CHAPTER ONE

A VIEW OF THE WHOLE

Origins and Purposes

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A primary function of art and thought is to liberate
the individual from the tyranny of culture.
—Lionel Trilling

For as far back as I can recall, I have been drawn to the liberating and transcendent power of art—the music that makes my heart sing, the poetry that soothes my soul, the dance that releases my rage, the novel that takes me to distant lands and brings me home, and the painting that offers me a new angle of vision. And for most of my adult life, I have had a deep respect for the rigor and discipline of science. I have admired the rules of design and the rituals of methodology, and have been engaged by the process of intellectual debate informed by evidence and argumentation. I have been both challenged by, and devoted to, the search for authenticity and authority, for resonance and truth. "Portraiture" has become the bridge that has brought these two worlds together for me, allowing for both contrast and coexistence, counterpoint and harmony in my scholarship and writing, and allowing me to see clearly the art in the development of science and the science in the making of art.

For more than a dozen years I have been laboring over the development and refinement of "portraiture," the term I use for a method of inquiry and documentation in the social sciences. With it, I seek to combine systematic, empirical description with aesthetic expression, blending art and science, humanistic sensibilities and scientific rigor. The portraits are designed to capture the richness, complexity, and dimensionality of human experience in social and cultural context, conveying the perspectives of the people who are negotiating those experiences. The portraits are shaped through dialogue between the portraitist and the subject, each one participating in the drawing of the image. The encounter between the two is rich with meaning and resonance and is crucial to the success and authenticity of the rendered piece.

My story of invention begins with this central encounter, experienced first as the subject of a portrait (actually many portraits rendered in various materials—pastels, oils, stained glass, clay). It is a story that can only be told in retrospect because it seemed to evolve as much out of intuition, autobiography, and serendipity as it did from purposeful intention. In *The Good High School* (1983), I describe two inspirational and provocative encounters—the first when I was

a child of eight, the second when I was in my mid-twenties. The former was a swift sketch in pastels as I sat in my mother's rock garden, and the latter a laborious, carefully crafted oil painting that took several weeks to complete in an artist's studio. Despite the great differences in these experiences, I learned many of the same lessons about the power of the medium, about the relationship between artist and subject, and about the perspective of the person whose image and essence is being captured. These were my first methodological lessons.

I learned, for example, that these portraits did not capture me as I saw myself; that they were not like looking in the mirror at my reflection. Instead they seemed to capture my essence—qualities of character and history some of which I was unaware of, some of which I resisted mightily, some of which felt deeply familiar. But the translation of image was anything but literal. It was probing, layered, and interpretive. In addition to portraying my image, the piece expressed the perspective of the artist and was shaped by the evolving relationship between the artist and me. I also recognized that in searching for the essence, in moving beyond the surface image, the artist was both generous and tough, both skeptical and receptive. I was never treated or seen as object, but always as a person of strength and vulnerability, beauty and imperfection, mystery and openness. The artist needed to be vigilant in capturing the image, but always watchful of my feelings, perspective, and experience. I learned, as well, that the portraits expressed a haunting paradox, of a moment in time and of timelessness. In the portrait of the young woman, for example, I could see myself at twenty-five, but I could also see my ancestors and the children in my future. Time seemed to move through this still and silent portrait of a woman, rendering the piece—now twenty-five years later—both anachronistic and contemporary. It is still a vital document of who I am (and who I may become), even if it no longer looks like me.

More than a decade later, when I was searching for a form of inquiry that might capture the complexity and aesthetic of human experience, I had the benefit of those early experiences as an artist's subject from which to develop my methodological tools. In trying to create what I called "life drawings" of high schools and trace the connections between individual personality and organizational culture, I felt the echoes of being on the other side of the artist's palette. I wanted to develop a document, a text that came as close as possible to painting with words. I wanted to create a narrative that bridged the realms of science and art, merging the systematic and careful description of good ethnography with the evocative resonance of fine literature. I wanted the written pieces to convey the authority, wisdom, and perspective of the subjects, but I wanted them to feel—as I had felt—that the portrait did not look like them, but somehow managed to reveal their essence. I wanted them to experience the portraits as both familiar and exotic, so that in reading them they would be introduced to

a perspective that they had not considered before. And finally, I wanted the subjects to feel *seen* as I had felt seen—fully attended to, recognized, appreciated, respected, scrutinized. I wanted them to feel both the discovery and the generosity of the process, as well as the penetrating and careful investigation. Inevitably, I knew these would be documents of inquiry *and* intervention, hopefully leading toward new understandings and insights, as well as instigating change.

But beyond the echoes of my early experience as an artist's subject, which got interpreted into my stance toward inquiry, I was also influenced—however subliminally—by a long arc of work, reaching back two centuries, that joined art and science. So when I speak about my invention of portraiture, I am not claiming that this form of inquiry and representation is all mine, or all new. There is a long and rich history of dialogue and collaboration between artists and scholars, between novelists and philosophers. As a matter of fact, the intersection of fiction and social science has occurred since at least the eighteenth century, when these two approaches to the study of life began to emerge from similar impulses and express common themes. Philosophers turned from closed systems of thought—where they sought the purity and elegance of rationality and logic—to discerning observations of the world around them, which often recorded the messy chaos and illogic of reality. Writers of fiction, as Samuel Johnson remarked in 1750, turned to "that experience which can never be attained by solitary diligence, but must arise from general converse and accurate observation of the living world" (Williams, 1970, p. 143).

Novelists and philosophers began to read each other; Rousseau and Diderot wrote both novels and treatises. Their motivations became intertwined, their purposes fused. Novelists and social scientists began to strive for a closeness to life, seeking to capture the texture and nuance of human experience. But both artists and scientists recognized the limits of their media, their inability to capture and present the total reality. Their purpose, then, became not complete and full representation, but rather the selection of some aspect of—or angle on—reality that would transform our vision of the whole. Both artists and scientists hoped that their choice of views, their shaping of perspective, would allow their readers to experience the whole differently.

We hear echoes of this integration of art and science in the history of clinical work as well, in work whose purpose it has been to intervene, to help, and to heal. In his wonderful book, *The Man Who Mistook His Wife for a Hat* (1985), neurologist Oliver Sacks extols the combining of narrative and science in the "richly human clinical tales" (p. viii) that dominated neurological medicine and reached their peak during the nineteenth century. This clinical storytelling—the "intersection of fact and fable" (p. ix)—declined as neurological science became increasingly routinized, codified, and impersonal. The efforts to increase

the rigor and the *science* led to caricatures and distortions in seeing, hearing, and healing the patient, in defining the doctor-patient relationship, and in identifying points of intervention and sources of strength leading to the patient's recovery. Sacks's book, therefore, is an earnest and intelligent effort to recapture the marriage of science and art, "to harken back to an ancient tradition . . . of the first medical historian, Hippocrates, and to that universal and prehistorical tradition by which patients have always told their stories to doctors" (p. viii). Sacks feels "compelled to speak of tales . . . the scientific and romantic cry out in such realms to come together" (p. ix).

Closer to the traditions and rituals of social science we also find a lively and rich history of resisting the tyranny that Lionel Trilling refers to, by embracing the intersection of aesthetics and empiricism. At the turn of the century, William James—whose family and writings spanned both realms—spoke about the younger generation's resistance to the reign of logic and abstraction and their determination (and I think his) to discover forms of representation that would capture the fluidity and complexity of the living world.

> It is difficult not to notice a curious unrest in the philosophic atmosphere of the time, a loosening of old landmarks, a softening of oppositions, a mutual borrowing from one another on the part of systems anciently closed, and an interest in new suggestions, however vague, as if the one thing sure were the inadequacy of the extant school-solutions. The dissatisfaction with these seems due for the most part to feeling that they are too abstract and academic. Life is confused and superabundant and what the younger generation appears to crave is more of the temperament of life in its philosophy, even tho it were at some cost of logical rigor of formal purity [1904, p. 52].

Thirty years later, John Dewey echoed James's admiration of boundary crossing and improvisation, the desire to push beyond the narrow cannons and abstractions of science in order to represent reality. Focused on life in schools, Dewey's classic *Art as Experience* (1934/1958) underscored the need not only to capture the cognitive, social, and affective dimensions of educational encounters, but also to find frameworks and strategies for representing the aesthetics of teaching and learning. If we wanted education to be artful—beautiful not merely pretty, creative not merely competent, discovery not merely mimicry—then, suggested Dewey, we would have to find ways of envisioning and recording the experience that would not distort its texture and richness. This would require joining aesthetic and empirical approaches, merging rigor and improvisation, and appreciating both the details and the gestalt. Dewey referred to the arts—to music, poetry, drama, and painting—to illustrate his views regarding the representation of social reality.

> The reciprocal interpretation of parts and whole, which we have seen to constitute a work of art, is effected when all the constituents of the work, whether picture, drama, poem, or building, stand in rhythmic connection with all other members of the same kind—line with line, color with color, space with space, illuminative with light and shade in a painting—and all of these distinctive factors reinforce one another as variations that build up an integrated complex experience.
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> But . . . there is a tendency to limit rhythm to some one phase of an art product, for instance, to tempo in music, lines in painting, meter in poetry, to flattened or smooth curves in sculpture. Such limitation always tends in the direction of what Bosanquet called 'easy beauty' and when carried through logically, whether in theory or practice, results in some matter being left without form and some form being arbitrarily imposed upon matter [1934/1958, p. 171].

More recent scholars have cultivated this fertile ground and merged the realms of art and science in an effort to represent the nuance and complexity of the whole, in an effort to speak about things that resist reductionism and abstraction, in an effort to challenge the tyranny of the academy, and in an effort to build bridges between theory and practice, research and action. In his wide-ranging eclecticism, W.E.B. DuBois was the quintessential boundary-crosser. More than any other social scientist I can think of, in his work and in his life, DuBois captured the interdisciplinary as he moved from social philosophy to empirical sociology to autobiography to political essays to poetry and literature to social activism. He invented a way of being, a point of view, a style of work that quite naturally, dynamically, organically integrated science, art, history, and activism. In his biography of DuBois, Arnold Rampersod spoke about his extraordinary integration of science and art as being shaped and illuminated by his powerful imagination. Rampersod sketched DuBois' paradigm:

> For DuBois, Imagination meant above all the vision of Unity. Because he was born into a divided world, where Race was set apart from Race—be they Anglo-Saxon, African, Celtic—the vision of Racial Unity became the first tableau projected by Imagination. But racial unity was only an insistence of the will to harmony generated by his free mind. DuBois declined to see a separation between Science and Art, believing that such a distinction violated the integrity of intelligence, which could set no wall between one fundamental form of knowledge and another, since all belonged to the world of nature, of Truth. . . .

> He devoted himself to a knowledge of this world equal to the power of his mind to imagine a better one. Science—social science, historical science, the daily observation of persons, places, events—became the mast to which the sail of the imaginary was lashed [1976, pp. 65–66].

Anthropologist Clifford Geertz (1973) also speaks about imagination as being a crucial ingredient in the drawing of cultures. He links imagination and interpretation in his depiction of what he calls "thick description" (p. 6), "the researcher's constructions of other people's constructions of what they are up to" (p. 9). But in addition to his emphasis on the interpretation at the heart of thick description, Geertz underscores the "creative," the imaginative "tableau." He claims that anthropological writings are "fictions" (p. 15), something made, something fashioned, and he likens his ethnographic work to the task of painting a likeness. "The line between the mode of representation and substantive content is as undrawable in cultural analysis as it is in painting" (p. 16). We must then, Geertz says, admit (maybe even celebrate) the fact that the "researcher's imagination" is a fundamental aspect of cultural depiction. "It is not against a body of uninterpreted data . . . that we must measure the cogency of our explications," he writes, "but against the power of scientific imagination to bring us in touch with the lives of strangers" (p. 16). But in admitting the centrality of interpretation, imagination, and creativity, we must not be misled. These "humanistic" dimensions must always be in close communion with rigorous and systematic attention to the details of social reality and human experience. Behavior, interaction, encounter, and gesture must be attended to with exactness, and retained, "because it is through the flow of behavior—or more precisely of social action—that cultural forms find articulation" (p. 17).

It was against this colorful historic canvas—from Rousseau to James to Dewey to DuBois to Geertz—that I began to draw the artistic and scientific forms that overlapped to shape my version of social science portraiture. I was not only inspired by this long legacy, but also by my resistance to many of the dominant canons and preoccupations of social science. I was concerned, for example, about the general tendency of social scientists to focus their investigations on pathology and disease rather than on health and resilience. This general propensity is magnified in the research on education and schooling, where investigators have been much more vigilant in documenting failure than they have been in describing examples of success.

To some extent the focus on pathology is understandable, maybe even laudable. Certainly some investigators have identified things that do not work, or work poorly, as a prelude to trying to figure out ways of fixing what is broken. In this case, social scientists have regarded their investigations as providing the evidence for better-informed and strategic social action. But the relentless

scrutiny of failure has many unfortunate and distorting results. First, we begin to get a view of our social world that magnifies what is wrong and neglects evidence of promise and potential. Second, this focus on failure can often lead to a kind of cynicism and inaction. If things are really this bad and there is no hope for change, then why try to do anything about it? Third, the documentation of pathology often bleeds into a blaming of the victim. Rather than a complicated analysis of the coexistence of strengths and vulnerabilities (usually evident in any person, institution, or society), the locus of blame tends to rest on the shoulders of those most victimized and least powerful in defining their identity or shaping their fate. Fourth, the focus on pathology seems to encourage facile inquiry. It is, after all, much easier to identify a disease and count its victims than it is to characterize and document health. The former requires focused methodologies that have been well used and developed, the latter invites a more complicated and eclectic set of research tools and some pathbreaking paradigms.

Portraiture resists this tradition-laden effort to document failure. It is an intentionally generous and eclectic process that begins by searching for what is good and healthy and assumes that the expression of goodness will always be laced with imperfections. The researcher who asks first "what is good here?" is likely to absorb a very different reality than the one who is on a mission to discover the sources of failure. But it is also important to say that portraits are not designed to be documents of idealization or celebration. In examining the dimensionality and complexity of goodness there will, of course, be ample evidence of vulnerability and weakness. In fact, the counterpoint and contradictions of strength and vulnerability, virtue and evil (and how people, cultures, and organizations negotiate those extremes in an effort to establish the precarious balance between them) are central to the expression of goodness.

Not only do portraits seek to capture the origins and expression of goodness, they are also concerned with documenting how the *subjects* or actors in the setting define goodness. The portraitist does not impose her definition of "good" on the inquiry, or assume that there is a singular definition shared by all (this is not the case of the expert researcher defining the criteria of success or effectiveness and using that as the standard of judgment). Rather the portraitist believes that there are myriad ways in which goodness can be expressed and tries to identify and document the actors' perspectives.

In addition to my concern for developing a methodological stance that might record the complex evidence of goodness, I also wanted to reshape the relationship between researcher and audience. More specifically, I was concerned with broadening the audience for my work, with communicating beyond the walls of the academy. Academicians tend to speak to one another in a language that is often opaque and esoteric. Rarely do the analyses and texts we produce invite dialogue with people in the "real world." Instead, academic documents—even those that focus on issues of broad public concern—

are read by a small audience of people in the same disciplinary field, who often share similar conceptual frameworks and rhetoric. The formulaic structure of the written pieces—research question, data collection and analysis, interpretation, policy implications—is meant to inform, not inspire.

With its focus on narrative, with its use of metaphor and symbol, portraiture intends to address wider, more eclectic audiences. The attempt is to move beyond academy's inner circle, to speak in a language that is not coded or exclusive, and to develop texts that will seduce the readers into thinking more deeply about issues that concern them. Portraitists write to inform and inspire readers. In Clifford Geertz's terminology, portraits are designed to "deepen the conversation" (1973, p. 29).

In a penetrating essay reviewing the purposes and values of portraiture, Joseph Featherstone (1989) links the private, intimate storytelling at its center with the public discourse that it hopes to influence. He connects the voices of the storytellers, the narrator, and the audience, and draws the continuum between "analysis and solidarity." The power of portraiture, he claims, lies in its explicitly humanistic impulse. It embraces both analytic rigor (a perspective that is distant, discerning, and skeptical) and community building (acts of intimacy and connection). Featherstone calls this "a people's scholarship"—a scholarship in which "scientific facts gathered in the field give voice to a people's experience."

> There is much more to this business of creating portraits and telling stories. It is a quest for something missing from a good deal of popular scholarship in education and other realms . . . we hear the sound of a human voice making sense of other voices, especially those not often heard, voices of women and of people of color. We trace the line of a story set in a historical context, placing the actors in a long-running moral and political drama. The text itself enacts the writer's deepest moral and political values, the eclecticism of method and material. What if this kind of work were to become more prevalent? What are the implications of a kind of scholarship in education that combines the distancing power of analysis with another kind of power, the deep gesture of solidarity. . . . Surely analysis and solidarity could stand as two poles of scholarship. Much research has neglected the second, studying teachers, for example, as though they were fruit flies. . . . It is in the quest of the power that comes from looking beyond the isolation at the little difference there is between humans, and the supreme importance of that difference. It searches for the energizing shock of sympathy and of human community [pp. 375–376].

But deepening the conversation and broadening the audience are not only acts of analysis and solidarity. They are also inevitably acts of intervention. In the process of creating portraits, we enter people's lives, build relationships, engage in discourse, make an imprint . . . and leave. We engage in acts (implicit and explicit) of social transformation, we create opportunities for dialogue, we pursue the silences, and in the process, we face ethical dilemmas and a great moral responsibility. This is provocative work that can disturb the natural rhythms of social reality and encounter. This is exciting work that can instigate positive and productive change. Again, Featherstone appreciates the benign, generous impact of portraiture, even as he recognizes the huge, ethical responsibilities weighing on the portraitist.

> The telling of stories can be a profound form of scholarship moving serious study close to the frontiers of art in the capacity to express complex truth and moral context in intelligible ways. . . . *The Good High School* utilizes portraiture to argue against today's top-down reformers. It reminds us that the creation of a learning community is an essential feature of successful schools. Community, in this context, suggests the power of the local actors on the scene to create conversations and find shared meanings, the significance of the voices of teachers, and the crucial importance of local context, as well as the commitment of a scholar to truth and solidarity. The methodologies are inseparable from the vision. Historians have used narrative as a way in which to make sense of lives and institutions over time, but over the years they have grown abashed about its lack of scientific rigor. Now, as we look for ways to explore context and describe the thick textures of lives over time in institutions with a history, we want to reckon with the author's own stance and commitment to the people being written about. Storytelling takes on a fresh importance [Featherstone, 1989, p. 377].

The portrait, then, creates a narrative that is at once complex, provocative, and inviting, that attempts to be holistic, revealing the dynamic interaction of values, personality, structure, and history. And the narrative documents human behavior and experience in context. In fact, the portraitist insists that the only way to interpret people's actions, perspectives, and talk is to see them in context. Of course, this approach contrasts greatly with traditional perspectives in social science, which mimic the positivist paradigms of mathematics and physics. The positivist sees context as potentially distorting, a source of distraction and confusion. To reliably document human experience, positivists want to see it clearly, purely, abstracted from the setting. The laboratory experiment, for example, is the prototype of this approach; the investigator creates

conditions that permit analysis of the phenomena under study separate from the messiness and complexity of the natural environment. Portraitists—like their cousins in anthropology—start with a counter proposition. Rather than viewing context as a source of distortion, they see it as a resource for understanding. The narrative, then, is always embedded in a particular context, including physical settings, cultural rituals, norms, and values, and historical periods. The context is rich in cues about how the actors or subjects negotiate and understand their experience.

But the portraitist is interested not only in producing complex, subtle description in context but also in searching for the central story, developing a convincing and authentic narrative. This requires careful, systematic, and detailed description developed through watching, listening to, and interacting with the actors over a sustained period of time, the tracing and interpretation of emergent themes, and the piecing together of these themes into an aesthetic whole. The process of creating a whole often feels like weaving a tapestry or piecing together a quilt. Looking for points of thematic convergence is like searching for the patterns of texture and color in a weaving. In creating the text, the portraitist is alert to the aesthetic principles of composition and form, rhythm, sequence, and metaphor. The portraitist's standard, then, is one of *authenticity,* capturing the essence and resonance of the actors' experience and perspective through the details of action and thought revealed in context.

This process of creating the narrative requires a difficult (sometimes paradoxical) vigilance to empirical description *and* aesthetic expression. It is a careful deliberative process and a highly creative one. The data must be scrutinized carefully, searching for the story line that emerges from the material. However, there is never a single story—many could be told. So the portraitist is active in selecting the themes that will be used to tell the story, strategic in deciding on points of focus and emphasis, and creative in defining the sequence and rhythm of the narrative. What gets left out is often as important as what gets included; the blank spaces and the silences also shape the form of the story. For the portraitist, then, there is a crucial dynamic between documenting and creating the narrative, between receiving and shaping, reflecting and imposing, mirroring and improvising. The effort to reach coherence must flow organically both from the data and from the interpretive witness of the portraitist.

In her exquisite autobiographical account, *One Writer's Beginnings* (1983), Eudora Welty makes a subtle but crucial distinction between listening *to* a story and listening *for* a story (p. 14). The former is a more passive, receptive stance in which one waits to absorb the information and does little to give it shape and form. The latter is a much more active, engaged position in which one searches for the story, seeks it out, is central in its creation. This does not mean that one directs the drama or constructs the scenes. It *does* mean that one participates in identifying and selecting the story, and helps to shape the story's coherence

and aesthetic. Welty's distinction identifies one of the key contrasts between ethnography and portraiture. Ethnographers listen *to* a story while portraitists listen *for* a story.

The identity, character, and history of the researcher are obviously critical to the manner of listening, selecting, interpreting, and composing the story. Portraiture admits the central and creative role of the *self* of the portraitist. It is, of course, true that all researchers—whether working within the quantitative or qualitative methodological paradigms—are selective in defining and shaping the data they collect and the interpretations that flow from their findings. Even the most scrupulously "objective" investigations reveal the hand of the researcher in shaping the inquiry. From deciding what is important to study to selecting the central questions to defining the nature and size of the sample to developing the methodological strategies, the predisposition and perspective of the researcher is crucial, and this perspective reflects not only a theoretical, disciplinary, and methodological stance, but also personal values, tastes, and style. The shaping hand of the investigator is counterbalanced by the skepticism and scrutiny that is the signature of good research. Through rigorous procedures and methodological tools the researcher tries to rid the work of personal bias that might distort or obscure the reality of the subject matter. So at the center of all research, the investigator needs to manage the tension between personal predisposition (more or less explicitly recognized and expressed) and rigorous skepticism.

With portraiture, the person of the researcher—even when vigorously controlled—is more evident and more visible than in any other research form. She is seen not only in defining the focus and field of the inquiry, but also in navigating the relationships with the subjects, in witnessing and interpreting the action, in tracing the emergent themes, and in creating the narrative. At each one of these stages, the self of the portraitist emerges as an instrument of inquiry, an eye on perspective-taking, an ear that discerns nuances, and a voice that speaks and offers insights. Indeed, the voice of the portraitist often helps us identify her place in the inquiry. Even though the identity and voice of the portraitist is larger and more explicit in this form of inquiry, the efforts to balance personal predisposition with disciplined skepticism and critique are central to the portrait's success. One might even say that *because* the self of the portraitist is so essential to the development of the work she must be that much more vigilant about identifying other sources of challenge to her perspective. The counterintuitive must always be present even as the portraitist takes full advantage of the intuitive.

In summary, portraiture is a method framed by the traditions and values of the phenomenological paradigm, sharing many of the techniques, standards, and goals of ethnography. But it pushes against the constraints of those traditions and practices in its explicit effort to combine empirical and aesthetic

description, in its focus on the convergence of narrative and analysis, in its goal of speaking to broader audiences beyond the academy (thus linking inquiry to public discourse and social transformation), in its standard of authenticity rather than reliability and validity (the traditional standards of quantitative and qualitative inquiry), and in its explicit recognition of the use of the self as the primary research instrument for documenting and interpreting the perspectives and experiences of the people and the cultures being studied.

Not only is the portraitist interested in developing a narrative that is both convincing and authentic, she is also interested in recording the subtle details of human experience. She wants to capture the specifics, the nuance, the detailed description of a thing, a gesture, a voice, an attitude as a way of illuminating more universal patterns. A persistent irony—recognized and celebrated by novelists, poets, playwrights—is that as one moves closer to the unique characteristics of a person or a place, one discovers the universal. Again Eudora Welty (1983) offers a wonderful insight gained from her experience as a storyteller. She says forcefully: "What discoveries I have made in the process of writing stories, all begin with the particular, never the general." Clifford Geertz (1973) puts it another way when he refers to the paradoxical experience of theory development, the emergence of concepts from the gathering of specific detail. Geertz (1973) says, "Small facts are the grist for the social theory mill" (p. 23). The scientist and the artist are both claiming that *in the particular resides the general.*

In this paradox we discover a very different way of thinking about generalization. It is not the classical conception typically employed in social science, where the investigator uses codified methods for generalizing from specific findings to a universe, and where there is little interest in findings that reflect only the characteristics of the sample. Before generalizing, the parameters of the universe are clearly articulated, as is the selection of the sample in an effort to define the relationship between them, and to be able to point to statistically significant differences. By contrast, the portraitist seeks to document and illuminate the complexity and detail of a unique experience or place, hoping that the audience will see themselves reflected in it, trusting that the readers will feel identified. The portraitist is very interested in the single case because she believes that embedded in it the reader will discover resonant universal themes. The more specific, the more subtle the description, the more likely it is to evoke identification.

This is certainly the way a novelist works, drawing the scene, defining the relationships among characters, creating the action, and tracing the story. The writer hopes the reader will feel the familiarity of the experience even if the setting and the people are exotic. The novelist offers the reader the opportunity of crossing boundaries of experience and geography, of moving across cultures and family dramas, of traveling to new worlds. But readers will only take the adven-

ture if they feel some sense of connection or identification with the story being told. Portraitists work to create this same kind of resonance and identification.

In trying to create this resonance, the portraitist describes the details of action and manifest behavior, what people are doing, how they are behaving, what they are saying. She wants to carefully and systematically document those phenomena that are visible, discernable, often countable. But the recording of these discrete behaviors will not alone produce the resonance. The portraitist is interested, as well, in how these actions and interactions are experienced, perceived, and negotiated by the people in the setting. In fact, that is the primary interest. The behavior may serve as an important cue, but the portraitist is especially concerned about the meanings people attach to those behaviors.

Since the publication of my book *The Good High School* (1983), where I used the methods of portraiture for the first time to examine the culture of six secondary schools, I have been working on the development and refinement of this methodology. For several years I have taught an advanced graduate seminar on the topic, trying to clarify and document the assumptions, values, and goals that shape this work as well as describe and codify the tools and techniques that are part of the process of data collection, interpretation, and analysis. In addition to using my teaching as a vehicle for methodological development, I have also refined and enlarged the methodology through my own research and writing.

In my most recent work, *I've Known Rivers* (1994), I explore the life stories of six women and men using the intensive, probing method of "human archeology"—a name I coined for this genre of portraiture as a way of trying to convey the depth and penetration of the inquiry, the richness of the layers of human experience, the search for ancestral and generational artifacts, and the painstaking, careful labor that the metaphorical dig requires. As I listen to the life stories of these individuals and participate in the "co-construction" of narrative, I employ the themes, goals, and techniques of portraiture. It is an eclectic, interdisciplinary approach, shaped by the lenses of history, anthropology, psychology, and sociology. I blend the curiosity and detective work of a biographer, the literary aesthetic of a novelist, and the systematic scrutiny of a researcher.

But *The Art and Science of Portraiture* is not a solo, it is a duet. There will be two voices in this volume, the second belonging to Jessica Hoffmann Davis. As a visual artist and a student of human development with expertise in the field of aesthetics, Davis has used portraiture extensively to study successful community art centers in city neighborhoods. Her *Safe Havens* (1993) includes rich and detailed portraits of six community art centers, tracing the structural, ideological, relational, and cultural themes that have made them resilient and creative organizations. Not only has Davis codified and transposed the methods of portraiture presented in *The Good High School* to accommodate the ecology of neighborhood art centers, she has also modified and extended the method to include what she calls "group voice"—portraiture done by an ensemble of

researchers, with three or four people involved in the data collection, thematic analysis, and narrative development. In this work, Davis has also developed a process of documentation and evaluation that is explicitly activist and interventionist, and that can be used by practitioners in the field as a way of strengthening their programs and institutions and as a way of becoming more self-critical and thoughtful about their work. There is in Davis's work the purposeful attempt to link research and practice, and to profit from the combined scrutiny and wisdom of the portraitists and the actors.

This volume takes advantage of our experience in producing these three pieces of portraiture—*The Good High School, Safe Havens,* and *I've Known Rivers*—employing textual examples adapted from these works for illustration, charting the methodological themes that are common to all the works, as well as identifying the particular variations found in group voice and human archeology. In each of these works, we explore the connection between the phenomena under study and the chosen methodology—substance and technique are intentionally intertwined, one informing the other.

The Art and Science of Portraiture is enhanced by our collaboration, combining our disciplinary approaches (sociologist and human developmentalist, storyteller and visual artist), joining our rich range of experiences, including illustrative work in a variety of settings, and challenging the individualistic and idiosyncratic nature of this work, searching for the elements that are teachable, replicable, and discernable. In this highly personal and artistic genre, what are the dimensions and techniques that can serve as guidelines and standards for others seeking to do this work? We hope that this volume will serve as a handbook for social scientists from a range of disciplines (and their students) who are eager to learn more about the purposes, uses, and methods of portraiture, that it will be illuminating to humanists and other scholars of narrative who are part of a growing body of writers and thinkers engaged in interdisciplinary discourse. And that it will inform practitioners (immersed in education, social service, and social action) who seek to document, and reflect on, their work, analyze the impact of their interventions, and make better use of the frameworks and insights of social science. In keeping with the aesthetic and empirical purposes of portraiture, we hope that our book will both inform and inspire, that it will be both didactic and illustrative, and that it will underscore the importance of both strategy and insight in this work.

Tête de Jeune Fille 1st state
11 January 1949