



COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE :
ADDRESSING YOUTH DATING VIOLENCE

Arts-Based Methodologies: A Summary

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Arts-Based Research (ABR) incorporates principles of the arts in collecting and representing research and evaluation information (Barone, 2012).¹ ABR is described by Barone (2012) as a way to “enhance understanding through the communication of subjective realities or personal truths that can occur only through works of art” (p. 2). This means that art is used as a way for research participants to communicate their understandings of their social context. ABR also integrates action-oriented ethical research principles – results are meaningful to the community because they are involved in the research process (Finley, 2005). ABR is also a research and evaluation practice that challenges colonial traditions that privilege Western viewpoints over Indigenous and other ways of knowing (Finley, 2005).

Conducting Research Using ABR

ABR requires the researcher to assume an ethical and political stance by: a) acknowledging that research has moral implications; b) being aware that the arts are the focus of the research project; c) knowing that in ABR, the researcher is no longer an expert and collaborates with participants to engage in research; d) being respectful of critics; e) focusing discussions on fostering diversity, inclusion, openness, and creativity; and f) recognizing the importance of the audience and incorporating their role in the design of the project (Finley, 2012).

Research design in ABR will look different depending on the art form that is chosen to present the findings. Common to all ABR projects however, is that the information that is collected is summarized into an aesthetic format (e.g., a story, poem, or series of photographs; Barone, 2012).

¹ 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).

Approaches to Arts-Based Research

ABR is conducted through many different arts-based methodologies (or, ways of doing the research). These ways of doing ABR are usually organized by genre, but it is important to know that there can be overlap among them (Chilton & Leavy, 2014). Some of the common types of ABR approaches are summarized below (Chilton & Leavy, 2014).

Literary-Based Approaches

The goal of the literary approach to ABR is the creation of engaging texts with which the audience can connect (Chilton & Leavy, 2014).

Poetic Inquiry

In this type of literary ABR, a poem is written to represent and communicate research and evaluation data (Leavy, 2015). The poem can be written from the perspective of the researcher or the participants, or can be derived from other literature (Leavy, 2015). Poetry written from the participants' perspective tends to be preferred so that the poem honors their voice (i.e., their language, rhythm, pauses; Sparkes et al., 2003). Poems can also foster empathy and provide the reader the opportunity to see the participant's perspective and connect to their experiences (Sparkes et al., 2003). Kim and Kim (2018, p. 303) provide an example of a poem written by an individual who collaborated in a research project that explored Korean students' awareness of the process of learning English as a second language. This research project used a Korean poetic form called *sijo* to capture the students' experiences as learners in the United States and in South Korea (Kim & Kim, 2018). The poem is first represented in the speaker's original language and is then translated to reach English-speaking audiences.

Narrative Inquiry

This type of literary ABR is used to communicate stories and share meaning (Leavy, 2015). This type of ABR can look like more ‘traditional’ research (e.g., interviews), or might look more like a book or other piece of literary text (Leavy, 2015). The narrative created through narrative inquiry is used to share a story that can resonate with the reader (Levy, 2015). This type of ABM is also common as part of a method called ethnography (Leavy, 2015). Some examples of narrative inquiry are summarized in *Table 1*.

Table 1

Examples of narrative inquiry

Autobiographical writing	The researcher shares their experience(s) by incorporating their point of view into their findings (Leavy, 2015). Field memos and notes can be used for the researcher to describe their understanding of a social situation (Leavy, 2015). For example, Lambert-Hurley (2013) wrote an article that reflects on some of their personal stories working with specific populations (i.e., South Asian women).
Creative nonfiction	Was originally created to make news reports more engaging (Leavy, 2015). In research, this style can be used in a variety of formats such as books and editorials. It is difficult to find examples of this type of methodology in research (Leavy, 2015). However, Leavy (2015) notes that <i>Fields of Play</i> , a book by Laurel Richardson, has been highlighted as an example of creative nonfiction.
Fiction	Is used to make writing accessible to the general public (Chilton & Leavy, 2014). It requires extensive research and tries to create a realistic portrayal of a specific social context

(Chilton & Leavy, 2014). The novel *Low-Fat Love*, which discusses commentary on femininity, has been described as an example of this methodology (Chilton & Leavy, 2014).

Performance-Based Approaches

In this type of ABR, performers as an important aspect of research (Chilton & Leavy, 2014). Their bodies are considered to be part of the method used to seek knowledge (Chilton & Leavy, 2014). Thus, research is *embodied* through dance, live performances, film and ethnotheatre, among other formats (Chilton & Leavy, 2014).

Ethnotheatre

Ethnotheatre is also known as ethnodrama, and consists of transforming research data (collected through interviews, journal entries, notes, etc.) into a dramatized script that captures the purpose of the research (Leavy, 2015). Ethnotheatre can also collect information from data that are publicly available (e.g., reports, public documents; Leavy, 2015). The method requires data to be analyzed and interpreted so that a script can be developed (Leavy, 2015). The script can be written for a film or play. It should incorporate both participants' perspectives and the researchers' interpretation of the information that has been collected (Chilton & Leavy, 2014).

As an example, Baur et al. (2014) wrote an ethnodrama based on data collected in a residential care home in the Netherlands. The final product dramatizes the situation by showcasing what happened when a client from the residential home was included on a team of professionals who were involved in a project to improve care (Baur et al., 2014). Data were collected by observing team meetings; through field notes, evaluation meetings and interviews (with five team members); and during informal conversations with the team of professionals (Baur et al., 2014). Baur and colleagues (2014, p. 279) include an example of a scene in an

ethnodrama (Baur et al., 2014). In the scene, the senior resident (Mr. De Graaf) expresses his concern about one of the other residents being unattended for what he perceived to be a prolonged period of time. All characters in the scenes are named through pseudonyms.

Playbuilding

Like ethnotheatre, this type of ABR involves dramatizing research findings and performing them (Leavy, 2015; Norris, 2000). The final product is a play that is created by gathering a group to select a topic and share personal experiences (Leavy, 2015). The story can also include information from other sources (i.e., news, reports; Leavy, 2015). All participants are recognized as co-authors (Chilton & Leavy, 2014). The main difference as compared to ethnotheatre is that playbuilding merges different dramatic techniques in the writing process (Norris, 2012).

Norris (2012) provides an example of playbuilding. In this project, Norris (2012) created a theater company with his students that focused on social issues (Norris, 2012). The group chose a topic and used different questions to guide the creation of a story based on each participants' experiences with the topic (Norris, 2012). Through this process, the story was co-created in a series of rehearsals (Norris, 2012). The group of people who create the play are referred to as A/R/Tors (i.e., actors/researchers/teachers; Chilton & Leavy, 2014). Another example of this type of ABR is provided by Prior (2005), who created a play with 20 undergraduate students over 10 weeks. The play informed the audience (17 to 20 years old) about HIV/AIDS (Prior, 2005).

Film

Film is also used as an ABR method (e.g., documentaries). Film can reach a wide audience and can develop empathy and educate viewers by presenting social issues (Chilton &

Leavy, 2014). For example, Chilton and Leavy (2014) describe the short film *Rufus Stone* as an example of this type of ABR method. This short film is about a gay couple and their experiences with homophobia after being outed in a rural community in the United Kingdom.

Visual-Based Approaches

This type of ABR includes things like photos, sculptures and ceramics (Chilton & Leavy, 2014). Visual formats give researchers and participants the opportunity to record an aspect of the participant's world (Leavy, 2015). Visual works can also represent ideas and portray cultural norms and change (Leavy, 2015).

Photovoice

Caroline Wang, a professor at the University of Michigan School of Public Health, is credited with developing photovoice methodology (Catalani & Minkler, 2010). When it was initially used, it was also called photo novella or photonovel (Wang & Burris, 1997). In this ABR method, participants are asked to take photos and then they have the opportunity to discuss and interpret those images with the group (Wang, 1999). Wang (1999) highlights five key concepts of photovoice: a) photos teach and provide learning opportunities, b) pictures can impact policy, c) people in the community should participate in creating public health policy, d) policymakers and influential individuals need to be part of the audience to support change, and e) emphasizing community and individual action.

Wang (2006) describes a nine-step method to use photovoice. *Table 2* summarizes these steps. Photovoice has several strengths, including collecting rich information (Catalani & Minkler, 2010), being adaptable to the developmental level of participants, and being engaging (Ford et al., 2017). Although photovoice research is still influenced by the work of Wang and Burris (1997), a recent literature review found that there is lack of consistency in how photovoice

data are shared (Catalani & Minkler, 2010). Some of the inconsistencies in reporting include a lack of description on how the community was involved in the process of developing the research proposal and how funds were allocated (Catalani & Minkler, 2010). However, out of the 46 articles included in Catalani and Minkler's (2010) review, 60% of the projects addressed community issues by promoting discussions and 96% organized an exhibition. Thus, Catalani and Minkler (2010) indicate that the literature for this method is becoming more robust.

Table 2.

Photovoice nine-step method (Wang, 2006)

Photovoice Step	Description
1. Include policy makers or leaders as the target audience	While this step may depend on the goals of the project, influential community members are often included as participants, since a common goal of photovoice is to implement recommendations that stem from the project.
2. Recruit participants	Recruiting 7-10 participants is recommended.
3. Present methodology to participants	Present the photovoice method through workshops that incorporate ethics, power, and the use of cameras.
4. Informed consent	Obtain informed consent from all participants (and their caregivers when working with children and youth).
5. Propose a theme for taking pictures	Participants can brainstorm a topic, or it can be presented to them.
6. Distribute the cameras	Give each participant a camera and review how to use it. Participants can also use a phone camera if they have access to this.
7. Give participants time to take the photos	Let participants know how long they have to take the photos.
8. Meet and discuss the photos	First, ask each participant to choose a photo or two and talk about it. Next, Wang (2006) recommends using the SHOWeD method (see below) so participants can frame stories through a critical lens. Finally, ask participants (as a group) to identify the themes that they see arising from the photographs.
9. Plan how to share the photographs and stories	Collaborate with participants to decide the format with which the findings will be shared. For example, the format could be a digital slideshow or an exhibition. Include community leaders and policymakers as part of the audience when sharing results, to promote uptake of project recommendations.

The SHOWeD method mentioned in *Table 2* supports participants in framing the group discussion by incorporating the following elements:

- What do you **See** here?
- What's really **H**appening here?
- How does this relate to **O**ur lives?
- **W**hy does this situation, concern, or strength exist?
- What can we **D**o about it? (Wang, 2006, p. 151)

As a final note, when working with children and youth, it is important to talk to them about safety when capturing the images. Caregivers (as relevant given the age of the participant) and children/youth should be included in this discussion, and it is crucial to ask them to review the photographs and delete anything they do not want to share (Ford et al., 2017). When capturing health issues or topics that children may feel uncomfortable with later in their life (e.g., a child showing a picture of an injection in their stomach), images can be cropped or blurred to ensure anonymity (Ford et al., 2017).

Visual Storytelling

Visual storytelling is based on a method called photo elicitation (Drew et al., 2010). Photo elicitation means using a photo as the basis for discussion. In visual storytelling, photos are used to share stories and to gather participants' narratives on a specific topic. By using images, visual storytelling reduces reliance on verbal skills and empowers participants to guide the conversation, especially if the picture (or other visual support) is taken/created by them (Ford et al., 2017). Using visuals when interviewing participants also supports their ability to remember information and gives them the opportunity to think about the theme and share their perspectives (Ford et al., 2017).

As an example of visual storytelling, Drew et al. (2010) recruited 34 adolescents and children (10 to 18 years old) and their parents. All youth had a chronic condition (i.e., asthma, diabetes, or cystic fibrosis). Participants were asked to take photos of what it was like to have a chronic health condition and the activities they engaged in to look after their health (Drew et al., 2010). Using the photos in the individual interviews supported the data collection process because participants had the opportunity to explore complex understandings in a developmentally appropriate way.

Digital Storytelling

This type of ABR involves creating a digital story (usually three to five minutes long) that uses images, audio recordings, music, and text (Gubrium, 2009). This method is considered participatory, as it includes participants as partners in research (Gubrium, 2009). The goal of digital storytelling is to create themes that showcase issues in the community, in order to begin a dialogue (Gubrium, 2009). It can also increase research ownership because of its participatory nature (Gubrium, 2009). This method requires training participants in the use of digital storytelling, and then working with them in a multi-day workshop to produce their digital stories (Gubrium, 2009). Participants are usually asked to draft a story in writing prior to the workshop (Gubrium, 2009).

Gubrium (2009) summarizes seven key elements of digital storytelling: a) point of view, b) dramatic question, c) emotional content, d) voice, e) soundtrack/music, f) economy, and g) pacing. These elements are used by participants to guide their stories. Story circles, or discussions in which participants share their stories, are used for participants to mentor one another (Gubrium, 2009). Confidentiality is encouraged in the circle because of the personal and

emotionally charged nature of the stories that are often shared by individuals in the group (Gubrium, 2009).

Once stories are completed, participants can be taught to use editing tools and any other tools that they need to tell their story (e.g., scanners, photography support; Gubrium, 2009). Then, participants are given a deadline to finalize their draft so that they can record a voice over for their digital story (Gubrium, 2009). Storyboards are also used to organize the story. Finally, the end of the workshop focuses on putting together the voice-over, images, video, and soundtrack. Each participant then shares their digital story with the group (Gubrium, 2009). In one example, digital storytelling was used with advanced cancer patients as a legacy-making intervention. In this work, 27 children created a digital story to share with their parents (Foster Akard et al., 2015).

Art Journaling

Art journaling is also known as A/r/tography, and uses images, text, and drawings so that participants can create meaning about their experiences (Chilton & Leavy, 2014). An important aspect of this method is that art and writing are connected to one another and that they come together to create meaning (Springgay et al., 2005).

Mixed Media

Multiple forms of visual art can also be used in one research project (e.g., photos and videos). This can also involve combining ABR with more traditional qualitative methods (e.g., combining paintings and interviews; Chilton & Leavy, 2014).

Strengths of ABR

ABR is used in many fields, and the use of the arts as a way to engage in research is growing (Chilton & Leavy, 2014). ABR has several strengths, and it can be helpful to understand its strengths before selecting it as a research framework:

- **ABR is helpful to understand metacognitive experiences** (Chilton & Leavy, 2014).

Metacognition involves a person's awareness of their own knowledge and thinking (Zimmerman, 2002). ABR allows the researcher to explore not only metacognition, but also social and emotional experiences (Leavy, 2015).

- **ABR can increase engagement and limit power differentials when working with children and youth** (Drew et al., 2010).

Engaging children and youth in research can be challenging. Using visual prompts in research can support children and youth in reflecting on the topic under study in a developmentally appropriate way (Drew et al., 2010). ABR can also be used to collect information in collaboration with children and youth, rather than gathering data about how they experience the world from adults around them (i.e., parents, teachers; Ford et al., 2017). ABR provides a way of removing limitations from traditional research by providing tools (e.g., a photo) that allows children to share ideas that might be beyond their verbal abilities (Ford et al., 2017). It can also be a way to encourage self-knowledge (Chilton & Leavy, 2014).

- **ABR is a holistic approach to research** (Chilton & Leavy, 2014). ABR studies are comprehensive and generally connect theory and practice (Chilton & Leavy, 2014). An important aspect of ABR is that research is not static, and changes are made in response to the needs of the community or context (Chilton & Leavy, 2014).

- **ABR shares information with the community.** An important aspect of ABR is to communicate research/evaluation findings with the community (Chilton & Leavy, 2014). Art shows, websites, plays and photo exhibitions, among other forms of knowledge dissemination, have been used to share ABR findings (Chilton & Leavy, 2014).
- **Art can eliminate barriers.** Language can be an important barrier for the community to access research findings. Among the main challenges in research publications is the use of jargon or specialized language. Using art to share research findings with a community can eliminate the barriers created by jargon and reach a variety of people (Chilton & Leavy, 2014).
- **ABR provides multiple meanings for research findings and promotes dialogue** (Leavy, 2015). Reality is complex, and using art to analyze meaning helps avoid promoting one way of knowing as superior (Leavy, 2015).

Limitations of ABR

Although ABR can be beneficial, like any research method, it also has some limitations.

- **ABR's boundaries are unclear.** Since ABR has developed in a variety of research fields, it can be referred to through different terms. The variety of terms and uses has made it difficult to distinguish the boundaries of ABR and has resulted in complex definitions (Chilton & Leavy, 2014).
- **Time and cost.** Materials and equipment (e.g., cameras) needed in ABR can be expensive (Boydell et al., 2012). ABR is also a time-consuming process that requires researchers to build connections with participants and considerable time needs to be allocated to plan exhibits or performances (Boydell et al., 2012).

- **Lack of quality standards.** There is no specific set of standards of quality to evaluate ABR (Barone, 2012). However, Barone (2012) has proposed three ways to assess quality in ABR: a) the research provides a window for the audience to experience the context of participant's experiences and identify aspects that resonate with them, b) the research is compelling, and c) the text/art moves the audience and helps them rethink their conception of the world.

Conclusions

ABR uses art to support social change through research, and to understand participant's lived experiences. The different approaches to ABR described in this document provide a variety of different tools that can be used to center the voice of participants. ABR's focus on social justice also provides the opportunity for the community to engage with decision-makers.

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