

INTERCULTURAL PERSONHOOD THROUGH 'BLIND'-PORTRAITS

*The role of arts-based research
into world musical experience for
lifelong learning*

ZHUO MIN HUANG

RICHARD FAY

OCTOBER 2020





'BLIND'-PORTRAIT

- **Background:**

A drawing training technique 'Blind Contour Drawing' (Kimon Nicolaides, 1941)

- **Introspective reflection:**

The first-person meaning-making of 'who I am'...

- **Imagination as a methodological source of knowledge (Huang, 2020): '...actually having your eyes closed made that a lot easier to imagine.'**

METHOD

- Draw a 'blind'-portrait about 'who I am' in the learning of world music (or in particular, Klezmer) performance
- Aim: Understanding students' negotiation and development of intercultural personhood
- Intercultural experience: world music education in a culturally-diverse UK university (i.e. University of Manchester), located in a multicultural urban setting (i.e. Manchester)

'BLIND'-PORTRAIT ONLINE

- 14 participants: current and previous students of the Klezmer module
- Approximately 1-hour each on Zoom
- Procedure:
 - Approximately 10-minute drawing
 - Sending the portrait by email
 - Introducing the portrait
 - Following up discussions
- Ethics: a) options to turn-off the camera; b) attending to the wellbeing in the 'new normal'; and c) data access.

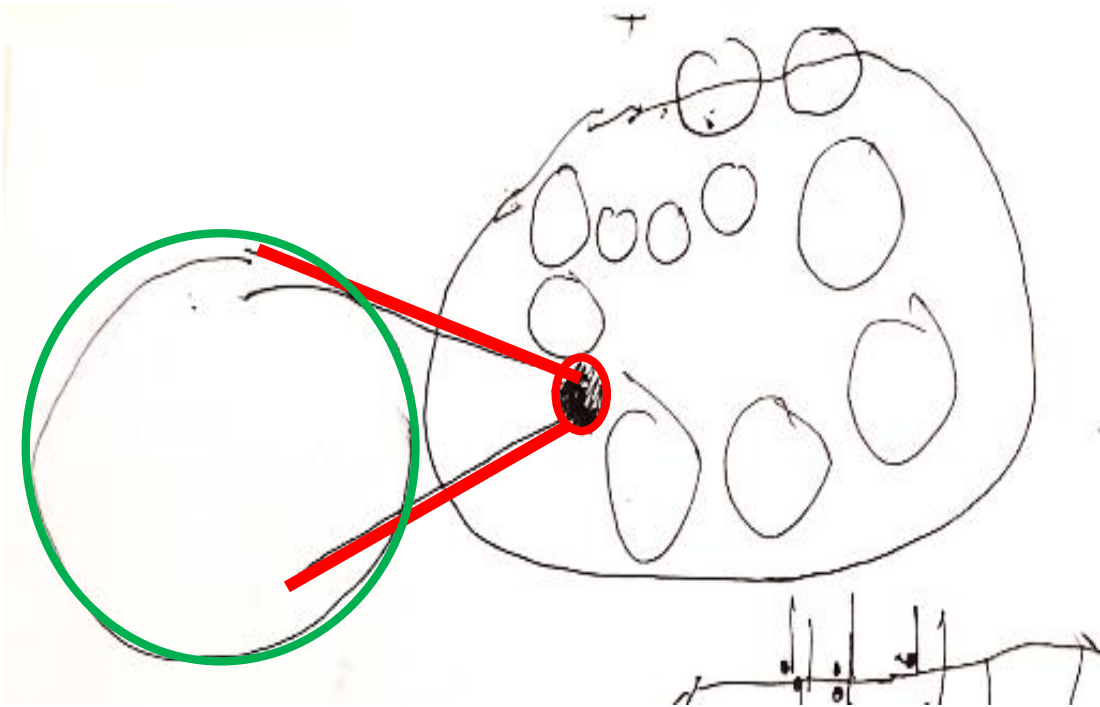


INTERCULTURAL PERSONHOOD (ICP)

- Yong-Yun Kim (2008, 2015): **challenging** the untested assumption of ‘national culture’
- A **humanised, meta-theoretical** concept for understanding the **complex** and **hybrid nature** of **human development**
- **Identity liberalism** (Tebble, 2006): a **small culture, constructivist** account for hybrid, changing, and creative individuals in the increasingly ‘fluid’ world
- The **first-person meaning-making** of ‘who I am’ in the intercultural context



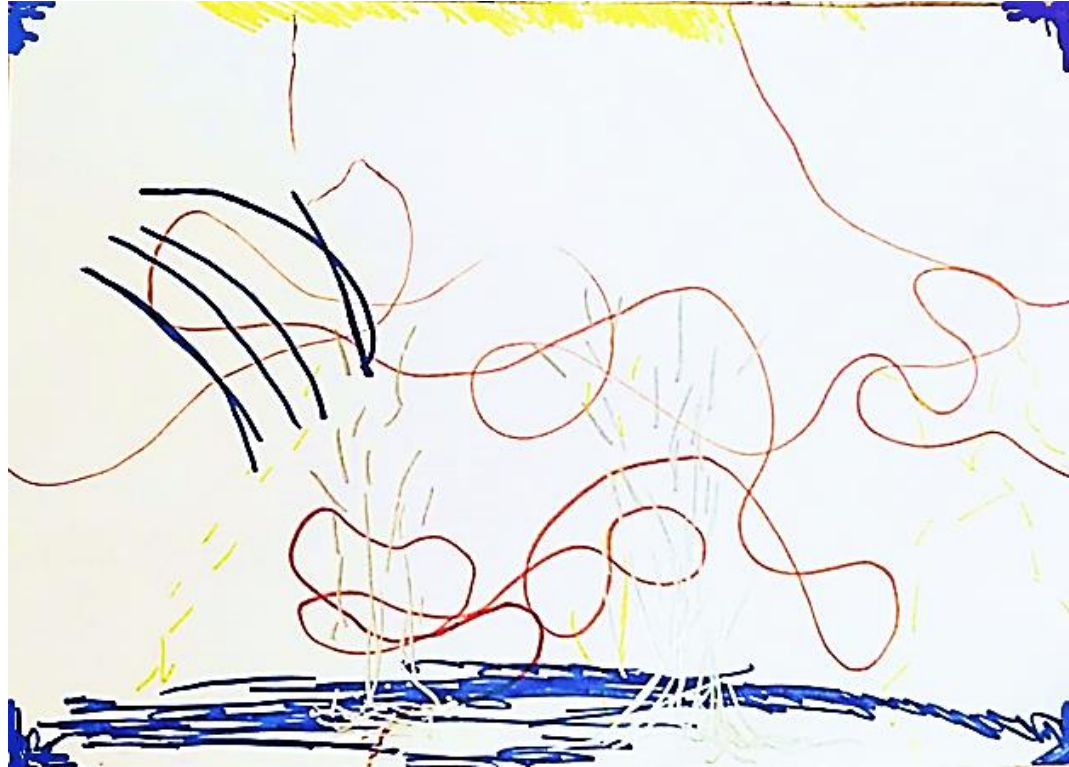
EXAMPLE 1



Filter: a safety mechanism

- ‘This big circle on the left is the **actual me**. But then what you see inside the classroom is just a **little shadow**...
- ‘That's my **filter**. There's 100% of me... (while) that's the amount that was present in the classroom. That's the filter (that) **transforms** 100% and 2% or 3%.’
- ‘I just felt particularly **constrained** sometimes in the context of the classroom. I think I should have had more presence at times... The filter... functions as a **safety mechanism**, or it's something

EXAMPLE 2



Understanding the role of 'my culture':
Bedrock and viewpoint

- 'My musical education...is obviously a very **Western** – part classical and part folk music....This **blue bedrock foundation** symbolises my heritage of all the culture that I grew up with in England.'
- 'This **foundation** is also my **limiting factor**. My basis of all of my musical creating is within this **Westernised musical practice**. As soon as you start looking at another culture, it's automatically in **reference and comparison to your own culture**. So that's why the corners are also in the blue colour that my foundation is also the **edge of my musical ability**... I'm very much **restrained or framed by my own cultural upbringing**...'
- 'Calling it **limiting** sounds **negative**. I don't think it's negative, I think is

EXAMPLE COMMENTS ABOUT 'BLIND'-PORTRAIT

- Visualising the **non-verbalisable**:

'I can't really **verbalise** them (my ideas) enough maybe'.

'It's very difficult to **vocalise**.. **How to explain** this.. it's **not much substance**.'

- Using **symbols** to represent meanings:

'I have to think of **how I would represent** myself because obviously, this is **not a physical portrait, describing my exterior characteristics**, rather what's going on in here in this **head**... So I thought that just the **simplest way to represent** me or represents individual in context of something else was to have

EXAMPLE COMMENTS ABOUT 'BLIND'-PORTRAIT

- **Visual creation as a space for organic, present, evolving meaning-making**

'I thought about, okay, what was what am I?... everything was **spontaneous**. I **didn't plan ahead**. It was not like this is idea 12345. And I'm going to do idea one first, but it's more like okay, **what's now?** Okay. Next, is this.'

'In my head, I **don't really know what they are**. And I **won't be able to say** this and this, **but maybe... and maybe...** They represent...'

EXAMPLE COMMENTS ABOUT 'BLIND'-PORTRAIT

- Engaging with and transforming the **subconsciousness** into consciousness

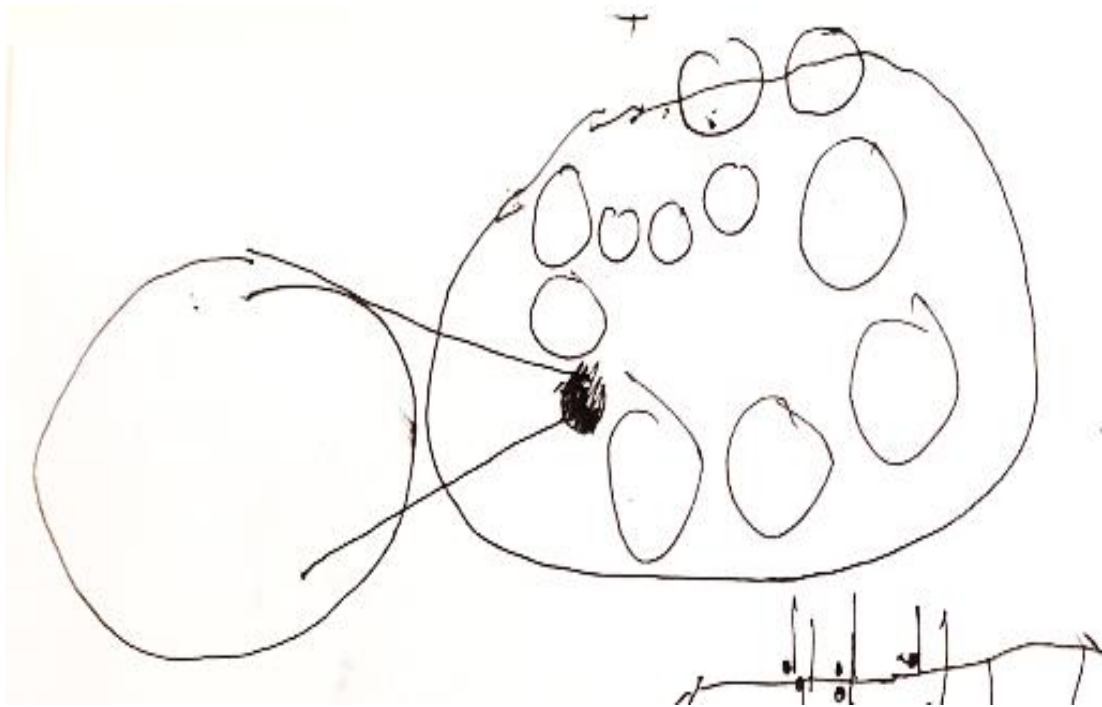
‘ This is just my **subconsciousness**. I’m trying to **translate my subconscious into my conscious**. It’s kind of **difficult**. I mean... conscious is something that you could put into words...’

‘In general, **who I am** ...I don't know if it's like a **conscious** thing. ... It's given me like more confidence connecting with people or definitely makes me want to keep doing it, and to think positively about that. But I think knowing that we've, I've played klezmer and played it live properly does give me more confidence in

Q&A



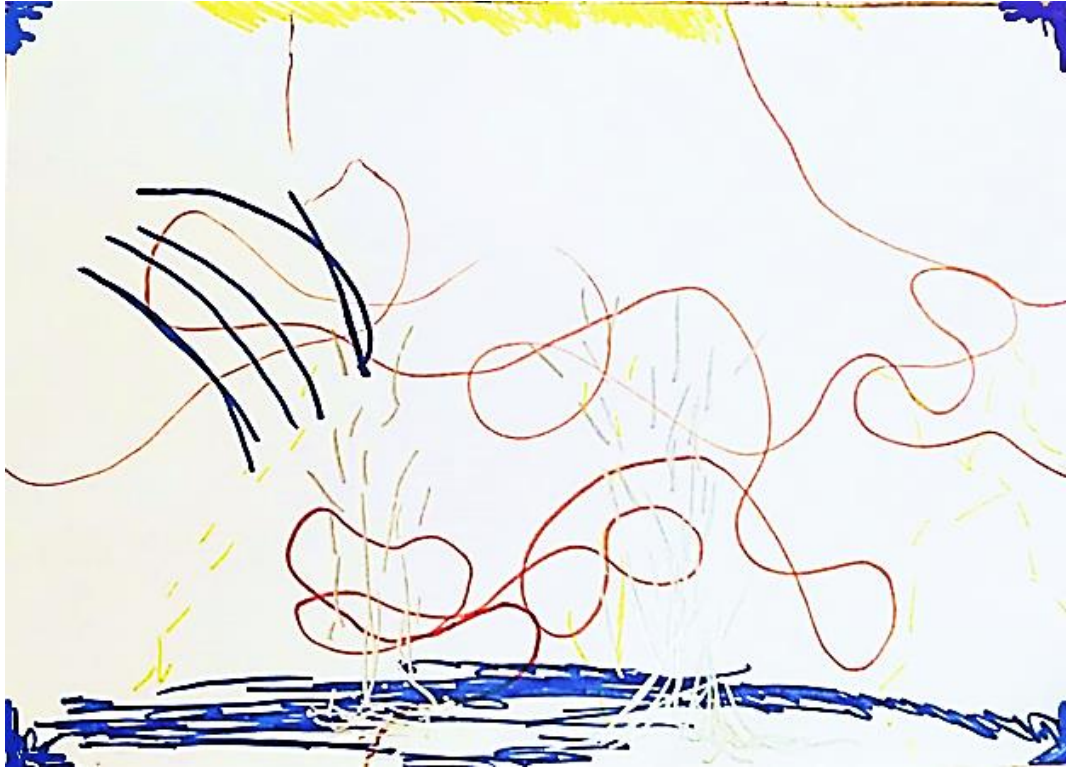
EXAMPLE



Negotiating further strategies...

- ‘....I’m just this **alone floating guy** on the **outside** who for over a year in my mind in constantly saying I **have to be accepted**, I have to be accepted. I have to **get in**. But then after that, I started making my own friends, valuable friends, and then I realised that, I think I should just surround myself with people who value me, who I value, who make my life better.’
- ‘Maybe it could be, in my mind, these people in the classroom, they didn’t **deserve** to see me. (I show) **minimal**, just the **functional** aspects...’
- ‘...And perhaps, because I always had the friends around me, I didn’t need to make any new friends. But

EXAMPLE



My culture: Negotiating a viewpoint

- ‘Calling it **limiting** sounds **negative**. I don’t think it’s negative, I think is maybe just ...a **framework**, or a **viewpoint**. In the same way that I want to kind of a reference points for the piece of art, the same way that you've gotten **the lens of reference of your own culture.**’
- ‘I’m very **cynical** about the way that a **lot of Western cultures believe that their form of music is all forms of music and is kind of an international language**. I don't believe is true because of just the huge amounts of cultural difference in what people produce and how people see as music. **So my cynical approach to Western music is enhanced by my education and awareness of my own culture...**