9. What if something goes wrong?

In the case of queries or complaints, you can contact either the Principal researcher who is handling this

project or the Chair of the UCL Research Ethics Committee. Each issue will be given consideration.

Regarding any complaints your first person of contact is generally speaking the **Principal Researcher** (Elizabeth Allison – e.allison@ucl.ac.uk).

This assures that the researchers are given the opportunity to solve the problem prior to involving the Research Ethics Committee. This regards explicitly but not solely participants complaints regarding their treatment by researchers.

In comparison, the Ethics Committee will get involved if the issue raised is of a more serious nature, for instance a reportable serious adverse event. If a concern that you have raised has not been handled to your satisfaction by the Principal Researcher, you always have the option to contact the **Chair of the UCL Research Ethics Committee** as a second instance – ethics@ucl.ac.uk.

10. Will my taking part in this project be kept confidential?

All the information that we collect about you during the course of the research will be kept strictly confidential. Before processing your data, the data will be

anonymised, so that you will not be able to be identified in any ensuing reports or publications.

11. Limits to confidentiality

- Confidentiality will be respected subject to legal constraints and professional guidelines.
- Please note that assurances on confidentiality will be strictly adhered to unless evidence of wrongdoing or potential harm is uncovered. In such cases the University may be obliged to contact relevant statutory bodies/agencies.
- Please note that confidentiality will be maintained as far as it is possible, unless during our conversation I hear anything which makes me worried that someone might be in danger of harm, I might have to inform relevant agencies of this.

12. What will happen to the results of the research project?

The result of the research will be anonymously included within a **PhD thesis** that will be concluded by the end of summer 2022. At this point, if you opted in on being contacted, you will be informed about the outcome of the study and in which arm of the research you were involved in (the resilient or not resilient group). You will not be identified in any report or publication.

A summarised version of this thesis may be **published as a paper** at a later point by a known publisher (not yet clarified). If you would be interested in receiving a copy of the published paper you can state this when filling out the questionnaires. I will keep a record of that to share with you either the link to the study or the paper itself at the end of the study.

All your personal data will be deleted by the end of the project. Merely the anonymized data – that cannot be linked back to you - gathered during the course of this project might be archived within UCL's Data Repository and used for additional or subsequent research.

13. Local Data Protection Privacy Notice

Notice:

The controller for this project will be University College London (UCL). The UCL Data Protection Officer provides oversight of UCL activities involving the processing of personal data, and can be contacted at data-protection@ucl.ac.uk

This 'local' privacy notice sets out the information that applies to this particular study. Further information on how UCL uses participant information can be found in our 'general' privacy notice:

For participants in research studies, click here

The information that is required to be provided to participants under data protection legislation (GDPR and DPA 2018) is provided across both the 'local' and 'general' privacy notices.

The categories of personal data used will be as follows:

- e-mail address
- phone number
- gender
- age
- country of residence
- education
- amount of work experience
- include any special category data which may be captured eg data concerning **health**

The lawful basis that will be used to process your personal data are: 'Public task' for personal data and' Research purposes' for special category data.

The lawful basis that would be used to process your *personal data* will be performance of a task in the public interest.

The lawful basis used to process *special category personal data* will be for scientific and historical research or statistical purposes.

Your personal data will be processed so long as it is required for the research project. This will be approximately until July 2022. If we are able to anonymise or pseudonymise the personal data you provide we will undertake this, and will endeavour to minimise the processing of personal data wherever possible.

If you are concerned about how your personal data is being processed, or if you would like to contact us about your rights, please contact UCL in the first instance at data-protection@ucl.ac.uk.

14. Who is organising and funding the research?

University College London

16. Contact for further information

For further information or needed clarification about this study you can either reach out to the primary supervisor of the project – Elizabeth Allison (e.allison@ucl.ac.uk) or contact the PhD student who is conducting this study – Julia Grieshofer (julia.grieshofer.17@ucl.ac.uk).

You will be given a copy of the information sheet and, if appropriate, a signed consent form to keep.

Thank you for reading this information sheet and for considering to take part in this research study.

UCL RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE
OFFICE FOR THE VICE PROVOST RESEARCH

8th August 2020

Dr Elizabeth Allison
UCL Psychoanalysis Unit
Division of Psychology and Language Sciences

Cc: Dr Christine English & Julia Grieshofer

Dear Dr Allison

Notification of Ethics Approval with Provisos
Project ID/Title: 18115/001: Getting in and out of role: What does the aesthetic work of acting entail and is resilience a central factor in the actor's ability to perform?

Further to your satisfactory responses to the Committee's comments, I am pleased to confirm in my capacity as Chair of the UCL Research Ethics Committee (REC) that your study has been ethically approved by the UCL REC until **3rd September 2022.**

Ethical approval is subject to the following conditions:

Notification of Amendments to the Research
You must seek Chair's approval for proposed amendments (to include extensions to the duration of the project) to the research for which this approval has been given. Each research project is reviewed separately and if there are significant changes to the research protocol you should seek confirmation of continued ethical approval by completing an 'Amendment Approval Request Form'
http://ethics.grad.ucl.ac.uk/responsibilities.php

Adverse Event Reporting – Serious and Non-Serious
It is your responsibility to report to the Committee any unanticipated problems or adverse events involving risks to participants or others. The Ethics Committee should be notified of all serious adverse events via the Ethics Committee Administrator (ethics@ucl.ac.uk) immediately the incident occurs. Where the adverse incident is unexpected and serious, the Joint Chairs will decide whether the study should be terminated pending the opinion of an independent expert. For non-serious adverse events the Joint Chairs of the Ethics Committee should again be notified via the Ethics Committee Administrator within ten days of the incident occurring and provide a full written report that should include any amendments to the participant information sheet and study protocol. The Joint Chairs will confirm that the incident is non-serious and report to the Committee at the next meeting. The final view of the Committee will be communicated to you.