

## Ethical Review as a Tool for Enhancing Postgraduate Supervision and Research Outcomes in the Creative Arts

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### ABSTRACT

This article outlines the potential for Research Higher Degree (RHD) supervisors at universities and similar institutions to use ethical review as a constructive, dynamic tool in guiding RHD students in the timely completion of effective, innovative research projects. Ethical review involves a bureaucratized process for checking that researchers apply risk management strategies when dealing with human participants. Ethical review can also be a powerful instrument for RHD supervisors in the creative arts if they use it to lead students through processes of imagining, articulating, and improving their methodologies and relationships with research participants. Proposed strategies involve adaptation of theories of visualization and imagination from several disciplines—imagined interaction from the social sciences and psychology, dramatic rehearsal from political science, and creative visualization from the health professions, sports coaching and many other personal–professional development contexts. By using creativity and imagination, supervisors can use ethical review to help students to ‘walk through’ the potential, progressive phases of proposed research in order to refine or redesign both ‘big picture’ strategies and specific steps taken to reach research goals. This can stimulate students to unearth possibilities that improve the quality and quantity of knowledge that their research generates and to avoid or manage problems that might disrupt their research.

### KEYWORDS

ethical review of research,  
creative visualization,  
imagined interaction,  
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### Introduction

This article outlines how university ethical review processes can assist Research Higher Degree (RHD) supervisors and students to improve the outcomes of both practice-based and traditional theses in the creative arts. Creative arts scholars are most commonly required to gain clearance from Human Research Ethics Committees or Institutional Review Boards for research in which participants will be invited to share their views or experiences in interviews, surveys–questionnaires, or focus groups; to allow a researcher to observe them; or to become involved as co-creators or consumers of practice-based research.

Some creative arts researchers might regard a positive depiction of ethical review as novel. Within the creative arts and affiliated disciplines, scholars have often criticized the standard processes and protocols for ethical review as being unwieldy, excessively time consuming, and restrictive (e.g. Davies, 2011; Richards, 2009). Others have either called for various disciplines in the creative arts–humanities to be exempt from clearance or have proposed that scaled-down or new ethical review procedures be developed (e.g. Evans, 2007; Gunsalus et al., 2007; Langlois, 2011).

Concerns have been expressed that ethical review protocols do not fully encompass the requirements, traditions, standards, and codes of practice of creative arts and similar disciplines; additionally, scholars in these fields have often lacked the language to articulate their modes of practice and risk management to ethics review bodies (Evans, 2007; Hay & Israel, 2006; Joseph, 2014; Romano, 2008).

Without denying that both ethical review procedures and review committees within many educational and research institutions may need improvement, this article identifies the positive elements of ethical review processes that can promote practices of visualization in ways that can enhance research efficiency and outcomes. The key for researchers is to take advantage of the fact that their institution's ethical review committee requires them to provide highly detailed descriptions of their research projects. Drawing from the author's experience as a university Research Ethics Advisor and insights from counterparts at other scholarly institutions, this article presents an analysis of de-identified examples to support propositions that ethical clearance procedures and visualization can foster rigorous, vibrant research. While the principles and strategies discussed in this article potentially apply to all scholarly researchers, they are particularly germane for RHD supervisors and their students. The proposed practices position supervisors to better understand their students' intentions regarding how they intend to conduct their research and to mentor the development of student projects.

### **Visualization for Creativity, Discovery, and Excellence**

Mental imagery and visualization have played an essential role in the creative thinking and conceptual breakthroughs of many of the world's most renowned artists, inventors, scientists, and mathematicians, including Einstein, Proust, Picasso, and numerous others of equal caliber (Ferguson, 1977; Miller, 2000; Shepard, 1978, 1988). This article uses insights from three different traditions for conceiving visualization—imagined interaction, dramatic rehearsal, and creative visualization—to explore what is gained when research supervisors purposefully guide their students in a process of imagining actions, behaviors, or situations that have not yet happened.

Imagined interactions are the everyday phenomenon of people anticipating conversations or meetings with other individuals who they will or they wish to interact with. These made-up verbal and non-verbal exchanges help individuals to focus, organize, and plan interactions and solve problems in ways that increase the effectiveness of their communications (Honeycutt, 2008). Similarly, creative visualization, also known as guided imagery among health professionals, involves 'using your imagination to see yourself in a situation that hasn't yet happened, picturing yourself having or doing the thing you want, and successfully achieving the results you desire' (Kehoe, 1987, p. 87). Dewey (1922) coined the expression 'dramatic rehearsal' to describe a related process of imagining strategies for addressing a new situation, question, or problem. Dewey noted that this allows the individual to play with their impulses and inclinations in meaningful experiments that extend far beyond the possibilities of real life:

Thought runs ahead and foresees outcomes, and thereby avoids having to await the instruction of actual failure and disaster. An act overtly tried out is irrevocable, its consequences cannot be blotted out. An act tried out in imagination is not final or fatal. It is retrievable. (Dewey, 1922, p. 190)

While this article refers to imagined interactions, creative visualization, and dramatic rehearsal as 'visualization', the activities are not necessarily 'visual'. When attempting to envisage what may happen in the future, some people will primarily 'see' imaginary scenes in their mind's eye. Others may conjure words and symbols into internal verbal descriptions, or the auditory, tactile, olfactory, or emotional sensations of settings, interactions, and activities that may eventuate.

I argue that when RHD supervisors assist students to combine ethical review processes with visualization, they promote reflexivity in research. Reflexivity requires that 'researchers should

constantly take stock of their actions and their role in the research process, and subject these to the same critical scrutiny as the rest of their “data” (Mason, 2002, p. 6). This article outlines how supervisors at universities and similar institutions can potentially use ethical review as a constructive, dynamic tool in guiding RHD students in the timely completion of effective, innovative research projects.

### *Rehearsal*

One of the main functions of imagined interactions is ‘rehearsal’—a trial run of future conversations to try to ensure the best possible outcome from the discussions (Honeycutt, 2003). Rehearsal is a strategic activity for any researcher because it enables preparation not just for conversations but also facilitates the personal or group goals, the various activities that may be conducted to reach those goals, and the contexts that decisions and actions are occurring in. Fesmire argues that this type of activity contributes to ‘an expansion of imagination’. He writes, ‘Rehearsal illuminates, opens up a situation so it is perceived in a new way’ (Fesmire, 2003, p. 70).

Research ethics procedures provide a ready-made context in which scholars can conduct thorough rehearsal of their research projects in the same way that a director of a play conducts rehearsals with actors, props, and settings in order to ensure optimal outcomes in a real performance. Ethical review committees require detailed descriptions of what will be involved in proposed projects from the moment a researcher attempts to find and recruit participants to the time that information from those participants is circulated as a thesis or scholarly publication. The ethics paperwork obliges researchers to anticipate and articulate their research goals, methodologies, recruitment techniques, what participants will experience, potential risks and risk management strategies, how researchers will store data, and what mechanisms they will use for publishing or circulating outcomes. This is a chance for scholars to examine their own practices in the same way that some researchers critically study films, novels, performances, and other texts. For RHD supervisors, the detailed information required for ethical review documents provides raw materials for scrutinizing the overarching narrative, the plot development, the relationship between research protagonists, and the location, timing, and nature of their students’ proposed research activities. In this rehearsal, the student researchers are the lead protagonists, and it is possible to pause or review specific scenes for detailed analysis.

An example of how an RHD supervisor used ethical review as an opportunity for rehearsal occurred when one doctoral student proposed to interview members of a community group that had initiated collective legal action in relation to a traumatic crime they had experienced. Both the scholarly literature and the student’s previous professional work indicated that people who survived this type of crime would rarely publicly reveal their status as crime victims. As a group, they suffered high rates of mental illness, self-harm, and suicide. The student proposed to adopt the same recruitment method that he would have used if he had undertaken his practice-based project in a professional context. He planned to identify the victims via court records, then telephone them to request an interview.

Using the information in the ethics review document to engage in rehearsal, the thesis supervisors and university ethics advisor forecast that the survivors might find the researcher’s approach to be emotionally demanding because the topic of the conversation would remind them of past traumas. Making the request via telephone could potentially exacerbate the problem, because it would create an onus for the survivors to respond immediately in some way, even if it was just to say ‘no’ or ‘I need time to think about it’. Survivors might feel exposed and vulnerable if the unexpected telephone call led them to realize that strangers could easily identify and approach them by using information from court records.

After rehearsing alternative recruitment methods, the student’s supervisors and ethics advisor recommended that recruitment letters be circulated to the group via their legal team. It was

envisaged that a letter would create less pressure than a telephone call, as recipients could take as long as they wished to digest the letter's contents and deal with their emotional reactions before deciding whether or how to reply. Submitting the request via the lawyers was deemed less confronting than a cold call from a stranger, because the survivors had already entrusted their contact details and information about their trauma to the legal team. They would also have control over whether they chose to respond and thus reveal themselves to the researcher, rather than starting the relationship with a potential shock that a stranger had uncovered their status as victims.

In developing his proposed methodology, the student drew almost exclusively from preexisting paradigms, norms, and methodologies that he had learnt about during his professional career. By contrast, the supervisors and ethics advisor used the research ethics application as a window to visualize the student's project in order to conceive new recruitment methods and to pretest their utility. Rather than actively lead the student in attempting his own proactive visualizations, they modeled the strategic function of imagined interactions. These are to rehearse messages and meetings, and consider not just what a person—in this case, a researcher—might say and do but also how other people will respond (Honeycutt, 2008).

### *Looking from Helicopter and Close-up Views*

Via visualization, researchers can regard their project from the helicopter view—an overview of planned activities and outcomes without close-grained focus on specific details. This focus on the broad perspective rather than the correctness of each small step is particularly valuable for RHD supervisors when they are helping students to scrutinize whether proposed research or creative methods are constructive in reaching desirable endpoints. In explaining this approach to innovation and creativity, de Bono explained: 'It may be necessary to be on the top of a mountain in order to find the best way up' (1970, p. 40). Similarly, via visualization, researchers can also take a close-up view of specific activities and phases within the larger research process. Rehearsal places the supervisor in a powerful position to inspect individual steps of their students' primary research activities and assist them in judging whether methodologies, tools, and strategies might be improved.

The example of an Honors student illustrates how ethical review procedures prompt both helicopter and close-up analysis that can strengthen research methodologies in creative arts theses. The student initially planned to conduct journalism-style interviews and photography to create a coffee-table book and media articles about East Timorese freedom fighters, whom he would recruit via a snowballing technique in which the first one or two of his research participants would identify further participants from among their acquaintances. His submission of an ethical review application initiated an extensive dialog about the risks of this methodology. The risks included the possibility that interviewees might experience emotional stress from revisiting traumatic experiences during interviews or might be subject to reprisals if they were identifiable in the book or articles.

Following deliberation, the student acknowledged: 'The lessons learned from the ethics application process proved critical in shaping my approach' (von Dietze, 2012). He described his revised methodology as 'a break from conventional short-form journalistic interviewing' where the goal was finding 'nice succinct "grabs"', a media industry term for short segments from a longer interview that are quoted due to their compelling tone or concise summation of an important point (von Dietze, 2012). His revised approach drew more from ethnography and oral history than journalism. The ethical review process also led to many smaller changes to fieldwork activities (von Dietze, 2012).

The ethical review of this Honors student's project unsurprisingly focused on addressing ethical issues in his methodology. The student, however, argued that his research would have benefited from foresight and guidance about multiple issues that were unrelated to ethical matters. These

included cultural issues, transport problems, difficulties with communications technology, and other challenges that he experienced during fieldwork.

It is worth noting that the literature says little about these sorts of apparently minor logistical issues, perhaps because the advice can seem too mundane to pass on to others. . . . If I had known in advance that these types of issues might arise, I would have coped better. While I learned from the experience, the learning process would have been faster had I been fore- warned. (von Dietze, 2012)

While the aforementioned doctoral student was a spectator of his supervisors' rehearsal, the Honors student's statements indicate that with the benefit of hindsight he would have preferred greater active participation in visualization-style processes during his research planning and design stages. The rich methodological and project description that was provided via the ethics application could have been an impetus and potent ingredient for deep reflection and brainstorming about questions, goals, and methods for the entire research process—not just ethical matters. The example of the Honors student shows, however, that mentorship from a supervisor or other experienced researcher may be necessary for RHD students to launch or conduct these types of visualization processes. As the Honors student indicated, textbooks and other literature often lack the exhaustive detail that students need to be able to imagine scenarios and actions that might eventuate during their projects.

Not all RHD students would welcome the changes that might be afforded if their supervisors compel them to use ethical review to conduct helicopter or close-up analysis of their projects. RHD students might be averse to dedicating time and effort to such activities or could resent the compulsion to alter their initial plans or mindsets. Such unwillingness was observed in the Honors student discussed above. The Manager of Research Ethics at his university noted that the student initially expressed 'a reluctant, almost aggressive view' to ethical review; it was only as the project progressed that the student shifted toward 'a view that embraced the process and partnership that developed' (von Dietze, 2012). Indeed, research reflexivity involves 'the act of asking oneself difficult questions in the research process' (Mason, 2002, p. 7).

### *Augmenting Spontaneous Discovery*

In addition to the effort involved in visualization and rehearsal, such processes would represent a substantive adjustment of research culture for many creative arts researchers who engage in practice-based and practice-led research. In the following section, I acknowledge the very valid hesitations of some creative arts scholars to extensively pre-plan their practice-based or practice-led research. I point to ways in which visualization can actually enhance the creativity of such scholars in developing their research questions. I argue that once creative practice has commenced, visualization also can help those scholars to better manage and observe the complex processes of creating, circulating, or consuming artistic products. Finally, this section draws on insights from other disciplines whose scholars similarly engage in the cycles of action, observation, reflection, and further action that are commonly seen in creative arts research. Such disciplines have worked around the seeming rigidity of ethical clearance requirements, by conducting phased ethical review applications that match the progressive stages of their research projects.

In practice-based and practice-led research, scholarly knowledge is produced via creative action—the making of artifacts (including performances) rather than simple observation concerning artifacts, their production, their producers, or the sociopolitical contexts in which they are generated and disseminated. Two rival views posit when reflection about creative action should occur. Most models adopt the approach that creative action is preceded by and dependent on creative thought. Rival philosophies posit that creative action without prior reflection and planning can lead to unexpected but important innovation that can only be reflected on and understood after the fact (Carruthers, 2007). This type of original thinking is often associated with the improvisation that regularly occurs in musical, dance, and other live performances. The concept of

using ethical review to conduct preemptive visualization is not likely to be immediately salient to creative arts RHD students, supervisors, or other researchers who follow the second philosophy, which promotes reflection during or after artistic practice rather than as a rehearsal prior to such practice.

Rehearsal may also hold no immediate attractions for practice-based researchers who draw on artistic traditions of problem finding. In the problem finding paradigm, artistic activity is often commenced without an explicitly defined goal. As Getzels and Csikszentmihalyi (1976, p. 247) have elaborated, 'a creative problem cannot be fully visualized in the "mind's eye"', and instead the processes and outcomes of creative work generate the question.

Creative work is the concrete statement of existential problems which previously were experienced only as diffuse tensions. ... Through 'trial and error,' 'logical analysis,' and preconscious 'inspiration,' the artist moves closer and closer to a statement of the specific problem that his unique experience has produced. (Getzels & Csikszentmihalyi, 1976, pp. 243–244)

In this context, it is relevant to remember that visualization is not only useful when there are precise 'problems' or situations to address. Dewey emphasized that prior to using dramatic rehearsal to seek answers or solutions, it is necessary to identify the true nature of problems by unearthing and reflecting on causal factors, issues, and trends. Dewey noted:

The poignancy of situations that evoke reflection lies in the fact that we really do not know the meaning of the tendencies that are pressing for action. We have to search, to experiment. Deliberation is a work of discovery. (1922, p. 216)

Even when creative arts or other researchers engage in extemporization, preemptive visualization can contribute toward both problem finding and problem answering. While practice-based and practice-led research may often involve highly spontaneous activities, the situation is analogous to that experienced by football teams. Despite the high requirement for impromptu decision-making and action in football matches, players train consistently under the leadership of coaches to plan general strategies, plays, and movements prior to performance in order that team members can focus more fully on settings, stimuli, and responses as events unfold. Similarly, RHD supervisors can coach students to use visualization to develop skills, tactics, and approaches that can be deployed in otherwise spontaneous creative research activity.

When RHD supervisors teach students to rehearse their research activities, they uphold the principle espoused by Pasteur that 'in the fields of observation, chance only favours the mind which is prepared' (Vallery-Radot, 1915, p. 79). Insight and discovery are most likely to germinate when previous action or thought has cultivated a fertile environment. In this context, visualization creates the milieu and tools to propagate creative and scholarly imagination, innovation, intuition, and invention.

Some researchers, however, have questioned how visualization of research projects that involve progressive and overlapping phases of problem finding and solving can be reconciled with the rigid requirements of ethical review (Grinter & O'Connor, 2012). Ethical review committees stipulate that before they can give approval for research to commence, the researcher must provide concrete, written descriptions of research goals, methodology, participants, and other fundamental elements of the project. Halse and Honey are among many who have contended that: 'The institutional discourse of ethical research often represents the practice of research as an ordered, linear process with objective principles/rules that inform/direct ethical decision-making and moral action' (2007, p. 336).

Grinter and O'Connor (2012) have proposed that scholars could address such problems if they were aware that ethics committees offered researchers the opportunity to lodge staged ethical review applications. Staged approval occurs when the researcher lodges an ethical review application to conduct only the initial phases of research. The application outlines the problems, methodologies, and risks as they are understood at that point. The researcher flags in the application

that the project will have further stages in which research focus, questions, methodologies, risks, and participant involvement will evolve. As each stage of the research project unfolds, a new application is lodged via what is commonly called a 'Variation' process.

Although Grinter and O'Connor employ participatory action research (PAR) paradigms in their own research, their methodological approach shares numerous commonalities with much creative arts practice-based research. Both PAR and creative arts practice-based research position researchers as participants rather than simply spectators in the phenomenon being studied. Both PAR and creative arts practice-based researchers often commence their projects by tentatively defining a problem, then conducting data gathering and reflection, which leads them to redefine the problem. This may be followed by further redesigning of the methods, data capture, additional reflection, and subsequent problem redefinition in an ongoing cycle that can continue for extended periods (Kemmis, McTaggart, & Nixon, 2014).

Grinter and O'Connor (2012, p. 4) argued that rather than being obstructive to research, ethical review 'can often reveal issues to which those undertaking PAR may be oblivious, precisely because of their close involvement with the participants as co-researchers'. Their conclusions can similarly be applied to creative arts research. With staged ethics applications, each progressive phase of ethical review becomes an opportunity for creative arts researchers to conduct visualization to explore their personal subjectivities as creators of artifacts or as collaborators with other artists or community members.

### *Removing Blinkers*

Creative arts research regularly exposes, confronts, and transcends commonly accepted social assumptions and boundaries, and visualization can play a lead role in these processes of innovation and discovery. In order to surpass the prevailing conventions, RHD students and other researchers require an awareness of the dominant cognitive schema that they and others in their communities use to acquire, code, store, retrieve, and use information that they gather from their socialization, social connections, conversations, observations, and vicarious experiences. Each person's understanding and actions are driven by scripts—a form of schema for how to behave, what is expected in various situations, and how to achieve desired goals (Schank & Abelson, 1977). Deliberately activating existing scripts through imagined interaction can help individuals to perceive and 'reconstitute' those scripts and the schema that underlie them (Honeycutt, 2008, p. 78). Thus, the levels of project visualization that are required by ethical review process provide researchers with opportunities to recognize, reformulate, or rise above the scripts and schemas that may affect how they design, conduct, and interpret their work.

Visualization and rehearsal also provide opportunities for RHD supervisors to help their students to anticipate what they will need to focus on during primary data gathering. In some forms of primary research, researchers may face more stimuli than they can reasonably process, particularly when working with multiple participants or complex environments. For example, they may need to simultaneously observe, record, and respond to the verbal content of participants' messages, their body language and non-verbal cues, patterns of interactions with other people or objects in the environment, attributes of the location in which the research is taking place, among other matters. While people try to undertake several attention-demanding tasks or operate in environments with multiple stimuli, it is common for them to suffer from what psychologists dub 'inattentional blindness'. This occurs when people fail to see, hear, or feel plainly discernible objects or stimuli because their attention is elsewhere (Mack & Rock, 1998). Prior visualization helps researchers to anticipate when, where, and how they need to concentrate. Mental images also assist a parallel, simultaneous processing of information, which may reduce cognitive strain, especially when individuals have a high mental load (Helstrup, 1988; Kaufmann, 1988).

Research also indicates that rehearsal can help people to cope better when faced with unfamiliar conditions or problems. When people encounter contingencies or new circumstances, they tend to activate schemas and scripts unconsciously, using them as an autopilot that guides their actions, reduces anxiety, and improves the fluency of their communications (Allen & Honeycutt, 1997; Honeycutt & Bryan, 2011). In such circumstances, people are best served by scripts that are purposefully developed for anticipated conditions, rather than calling into play scripts that have been developed through disparate experiences and encounters outside the new situation (Honeycutt & Bryan, 2011). This type of reflexivity about ethical or other research challenges is not necessarily 'prescriptive in the sense that it specifies in the abstract precisely what a researcher should do', but instead it 'encourages researchers to develop the skills to respond appropriately' (Guillemin & Gillam, 2004, p. 277).

These processes are more than a dispassionate assessment of what schema researchers should use or what stimuli they should focus on when conducting research. Researchers can use visualization to plumb to the core values that motivate their work. In reflexive research, researchers go beyond the 'facts' of research ('what do I know?'), so that they also construct and question their own interpretations of that research ('how do I know it?') (Hertz, 1997, p. viii). Visualization, rehearsal, and deliberation ideally absorb input from people's intellect, emotions, and imagination so that they can discover and acknowledge their own preferences and values (Dewey, 1920).

On this point, visualization and reflexivity do more than simply enlighten students about how their values, understandings, and behaviors affect their research. Visualization can also enlighten RHD supervisors, as they are integral members of the student's research team. According to Manathunga (2007), supervisors' subjectivities and positions of power can define and delimit the development of RHD students' projects and their evolving identity as independent researchers. The practices proposed in this article can also assist supervisors to acknowledge their own power and presumptions, and how these might affect the research process.

### **Challenges of Adopting Visualization Approaches**

While individual researchers may choose personally to adopt visualization approaches, it may be more difficult to integrate them into team situations, such as supervisor–student teams. Kunstler has noted that activities such as visualization are outside some people's comfort zone and they will 'feel embarrassed about actually *doing* some of the activities', while others will use such techniques to waste time; 'Don't bother me, I'm visualizing!' (2004, pp. 236–237).

Furthermore, strategies such as dramatic rehearsal cannot be viewed as 'a cloistered soliloquy' (Fesmire, 2003, p. 71). While such rehearsal will sometimes be 'an arm-chair affair', Fesmire noted that 'it is not a matter of prancing arbitrarily in one's mind from one imagined scenario to another' (Fesmire, 2003, p. 70). In most cases, rehearsal must necessarily be supported by background research and communication—consultation with a wide range of stakeholders who can provide input necessary to understand potential priorities, choices, and actions, particularly from sources who may be affected by decisions made as a result (Fesmire, 2003). The RHD supervisor again plays an important role in helping the novice student to select and engage in relevant research and communication to support visualization.

Finally, researchers must take care that visualization opens rather than closes their mind to discoveries. The latter could occur if researchers become so fixed on the scenarios that they have imagined that when they conduct their research, they overlook evidence that is contrary to their forecasts. It could also occur when their expectations about circumstances, events, and people shape their own behavior to a degree that it leads to self-fulfilling prophecies, i.e. their own actions prompt responses from other people that led to those initial expectations being fulfilled. 'Discrepancy' is an inherent part of visualization; there will be incongruity between what someone imagines will happen and the actual interaction that eventuates (Honeycutt, 2008, p. 79). RHD



supervisors can assist students by altering them to the inherent probability of divergence between what they visualize will occur and what really transpires. Indeed, new discoveries sometimes result from studying such discrepancies, by probing the circumstances and causes of the gap between prediction and reality.

## Conclusions

In this article, I have considered the scope for RHD supervisors, students, and other researchers at universities and research institutions to exploit the latent potential of ethical review procedures to act as a tool that enhances research processes and outcomes. Ethical review documents produce a wealth of data for researchers to use when imagining, articulating, and improving their research questions, methodologies, relationships with research participants, and management of personal subjectivities and values. The use of visualization in tandem with ethical review can help researchers to anticipate delays and problems that might occur in their research, and then to avoid, manage, minimize, or cope with such contingencies by pre-developing a repertoire of potential responses. Visualization and reflexivity can heighten creativity by assisting researchers to recognize and reformulate preexisting cognitive scripts and schema, to overcome inattentive blindness, and to reflect on potential options in research processes and outcomes. These strategies involve more than simple compliance with the bureaucratic procedures and paperwork associated with ethical review, instead encouraging researchers to recognize the influence of their core values on project goals, methods, and projected outcomes.

The onus created by ethical review procedures on researchers to comprehensively describe their research process to a board or committee prior to undertaking any actual research may seem at odds with the traditions in many creative arts disciplines of independence and spontaneity. As creative arts research projects progress, there may be unexpected shifts in the methodology, location of research, the nature of the research question, and overarching topic. Staged ethical review can assist creative arts researchers who engage in research projects that involve non-linear trajectories or problem finding rather than problem solving. Staged ethical review is of particular value for research that involves cycles of reflection, defining of problems and methodologies, practice/research, data analysis, further reflection, refinement of problems and methodologies, additional practice/research, and so on.

While the principles discussed in this article apply to all researchers, they are particularly salient for supervisors of RHD students. Contemporary RHD students are generally newcomers to formal research, and rarely fit the “‘always-already” independent’ model of postgraduate scholarship that was popularized in previous decades (Johnson, Lee, & Green, 2000, p. 138). As such, RHD students are less likely than other researchers to have the ability or awareness required to independently initiate or apply visualization techniques to their research. The expertise of RHD supervisors varies enormously, but their advanced research skills and strategies afford them with the leadership capacity to use information that is generated during the ethical review process as a spyglass into all elements of the student’s research plans. Ethical review documents can offer a helicopter view of the goals, strategies, and alignment of different elements of the research project, and a close-up view of specific activities and phases within the larger research process. By using creativity and imagination, supervisors may use their experience to ‘walk through’ their students’ projects and potentially lead them to more dynamic, innovative outcomes.

## Notes on contributor

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