

Subversive Materials: Quilts as Social Text

Helen K. Ball

Memorial University of Newfoundland

Helen Ball is an assistant professor in the School of Social Work, where she teaches clinical courses in family therapy and feminist therapy. Her research interests include feminist research methodologies, issues of representation, and arts-based methodologies. She spends all her free time watching whales in the North Atlantic.

Abstract

Using a feminist-postmodernist approach to qualitative research, this article explores the crisis of representation in social science writing. The discursive practices of social scientific knowledge production are explored through the creation of quilts as social texts. Women and men who were recovering from childhood trauma were asked to represent their life experience in quilt blocks. Participants provided written descriptions of both their quilt blocks and the quilting process. I explore and experiment with the representation of voice(s) through the creation of a reflexive research process and experimental textual style. This article contributes to the dialogue on arts-based methodologies and the creation of alternative textual styles in social science writing.

Feminist researchers (Baker, 1998; DeVault, 1990, 1996, 1997; Richardson, 1991, 1992, 1993a, 1993b, 1994a, 1994b, 1996; Ellis & Bochner, 1992, 1996; Lincoln, 1993; Spender, 1980) have been challenging the power imbrications of traditional social science representational practices. These researchers have used nontraditional or alternative writing strategies to challenge traditional representational practices. These strategies have allowed us to hear silences and see absences and invisibilities through their focus on multiple voices, dialogue, the process of the research journey, and the acknowledgment of the change process in both the researcher and the participants (Gordon, 1990; Lincoln, 1993; Ronai, 1996).

Experimenting with arts-based methodologies and alternative writing strategies is risky business (Behar & Gordon, 1995). It is also a crucial struggle. Essentially (paradoxically) this struggle is about writing outside the lines, transgressing the rules, while staying (subversively) within the lines of dominant discursive practices. Writing strategies (DeVault, 1996) are one of the few ways that we have left to disrupt the dominant discourses in society that silence and marginalize. Implementing nontraditional writing strategies helps us to hear the silenced, those whose voices unsettle or disturb the collective myth of who we are and what we do, those voices that ask questions and tell different stories. This research is about the creation of a social text. It is about challenging traditional methodologies, responding to the crisis of representation, and it is about writing.

Feminist researchers have been calling for the creation of experimental texts. This refers to texts that experiment with format and narrative style. We have begun to challenge not only the notion that language is a transparent medium through which to transmit

knowledge, but also the myth that textual discursive practices are benign formats whose application simply structures the presentation of knowledge in a logical format. Instead we acknowledge that traditional discursive practices also serve as structures that reinforce dominant ideologies and suppress (marginalize) others. Sociologists Richardson (1992), Ellis and Bochner, (1996), Michalowski (1993), Paget (1990), and Ronai (1996) have created experimental textual styles. Representing their research as poetry (Richardson, 1994a, 1994b) or performance (Ellis & Bochner, 1992; McCall, Becker, & Meshejian, 1990) they have challenged the notion of prose as the only way to represent experience in the research text. In order for the crisis of representation to be adequately addressed experimental genres and alternative textual forms will be a necessity because traditional research reports are too rigid and exclusive in their conventions (Lincoln, 1993; DeVault 1990, 1997).

These discursive conventions (and potentially the publishing/academic careers of those who break them) are strictly controlled by the "editorial practices of professional journals" (DeVault, 1997). To transgress these conventions, in even an experimental manner, is to risk derision, personal and professional attack, and silencing by the powerbrokers (gatekeepers) of the dominant discourse. Each of these researchers has endured the consequences of transgressing the accepted (dominant) discursive practice of the research report. All have felt the derision "You write well, but is it sociology?" (Richardson, 1996) and the apparent hostility (Ellis & Bochner, 1992) that using a more experiential experimental format often (surprisingly) evokes. It reminds me of a story. It is a story that for the purposes of this article I call the Drunkard's Path (which is the name of a traditional quilt block design). It goes like this:

There was a woman walking down a street at 3 a.m. She came across a dishevelled drunken man. He was crawling around on his hands and knees beneath a lamppost. She stops and asks the man what he is doing.

Aoh ... I've lost my keys.@

AWhere did you lose them?@

Al lost them over there ... down the street.@

AWell, why are you looking for them here?@

AWhat?@ he said indignantly.

Al said why are you looking for them here?@

The drunk glares at her incredulously and says, ABecause the light is better here."

This is the way things are in social science. We keep asking variations of the same questions and coming up with similar answers because we are stuck, indoctrinated, intoxicated by the "light" of traditional ways of representing and writing what we study. As long as we keep looking for the answers in this pool of light, we will never see what exists beyond its edges. We will never see what from this vantage point is in the dark, invisible, absent, and silent. As long as we continue to crawl around in this small puddle of light, we will see only what is familiar. We will see only what is visible, the tangible. We will remain intoxicated with the cleverness of our solution to the problem. We will never find our keys. We will stay on the Drunkard's Path.

It is toward this end, toward making this invisibility visible, toward looking outside the light into the unfamiliar that I have conducted this research. In this project I deal with issues of invisibility and silence not only among the research participants, but also my own in challenging issues of representation and traditional methodology.

Quilts

In order to look beyond the Drunkard's Path and not be completely overwhelmed by what we see, it would be helpful to have some sort of an organizing framework. Quilts can provide us with such a framework. Quilts can be considered as a peephole onto something else, as a lens that shapes, colors, and informs what is seen through it (A. Stubbs, personal communication, February 1996). I was drawn to the idea of using quilts because I was at the time living in Waterloo County, Ontario. This part of Ontario is known for the quilts that are created by Mennonite women who live there, as well as for its Quilt Festival. Living in this context, I began to reflect on the possibility of the creation of quilts as social text.

Quilts have been used to communicate messages for hundreds of years. They have been used to relate family stories as well as the stories of community events such as weddings and births and deaths (Federico, 1983). A murder trial at the turn of the century was represented in a quilt (Neyman, 1996). More recently, the AIDS Memorial Quilt (Howe, 1991) was created and displayed as a memorial to people who have died of AIDS. In the America ante-bellum South, Log Cabin quilts (a particular quilting design) that contained black fabric were hung on fences or clotheslines to signal safe houses on the Underground Railway (Tobin &

Dobard, 1999; Fry, 1990). In many respects quilts have been used somewhat subversively, in that quilting has provided a legitimate space where women could come together to talk and create utilitarian objects. Quilting provided women with the possibility of communicating messages about their lives through the images in their quilts. The subversive nature of quilts lies in the dual purposes for which they can be used. Unless one looks closely, a quilt looks like a quilt, a bed cover. If you look closer however, there may be messages and ideas that were communicated subtly across time and location. Quilts have held messages within and between families, groups, and communities. In essence quilts are the perfect social text.

Quilt Design. I began this research while I was working as a family therapist on an inpatient treatment program for individuals recovering from posttraumatic stress. I invited clients involved in this program to participate in this research not because I was interested in understanding the experience of those with posttraumatic stress, but because I had access to a group of people who had often been silenced. In retrospect this seems somewhat naive. But I had been working with this population for a number of years and felt I had an understanding of trauma. In this instance I wanted to know what would happen if I created a space where they could represent their experience (however they chose to define experience) without my determining what the exploration would be about.

Process. I invited clients involved in the program for recovery from posttraumatic stress to participate in the creation of a quilt that represented their experience. Following the completion of the quilt block they were asked to describe it in a journal. They were invited to participate on a voluntary basis. Quilting ability was not a prerequisite for participation. Those who

volunteered to participate were informed of the intent of the research and were required to read and sign a consent form that gave me permission to use both the quilts and the texts created as text to be analyzed and displayed in the research. I did not introduce the quilt project as a therapeutic group. The participants clearly understood that the quilt group was not intended as a therapy and that it was not part of their treatment program.

The research project was conducted on a weekly basis over six months. The quilting groups met in the treatment unit. The groups were facilitated by myself and another social worker who is a quilter. The involvement of a quilter-social worker was important to facilitate the actual quilting process so that participants were not overwhelmed with what might have seemed like a complicated task.

Three Quilts

Three quilts were made over a four-month period. Altogether 29 quilt blocks were made. There were 20 male and female participants, some of whom made more than one quilt block.

In the following section I have arranged pictures of the quilts and individual pictures of three quilt blocks. Following each quilt block is an excerpt from the quilter's journal. In the presentations that I have made about this research people always ask me to tell them about each block. I receive questions such as "What happened here?" "What is this one about?" "What does this one mean?"

I have protected the quilter-participants' anonymity and I responded to the questions asked by various audiences. I have taken an excerpt from each quiltmaker's journal that most specifically describes his or her quilt block and what it is about. Therefore, the images and the

words to follow are those of the participants in this project. You need also to be aware that these are not all of their words. Conventions of confidentiality prevent me from revealing their entire journals. However, these are their words for describing the quilt blocks that they created.

When you are reading the next sections there are some things of which I would like you to be aware. First of all know that the images and words to follow are intensely powerful. Because of this intensity, it is important that you look after yourself when you read the next section. Take your time. Be aware of the courage and persistence that it has taken for these images and these words to be shared so bravely. And so openly.



NUMBER ONE. I really feel dead—decided I would do a quilt to try and express the feelings I had today—the death of me at 16 months. My picture portrayed on the quilt of a cemetery with a tombstone and a mound of dirt on the left side and the sun with grass and flowers on the right.

When I was 16 months old my parents were ready to have another baby. I was taken to a relative's house many miles away. I felt very afraid and alone. While I was there I was sexually abused by a relative—it was then I died. No more feelings, no more me. I stopped eating and my parents came back to get me. I can't remember ever wanting to live—I've just been existing since then.

The sun and the flowers are to represent the hope that someday this will be over—I want to feel again—and I want to feel joy.



NUMBER TWO. I want the picture to be graphic. It is taken from my own experience of being raped at gunpoint at the age of five. This was one of many similar experiences. Each piece of cloth representing night, the bed, the blood, the body, is ripped to symbolize the ripping of my skin, the ripping of my childhood, and the ripping of my soul as I created parts to separate from the body to protect my sanity. The background is dark blue, like the night. The shredded pieces of blue show how the night takes on a texture and life of its own. I could feel myself going out of the window and into the night. The night sky would seem to wrap itself around me like strips of fabric. This is why I'm trying to give the sky so much texture. So far I have the sky, the background, and the bed. I have the fabric for the body but I haven't cut it yet— it's too thick to rip—perhaps I'll find more suitable fabric. I still don't have the right piece for the blood yet, but in my mind I can see how it will all work. I am thinking of cutting out black circles and putting them around the perimeter of the block. Each circle will have a pair of eyes. This will symbolize how, with each assault, a piece of me was broken off, separated from the whole.



NUMBER THREE. This quilt square represents the mask I wore for over 35 years. I was never allowed as a child to show my true emotions or even as a teen I was afraid. I became so accustomed to the same response or numbing and pretending everything was fine in my life. Even after I was married I still could not take responsibility for my true feelings. I enjoyed doing this square because I was allowed to show my feelings of ugliness in the mask, but also still have the pretty lace and material other people seen.

What was it like to make the quilt blocks? How did the participants feel when creating and writing about their quilt blocks? What was it like for them to do this work? Just as there are a wide range of colors of fabric in a quilt, there were also a wide range of feelings in creating these texts.

C. wrote

AWhat do I really want to say?@ or AWhat is to me, the most important message to get across?@ keep coming up as I consider what my block, or blocks will look like. I want to show what trauma does to a child, and how that impacts an adult Life. Trauma is, in the mind of a child (and in reality for that matter), horrific, life threatening, violent, torturous, and to many for so long, unbelievable. Part of me wants to grab this society by the shoulders, shake it and say WAKE UP!!! This is what is happening to our children!!! It is with this in mind that I started work on my first block.

S. explains

The square ... became a very significant part of my healing journey. In the beginning I would never have guessed what an important part it would play in bringing me in touch with my feelings of anger, rage, hurt, guilt, shame, sadness and love. What power from a small piece of muslin. In the end I was able to put some closure on my issues regarding my family. *I* was finally in control. I chose to lock the square away in a cupboard down the hall and only bring it out when *I* felt safe.

L. describes

I often felt sad while doing the block. I found I progressed very slowly or could not do it when other people were around. Doing this project has allowed me to think about my life and gain a better perspective. I feel it has helped me on my road to recovery.

Look inside and see how you are feeling now? What is going on for you? What was it like looking at the quilt blocks? What was it like reading the journals? Do you recall your reactions while you were looking, while you were with the images and words. Let me tell you a little bit now about my reactions. What it was like for me doing this work.

whispers

The field work for this project was finished two years ago. The quilts were made, the journals written. I took the quilts home, put them in a closet in my bedroom and fell into a very deep silence. I stopped writing. Period. I talked a lot about the project, but eventually that gave way to silence too.

Try to imagine silence as a surprise. You are chatting away laughing and then total silence. You are talking but no one can hear you. It is as if the laws of the universe don't apply. Every time you reach for something your hand goes right through it. It is difficult to move things. Difficult to have your presence known. And all the while you continue trying to smile and laugh and look as if everything is all right. But you know something is very wrong.

How did you get to this point?

I have been reading. But my writing, my voice, is silent. It is not a comfortable silence. It is a silence of tension. A thin-lipped, angry silence. I have brought it on. I am at that in-between point of not being able to speak and not being able to not speak. Vicious whispering in my head. Demanding that I write the story and insisting that I keep my mouth shut. Where do these voices come from? Whose voices are they?

magic realism: my researcher head inside-out

What we have on the screen is the interior of an apartment. The woman is living her life—a scene—she walks into the kitchen in the morning and there is a man in there holding a kid's face—too many words—there is a lot of screaming; horses are being shot, a little girl is crying, a man is forcing her to watch this—the woman continues to put water in the kettle to make some tea.

Next scene

The woman is driving in a small city; driving along, singing with the radio, she is alone in the car, she glances to her right—and here I stop writing. I don't want to write this—it traumatizes me and it may traumatize you—you see if I tell you about the little kid whose parent shot their pet and put it in the freezer and kept it there as a reminder of what could happen to him—this is a horrific disorganizing image. And you're stuck with it, I'm stuck with it, and he's stuck with it. My role as therapist is to help him deal with these images so that he is in control and they are not. The challenge for me as the researcher is to manage/acknowledge these images—first to acknowledge that they are there and then to not to let them control my life.

The difficulty is how to tell the story but not get stuck by, distracted by, the horror. To still tell the story without minimizing it—but not letting the horror or the images from these horrors become the organizing feature of the story.

Quilts as Social Text

As cultural artifacts associated with warmth, protection, and nurturance the images in the quilts have a profoundly defamiliarizing effect. A paradoxical irony. Quilts as cultural icons are associated with safety, warmth, nostalgic stereotypes of the home, and the *Agood old days.*@ Yet these quilts defamiliarize—in fact they explode the notion of home as a safe place. In many instances it has been in the home that these traumas occurred. Ironically, or perhaps in another disturbing parallel, people look at these quilts, see the images, and then talk of something else; which is the all too familiar manner in which this culture has responded to issues of domestic trauma, child abuse, and violence. See it but don't see it. Our way of writing in social sciences has maintained this. Our neutral, impervious language maintains our look of calm control when perhaps an acknowledgment of a bleak component of our society, indeed of ourselves, needs to be acknowledged.

When people look at the quilts I feel a need to point this out to them, in part in a protective way, but more importantly because I want to make a connection with them that will allow them to know that it is all right for them to struggle with the images; that the images do unsettle and that it is only by taking the familiar and making it unfamiliar that messages can be communicated.

On The Other Side of the Quilts

Challenging traditional representational practices through the implementation of arts-based methodology produces a different kind of data." It produces what has been described as transgressive narratology (Kincheloe, 1997) the purpose of which is an act of defamiliarization (p. 72). In essence the social text has provided us a way to regard the world anew (Stimpson, 1979, p. 59). We are not looking at something that is new; instead the social text defamiliarizes what has become mundane. There is a different emphasis in our perceptions. The silence is broken, the invisible materializes, and the intensity of the experience is not contained within neutral terminology. It is one of the views from beyond the Drunkard's Path.

I came to the realization that there had been a parallel process in this research. My silence and my thoughts of "will be in trouble if I tell this story? I can't tell this story, no one will believe this story, no one wants to hear this story and no one will like me if I tell this story" are parallels to the same process that survivors go through in deciding to break their silence. After two years of silence and not writing, I realized that I had been dealing with issues of vicarious traumatization (Figley, 1995; McCann & Perlman, 1990; Perlman & Saakvitne, 1995).

Posttraumatic stress reactions and vicarious or secondary trauma reactions are normal reactions to an abnormal circumstance (trauma) or stories (hearing repeated stories of trauma). Trauma and vicarious traumatization change our world view, leaving us hypervigilant, suspicious, and cynical. They leave us with flat affect, profound feelings of hopelessness and helplessness (Herman, 1997).

Because the dominant discourse in psychotherapy is to remain neutral, it makes it difficult to find places in this discursive field to discuss our reactions. Not having a legitimized space in which to talk about these reactions in effect silences any discussion of our true experience. This is in the discursive field of psychotherapy. But what about researchers? What about qualitative researchers in particular?

Clandinin and Connelly (1994), Behar (1996), and Lincoln (1993) discuss the notion of the researcher being the **A**tool, the **A**vehicle, the **A**medium for knowing, for being a conduit through which knowledge is conveyed. This has been my experience and it has been difficult. It has been difficult for a number of reasons the foremost of which is the notion of stigma. I find myself struggling with the stigma that is associated with the experience of "psychiatric patients," the stigma associated with trauma, and also because of the stigma that is associated with having intense reactions to research. I have struggled with how not to be silenced by them. I have struggled with how to represent what has been shared with me, what has moved me, wondering how to maintain my commitment to re-presenting experience differently, while also acknowledging that I have thoughts of **A**tidying it up, making it more clinical, more palatable; perhaps somehow to try to protect (disconnecting) myself from stigma. As result, I start to censor material, subdue voices and accounts out of fear and shame (DeVault, 1997). It has been as if I am trying to deny the expression of this knowing.

Intense Knowing

The creation of a social text through quilting has given me a different kind of knowing: a knowing that is different from immersing oneself in a culture; different from filling out questionnaires; different from lengthy interviews.

In creating the social text, in creating quilts with these people, I have been the conduit through which they have shared their images and the words of their experience. This has been different than working in therapy with someone, because, unlike in therapy, the words and images in the quilts are static. The quiltmakers go on, but because of my position as researcher I have stayed with the story and images in a way that is different, in a way that has moved me to a different level of understanding. The parallel process has given me an intense knowing that insidiously manifested itself in my fear of breaking silence, of opening my mouth, of writing. It would have been easy to stay with and be overwhelmed by these fears. I have stayed with them for a long time—years in fact. Having internalized the dominant culture of research methodologists and psychotherapists, I have been wondering all the while, What is wrong with me? How did I get to this place? Where and when did I become so afraid?

To really know, to really break silence—is to be able to acknowledge the depth and intensity/complexity of experience. This knowing has emerged as a result of using an arts-based methodology—quilting. This has been a departure from the Drunkard's Path. In order for this knowing to emerge in a helpful way, we must recognize the need for community, whether it is subsumed in the words *support* or *connection*. In order to know, we must connect. To connect is to know, not to connect is to watch and speculate: to remain at a distance.

For me, remaining distant, remaining neutral would have been much easier in the short run of this project. In the long run, however, it would have perpetuated the cult of individualism that has allowed us to be distant and disconnected from our worlds. If our writing, our methods, if the discursive patterns of the dominant culture were methods of connection, our worlds would be different. Perhaps this planet would not be in the state that we have brought it to. Perhaps we would not be blindly obsessed with technologies and "virtual realities." Perhaps instead we would look at and know what is here.

In order to know we must be connected. We cannot safely know in isolation. If we are not connected, if we follow the isolationist patriarchal method of the distant observer—and operate independently—we can never know. We can never know because our distance, our neutrality stifles our knowing. This disconnection allows experience to be de-contextualized into neutral terms *like minor injuries, sexual interference, sexual abuse, toxic waste*. Terms like these immobilize the knowing.

Similarly, intense knowing without connection overwhelms and essentially immobilizes us as well. Either end of the continuum meet, immobilized through neutrality, immobilized through intense knowing—both a result of isolation and no connection.

The creation of the social text has provided an intense knowing for the quiltmakers and for me, as well as those who look at the quilts. All of us are touched in a way that is more visceral than looking at a chart or reading transcripts. We are touched in a way that goes in between our language and our talk. It goes to our knowing. Often knowing cannot always find expression in words.

Telling

As well as intense knowing, the quilts have produced a different kind of telling: a telling that, like the intense knowing, goes beyond words to convey experience. One of the quilters, J., writes;

Using this media to express myself (my) experiences allowed me to express more of myself than I do in words and voice alone.

C. writes:

It's a graphic way of saying "we have a voice and we will be heard; we have a lot to say! Listen and learn! To those who work with survivors, I want to say that even as we learn from you, and honour your facilitation in our journey, you can learn from us. LISTEN TO US! We are the ones who have not died, who continue to heal and grow. We can also teach you.@"

Dear Anne:

I am choosing to write a letter because I want to be present. I don't want to become invisible as a voice of authority ... or to allow you to forget that I am here as a woman writer researcher. Numerous partial selves, partial voices all with different perspectives.

I have been thinking a lot about the implications of this kind of research for social work; the implications of the social text for social work. I have also been thinking about if I would do this kind of research again.

Choosing to pursue an alternative feminist poststructural research project has been difficult work. To develop an alternative way of representing experience and analyzing the

process of that experience has been brutal at times. As I have said previously, it would have been much easier to remain at a distance by invoking the invisible voice of authority ... but doing that would be creating more of the Asame old same old.®

A Feminist-poststructural approach invites us to reexamine who we are and what we do. For social work this is an invaluable invitation if we accept it. From the start in our training for clinical practice we are taught the importance of developing self-awareness as clinicians. The development of self-awareness is critical too in our work as researchers and teachers. Although it has been difficult, I think this process is of great value for social work researchers in particular and for social science researchers in general. Especially when we are writing about, or trying to understand the experience of others.

Doing the talk and walking the walk ... that is what this research has been about. It is quite easy to sit with a friend having a cup of tea and talk about how research Ashould® be done or how feminist methodology Ashould® be implemented. It is easy to feel safe in suggesting the development of a social text ... of creating a safe place for multiple voices to be heard ... wonderful ideas ... and at the outset it all seems straightforward and easy. And at the beginning reexamining what we know and how we know also seems like an exciting task ... and so I started ... but I could not have, and nor could you have seen where this was going to go. Challenging dominant discursive practices ... never mind the jargon ... becoming visible is a painful process. It is easier to hide behind objective language ... but I think if you do let yourself as a researcher or as a participant in the research, talk, listen and see the stories ... the knowing that comes from this is much richer. The realities that we know and can see, no matter

how painful, are rendered in such exquisite detail that they are unforgettable. And that is one of the points. To create texts that matter inside and outside of the academy. Texts that can be read, texts that provoke, evoke, disturb, move, challenge, make the reader laugh, gasp, or cry.....texts that remind us that we are all in this social world, this world, together ... that there is connection and that connection brings with it an awareness of subtleties, slows us down and makes us contemplate our certainties, makes us more respectful of one another because we are present. And in being present we are accountable.

This journey has been a writing act. It has been an exploration that has drawn attention to how we write and represent experience. It has been about doing methodology differently. It has been about representing experience differently. It has been an exploration of the creation of alternative (Ellis & Bochner, 1996) textual styles in methodological practice. It has been a stitching together of feminism and postmodernism

Feminism and postmodernism invite us to reexamine dominant discourses. To re-examine who we are and how we know. We are offered the opportunity to explore the creation of alternative methodologies, alternative ways of knowing (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, Tarule, 1986). Choosing to pursue invitations like these while existing within a predominantly positivist and patriarchal discursive field is much like leaping from the Titanic and trying to swim to shore. The ship is going down, there aren't any life rafts that we can get in, and rather than sink we swim. The cold of the water paralyzes us momentarily ... but if we keep moving we can make it. We can swim out of that reality and into the Gulf Stream where it is warm and luxurious, where tropical currents melt the North Atlantic. Where we can catch our breath and find our voices.

Exploring alternative methodologies is dangerous. Being affiliated with postmodernism and feminist methodologies is risky business. Postmodernist approaches to social science have been described as having more interest for Agraduate students and junior faculty than for those further along in their careers@Rosenau, 1992, p. 11). Is this because it is appealing to those who feel marginalized and who wish to challenge the establishment? Or is it because these paths have the potential to help us to see beyond ourselves; to see beyond our certainty?

Whatever the attraction, the exploration of alternative methodologies from a postmodernist-feminist framework has posed risks to the researcher. You know as I write this I am fascinated to see that I have started to write in the third person. All of a sudden. Out of the blue. Maybe I am feeling at risk here. Maybe I am searching for the voice of authority ... and we know now that that usually means invisibility. The invisible voice of authority. Now that I have drawn your attention to that let-s keep going and see what happens. What is it that I need to say that requires the invisible voice of authority? Let-s continue.

Whatever the attraction, to be maintained, postmodernist research explorations within the social sciences will require a reexamination of the construction of doctoral studies. Most doctoral programs are based on the patriarchal notion of the rugged individualist research student. The rugged individualist Awho boldly goes where no man has gone before.@ The rugged individualist researcher who goes Aout into the field@and then comes back to write up his or her notes. Within this practice the researcher is disconnected. Not connected to others. She or he is isolated. She or he is on an individual path of knowledge. There is no connection, there is no community. There are no people. She or he is isolated. She or he is on an individual path of

knowledge. She or he is on the path to the defense. She or he will have a defense. In a defense there is no connection. In fact, to defend is to avoid or prevent connection. That is what defences do. They keep things away. At arm's length. Defended territory. There is no connection. Our writing styles and the social realities that are constructed from them recreate/maintain this disconnection.

To be committed to the development of different ways of knowing through the development of different methodologies such as arts-based methodologies, and on alternative writing strategies, will necessitate the development of different research/scholarly practices. The notion of the rugged individualist researcher will need to make space for the researcher who pursues connected, creative sorts of knowing. I am not suggesting replacing one with the other. Nor am I suggesting that rugged individualists aren't creative. I am suggesting making space for different kinds of knowing and for different methodologies for knowing will mean reexamining how we teach and practice research. Continuing to practice traditional research exclusively and writing methodologies to the exclusion of others is the same as continuing to look for our keys under the lamppost where the light is better. We need to begin to move beyond what we know. This is facilitated by challenging how we know and how we represent what we know. A refusal to do this will mean that we choose to remain on the Drunkard's Path.

Helen

Hand Stitching

By persisting in this journey and by persevering through our discomfort we have each been able to experience a different kind of knowing. Together we have experienced a social text.

E. offers an exquisite description of the spiralling, spinning relationship between space, connection, voice and knowing,

Survivors put feelings and events into these little compartments. Each compartment is cut off from the others and as a result there is no integration ... there is no wholeness, or sense of self. I have felt this all my life; my experiences don't connect and so I am not whole. It hit me tonight ... *My "holes"* are compartments, emanating from a dark place, however the need and desire to be whole are what takes one the majority of the work. Going from holes to being whole; eliminating the lines between each of the compartments so to feel whole, connected ... a sense of being one.

I can't believe how all this came together at this time. I am so grateful ... perhaps there is a spiritual force that touches us all. I don't know that to be sure, but I am so grateful this has been lifted and that there is hope. In fact the quilt per say [sic] is no longer important. What is important is that I found something out about myself, specifically how the survivor-s mind works to bring sanity to an insane childhood and subsequent life.

Now I truly believe and know in my heart that it is the creative voice which brings us to freedom and knowledge and above all a sense of knowing who we really are.

References

- Baker, P. (1998). Hearing and writing women's voices. *Resources for Feminist Research*, 26(1+2), 31-53.
- Behar, R. (1996). *The vulnerable observer: Anthropology that breaks your heart*. Boston, MA: Beacon Press.
- Behar, R., & Gordon, D.A. (Eds.). (1995). *Women writing culture*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Belenky, M.F., Clinchy, B., Goldberger, N., & Tarule, J.M. (1986). *Women's ways of knowing: The development of self, voice and mind*. New York: Basic Books.
- Clandinin, D.J., & Connelly, M.F. (1994). Personal experience methods. In N.K. Denzin & Y.S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (pp. 413-427). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- DeVault, M.L. (1990). Women write sociology: Rhetorical strategies. In A. Hunter (Ed.), *The rhetoric of social research: Understood and believed* (pp. 97-110). New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.
- DeVault, M.L. (1996). Talking back to sociology: Distinctive contributions of feminist methodology. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 22, 29-50.
- DeVault, M.L. (1997). Personal writing in social research: Issues of production and interpretation. In R. Hertz (Ed.), *Reflexivity and voice* (pp. 216-228). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Ellis, C., & Bochner, A.P. (1992). Telling and performing personal stories: The constraints of choice in abortion. In C. Ellis & M.G. Flaherty (Eds.), *Investigating subjectivity: Research on lived experience* (pp. 79-101). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Ellis, C., & A.P. Bochner (Eds.). (1996). *Composing ethnography: Alternative forms of qualitative writing*. Ethnographic Alternatives Series Volume 1. Walnut Creek, CA: Altamira Press.
- Federico, J. (1983). American quilts: 1770-1880. In C. Robinson (Ed.), *The artist and the quilt* (pp. 16-25). New York: Knopf.
- Figley, C.F. (Ed.). *Compassion fatigue: Coping with secondary traumatic stress disorder in those who treat the traumatized*. New York: Brunner/Mazel.

- Fry, G.M. (1990). *Stitched from the soul: Slave quilts from the Ante-bellum South*. New York: Dutton Studio Books.
- Gordon, A. (1990). Feminism, writing, and ghosts. *Social Problems*, 37(4), 485-500.
- Herman, J. (1977). *Trauma and recovery: The aftermath of violence—From domestic abuse to political terror*. New York: Basic Books.
- Herbert, E., & McCannell, K. (1997). Talking back: Six First Nations women's stories of recovery from childhood sexual abuse and addiction. *Canadian Journal of Community Mental Health*, 16(2).
- Howe, L. (1991). A text of the times: The names project. *Uncoverings*, 12, 11-31.
- Kincheloe, J. (1997). Fiction formulas: Critical constructivism and the representation of reality. In W.G. Tierney & Y.S. Lincoln (Eds.) (1997). *Representation and the text: Reframing the narrative voice* (pp. 57-79). Albany, NY: SUNY Press.
- Lincoln, Y.S. (1993). I and thou: Method voice and roles in research with the silenced. In D. McLaughlin & W.G. Tierney (Eds.), *Naming silenced lives: Personal narratives and processes of educational change* (pp. 29-47). New York: Routledge.
- McCall, M.M., Becker, H.S., & Meshejian, P. (1990). Performance science. *Social Problems*, 37(1).
- McCann, L., & Perlman, L. (1990). Vicarious traumatization: A framework for understanding the psychological effect of trauma work on trauma therapists. *Professional Psychology: Research and Practice*, 26, 558-565.
- Michalowski, R.J. (1993). (De)Construction, postmodernism, and social problems: Facts, fictions, and fantasies at the end of history. In J.A. Holstein & G. Miller (Eds.), *Reconsidering social constructionism: Debates in social problems theory* (pp.377-401). New York: Aldine de Gruyter.
- Neyman, G. (1996). The murder quilt. *Piecework*, March-April, pp. 30-33.
- Paget, M.A. (1990). Performing the text. *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, 19(1), 136-155.
- Paget, M.A. (1990). Unlearning to not speak *Human Studies*, 13, 147-161.
- Perlman, L., & Saakvitne, K. (1995). *Trauma and the therapist: Counter transference and vicarious traumatization in psychotherapy with incest survivors*. New York: Norton.

- Richardson, L. (1991). Value constituting practices, rhetoric, and metaphor in sociology: A reflexive analysis. *Current Perspectives in Sociological Theory*, 11, 1-15.
- Richardson, L. (1992). The consequences of poetic representation: Writing the other, rewriting the self. In C. Ellis & M.G. Flaherty (Eds.), *Investigating subjectivity: Research on lived experience* (pp. 125-137). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Richardson, L. (1993a). How come prose? The writing of social problems. In J.A. Holstein & G. Miller (Eds.), *Reconsidering social constructionism: Debates in social problems theory* (pp.523-534). New York: Aldine de Gruyter.
- Richardson, L. (1993b). Poetics, dramatics, and transgressive validity: The case of the skipped line. *The Sociological Quarterly*, 34(4), 695-710.
- Richardson, L. (1994). Writing: A method of inquiry. In N.K. Denzin & Y.S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (pp. 516-529). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Richardson, L. (1994). Nine poems: Marriage and the family. *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, 23(1), 3-13.
- Richardson, L. (1996). Educational birds. *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, 25(1), 6-15.
- Ronai, C.R. (1996). My mother is mentally retarded. In C. Ellis & A.P. Bochner (Eds.), *Composing ethnography: Alternative forms of qualitative writing*, (pp. 109-131). Ethnographic Alternatives Series, Vol. 1. Walnut Creek, CA: Altamira Press.
- Rosenau, P.M. (1992). *Postmodernism and the social sciences: Insights, inroads, and intrusions*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Spender, D. (1980). *Man made language*. London: Harper-Collins.
- Stimpson, C.R. (1979). The power to name: Some reflections on the avant-garde. In J.A. Sherman & E. Torton-Beck (Eds.), *The prism of sex: Essays in the sociology of knowledge* (pp. 55-77). Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press.
- Tobin, J.L., & Dobard, R.G. (1999). *Hidden in plain view: A secret story of quilts and the underground railroad*. New York: Doubleday.