

A Pro in Intimacy: The Use of GoPro Camera within Art-Based Research

亲密关系中的专家：基于艺术的研究中GoPro运动相机的使用

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Abstract

This article presents the primacy of video in research. It integrates notes from art-based research that used a GoPro video camera to explore intimate experience, with demonstrating applications of video for documentation, artistic inquiry, systematic processing, analysis, and presentation of results. The article addresses the natural linkage between artistic expression both in-person and online and its relation to intimacy.

Keywords: art-based research, video in research, GoPro video, research tools, intimacy

摘要

这篇文章介绍了研究中视频的首要地位。它整合了使用GoPro运动摄像机来探索亲密体验的基于艺术的研究笔记，并展示了视频在记录归档、艺术探究、系统处理、分析和结果呈现方面的应用。文章讨论了当面和网络艺术表达之间的自然联系及其与亲密关系的关联。

关键词：基于艺术的研究；研究中的视频；GoPro运动相机视频；研究工具；亲密关联

The notion of directing a film is the invention of critics—the whole eloquence of cinema is achieved in the editing room.

Orson Welles

Introduction

Months of isolation dictated by the COVID-19 pandemic made in-person connection and conversation seem estranged and what used to be taken for granted became imponderably valuable, as daily communication became virtual. Communities throughout the world, including therapists and caregivers, were now required to remain at home and practice their profession online. For some, this felt like they inhabited an alienated space, in which they were expected to confer empathy upon others.

Extreme inconveniences that were created by such constrained circumstances were the same conditions that inhibited opportunities for creativity and other ways of knowing the self and others. My academic role in teaching art therapy to graduate students and my clinical role as an art psychotherapist for families and couples have put

my research findings (Lev, 2019) into daily practice, that is, in inviting intimacy into my virtual workspace.

This article presents the primacy of video in research and integrates notes from art-based research that used a GoPro video camera to explore intimate experience. It demonstrates applications of video in research and the natural linkage between artistic expression both in-person and online, in relation to the phenomenon of intimacy.

[Breaking] Conventions about Video

Much has been written about the disruptive effects of the virtual world on the capacity to become intimate (Gardner & Davis, 2013; Gao & Sai, 2020) and the increasing hold of the virtual world upon our lives (Harari et al., 2015; Potdevin et al., 2021). In contrast, imagery has been known to stimulate awareness and memory that could lead to intimacy, and video even more so (Yates, 2013). It is compared with bringing up a memory in our imagination, and in this way, viewing video footage enlivens experienced moments and offers alternative perspectives and viewpoints as viewers become close with the footage. In addition, cutting-edge video equipment and software as well as available video applications enable editing processes that require less training and proficiency. Nevertheless, there is a scarcity of research that has been published in recent years about the use of digital media as research tools within art-based research (Carlton, 2014; Duckrow Fonda, 2017; McNiff, 2018).

Interestingly, results from art-based research suggest that the process of editing video footage encompass some of the conditions that invite intimacy into one's space (Rubesin et al., 2022). Moreover, the infinite possibilities for meaning-making with any raw footage highlights its value, as well as its challenges, as a research mode of inquiry.

Applications of Video in Research

Back in 2005, Shrum et al. concluded that camera and video offered validated methodologies for conducting field research and that these became essential tools for studying psychological aspects of human behavior. This was due to the parallel behavioral transformations that took place behind the camera as well as in front of it. Digital media carries the qualities required for reflective retrospective processes by enabling the possibilities to view past events that had been filmed and recorded and was suggested as a virtual art studio for the creative, special elements it possesses. McNiff (1999) noted that the space and energy between the creator of video, their hand holding the mouse, and the computer screen preserve the sacredness and intimacy as with any creative process: “the digital image stands apart, connected to its maker through the movements of the mouse but yet standing alone as an autonomous presence.” (p. 199) Shrum et al. (2005) went even further and suggested that the video camera was an actor (i.e., an *other*) in the research project. Video presentations were “bringing to the fore embodied memory” (Pink & Mackley, 2014, p. 151) and mediated an understanding of experienced, unspoken knowing for the viewers through their re-enactment.

Re-enactment in video was related to by Jung (1964), who had foreseen the movies capacity to outlast the emotional effects of theater, and by Hillman (2000), who

supported an aesthetic observation as symbols of the imagination. Hillman suggested that instead of simply seeing an image or hearing its voice, we must seek a deeper aesthetic observation, which could turn into an emotional understanding he called “an operation of insight, which is a seeing-through or hearing-into” (p. 171). This notion is strengthened within literature of visual aesthetic thinking (VTS) and gesture research in contemporary times (Housen & Yenawine, 2000; Pouw et al., 2020).

In an art-based research project that explored intimacy, video was used as a primary mode of inquiry to study the conditions that favored or impeded intimacy and examine whether particular features and qualities of artistic media, processes, and reflection through video footage editing could further intimate experience (Lev, 2021).

Participants in this research project were five adults familiar with the creation of art, who differed in their sociocultural status, including myself as the primary researcher and three painting artists and one art therapist who participated as co-researchers. The research was held in the private studio spaces of each participant, in five different locations, mainly in Israel, and entailed six interdependent modes of inquiry, among which were drawing and painting by the co-researchers in three experimental sessions, my own artistic responses to the individual sessions and the process of inquiry as a whole, the creation of edited videos, and culminating discussions and review with participant co-researchers. In addition to the three experimental sessions with co-researchers, two reflective sessions were held with each participant that included viewing edited videos and were followed by a verbal discussion about the research questions and findings. This research was conducted as part of doctoral studies in expressive therapies at Lesley University and can be found at https://digitalcommons.lesley.edu/expressive_dissertations/60/.

Video for Documentation of Research

During the three experimental painting sessions, the co-researchers drew and painted while wearing a head-mounted GoPro Hero3+ video camera to enable a direct focus on their hands and imagery in-process, while paying as little attention to their surroundings as possible (Figure 1), thus the privacy of participants within this research was maintained.

The third mode of inquiry entailed a process of artistic responding by the researcher to the co-researchers’ experimental sessions. Responses were made in writing and in painting. Each response session commenced with watching the video footage, reflecting in writing, and then responding in painting, using the same media and materials used by the co-researchers in their sessions. The purpose in using the same media and technique was to provide information that only the art materials and creative processes could provide, in order to explore particular qualities and features of artistic processes that furthered intimate experience. Similar to the co-researchers’ processes in their studios, while painting alone in my studio in response to their work, I wore the GoPro camera on my forehead. This enabled me to gain access and to pay attention to the multiple ways of knowing what cannot be understood through linear, logical analysis.



FIGURE 1 | Co-researcher Ofira during experimental session 2.

The video files created during each experimental and response session allowed authentic, transparent documentation of the painting processes. The video also relieved me from the need to document in writing, so I could focus on journaling what was going on within me (physically and mentally). Video functioned as a supportive backrest, in the sense that I could go back to specific moments within the experimental modes of inquiry and see for myself.

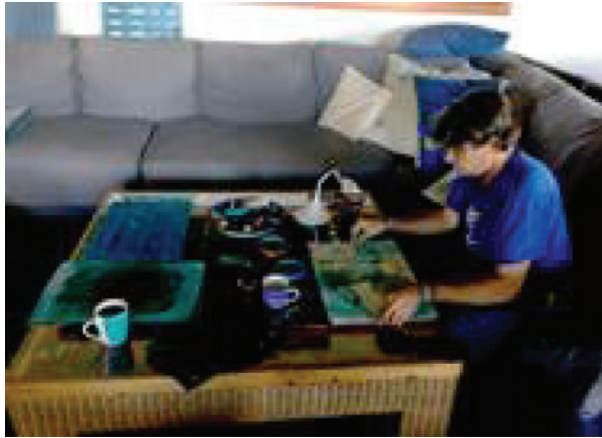
Looking at video through a researcher lens, re-enactment becomes an even more important quality (Howlett, 2022). Video has the capacity to recruit the attention of viewers in somewhat mysterious ways (Henley, 1998; Orr, 2012), leading participants in research to be actively involved and remain curious. Video is considered as a nonlinear art (Frieling & Daniels, 2004), which involves the viewer as participant. Perhaps this is why video appeals to a wide range of audiences (Amini et al., 2018).

Video as Artistic Inquiry

According to film editor Ralph Rosenblum, editing normally takes about two or three times longer than the filming itself and requires devoting time and commitment to the present moment. It includes numerous viewings, selecting, tightening, pacing, embellishing, arranging, and cutting videotaped scenes and is described as a complex process that is mainly about juxtapositions (Dancyger, 2018; Rosenblum & Karen, 2009).

The fifth mode of inquiry in my research on intimacy involved creating 10- to 15-minute-long videos for each participant that included materials from all the sessions and previous inquiry phases. Similar to Rosenblum's perception, the process of editing the video footage included multiple viewings of the video files produced during the painting sessions, photographs of the processes and artworks, the transcribed texts of our discussions, and my reflective journals. The careful examination of video footage included being intimate with the body of work, cropping the images, and organizing videotaped moments that seemed to echo ideas from the verbal discussions and response

art sessions that addressed the research questions, as this edited video of co-researcher Eran demonstrates:



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cZnF7K3Hmw0>.

I devoted attention to the co-researchers' use of art materials and their hand and body movements by noting the time and duration of significant repeated gestures during the video files of each participant. I noted what their painting routine included and how much time they spent on preparations and readying themselves for the painting process.

I examined how long it took them to become encapsulated within the process, as well as the things that encouraged their persistent immersion in painting, and what interfered with it. I looked at how attentive they were to their environment, to my presence, how they used each material, how they held their painting tools, and so on.

Since I did not initiate nor encouraged any conversation during their painting sessions, the direct video shooting angle of the GoPro camera made it easier to direct my attention to their hands and their head movements. I noted the amount of time they spent in each phase of their painting process. I noticed their physical distance from the painting when the frame enlarged or reduced the size of the painted imagery when they moved closer to or farther away from the painting. I wondered whether I should include sections of significant points and ideas from the transcribed texts of the discussions and whether I should add any background music. I ended up with more than 270 minutes of raw video files for each co-researcher. I found it challenging to reduce the raw footage to less than ten minutes without losing its essence because every minute felt important in revealing more and more layers of intimacy. Each decision had its own pros and cons, which made me realize the effect these decisions could have in underscoring different findings within the research material. I realized the considerable impact such details could have on the general outcomes of my research project.

It was an especially delicate process whereby I attempted to remain credible and accountable for transferring the co-researcher's understandings and ideas I was trusted with, through the edited videos. This stance eventually led me to put no music,

background sounds, citations of co-researchers, or other texts within the videos, since this could be distracting from an intimate presence with the video footage. I treated these videos as research tools, and as such, their primary role was to inform the research questions with fewer distractions as was possible.

Editing Footage as a Research Tool

Video footage exists in the virtual space. The footage is a collection of stills in motion (Paul, 2015). The word still is palpable that it is present, frozen in time, eternalizing a certain moment, and is no longer existent in the moment it holds. Stills, as inanimate objects, enable spending time with them in observation and dialogue. Video, on the other hand, runs by us. As such, it demands concentration and focus in order to grasp and understand all of its parts. It is unforgiving for even a blink of an eye (Dancyger, 2018). As a visual artform, it differs from material artworks by leaving no physical evidence after its presentation but remains an icon on the computer screen or in virtual space. Similar to the process of bringing up a memory in imagination, the footage presents scenery in-motion with a beginning and an end that serve as experiences in real life. Perhaps a part of its attraction and appeal is the ability to preserve life, because viewing video footage is as close as we can get to the real-time experience (Taylor et al., 2019).

Video as an Artform in Art-Based Research

The expansion of art materials within the practice of art therapy to integrate photography and video had been suggested over 40 years ago (McNiff & Cook, 1975; Muller & Bader, 1972). Technology's innovations and the new media-art was considered to shatter traditional art-making and, in fact, has caused the renewal of mankind (Benjamin, 2008). For example, people like me who were born in the early 1970s have been brought up to believe that the original, the unique, the one of a kind, is what equals quality. The current young generation does not necessarily grasp originality as a value. The new media changed this perception due to elements of reversibility, reduplication, and changeability, which are interwoven and inseparable to the process of creation.

As a creative tool for producing artworks, video challenges artists to present content and theme within a rather short timeframe. The technical challenges such as integrating high-quality imagery, sound, and transitions hone in on the creator's artistic skills (Carlton, 2014).

In my research, during the creation of the inclusive video, I identified elements that were common and different for all the participants in answering the research questions. I made every effort to remain faithful to each co-researcher's unique understanding of intimacy while distilling the characteristics that stood out throughout all the components of research materials. I was also determined to stay within the timeframe of 10 minutes for the video's total length. I therefore used the five edited videos that had been prepared for each participant, treating them as raw footage.

The distilled lists of the research results that included elements and qualities of intimacy were used as subdividers of the video. To maintain transparency and authenticity in linking the results to the co-researchers' processes, I translated verbal

narratives of participants from Hebrew into English and used them as subtitles within the scenes, to which I added narration in my own voice. The artist in me treated this inclusive video as an artwork. I was astounded by the endless possibilities for aesthetic decisions within video as an artform that was new to me. I was aware of the transitions between still shots and movement, composition and different effects, and the various aesthetic elements in each frame. As my editing skills developed, I treated the footage as art material and the software as tools for artmaking.

Connecting through Video

Research conducted in Romania that explored the level of intimacy in long-distance relationships between families of Romanian immigrants through video calls found that video and photographs share and create emotional experiences that are unique to contemporary digital combinations of technological devices (Alinejad, 2021). The study of Marôpo et al. (2020) analyzed how YouTubers manage their intimacy through narration of their daily discourses to feelings of closeness and a sense of proximity that arose in their followers. Comments of the followers revealed their feelings of communal participation in the YouTubers' daily lives.

My research process demonstrated how viewing the inclusive edited video together with each co-researcher affected their sense of intimacy. The video aroused curiosity about the other participants, whom they had never met. Their attention was strongly directed toward the visual footage. The sessions generated considerable interest, as evidenced by the co-researcher's requests to watch all or parts of the video once again, this time pausing at moments that generated questions and expressions of their understanding of intimacy.

Some questions, which were about the other participants' processes, generated a new sense of intimacy between them, one that did not require them to be physically present together. Some participants commented about the intimacy gained by the position of the video camera. The head-mounted camera led them, as viewers, to feel as if they shared their peers' perspective in this project. The conversations also focused on the conditions that favored intimacy, the obstacles that prevented it, and their insights gained from participating in the research.

Unlike verbal expression that is a form of linear communication taking place in a moment in time, in which one word follows the other to form a sentence, artistic expression is a language unbound by these rules. Video as an artform replicates an experience and can therefore be formulated with a different interpretation of time and space.

Video Editing as a Way of Furthering Intimacy

My role as a practicing art psychotherapist with adult clients led me to believe that the discussions with co-researchers in their private studio spaces during the three experimental sessions would create the requirements for intimacy. Yet a surprising discovery was that I felt more intimate with co-researchers and their artworks during my response art painting and while editing the video footage than I did during the

verbal discussions with them. Being alone with the participants' work enabled me to take as much time as I needed and persevere in the work. Their processes were open for me to see, and I was free to zoom in, explore deeply and focus on the research material at my own pace. I used the video footage as a mediator, an agent that helped me see the painting process and imagery closely (Lev, 2020).

Unexpectedly, editing the video footage led me to the discovery that witnessing the painting process generated significant information in answering my research questions. It accentuated the value of using video footage as a research inquiry and systematic analysis mode. Watching and reflecting upon the video files enabled a new form of intimate relationship to grow. Dedication of time and space to being alone with the work, as the computer became an intimate studio space free of distractions, inviting me to look closely and attentively at details of the painting processes and the imagery that was created.

The video also led to a reenactment of the sensuousness and aesthetic qualities of the participants' painting processes during our shared presence in their private studios. The use of live-in-motion photography available nowadays in mobile phones and applications suggests looking at the self from a "third-eye" perspective. The filmed action and person can be seen and related to as an *other* and could possibly ignite a reflective mode of inquiry. In the study of Taylor et al. (2019) that explored the therapeutic role of video diaries in breastfeeding mothers, video camcorder was personified and treated as a confidante, a mirroring motivator, and a soundboard.

The video footage editing process was found to be a vitally important resource in my systematic review and meaning-making process. Hence, I updated my research question accordingly:

The original research question was: "Are there particular qualities and features of artistic media and processes that further the intimate experience?"

The updated research question became: "Are there particular qualities and features of artistic media, processes, and reflection through video footage editing that further intimate experience?" This revelation of the primacy of video within my research led me create another video to sum up the research as a whole to that point. The summary video was approximately eight minutes long. Unlike the edited videos that I had prepared for each of the participants, which echoed their individual processes, this inclusive video comprised footage from all the participants' processes as an examination and review. This footage was also found to provide answers to the updated research question.

Video for Presentation of Research Outcomes

During the culminating discussions with co-researchers, video enabled me to share my findings in a transparent, lucid manner, simply by projecting them by an iPad, and a white wall with any low-cost projector, a TV screen, or even a portable smartphone device as these become instant exhibitors. Although the presentation of most research outcomes is done in writing, I found that the edited video can demonstrate results clearly and explicitly. Throughout the dissertation, I placed brackets of video timelines.

These served as empirical evidence, which validated the written ideas visually, and also strengthened the outcomes.

If a picture is worth a thousand words, video is even more so, as my culminating video demonstrates:



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gX-k7QjPr4M>.

Conclusion

My goal in planning the research method of my dissertation project was choosing inquiry modes that could address the topic of intimacy.

Glimpses of moments from my art-based research, which explored intimacy using GoPro video camera as a research tool, present the primacy of video in research—how it enables empirical inquiry, presents art evidence, affirms participants, furthers memory, and is significant in identifying outcomes. I designed six interdependent modes of inquiry: (1) three experimental sessions of painting by the co-researchers, to which I was a witness, sitting a little behind them while they painted; (2) reflective discussion with each co-researcher immediately after they painted; (3) my own artistic responses to the sessions and the process of inquiry as a whole; (4) a private exhibition; (5) creating edited videos; (6) culminating discussions and review with co-researchers that included viewing the edited videos and a verbal discussion about the research questions and findings.

Editing the video footage, I noticed that the subjects in the frame were enlarged, when researchers painted leaning toward their paintings. The video was still when the researchers were moving their brushes or other painting tools slower. The head-mounted video camera that they wore zoomed in on their hands, and every motion was shown clearly on the screen.

Unlike the painter whose process was being shown on the screen, as viewers, researchers could control the footage. They would ask me to pause the video for some time, rewind parts to view them again, and fast-forward to other parts. The physical

nature of the medium allowed us to view the footage whenever we desired, see the stages of the artworks' development, and study the movements of the participants' hands as they painted. The researchers noticed moments during which they felt a desire to move closer to the screen and identified them as *intimate moments*.

Not enough attention has been given to video within art-based research, as an artform. Creation of the edited videos was an artistic process on its own. It involved acquiring technical skills, practice, mastering various video and audio software, and then playing with them as means of expression. The edited videos, as artworks, extracted feelings and associations and touched viewers.

This article suggests seeing the significance of the GoPro video camera as an art-based research tool. It opens a hatch to the unique ways in which video was central in exploring intimacy and inviting it to our space.

About the Author

Dr. Michal Lev is a board-certified art therapist, supervisor, and a certified family psychotherapist. She is a faculty lecturer at the graduate art therapy program at Ono Academy–ASA in Israel, advising students in their seminar thesis and promoting art-based pedagogy and research. Dr. Lev was the head of the approval committee for YAHAT-the Expressive Therapies Organization in Israel between 2016–2022, supporting public legislation for expressive therapies. Since 2022 she is an Executive Committee member in the International Association for Creative Arts in Education and Therapy (IACAET). Her clinical practice included inpatient and outpatient treatments for adults with mental health issues. In her established private practice for couples and families Michal incorporates expressive therapies to deal with intimacy issues and promote wellbeing. Her published research and presentations focus on intimacy, art-based research, and creative process-oriented pedagogy.

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