

What could possibly go wrong? The role of supervisors in ethics training for creative practice researchers

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Abstract

In a university research lounge over lunch, three new PhD candidates talk about their projects. With confirmations of candidature imminent, they are excited to share where they have got to – they have all had research epiphanies recently – and are keen to gather any feedback they can. While confident practitioners, being relatively new to the research space they are still grappling with what ethics ‘means’; if their personal ethics are the same thing as university ethics; and whether or not their supervisors are guiding them in the right ways. We use fictional vignettes to illustrate the kinds of dilemma regarding ethical conduct that are often faced by creative practice research degree candidates. We bring together our collective experiences of research degree supervision and conducting creative practice research to discuss the role we play in facilitating research know-how, to interrogate and bridge the gap between the academy and the world.

Keywords

creative practice research; ethics; supervision; candidate journey; methodology

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Introduction

In a university research lounge over lunch, three new PhD candidates talk about their projects. With confirmations of candidature imminent, they are excited to share where they have got to – they have both had research epiphanies recently – and are keen to gather any feedback they can. One is a designer, and her PhD uses creative practice strategies to help migrants create visual stories of home. Her research question asks: ‘How can interactive storytelling techniques combined with digital platforms provide nuanced accounts of migrant experiences?’ The research question is loose at this early stage of the candidature. Tapping into ideas of genocide, suicide, death, trauma – whatever the migrants want to draw on – these stories, which she envisages will become an installation as well as an interactive website, will function as therapeutic and cathartic practices from which the migrants can find agency in a foreign land, and peace within themselves. She tells her fellow candidates that her supervisors are thinking that this project could make a massive difference to people’s lives, a real world impact.

Another PhD candidate is a filmmaker. He wants to interrogate the relationship between narrational voice and editing, and will make a series of short films that explore how best to ‘give voice’ to the queer community, in particular young queer people who have recently come out under difficult circumstances. Using a combination of ethnography and guerilla filmmaking techniques, the candidate will undertake the role of editor and reflect on the process of doing so. His initial research questions are: ‘What is the relationship between the editor and the subject when the theme of the film is unfamiliar to the former?’ And, ‘How might marginalised voices be captured and edited to give agency, and ultimately transgression, to those voices?’

The third candidate is an artist who plans an intervention in an urban children’s playground, where she will place cupcakes on a picnic table each day at 4pm for a week and set up a live webfeed from GoPro cameras hidden around the table. She is interested in the dynamics of play in playground spaces and how children’s imaginations and sense of agency might be ignited by cosplay. Her research questions are still very broad and ask: ‘What counts as “play” and “cosplay”?’ ‘What are the relations between children and adults in playground spaces?’ And, ‘How might cosplay provide children with diverse voices and enhance their sense of their own agency?’ She will appear at the table herself as the host, like a 21st century Mad Hatter-type character dressed in a mythical cosplay costume – a different costume for

each day of the week – and chat with whoever comes to the playground. She is excited by the possibility of spontaneous participation, and what the children’s innate reactions might bring to the project. She and her supervisors anticipate that her emergent questions will coalesce to be refined and consolidated through creative experimentation in her chosen site of an urban children’s playground.

The PhD candidates are animated about the common concerns between their projects, and are already thinking about how they might work together to support each other in collegial ways. They are each interested in voice and agency; in the marginalised, vulnerable and suffering; and how their research can demonstrate ways in which creative abilities can help others. They have heard whispers in university corridors about something called ‘impact’, and feel that these projects are right on the money in that regard. They have also heard that during confirmation of candidature events, panel members often bring up the topic of ethical conduct of research. What do the others think of this, each of the candidates asks? The university has policies to ensure that all research conducted under its imprimatur conforms to the spirit of the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research* 2007 (Updated 2018) (*National Statement*).

. Researchers need to complete the University’s ethics application form, which is then reviewed and approved by research active academics. The *National Statement* contains four clear values and principles to be followed in terms of human research participants, which may be summarised as being ‘respect for human beings, research merit and integrity, justice, and beneficence – help to shape that relationship as one of trust, mutual responsibility and ethical equality’.

The designer knows she will have to look into applying for ethics approval at some point. She will probably have to get some participant consent forms signed, given she will be working with people, but that should be ok because it is very common in design. As long as she can document that they agree to be part of the project and know that she will be curating their visual stories, she should be ok. But she might need to have these forms translated into different languages. She believes her project has intrinsic merit, integrity, justice and beneficence and that her participants could trust her not to sensationalise their stories.

The filmmaker wonders about the model release form, but thinks about this more and decides no, he will have to go through ethics. It will be a simple procedure, though, because the young queer community will know what they are stepping into, and now that they have ‘come out’, there will be nothing major at stake in terms of their privacy. And surely participating in a project that will help others in similar circumstances is a good thing? The

filmmaker feels that he can easily tick off research merit and integrity, justice, and beneficence because of his subject matter.

The artist thinks she can probably put up some signs in the playground and around the table, stating that this is part of a research project. She'll be pretty conspicuous in her costume as well. Anyone entering the playground will understand that they are part of a participatory art research project. She recalls going to an installation at a local gallery by an artist researcher that had been set up in this way, which also showed live feeds of CCTV footage from the various parts of the space. The signage actually added to the installation because it used a famous quote about surveillance from Phillip K. Dick (1968 np): 'There will come a time when it isn't "They're spying on me through my phone" anymore. Eventually, it will be "My phone is spying on me!"'. There was also text stating that it was a research project, and that people entering the space would be captured on CCTV. There were clear precedents in art research practice so she felt could prove merit and integrity.

The PhD candidates in the scenarios see themselves as good people who want to use their skills and contributions to knowledge for the greater good (if indeed such a thing exists). In the contemporary academy, however, – and in particular, the research education space – 'the greater good' can often be subsumed by notions of participation, permission and proof-of-consent. While these are important aspects of research education, they could be seen to 'take away' from a deep connection with the ethical issues at hand: ethical procedures over ethical know-how, perhaps. Ethical know-how is a notion developed by Francisco Varela and we draw on this idea here to uncover how tacit understandings of beneficence drawn from various professional contexts come into play when addressing the four values identified in the Australian National Statement on Ethics.

In this chapter we examine the role supervisors play in training PhD candidates in ethics approval processes as a part of their overall research training. Drawing on our collective experience of supervising candidates across a range of creative writing, screen and media practice forms, we pull apart, question and put back together questions of ethical research conduct in creative disciplines, mapping the terrain in which, we believe, supervisors play a vital role. We use the technique of fiction storytelling, which we have published on previously when discussing the roles played by supervisors in research degree mentoring (Berry and Batty,

2016), to help bring life to the topic; as a way of injecting energy and affect into our discussions, in the hope that they are better understood and/or felt.

Part 1: The landscape of ethical conduct

The three PhD candidates in the research certainly do not seek to harm people, and they are respectful of the people they wish to draw into their creative projects. Where they may lack in ethical literacy, they certainly make up for in passion for change. But is that all there is to it? To begin to address the kinds of know-how our three candidates need to develop, let us turn to Bolt et al (2016) who distinguish between procedural ethics and the type of ethical know-how that is located within a creative artist's practice. This 'know-how' needs to be brought into alignment with what institutions and government policies identify as ethical conduct of research. Bolt et al. (2016) build their case by referring to Varela's (1999) series of lectures, so let us follow their path and also return to Varela's first lecture to the part where he asks: 'How can one best understand ethical know-how? How does it develop and flourish in human beings?'

Explicitly through advising on drafts, and implicitly through responding to ideas, it is part of our role as supervisors to help candidates develop understandings of ethical know-how, in order that we are providing scaffolding for a robust and meaningful research education experience that will have a positive influence on the future research community. Arguably this in itself is another form of ethical conduct. To do this we need to understand the shapes and forms that ethical know-how can take in our disciplines, and in direct relation to this, the variety of research methodologies we use.

The language of the National Statement assumes that the overall methodology of a research project, including its methods and analytical strategies, is known at the start of the process. Furthermore, it is assumed that the research design comprises methods or techniques that can be clearly articulated and are commonly understood, such as surveys, interviews and focus groups. Terms like 'participant', 'data' and 'informed consent' are not problematised, the assumption being that researchers know what these terms mean. In creative practice research contexts, however, these terms can take on very different meanings; or else new terms are required altogether. For supervisors of creative practice projects, there are many concepts to be aware of and complexities to negotiate, not only within the supervision but also outside of it, such as at milestone review events and with relevant research managers and ethics committees. It behooves supervisors to assist their candidates on how to interpret and apply the terms 'participant', 'data' and 'informed consent' within their own research projects.

In our experience, as creative practice researchers and supervisors, the guidelines present a source of anxiety and consternation for researchers who use a wide spectrum of creative practice approaches, including practice-led research and research-led practice (see Smith and Dean, 2010), and other, more general practice-based strategies (see Haseman, 2006). Many of these challenges are about articulating a creative practice research methodology that may be intuitive or inductive, and that can evolve and shift over the course of a project. The challenges are also related to a fear about people becoming participants (e.g., people who give feedback; people who are being fictionalised; people who are models or actors in a project) and what constitutes 'data'. The terms 'participant', 'data' and 'informed consent' are not a part of the vernaculars associated with creative practice so they need to be translated. This in itself is problematic: how should we translate concepts and terms drawn from science-based paradigms for creative practice research in the academy?

According to creative practice researcher and supervisor Brad Haseman (2006: 100), practice-based research is 'concerned with the improvement of practice, and new epistemologies of practice distilled from the insider's understandings of action in context'. Haseman was frustrated with the limitations of modifying existing research methods to accommodate creative practice research, as well as the need to write up one's research into a form that could be easily recognised by the academy. He was also frustrated with the need to shoehorn creative practice research into forms that are driven by older research paradigms, such as textual and discourse analysis, and familiar scientific methods that emphasise testing hypotheses. Similarly, it could be argued that creative practices have their own, ethical know-how linked to established practices and processes. As with Haseman's frustration with methods and methodology, the issue here seems to be one of establishing a dialogue within the academy about ethical conduct as seen in creative practice, and gaining recognition and credence accordingly.

It is easy to become distracted by such problems of finding a common language or terminology, however, the real issue is what ethical conduct might look like in creative practice research contexts. This can, in fact, go right to the heart of the creative practice itself, and all of its surrounding socio-cultural values and norms. If we return to the *National Statement*, it is actually concerned with ethical conduct or research as being such that it sets out to *minimise harm and inconvenience* to research subjects. Candidates coming to ethics from this perspective are, from our experience, more open to discussing ethics than they are to closing the conversation down and electing to use different research methods.

As supervisors – or advisors – our role is to guide our research candidates through the maze of the university’s ethics approval process, but not just for the sake of filling in the right form correctly. Rather, our role is to navigate the maze so that the candidates connect deeply with ethical know-how and ‘doing the right thing’ in their future careers and practices. Ethics is a key part of research training; we are reminded of the educational psychologist’s Vygotsky’s pedagogical dictum or zone of proximal development which holds that what a child can do today holding a teacher or mentor’s hand, she will be able to do tomorrow by herself (Cazden, 1996). It is therefore important candidates learn that ethical conduct is not just a compliance issue, but should function as a genuine consideration and assessment of the risks and benefits to any potential participants in their research, and the broader value of the research. This is a key capability of all researchers, irrespective of their field or mode of research with all of its associated epistemologies, ontologies and methods.

As supervisors, therefore, we need to interrogate the gap between ‘institutional research know-how and the practices of creative practitioners in the world’ (Bolt et al., 2016: np) together with our candidates. Know-how is about tacit knowledge and expertise. As practitioners our knowledge is situated, responsive, dynamic and often intuitive as well as inductive. This know-how needs to be cultivated and illuminated through discussion with research candidates so that they can begin to understand and identify the conditions and limits of their know-how.

Bolt et al. (2016: 103) tentatively propose that ‘the opportunity of creative practice research is to find that middle way between spontaneity and rational calculation’, and that thinking about ethics can provide a valuable opportunity, for candidates and supervisors alike, to think about creative practice research methods; how research can switch between intuitive ways of working and propositions to be tested, and between spontaneity and planned activity.

Having set up the ethical landscape as it pertains to creative practice research, we now return to the fictional cases outlined in the Introduction and look at how they progress with their research, examining (playfully) the types of issue they encounter. Our approach is through a supervisory lens in order that we might provide some ideas about how to engender connections between ethical know-how and deliberations within the academy. As with any traditional ‘journey’ structure, we present the vignettes to show the progress and setbacks of our three hypothetical PhD candidates, who are trying to satisfy the requirements of the university ethics committee. In our previous work on creative practice research supervision we argued that ‘Like a novel or screenplay, there are protagonists and antagonists, emotional transformations, dramatic twists and turns, and nearly always rising tension – especially in the

domain of creative practice, where methodologies and research artefacts are still debated and contested' (Berry and Batty, 2016: 247). Here we build on this to offer a critical-creative exploration of some of the implications and interrelationships of the National Statement for the Ethical Conduct of Research; ethical know-how associated with disciplines and creative professions; and the requirements of university bureaucracies in the form of ethics committees.

Part 2: The ethical position

The designer, with the idea for a website where migrants can tell visual stories of home, feels that storytelling has a therapeutic function: she wants to be able to provide a space where traumatic stories can be shared. She assumes that people would contribute stories on a voluntary basis, and the works would be available for all to access. She had attended an exhibition that had used the sounds of a rail yard evoking the Holocaust train journeys interspersed with survivor stories and black and white portrait photographs (Trotter 2016). She wants to do something similar but with more recent migrants; but which community she should work with? And does she need to make that decision now? She looks at the ethics form and decides she does not need to, she can just say how she will approach a few communities and then go with the one that seems the most enthusiastic.

The filmmaker has already decided that there are standard industry forms that documentary filmmakers use and he can submit these with his ethics application. He downloads the ethics form and sees that he needs a working with children check¹ if any of his interviewees will be younger than 18. He figures he has no problem there because he already has one, and so the ethics for his project should be relatively straightforward. The merit of his project is obvious and he has an industry background and reputation in documentary making, so he does not anticipate any issues. After all, the ethics committee will see the good that he is intending to create.

The artist decides that she does not need a consent form. Instead she will write some participation information blurb under her artist's statement, and put up signage to the effect that the installation area is covered by CCTV-type cameras and that footage may be used in future projects. She also has a working with children card from a project she did with a year two teacher at a primary school, so she does not see a problem in children wanting to interact with her when she undertakes the performance installation. In fact, she can use this contact to publicise her installation as well as sending it through to her professional networks. It would be great to have some kids turn up, she thinks, to add a richness and authenticity to the work.

She asks her fellow candidates what they think about what she is doing, and whether there are ethical problems and they do not see any issues either.

The three candidates look at the risk assessment and management section on the ethics form, and decide that it does not really apply to them because all they are doing is talking to people and sharing food. It is not like they are asking people to do anything unusual or strenuous, or are taking DNA samples from them, they joke. What could possibly go wrong? They all agree that they have filled out their forms really well, and look forward to receiving positive feedback from their supervisory teams so that they can crack on with the work. Feedback from their supervisors raises a number of issues, including: the danger of potentially re-traumatizing people by talking about traumatic memories; working with vulnerable people; providing food with potential allergens to children; and, videoing people without their explicit knowledge. It is clear from the feedback that the candidates have to think more broadly and deeply about their projects and ethical conduct of research.

The candidates discuss their respective feedback and wonder where they went wrong. Did they miss an ethics session at the induction session? Was it covered in their research methods training? Should the supervisors have discussed ethics with them at the very start, even during the application process, when they received feedback on their proposals? While disappointed and disillusioned, the candidates agree to spend some time together to work out how and why they went wrong, and also if they can create some kind of document for other candidates (and maybe supervisors), so that others are not caught out in the same way. As they think about a template, they begin to understand that ethical conduct really does depend on the context and project, and that there is no simple one size fits all solution. Equally, what might be acceptable within their respective professions is not sufficient in the context of research.

The designer shares her supervisor's feedback, which raises concerns about the possibility that asking a person about traumatic events that happened in the past has the potential to re-traumatise that person. She had not really thought about that, assuming that if they consented to speak they were comfortable with it. Documentary makers and current affairs people seem to do this all the time when they ask interviewees about traumatic events and journeys. What is the main difference here? While this appears to be an acceptable and unremarkable practice in mainstream media, within a university research context it is seen as problematic and potentially fraught. The supervisor's response has alerted her to the ethics requirement that one should minimize harm. Together with her fellow candidates she starts to craft a response, now bearing in mind how her project might have the unexpected consequences of re-traumatising her participants. She is glad that her supervisor has made her think about the

fact that revisiting stories of home may have negative consequences for her participants, though she wishes the topic had come up earlier. She needs to do more reading in this area, and she will revise her methodology accordingly. She also commits to finding out what counselling referral services would be most appropriate for her participants should they need support, something that she will include in her revised ethics application.

The filmmaker quotes back e-mails from his supervisor, which make comments about queer youths being a vulnerable community, and that they could be open to bullying from unscrupulous, homophobic and bigoted groups unless he puts measures in place to protect their identity, even if they are willing and outspoken participants. He feels terrible that he never thought of these things, and wonders about his previous projects in the industry: did they have any negative consequences that he has never considered? He worries about this, but his fellow candidates tell him he should move on and see this as good feedback that will enhance his future work, in or out of the academy. For his PhD project he brainstorms ideas about how he can best ensure that no harm is created for his participants. Maybe he should film all the interviews in the CBD of Melbourne, in one of the graffiti laneways, so as to not reveal where the participants live? Or how about filming them as shadows projected on Flinders Street station? He begins to think of unconventional ways of filming the interview that would also extend documentary practices into new directions.

The artist is a little less reluctant to accept the feedback, wondering if she does not, in fact, need another opinion. She has worked in this setting before and it has never been a problem, so why should it be one now? Her peers try to point out some of the dangers her supervisor has raised, such as food allergies and the need to have a person trained in how to use an EpiPen close by, and the need to reveal the presence of hidden cameras as well as disclosure that a live feed is being transmitted to a website. They do, however, also understand her position as an artist who, as she has made clear, has no long-term intentions to work in the academy. They debate the topic of disclosing the presence of cameras and wonder if there is a compromise: what if, instead, she puts up signage about the project so that as parents and children walk up they can read about it? Or would this disrupt the element of serendipity she is seeking?

From their discussion, it becomes clear that while they may have been naive in considering the ethical position and possible unintended consequences of their work and, they admit, they should have read more of the introductory research materials sent to them by the graduate research school, they did want a more proactive and open discussion with their supervisors. They needed to work through terms like 'participants', 'informed consent' and

‘data’ with their supervisors in order to understand how these terms were reflected in their own research projects. They agreed that more awareness of ethical considerations and consequences would have been useful at the proposal stage, especially because they felt their methodological intentions were clear at that point. There was a general feeling that their industry and arts-based backgrounds had not prepared them so well for this type of thinking, and that perhaps universities for whom creative practice research is strong ought to pay more attention to the transitional identity from creative practitioner to creative practice researcher. They fully agreed that becoming an independent thinker and researcher underpins a PhD, but it does not happen like magic – there needs to be guidance and support.

Part 3: The ethical dilemma

It is the ethics committee meeting, and the members are discussing the three candidates’ applications. The first application on the agenda is the designer’s. It has been given to two social scientists to review. One of the social scientist’s own area of research expertise is migrant studies, and he notices that the applicant has not distinguished between refugee groups: they all seem to be bundled in together in the application. There also appears to be no consideration of potential language issues, because there is no mention of using interpreters and/or translators. This reviewer feels that the project is worthy in terms of merit and beneficence nonetheless, but wants to know how language issues will be handled. The ethics committee decides that before the application can be progressed, it needs further information about how language issues will be managed. It also wants clarification about how people on temporary protection visas will be handled in regard to vulnerability, safety, anonymity and mental health. The committee questions the need to include asylum seekers on temporary protection visas.

The second application on the agenda is the artist’s. The committee loves the project and the clarity of the application. It sounds like great fun and it is heartening to see that the candidate has thought about food allergies by having cute little signs on the table warning about the potential presence of nuts and other allergens because she will be providing commercially available snacks and this is in line with the disclosure statements on the packaging. The committee feels that the implied consent signage around the area with the picnic will be effective. Regarding issues of surveillance and the artist’s part in the performance, it is not as if she will be lurking in the bushes; rather, she will be in plain sight wearing a colourful costume and there will be clear signage indicating that participants will be video and audio recorded if they choose to engage with the artist. The application is unanimously approved.

The filmmaker's application is up next. One of the reviewers has a background in child protection services. She points out that the participants do not necessarily need parental permission when a committee reviewer raises this question and refers to a handbook put out by the Royal Melbourne Children's Hospital by Merle Spriggs (2010). However, the reviewer does agree that the applicant needs to pay more attention to mask the interview locations because it can be relatively simple to identify places. If the filmmaker reveals his participants' names, even with their full agreement, and shows the local places where they hang out, his participants could be very easy to trace. It is discussed how even simple things like streetscapes and faces can reveal details that could potentially put his participants at risk of harassment from homophobes. The committee wants to see how the researchers – the candidate and his supervisors – are thinking about these potential issues, and what measures they propose to manage these risks.

The candidates receive their feedback from the committee. After discussing things with their supervisors, they meet for coffee to see how each of them has gone. The designer is happy with the result, though she knows that there is still a little more work to do. That said, she is happy that the feedback points towards very practical and logistical issues, rather than epistemological concerns; even though being asked to consider her ethical position more deeply has informed her approach to knowledge making. She does wonder, though, if – given the nature of this required work – the university will assist her financially with interpretation and translation costs. Are there sources of money that are set aside for ethical practices? Or, should she only work with those who have good English, to feel confident that they fully understand the consent form?

The artist reads from her letter from the committee, which to her delight reveals the backing of her project. She is heartened to see that the committee values the playful nature of her artistic practice, and beyond specific things that could in any scenario cause harm or health issues to people, understands her creative approach to research. She was expecting a battle ahead, and she is grateful for the way that her supervisor not only picked up on practical issues, but also deepened her thinking about research that involves other people.

The filmmaker is concerned about the outcome, and shares his insecurities about what the committee has asked. He starts to doubt his practice: what kind of a filmmaker does not even realise when they might be putting their subjects in danger? Was he so wrapped up in the aesthetics of the work that he glossed over any potential harmful ramifications? The others comfort him by talking about the very different parameters that are put around a research project compared with an industry project. The main thing is that he is seeking to do good, not

harm and this was acknowledged by the reviewers; and if university ethics feedback can help him develop as a practitioner as well as a researcher, is that not a good thing?

It becomes apparent from their discussion that the advice of the supervisor has, for the main part, been productive. And this is felt on a number of levels. As well as helping them move through their candidature successfully, they all agree the way they conceive of their practice in the world, both in and outside of a research context, has shifted, or has at least been clarified through pausing and reflecting. While they still wonder about the level of ethical discussion that might take place during the application stage, they feel that being ‘thrown in the deep end’ is not all that bad. Conversely, it has taught them to be more aware and more resilient. They wonder how they might see themselves at the end of candidature. Having gone through various research initiation exercises, not least the ethics process, will they still even call themselves practitioners? Or will they regard themselves as practitioner-researchers?

Part 4: The towards ethical know-how

Six months later and the candidates are in the full throes of their research. They all passed their Confirmation of Candidature milestones and feel fully revved up to do good work. They are also experiencing what it means to be an ethical researcher and practitioner, and all agree that their practices have evolved in noticeable and important ways: they now think more deeply before they do.

The artist is looking over her video. She is selecting scenes that she can include in her documentation of the work, which she will annotate with reflections. The installation and performance went really well. She decided in the end to leave feedback sheets on the other picnic tables for the parents. Most of the feedback sheets said that people were thrilled to encounter such a whimsical scene in the picnic area. The signage disclosing the nature of the research project stipulated that that as parents and children entered the space and chose to engage with the artist dressed in a colourful costume they were providing implied consent that they would be video and audio recorded and that the videos and audio would be used in a PhD research project and may be presented at conferences and other semi-public forums. The signage about implied consent and the hidden cameras added to the magic because parents felt safe letting their youngest children join in the fun. They were also reassured that they were warned the cupcakes potentially had traces of nuts in them, and that they were not gluten free. People noted how they felt the artist had a real sense of social responsibility. Interestingly, they also said that they would like to see local councils and arts councils fund more projects like this. They saw a clear benefit because performance art such as this encourages their children

to read books and to play outside. The artist smiles at this point: this was not the intention of the project, with the current research questions focusing on how children's imaginations and sense of agency might be ignited by cosplay, but she can use this feedback in her next arts grant application. The feedback also proved her with a way to refine her research questions. She decided that the observations about performance art's and cosplay's potential to encourage reading in children was a direction worthy of further research.

The designer is overwhelmed by the level of response to her project, and feels like she has developed a careful, considered methodology to facilitate the stories of the migrants. In the end she decided that she would work with a specific refugee community and exclude asylum seekers that had not yet gained refugee status. Working with just one community would help her to develop a meaningful relationship with her participants. She decided to employ an interpreter to help with language issues, too. She made sure she distributed contact details of relevant support services so that if participants became distressed she could direct them to relevant support services. She also decided to undertake training in cultural sensitivity, as well as in oral history, to deepen her own knowledge as a practitioner. She and the interpreter are now considering writing a paper together about the experience for a migrant studies journal.

The filmmaker reflects on his rushes each day, listening carefully to the interviews and considering how their voices and gestures have a deeper resonance relating to the subject matter. He is surprised at how, in contemporary Australia, there are still young gay people who feel frightened, call themselves failures, and wish they were someone else. He knew there would be a range of interesting 'coming out' stories but he never expected such raw and deep experiences. He considers his previous work and how, even when documenting interesting people, he was more interested in the look of the work and how he could show off his directing skills. Something has stirred him with this project, and now he thinks the content of the work far overrides any aesthetic concerns. It is in this vein that he has decided to shift the topic of his work slightly, away from the participants themselves and more towards society as a whole: what structures and processes are in place that can make someone feel like this? His ethical know-how has expanded from practical and tacit knowledge about what constitutes ethical conduct in documentary filmmaking to include a broader knowledge of national policies and university contexts.

Conclusion

In this chapter we have presented a range of hypothetical PhD candidates' ethical 'becoming' through the lens of a journey towards ethical know-how. Presented as a type of hero or

heroine's journey, their processes of setting out into the unknown world of ethical research conduct, as it is expressed in National Guidelines and government policy, have been documented. On this journey, and in relation to advice given/not given by their supervisors, the candidates have their own tacit working knowledge of ethical conduct in relation to their disciplinary and thematic contexts. There may be dissonances in terms of language and research paradigms, but these have been unpicked and translated through careful thought and robust discussion.

Our candidates felt they did have agency as practitioner-researchers, and that the formal ethics application process, while frustrating and bureaucratic at times, did help them to think about their own ethical positions and their practical ethical know-how as drawn from their experience in the creative industries. They learned that the voices and agency of their participants were paramount to how ethical conduct of research was conceived in national guidelines and interpreted through university policies, protocols and approval processes. They also understood that it was their responsibility as researchers to think through the implications of their creative ideas because despite their best intentions, there may well be unintended negative consequences and they needed to acknowledge these as risks so that they could devise strategies to minimise possible harm. Finally, they learnt that ethical know-how can (or perhaps should) be co-created with supervisors – who in some institutions have to be listed as primary researchers on PhD ethics applications – and that building this reciprocal practice into the process, including ethical discussions at proposal stage, can result in an enhanced experience of doctoral training.

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ⁱ A working with children card signifies that a person has undergone a screening process that has determined their suitability to work with or care for children. The process is designed to protect children from sexual or physical harm. Each state in Australia has a system in place to screen individuals. For an example see <http://www.workingwithchildren.vic.gov.au/home/about+the+check/>