

12-20-2020

Using Drawings in Qualitative Interviews: An Introduction to the Practice

Alexios Brailas

Department of Psychology, Panteion University, Athens, Greece, abrailas@yahoo.com

Follow this and additional works at: <https://nsuworks.nova.edu/tqr>

 Part of the [Education Commons](#), [Medicine and Health Sciences Commons](#), and the [Social and Behavioral Sciences Commons](#)

Recommended APA Citation

Brailas, A. (2020). Using Drawings in Qualitative Interviews: An Introduction to the Practice. *The Qualitative Report*, 25(12), 4447-4460. <https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2020.4585>

This How To Article is brought to you for free and open access by the The Qualitative Report at NSUWorks. It has been accepted for inclusion in The Qualitative Report by an authorized administrator of NSUWorks. For more information, please contact nsuworks@nova.edu.



Using Drawings in Qualitative Interviews: An Introduction to the Practice

Abstract

Drawings are employed by qualitative researchers in many creative ways, and in many different contexts, and a variety of different terms are used to describe similar techniques. I present here a concise description of two basic approaches to integrating participants' produced drawings into verbal qualitative research interviews, along with characteristic cases of empirical research demonstrating how these approaches have been applied. I also provide a list of best practices and I discuss ethical issues. It is common for qualitative researchers to mix techniques in order to creatively address real-world research challenges. The proposed categorization, augmented by the list of best practices, can help researchers to effectively integrate drawings and verbal interviews into a multimodal research project.

Keywords

Participatory Research, Visual Methods, Drawings, Interviews, Multimodal, Best Practices, Psychotherapy, Qualitative Research

Creative Commons License



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial-Share Alike 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/).

Acknowledgements

Many thanks to my students in the Qualitative Research Course I teach at Panteion University for granting me permission to use their drawings.

Using Drawings in Qualitative Interviews: An Introduction to the Practice

Alexios Brailas

Panteion University, Athens, Greece

Drawings are employed by qualitative researchers in many creative ways, and in many different contexts, and a variety of different terms are used to describe similar techniques. I present here a concise description of two basic approaches to integrating participants' produced drawings into verbal qualitative research interviews, along with characteristic cases of empirical research demonstrating how these approaches have been applied. I also provide a list of best practices and I discuss ethical issues. It is common for qualitative researchers to mix techniques in order to creatively address real-world research challenges. The proposed categorization, augmented by the list of best practices, can help researchers to effectively integrate drawings and verbal interviews into a multimodal research project. Keywords: Participatory Research, Visual Methods, Drawings, Interviews, Multimodal, Best Practices, Psychotherapy, Qualitative Research

At the most elementary biological level, life can be understood as a constant interchange, as an ongoing transaction among the participating molecules, cells, or more complex living entities. This dialogue can take many forms: chemical, electrical, olfactory, visual, sonic, or any other. Life is a multimodal dialogue. Adding extra modalities to a qualitative interview—such as drawings, collages, digital objects, and artifacts of any form—can make “the difference which makes the difference” (Bateson, 1972, p. 459). Participant-produced drawings provide access to non-verbal meanings and facilitate participants' sharing of thoughts, feelings, and experiences which are not easily communicated otherwise. Silver (2013) concluded that “visual methods assume that there is more to human experience than can be captured in words and that this non-verbal dimension deserves attention from qualitative researchers” (p. 480). Bagnoli (2009) points out that: “The inclusion of non-linguistic dimensions in research, which rely on other expressive possibilities, may allow us to access and represent different levels of experience” (p. 547). These “levels of experience” have a phylogenetic and ontogenetic base: “the parts of the brain that process visual information are evolutionarily older than the parts that process verbal information. Thus, images evoke deeper elements of human consciousness that do words” (Harper, 2002, p. 13). Maybe it is not only that the “visual as an outcome” allows the researcher to access a qualitatively different aspect of the participants' experiences, but also that “the visual as a process” allows participants to access and apprehend previously untouched experiences.

Kearney and Hyle (2004) observed that “The drawing process itself seemed to cause the related feelings and emotions to be internally accessed, and therefore more readily available to verbal sharing, even if the feelings or emotions were not clearly a part of the drawing itself” (p. 367). Visual methods can also facilitate the communication of painful and difficult experiences (Guillemin & Westall, 2008) in a non-threatening way (Ogina, 2012). Besides accessing nonverbal aspects of an experience and eliciting unspoken emotions, drawings can serve as icebreakers and effective prompts to catalyze verbal communication in interviews

(Ellis et al., 2011; Kearney & Hyle, 2004; Morrow, 1998; Silver, 2013). Visual techniques can also help the researchers in making the familiar strange (Mannay, 2010, 2015).

Adding a visual component to a qualitative interview adds extra value, but this is not meant to reduce the importance of the verbal component or to result in a fetishization of the visual prompts (Clark, 2017; Sweetman, 2009). Exploring the complexity of the human experience requires sophisticated methods that allow for a dialogue to emerge between the different communication modalities. As Guillemin proposes: “The use of an integrated approach that involves the use of both visual and word-based research methods offers a way of exploring both the multiplicity and complexity that is the base of much social research interested in human experience” (2004b, p. 273). Participants’ produced drawings can be used to elicit further verbal data, by asking participants to reflect on what they have drawn (Ellis et al., 2013; Silver, 2013). The visual material can also be used to communicate the results to the public in a rich multimodal format. Drawings constitute data that can be analyzed on its own (Gleeson, 2011). However, the combined use of both the visual and the verbal reduces the possibility of misinterpreting either data set during the analysis and enhances data quality and validity (Glegg, 2019).

Visual and multimodal methods are employed by qualitative researchers in many creative ways and in many different contexts, and a variety of different terms are used to describe similar techniques. This polyphony, although desired and celebrated in the qualitative research tradition, can be confusing and overwhelming for newcomers to the field (Glegg, 2019). In this article, I focus on two basic approaches to mixing the visual with the verbal in qualitative interviews, and I propose a set of best practices for implementing these approaches. The proposed categories are not exhaustive; they aim to guide students and novice researchers through their initial exploration of the field.

Figure 1

Emotional presence



Note. A participant-produced drawing during a simulation session with two undergraduate students: “The painting represents our conversation, where the verbal process was gradually minimized while our senses and emotions were more mobilized.” (Image used with permission)

Situating Myself in the Inquiry

At this point, it is important to be reflexive and provide information about my epistemological background and how my own identity positionings have affected the development of this article. In the previous decade, my route to academia co-evolved with my training and practice in systemic family therapy and group psychotherapy. During my training period, it was standard practice to use drawings in psychotherapy sessions, especially a technique known as *Synallactic Collective Image Technique* (Polemi-Todoulou, 2018; Polychroni, Gournas, & Sakkas, 2008; Vassiliou & Vassiliou, 1985). As a result, I became familiar with drawing: I came to feel comfortable using drawing as a means of expression and asking patients or students to use drawing in this way (For examples of collective participatory drawings produced during educational sessions see also Brailas, 2019; Brailas et al., 2019).

Having developed an appreciation for the value of drawings in the communication of intimate emotions and subconscious thoughts, I was able to provide clear instructions and help others venture into the process of using drawing in this way. Over time, using drawings in my work became embodied knowledge that inevitably informed my teaching. While teaching qualitative research methods in tertiary education for the previous three academic years, incorporating drawings in the interviewing assignments that I developed for my students came naturally to me. I organized in-class simulations (Figure 1), and I provided guidance on how to conduct interviews that included participant-produced drawings long before I studied the relative literature. This was an unorthodox academic practice, and I was missing some crucial details, as I now realize, but this is how things happened; it just came naturally to me.

My conception of the “ideal” qualitative interview is based on my psychotherapeutic and constructivist epistemological background. I think of the interview as an authentic encounter between humans, in which the underlying purpose of the interaction is honored and respected by the researcher. I assign the highest priority to respecting and valuing the participant as a human being and establishing “authentic-not-gimmick” rapport. When an authentic relationship exists between the researcher and the participant, a meaningful dialogue can emerge that will produce rich qualitative data for further analysis, but the production of data is secondary to the human encounter, the communication, and the relationship that permeates the interview: the process determines the outcome.

Rapport begins with the researcher’s authenticity: “you in your shoes,” respecting and valuing the participant more than the data you are aiming to elicit. Based on my own epistemological tradition, on my own practice while teaching qualitative interviewing with drawings in a higher education setting, and after reviewing the existing literature, I discerned two basic strategies and compiled a list of best practices for implementing these strategies. My aim was to develop a useful toolkit for novice qualitative researchers whose epistemological aspirations are similar to my own. The two basic strategies and the list of best practices follows.

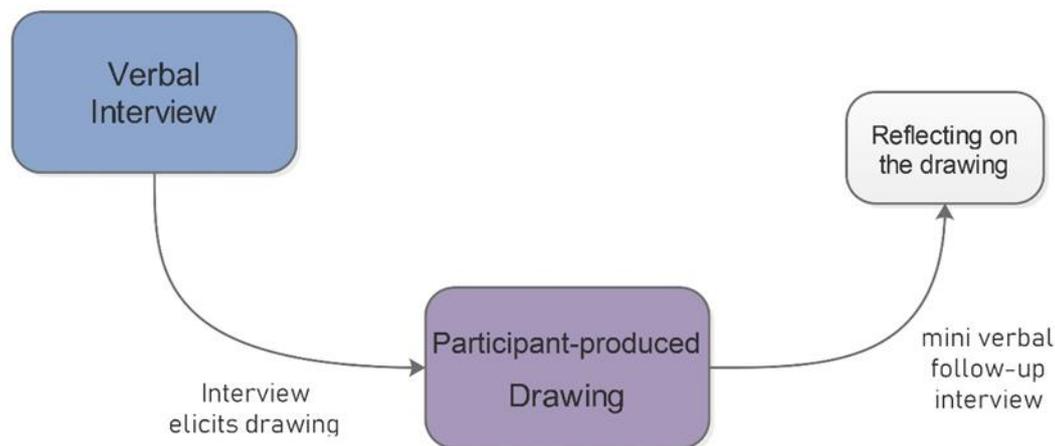
The Post-Interview Approach

The first strategy proposed here for incorporating participant-produced drawings in qualitative interviews is the “post-interview approach,” which can be summarized in the following steps:

- (a) Conduct a verbal qualitative interview as usual;
- (b) Go on with the drawing part;
- (c) Conduct a mini verbal follow-up interview to encourage the participant to reflect on the drawing and elaborate further on the topic.

The whole process is illustrated in Figure 2. In this approach, a traditional (verbal) qualitative interview, usually semi-structured with open-ended questions, is employed to initiate the process. This verbal component is a full interview and could stand on its own. However, it is enhanced by the subsequent drawing phase. The initial verbal interview helps in building rapport between the researcher and the participant and serves as an icebreaker for the next step.

Figure 2
The post-interview approach



The drawing session can be introduced with simple instructions, in whatever words are comfortable to the researcher, such as: “Now that you have shared these personal experiences in words, I would like you to show me what they *look like* to you in your mind. It can be a picture of a feeling, or a thought, or an experience, shown in any way that makes sense to you. You don’t have to be an artist. In fact, it’s better if you’re not. Just express yourself as freely as you wish.” When the drawing is completed, the participant is asked to reflect on what they have drawn, and to talk about the personal meaning attached to it. Depending on the case and the participant’s response, this discussion can be shorter or longer.

Guillemin (2004a) provides characteristic examples of the post-interview scenario. The first is an interview designed to capture the experience of recently post-menopausal women. Another describes how drawings can be utilized in interviews designed to explore the experience of people suffering from heart disease. Guillemin (2004a) describes the drawing prompt as: “Following each interview, I handed the participant a blank, A5 card and a packet of 12 coloured felt pens and asked them to draw how they visualized their condition” (p. 226). In another study, researchers utilized the drawing technique to understand women’s perspectives on HIV testing: “I would like for you to draw the type of person that would NOT get tested for HIV. In the bottom half of the page, I would like you to draw the type of person that WOULD get tested” (Mays et al., 2011, p. 331).

The post-interview strategy is a simple and effective way to transform an otherwise verbal-only interview into a multimodal research technique. An advantage of this approach is that it is “safe” for researchers who feel nervous about handling the drawing part: even if something goes “wrong” during the drawing, i.e., if the participant refuses to draw or draws something reluctantly, the researcher still has the oral interview to work with.

The Pre-Interview Approach

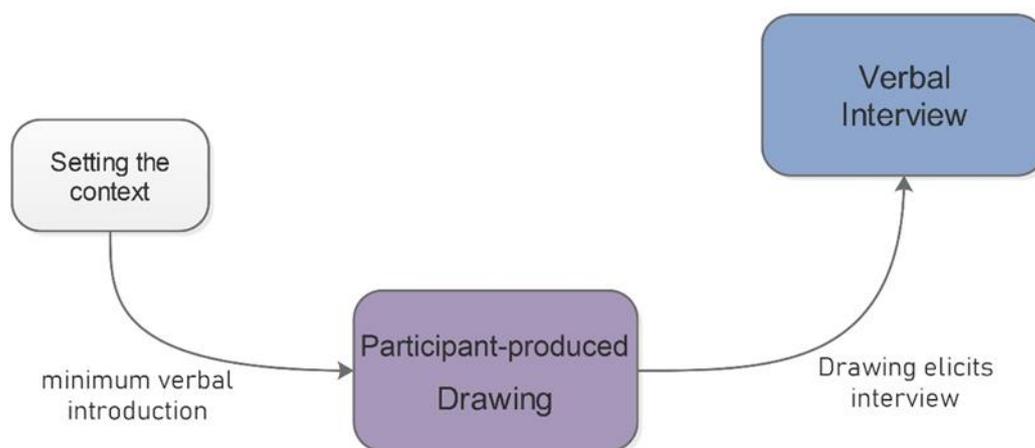
The second basic strategy is the “pre-interview approach,” which can be summarized in the following steps:

- (a) Conduct a short verbal pre-meeting to set the context;
- (b) Go on with the drawing part;
- (c) Use the produced drawing as prompting material for the full verbal interview.

As shown in Figure 3, a short verbal discussion initiates the process by setting the context, providing some basic directions, and building a minimum level of trust. The drawing part follows. The process concludes with a full verbal interview that is based upon (but not limited to) the drawing. In this approach, the visual part is used to build rapport and as an elicitation technique for the concluding verbal part. Because there is no full-length verbal interview preceding the drawing session, the research agenda is less limited: the pre-interview approach is less directive, as compared to the post-interview one.

Figure 3

The pre-interview approach



There are many examples of what can be classified as pre-interview approach in the literature. Mannay (2010) utilized visual methods with follow-up interviews to investigate the everyday life of working-class mothers and daughters in their local environment. Bagnoli (2009) explored young people’s impressions of their personal identities by encouraging their reflexivity through the use of a mapping/drawing technique: “I gave participants paper and felt tips and asked them to show on the paper who they were at that moment in life, and then to add the people and things that they considered important at that time” (p. 550). Kearnye and Hyle (2004) examined the emotional impact of change on individuals: “Each participant was asked to make two drawings as entry to a one-on-one unstructured interview—one drawing represented their experiences of ongoing local change, and one focused on their experiences of pending state level or systemic change” (p. 364). Gillies et al. (2005) explored the embodied experience of aging by asking participants to paint an image representing both their relative experiences and their feelings. Sewell (2011) used drawings to study children’s perceptions of the transition from primary to secondary education and the management of bullying. Ogina

(2012) studied the life experiences of orphaned children: “While they were drawing, the researcher asked them to write about who was in their drawing and what they were doing” (p. 431).

Horstman et al. (2008) investigated how children diagnosed with cancer perceived the hospital care they were receiving: “Using the picture as a centerpiece, the researcher then conducted a semistructured interview that was aimed at the child generating a response rather than confirming a supplied response” (p. 1005). Vakali and Brailas (2018) investigated teachers’ attitudes towards the use of smartphones by students in their classroom: “There was only one brief introduction to the subject and the time given to the participants was pretty short, around 10 minutes, to ensure the drawings would be as spontaneous as possible” (p. 43). McGrath, Mullarkey, and Reavey (2019) explored the value of participatory mapping, a visual technique quite close to drawing, in qualitative psychological research on affect and emotion: “Participants were asked to locate emotions experienced in the house with different colored stickers, each representing a different emotion” (p. 6). Höykinpuro and Ropo (2014) investigated students’ first-time experiences of the university campus: “(1) Close your eyes and recall the moment when you arrived to the university campus for the first time; (2) recall which things in the environment gained your attention and draw a picture/pictures from your memories; and (3) write a story” (p. 784).

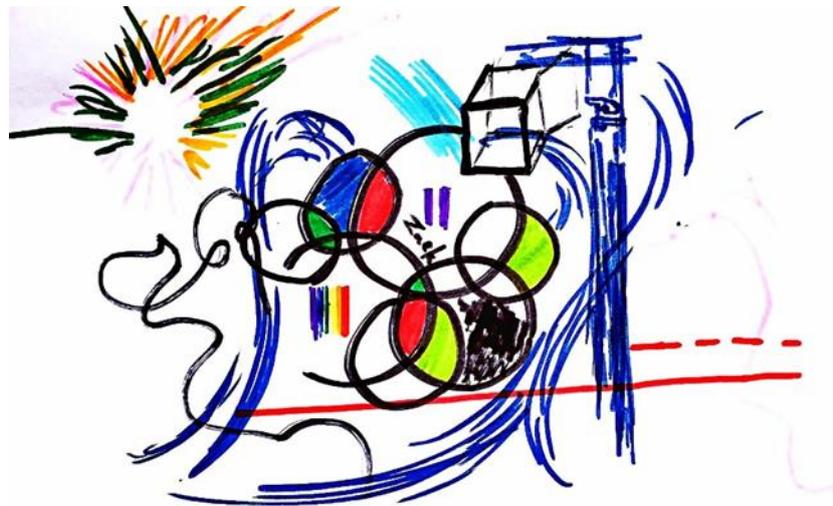
Compiling a List of Best Practices

While not exhaustive, this set of best practices constitutes a solid foundation for further delineation.

Practice Drawing Yourself

It is critical to have the experience of drawing yourself before asking others to do so. If you have familiarized yourself with the drawing technique it would be easier to persuade others to engage in this process: “Participants are often more comfortable with drawing when the researcher is more familiar to them” (Mitchell et al., 2012, p. 24). Simulation sessions in which the interviewers practice drawing themselves (before conducting the actual research interviews) can be quite useful to gain first-hand lived experience of the overall process. According to Ellis et al. (2011), participants in such simulation activities observe a surprising richness of ideas and information coming out of their own drawings. In Figure 4 we see the “Social media vortex,” a participant-produced drawing during a simulation session in the qualitative research course I teach. Two undergraduate students participated in the interview simulation. After the drawing part, the student who had taken the role of the interviewee reflected on her drawing: “The drawing is about Facebook. The circles intersect to support the idea that all phenomena are connected. The green-colored intersections stand for environmental issues, the red for opinions and the black one for distressful events. The symbol of equality and the symbol of the LGBTQ+ community represent my main interests in social media, as I realized after being asked by my pair mate during the interview [simulation]. The addition of a box with open cover stands for a personal reminder, to remain open-minded. Various emotions were represented by free lines of different intensity and color, and our excitement as fireworks.”

Figure 4
Social media vortex



Note. A participant-produced drawing during a simulation session by two undergraduate students. (Image used with permission)

Build Rapport

Building rapport is a crucial aspect of any interview, and especially when visual methods are employed (Mitchell et al., 2012; Turner, 2010). Sensitive data can be elicited only through building rapport (Sewell, 2011). In the case of the “post-interview” scenario, the preceding verbal interview contributes to rapport-building: “First, I asked the participants to draw on completion of the interview. This enabled a sense of rapport to be established with the participant over the period of the interview before the request to draw” (Guillemin, 2004b, p. 277). In the case of the “pre-interview” scenario, a short opening orientation meeting can serve the purpose of establishing rapport. Some scholars encourage interview practitioners to invest in reciprocal relationships with the participants and authentically share personal information with them. This can help to build a non-hierarchical interaction and establish rapport in order to conduct research “with” rather than “about” the participant (Mannay, 2015). Watkins, Mohr, and Kelly (2011) propose an approach to building rapport based on the appreciative and empathetic connection between the interviewer and the participant where the “intense focus by the person listening to the stories leads to the experience of being heard fully and understood” (p. 173). However, Brinkmann (2018) cautions that it is an unethical and unacceptable practice to use rapport as a gimmick, that is, a commodification of empathy in order to manipulate participants and obtain the desired data.

Be Mindful of the Line Between Research and Therapy

Despite the need to establish rapport, there is a line between interviewing and therapy. Blurring this line can have serious emotional and practical implications. Drawings are systematically used in therapeutic sessions. The process of visual production has been described as a transformative practice in which participants revisit, reconsider and narrate their life in an alternative way: “The production of images required a lot of thought over an extended period of time and participants had to actively assess their sense of place, space and self”

(Mannay, 2015, p. 34). Rossetto (2014) argues that the qualitative interview process can be therapeutic and should be acknowledged as such: “We may reside within a spectrum between information collectors, empathic listeners, and subjectively embedded and affected story builders. Wherever we find ourselves, we are ethically responsible to recognize the change that can occur through our inquiries” (p. 487). However, a critical point is for participants not to be drawn by the emotional climate to share information that is so intimate that they might later regret doing so (Clarke, 2006). This is especially relevant when working with sensitive topics such as suffering from a difficult or terminal health condition or confronting painful life events. Interviews are not therapeutic sessions, although it is inevitable that in some cases it may be perceived as a therapeutic engagement: “Articulating painful stories can lead to a degree of self-reflection and empowerment for some participants, while also being aligned with positive emotional outcomes because of feeling heard, consolidation of memories and gaining perceived social support” (Kendall & Halliday, 2014, p. 307). Thus, when using drawings in interviews, it is easy to blur the line between interviewing and therapy.

My background in therapy caused me to instinctively incorporate drawings into interviews that I designed for qualitative research. However, I strongly advise researchers to keep in mind that interviews are not therapeutic sessions, despite their potential positive effect. Researchers should take precautions that protect participants from opening intimate or painful matters that cannot be handled appropriately outside an official therapeutic context. I propose that qualitative interviews should be “intimate enough, and no more.” If we serendipitously create a therapeutic experience, that’s good, but to aim at therapy in a non-therapeutic context is a dangerous excursion into murky waters.

Choose a Safe and Comfortable Location

Drawing an image of one’s intimate emotions, thoughts, and experiences constitutes a personal disclosure that can cause participants to feel vulnerable. A location that protects the participant’s privacy and minimizes external disturbances is necessary: “It is important to leave the child in peace during the drawing phase so that he or she can concentrate on the activity but to remain in the room to prevent contamination of the child’s individual ideas through parental input” (Horstman et al., 2008, p. 1007). While public spaces like coffee shops are often used for practical reasons (especially by students in research assignments) despite the disturbing background noise and the subsequent low recording quality (Jacob & Furgerson, 2012), these places are even more unsuitable for doing interviews with drawings. The process would look quite unusual in such places, and this can cause stress for both the participant and the interviewer.

Prepare for Resistance to Drawing

Participants are often surprised when we ask them to draw. Adults usually are not used to drawing during interviews or in their adult-life in general. After the initial surprise, in most of the cases participants will proceed with the drawings (Guillemin, 2004a). Some participants may be anxious about drawing and need to be assured that: “artistic quality is not important, but rather the spontaneous depiction of their feeling” (Polychroni et al., 2008, p. 36). As one of my students in a qualitative methods course reported for her experience in an interview assignment: “The participants’ willingness to paint was not so obvious from the beginning. She faced difficulty because she didn’t know what to draw and I remember it took her a few minutes to find it. I encouraged her again and orient [sic] her towards her feelings and body reactions at the present moment. Once she started drawing, she seemed to enjoy it and one design brought the other and one thought led to the other.”

It is important to continuously remind participants that their drawings cannot not be “bad,” and the artistic quality does not matter at all (Guruge et al., 2015). However, in some cases and despite the researcher’s efforts, some participants will refuse to proceed (Horstman et al., 2008). The researcher has to be open to this possibility, avoid “scape-goating” the participant, and allow alternative plans to emerge: “resistance in interviews may be a valuable finding in itself if contextualized properly” (Kizlari & Fouseki, 2018, p. 1958). Handling a participant’s resistance to drawing begins with respecting the participant’s stance: “Researchers should allow themselves to be exposed to the observations and sensitivities of participants in order to help increase understanding of the possibilities and problems of conducting qualitative interviews” (Clarke, 2006, p. 27).

Take Ethical Matters Seriously

Informed consent is always required. For example, “Prior to the interview, all participants had been provided with an information sheet and consent form in which they were informed that they might be asked to draw” (Guillemin, 2004b, p. 276). However, this is not enough: the use of drawing can cause participants to uncover painful suppressed emotions, and the researcher has to be prepared to handle such cases appropriately. According to Sewell (2011), “This notion of ‘Pandora’s box’ is one which underpins any research into sensitive issues and should be carefully thought through before embarking on such study” (p. 183). The researcher has to take pains to ensure no harm will come to participants and be prepared with a positive reframing—especially with vulnerable populations (Guillemin & Westall, 2008). Clarke (2006) addresses the potential for qualitative interviews to be exploitative or even harmful to vulnerable subjects (such as in healthcare settings). Clarke proposes that researchers must be mindful of the impact their practice could have and adopt a reflexive stance to help minimize negative effects. Even with careful forethought, “ethical issues that arise in qualitative health research that may affect both the researcher and those being researched are not as easy to identify prospectively” (Kendall & Halliday, 2014, p. 306), and the mindful practitioner has to be alert in order to handle unexpected situations in an ethical manner.

Form and Participate in Peer Supervision Groups

Peer supervision groups can help researchers plan their research, share ideas, and improve their methodologies (McPhail-Bell & Redman-MacLaren, 2019). In a peer group setting, researchers have the opportunity to simulate the research techniques before the actual fieldwork starts and develop the soft skills that will be required to successfully incorporate drawings into their practice. A bottom-up peer learning ecology can emerge through members’ collaborations and synergies (Brailas, Koskinas, et al., 2017; Brailas & Nika, 2015). Participants can learn from each other, and the group provides the collective wisdom necessary to handle difficult situations that often arise during field interviews. The group can also address questions that are difficult to answer, such as: “Had I been more assertive, what impact would that have on the interview?” (Kizlari & Fouseki, 2018, p. 1956).

Another critical point not easily tackled outside a peer support group is researchers’ own vulnerabilities, especially when working with sensitive or traumatized populations: “During any qualitative research process all the players involved carry their own personal vulnerabilities. The many factors which can affect distress levels are deeply embedded within the contexts of the situations in which they arise” (Davison, 2004, p. 386). According to Kendall and Halliday (2014), “Researchers’ emotional reactions to the research process, including emotional distress, anxiety, vulnerability, guilt or moral uncertainty, may be hidden and experienced in isolation through fear that it may be interpreted as a sign of weakness, or

even research incompetence” (p. 307). The emphasis has been mainly on the side of the participants’ safety, and the researchers’ side is usually overlooked: “We were surprised to uncover a gap in the literature pertaining to the emotional wellbeing of doctoral students researching with vulnerable populations” (Velardo & Elliott, 2018, p. 212). When the peer group prioritizes an appreciative culture, members have the opportunity to express themselves authentically and articulate their unspoken thoughts, without the fear of being criticized or disrespected (Brailas, Avani, et al., 2017; Brailas et al., 2019). By doing so, they gradually come to understand that their own feelings of incompetence are neither uncommon nor something to be demonized or hidden, but, instead, something they should acknowledge and take advantage of in their practice (Holloway & Johnston, 1985). One way to cope with unexpected issues of any kind that could arise during the interviewing practice is to keep detailed personal research diaries and share the critical points with the peer group (Davison, 2004).

Final thoughts

In this article, I proposed two basic strategies to integrate participant-produced drawings with verbal interviews in a research project. It is inherently difficult to differentiate among the many approaches that mix the visual with the verbal. The proposed categorization can serve only as an introductory map for those who are navigating the territory for the first time. It is common for qualitative researchers to mix techniques in order to creatively address real-world research challenges. For example, Stevenson, Oldfield, and Ortiz (2019) proposed a reflexive, multi-phased, participant-led strategy that enabled data collection to adapt to their developing field knowledge: “Participatory drawing and drawing elicitation were the most serendipitous of the methods used. The researchers had neither planned nor been familiar with this method prior to the field work” (p. 10). In this direction, the “post-interview” and the “pre-interview” strategies proposed in this article can be thought of only as entry points in an ongoing iterative research process that has both elicitation and performative dimensions. It is a process that aims to produce a rich multimodal body of empirical data, through meaningful human interaction, that will eventually lead to a positive community effect: “These texts do more than move audiences to tears. They criticize the world the way it is and offer suggestions about how it could be different” (Denzin, 2001, p. 24).

Qualitative interviewing is both a scientific inquiry and a craft. It requires knowledge and understanding of the techniques, simulating the process, and practicing responses to resistance before undertaking the actual fieldwork. Peer supervision groups can help researchers to develop the required skills. For researchers coming from a psychotherapeutic background where clinical interviewing and imaging techniques are standard practice, it is especially crucial to be mindful of the limits of the research interview context, to resist the temptation to stray into the realm of therapy, and to maintain the line between research and therapy. This is not to deny the potential positive effects of producing drawings. Multimodal methods can promote resilience by providing participants with new ways to generate deep insight and make constructive meaning of adversity (Haffejee & Theron, 2018; Theron, 2012; Van Der Vaart et al., 2018). Research interviewing per se is a transformative process, a process that affects participants as well as the community: “Interviews arise out of performance events. They transform information into shared experience. This reflexive project presumes that words and language have a material presence in the world; that words have effects on people. Words matter” (Denzin, 2001, p. 24). Drawings also have material presence that produce effects, and drawings also matter: “visual methods do not just represent the world differently to word- and number-based techniques, they also come to construct it through their performative nature” (Clark, 2017, p. 191). It is the synergy between the verbal and the visual that generates a new

whole with emergent properties: a multimodal interview that does not just create a nice window onto the inner world of the participants, but a new entity that is the difference that makes the difference.

References

- Bagnoli, A. (2009). Beyond the standard interview: The use of graphic elicitation and arts-based methods. *Qualitative Research*, 9(5), 547–570. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1468794109343625>
- Bateson, G. (1972). *Steps to an ecology of mind*. University of Chicago Press.
- Brailas, A. (2019). Psychotherapy in the era of artificial intelligence: Therapist Panoptes. *Homo Virtualis*, 2(1), 68–78. <https://doi.org/10.12681/homvir.20197>
- Brailas, A., Avani, S., Gkini, C., Deilogkou, M., Koskinas, K., & Alexias, G. (2017). Experiential learning in action: A collaborative inquiry. *The Qualitative Report*, 22(1), 271–288. <https://nsuworks.nova.edu/tqr/vol22/iss1/15>
- Brailas, A., Avani, S.-M., Gkini, C., Deilogkou, M.-A., Dimitriadis, G., Thravalou, E., Fouka, E., & Koskinas, K. (2019). Group work, reflective practice and blogging in academic teaching: Developing peer learning networks. *PsyArxiv*. Advance online publication. <https://doi.org/10.31234/osf.io/stjv2>
- Brailas, A., Koskinas, K., & Alexias, G. (2017). Teaching to emerge: Toward a bottom-up pedagogy. *Cogent Education*, 4(1). <https://doi.org/10.1080/2331186X.2017.1377506>
- Brailas, A., & Nika, S. (2015). Groupwork and participatory media. *European Journal of Social Behaviour*, 2(1), 12–20. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.237077>
- Brinkmann, S. (2018). The interview. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *The SAGE handbook of qualitative research* (5th ed., pp. 576–599). SAGE.
- Clark, A. (2017). Seeing real life?: Working with the visual to understand landscapes of community. *International Review of Qualitative Research*, 10(2), 190–210. <https://doi.org/10.1525/irqr.2017.10.2.190>
- Clarke, A. (2006). Qualitative interviewing: Encountering ethical issues and challenges. *Nurse Researcher*, 13(4), 19–29. <https://doi.org/10.7748/nr2006.07.13.4.19.c5987>
- Davison, J. (2004). Dilemmas in research: Issues of vulnerability and disempowerment for the social worker/researcher. *Journal of Social Work Practice*, 18(3), 379–393. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0265053042000314447>
- Denzin, N. K. (2001). The reflexive interview and a performative social science. *Qualitative Research*, 1(1), 23–46. <https://doi.org/10.1177/146879410100100102>
- Ellis, J., Amjad, A., & Deng, J. (2011). Interviewing participants about past events: The helpful role of pre-interview activities. *In Education*, 17(2), 61–73.
- Ellis, J., Hetherington, R., Lovell, J., McConaghy, M., & Viczko, M. (2013). Draw me a picture, tell me a story: Evoking memory and supporting analysis through pre-interview drawing activities. *Alberta Journal of Educational Research*, 58(4), 488–508.
- Gillies, V., Harden, A., Johnson, K., Reavey, P., Strange, V., & Willig, C. (2005). Painting pictures of embodied experience: The use of nonverbal data production for the study of embodiment. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 2(3), 199–212. <https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088705qp038oa>
- Glegg, S. M. N. (2019). Facilitating interviews in qualitative research with visual tools: A typology. *Qualitative Health Research*, 29(2), 301–310. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1049732318786485>
- Gleeson, K. (2011). Polytextual thematic analysis for visual data: Pinning down the analytic. In P. Reavey (Ed.), *Visual methods in psychology: Using and interpreting image in qualitative research* (pp. 314–329). Routledge Psychology Press.

- Guillemin, M. (2004a). Embodying heart disease through drawings. *Health*, 8(2), 223–239. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1363459304041071>
- Guillemin, M. (2004b). Understanding illness: Using drawings as a research method. *Qualitative Health Research*, 14(2), 272–289. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1049732303260445>
- Guillemin, M., & Westall, C. (2008). Gaining insight into women's knowing of postnatal depression using drawings. In P. Liamputtong & J. Rumbold (Eds.), *Knowing differently: Arts-Based and collaborative research methods* (pp. 121-140). Nova Science Publishers.
- Guruge, S., Hynie, M., Shakya, Y., Akbari, A., Htoo, S., & Abiyo, S. (2015). Refugee youth and migration: Using arts-informed research to understand changes in their roles and responsibilities. *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung / Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, 16(3). <https://doi.org/10.17169/fqs-16.3.2278>
- Haffejee, S., & Theron, L. (2018). Visual methods in resilience research: Reflections on its utility. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 1–24. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14780887.2018.1545063>
- Harper, D. (2002). Talking about pictures: A case for photo elicitation. *Visual Studies*, 17(1), 13–26. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14725860220137345>
- Holloway, E. L., & Johnston, R. (1985). Group supervision: Widely practiced but poorly understood. *Counselor Education and Supervision*, 24(4), 332–340. <https://doi.org/10.1002/j.1556-6978.1985.tb00494.x>
- Horstman, M., Aldiss, S., Richardson, A., & Gibson, F. (2008). Methodological issues when using the draw and write technique with children aged 6 to 12 years. *Qualitative Health Research*, 18(7), 1001–1011. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1049732308318230>
- Höykinpuro, R., & Ropo, A. (2014). Visual narratives on organizational space. *Journal of Organizational Change Management*, 27(5), 780–792. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JOCM-09-2014-0174>
- Jacob, S. A., & Furgerson, S. P. (2012). Writing interview protocols and conducting interviews: Tips for students new to the field of qualitative research. *The Qualitative Report*, 17(42), 1–10. <https://nsuworks.nova.edu/tqr/vol17/iss42/3>
- Kearney, K. S., & Hyle, A. E. (2004). Drawing out emotions: The use of participant-produced drawings in qualitative inquiry. *Qualitative Research*, 4(3), 361–382. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1468794104047234>
- Kendall, S., & Halliday, L. E. (2014). Undertaking ethical qualitative research in public health: Are current ethical processes sufficient? *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Public Health*, 38(4), 306–310. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1753-6405.12250>
- Kizlari, D., & Fouseki, K. (2018). Treating resistance as data in qualitative interviews. *The Qualitative Report*, 23(8), 1951–1961. <https://nsuworks.nova.edu/tqr/vol23/iss8/12>
- Mannay, D. (2010). Making the familiar strange: Can visual research methods render the familiar setting more perceptible? *Qualitative Research*, 10(1), 91–111. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1468794109348684>
- Mannay, D. (2015). *Visual, narrative and creative research methods: Application, reflection and ethics* (1st ed.). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315775760>
- Mays, R. M., Sturm, L. A., Rasche, J. C., Cox, D. S., Cox, A. D., & Zimet, G. D. (2011). Use of drawings to explore U.S. women's perspectives on why people might decline HIV testing. *Health Care for Women International*, 32(4), 328–343. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07399332.2010.510585>
- McGrath, L., Mullarkey, S., & Reavey, P. (2019). Building visual worlds: Using maps in qualitative psychological research on affect and emotion. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 17(1), 1–23. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14780887.2019.1577517>

- McPhail-Bell, K., & Redman-MacLaren, M. L. (2019). A co/autoethnography of peer support and PhDs: Being, doing, and sharing in academia. *The Qualitative Report*, 24(5), 1087–1105. <https://nsuworks.nova.edu/tqr/vol24/iss5/12>
- Mitchell, C., Theron, L., Smith, A., Stuart, J., & Campbell, Z. (2012). Drawing as a research method. In L. Theron, A. Smith, & J. Stuart (Eds.), *Picturing research: Drawing as visual methodology* (pp. 19-36). SensePublishers.
- Morrow, V. (1998). If you were a teacher, it would be harder to talk to you: Reflections on qualitative research with children in school. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, 1(4), 297–313. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13645579.1998.10846882>
- Ogina, T. A. (2012). The use of drawings to facilitate interviews with orphaned children in Mpumalanga province, South Africa. *South African Journal of Education*, 32(4), 428–440. <https://doi.org/10.15700/saje.v32n4a668>
- Polemi-Todoulou, M. (2018). Systemic-Dialectic-multilevel-multifocal approach. In J. Lebow, A. Chambers, & D. C. Breunlin (Eds.), *Encyclopedia of couple and family therapy* (pp. 1–5). Springer International Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-15877-8983-1>
- Polychroni, K., Gournas, G., & Sakkas, D. (2008). Actualizing inner voices and the group process: Experiential training in personal development. *Human Systems: The Journal of Therapy, Consultation & Training*, 19(1), 26–43.
- Rossetto, K. R. (2014). Qualitative research interviews: Assessing the therapeutic value and challenges. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 31(4), 482–489. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0265407514522892>
- Sewell, K. (2011). Researching sensitive issues: A critical appraisal of ‘draw-and-write’ as a data collection technique in eliciting children’s perceptions. *International Journal of Research & Method in Education*, 34(2), 175–191. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1743727X.2011.578820>
- Silver, J. (2013). Visual methods. In C. Willig, *Introducing qualitative research in psychology* (3rd ed., pp. 207-221). McGraw Hill Education, Open University Press.
- Stevenson, A., Oldfield, J., & Ortiz, E. (2019). Image and word on the street: A reflexive, phased approach to combining participatory visual methods and qualitative interviews to explore resilience with street connected young people in Guatemala City. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14780887.2018.1557769>
- Sweetman, P. (2009). Revealing habitus, illuminating practice: Bourdieu, photography and visual methods. *The Sociological Review*, 57(3), 491–511. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-954X.2009.01851.x>
- Theron, L. (2012). Does visual participatory research have resilience-promoting value? Teacher experiences of generating and interpreting drawings. *South African Journal of Education*, 32(4), 381–392. <https://doi.org/10.15700/saje.v32n4a656>
- Turner, W. D. (2010). Qualitative interview design: A practical guide for novice investigators. *The Qualitative Report*, 15(3), 754–760. <https://nsuworks.nova.edu/tqr/vol15/iss3/19>
- Vakali, E., & Brailas, A. (2018). “Me and my students’ smartphones in the classroom”: A case study using arts-based methods. *Homo Virtualis*, 1(1), 35. <https://doi.org/10.12681/homvir.19070>
- Van Der Vaart, G., Van Hoven, B., & Huigen, P. P. P. (2018). Creative and arts-based Research methods in academic research. Lessons from a participatory research project in the Netherlands. *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung / Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, 19(2). <https://doi.org/10.17169/fqs-19.2.2961>
- Vassiliou, G. A., & Vassiliou, V. G. (1985). Short-term intervention with the synallactic collective image technique. In P. Pichot, P. Berner, R. Wolf, & K. Thau (Eds.), *Psychiatry the state of the art: Volume 4 psychotherapy and psychosomatic medicine*

- (pp. 59–63). Springer US. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4684-4697-511>
- Velardo, S., & Elliott, S. (2018). Prioritising doctoral students' wellbeing in qualitative research. *The Qualitative Report*, 23(2), 311–318. <https://nsuworks.nova.edu/tqr/vol23/iss2/2>
- Watkins, J. M., Mohr, B. J., & Kelly, R. (2011). *Appreciative inquiry: Change at the speed of imagination*. Pfeiffer.

Author Note

Alexios Brailas (Ph.D.) works at the Department of Psychology, Panteion University, Athens, Greece, where he teaches courses on qualitative research methods, Systems Science, and Psychology of Social Media. He is also running and facilitating group workshops and interventions with students and the community. His approach to research is participatory, design-based, and practice-focused. Research interests include, among others: personal development and resilience in complex techno-social systems; learning communities, reflective practice and peer learning networks; evidence-based group work and therapy; and community-based action research. Alexios is a licensed psychologist and a certified group psychotherapist and adult educator. For further or updated information and a list of publications, please visit: <https://abrailas.github.io/>. Please direct correspondence to abrailas@panteion.gr.

Acknowledgements: Many thanks to my students in the Qualitative Research Course I teach at Panteion University for granting me permission to use their drawings.

Copyright 2020: Alexios Brailas and Nova Southeastern University.

Article Citation

Brailas, A. (2020). Using drawings in qualitative interviews: An introduction to the practice. *The Qualitative Report*, 25(12), 4447-4460. <https://nsuworks.nova.edu/tqr/vol25/iss12/14>
