

A Fine Line: Integrating Art and Fieldwork in the Study of Self-Conceptualization and
Educational Experiences

Kelly Clark/Keefe

University of Vermont

Kelly Clark/Keefe teaches qualitative research and is engaged in educational inquiry. Her interests include arts-based approaches to research, embodied conceptualizations of identity development, and the relationship of socioeconomic status and gender to educational experiences.

Abstract

This article explores the possibilities created when artistic principles and practices are integrated with the fieldwork process. I was interested in understanding the holistic and embodied expressions of self-conceptualization among six women academics from working- and poverty-class backgrounds. Artful “happenings” became a generative tool for inquiry and analysis and provided interpretive directions. I present one brief and a second more lengthy account of what my art-based approach to inquiry looked and felt like; a description of my approach to integrating art and fieldwork; and a discussion about the value that such a methodological approach can have.

More attention to variability would, I believe, lead to the development of more complex theories in which attention would be given to the many alternative ways in which human agency exhibits itself in the world. There is always more than one picture, however detailed it may be. (Mishler, 1996, p. 90)

About Joan

Joan (a pseudonym) cradles her gold-framed reading glasses lightly in both hands as we continue our conversation. Methodically, she moves her left thumb gently along one of

the spectacle's arms. Moments into one of Joan's characteristically pensive silences I remind her of our conversation about "self-as-process" and the related question asked at the close of our previous interview: *How would you describe your identity in terms of something you do, rather than as something you are?* Settling back into her chair and taking a long, mindful sip from her paper coffee cup, Joan begins:

Something moving, changing, energy, not static. I'm picturing—if you look though a kaleidoscope, and say the kaleidoscope is depicted by stars—that's how kaleidoscopes are, almost like fractures—little stars, and big stars. And if you turn it, the geometric shapes might change, and the colors might change. But there is always some element or some sense of what you saw before you turned it that remains ... It

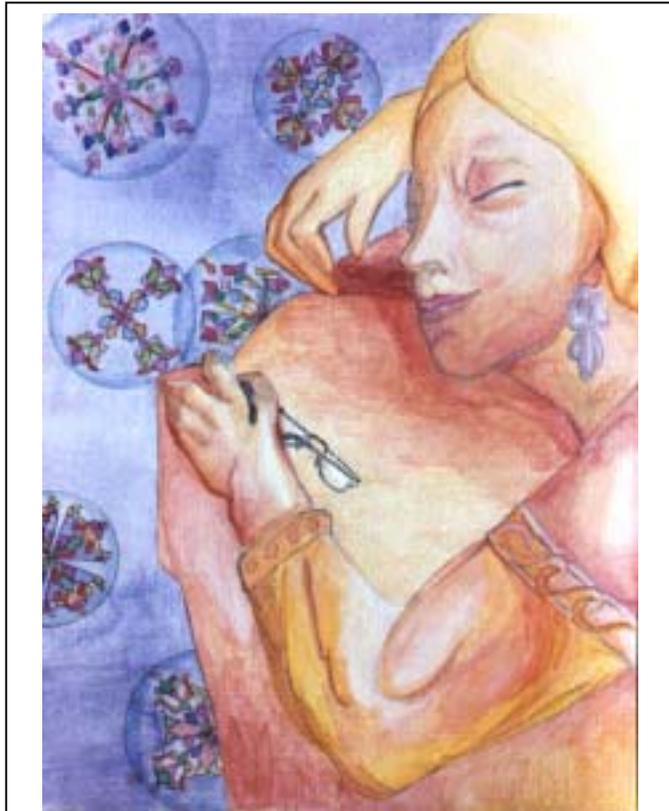


Figure 1. Artist's name: Kelly Clark/Keefe, title *About Joan* (1998), watercolor and pastel on illustration board, 10 x 12 in.. original owned by research participant.

is a kaleidoscope of relationships. And when I think about who I am, I am a person that really, well, *that's* what I am about. I'm about; no matter what the paper work is, or the project is, or the task is—it's never devoid or absent of the people that it is about, that it represents, or that it is being done with. So, I don't

know how to articulate this, but I was thinking about the kaleidoscope and I was thinking about relationship ... You form relationships, and as you construct meaning among and between your selves and others, they change. They take on different colors and they take on different shapes. They are never static. Out of that comes the movement and the energy for things to happen. So I was thinking about myself and that image—It's what I'm about. It's who I am.

When I interviewed Joan in May 1997, she was a 50-year-old professor of education at a mid-sized university in northern New England. Prior to her present appointment Joan had over 28 years of experience working in a variety of capacities including guidance counseling, curriculum development, and administration at both the public school and community college level. Like the many metaphorical references she used to convey aspects of her identity development, Joan's "kaleidoscope of relationships" seemed a poignant accompaniment to her descriptions of being someone who has persistently searched for "the right combination," for a "harmonious balance" between her personal and professional selves.

Thick files, countless books, and several stacks of neatly organized paper cover every available surface in Joan's small office. Despite the volumes of evidence surrounding us that tell me there are many things vying for Joan's attention, she smiles, vigorously waving me into her space when I return with my recorder and notebook for another interview. Joan speaks, her words and her ways reflecting the gentleness and poise of a gifted storyteller. Through our conversation I perceive her thoughts and emotions in visible action. Expressing her self-as-process in metaphorical terms leads us

both to wonder aloud about the perceptual qualities of kaleidoscopes and selves. We contemplate the interplay between her chosen image and the range of physical, emotional, and other sense impressions that she associates directly and indirectly with schooling, higher education, and her broader sense of being in the world. Hearing, seeing, and sensing her story, my “note” taking blends verbal and pictorial description. Fine lines form words as well as shapes traced in circular motions on my page, each an experiential reaction to the sound, movement, and imagery of her conveyances and to the tone and mood of her speaking rhythm.

Making Sense

Joan and Kaye (a pseudonym), whose story is offered below as a concrete example of how my methodology functions, are two of six female academics whose life stories provided the basis for a collective case study completed in the spring of 1999. The central purpose of my inquiry was to explore the phenomenon of self-conceptualization where that process intersected with educational experiences. All the women in the study were among the first generation in their families to access college, and each originated from what they described as working-class or poverty-class backgrounds.

Conceptualizing my research has meant acknowledging my subjectivity as “*the* basis for the story that I am able to tell” (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992, p. 104). At the reflexive places where my own experiences of being among the first generation in my working-class family have touched and become woven together with my desire to understand better the phenomenon of self-conceptualization among women who share similar life attributes, there has been a profound “fusion of the intelligible and the

Reflective Memo: 8/17/98

Communication across generations through the caring hands of one's elders is not always remembered by the growing child. We need to look at the consequences of these early motoric and gestural interactions through the special prisms of cultural comparisons, and through the detailed study of body movements. As yet, these sources are limited, as is our knowledge about the lessons in the thinking of the body, a kind of learning that is amplified by children's joint activities with their elders.

(John-Steiner, p.14)

I'm enjoying the sparks of personal pondering that emerge as I take in John-Steiner's words. I am struck by the fact that in all my years of studying psychology, this is the first scholarly discussion of human cognition that not only explicitly links the adult acquisition and transmission of knowledge with the body, it also valorizes the process. As I read John-Steiner's analysis of the imaginative patterns of writers, artists and scientists, it reminds me how, as a young person, I learned the now habitual way I store ideas, the recursive patterns I use to search for information and solve problems. What I recall is that much of my childhood was spent alongside my father, a construction worker and mechanic. I would describe his style of teaching as verbally reclusive and kinesthetically brilliant. In contrast, my elementary and middle school experiences were ones that mirrored most Western schooling traditions. There, the physical as well as relational structure of the classrooms functioned on the widely held assumption that the most effective way to teach children was for them to listen quietly to the voices of teachers—a broad departure from my formative familial experiences. It is no wonder that my vocational high school experiences as a commercial art student and my undergraduate art major days were ones that made me feel “at home,” expanding earlier developmental habits of intense observation and ways of knowing that emphasized a mind-body connection. I'm compelled to discover more about what researchers regard as “thinking of the body” (John-Steiner, 1997) and to talk with colleagues and my committee about my proclivity to link the creative process in general to issues of class, gender, and qualitative inquiry more specifically.

sensible” (Stoller, 1997). As I fashioned a research project aimed at illuminating how and why some women made self-defining choices that demonstrated a significant shift from earlier familial and cultural influences, lines began to be drawn between my current academic self and my

previous, long-suspended ways of knowing and being. I found myself contemplating how as a young person I learned the now habitual way I store ideas, the recursive patterns I use to construct meaning and solve problems. Central to these developmental habits were joint activities with my father. Each engine-repair job or shed building project required

interpersonal proximity, visual perception, and tactile problem-solving. Through reflective journaling, it became increasingly clear to me just how these formative familial activities coalesced with the strategies and concepts I learned as a vocational high school student in commercial art and how these ways of being became even more deeply integrated into my meaning-making schema as I moved through my art program as an undergraduate. My body, in varied ways and for as far back as I could remember, was the site for my knowing, with observation, art, and movement providing the most meaningful avenue for the perceptual currents of experience and expression.

I wanted and needed to become passionately engaged (Coffey, 1999) in the fieldwork process. This meant reclaiming earlier developmental habits of intense body-with-mind observations and perceptually based modes of analysis and communication. “Acknowledging and working with the ambiguities” (Sandelowski, 1994, p. 55) created through the intentional integration of art and research, I began searching for theoretical frameworks that would support and legitimize the structure of an inquiry process that was becoming at once visual, visceral, and verbal.

In my research and my writing I am guided by the ideas of Dewey (1934/1980) and Eisner (1991), who both remind us that “art is fundamentally a special quality of experience, and that the process through which art is lived is dependent on the use of qualitative thinking” (Eisner, 1991, p. 16). My artful approach to educational inquiry is rooted in a whole-body and relational perspective of identity development, one that draws on and draws about the dynamic, emergent, culturally bound, and embodied ways that learners and knowers such as Joan and Kaye come to understand and describe their selves in relationship to their educational journeys.

Methodological Mediums

I am interested in the hearty discourse related to the implications postmodernism and poststructuralism have on how research has been and continues to be understood and presented (Clough, 1994; Heshusius & Ballard, 1996; Lincoln & Denzin, 1994, Slattery, 2001). I am encouraged by the call that has been sounded by many for examples and critiques of new forms of experimental or alternative texts (Denzin, 1997; Kilbourne, 1999; Richardson, 2000). I join Denzin (1997) and others in their assertion “that a new form of looking, hearing and feeling must be cultivated—a form that goes beyond the male way of seeing” (p. 46), and consider my work to reflect what Irigaray (1985) has argued for: work that “transcends pure vision and specularity to privilege the other senses, including touch, hearing and taste” (p. 103).

An equally important contribution to this conversation, which I view as primarily concerned with the presentational or re-presentational aspects of inquiry, is discussions about whether and how the actual conduct and analysis of fieldwork is complementary and contributory to the reflective choices researchers are making about reporting research in alternative ways. As Coffey (1999) notes, “It is often difficult to describe or discover how analysis is actually done” (p. 137). She observes that “There are very few confessional accounts of ‘doing’ analysis” and comments further that “methods texts pay disproportionately less attention to the mechanics of analysis than to other aspects of the research process” (p. 136). In the spirit of these remarks, I present a straightforward account of how arts-based principles and practices became generative for knowing—not just at the end—but throughout the interviewing, analytical, and presentational aspects of my fieldwork process. Kaye’s story follows and builds on this first account, providing a

more multidirectional and multisensory example of the fine line(s) between my fieldwork and studio process.

Art-Based Interviewing

As a researcher/artist interested in issues related to self-conceptualization and education, developing guiding questions that invited subjective, nonlinear, inchoate descriptions and expressions of experience became a sensible extension of in-depth conversations.¹ Asking questions that were framed by the notion of identity as verb rather than noun evoked a variety of perceptual, emotive, and other body-based expressions. The women frequently reframed these expressions into metaphors,² and together we explicitly explored their related visual, auditory, and felt aspects. What each of the women said, what I said, how she said it, how I reacted, the historical and cultural context of her story, my history, her movements, her emotions, the specific textures and tone of our surroundings, and all the interactive, intersubjective experiences and understandings that emerged became data.

These data took the form of descriptive notes and reflective journalings interspersed with sketched lines and shadings depicting what I sensed to be, as in the case with Joan above, qualities of her “selfness” in the framed moment of the interview.

Arts-Based Analysis

I agree with Coffey’s (1999) assertion that “the imaginative, artful and reflexive aspects of data analysis are far less easy to codify, describe and teach” (p. 138). I can say—and I intend the sharing of Joan’s, and in more detail Kaye’s, story to further illuminate this—that my analysis involved recording remembered perceptual expressions and experiences, the women’s as well as my own. Preliminary coding, then, included searching and ordering multisensory data segments according to the verbal and non-

verbal content of their emotional, intellectual, and physical expressions. The relative value, the “lightness” or “darkness,” for example, and the various shapes or forms of the women’s words, moods, and movements were drawn on and drawn about during the sorting and resorting of data. Analytical and interpretive meaning-making also included gathering relevant concrete forms (e.g., a kaleidoscope) that I could manipulate motorically and visually in order to explore the unique as well as any potentially shared qualities within and across each woman’s expressions.

Arts-Based Presentation

The artful approach to organizing and analyzing the data noted above led to what Coffey (1999) describes as “the pursuit of ‘passionate engagement’ with the subject matter” (p. 136). “Matter” in this case was visceral, visual as well as verbal. The pursuit toward interpretive engagement included an intensity: a penchant to grip, to hold onto multisensual impressions, and a disciplined approach to using writing and painting to synthesize, translate, and integrate the various qualities of the interviews into preliminary visual and textual compositions. This process prompted deeper, more refined images and thoughts about what I understood each of the women to be conveying about themselves, their lived situations, and the phenomenon under study. In the painted products that accompanied the final textual presentation of the research project, choices about artistic medium, composition, color, and tone were relative to the intersubjective, embodied aspects of inquiry, to the specific conveyances of participants, and to the emergent themes.

About Kaye

Preparing this manuscript confirmed what I have suspected for some time, namely, that the sources of thought and related artful integration process are really difficult to talk about. I mean that the role of memory and visual images, the integration of sights, sounds, movements, and feelings, is hard to convey wholly in words. Unraveling and sequentially ordering into linear prose these overlapping and simultaneous happenings can lead to a somewhat incomplete picture of the process and can therefore be misleading.

Attempting to reconcile the tension I sometimes feel using words to express the partly ineffable qualities of this arts-based approach, I present several “snapshots” (Fulwiler, 1997) of interview and post-interview moments with Kaye’s story. Excerpts of Kaye’s narrative and my analytic impressions are offered as sometimes fragmented, other times complete, scenes separated by independent (although connected) definitions of artistic principles and practices. The content of these layered expressions, their simultaneously metaphorical and practical implications, and their placement invite readers to experience some of the existentially immediate ways that perceptual meaning-making helped Kaye to convey and me more fully to know the multifaceted and vicissitudinous process of self-conceptualization at the intersection of schooling and higher education.

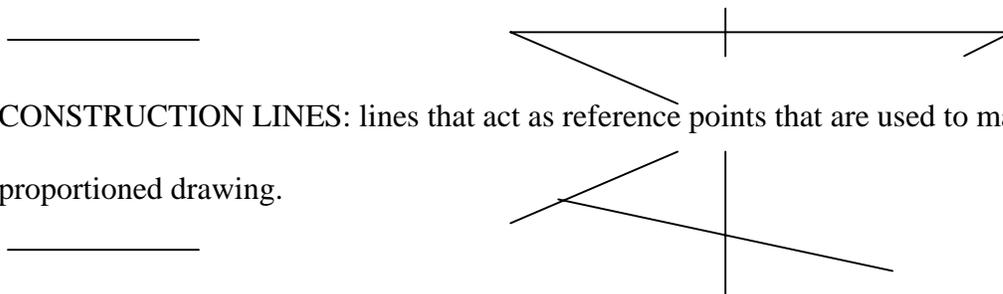


Early in my time with Kaye, I sensed her eagerness to share the details of her life that she saw as connected to her past sense of self as a first-generation college student

and currently as a female academic. As if the high-gloss finish on the sturdy boardroom table between us had been laid as track for her words to travel on, Kaye spoke freely about her college-bound situation, especially as it related to her felt position within her family: “I knew that I was very small, very slight, like my father. And that always operated against ... made it difficult to ever be taken seriously.” Kaye also knew that “adults underestimated the power of [her] thinking” and that attempts to keep learning central would involve convincing adults of her ability to be college bound.

It is well into the second hour of our conversation about her decision-making process for accessing college and I begin probing into issues of perceived support. As if in learned defiance to what she knew about herself and about others’ perceptions of her and her future, Kaye sits taller, squaring her shoulders. With her “larger” presence, Kaye now commands a broader slice of the space that surrounds us.

CONSTRUCTION LINES: lines that act as reference points that are used to make a proportioned drawing.



Kaye continues by describing a familial ethos where “there was no encouragement, in fact there was discouragement” surrounding her desire to attend college. And although she “clearly remember[s] having the sense of not knowing exactly what [she] wanted to do at that point,” Kaye “knew that this version wasn’t an appropriate version—the one that other people kept.” Kaye’s gaze is fixed on the beige wall behind me: “It just seemed that there was something that didn’t have shape, didn’t have color, didn’t have sounds—it was something right beyond my reach.”



IMPLIED LINE: line that is not actually there but is completed by the mind because there is enough other information.

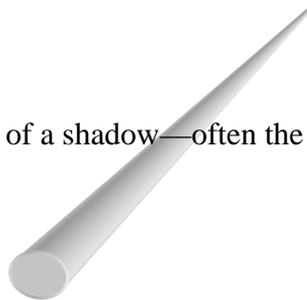


In the eighth grade I decided that if I was going to try to convince anyone that I should go to college that I needed to pick a college. I got a notebook and went to the library at the school ... looked at all the college catalogs and started to plot and do a comparative matrix on what colleges offered what ... Um, I knew nothing. I mean, I didn't have anyone in my environment who knew what the language was ... I picked out some key features of an institution that I thought I wanted to be a part of ... and of all the college catalogs I looked at, my number one choice was Smith ... But, you know, my school counselor, I mean it just ... well, that never went anywhere.

Kaye shrugs her shoulders and sinks back into the large, navy blue cloth-covered boardroom chair—a chair that in the moment seems to appear intentionally in stark relief to the adolescent she so vividly describes of some 40 years prior. She continues:

I clearly remember having the sense of not knowing exactly what I wanted to do at that point, but feeling *so* joyous about what it meant to learn ... that reading about these places.

CORE OF SHADOW: the darkest part of a shadow—often the farthest part away from the light source.



Kaye pauses, leans toward me, and plants both feet firmly in front of her. As I watch and listen to Kaye, I sense I am bearing witness to her “necessity for combination,” her self-described practice of physically and mentally intuiting next steps in her construction of self. My hands move swiftly, recording bold gesture lines in my sketchbook (field log), a response to the perceived mood, shape, and motion of the interview moment:

So the next thing I did as an eighth grader was I decided, okay, so if this doesn't look like it's a possibility, a magazine that people that go to these schools might read is only going to cost me a dollar.

COMPOSITION: the arrangements of the elements of art within a defined area.

So I started to read *Harper's Monthly*. I started to read *Atlantic*. I started to look for magazines that I didn't see on any shelves or coffee tables of any of my relatives or family or friends. So I remember trying on those identities and really looking at that.



FOCAL POINT: the place ones eye goes first caused by contrast.



The beginning of Kaye's story unfolds in a rural mining town in northern Minnesota. Her father was an iron ore miner before he lost his job in the 1950s. Kaye recalls that he “then worked three part time jobs just to keep us in clothes and food.” Her expression is thoughtful and intense as she responds to my questions about what elements of her sense of self she attributes to her upbringing:

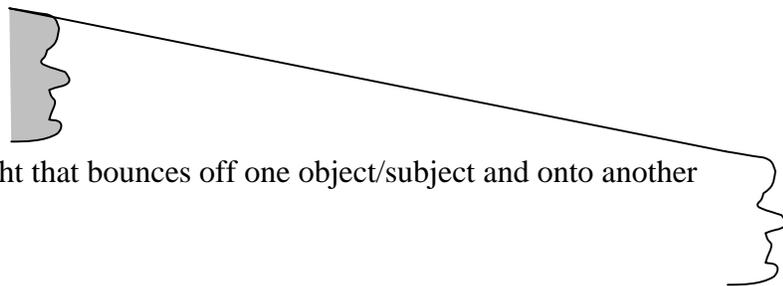
You know that's hard because I think I brought myself up.... I was growing up in negative space—and I brought myself up ... So my sense of self has come from that negative space.



NEGATIVE SHAPES/POSITIVE SHAPES: the shapes the artist originally intends and the resulting shapes surrounding them.



So, for example, where [my parents] technique for us growing up was to say, “You’re no better than anybody”—I began to ask, How can I be unique? Not better, but how can I be unique. That was a consequence. Where their message was “Don’t excel” was—is this curiosity about where I might excel. Their messages about “You are dumb” became How do I test what I am? ... I mean, it was about them saying, “Know your place, know you are lower class, know you are from a labor family ... put that book away and do something useful” ... You know?



REFLECTED LIGHT: light that bounces off one object/subject and onto another

So that gave me this curiosity ... And I created a negative, other space to live and wander in—separate from this other space ... I knew other people in other places with better opportunities than what I had envisioned for myself, so it was curiosity, a wonder that kept me alive when I could have bought the other story.



LOCAL VALUE: the light or dark value of an object/subject that has nothing to do with a particular light source.



Echoing from Kaye’s narrative are the ideas expressed by Shotter (1992, p. 192) about the cultural politics of belonging:

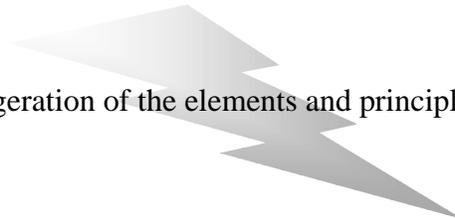
In this new politics what seems to be at stake is not the possession of material property as such, but access to opportunities to give shape and form to one’s own life, that is, access to ...”a political economy of developmental opportunities” that limits who or what we can become. For we cannot just position ourselves as we please; we face differential invitations and barriers to all “movements” we try to make in relation to others around us.



I see, listen, and feel Kaye’s words being brushed intermittently with a thin, translucent coat of alizarin crimson:

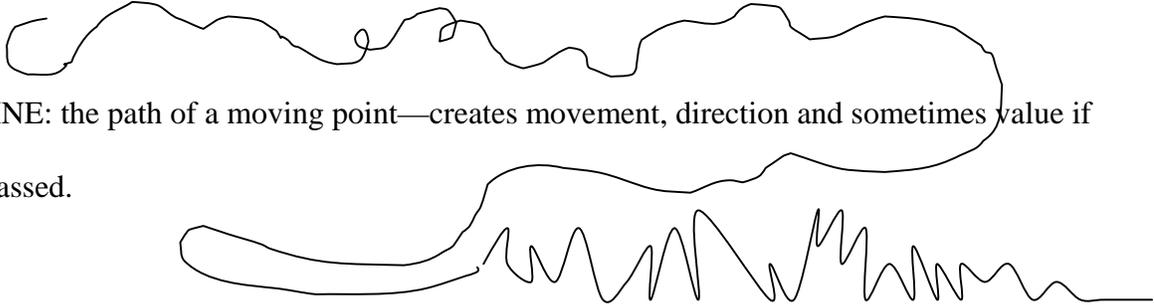
As a tenth grader we had to do a research paper ... And he [the teacher] didn’t give us much explanation of what a research paper was. So I went to the library and got out Campbell and Ballou and did my research paper following the guidelines for a dissertation at five chapters.

EXPRESSIONISM: exaggeration of the elements and principles that creates a strong reaction.



So I did this and I, and I have very vivid memories of [my teacher] standing up in front of the class when he handed back those papers and saying, “Well, you won’t believe what somebody in your class did”... And then he proceeded to make fun of the intensity that I brought to that paper and I said, okay, I don’t need this.

From that point on, for most major class assignments, I actually did two—one the way I wanted to and then I rewrote them and submitted one that I thought would earn me a B but keep me out of the limelight and it was much safer.



LINE: the path of a moving point—creates movement, direction and sometimes value if massed.

It was during college that I got introduced to what for me has become a coping skill. That is, a kind of antagonistic affection ... So I was in this Chaucer class and [the professor] would always have me translate. I was the only girl in class, see—so he would always have me translate the dirty parts of Chaucer. So I can’t remember if it’s swiven or sweven, one of them means to dream and one of them means to screw, and he would always have me translate those and then everybody else would giggle.



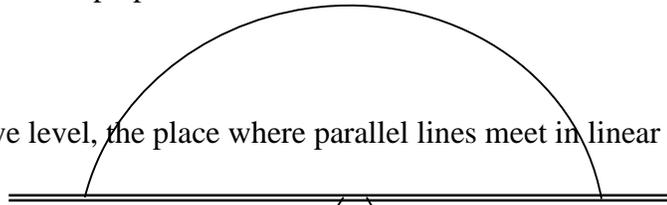
RHYTHM: repetition that creates movement.



So it was sort of, can you know your place? And, how do you negotiate knowing you’re being taken advantage of and exploited to some extent—but still know that you might have to do this in order to survive?

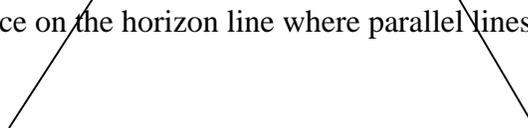
God yes! These are all things that, I mean, I really have processed visually. I always felt squished in a very narrow corridor of a big incredible house that nobody would let me see. One of my reoccurring dreams is about secret rooms that were in a house—discovering secret rooms ... I so badly wanted to be in a rich intellectual environment that asked me to stretch, that asked me to run as fast as I could just to keep up...

HORIZON LINE: eye level, the place where parallel lines meet in linear perspective.



instead of one where I had to put my hands behind my back and shackles on my legs just to be accepted.

VANISHING POINT: place on the horizon line where parallel lines meet.



So it really was very much like a narrow hallway where you bump your shoulders and the doors are all locked except for a few occasional ones.



SIMULTANEOUS CONTRAST: the effect one color or value has on another when seen side by side at the same time.



After several hours of interviewing the day before, Kaye and I come together again early the next morning. As I prepare my recording equipment and myself, Kaye,

ensuring no lost ground, begins answering a question I had asked in closing the night before:

You know, with the last question you asked me last night? It was real helpful because it forced me to think about some overarching metaphors that I have in my head—ones that I know about and that I have explored but never articulated.

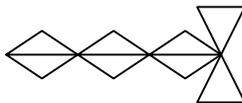


MODELING: making something appear dimensional.

BALANCE: equality of visual weight.



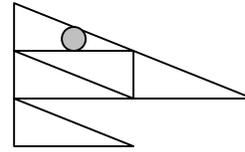
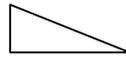
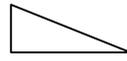
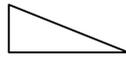
So when I think about music and my process of self, I envision it much like Bach. I'm very much a combination of variations on a theme and, at the same time, revisiting the theme because it changes at any given period. Then when I think about drawing, actually, what intrigues me the most is what I think is art's dance between simplicity and complexity ... You know the line drawings where someone will draw a line in such a way that it implies so much else, but the "much else" isn't visible because there's this skill with this line? So the construction of "self" for me is also that. It is: what's the visible line? And is that authentic enough, authentic in a way that it resonates with the rest?



"Identities themselves are multifaceted and contradictory. They are formed through a combination of available discourses, personal experience and material existence ... It is by drawing boundaries and placing others outside those boundaries that we establish our identities" (Epstein, 1993, p. 18).



CUBISM: simplifies the “real” world into geometric planes that allows us to see more than one perspective of an object/subject at the same time.



Easel to Desk to Easel

I move and I am moved as I search for patterns, continue to categorize and try to interpret the data that emerge from the telling of Kaye’s story. At different points I am drifting back into the interviews where my body consciously reconnects unabashedly with my mind. Trusting my multisensory memories of how I directly experienced Kaye’s words and ways to be reflecting helps me shape the story I want to tell, the essence of what I understood her thoughts, images, and emotions to convey. I work and the illusive, impalpable textures, the physicality of her lived situation, and the emotions embedded in hers and now our voiced experience seems to call for research presentation that is sometimes nonreferential, evocative, and in a form that “yields only reluctantly to a translation into sequence” (Arnheim, 1969, p. 23).

As Kaye’s words and ways ebb and flow, images about her sense of self in relationship to her formative familial and educational experiences emerge and then recede. Figures and symbols resurface in new, more detailed forms, especially when the qualities of what she wants me to understand and make meaning from are elaborated through simile and metaphor. The boundary between written expression and visual imagery is becoming increasingly fluid as my attention turns more fully toward theorizing about the various edges and tones of Kaye’s expressions about the role that defiance, for example, played in her ability to enact her desires for difference in her

family. Words turn to motion, reflected in the strong, occasionally disrupted strokes of cerulean blue I am placing at the center of a vast canvas surface washed in various hues of alizarin crimson. What is the shape of border crossing for Kaye and other academics from working- and poverty-class backgrounds? What value should be placed on theories that claim to explain their experiences?

I paint and I feel as though I am a conduit for Kaye's physical, emotional,

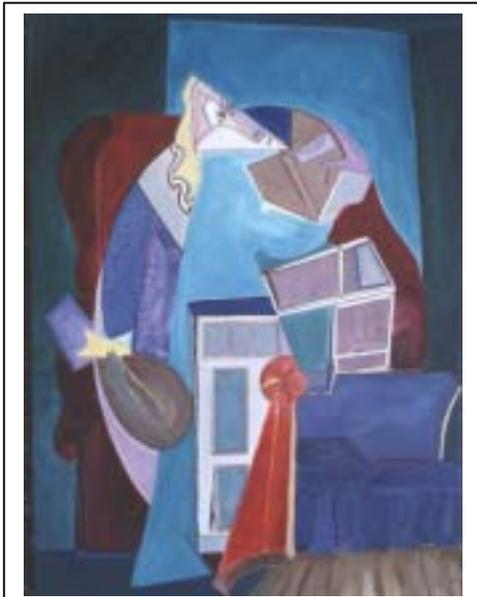


Figure 2. Artist's name: Kelly Clark/Keefe, title *About Kaye* (1998), acrylic on canvas, 18 x 24 in., original owned by research participant.

intellectual, and metaphorical self, in all its translucence as well as its mystery. Her expressions move through me, the canvas surface operating as a site for embodying the dynamic, open composition that is my interpretation of her words and the ideas that they bring. Kaye is her landscape and all that occupies its space. Her sense of self-as-process simultaneously develops into the background, the middle ground, as well as the foreground. A polydimensional figure

appears, cunningly reordering the surrounding chaos. Her eyes, her many *Is*, behave as a centrifugal force for anything, anyplace, or anyone that suggests that she belong anywhere. Appearing as the seated master of her own metaphorical mansion, my self-perceptive image reflects Kaye's expression of her "Deweyian like" (Kaye) experiential reflexivity. Overall, the image is taking on cubist notions of nonlinear spatial planes, hidden as well as referential implications, a play on positive and negative space, as well

as simultaneity of perception—all an incomplete interpretation of Kaye’s artistic “dance between simplicity and complexity” and her “necessity for combination” (Kaye).

Valuing an Arts-Based Methodological Approach

Art “happened” in the course of my inquiry: it happened metaphorically, analytically, and in a practical way. Its genesis was in my research interests, my purposes, and the practices I was inclined to employ. What implications do discussions such as this have for the broader research community? In addition to a demonstrative inroad for other researchers interested in incorporating arts-based strategies, my hope is that this article invites readers to consider the value that these particular methodological approaches can have for the empirical research process as well as for the individuals involved.

In the case of data collection, combining interview questions that facilitate a more standard storied response with questions designed to prompt metaphor, imagery, song, and other perceptually rich expressions can significantly broaden the basis from which the researcher and inquiry participants make meaning. Out of the raw material of new and previously existing media—memories, feelings, textures, movements, music, images, and so forth—participants are free to construct a multidimensional and dynamic set of understandings. Researchers encountering this performative act of meaning-making can find their attention drawn to new, sometimes nameless expressions that linger and resurface in cathartic ways during data coding and synthesis.

Bringing arts-based principles and practices into the data collection process and then attending during analysis to the variety of embodied data it gives rise to offers several sensory points of entry for “critically useful” (Barone, 2000) patterns, complexities, connections, and ideas that narrative strategies alone may not have brought

to the surface. As Stoller (1997) notes in the prologue of his book about the role that a scholar's body should play in interpretive inquiry activities,

The sensuous scholar's agency ... is a flexible one, in which the sensible and the intelligible, denotative and evocative are linked. It is agency imbued with what the late Italo Calvino called "lightness," the ability to make intellectual leaps to bridge gaps forged by the illusion of a disparateness. It is also agency in which scholars admit their errors of judgment and interpretation and struggle to improve their analytic and expository skills ... Such embodied hospitality is the secret of the great scholars, painters, poets, and filmmakers whose images and words resensualize us. (p. xviii)

Over the past decade, many qualitative texts and scholarly journals have devoted space to lively debates and detailed discussions about the implications of alternative approaches to research presentation. Implications of strategies discussed and demonstrated in this article point to the profound influence intersubjectivity can have on the presentation process and products. The creative challenges and resulting products of art-infused inquiry are made possible and defined by the interpersonal and autobiographical nature of the inquiry. Efforts in this regard reflect the spirit of what feminist art critic Gablik (1995) describes as "new genre public art." About this type of art she notes,

Art that is rooted in a "listening" self, that cultivates the intertwining of self and Other, suggests a flow-through experience which is not delimited by the self ... Because this art is listener-centered rather than vision-oriented, it cannot be fully realized through the mode of self-expression; it can only come into its own

through dialogue, as open conversation, in which one listens to and includes other voices. (pp. 82-83)

And although certainly this type of art can be produced without a defined research agenda, its relational, social, and political dimensions distinguish it from other forms of art developed purely for aesthetic purposes. The nature and intent of the approach aligns with many feminist and critical theorist researchers' aims, including an interest in illuminating how researchers and inquiry participants shape and are shaped by the classed, ethnic, gendered, and other socially and psychologically constructed positions we occupy.

For me the paths of art complemented the paths of science, each mutually supplying what the other lacked in terms of generative powers such as logic, intuition, order, ambiguity, and so on (Eisner, 1991). Thinking and acting in these nonreductionist terms, art and fieldwork hold the potential for folding back on one another. Each strategic path can continually open new, fresh paths of possibility: "new lenses through which to look out at and interpret the educative acts that keep human beings and their culture alive" (Greene, 1995, p. 18).

Notes

1. Historically, scholarship focused on explaining conceptualizations of self has viewed this process as a *cognitive* construction (Castelnuovo & Guthrie, 1998). Although these models have offered insights into how we view ourselves, they have also served (actively or through passive exclusion) to disintegrate the self from its cultural and corporeal dimensions. Models of self rooted in this Cartesian notion of a mind-body split bypass the infinitely rich web of sensate and symbolic information we use to understand and creatively communicate their selves to others.
2. Lakoff and Johnson (1980) contend “that metaphor is pervasive in every day life, not just in language but in thought and action” adding that, “Our ordinary conceptual systems, in terms of which we both think and act, is *fundamentally* metaphorical in nature” (p. 3, emphasis added). This fundamental use of metaphor has important implications when considered in the light of my interests in understanding processes related to self-conceptualization as well as my desire to contribute to underarticulated embodied knowledge perspectives.

References

- Arnheim, R. (1969). *Visual thinking*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Barone T. (2000, November). Notes taken during symposium conducted at the meeting of the Arts-Based Educational Research Special Interest Group, Austin, TX.
- Castelnuovo, S., & Guthrie, S. R. (1998). *Feminism and the female body: Liberating the Amazon within*. Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner.
- Clough, P.T. (1994). *Feminist thought: Desire, power and academic discourse*. Cambridge, MA: Blackwell.
- Coffey, A. (1999). *The ethnographic self: Fieldwork and the representation of identity*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Denzin, N.K. (1997). *Interpretive ethnography: Ethnographic practices for the 21st century*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Dewey, J. (1934/1980). *Art as experience*. New York: Perigee.
- Eisner, E. W. (1991). *The enlightened eye: Qualitative inquiry and the enhancement of educational practice*. New York: Macmillan.
- Fulwiler, T. (1997). Writing snapshots. In D. Starkey (Ed.), *Teaching writing creatively*. Portsmouth, NH: Boynton/Cook.
- Gablik, S. (1995). Connective aesthetics: Art after individualism. In S. Lacy (Ed.), *Mapping the terrain: New genre public art* (pp. 74-87). Seattle, WA: Bay Press.
- Glesne, C., & Peshkin, A. (1992). *Becoming qualitative researchers: An introduction*. Reading, MA: Longman.
- Greene, M. (1995). *Releasing the imagination: Essays on education, the arts, and social change*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Heshusius, L., & Ballard, K. (Eds.). (1996). *From positivism to interpretivism and beyond: Tales of transformation in educational and social research (the mind-body connection)*. Albany, NY: Teachers College Press.
- Irigaray, L. (1985). *Speculum of the other woman* (G.G. Gill, Trans.). Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- John-Steiner, V. (1997). *Notebooks of the mind: Explorations of thinking*. New York: Oxford University Press.

- Kilbourn, B. (1999). Fictional thesis. *Educational Researcher*, 28(9), 27-32.
- Lakoff, G., Johnson, M. (1980). *Metaphors we live by*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Lincoln, Y.S., & Denzin, N.K. (1994). The fifth moment. In N.K. Denzin & Y.S. Lincoln (Eds.), *The handbook of qualitative research* (pp. 575-586). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Mishler, E.G. (1996). Missing persons: Recovering developmental stories/histories. In R. Jessor, A. Colby, & R.A. Shweder (Eds.), *Ethnography and human development: Context and meaning in social inquiry* (pp. 73-99). Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Richardson, L. (1997). *Fields of play: Constructing an academic life*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.
- Shotter, J. (1992). Social constructionism and realism: Adequacy or accuracy? *Theory and Psychology*, 2(2), 175-182.
- Slattery, P. (June, 2001). The educational researcher as artist working within. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 7(3), 370-398.
- Stoller, P. (1997). *Sensuous scholarship*. Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Terenzini, P.T., Springer, L., Yaeger, P.M., Pascarella, E.T., & Nora, A. (1995). *First-generation college students: Characteristics, experiences, and cognitive development* (Clearing House No. HE028585). University Park, PA: National Center on Postsecondary Teaching, Learning and Assessment. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 387 004)
- Ward, J.V. (1996). Raising resisters: The role of truth telling in the psychological development of African American girls. In B.J. Ross Leadbeater & N. Way (Eds.), *Urban girls: Resisting stereotypes, creating identities* (pp. 85-99). New York: New York University Press.
- Wolcott, H.F. (1995). *The art of fieldwork*. Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press.