

## ❖ EIGHT ❖

PUBLISHING AND PROMOTING  
CRYSTALLIZATION

*There are no stories out there waiting to be told and no certain truths waiting to be recorded; there are only stories yet to be constructed.*

—Denzin (1997, p. 267)

Some of the stories yet to be constructed may be productively, elegantly, and even courageously performed through a crystallized text or series of texts. Although not a panacea for all that ails the field of qualitative methodology nor a one-size-fits-all format for every project, crystallization provides a path toward constructing richly descriptive, useful, and artful representations of qualitative research. When we release the urge to discover definitive, singular Truth and surrender the need for certainty, we may discover the joys of “delicious ambiguity” (Radner, 1989), intervene into the “taken for grantedness” of daily life (Gergen, 1994), and become a pebble of innovation whose splash sends out ripples that impact the breadth of the qualitative research pond. In this chapter, I consider several lessons I have learned from crystallization, discuss crystallization’s utility in social justice research, and offer suggestions for responding to common misunderstandings of and criticisms to crystallized texts.

## LESSONS OF CRYSTALLIZATION

Both the processes and the products of crystallization reinforce the constructed and partial nature of all knowledge and of all modes of knowledge production. I understand crystallization as an emergent framework; hence I have opted not to present any static conclusions. Instead, I offer several lessons that arise again and again as I practice crystallization and read the work of others whose goals reflect the principles I promote.

**Lesson One:** The pervasive effects of dichotomous thinking continue to limit our ability to make sense of data and to represent it in meaningful ways (Ellingson & Ellis, 2008). Continuums offer multiplicity and the benefit of more than one correct answer. Challenging the art/science and the story/report dichotomies through crystallized texts opens up the field to more possibilities by embodying a range of representation. Regardless of where you locate yourself on the methodological continuum, I urge you to resist “us/them” mentality in judging others’ work and the field of qualitative methods; few people fit the “anything goes, touchy-feely” caricature of autoethnographers/artists, and equally as few truly believe in the myth of value-neutral, completely objective research. I recognize that we accept serious risks in emphasizing methodological and epistemological commonalities over material differences (see Ellingson & Ellis, 2008), but I prefer those risks over those incurred when we paint the “other side” as distorted straw persons (see K. I. Miller, 2000). Much of that distortion arises from the perceived need to establish two polarities. Ideally, crystallized texts should reinforce a continuum of possibilities and dispel dichotomous views by representing multiple ways of knowing the world.

**Lesson Two:** The question must determine the method(s). Avoid methodolatry (Chamberlain, 2000), or reifying and privileging methodological concerns at the expense of other important considerations and seeking only to apply a favored method regardless of the question posed or the opportunities presented. Instead, utilize methods of data collection, analysis, and representation that enable you to most fully address the questions you pose. Like any other approach, crystallization should be implemented in ways that respond to the nature of the questions being asked, not done for its own sake or out of a desire merely to be considered innovative.

**Lesson Three:** “It’s just more data.” I say this to my students all the time and they roll their eyes at me. But I knew this in my gut all along, my research

experience now bears it out, and many of my colleagues concur. To say, “it’s just more data,” means that you respond to any unexpected deviations from your research plan with curiosity rather than with shame and frustration. The wonder of social construction is that the entire journey “counts,” not just the good parts (Mishler, 1986). We can learn from what seem at first like harmful missteps and mistakes if we think of them as providing yet more data to consider for our study, instead of considering them failures that inherently compromise our research. Thus, awkward interviews, embarrassing fieldwork incidents, shifts of topic focus, and dropped balls of administrative details, all reveal more about our participants, their worlds, and ourselves as researchers. For example, I was mortified by being publicly scolded by a physician while conducting participant observation, but upon reflection the incident revealed a lot about the culture of medicine. Once you finish fretting over what you perceive as an undesirable research experience, carefully document the details of what happened and your feelings about it, then add the account to the rest of your data. When engaging in crystallization, use some of those uncomfortable moments to deepen your analysis, construct reflexive writing stories (Richardson, 2000b), shed light on your participants’ world, and/or complexify any stories or analyses that appear too tidy (and therefore unrealistic).

Lesson Four: Qualitative researchers are embodied, unique selves (Coffey, 1999; Ellingson, 2006a). Many researchers pay lip service to recognizing and articulating the standpoints from which we write, but we must go further than that. Too many times we provide obligatory statements about our identities as researchers, but we do not go the next step toward exploring the impact of who we are on *how* we research and *what* we produce. While most qualitative researchers eschew objectivity, we nonetheless produce accounts that often only minimally reflect an awareness of our unique selves as they impact our work. Crystallization necessitates a deep degree of reflexivity because it invokes the researcher’s self on so many different levels as it constructs and deconstructs meaning.

#### CALL TO ACTION: EMPLOYING CRYSTALLIZATION TO PROMOTE SOCIAL JUSTICE

Much of the practice of ethnography and other qualitative methods remains rooted in the passion for protesting injustice that characterized the Chicago School, many members of which explored marginalized groups in urban settings

(e.g., C. A. B. Warren & Karner, 2000). Conquergood (1995) argued that the goal of applied research is always political, potentially revolutionary, and never neutral:

We must choose between research that is “engaged” or “complicit.” By engaged I mean clear-eyed, self-critical awareness that research does not proceed in epistemological purity or moral innocence: There is no immaculate perception. . . . The scholarly commitment of the engaged intellectual is to praxis. . . . By praxis I mean a combination of analytical rigor, participatory practice, critical reflection, and political struggle. (p. 85)

I concur with Conquergood: researchers cannot remain uninvolved—to refuse to advocate or assist is to reinforce power relations, not to remain impartial. Conquergood’s (1994) study of youth gangs in Chicago constitutes an outstanding example of applied communication research that promotes social justice by rejecting standard characterizations of gang members in favor of more nuanced, compassionate accounts constructed through extensive, hands-on involvement with participants. Calls to socially engaged work proliferated across the social sciences during the last decade. For example, the third edition of the *Sage Handbook of Qualitative Methods* (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005) focuses on strategies for promoting social justice and accomplishing political work through qualitative research; see also the forum on social justice research in *Communication Studies* (Frey, Pearce, Pollock, Artz, & Murphy, 1996; Makau, 1996; Wood, 1996), and the special issue of *Journal of Applied Communication Research* with articles on conducting participatory and applied research for social justice (Artz, 1998; Crabtree, 1998; Frey, 1998; Hartnett, 1998; Pearce, 1998; Ryan, Carragee, & Schwerner, 1998; Varallo, Ray, & Ellis, 1998).

I encourage readers to think of their work as always already political in its practices and implications and to use crystallization to highlight the material and ideological consequences of representation of others. Moreover, we must engage in dialogue with the worlds outside of the academy in order to effect social change. When we bring our ideas to the general public, we act as public intellectuals who

are more than just righteous in their stance; they embody and enact moral leadership. They are not afraid to speak out; rather, they thrive as “rabble-rousers” grounded in ethical pillars. . . . When the intellectual speaks to a “public,” ideas are not just heard but debated, discussed, and passed on in recursive societal dialogue. (Papa & Singhal, 2007, pp. 126–127)

When we speak out, we move beyond the important work of knowledge creation and theory building to apply our scholarly resources to benefit people in concrete ways. This requires us to engage as much in listening as in speaking.

Moreover, we must expand our definition of what counts as a “public” with which to engage with our work.

By embracing a framework of multiple publics—local and national, enduring and temporary—we can better recognize and affirm the meaningful work that scholars do for local, particular communities . . . [and] we call for greater institutional and material recognition of these multiple forms of public intellectual work. (Brouwer & Squires, 2003, p. 212)

Getting credit for our “nonscholarly” work and the representations we produce as part of the crystallization process bears serious material consequences for hiring, tenure, promotion, and allocation of resources. Of course, we all can afford to volunteer time in our communities, but significant engagements with the public need to be central to our academic mission. Crystallization (particularly dendritic forms) offers an ideal mechanism for accomplishing the goal of public engagement because of its emphasis on producing a range of representations suitable for a variety of stakeholder audiences, both within and outside the academy. We will not find engaged research easy. We need courage to speak out.

At a time when our civil liberties are being destroyed and public institutions and goods all over the globe are under assault by the forces of a rapacious global capitalism, there is a sense of concrete urgency that demands not only the most militant forms of political opposition on the part of academics, but new modes of resistance and collective struggle buttressed by rigorous intellectual work, social responsibility, and political courage. (Giroux, 2004, p. 77)

As a faculty member at a Jesuit university, I receive considerable encouragement and support from my institution to act “in solidarity” with the needs of oppressed peoples, making public engagement an obvious choice for me. However, many other researchers at a wide range of institutions find creative ways to garner publications from engaged research through strategic placement and promotion of work. I encourage all faculty to move courageously in this direction toward engagement and away from complicity.

I now turn to a discussion of strategies for disseminating our engaged, multigenre work within academic outlets.

## GETTING THE WORD OUT: PURSUING PUBLICATION

Some editors will welcome your crystallized work with open arms. I remain grateful for and humbled by the support I have received from my editors and impressed by the open-mindedness of some other editors who have embraced innovative work. However, in my experience, articles, chapters, books, performances, multimedia presentations, and other texts that utilize strategies that reflect the goals of crystallization do not find welcome by all, or even the majority, of colleagues. Despite professed support, I often find colleagues in the form of peer reviewers, journal and edited volume editors, departmental/college faculty evaluation committee members, and the like to be highly critical of such work on its face. Tellingly, their critiques often fail to mention the *form* or perceived incompatible elements of the piece at all, and instead provide streams of nitpicky complaints about the most minute elements of the manuscript. Alternatively, I receive the two-line review that basically states that the paper constitutes an abomination and must be rejected (and presumably burned, I infer). These critics seem uncomfortable but without being willing and/or able to express why.

Over time, layered accounts (Ronai, 1995) have become fairly common, but even then, they find publication primarily in such strong qualitative methods-focused (rather than discipline- or topic-focused) journals as *Qualitative Inquiry*, *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, *Ethnography*, and *Symbolic Interaction*. Even those outlets who welcome layered accounts and other interpretive work may have specific expectations for evocative prose, coherent argumentation, use of particular theoretical perspectives, and/or other sacred mores. Yet, many of us wish to speak to and with communities of scholars, practitioners, and theorists in health care, education, human services, government, community organizations, activist groups, business, and other groups who cannot be realistically reached via a small number of journals focused on interpretive scholarship. I believe that very few, if any, scholars act simply with petty territorialism, seeking to punish those who trespass against established conventions. But more than a few of them are rendered uneasy, threatened, and defensive by work that pushes the boundaries, which crystallized texts often do.

While I have faced such defensiveness from all along the qualitative continuum, they primarily fall into two “camps”: (some) postpositivists who think that artistic works compromise the validity of accompanying inductive analysis and (some) artsy folks who think that those who practice qualitative analysis

needlessly hold onto—or worse, are duped by—irrelevant, patriarchal, and/or passé conventions of science. These criticisms reflect two levels of perceived incommensurability: (1) philosophical objections to logical and epistemological inconsistencies in the work (i.e., objections to putting art and science (together), and (2) symbolic approaches that focus on the lack of consistent symbol sets and common vocabularies across “systems of explanation” (K. I. Miller, 2000, p. 63; i.e., objections that the work makes no sense, is not explained meaningfully). In the interest of providing practical assistance to those who want to engage in and publish works of crystallization, I provide a few general suggestions for preparing and “selling” your crystallized work, and then offer some suggested responses to common criticisms.

One fairly obvious tactic is to engage exclusively in dendritic crystallization, as discussed in Chapter 6. By strategically dividing up your work into segments that each adhere to a single genre, you can target specific publication outlets and meet their individual expectations in each of your pieces, without compromising your ability to work in other genres for other outlets. Dendritic crystallization is not less valuable or easier than crystallization that yields multigenre texts, nor is it mutually exclusive with it. Moreover, opportunities to practice guerilla scholarship enable practitioners of crystallization to plant seeds in other gardens (Rawlins, 2007).

Second, for any work of crystallization, I highly suggest preemptive inclusion of strategic explanatory and/or justifying statements within manuscripts and/or cover letters in order to ward off editorial defensiveness, when possible. Of course, authors should avoid being defensive themselves and avoid accusing editors, even subtly, of being close minded. Think more along the lines of offering some persuasive statements about the value of your boundary-spanning, innovative, cutting-edge work that challenges limitations of existing approaches to your topic, and the like. Express your certainty (even if you don't feel it) that the editor will appreciate your fresh perspective and creative way of representing your research.

Third, be extra careful to avoid giving editors and reviewers a simple reason or excuse to reject your work, that is, do not be sloppy. Be incredibly neat in your formatting, do a thorough reference check to ensure that all in-text citations have corresponding references and all references are cited in your text, be sure every one of your references adheres to the preferred style of the journal (e.g., APA, MLA), proofread or get someone to do it for you, and look out for ambiguous statements that might evoke criticism by unintentionally

overclaiming a finding or implying a measurement not warranted by your data. Professionalism dictates such careful manuscript preparation anyway, but manuscripts that push the boundaries cannot afford even minor mistakes that might tempt reviewers to dismiss them out of hand. Many will dismiss the work anyway, but that is no reason to make it easy for them.

## JUSTIFYING YOUR WORK

For those who have not already learned of the rigidity of many research publication conventions through personal experience, let me assure you that they persist. For those of you coping with social and scholarly rejections, let me offer both hope and empathy (see this chapter's interlude) and some ways to respond to some of the most common concerns I encounter, first from the methodological middle-right, then from the middle-left. I structured this discussion with paired criticisms and suggested responses. I welcome readers to adapt these ideas in whatever way proves useful in seeking publication, or simply as ideas to keep in the back of your mind as you practice crystallization.

### **Criticisms From the Methodological Right (Including IRB/Human Subjects Boards)**

**Criticism:** You can do that “artsy stuff” *only* after you establish the social scientific rigor of your method and contributions of your findings. For example, Morse, a highly accomplished researcher and leader in the field of qualitative methods (e.g., Morse & Field, 1995; Morse & Richards, 2002) and editor of *Qualitative Health Research* (<http://qhr.sagepub.com>), cautions that “alternative” forms of representation must not replace or even precede more conventional accounts of qualitative research analyses:

The research results disseminated in an arts-based form must follow careful qualitative work conducted as we have done for decades. The play or the artwork cannot, and must not, be the first or the only results emanating from a qualitative project. The refereed article first produced then provides the criterion to evaluate the message of the adequacy of the alternative arts-based “publication” used to provide supplemental or alternative dissemination of the findings. Thus, the alternative representation of the research is not an end in itself, but, rather, an essential and significant additional means for dissemination, accessing a different audience. (Morse, 2004, p. 887)



*Response:* I deeply respect Morse, and I concur with her view that artistic work is not the same as social scientific analysis. However, I disagree with her (and others') mandate that creative analytic work cannot be "first" or "only" products of a qualitative project. I engage in this discussion about our difference of opinion in the interest of creating better rationales for what we do and why. Readers should keep in mind that productive differences of opinion about methodological issues abound within the community of qualitative researchers, and that continuing dialogue enriches the field. I encourage authors to do both more conventional and creative analytic work too, but contend that one mode need not necessarily precede or require another. We can engage in rigorous data analysis processes that we then express in creative genres, or produce narrative work that then leads to systematic analyses. Moreover, researchers can enact multiple modes of sense making concurrently. While artistic representations cannot fully capture the meaning of any phenomenon, neither can conventional reports. The tendency to romanticize traditional qualitative analysis as the primary and hence only authoritative account obscures its limitations as an inherently partial account embedded in relations of power. Qualitative (or quantitative) reports require readers' faith that the authors conducted rigorous analysis and that they have offered a fair, thorough, and nuanced analysis of their data. Invocation of the report genre does not automatically ensure such rigor, anymore than adopting an artistic genre precludes or casts doubt on it. The rhetorical advantage of the report genre manifests in its explicit discussion of procedures, which enhances perceptions of accountability. Authors should be trustworthy to the highest standards of excellence in any genre. One compromise involves offering methodological details in a method section, appendix, epilogue, or elsewhere in artistic representations to allay concerns about the rigor of analytic procedures (see discussion of options in dendritic crystallization, Chapter 6).

**Criticism:** Your work is hopelessly subjective.

*Response:* Owning your standpoint involves risk: "To admit one's passions is to see through a glass darkly" (Gergen, 1999, p. 76). For those concerned with my lack of objectivity, I routinely offer two responses. First, I paraphrase Gergen's (1999) views on the subjectivity/objectivity dichotomy using my own pithy rejoinder: *Objectivity is merely a rhetorical accomplishment*. I often elaborate that people attempt to persuade others through argumentation that they achieved objectivity, but that does not make it so.<sup>1</sup> Second, I suggest that interrogating my subjectivity through continual reflection on my role in data collection, analysis, and representation offers far more rigor than *pretending*

my subjectivity does not exist or has been somehow eliminated from the process of my research (see Harding's 1993 discussion of "strong objectivity").

**Criticism:** You simply cannot do that; everyone knows you cannot combine creative work with analysis and expect to get it published by a reputable journal.

*Response:* Language and meaning are not static, and neither are research methods and conventions. We do not say "thee" and "thou" any more. Thirty years ago we could not publish a paper that used first-person voice; now APA [or insert your disciplinary standard] considers it appropriate language—most journals allow it, and many even require it. Likewise, methodological evolution continues, and crystallization offers one innovative way to represent qualitative research findings. A few great journals that publish this type of boundary-spanning work include *Qualitative Inquiry*, *Cultural Studies*, *Critical Methodologies*, *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, and *Ethnography*.

**Criticism:** Your findings are not generalizable because you only studied one person, group, or setting, or a nonrepresentative sample.

*Response:* Crystallization does not involve claims of generalization. Instead, my findings offer rich descriptions, theoretical insights, and pragmatic implications for practitioners in the types of settings I studied. While of course health care teams [or restaurants or group homes or whatever you study] vary, they also have a lot in common and hence can benefit from my research. One benefit of my crystallized account lies in the utility of being able to reach multiple audiences instead of only academics. Let me give you an example of my work's implications for practitioners. . . .

**Criticism:** Your findings are not valid because those stories (poems, photos, etc.) reflect individuals and are not representative of the corpus of your data.

*Response:* The term validity is a contested term that holds different meanings for researchers depending upon where researchers situate themselves on the methodological continuum (Potter, 1996). Since I do not claim to measure anything, I do not need a representative sample in order for my creative work to offer rich descriptions that embody the meanings in my data. Instead, I selected illustrative, evocative, moving exemplars to build my case. A long tradition of inductive analysis exists in qualitative methods, and my work reflects this approach (e.g., Lindlof & Taylor, 2002).

Criticism: Your methods are not reliable or replicable.

*Response:* As a social constructionist I do not believe that any qualitative research can be reliable or replicable; all meaning is intersubjective (i.e., co-created in the moment), and hence it is not only inevitable but *beneficial* that each researcher will generate somewhat different findings when studying the “same” place or group (e.g., Gergen, 1999). Rather than reliability, I focus on reflexivity: careful consideration of the individual point of view (i.e., positionality) of the researcher as it relates to data analysis, knowledge construction, and representation (e.g., Fine et al., 2000; Lindlof & Taylor, 2002).

Criticism: Your presentation is not ethical because you did not secure permission to present participants’ voices as a performance [or other creative representation].

*Response:* My work conforms to ethical standards for research. The informed consent procedures included a reference to any report or public presentation of the data, and my [insert genre or medium] is a form of public presentation. I made appropriate changes to protect the identities of my participants through the use of pseudonyms and changes to other identifying characteristics. Moreover, my creative account actually fulfils the ethical imperative of giving voice to marginalized groups with its foregrounding of my participants’ voices in ways that demonstrate their strength and resiliency [or other positive characteristics] (Conquergood, 1995; Madison, 2005; Nielsen, 1990).

Criticism: Your manuscript does not follow appropriate APA (or other) style.

*Response:* Those style conventions got in the way of my artistic/representational goals for this work. However, I would be happy to include an overview, appendix, reference list, postscript, or other addendum to my work that would fulfill the purpose of providing appropriately formatted documentation of sources, procedures, and methods, and to address any other editorial concerns you might have.

Criticism: Your book wouldn’t fit in our list, since our audience doesn’t read work of that type.

*Response:* I understand that my work appears atypical. However, most readers embrace or at least are open to considering work that pushes the envelope of accepted practices, provided it fits their area of focus and is well done.

Let me explain to you how my work meets the goals of your series articulated in your call for submissions and how my work complements your current list of publications. . . .

**Criticism:** You are trying to do too much; you include everything but the kitchen sink in your manuscript!

*Response:* The manuscript reflects a careful balance of coverage. Of course, breadth and depth always trade off in any representation. While I do include multiple forms of representation, I also narrowed the scope of my inquiry accordingly, enabling me to fully explore a more tightly defined topic area. A concrete example of how I limited my range of inquiry is that early in my project with the IOPOA team, I considered many aspects of interdisciplinary communication in several settings. Yet, in my book, I focused specifically on the interdisciplinary team members' collaborative communication in the backstage of the clinic. The appearance of several contrasting genres may increase the perception of length; in reality, my manuscript falls within the normal topical parameters for this outlet.

**Criticism:** You shouldn't do that kind of work; people will think you are one of those crazy, navel-gazing storytellers who are hurting our discipline, compromising our department's reputation on campus, and/or ruining academics' credibility with the public.

*Response:* Smile tolerantly and quote Bochner (1997): "We know we're onto something, when we're told, 'You mustn't think that way'" (p. 425). People tend to fear and find fault with things they do not understand. Try to transform the confrontation into a teachable moment by explaining some of the basic tenets of crystallization and/or the interpretive turn in the social sciences (e.g., Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). If your mentor or a senior colleague offers this caution "in your best interest," then also consider having a few examples of more mainstream work you can use for show and tell to demonstrate your ability to adapt to a variety of audiences. One skill I learned from my work with crystallization is the ability to move from one methodological speech community to another in order to survive (e.g., get your dissertation approved, get hired, earn tenure), thrive (secure a book contract, publish in a prestigious journal), and meet goals with multiple audiences (e.g., influence practitioners). I consider it arrogant and elitist—albeit tempting—to continue to address only those who already agree with you; being able to write in multiple genres that span the qualitative continuum can only serve you in

enacting positive change both within and outside of the academy. I also find it helpful to quote Richardson (2000b):

Students will not lose the language of science when they learn to write in other [artistic] ways, any more than students who learn a second language lose their first. . . . There is no single way—much less one “right” way—of staging a text. (p. 936)

In sum, practitioners from the middle-to-right of the continuum tend to object to the failure of crystallized texts to conform to traditional formats, goals, and stylistic norms. Your goal must be to explain how you meet the spirit of such norms in an alternative manner, and/or how you embody other—equally rigorous and important—standards for quality work.

### **Criticisms From the Methodological Left**

**Criticism:** You have turned a story told into a story analyzed; you break apart a story instead of thinking *with* a story (see A. W. Frank, 1995).

*Response:* Thinking about and with stories are not mutually exclusive practices; we can do both. Crystallization does not invalidate or cancel out the contributions of one form of analysis with those of another. Multiple genres and forms of analysis complement each other within a social constructionist framework that positions all representations as equally mired in power and limited by the indeterminacy of language (see Holstein & Gubrium, 2008). Analysis is a form of story too; it constitutes an academic narrative (Gergen, 1994). Moreover, good reasons exist for analyzing stories, such as identifying patterns and critiquing implicit cultural norms (see Charmaz, 2000, 2006), just as we have good reasons to use narrative or poetic genres to communicate some truths (e.g., Ellis, 2004).

**Criticism:** You uphold or submit to patriarchal conventions by including analysis that manifests the disembodied voice of academe, the “god trick” (Haraway, 1988).

*Response:* No form, genre, or method is inherently patriarchal or incompatible with feminist, critical race, or other perspectives. Moreover, theory or method is “not inherently healing, liberatory, or revolutionary. It fulfils this function only when we ask that it do so and direct our theorizing towards this end” (hooks, 1994, p. 61). Neither are stories or other artistic representations inherently subversive, liberatory, or reflecting of noncanonical truths.

While stories may be more open to multiple interpretations, they do not escape their authorship; we make no fewer power-laden decisions in the construction of a video, poem, or performance than we do in writing a social scientific report; no innocent position exists from which to analyze and represent in any genre (Wolf, 1996). Awareness of my own involvement with research and writing and active reflexive consideration of my own role in meaning making is vital to all of my work, including rigorous qualitative analysis. Allow me to explain how I included consideration of my standpoint in my sense making processes. . . .

**Criticism:** You ruin the flow of the film, narrative, essay [insert other genre or medium] with your academic/analytic prose.

*Response:* This piece is not intended to be a seamless text. The qualitative analysis functions as part of a layered structure (Ronai, 1995), and it fits exquisitely well with the work's purpose, which is to [insert purpose—e.g., to reveal the subtle manifestations of power in health care organizations]. It is unproductive to criticize a hammer for being a poor screwdriver; likewise, criticizing a layered account for not being a short story or a narrative film for including explicit discussion of theory rejects the value of honoring each genre on its own terms, including hybrid genres. By combining more than one genre—and hence more than one epistemology—in my representation, I reveal the constructed nature of all accounts. In doing so, I challenge my audience to resist simplistic understandings of the topic and problematize the nature of knowledge construction.

**Criticism:** Your incorporation of social scientific analysis demonstrates that you are naive, a modernist, a latent positivist, or (my personal favorites) a “hopelessly second wave feminist” or one who “surrenders her authority to science.”<sup>2</sup> You clearly do not understand postmodernism, poststructuralism, narrative theory, feminist theorizing about epistemology and methodology, or [insert other perspective].

*Response:* My work reflects neither naiveté nor lack of comprehension of postmodernity [or other perspective] and related aspects of the interpretive turn. In fact, my work reflects what Richardson (2000b) calls creative analytic practices; it is both creative in its representation *and* analytic in the meanings it embodies. By juxtaposing social science with artistic representations, I complexify and demystify both as socially constructed representations; each is partial, situated, and bears both strengths and weaknesses grounded in their

respective genres. I don't accept the neutrality of analyses any more than I think of stories or art as anything other than emanating from a particular standpoint and historical moment. Reinscribing caricatures of all social scientists as slavishly naive positivists is inaccurate and unproductive (K. I. Miller, 2000). We need to move beyond dichotomous views of qualitative researchers as either artists or scientists and embrace a continuum of methods where art and science can blend in an infinite number of ways (Ellingson & Ellis, 2008; Ellis & Ellingson, 2000).

**Criticism:** Good stories *are* theories; it is not necessary to include other, social scientific articulations of analysis and/or theory. In fact, relying on theory undermines the effectiveness of your artistic representation.

*Response:* I certainly agree that good stories can be theories (Ellis & Bochner, 2000), but that does not invalidate crystallization as an effective strategy for illuminating some topics and processes. In fact, we can think of theories as stories of how the world works. Artwork gives us much to feel, think, and appreciate; in crystallization, we think, feel, and critique on other levels as well. You do not have to give up theory to embrace stories, nor vice versa. It all depends upon your representational and analytic goals. Different questions—about research topics, methodological processes, or the researcher (and the researcher–participant relationship)—require different strategies for answering. Some of us pose questions more satisfactorily answered with the inclusion of more formal articulations of theory. Let me explain to you why I chose to include this particular theory and how it illuminates my topic. . . .

**Criticism:** Your mentor, advisor, or editor says of your work of crystallization, "You are trying to do too much; you include everything but the kitchen sink in there!"

*Response:* [same as above criticism from the middle-right]

**Criticism:** An editor says (or you fear s/he will say), "Your book wouldn't fit in our list, since our audience doesn't read work like *that*."

*Response:* Actually, my work fits well with your list's focus on [insert topic area]. My crystallization framework improves my ability to illuminate the complexity of that topic. People doing interpretive work tend to be extraordinarily broad-minded; they won't dismiss well-written grounded theory [or other form of inductive analysis] out of hand, especially since it

is enhanced with other artistic genres. This postmodern form of triangulation allows researchers to view the topic through multiple lenses, enriching understanding and reinforcing the partial and constructed nature of all knowledge claims.

### ENCLOSING WILD POWER: A CONCLUSION/INVITATION

The writer knows her field—what has been done, what could be done, the limits—the way a tennis player knows the court. And like that expert, she, too, plays the edges. That is where the exhilaration is. . . . Now gingerly, can she enlarge it, can she nudge the bounds? And enclose what wild power?

—Annie Dillard (1989, ¶ 6)

Thinking of crystallization as embodying *wild power* provides an energizing trope for our work. Crystallization skirts the edges of academic publishing conventions, drawing power from art, science, and endless combinations of artful science and scientific artwork. I offer crystallization as an emergent framework that promises tremendous opportunity to promote positive change in the world through qualitative research. One area of productive change centers on the growth and development of crystallization itself. I eagerly anticipate that readers adopting and adapting the principles contained in this book will use their imagination to expand the boundaries not only of qualitative research but of my current conceptualization of crystallization as a framework. I welcome constructive feedback and explanations of how you made crystallization your own. I hope to sustain dialogue and widen the community that plays along multiple edges of academic norms. If you would like to share your thoughts and experiences, please contact me at [lellingson@scu.edu](mailto:lellingson@scu.edu).



## INTERLUDE

### When Your Work Is Rejected

"I'd like an Earl Grey tea, please," I said to the burly guy at the bakery counter. "For here."

"OK," he replied. "Anything else?" He gave me a winning smile and nodded to the display on his left, inviting me to splurge on one of the dozens of butter-and-sugar-laden goodies that lined the glass case.

I groaned inwardly. "No, thank you."

After doctoring my tea with copious amounts of low-fat milk and a little Splenda, I surveyed the seating area and chose a table with an electrical outlet at its base. I set up my Mac laptop with its lovely lavender "Macskin" cover; arranged the small pile of photocopied, underlined, and annotated articles; placed my tea to the left of my computer; and sighed. My trip to the bakery constituted a last ditch effort to get some uninterrupted writing time, something I rarely seemed to manage in my office.

A tension headache loomed on the horizon. Slogging through spring quarter at the university always exhausted me, but this time I was teaching two sections of qualitative methods, which meant loads of grading and individual appointments with students. Meanwhile, I had a publisher interested in a proposal who wanted sample chapters ASAP, two overdue manuscript reviews for journals, a revise and resubmit decision I had sat on for 5 months, and a bad case of spring fever. *Get a grip*, I told myself. *Get some work done*.

Taking a deep breath, I plunged into my analysis of aunts in extended family networks, pausing only to look up information in the articles or to sip my tea. I worked steadily for over an hour, then paused to sigh again. Deciding I deserved a minibreak, I opened my e-mail program, grateful for the bakery's free Wi-Fi Internet connection.

My mailbox screen popped open and I saw it immediately—a decision on my latest journal submission. Trembling, hoping, fearing, I double-clicked the message and read:

Dear Dr. Ellingson:

Re: Manuscript # 2007-0084 entitled "The Poetics of Professionalism among Dialysis Technicians"

Thank you for submitting the above manuscript. I have received the reviewers' comments (please see below) and regret that your article has not been accepted for publication.

Thank you for your support of [journal].

Sincerely yours . . .

Much to my horror, tears welled in my eyes and began flowing down my cheeks. A sob burst from my throat, and I grabbed two beige, recycled paper napkins and held them against my face. I struggled to remain silent, mortified by my reaction. The lunchtime crowd swarmed around my table. *StopitstopitSTOPIT!!!* I chanted to myself. *Breathe deeply.* I tried, but it was just too much to keep inside. I assumed people were staring by now, but reminding myself of that fact didn't help to stem the tide. I continued crying, grateful at least for the loud hum of conversation that partially obscured my napkin-muffled wailing. After a while, I realized I was sweating copiously; the legs of my khaki shorts felt damp and my thighs stuck to the cheap vinyl seat. Miserable, I took a sip of my now-cold tea.

When the tears stopped, I chanted the standard litany to myself, hoping against hope that it would provide comfort.

I've been rejected before; it's no big deal.

Everyone gets rejected.

Carolyn Ellis's first book was rejected more than 30 times before it found a publisher.

I am still a good researcher.

I have rich data and conducted a sound analysis.

I am a good writer.

The piece can be revised and sent elsewhere; there are plenty of other journal-fish in the academic sea.

And that editor is probably an evil, close-minded, patriarchal, power-hording scumbag anyway.

But it still hurt—especially since I actually respect that editor a great deal and know that s/he bears no resemblance to my bitter description. This I know: Rejection will *always* hurt, and it always embarrasses me.

I debated with myself whether to include this narrative in the book. On one hand, I staunchly maintain that my reaction is nothing of which I should be ashamed. In fact, sharing it may provide comfort to others coping with inevitable rejection and perhaps serve as a reminder to those prone to writing nasty, unconstructive, petty, arrogant reviews that *they hurt real people* when they do that. On the other hand, I hate sounding weak and weepy; it seems so unprofessional and unproductive (not to mention it reinforces stereotypes of women as overly emotional). The anonymous reviewer system resembles democracy, in my mind: It is the worse possible system, except for everything else out there. And I can even admit (most of

the time) that some of my rejections were well deserved; my work generally improves after getting feedback from reviewers and editors. But rejection still hurts, and I encourage you to acknowledge the pain and to find nurturing, nondestructive ways to comfort yourself when the inevitable happens.

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## NOTES

1. Gergen (1999) wrote,

If rhetoric is the art of persuasion, then the study of rhetoric is the illumination of power in action. . . . More dangerous are those who seem only to be reporting the facts—the world as it is outside anyone’s particular prejudice. . . . The language of objective reality is essentially used as a means of generating hierarchies of inclusion and exclusion. . . . Objectivity cannot refer to a relationship between the mind and the world; rather, as the rhetorical analyst proposes, objectivity is achieved by speaking (or writing) in particular ways. (pp. 73–74)

2. These are actual examples of comments made to me about my work by other academic professionals.

