



Critical
Approaches
to Arts-based
Research

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ABOUT THE E-JOURNAL

The UNESCO Observatory refereed e-journal is based within the Graduate School of Education at The University of Melbourne, Australia. The journal promotes multi-disciplinary research in the Arts and Education and arose out of a recognised need for knowledge sharing in the field. The publication of diverse arts and cultural experiences within a multi-disciplinary context informs the development of future initiatives in this expanding field. There are many instances where the arts work successfully in collaboration with formerly non-traditional partners such as the sciences and health care, and this peer-reviewed journal aims to publish examples of excellence.

Valuable contributions from international researchers are providing evidence of the impact of the arts on individuals, groups and organisations across all sectors of society. The UNESCO Observatory refereed e-journal is a clearing house of research which can be used to support advocacy processes; to improve practice; influence policy making, and benefit the integration of the arts in formal and non-formal educational systems across communities, regions and countries.

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THEME

Arts based research (ABR), its products, processes and critical theorising have come a long way in recent times. Nuanced distinctions indicate the development of the field, as arts-informed research, arts-based research, practice-led research, applied research, and creative participatory action research all claim different relationships with the art and criticality present in such innovative scholarship. Finally, it seems, we are moving away from a defensive stance regarding arts based research and its ‘validity’, and toward a celebration of this proliferation of diverse ways of knowing, theorising and doing research. This ‘coming of age’ is evident in this special issue, which urges readers to move beyond binarised notions of scientific ‘versus’ arts based research that still at times dominates academic research environments and conversations, and outmoded practice/theory divides. For we co-editors and for the authors here, theorising is indeed a creative practice, and goes hand-in-hand with the epistemological and ontological potential of arts-making methods. This issue celebrates the opening of new doors in theorising innovative arts based research from a range of global contexts, theoretical and epistemological frameworks, and inter/disciplines. We avoid any attempt to codify or limit the parameters of what contemporary arts based research is or can be. Indeed, we seek the opposite: to highlight its ever-expanding possibilities.

The essays here aim to encourage critical analysis and dialogue about the objects and subjects of arts based research for contemporary times, poststructuralist, posthuman and other critical approaches to arts based research, and the interdisciplinary application of performative and practice-led research in transferable methodological models. We are pleased to be able to include digital assets with many of the articles in this special issue. Indeed, the layered and multimodal complexity of arts based 'outputs' or artefacts is one of its rich distinguishing features, and it requires commitment from editors and publishers to not always demand a 'reduction' back into text-based forms, a diminishment of many forms of ABR. For this we thank the UNESCO editorial and production team, and hope you enjoy this contribution to the critical development of the arts based research field.

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Towards Articulating an Arts-based Research Paradigm: Growing Deeper

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ABSTRACT

The intention of this article is to further a discussion or ‘grow deeper’ into an exploration of the philosophical underpinnings that those who are working with art in/as research might share. Building on the relational paradigms outlined by Heron and Reason (1997) and Wilson (2001), we argue that the articulation of an arts-based research paradigm requires a deeper discussion that expresses the ontological, epistemological, axiological, and methodological underpinnings of arts-based research and the perspectives that shape and guide arts-based ways of knowing, doing, being, and becoming. We suggest that an arts-based paradigm is one that is grounded ontologically in a belief that we are all, at a fundamental level, creative and aesthetic beings in intersubjective relation with each other and our environment; and is one that encourages contributions towards honouring relations, human and non-human flourishing, and celebrates art’s potential to transform the world.

KEYWORDS

arts-based research paradigm; ontology; axiology; epistemology; philosophy

'Poetry is the anarchy of the senses making sense'

Lawrence Ferlinghetti (2007, p.45)

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The Arts-based Research Studio in the Faculty of Education at the University of Alberta is a Canada Foundation for Innovation funded facility dedicated to interdisciplinary arts-based research. Author Diane Conrad is director of the Studio and author Jaime Beck was research coordinator from 2011-2013. <http://arts-basedresearchstudio.ning.com/>

INTRODUCTION: GROWING DEEPER

For the past five years the Arts-based Research Studio in the Faculty of Education at the University of Alberta has been a crucible for thought, bringing together local, national and international fine arts, social sciences and humanities, and health sciences scholars to discuss the nature of arts-based research. ¹ They, while representing diverse disciplines, are each in their unique ways compelled to integrate the arts with their scholarship. We continue to be compelled to better understand why this is so.

The intention of this article is to further a discussion or grow deeper into an exploration of the philosophical underpinnings that those who are working with art in/as research might share; to move towards articulating an arts-based research paradigm. We do not seek nor claim to have definitive answers. Rather, we field some ideas for others to take up, develop further, or refute. We have presented our preliminary ideas, earlier versions of this paper, to two arts-friendly audiences and elicited feedback towards developing them – seeking to better understand and

We presented in 2013 a first version of the paper at the International Congress of Qualitative Inquiry, Urbana, Illinois (USA); and a revised version at the Canadian Society for the Study of Education for the Arts Researchers and Teachers Society Special Interest Group, Victoria, British Columbia, Canada.

Fig 1
Duck-Rabbit
public domain.
Retrieved
from: [http://](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rabbit-duck_illusion)
en.wikipedia.
org/wiki/Rabbit-
duck_illusion
Original source:
'Kaninchen und
Ente' ('Rabbit
and Duck') from
the 23 October
1892 issue of
Fliegende Blätter.

articulate why arts-based researchers do what they do. ² Based upon these extended conversations, we now offer an exploration of what philosophical assumptions might be shared by arts-based researchers, here defined broadly as those working with art in a process of inquiry or meaning-making (generating, interpreting and/or representing material) or as a form of research (research-creation). We include a discussion of the potential of arts-based research in transforming the world.

WHY ARTICULATE AN ARTS-BASED RESEARCH PARADIGM?

The 'duck-rabbit' image below was referred to by Kuhn (1970) to illustrate the notion of paradigms. What we see, he suggested, depends on how we perceive the world. In *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* Kuhn (1962) describes a paradigmatic perspective as underlying the practices in any discipline – the set of preconceptions or assumptions, which shape and determine the problems and the solutions of that discipline. Such a notion of differing paradigms resonates with the authors' experiences as arts-based researchers. At times, when speaking with research or funding administrators who are steeped in the scientific paradigm, we find ourselves speaking at odds –



as though they see ducks where we see rabbits. Barone (1995, 2007), a founder in the area of narrative education research, was not interested in a diffusion of research paradigms; our hope is that by better articulating what is distinct about arts-based research, conversations with others of a different paradigmatic bent might be easier. Perhaps the time for an arts-based research paradigm has come.

Arts-based research does not fit neatly into other identified research paradigms: the positivist, post-positivist, constructivist, interpretivist, critical, participatory, or pragmatic as described in Lincoln, Lynham, and Guba (2011) or Mackenzie and Knipe (2006). While we do see some commonalities between an arts-based research paradigm and some of these paradigms, the arts are not central to any of these descriptions as they are in arts-based research. We proceed in articulating an arts-based research paradigm by following the approach taken by Heron and Reason (1997) who develop a participatory inquiry paradigm, and Wilson (2008) who outlines an Indigenous research paradigm.

In their critique and extension of the four competing paradigms of research (positivism, post-positivism, critical, and constructivism) outlined by Guba and Lincoln (1994), Heron and Reason (1997) argue that it is essential that the understanding of a paradigm include an articulation of the ontological, epistemological, axiological, and methodological underpinnings of the world-view. Axiology is an addition to Guba and Lincoln's (1994) original discussion of paradigmatic perspectives and considers what kinds of knowledge or activities are seen as intrinsically valuable from the perspective of each paradigm. Heron and Reason also offer the addition of the participatory paradigm to Guba and Lincoln's original four as a paradigm that can more fully encapsulate participatory/experiential, presentational and practical, along with propositional knowing. The participatory paradigm is added in Lincoln, Lynham, and Guba's (2011) subsequent discussion.

Shawn Wilson (2001) offers a corresponding discussion of ontology, epistemology, axiology, and methodology as the underpinnings of an Indigenous research paradigm. Building on the relational paradigms outlined by Heron and Reason (1997) and Wilson (2001), we argue that the articulation of an arts-based research paradigm requires a deeper discussion that expresses the ontological, epistemological, axiological, and methodological underpinnings of arts-based research and the perspectives that shape and guide art-based ways of knowing, doing, being, and becoming.

3

Consistent with our values of inclusivity and relationality, to mitigate a concern of including some while excluding others, we avoid providing any citations here although examples of these methodologies abound. We would like to acknowledge all arts-based researchers and the scholarly work they are doing.

METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Arts-based methodological approaches are as varied as the artists and/or scholars who employ them. An element that is common to these approaches, that defines them as arts-based, is the primacy given to interacting with and making art. A small sampling of arts-based approaches³ or arts-informed approaches could include: autoethnography; life-writing; creative nonfiction; photovoice; dance; a/r/tography; performance ethnography; ethnodrama; visual ethnography; practice-led research in the visual arts or the performing arts; participatory arts-based approaches; poetic inquiry; popular media such as film; arts activism, and more. All of these arts-based approaches enrich and deepen our understandings, provide enriched opportunities for meaning-making, and are reflective of the generative nature of artistic practices. The current proliferation of a variety of arts-based approaches demonstrates the intrinsic value that aesthetic considerations have for researchers. Art presents a unique opportunity for relational and contextual engagement. Denzin and Lincoln's (1994) description of the qualitative researcher as bricoleur is an apt metaphor for the arts-based researcher as she/he responds to emergent opportunities for research-creation.

Arts-based methods are being explored, documented, and theorized. We have found these discussions have focused largely at the level of methodology and often respond to the questions: *How* do we do arts-based research? *What* do arts-based researchers do? This is an appropriate starting point as arts-based methodologies emerge. Rolling (2010) for example, who claims to do a paradigm analysis of arts-based research, explores the *characteristics* of arts-based research practice with a focus on visual arts research methods. A discussion of the characteristics of practice is undoubtedly valuable in and of itself. It does not, however, begin to address the provocations underlying the practices.

To some extent, discussions about arts-based research have also addressed epistemological matters: What questions can the arts as research answer? (Eisner 2006; O'Donoghue 2009; Rolling 2010; Woo 2008). What is arts-based research for? Barone (1995) suggests that the purpose for arts-based research is 'enhancing uncertainty' (p. 172), promoting ambiguity and raising questions to 'enrich an ongoing conversation' (p. 466).

Building on the work that has come before, we want to 'grow deeper' in our discussion of arts-based research by moving towards articulating a paradigm; in particular, we focus on putting forward some ideas for an ontology of arts-based research, as well as addressing epistemological and axiological assumptions that may underlie this methodology. We focus on the 'why?' in relation to the 'how?' and the 'what for?' of arts-based research. While it is exciting to observe researchers bringing together arts and scholarship, it is also intriguing that so many are drawn to doing so. We want to better understand why this is so. Why do more and more researchers across disciplines turn to the arts in their scholarly undertakings?

ONTOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

We suggest that an arts-based paradigm is grounded ontologically in a belief that we are all, at a fundamental level, creative and aesthetic beings in intersubjective relation with each other and our environment. Kelly and Leggo (2008) contend:

‘Creativity is a central source of meaning in our lives. Design, invention, and innovation are integrally connected to our being human. The excitement of generating ideas, experimenting, and creating new forms makes for a passionate world that runs across disciplines and all walks of life’ (p. 8).

Similarly, Gaztambide-Fernandez (2013) in his argument against the ‘rhetoric of effects’ (p. 213) that dominates discussions of the value of arts in education, claims that the arts don’t ‘do’ anything, turning away from seeing the arts in an instrumentalist way – for their desired effects – which devalues cultural practice as something people do. Rather, he re-envision the arts as cultural production suggesting:

‘the rhetoric of cultural production takes as its starting point the idea that symbolic work is part of everyone’s everyday life and that, as such, it should be front and center in education; while the arts may not do anything, symbolic creativity is fundamental to cultural life, and education is fundamentally cultural’ (p. 226).

In the same way that Kelly and Leggo (2008) and Gaztambide-Fernandez (2013) are saying that creativity and cultural production are foundational to educational practice, we are exploring the ways in which art and art-making practices are fundamental to research and knowledge creation – fundamental to our very being.

An ontology of arts-based research would look at the processes of cultural production: making art (artistic practice) and

responding to art (aesthetic experience), as fundamental to being human. Dewey (1934/2005, p. 11) described how ‘artistic and esthetic quality is implicit in every normal experience.’ We carry this further to suggest that art is fundamental to our capacity to make meaning of and give value to life; human beings are fundamentally aesthetic beings. The sense of aesthetics we refer to here is not the modern sense of aesthetics related to taste or judgment of fine arts based on notions of beauty (Kant 2007), but what might be more aligned with the classical Greek sense of aesthetics (Aristotle 1998) – the origin of the Greek word *aisthanesthai* meaning to sense, perceive, or feel (Online Etymology Dictionary 2014). This is an understanding of aesthetics as a sensory, perceptual, and emotional knowing (Whitfield 2005). In other identified research paradigms, there is no accounting for this aesthetic way of knowing, for artful ways of being, for arts as a way of life, for human beings as fundamentally aesthetic beings, or for creative practices as fundamental to life. As Dewey suggests, ‘art develops and accentuates what is characteristically valuable in things of everyday enjoyment’ (1934/2005, pp. 9-10).

Understandings of art from the perspective of Indigenous cultures around the world (Cajete 1994; Sefa Dei, Hall & Goldin Rosenberg 2000) provide insight into the place of art in human cultures. The sense of art for First Peoples, according to Kenny (1998), is related to coherence, authenticity, health, and spirituality. Kenny sees expression as fundamental to healing and the arts as life-enriching and life-sustaining. For First Peoples she says, ‘art is not a separate language, but rather the way we live’ (p. 77). In Hill’s (2008) dialogue with Blackfoot elder Leroy Little Bear about the ancient petroglyphs in Writing-on-Stone Provincial Park in Alberta, Canada, Little Bear suggests that it was not human beings who created the writings at all, but spirits. Little Bear believes that the experience and relationship with the place, which ‘created the conditions that gave rise to the phenomena represented by the petroglyphs’ (p. 45) is

4
Dissanayake
(1992) also
looks at artlike
behaviours in the
animal world.
She claims that
both human and
animal artlike
behavior have
presymbolic
sources.

more significant than the artefacts themselves. Here it is the experiences and relations that are foregrounded, rather than an isolated incident of artistic creation.

Dissanayake (2003), from an anthropological perspective, in trying to understand why in every society humans make and value arts, argues that for humans art is biologically adaptive; as a species we are predisposed to making art. We are '*homo aestheticus*' (Dissanayake 1992) and create art as a way to denote what we value, or what we consider special. She uses the term 'artification' to describe individuals' acting upon natural materials 'to make them into extraordinary artifacts' (2003, p. 248). Humans, she claims 'intentionally shape, embellish, or otherwise fashion or regard aspects of their world to make them 'special,' i.e., more than ordinary' (p. 247). This intentional acting-upon behavior – carving, painting, dancing, storytelling, ceremonies – she claims, in order to have proven so pervasive through time and across cultures, must have had an adaptive purpose in its own right. She suggests art-making felt good and so contributed towards individual and communal well-being and social cohesion. In this sense, art-making was related to identity and survival (also Whitfield 2005). We are fundamentally creative. Art-making is everyone's, not just the artist's, way of *making special*, for sharing meaning and value. In describing her journey towards poetic research, Glesne identifies her 'longing for more creativity, to find a medium for tapping and expressing some connection to the soul' (1997, p. 205).

In *Chaos, Territory, Art*, Elizabeth Grosz (2008) explores an ontology of art – its origins or conditions, not in a historical sense, but rather in questioning what makes art possible. Grosz explores the creative life sustaining practices that we call 'art,' which humans share with others in the animal world.⁴ She argues that art in the natural world occurs as excess: 'the haunting beauty of birdsong, the provocative performance of erotic display in primates, the attraction of insects to the perfume of plants are all in excess of mere survival' (p. 7). Art,

she says, gives sensation a life of its own, expressing the chaos from which it is drawn.

Following Grosz (2008) we seek an understanding of what makes art as research possible. What are the provocations or incitements to create art as scholarship? Grosz attempts to develop, following the work of Deleuze and Guattari (1994), a 'nonaesthetic philosophy for art [. . . which] addresses the common forces and powers of art' (p. 2). The forces that provide provocations for art, she affirms, are bodily forces, forces of nature, the earth, the universe. She sees art, alongside philosophy and science, as a way of organizing or composing the chaos of the cosmos (nature, the universe, the infinite), to extract something consistent or coherent. This desire for organizing or composing to extract something consistent or coherent is inherent, we suggest, in arts-based research processes.

EPISTEMOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Epistemology describes what we can know and how we can know about our experiences. Whitfield (2005) suggests that aesthetic or sensory-perceptual-emotional knowing evolved in humans pre-linguistically, involving highly sophisticated brain processes originally related to experiences of fear and pleasure essential for survival. This way of knowing would therefore be primary to (coming before) linguistic-cognitive knowing, and not relevant to and so not necessarily accessible to conscious understanding, introspective analysis, or linguistic articulation.

Wilson's (2001) Indigenous paradigm understands that 'it is with the cosmos, it is with the animals, with the plants, with the earth that we share this knowledge. It goes beyond the idea of individual knowledge to the concept of relational knowledge' (pp. 276-277). As aesthetic beings we come to know more about our world; to relate to, organize, and impose meanings upon

Fig 2
Arts-based
Research Studio
logo and tagline

it through relational, aesthetic (sensory, perceptive, emotional) practices. An arts-based research paradigm acknowledges our



multiple and diverse ways of coming to know through creating, embodiment, feelings, intuition, and spirit.

The tagline of the Arts-based Research Studio at the University of Alberta, ‘We know more than we think,’ in its double sense suggests that our knowing exceeds our awareness of what we know. Beyond thinking, beyond cognition is precognition, and the arts serve as other media through which those meanings can be evoked. The adage tries to articulate an epistemology that includes our multiple ways of knowing. As Grosz (2008) suggests, referencing Deleuze, art ‘does not produce concepts, though it does address problems and provocations. It produces sensations, affects, intensities as its mode of addressing problems’ (p. 1). This is the epistemology of arts-based research.

AXIOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Heron and Reason (1997, p. 277) define axiology as that which ‘asks what is intrinsically valuable in human life, in particular what sort of knowledge, if any, is intrinsically valuable.’ In their participatory paradigm, they suggest that human praxis and the promotion of human flourishing is of intrinsic value; ‘conceived

as an end in itself, where such flourishing is construed as an enabling balance within and between people.’

Greene writes, ‘Martin Heidegger, earlier, wrote that the arts “make space for spaciousness;” they often open worlds. Openings, beginnings, initiatives, new understandings, more intense these, I think, are our shared concerns’ (1987, p. 12). Such openings through art create a space for relationality or dialogic engagement (Conquergood 2003). For Assante (2008) art has a role in the struggle for social justice. He asserts:

‘if our art does not challenge and confront, fight and tussle, wrestle, grapple and stand up against oppression, then our art is actually aiding that oppression. Neutrality, or the perception of neutrality, only helps the oppressor, never the oppressed. In a world where human beings are denied their humanity, the activists must – by depicting the humanity of the oppressed – bring value back to human life’ (p. 206).

As in the paradigms outlined by Heron and Reason (1997) and Wilson (2008), an arts-based research paradigm has an inherently relational quality. A relational ethic is identified by Finley (2003) in her review of a decade of arts-based research, as a central perspective underlying this approach. Likewise, Springgay, Irwin, and Kind (2008) discuss a/r/tography in terms of its focus on relationality. They discuss a relational aesthetics citing Bourriaud (2002) for whom a relational aesthetics takes ‘as its theoretical horizon the realm of human interactions and its social context’ (p. 14) with intersubjectivity, being-together, the art encounter and collective meaning-making as central ideas. For Bourriaud, contemporary art (and we would add arts-based research) is about ‘learning to inhabit the world in a better way [. . .] the role of artworks is to [. . .] actually be ways of living and models of action within the existing real’ (p. 13).

Grosz's (2008) suggestion that 'art is the opening up of the universe to becoming-other' (p. 24) goes beyond human flourishing to encompass the role of art in the flourishing of the more-than-human world. This perspective is consistent with Indigenous understandings of the relationships between humans and the natural world (Sheridan & Longboat 2014).

Openings, becoming-other, standing up against oppression, and bringing value to all aspects of human life – these are among the efforts that must be undertaken through the arts in/as research. An arts-based research paradigm encourages contributions towards honouring relations, human and non-human flourishing, and celebrates art's potential to transform the world.

AN ARTS-BASED EXEMPLAR

Fig 3
Life Lines from
the Alzheimer's
Project

Photo credit:
Ardra Cole and
Maura McIntyre



As we shared the above ideas with our colleagues, we found an illustrative example useful for clarifying our discussion. At a preconference prior to one of our presentations of our work for this paper, Cole and McIntyre's (2004, 2008; also McIntyre & Cole 2007), *Life Lines*⁵ was mentioned, so we have taken up this example as both apt and familiar to many. We share this example to illustrate the methodological, ontological, epistemological, and axiological perspectives outlined above.

Life Lines, one of seven visual representations/installations that were part of a larger *Alzheimer's Project*, 'is a 30 foot (9.14 metres) free standing clothesline of over-washed female undergarments that mark the shift in personal power and changing nature of dependence across a life span from diaper to diaper' (Cole & McIntyre 2008, p. 315). As part of the larger research project on Alzheimer's disease, based on their own experiences of caring for their elderly mothers with the illness, the researchers aimed to advance an understanding of Alzheimer's within a situated context, to express the complexities of caregiving, and to honour those who care for people experiencing Alzheimer's. Cole and McIntyre (2011) state:

'As daughters of women who lived with and died with Alzheimer's disease, we remember and use the practical and emotional realities that were our own experience of caregiving to guide our work. Rooted as we are in the everyday routines of caregiving, we found ourselves drawn to three dimensional installation art with its assemblage quality of found materials. Using the 'everyday' and 'ordinary' as guides we chose universal, domestic symbols and forms in order to keep 'the academy and the kitchen table' together and make our work broadly accessible' (para. 20).

The researchers expressed their experiences through visual/installation art with the understanding that 'research becomes a site of aesthetic contemplation when feelings, intellect and perception are given space to come together to make meaning' (p. 313). They contend that the arts allow for ambiguous, open

texts, without fixed meanings, through which viewers co-create meaning that is intimate, personally relevant, emotional, and embodied. Cole and McIntyre's work was publicly presented at two different stages in four cities reaching thousands of viewers. The responses from multiple viewers suggest that the artwork evoked recognition with their past experiences, and different aspects resonated differently with each viewer. This is significant from both epistemological and axiological perspectives in the way the work reaches out to create meaning in relation with others.

Cole and McIntyre, at the time of the *Alzheimer's Project*, were scholars with a focus on qualitative research methodologies. When they first explored arts-informed methods, Cole (2013) noted, neither had any formal background in artistic practice but embraced their creativity and aesthetic sensibilities. The arts-based forms they worked with 'were primarily based on communication potential – how to reach and engage people in an embodied way that had transformative potential – in combination with the theme or issue being explored and reflected.'⁶

For *Life Lines* they discuss the use of the arts-informed methodological approaches of visual inquiry and installation art as research. They honoured or 'made special' their experience of caregiving, using art to make sense of the complexity of their experiences and to share that meaning with others. The clothesline evokes an understanding of some aspect of human bodily existence that is otherwise difficult to comprehend – 'from diaper to diaper.' Experiencing the work provides audiences with a suspended moment in which the complexities of aging, dependence, caregiving, and others are, as Grosz (2008) articulates, externalized, intensified, and enframed so that these complexities can then be engaged. It affects each viewer differently, in aesthetic (sensory, perceptual, emotional), embodied, and relational ways, and works towards human flourishing through the promotion of deeper understandings

of persons with Alzheimer's and their caregivers. McIntyre and Cole (2008) talk about their research process on the *Alzheimer's project* as *Loving Research*, involving 'a more humane research ethic where love, care and human connection are foundational to the advancement of knowledge' (p. 221).

Fig 4
Life Lines from
the Alzheimer's
Project

Photo credit:
Ardra Cole and
Maura McIntyre



VALUING ARTS-BASED RESEARCH

Outcomes for arts-based research are not based in measurement or any traditional expectations for scientific research, nor should arts-based research be evaluated by these standards (Barone 2007; Barone & Eisner 2011). Based on the ontology and epistemology outlined above, arts-based research should not be seen as a scientific activity, but a vigorous, partly intuitive process for meaning making in its own right. Barone and Eisner (2011) expect a piece of arts-based research to ‘succeed both as a work of art and as a work of research’ (p. 145). They insist that the value of arts-based research is in allowing the reader/viewer to vicariously experience the phenomenon under investigation by making accessible some aspect of human experience in a new way. They note that raising questions, rather than providing answers is a valuable outcome of arts-based research.

Building on Dewey (1934/2005), Barone and Eisner (2011) offer a set of common criteria as a starting point for valuing arts-based research, while also warning against the liability in attempts at standardization. Their criteria include:

- Incisiveness, ‘that a work of research is penetrating; it is sharp in the manner in which it cuts to the core of an issue’ (p. 145);
- Concision, which involves judgments on the part of the researcher to include only the most essential elements of the portrayal;
- Coherence, ‘the creation of a work of arts-based research whose features hang together as a strong form’ (p. 151);
- Generativity, ‘the way in which the work enables one to see or act upon the phenomena’ (p. 152);

- Social Significance, ‘pertains to the character, meaning, and import of the central ideas of the work [. . .] the best arts-based research aims to make a difference in the world’ (p. 153); and
- Evocation and Illumination, through which the reader/viewer feels the meanings of the work – ‘evocation pertains to feeling [. . .] an aesthetic experience.’ Illumination is about the way a work ‘sheds light [. . .] so that [the phenomenon] can be seen in a way that is entirely different’ (p. 154).

As Barone and Eisner do for readers of their chapter, we invite you to apply these criteria to the example we offer above. We would contend that Cole and McIntyre’s (2004, 2008) *Life Lines* encapsulates these criteria brilliantly.

Norris (2011) creates a framework for assessing arts-based research projects drawing on the metaphor of a First Nations medicine wheel. He suggests that the value of a project be determined based upon the distribution of four interrelated concepts (positioned in the four quadrants of the wheel) and the way in which, appropriate to the context and intention of the project, the concepts are taken up.

The concepts he puts forward are: pedagogy – the extent to which it changes the person experiencing it; poiesis – the quality of meaning-making through artistic form; politics – the degree of political stance taken; and public positioning – how the work is brought into the public domain. For example, the quality of the artwork in a project may be at a novice level, while the project may have provided a powerful pedagogical experience for those creating the artwork, in which case the research would be valued more highly in the pedagogical realm. Norris posits that the framework provides an inclusive set of criteria that appropriately responds to the complexity and variety of arts-based research projects undertaken and through which the

quality and merit of a project can be determined taking into consideration the intrinsic characteristics of any given project.

In Finley's (2003) retrospective of arts-based research, the emerging bases upon which she saw this research being evaluated were for the work to be ethically motivated, socially/politically action orientated, and performative. As Conrad (2006) summarized in her reading of Finley's essay:

'The ethical imperative calls for research that embraces an ethics of care, is relational, builds community, allows the voices of participants to be heard, promotes agency, encourages reciprocity between researcher and participants allowing a blurring of roles, deepens relationships, displays the researcher's positionality, and is culturally responsive, based in context and community. The social/political action orientation emphasizes research that embodies political praxis, is radical in its purpose, useful in the community in which the research was conducted, fights oppressive structures in our everyday lives and moves the reader to action. The performative push encourages research that is creative, passionate, visceral and kinetic, focusing on process over product, is critically reflexive on the part of the researcher, experiments with form including popular arts forms, produces open texts with multiple meanings and multiple ways of relating to the work, allows dialogue with research participants, appeals to diverse audiences and raises questions rather than formulating conclusions' (pp. 445-446).

The value of the arts in/as research continues to be debated. As the criteria shared above suggests, rather than valuing the outcomes or effects of arts processes, the arts and arts-based research may also be valued for qualities inherent in the practices and processes involved in art-making. Gaztambide-Fernandez (2013) claims that 'cultural production' or 'symbolic creativity' (p. 226) is fundamental to education and cultural life in that every human interaction involves the arrangement and rearrangement of materials through symbolic work. In a similar

vein, Wallin (2011) values the arts for the ‘concepts (images of thought), percepts (sensations), and affects (capacities to act and be acted upon)’ (p. 105) they engender and the ‘kinds of forces they modify and unleash from material repetition’ (p. 111). For Grosz (2008; see also Jagodzinski & Wallin 2013) too art is rethought in terms of forces. Grosz believes that art intensifies, externalizes and gives life to sensation, slows down, enframes and organizes chaos. In this sense the arts involve practices, processes and products that allow us to shape and give meaning to our engagements in the world, and so are invaluable for inquiry purposes.

CONCLUSION

Arts-based research, for the furthering of human flourishing through ‘artification’ practices serves to make our knowing special. Arts-based research acknowledges and nurtures us as aesthetic (and scholarly) beings. As Heron and Reason (1997) believe, ‘humans consummate [. . .] self-awareness as creative agents, whose practical inquiry is a celebration of the flowering of humanity and of the cocreating cosmos, and as [. . .] an expression of the beauty and joy of active existence’ (p. 291).

We have offered here a starting point for discussion about a research paradigm – some ontological, epistemological, axiological, and methodological assumptions that arts-based researchers, we think, may share. Our efforts aim towards more clearly articulating, for ourselves and for those outside the paradigm with whom we speak, a foundation for the rich scholarly arts-based work being done across disciplines around the world. We welcome others to build upon these humble ruminations.

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