



COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE :  
ADDRESSING YOUTH DATING VIOLENCE

# Arts-Based Methodologies: Supplemental Material

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*This document contains additional information that is related to the use of arts-based methodologies. Readers who are interested in understanding more about these methodologies may find it useful.*

## Ways of Knowing

Humans understand their world using many different methods and ways of knowing.<sup>1</sup> For example, Kerlinger and Lee (2000) describe four methods of knowing: a) the method of tenacity (e.g., we hold on to what we think is true), b) the method of authority (e.g., an idea might be supported due to tradition or through public sanction), c) the *a priori* or intuitive method (e.g., the most reasonable explanation), and d) the Western scientific method. Another important method of knowing is Indigenous ways of knowing. Indigenous knowledge has been defined as "...knowledge to describe local, culturally specific knowledge unique to a certain population" (Simonds & Christopher, 2013, p. 2185). In contrast to other ways of knowing, Indigenous knowledge is usually transmitted orally, and it is relevant and current to the community to which it belongs (Simonds & Christopher, 2013). Comparatively, Western scientific research tries to understand human activity by obtaining information in a systematic and 'objective' way (Kerlinger & Lee, 2000). As part of finding ethical spaces for reconciliation (Crowshoe & Ermine, 2014), it is important for Western researchers to think about how to combine different ways of knowing in their work (in Canada specifically, incorporating both Indigenous and Western ways of knowing).

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<sup>1</sup> In research, methods outline a plan for researchers to follow to gain new knowledge. Thus, there are different ways of knowing that can underlie methods.

Why is it important to consider methods and ways of knowing? This is because research studies need an underlying methodology to guide their investigations (Overton, 2006). A method is made up of different techniques that support researchers in collecting information, organizing data, and analyzing it (e.g., by coding information) (6 & Bellamy, 2012). Methods are important because they support researchers in making inferences about the information they are collecting (6 & Bellamy, 2012). Inferences are conclusions that are drawn based on theories and data. Methodologies vary by discipline and the underlying worldview of the researcher/research team.

Western researchers have often tried to understand reality through a quantitative lens (Kerlinger & Lee, 2000). Researchers working from a quantitative perspective who adopt a positivist worldview<sup>2</sup> believe that social phenomena can be studied objectively, and that biases can be avoided by creating experiments that allow researchers to control for context (Kerlinger & Lee, 2000). However, limitations to this approach (e.g., belief in objective interpretation) have led to alternate views of science that seek to qualitatively describe the human experience (Kerlinger & Lee, 2000). Qualitative approaches generally better recognize the impact of historical and social factors in the community (Kerlinger & Lee, 2000). From a sociohistorical understanding, researchers realize there are multiple stories that can be told about any given experience, and thus, the observer is always sharing about the topic from their point of view (i.e., is not 'objective'; Kerlinger & Lee, 2000).

Towards an understanding of lived experience, newer qualitative methodologies have incorporated art as a way to understand social experience and to foster social change in the

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<sup>2</sup> But note that not all quantitative researchers adopt a positivist worldview. Other worldviews included post-positivism, realist and Indigenous.

community (Finley, 2012). Broadly, these methodologies are known as Arts-Based Research (ABR).<sup>3</sup> The methodologies embedded in ABR present new ways for researchers to collect and report data that are different from other research methodologies (Barone, 2012).

## Historical Background of Arts-Based Research

Some authors suggest ABR became a methodological genre between the 1970s and 1990s (Chilton & Leavy, 2014). Finley (2005) identified three historical moments as key for the evolution of arts-based inquiry: a) Social Science Activism, b) Educational Arts-Based Research, and c) Revolutionary Pedagogy.

*Social Science Activism.* Researchers in the 1970s started questioning traditional (i.e., quantitative) methodologies. In particular, ABR emerged during a time in which academics started questioning what research entails (Finley, 2012). In addition, others noted that quantitative research was not useful for every project (Finley, 2005). Further, researchers also recognized that participants could support research efforts as true collaborators (Finley, 2005). This switch from participants only to participant-collaborators meant that researchers needed to find new ways to report their findings to avoid ‘othering’ those who engaged in their studies (Finley, 2005). In ABR, participants “should not be voiceless in the reporting of their own stories” (Finley, 2005, p. 682). At this time, it was also highlighted that community-based research needs to be useful to the community in which the research takes place (Finley, 2005). Because of this, ABR incorporated relational ethics, a participatory approach, and explicit social justice goals (Chilton & Leavy, 2014). In terms of ethics, ABR recognizes the

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<sup>3</sup> Many terms are used to refer to ABR. These include: “Art practice as research, Art-Based Inquiry, Art-based enquiry, Arts-Based Research Practices, Performative Inquiry, Arts-Based Educational Research (ABER), [and] Arts-based health research (ABHR)...”, among others (Chilton & Leavy, 2014, p. 60).

distinction between institutional ethics (e.g., informed consent) and relational ethics – researchers need to be aware of the how their actions impact the community in which they are working (Ellis, 2007).

*Educational Arts-Based Research.* Elliot Eisner was an educational researcher who strongly advocated for the inclusion of the arts in education (Siegesmund, 2018). Though his work, he highlighted the need for education to understand individual needs through the arts, and described his work as Educational Arts-Based Research (Siegesmund, 2018). Finley (2005) summarizes Eisner’s foundational components for ABR as: a) the world can be known in different ways; b) knowledge depends on experience and reflection – it is not only discovered, it is made; c) the language people use to describe how they see the world influences their ability to describe it; d) intelligence is required for any form that represents the world; e) people’s experiences and what they say are impacted by the form chosen to represent the world; f) educational inquiry will progress as humans use multiple means to describe, interpret, and evaluate education; and g) new competencies are needed when using new forms of representation.

*Revolutionary Pedagogy.* Revolutionary Arts-Based Inquiry is a type of pedagogy that encourages challenging oppression and empowering communities to promote social change and transform educational practice (Finley, 2005). Broadly, revolutionary pedagogy stemmed from the work of Freire, who highlighted the need to teach socially marginalized groups by breaking from the power mechanisms that can accompany educational systems (Arnett, 2002). McLaren is also recognized as a contributor; they noted that revolutionary pedagogy aims for social democracy (Finley, 2005). Some aspects of this pedagogy were incorporated

into ABR. Specifically, in ABR, arts are the basis for research, and are a way of representing social realities that allow participants to share the strengths and challenges in their community to advocate for change.

## Theoretical Influences on Arts-Based Research

ABR is strongly influenced by social justice, relational ethics, and feminism (Chilton & Leavy, 2014).

*Social Justice.* A widely used definition of social justice is “a vision of society in which the distribution of resources is equitable and all members are physically and psychologically safe and secure” (Bell, 2013, p. 21). ABR is influenced by social justice because it seeks to empower communities by providing opportunities for them to share their experiences and strive for change that increases their physical and mental safety. Specifically, the focus of ABR is to communicate to create social impact (Chilton & Leavy, 2014). This type of research also challenges oppression and is critical of injustice (Leavy, 2015). By acknowledging participants as collaborators, research is participatory and action-oriented (Leavy, 2015). A participatory approach allows for the elimination of the participant-researcher hierarchy because participants become stakeholders in the research project (Leavy, 2015).

Leavy (2015) describes that ABR can foster critical awareness and promote consciousness (e.g., by developing empathy through stories, performances, and images that create a response in those who engage with the findings). ABR also looks to challenge dominant ideologies and stereotypes to provide a voice for those who are marginalized due to some aspect of their identity (Leavy, 2015). For example, Finley (2012) notes that telling

community stories can expose discrimination, sexism, and racism. Finley (2012) further describes ABR as a practice that also challenges colonial traditions that privilege Western viewpoints over Indigenous and other ways of knowing.

Because of its focus on social justice, when engaging in ABR, researchers need to reflect on their personal value system and motivations to engage in ethical practice (Leavy, 2015).

Respect of Indigenous knowledges is also a crucial aspect of ABR (Finley, 2012).

*Relational Ethics.* Ethical considerations are integral to any research endeavour. In Canada, research projects are reviewed by an institutional research ethics board (REB) that makes sure the process allows individuals to understand confidentiality, privacy, and to guard people from harm through informed consent (Ellis, 2007). Beyond these common ethics principles, however, Ellis (2007) urges researchers to consider *relational ethics* in their work. Relational ethics require individuals to become aware of their actions and the impact they have on those who are collaborating in the research (Ellis, 2007). Relational ethics recognize that the researcher needs to recognize their bond to research participants and actively engage in conversations that help develop the researcher's ethical responsibilities (Ellis, 2007). Relational ethics thus complement common ethics principles. In addition, Leavy (2015) notes several ethical considerations specific to ABR:

- Results should be shared in a way that is sensitive to complex participant experiences. This includes reporting and sharing information in a way that is culturally respectful.
- When utilizing performances as a way to share research with the community, care must be given to the audience's well-being (e.g., including discussions at the end of



the performance to support the audience in assessing the impact that the show had on them).

- Clarifying copyright expectations for any images or products created through research from the moment the first participants are engaged in the project. Setting expectations for the final public display (if this is part of the project) is also recommended.
- It is important to find a balance between the research findings and the artistry used to represent them. Findings must be represented faithfully. For example, it is important that artistry does not misrepresent the original data in an effort to engage the audience.
- Incorporating reflexivity supports research. Reflexivity involves an examination of the researcher's feelings, decisions, and assumptions as they engage in the research process.

*Feminism.* The feminist movement impacted research by raising societal awareness about the presence and experiences of marginalized and oppressed groups (Leavy, 2015). From a feminist standpoint, research should not be complicit in oppressing marginalized groups through its theories and methodologies (Leavy, 2015). Rather, research from this perspective needs to understand that people have different points of view based on their *standpoint* in society (Leavy, 2015). A standpoint is the result of the perspectives that are the consequence of an individual's life experiences (Leavy, 2015). Feminism has developed its own research methodologies and has influenced ABR because it questions the existence of 'objective' findings in research (Leavy, 2015). Eisner (2001) explained this influence by highlighting that

feminism stipulates that research cannot be neutral because the world is experienced in different ways by different people.

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