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Mind the research gaps: drawing on the self in autoethnographic writing

Abstract:

When writers and other scholars seek to define a ‘gap’ in knowledge for their writing, creative and/or academic, to fill, they inevitably draw on their experiences and ‘hunches’. The notion that ideas for research begin with a ‘hunch’ is ingrained in literature on methodology (Cormack, 1991). Educated guesses, organised systematically and purposefully, emerge from exploratory and reflective practice. Minding the gap – identifying, claiming and inhabiting an original space for writing – is a requirement for writers in the academy, creative or otherwise, research student or researcher. The epistemological origins of the gap go back to the self and the realm of autoethnography. However, to draw upon the autoethnographic in university discourses, artefacts and texts draws attention to another gap: the ethical gap between writers in the academy bound by a HREC (Human Research Ethics Committee) and those beyond it whose reputation licenses them to draw more freely on the world around them and its ‘others’. This study minds two gaps. It asks what the implications of inevitably drawing on the self to generate a research question might look like. Then it explores the ethical implications for researchers in autoethnographic writing who discover they need to consider the role of others in their narratives more deeply than they might as professional writers.

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Introduction

This paper draws attention to two literal gaps in the research performed by autoethnographers including creative and academic writers. The first gap is the *topos* of the metaphorical notion of finding the ‘gap’ in the research. This metaphor is so well known that it commonly appears in books about research. Also commonplace is the notion of the ‘hunch’, an idea accepted as the source of hypothesis in research literature, yet acceptable in realms of creativity due to its alliance with the intuitive. This study examines the idea of the ‘hunch’ as one possible solution to the problem of the ‘the gap’, finding one space of concurrence between the metalanguages of conventional knowledge and creative ‘knowing’. The essay claims that if any ‘hunch’ in research depends on knowing accumulated by experience and observation, then it necessarily contains an element of autoethnography, with the researcher inseparable from ideas used to identify the gap and formulate hypotheses. Part one of this study, ‘Filling the gap with a hunch’ looks at descriptions of how a creative idea originated in the exegeses of five PhD candidates enrolled in Writing doctorates. This section hopes to clarify how hunches power research in the discipline.

The second half of the paper looks into the connections between the self, the act of writing and the process of writing about writing, examining particularly the gap between Human Research Ethics Committees’ (HRECs’) precepts about the ethics of autoethnographic narratives and the work of publishing writers as they draw on their own experiences and observations to create fictionalised and imagined worlds characterised by raw verisimilitude. Inevitably, for the writer tied to the academy, there is need to follow institutional rulings, largely captured by Martin Tolich’s (2010) study of autoethnography in ethical research, but this means accepting a less raw depiction of verisimilitude since the university is obviously liable for any accidentally hurtful references to others we may make in narrating our own autoethnographies. Identification of this gap, again using ‘data’ from my doctoral supervision, suggests that writers in the academy must generate more diluted narratives of self than may be available in the world of publishing. The onus for the ethical integrity of the text ultimately belongs to the experience of the supervisor and the trust implicit in the supervisor-student dyad.

Filling the gap with a hunch

‘A hunch is creativity trying to tell you something’ - Frank Capra (1955)

All researchers, including creative and writer/researchers, are aware of the requirement of their work to constitute an original contribution to knowledge that somehow fills an identifiable “gap” in existing literature or culture. In a great deal of qualitative and empirical research, particularly in humanities and social sciences, filling the gap begins with the generation of an idea that can be performed, created or tested to the more positivist among us, through an act of research. The gap can be conceived as both the space for your hunch and the space where work or research makes a contribution or a difference. This gap is intricately connected to the notion of the ‘problem’ in research: it is a void to be filled with knowing and doing, epistemologically posing a solution to something puzzling. The puzzle is framed as a research question and the process is perceived as more or less linear: a ‘line’ of enquiry can define researchers’ methodologies and methods of collecting and analyzing ‘data’. The terminology of ‘lines’ and ‘data’ alienates creative researchers and writers, whose projects are not problem-generated and do not follow a predetermined line; but the idea of the ‘hunch’ is appealing as it is a seemingly unscientific concept aligned with intuition, associated, as in movie director Frank Capra’s quote (1955 in a 1959 volume), with the workings of creativity. Interestingly, though, it also appears in the language of conventional research.

The notion that ideas for both quantitative and qualitative research projects begin with a ‘hunch’ is ingrained in literature on research methodology (Cormack 1991). As early as 1931, chemists Washington Platt and Ross A. Baker discussed the role of intuition in science and announced ‘The relation of the scientific “hunch” to research’. Research hunches, of course, do not really come with flashes of inspiration, eureka moments or sudden bolts of lightning despite how we, and many writers, might describe our creative epiphanies (Dawson 1996; Ellis 2011). The next paragraph will move into the worlds of innovation and cognition to investigate what ‘hunches’ might be.

Eclectic science historian Steven Johnson, interviewed about innovation for *Where good ideas come from* (2011), paraphrases: ‘It’s very, very rare to find cases where somebody on their own, working alone, in a moment of sudden clarity has a great breakthrough that changes the world. And yet there seems to be this bizarre desire to tell the story that way’ (Burkeman 2010). In 2005 another contemporary innovator, Steve Jobs, said: ‘Creativity is ... connecting things. When you ask creative people how they did something, they feel a little guilty because they didn’t really do it; they just saw something. It seemed obvious to them after a while. That’s because they were able to connect experiences they’ve had and synthesise new things’ (Kreamer 2012: online, paragraph 8). The notion of convergent thinking, where something seems obvious after a while, describes the hunch; the metacognitive moment of ‘connecting’ channels the autoethnographic since ‘experience’ could be one of the catalysts. Seen this way, the hunch becomes a moment where divergent thinking (eclectic, from multiple sources, multi-associative) and convergent thought (sudden capacity to decide or swift ability to decide) meet (Guildford 1950), or when exploratory thinking fuses with evaluative (Ficke et al. 1996).

However serendipitous they seem, breakthrough ideas and solutions to writers’ blocks are the subconscious result of experience, observation, reflection and latent knowing – even for creative writers engaged in research, romantic though the inspiration of the Muse has always been (Dawson 1996). As the above suggested, hunches go deeper than the bisociative idea of putting two and two together, ‘perceiving a situation or event in two habitually incompatible associative contexts’ (Kostler 1964: 94). They are, though, one of the most creative of notions: hunches.

In a Sage-published primer on research methodologies, Ranjit Kumar (2010: 82) writes: “A researcher calls ... assumptions, assertions or statements or hunches hypotheses and they become the basis of an enquiry. In most studies the hypothesis will be based upon either previous studies or your own or someone else’s observations”. Even in the high-stakes discipline of law scholars are validating the judicial hunch as a mode of problem-solving: “Visual and verbal cues point to similarities, triggering an intuition or recognition of potential parallels, unlocking patterns and unblocking paths” (Berger 2013: 1). Such descriptions of hunches are surprisingly non-positivist in allowing subjective phenomena into the research

process and affording the problem-solver subjective space as he or she positions himself relative to the 'data' and its presentation or narrative. Indeed, if the researcher's experience and observations count as 'data' in the construction of a hypothesis, then positivist forms of science are, in fact, partially autoethnographic. The idea that sparks a hypothesis, like the breakthrough moment writers experience and describe, is grounded in the self. It is possible to 'know' and still allow a major source of knowing, 'data' if you will, to originate naturalistically in the subjective self. Steven Johnson (2012: online, paragraph 2), contributes:

most good ideas (whether they're ideas for narrative structure, a particular twist in the argument, or a broader topic) come into our minds as hunches: small fragments of a larger idea, hints and intimations. Many of these ideas sit around for months or years before they coalesce into something useful, often by colliding with another hunch.

There is consensus that educated guesses organised systematically and purposefully emerge from any form of reflective practice involving action-minded thinking (Maykut and Morehouse, 1994). Maykut and Morehouse (1994:21) assert that in empirical methodologies that emphasise proof over discovery, inductive hypotheses lead to 'hunches' that 'coalesce' into deductive hypotheses. Hypotheses arise from a set of hunches which can be tested to bring "direction, specificity and focus" to a study (Kumar 2010:82).

From an experience base comprising educational and social sciences and humanities, particularly writing, I maintain the 'hunch' originates from an inductive combination of experiential, observational, reflective and practice-led learning. Reed-Danahay (1997) observed autoethnography was all in the researching and writing (the *-graphy*) of observations about others in the sociocultural world (the *ethno*) from a unique insider's perspective (the *auto*). With these facts in mind, I see the hunch as touching on the qualitative domains of narrative enquiry and autoethnography, where the self is ratified as data (Chang 2008; Arnold 2011), offering value to both practice-led practitioners and academic writers. I maintain that any hunch-based research involves enquiry into the nature of practitioner work and into the experiences of the researcher.

As such, the methodological design of projects motivated by hunches needs to allow space for the self as data regardless of how grounded the data collection and analysis methods may be. Failure to acknowledge the genesis of the ‘hunch’ as originating in the practical, experiential, reflective and creative puts under erasure the idea that any hypotheses that appear to emerge can be purely objectivist. They may not be ‘voice-centred’ (Mauthener and Doucet 2003) but they do contain voice. Epistemologically, the hunch originates in the life and identity of the researcher. Hunch-based studies need the insights of such approaches as narrative enquiry and autoethnography in order to situate their theses and position their researchers. Freelance writer and antiques enthusiast Bob Brooke (2013: online, paragraph 2), for instance, writes on his website:

Hunches, intuition, and instinct can play a major role in freelance writing. A writer bases all of them on prior knowledge and experience and draws conclusions from what has been learned in similar situations.

Heewon Chang (2008) demonstrated that autoethnography takes self-narrative from the domain of storytelling into that of data creation. This, in turn, leads to new knowledge and/or new understanding of areas of existing knowledge. It ‘transcends mere narration of self to engage in cultural analysis and interpretation’ (Chang 2008: 43). Autoethnographers can investigate themselves as the main character; include others as ‘co-participant or co-informants’ or, more scientifically, study others as the ‘primary’ focus (Chang 2008: 65). ‘Data’, to start to rehabilitate the term, comes about through interactions, observations, analyses and interpretations and provides us with insights into the modes of thought, action and interaction that underpin and/or evolve from enacting the self and others as data (Arnold 2011). The resultant works, like the one you now read, become ‘autobiographies that self-consciously explore the interplay of the introspective, personally engaged self with cultural descriptions mediated through language, history and ethnographic explanation’ (Ellis and Bochner 2000: 742). Doing this honestly and authoritatively, namely ‘representing, presenting, legitimating, analysing, and reporting one’s own experience as data’ (Bullough and Pinnegar 2001: 15) is one particular burden of autoethnographic writers and narrativists.

Methodically, this paper becomes a subjective academic narrative (Arnold, 2011), valorising

self-reflection, observation and analysis as contributors to academic knowing as in auto-ethnography (Chang 2008) and voice-centered methodology (Mauthner and Doucet 2003). Autoethnography, as Reed-Danahay (1997: 9) wrote, is both ‘a method and a text’. Narrating, Laurel Richardson argued in 1990, is unavoidable in academic writing. Academic texts such as this are a *bricolage* of “the scholarly, the anecdotal...and the autobiographical” (Arnold 2011: 66). Like Levi-Strauss’s (1966) *bricoleur*, I use sources immediately available to me, rather than designed for any particular project. Both and neither creative not academic, I am, to cite Robyn Stewart (2006: 6), positioned ‘within the borderlands, crossing between time and place, personal practice and the practice of others, exploring the history of the discipline and its changing cultural contexts’. The narrative I unfold sits as Bullough and Pinnegar (2001) indicate practitioner research does (and must), ‘between personal growth and understanding and public discourse about that understanding’ (p.15).

This methodology is voice-centred because I have called upon a multiplicity of voices, and in this paragraph will include the voices of five PhD writers, describing in their exegeses the ideas that sparked their doctoral study. Their voices, voices I had a supervisory role in shaping, become part of my narrative as my input had been part of theirs.

- First, ‘John’ speaks of discovering a ‘greenfields’ site for his novel and calls the hunch a ‘seminal idea’. The work explores models of masculinity in Australian cultural history through the creation of a range of autoethnographically-infused characterisations and generational relationships. This hunch is related to his identity formation; the act of writing fulfilled a human necessity.
- For ‘Celia’ motivation by identity fulfillment was also the case. For her the hunch involved fulfilling the goal of representing her forebears and ancestors via a set of reconstructed journalistic interviews and allowing herself space within the stories to become the narrator. She had set herself this goal many years prior, but having the hunch moment crystallised a desire into an action. The project was positioned among postmodern ideas about the complexity of individual identity, not the least of which is that of the writer submerged in others’ stories retold simultaneously creating a new identity for herself.

- ‘Emerald’ describes a revelation as ‘idea seeding’: engaging with art can lead to changes not only in emotional states but in consciousness. Her novel for young readers is an encapsulation of this moment in the light of the practice-led understanding of the importance of balancing message, ethos and empathy.
- Historical novelist ‘Gwendoline’ was motivated, after careful selection of a historical character as the subject, with the speculative resonance of the question ‘what if?’ Citing Margaret Atwood’s belief that the right moment begins with an idea, she describes her hunch as the igniting of the imagination, ‘seeded’ from contemplation on a work of art.
- Lastly, ‘Jo’ speaks explicitly of filling a gap: with an under-represented figure in an under-researched historical period. Her own hunch moment – described as a ‘conception’ - came with the realisation that by repositioning herself from non-fiction writer passionate about immersive research to novelist she could bring fresh verisimilitude to the ‘herstorical’ genre.

None of these PhD writers uses the notion of a hunch, consistently preferring metaphors of seeding or conceiving, propelling and sparking. Each exegesis, however, clearly foregrounds what can be understood as a ‘hunch’ and all the students makes their knowledge claim in the space where they describe their hunches.

Having argued for the usefulness of the notion of ‘hunch’ to describe a writer’s contribution to the research gap and suggested what it looks like in the context of doctoral study by artifact and exegesis, I now turn to the gap between the academician/writer and the non-academician/writer that opens when we examine the possibilities that autoethnography offers each group.

The ethical gap between university and non-academic autoethnographies

The university cannot assume that writers within or outside the academy possess what Freeman (1997) called ‘narrative integrity.’ The ‘first generation’ of autoethnographers characterised narrative integrity by the advice: ‘before we act we consider what we are writing ourselves into’ (Ellis, Bochner, Denzin, Goodall, Jr, Pelias and Richardson 2008:

319). In this vein, Chang (2008:61) reminds us that ‘given that autoethnography is more than casually recalled and accounted memories, your research plan needs to delineate why and how you want to explore your own life.’ Herein lies the gap. Many doctoral researchers in writing have already collected parts of their ‘data’ simply by living their lives and knowing key people. Writing about their lives retrospectively may not be problematic to Tim Winton or Arnold Zable, but for those in creative practices in the academy, autoethnography looks backwards ethically as well as forwards (Tolich 2010). Those we speak of in autoethnography are always visible or invisible ‘participants’ in our stories (Chang 2008: 69) and they have rights of consent and deserve protection. Autoethnography can certainly play into counter-discursive spaces and validate the stories of the silenced, the imprisoned, the marginalised, the deviant (Muncey 2010) – and even the dead – as sites of empathy, knowledge and research, but these people – or their descendants or victims – deserve protection. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) asked if we own a story simply because we tell it. Martin Tolich (2010:1159) asks, ‘do others mentioned in the text have rights?’ Since autoethnographers logically cannot speak of themselves without speaking of others (Wall 2008), a process of ethical interrogation is required.

Examining autoethnography, Tolich (2010) maintains, involves a close scrutiny of the boundaries between the self and the other, by which he means personages in our work, but we are loath to call them ‘participants’. This process of scrutinising is both enlightening and essential for supervisory dyads in writing methodologically informed by autoethnography. In a study of such a dyad working in the genre of trauma memoir, Sue Joseph (2013) warned, ‘each candidate wishing to render creatively their personal trauma narrative must be viewed individually and carefully, and supervised and monitored closely, both for ethical as well as safety issues’. The safety of the writer herself as well as those observed, remembered and retold, is crucial to this process. Norman Denzin (2003: 249) considered this an ethic of ‘personal and communal responsibility’ and an ‘ethic of care’.

Within the discipline of writing, at least three studies have detailed experiences of participation in such ethical processes. First, Sophie Tamas (2011) analysed difficult questions of harm versus benefit and intent versus impact in the context of a doctorate in autoethnographic writing focusing on spousal abuse. Next, Jessica Rose (2011), interrogating her right as an outsider to produce a narrative of Sri Lankan migrants based on her close

friendship with one family, concluded ‘we should always be aware of our responsibilities to the voices we represent in our fiction: to question the impact of our decisions and actions’ (7). Thirdly, Janene Carey (2011) foregrounded writers’ responsibilities for what – and who – they write within narrative methodologies. She indicates, however, such methodologies are more closely aligned with the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research* (National Health and Medical Research Council 2007) than those of creative industries. Here we, once more, see a gap.

Chang (2008) spoke of ‘co-participants’ and ‘co-informants’ much as Human Research Ethics Committees (HRECs) do. Writers completing an ethics application need to anticipate their ‘participants’ and describe their ages, their relationship to the researcher, their national location and any relevant cultural dimensions. If there is any suggestion of conflict of interest, power differential or threat to safety, including psychological safety, the data collection needs to be rethought. Likewise, they need to consider the likely impact of their text, so writers need to be prepared to share their writing with those whose stories they share to nullify or at least minimise risk of harm, and accept suggestions for change. In ethical research of any kind, subjects have the right to veto how a writer may have represented them (Borland 2006), ‘to talk back to how they have been represented in the text’ (Ellis 2011: online, 4.3) or decide their story is not to be used at all (Tolich 2010). Carey (2008), problematising co-negotiating textual representation with her subjects/ ‘participants’, draws on Carolyn Ellis’s (2007) notion of ‘relational ethics’. Relational ethics require researchers to ‘act from our hearts and minds, to acknowledge our interpersonal bonds to others, and to initiate and maintain conversations’ (Carey 2008: 4). Maintaining dialogue with a subject and offering the right of veto are two clear valuable techniques. *The* notion that we should not publish anything we would not show to the other persons mentioned in the text (Medford 2006), are needs consideration. Application of ethical care in addressing any charge of researching *post hoc* is another consideration. These are useful writers’ strategies that could be anticipated in an HREC application.

Chang (2008:68) says: ‘If your study engages others as interviewees or the observed, you should treat your study in the same way as other social science research requiring an [HREC] approval’. All writers, like Ellis or Carey, however, have already spoken with and seen people, maybe some whose stories have impacted our hunches. In *Broadstreet* (1991) Winton

wrote of his grandmother who lived in a tent in her backyard, the farmers forced to leave their land, the grandfather who worked at the Mint, fundamentalist Christians, wharfies and marksmen, gamblers and drinkers. In *Violin Lessons* (2011) Arnold Zable recalled encounters with people in railway carriages or Ithacan pathways, those he had worked with in Swiss orchards and vineyards and observed the displaced boys of Saigon and the living rooms of homes on the Polish-Russian border. In *Write* (2006: 107), Sarah Quigley observes that ‘writers are like magpies, picking up by nature and instinct any glittering items that appeal to them. This appropriation can be seen as a kind of stealing; but then all art steals from the world in which it is based. In other words, it’s a necessary theft that usually does no harm’.

Clearly, in the academy, there are no guarantees of ‘narrative integrity’ and proof that no harm will be done must precede the project, so the representation of Winton’s grandmother or Zable’s railway conversant will need to be treated with care. But are they participants or memories? This question can be applied to the following three cases, all narrative retellings of PhD student dilemmas encountered in my own supervisory experiences:

- I’ve been a resident in a rest home, and I’m writing stories about the tensions between residents and staff, residents and family members, like those I’ve experienced. I’m not writing biographical material but I’m inspired by snatches of dialogue and observed interactions.
- As a high school teacher with a social justice agenda, I’m writing a fictional book for young adults where I investigate the impacts of cyber-bullying and binge drinking. Much of my knowledge of the current state of affairs comes from interacting with students in my line of duty.
- My magic realism novel places people with disabilities into heroic positions and draws on my experience as a social worker to add verisimilitude to their characterisations and empathy to their transformations and, sadly, degenerations.

The problem, or gap, is that writing ‘data’ is often retroactive not proactive. For this reason, writers in the academy face the dilemma that not only are the people in their stories not

‘participants’ but nor is the ‘data’ the kind of data that can be described and understood in the context of an institutional HREC. As Romano (2008: 6-7) observed:

While creative practitioners clearly benefit from forethought about the implications of the different territories their research may traverse, they may be unable to provide the very precise identification of human research participants and potential risks expected from researchers in other disciplines.

Clearly, seeking informed consent after writing is potentially coercive, placing undue obligation on research ‘subjects’ to volunteer (Tolich 2010). On the other hand, surely those we interacted with on a daily basis were not participants in a planned ethnographic study? And how about those people we watch on the train only to find our imagined backstories of them are appearing in our writing? Is it unethical to call on these memories in writing in the academy because they happened before embarking on the study or because they happened casually? Must we also seek the approval of those involved in our stories of the origin of our hunches? Is it any more possible to cut the memory from the mind than it is for Antonio to cut a pound of Shylock’s flesh without spilling a drop of blood? We may feel, with Tessa Muncey (2010: 106) that ‘ethical committees take it upon themselves to create a protection where it isn’t always warranted’.

Is it simply more sensible to return in such cases to Freeman’s ‘narrative integrity’, Denzin’s ‘ethics of care’ and Ellis’s ‘relational ethics’? If it is, the HREC needs to be convinced that such issues are negotiated within the trust and care of the student: supervisor dyad. Romano (2008) critiqued the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research*, and recommended a fast-tracking of non-contentious creative research, perhaps run by discipline-specific or faculty-focused sub-HRECs. My hunch is that the solution lies in an HREC’s respect of a supervisor’s experience and ethical being to participate in what Ellis (2011: online, 5.0) called ‘socially just acts’.

Along with Ellis’s (2011: online, 4.4) application of ‘reliability’, ‘generalisability’ and ‘validity’ to autoethnographic writing, the best training material for supervisors remains Tolich’s (2010) ten foundational guidelines for autoethnographers:

- **Consent:** First, respect participants' autonomy and the voluntary nature of participation and document the informed consent processes that are foundational to qualitative inquiry. Second, practice 'process consent', that is, ensure participants still want to be part of the project at all stages. Third, recognise the conflict of interest or coercive influence when seeking informed consent after writing the manuscript.
- **Consultation:** Fourth, consult with others, such as your HREC or institutionally delegated experts. Fifth, don't publish anything you would not show people mentioned in whatever you write.
- **Vulnerability:** Sixth, ensure internal confidentiality- although this is a particular issue in autoethnography since it is hard to ensure confidences will not be exposed to family members, friends, colleagues or acquaintances. Seventh, regard any autoethnography as permanent and anticipate your own and your co-observers' future vulnerabilities. Eighth, do no harm: just as no photograph is worth harming others for, so should no story. If harm is unavoidable, minimise it. Ninth, if minimising risk to yourself or to others is impossible, use a *nom de plume*. Finally, assume all people with an investment in the text will indeed read it.

Conclusion

This paper has argued that while creative autoethnographies may be motivated by what Ellis (2011: online, 2.0) considers 'epiphanies', 'remembered moments perceived to have significantly impacted the trajectory of a person's life', the research element of such a project, specifically the research 'question', will often be the result of a 'hunch'. These hunches far from being messages from muses are in fact educated guesses drawing on our own experiences and observations. As such, the origin of the hunch is itself autoethnographic, consisting in the researcher's perceptions of where new knowledge is possible and how to address it. Seen this way, the hunch is a creative response to the research gap. The concept of the hunch thought is as prevalent in more positivistic science as in interpretivist and naturalistic enquiry.

The study contributed to ongoing discussions among autoethnography scholars about additional gaps. These gaps appear when we try to reconcile the work of autoethnographers beyond the academy with those within it. Because of the need for university research to be overseen by a HREC, the latter are subject to closer scrutiny due to legalistic, evidentiary policies and principles that have at heart a protectionist orientation. This scrutiny, and the epistemological gaps it opens up, can be obviated if universities can allocate greater trust to supervisors to allocate appropriate ethical care. In 2011 Carolyn Ellis resolutely stated that autoethnographers simply take a different point of view toward the subject matter of social science and argued for the inclusion of aesthetic written autoethnographies into that category. The message can be essentialised as '*Vive la différence*'.

The most gaping of gaps is the writing autoethnographer's fear that they may be unable to write about turning-point events and life-defining people they remember because in the HREC's perception ethics are prospective not retrospective and the concept of research embedded in ethics applications is planned and deliberate, not serendipitous. It has participants who can be identified both in advance and at once. Despite Martin Tolich's (2010) guiding principles, the roles of the supervisor-student dyad to participate in 'socially just acts' (Ellis 2011: online, 5.0) and treat subjects with 'personal and communal responsibility' and an 'ethic of care' (Denzin 2003: 249) remains commonsensical.

Translating the language of social science into terms meaningful to autoethnographers, Ellis (2011: online, 5.0) asserted: 'autoethnography, as method, attempts to disrupt the binary of science and art'. The concept of the research hunch is, however, one that both science and art can embrace.

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