CHAPTER 1

Social Research and the Creative Arts

An Introduction

> The most beautiful thing we can experience is the mysterious. It is the source of all true art and science.
>
> —ALBERT EINSTEIN

Many researchers in the social and behavioral sciences enter the academy full of what my mother calls "chutzpah": a palpable energy, desire to make a difference, and fearlessness about shaking things up. Chutzpah flows from passion. However, operating within a context of institutional pressures of tenure and promotion clocks, coupled with publish-or-perish dictates and funding agencies that reward "hard-science" practitioners, many academics soon become disenchanted. They tell themselves that they'll simply do the work they want to do later, which works because "later" never arrives. Although traditional methods grounded in the scientific method suit some, and traditional qualitative research methods create a working space for others, still there are the *other* others for whom these research conventions make what was once a passion start to feel more like a job.

Arts-based researchers are not "discovering" new research tools, they are *carving* them. And with the tools they sculpt, so too a space opens within the research community where passion and rigor boldly intersect *out in the open.* Some researchers have come to these methods as a way of better addressing research questions while some quite openly long to

merge their scholar-self with their artist-self. In all cases, whether in the particular arts-based project or in the researcher who routinely engages with these practices, a *holistic, integrated perspective* is followed.

In his eloquent book *A Methodology of the Heart: Evoking Academic and Daily Life,* Ronald Pelias (2004) writes: "I speak the heart's discourse because the heart is never far from what matters. Without the heart pumping its words, we are nothing but an outdated dictionary, untouched" (p. 7). In my own research on collective memory and national identity (see Leavy, 2007) I often felt that the "scraps" of data left strewn across my office floor were a part of the heart—the heart of my work and even more so the heart of my relationship with my work. As researchers, we are often trained to hide our relationship to our work; this is problematic for some, impossible for others. Arts-based research practices allow researchers to share this relationship with the audiences who consume their works. In Chapter 2 my short writing entitled "Fish Soup" illustrates, in a small way, what a research "scrap" can generate.

Pelias notes that arts-based texts are "methodological calls, writings that mark a different space. They collect in the body: an ache, a fist, a soup" (2004, p. 11). The turn to the creative arts in social research results from a confluence of many historically specific phenomena. Concurrently, these practices open up a new space that, as the negative space that defines a positive object in visual art, creates new ways of thinking about traditional research practices. What is clear when compiling recent arts-based research, and researchers' reflections on it, is that the pioneers in this area seek to sculpt engaged, holistic, passionate research practices that bridge and not divide both the artist-self and researcher-self with the researcher and audience and researcher and teacher. Researchers working with these new tools are merging their interests while creating knowledge based on resonance and understanding.

Art and science bear intrinsic similarities in their attempts to illuminate aspects of the human condition. Grounded in exploration, revelation, and representation, art and science work toward advancing human understanding. Although an artificial divide has historically separated our thinking about art and scientific inquiry, a serious investigation regarding the profound relationship between the arts and sciences is under way. This book reviews and synthesizes the merging of cross-disciplinary social research with the creative arts. In recent decades a new methodological genre has emerged at the intersections of multiple disciplines and disciplinary practices: arts-based research practices.

Arts-based research practices are a set of methodological tools used by qualitative researchers across the disciplines during all phases of social research, including data collection, analysis, interpretation, and rep-

resentation. These emerging tools adapt the tenets of the creative arts in order to address social research questions in holistic and engaged ways in which theory and practice are intertwined. Arts-based methods draw on literary writing, music, performance, dance, visual art, film, and other mediums. Representational forms include but are not limited to short narratives, novels, experimental writing forms, poems, collages, paintings, drawings, performance scripts, theater performances, dances, documentaries, and songs. This genre of methods also comprises new theoretical and epistemological groundings that are expanding the qualitative paradigm.

A/r/tographical work is a specific category of arts-based research practices within education research. A/r/t is a metaphor for artist–researcher–teacher. In a/r/tography these three roles are integrated creating a *third space* (Pinar, 2004, p. 9). These practitioners occupy "in-between" space (Pinar, 2004, p. 9). A/r/tography merges "knowing, doing, and making" (Pinar, 2004, p. 9).

A group of Faculty of Education at the University of British Columbia began responding to a trend in research conducted largely by their graduate students, ultimately compiling a collection of more than 30 dissertations that used arts-based research. The faculty then analyzed the collection, identifying three major pillars of practice: literary, visual, and performative (Sinner, Leggo, Irwin, Gouzouasis, & Grauer, 2006). Additionally, this group uses the term "practices" instead of the more conventional term "methods" (Sinner et al., 2006, p. 1229), which in part signifies the break with methods conventions and also rejects the idea of tools that are neutrally implemented. Referring to a/r/tographical research as a localized and evolving methodology, Sinner and colleagues (2006) posit this is a "hybrid, practice-based form of methodology" (p. 1224) that is necessarily about both the self and the social. They write:

> A/r/tographical work is rendered through the methodological concepts of contiguity, living inquiry, openings, metaphor/metonymy, reverberations, and excess which are enacted and presented or performed when a relational aesthetic inquiry condition is envisioned as embodied understandings and exchanges between art and text, and between and among the broadly conceived identities of artist/researcher/teacher. (p. 1224)

For the remainder of this book I employ the umbrella category "arts-based research" as a way of including the fundamental tenets of a/r/tographical research.

This new breed of qualitative methods offers researchers alternatives to traditional research methods that may fail to "get at" the particu-

lar issues they are interested in, or may fail to represent them effectively. For example, the a/r/tographical research dissertation collection at the University of British Columbia includes research on the following topics: love, death, power, memory, fear, loss, desire, hope, and suffering (Sinner et al., 2006, p. 1238). These highly conceptual topics, which represent some of the most fundamental aspects of human experience, are often impossible to access through traditional research practices.

Although art has long been a subject for investigation in anthropology and art education, as well as other disciplines, only recently have the methodological *tools* employed in the arts been vigorously explored by social scientists, health care researchers, education researchers and practitioners, and others in order to reveal tremendous meaning-making and pedagogical capabilities. Although the arts are most typically associated in social research with the *representation stage* of research, as evidenced throughout this book, the arts are being used during *all phases* of the research endeavor from data collection to analysis and representation, as well as continuing to serve as a subject of inquiry and a pedagogical tool.

In this chapter I review the historical context in which arts-based methods have emerged; how they sit with respect to ontological, epistemological, theoretical, and methodological questions; the impact of these new strategies on the qualitative paradigm; and the primary reasons why a researcher might opt for an arts-based practice. In terms of the latter, I address the questions: What do these methods help us to unearth, illuminate, or present that would otherwise remain untapped or opaque? Why use an arts-based method as opposed to a traditional qualitative method? Finally, I review the organization of this book.

Pushing on the Borders of an Alternative Paradigm: Historical Context for Arts-Based Research

In order to understand how researchers have developed arts-based methodological practices they must be situated in a discussion of the emergence of the qualitative paradigm as an alternative to the quantitative paradigm. It is important to note that there are many competing ways to conceptualize qualitative research. I use the term "paradigm" to encompass the diverse expanse of qualitative research, which is practiced from many different epistemological and theoretical perspectives. I consider arts-based research to constitute a new methodological genre within the ever-evolving qualitative paradigm. I should also mention that although many qualitative researchers resent the endless comparisons of qualitative practices to quantitative practices (and rightfully so), given the

historical dominance of quantitative research and the extent to which positivist approaches to evaluation remain "the gold standard," this kind of comparison seems warranted. Moreover, although this book is about a new genre of qualitative research practices, quantitative and qualitative methods are simply different approaches to answering social research questions.

Positivist Science

Positivist science, also referred to as empiricism, emerged in the late 1800s out of European rationalist movements. This model, first established in the natural sciences, is based on the "scientific method," and served as the foundation upon which social science perspectives on knowledge-building developed, largely as a result of the pioneering classical sociologist Emile Durkheim's effort to legitimize sociology by modeling the discipline after physics. With the publication of Durkheim's (1938/1965) book *The Rules of the Sociological Method,* which posited that the social world consisted of universal "social facts" that could be studied through objective, empirical means, positivist science crossed disciplinary boundaries and became the model for all scientific research.

The scientific method, which guides "hard science," developed out of a positivist ontological and epistemological viewpoint. Positivist science holds several basic beliefs about the nature of knowledge, which together form *positivist epistemology,* the cornerstone of the quantitative paradigm (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2005). Positivism holds that a knowable reality exists independently of the research process and this reality consists of knowable "truth," which can be discovered, measured, and controlled via the objective means employed by neutral researchers. Positivist science employs *deductive* methods. Within this framework, both the researcher and methodological instruments are presumed to be "objective." Like the natural world, the social world is governed by rules that result in patterns, and thus causal relationships between variables can be identified, hypotheses tested and proven, and causal relationships explained. Moreover, social reality is predictable and potentially controllable. The positivist view of social reality (the ontological question), researchers' objective and authoritative study of it (the epistemological question), and the tools designed to quantitatively measure and test the social world (methods) together comprise the quantitative paradigm (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2005). As noted by Thomas Kuhn (1962), a paradigm is a worldview through which knowledge is filtered.

For more than half a century diverse scholars have been challenging the basic tenets of positivism, resulting in an alternative worldview: the qualitative paradigm. *Qualitative research* is the term used to designate

a diverse range of methods and methodological practices informed by various epistemological and theoretical groundings.

It is necessary to review the primary social and academic catalysts responsible for the major challenges to positivist science and eventual culmination into the qualitative paradigm (although such a brief history is certainly partial). Understanding this historical shift is directly related to contemplating the newer category of arts-based research practices because the main concern levied against these methods centers on issues of validity and trustworthiness. These evaluation concepts, however, were initially conceived in relation to the positivist perspective on knowledge-building and corresponding methods practices. As researchers working within the qualitative paradigm realized decades ago, the conventional strategies available for checking validity, reliability, and the like, as well as the appropriateness of these concepts, required new methods for achieving trustworthiness and new concepts that properly identified the benchmarks against which scientific "success" could be measured. Many argue that qualitative research is still at times mistakenly judged in quantitative terms and the legitimacy of qualitative evaluation techniques continue to be critiqued more than their quantitative counterparts. The resistance, by some, to the newer breed of arts-based practices is therefore linked to these larger struggles about scientific standards and knowledge-building. With this said, I turn to a brief review of the move toward qualitative research.

The Qualitative Paradigm

Qualitative research is generally characterized by *inductive* approaches to knowledge-building. Ethnography has long been the methodological cornerstone of anthropology, a discipline committed to studying people from various cultures in their natural settings. The shift toward ethnography across the disciplines largely emerged at the University of Chicago. In the 1920s researchers at the "Chicago School of Sociology" began using ethnography and related methods to study various hidden dimensions of urbanization in the area (among other topics). This in part prompted the use of qualitative methods in sociology departments around the United States, as well as the development of new theoretical perspectives that would further propel qualitative innovation. Ethnography produced what Clifford Geertz (1973) later termed "thick descriptions" of social life from the perspective of research participants (as well as the researcher's own interpretation of what he or she learns in the field). Moreover, this method required the researcher to develop rapport with his or her research participants, collaborate with them, and

embark on weighty and unpredictable emotional as well as intellectual processes. Ethnography clearly challenges positivist assumptions about social reality and our study of it, making the use of this method outside of anthropology pivotal. Similarly, sociologists and health care researchers in the 1940s adapted the focus-group interview method that developed as a tool for then-burgeoning market researchers to suit a range of other topics.

Qualitative research was further propelled in 1959 with the publication of Erving Goffman's groundbreaking book *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life.* In this work Goffman co-opted Shakespeare's famous line "all the world is a stage" and developed the term *dramaturgy* to denote the ways in which social life can be conceptualized as a series of ongoing performances complete with "front stage" and "backstage" behaviors, daily rituals of "impression management," including "face-saving behavior," and other ways in which people operate as *actors* on life's stage. Not only did Goffman's work move qualitative research forward at the time, but as reviewed in Chapter 5 on performance studies, his work has been foundational for more recent arts-based innovations.

More than any single work, the social justice movements of the 1960s and 1970s—the civil rights movement, the women's movement (second-wave feminism), the gay rights movement—culminated in major changes in the academic landscape, including the asking of new research questions as well as the reframing of many previously asked research questions and corresponding approaches to research, both theoretical and methodological. Populations such as women and people of color, formerly rendered invisible in social research or included in ways that reified stereotypes and justified relations of oppression, were sought out for meaningful inclusion. The common outgrowth from these diverse and progressive movements included a thorough reexamination of *power within the knowledge-building process* in order to avoid creating knowledge that continued to be complicit in the oppression of minority groups. This collective goal can metaphorically be conceptualized as a new tree trunk out of which many branches have grown.

For example, feminists developed standpoint epistemology as a means of acknowledging that a hierarchical social order produces different "standpoints" (experiences and corresponding perspectives), and standpoint epistemology spawned corresponding feminist methodologies (see Harding, 1993; Hartsock, 1983; Hill-Collins, 1990; Smith, 1987). Through their attention to power dynamics in the research process, many feminists also began a critical discourse about related issues and practices such as voice, authority, disclosure, representation, and reflexivity. Moreover, many argued that feminism should seek to pro-

duce "partial and situated truths" (see Haraway, 1988) and that feminists should be attentive to the "context of discovery" and not only the "context of justification," the focus in positivist research (see Harding, 1993). In these and other ways, feminists called for a dismantling of the dualisms on which positivism hinges: subject–object, rational–emotional, and concrete–abstract (Sprague & Zimmerman, 1993). Moreover, feminists challenged the positivist conception of "objectivity" that permeates positivist research practices. In this regard, feminists have argued that the positivist view of objectivity has produced a legacy of "scientific oppression"—relegating women, people of color, sexual minorities, and the disabled to the category of "other" (Halpin, 1989). All of these epistemological and theoretical advances prompted the increased interdisciplinary use of qualitative methods such as ethnography and oral history interview.

In addition to feminism and other social justice movements, globalization and a changing media and economic landscape influenced alternative theoretical schools of thought, including postmodernism, poststructuralism, postcolonialism, critical race theory, queer studies, and psychoanalysis (which also informs embodiment theory). All of these theoretical perspectives attend to issues of power and have caused a significant renegotiation and elaboration of the qualitative paradigm. For example, postmodern theory (an umbrella term for a diverse body of theories) rejects totalizing or "grand" theories, calls for a critical restructuring of "the subject," pays attention to the productive aspects of the symbolic realm, accounts for the sociopolitical nature of experience, and rejects essentialist identity categories that erase differences.

These theoretical and epistemological claims bear directly on methodological practices and the expansion of the qualitative paradigm. With the goal of troubling dominant knowledges or "jamming the theoretical machinery" (Irigaray, 1985, p. 78), researchers informed by postmodern and poststructural theories have adapted qualitative methods in order to expose and subvert oppressive power relations. For example, poststructuralists influenced by Jacques Derrida (1966) apply "deconstruction" and "discourse analysis" approaches to qualitative content analysis. Postmodern theorists have also brought issues of representation to the forefront of methodological debate. Arguing that form and content are inextricably bound and enmeshed within shifting relations of power (see Foucault, 1976), postmodernists have been integral to the advancement of arts-based methods of representation.

The qualitative paradigm has expanded greatly as a result of all of these advances in theory. It is within this politically, theoretically, and methodologically diverse paradigm that, in recent decades, arts-based practices have emerged as an alternative methodological genre.

Arts-Based Practices:
Disrupting and Extending the Qualitative Paradigm

A major shift in academic research began in the 1970s, and by the 1990s arts-based practices constituted a new methodological genre (Sinner et al., 2006, p. 1226). This shift is in part the result of work done in arts-based therapies. Health care researchers, special education researchers, psychologists, and others have increasingly turned to the arts for their therapeutic, restorative, and empowering qualities. Although there are differences between therapeutic practices and research practices, the work of these practitioners is cited throughout this text, as there is no doubt that knowledge derived from the practices of arts-based therapies has informed our understanding of arts-based research practices.

Although arts-based practices are an extension of the qualitative paradigm, these methods practices have posed serious challenges to qualitative methods conventions, thus unsettling many assumptions about what constitutes research and knowledge. Sava and Nuutinen (2003) refer to these methods as presenting a "troubling model of qualitative inquiry into self, art, and method" (p. 517). These disruptions to traditional research practices, much like early responses to the qualitative challenge to positivism, have caused concerns and inspired debates. As our methods history shows, such debates are critical to scientific progress, as they create a space for a professional public renegotiation of disciplinary practices and standards. Influenced by Elliot W. Eisner (1997), I therefore suggest that the emergence of arts-based social research advances critical conversations about the nature of social scientific practice and expands the borders of our methods repository. Eisner (1997) articulates the fear experienced by some as the methods borders are pushed making way for artistic representation.

> We have … concretized our view of what it means to know. We prefer our knowledge solid and like our data hard. It makes for a firm foundation, a secure place on which to stand. Knowledge as a process, a temporary state, is scary to many. (p. 7)

It is important to remember that this trepidation parallels the fear quantitatively trained researchers expressed when qualitative research was emerging and struggling for legitimacy. In this regard, Jones (2006) notes that "novelty is always uncomfortable" (p. 12).

The move toward arts-based practices flows from several related issues. In this chapter I first address the nature of art and artists and the intrinsic parallels between artistic practice and the practice of qualitative research. Second, I address the strengths of arts-based practices. What

kinds of research questions can be answered via these methods? What can these methods reveal and represent that cannot be captured with traditional qualitative methods? How can these methods be applied to access subjugated voices? Finally, I consider issues of assessment. How can knowledge constructed with these methods be evaluated? What are the primary dimensions of evaluation, and what methods strategies are currently available? How do these practices move conversations about knowledge construction forward?

Artistic and Social Scientific Practice

Both artistic practice and the practice of qualitative research can be viewed as *crafts.* Qualitative researchers do not simply gather and write; they *compose, orchestrate,* and *weave.* As Valerie J. Janesick (2001) notes, the researcher is the instrument in qualitative research as in artistic practice. Moreover, both practices are holistic and dynamic, involving reflection, description, problem formulation and solving, and the ability to identify and explain intuition and creativity in the research process. Therefore Janesick refers to qualitative researchers as "artist-scientists." She also suggests that if we begin to better understand and disclose how we use creativity and intuition in our research, then we can better understand the function of qualitative research. In this vein, a systematic exploration of arts-based practices can lead to a refining of the work we as qualitative researchers *already do.*

Hunter, Lusardi, Zucker, Jacelon, and Chandler (2002) similarly argue, from their perspective as health care researchers, that the creative arts can help qualitative researchers pay closer attention to how the complex process of meaning-making and idea percolation shapes research. Hunter and colleagues posit that although meaning-making is of course central to the research process, the "incubation phase" in qualitative research—the phase in which structured "intellectual chaos" occurs so that patterns may emerge and novel conclusions can be drawn—is given lip service but isn't actually legitimized as a distinct phase of the research process and is accordingly rushed through and later glossed over (p. 389). Hunter and colleagues suggest that the legitimized research process consists of the following four stages: (1) problem identification, (2) literature review, (3) methods, and (4) results (p. 389). Nevertheless, in qualitative research praxis the meaning-making process occurs as an *iterative process* (not a linear one) and meaning emerges through labeling, identifying, and classifying emerging concepts; interrelating concepts and testing hypotheses; finding patterns; and generating theory (p. 389). Furthermore, there is an interface between interpretation and analysis—the pro-

cess is *holistic* (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2004, 2006b; Hunter et al., 2002). Hunter and colleagues argue that visual and other arts-based methods make this process explicit—allowing qualitative researchers to better accomplish what they already do—arts-based practices draw out the meaning-making process and push it to the forefront.

The move by qualitative researchers to the arts is not surprising to researchers in drama education, who note, for example, profound similarities between theater arts and qualitative inquiry. Joe Norris (2000) notes that in both fields there is an ongoing process of reexamining content in order to create new meanings, and that drama students constantly test hypotheses via "the magic of what if" (p. 41). Johnny Saldaña (1999) asserts that theater practitioners and qualitative researchers share many critical characteristics, including keen observational skills, analytic skills, storytelling proficiency, and the ability to think conceptually, symbolically, and metaphorically. Moreover, as indicated, both practices require creativity, flexibility, and intuition, and result in the communication of information from which an audience generates meaning. Saarnivaara (2003) posits that it is assumed there is a "chasm" separating social inquiry and artistic practice, in which the former is viewed as a conceptual arena and the latter as experiential. However, Saarnivaara suggests that this is an artificial dualism and that art and inquiry can be merged because they already entail a similar process. Saarnivaara writes about artists as follows:

> I am using the word *artist,* following Juha Varto (2001), in a loose sense— metaphorically—to describe a person who confronts her experiential world by means of a craft and without exerting any conscious conceptual influence and who draws on it to create something new. (p. 582)

Although some may argue that it is unrealistic to assume researchers are not applying conceptual frames, Saarnivaara makes an excellent point regarding the common theme of investigating experiential reality via a craft—a *process,* as opposed to the clearly graded stages that comprise quantitative inquiry.

In addition, the writing of qualitative research, as with the work of artists, is ultimately about (re)presenting a set of meanings to an audience. In this regard, Diaz (2002) writes, "The act of writing assumes an attitude of persuasiveness. Literary persuasion, or rhetoric, like much of visual persuasion, is artistic. As writers and painters we try to persuade our readers and viewers to see the world through our eyes" (p. 153). The arts simply provide qualitative researchers a broader palette of investigative and communication tools with which to garner and relay a range

of social meanings. Moreover, the artists' palette provides tools that can serve and expand the promise of qualitative research.

Finally, technological advances have assisted with the development of arts-based innovations. Quite simply, new technologies have allowed for the construction, preservation, and dissemination of many new kinds of "texts." Examples of relevant technologies include the Internet, PhotoShop, digital cameras, digital imaging technology, and sound files. Actually, this is a point of difficulty with compiling this volume as a textual representation. Many of the methods used in this book either create data or representations that cannot be held on to, such as dance, or they create data that cannot be textually transcribed without losing the very essence the method seeks to reveal, such as music or performance. These new technologies therefore allow researchers to use the arts in ways not previously possible. The Internet is particularly important for the dissemination of arts-based research.

Given the similarities between artistic practice and qualitative research, what are the methodological possibilities associated with arts-based practices?

The Strengths of Arts-Based Research Practices

Interdisciplinary arts-based practices have developed to service all phases of the research endeavor: data collection, analysis, interpretation, and representation. Many researchers referred to in this volume suggest that an artistic method, such as visual art or performance, can serve as an entire methodology in a given study. Moreover, arts-based practices allow research questions to be posed in new ways, entirely new questions to be asked, and new nonacademic audiences to be reached.

Arts-based practices are particularly useful for research projects that aim to *describe, explore,* or *discover.* Furthermore, these methods are generally attentive to *processes.* The capability of the arts to capture process mirrors the unfolding nature of social life, and thus there is a congruence between subject matter and method. Liora Bresler discusses this in detail and is referred to in Chapter 4, which explores music-based practices.

The arts, at their best, are known for being emotionally and politically evocative, captivating, aesthetically powerful, and moving. Art can grab people's attention in powerful ways. The arresting power of "good" art, whether musical, performance-based, or visual, is intimately linked with the *immediacy* of art (the concept of "good art" itself needs modification with respect to arts-based practice and this is discussed shortly). These are some of the qualities that qualitative researchers are harnessing in their arts-based research projects.

As a representational form, the arts can be highly effective for communicating the emotional aspects of social life. For example, theatrical representations of the experience of homelessness, the experience of living with a debilitating illness, or surviving sexual assault can get at elements of the lived experience that a textual form cannot reach. Furthermore, the dramatic presentation connects with audiences on a deeper, more emotional level and can thus evoke compassion, empathy, and sympathy, as well as understanding. In this way, arts-based practices can be employed as a means of creating *critical awareness* or *raising consciousness.* This is important in social justice–oriented research that seeks to reveal power relations (often invisible to those in privileged groups), raise critical race or gender consciousness, build coalitions across groups, and challenge dominant ideologies.

Arts-based practices are often useful in studies involving *identity work.* Research in this area often involves communicating information about the experiences associated with differences, diversity, and prejudice. Moreover, identity research seeks to confront stereotypes that keep some groups disenfranchised while other groups are limited by their own biased "common-sense" ideas. For example, Sandra L. Faulkner (2006) conducted in-depth interviews with people who are Jewish and lesbian, gay, or bisexual. This interview research, discussed in detail in Chapter 3 on poetry, is particularly interesting because Faulkner elected to conduct identity work with people who occupy two concealable identities—identities that may also conflict with each other. Part of her research centers on how her respondents chose to reveal or conceal their Jewish identity and sexual identity in different contexts. In order to most effectively communicate the powerful themes that emerged from her interviews, Faulkner used a poetic form of data representation. As with most identity-based research, part of the goal is to communicate the data in such a way as to challenge stereotypes, build empathy, promote awareness, and stimulate dialogue.

Faulkner's research also brings us to the next dimension of raising awareness: *giving voice to subjugated perspectives.* Many qualitative researchers, particularly those influenced by the theoretical perspectives that emerged from the social justice movements of the 1960s and 1970s, are interested in accessing subjugated voices. In other words, many qualitative researchers across the disciplines seek to give voice to those who have been marginalized as a result of their race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, nationality, religion, disability, or other factors (as well as the interconnections between these categories). For example, as noted in Chapter 6 on dance as a method, Carol Picard's (2000) research on the effectiveness of movement as a part of a multimethod research design

centered in accessing personal narratives from women at midlife, whose stories have long been silenced in scientific research and made invisible in mainstream culture.

Arts-based practices can also *promote dialogue*, which is critical to cultivating understanding. The particular ways in which art forms facilitate conversation are important as well. The arts ideally evoke emotional responses, and so the dialogue sparked by arts-based practices is highly engaged. By connecting people on emotional and visceral levels, artistic forms of representation facilitate empathy, which is a necessary precondition for challenging harmful stereotypes (pertinent in identity research) and building coalitions/community across differences (pertinent in action research and other projects with activist components). For example, in Chapter 4 I note Stacy Holman Jones's (2002) research on torch singing as a method of bringing women together despite racial and economic differences. By accessing subjugated voices and promoting dialogue, these methods are very useful for unsettling dominant stereotypes and providing people with the tools necessary (such as compassion) to continue problematizing dominant ideologies. In this vein, these methods serve postmodern attempts at subversion.

In addition, the use of arts-based representational strategies brings academic scholarship to a wider audience. Free from discipline-specific jargon and other prohibitive (even elitist) barriers, arts-based representations can be shared with diverse audiences, expanding the effect of scholarly research that traditionally circulates within the academy and arguably does little to serve the public good. In this vein, with *public sociology* on the rise, arts-based practices may continue to see an increase as a result of their representational strengths. It is important to remember that the capability of arts-based texts to reach diverse audiences is, at this point, largely an ideal that has yet to be realized. Given the pressures to publish and present research, many scholars who use these methods present their research at scholarly conferences and publish in alternative academic journals, thus limiting the public nature of the results. Nevertheless, the possibility for wider dissemination is there.

The kind of dialogue promoted by arts-based practices is predicated upon *evoking meanings*, not denoting them. In other words, although qualitative research typically claims to be inductive by design, it often falls short with preconceived language, code categories, and guiding assumptions creeping into the process, often more than we may realize. Arts-based practices lend themselves to *inductive* research designs. In this way, these methods again can be viewed as mirroring the ideal goals of conventional qualitative research and offering new tools to facilitate these goals.

The inductive nature of these methods is connected with the strength of arts-based practices to get at *multiple meanings.* Qualitative researchers working from many perspectives are interested in accessing multiple meanings, which links back to the critique of positivism as a perspective that has historically concealed multiple meanings by proposing universal truths that have oppressed and silenced many groups, often rendering them invisible within knowledge production. This is one of the reasons that some researchers conducting identity research, for example, have turned to arts-based practices. The attention to multiplicity and inductive focus afforded by arts-based practices has affected their current popularity. Carl Bagley and Mary Beth Cancienne (2002) speak to this issue as they reflect on their use of dance as a representational form in their education research project.

> In "dancing the data" we were able to facilitate a movement away from and disruption of the monovocal and monological nature of the voice in the print-based paper. Through a choreographed performance we were provided with an opportunity to encapture the multivocal and dialogical, as well as to cultivate multiple meanings, interpretations, and perspectives that might engage the audience in a recognition of textual diversity and complexity. (p. 16)

Arts-based practices help qualitative researchers access and represent the multiple viewpoints made imperceptible by traditional research methods. For the many researchers committed to accessing subjugated voices, engaging in reflexive practice, and opening up a public discourse, arts-based practices are a welcome alternative to traditional modes of knowledge-building.

Struggles over Standards:
Validity, Assessment, Trustworthiness,
and the Renegotiation of Scientific Criteria

The emergence of arts-based practices has necessitated a renegotiation of the qualitative paradigm with respect to fundamental assumptions about scientific standards of evaluation. In particular, these methods have been interrogated around issues of validity, trustworthiness, and authenticity. Critics as well as those who practice arts-based research have asked: How can we evaluate knowledge constructed with these methods?

Traditional conceptions of validity and reliability, which developed out of positivism, are inappropriate for evaluating artistic inquiry. Unlike positivist approaches to social inquiry, arts-based practices produce par-

tial, situated, and contextual truths. These innovations require a modifi-
cation of traditional evaluation standards and a move away from "rigor"
and toward "vigor" (Sinner et al., 2006, p. 1252). The aim of these
approaches is resonance, understanding, multiple meanings, dimen-
sionality, and collaboration. Pelias suggests that all research offers first-
person narratives (2004, p. 7). He writes:

> Some would object: To say all research is first-person narrative is not to say
> that all research is about the heart. The heart pushes the self forward to
> places it doesn't belong.
>   And I would respond: I don't want to go places where the heart is not
> welcome. Such places frighten me.
>   Are you frightened by the truth? would come the rejoinder.
>   No, I'm frightened by what poses as the truth. (p. 8)

Perspectives on how to attain authentic and trustworthy results are
grounded in a researcher's ontological and epistemological assump-
tions. There is no "one-size-fits-all" model of evaluation with respect
to knowledge derived from qualitative methods. The "success" of any
given research project is linked to the research purpose(s) and how
well the methodology has facilitated research objectives and communi-
cated research findings. Although there is no standardized approach to
attaining trustworthiness, as there is in positivist science, there are many
methods for achieving trustworthiness that should be considered during
research design and ultimately built into the project.

Although qualitative methods of assessment may be useful in some
instances, in others the new artistic methods require new, flexible meth-
ods of assessment or adaptations of more conventional approaches.
In this way, artistic forms of social inquiry move conversations about
knowledge construction forward. Although researchers are still working
through many of the theoretical, methodological, and ethical issues to
emerge from these new practices, there are strategies that can be incor-
porated at the point of research design. Issues surrounding evaluation
are considered throughout this book as they pertain to particular meth-
ods; however, here I present a review of major assessment issues and
strategies. These methods are linked to various dimensions of arts-based
research.

Aesthetics

The issue of *aesthetics* is central to the production of arts-based texts as
well as our evaluation of them. Although in the best cases art provokes,

inspires, captivates, and reveals, certainly not all art can meet these standards. Throw novices into the mix who create art *for their scholarly research* and even less of what is produced is likely to meet the aesthetic ideals developed in the fine arts. Simultaneously, scholarly texts have rarely been judged on the basis of aesthetics, although in arts-based research this springs forth as a central feature of representation. There are two primary avenues for addressing the question of aesthetics in arts-based research: the theoretical and the methodological.

On a theoretical level, the emergence of these new methods necessitates not only a reevaluation of "truth" and "knowledge" but also of "beauty" (Jones, 2006, p. 1). Furthermore, the research community needs to expand the concepts of "good art" and "good research" to accommodate these methodological practices (Sinner et al., 2006, p. 1229). Piirto (2002) asks: What level of expertise in the particular art form being used must one have? While arts-based research texts must be rendered with consideration for the aesthetic qualities, so too must audiences or evaluators be cognizant that these are not "pure" artistic representations but rather *research texts.* The important assessment questions are: How does the work make one feel? What does the work evoke or provoke? What does the work reveal? In this vein, Leggo (2008) writes:

> The question shifts from "*Is this good arts-based research*?" to "*What is this arts-based research good for*?" The evaluation of the knowledge generated in arts-based research includes a critical investigation of the craft and aesthetics of artistic practices; a creative examination of how art evokes responses and connections; a careful inquiry into the methods that art uses to unsettle ossified thinking and provoke imagination; a conscientious consideration of the resonances that sing out to the world from word, image, sound, and performance. (quoted in Sinner et al., 2006, p. 1252, original emphasis)

In other words, aesthetic evaluation is based on the *value of the work* in terms of research and pedagogical functions (Sinner et al., 2006, p. 1252).

On a methodological level, it is necessary to recognize that the arts have different criteria for evaluating works as compared with the social and behavioral sciences. Faulkner (2005) urges researchers to merge scientific and artistic criteria in order to suit their hybrid arts-based methods. Faulkner also argues a related point, as does Percer (2002), both advocating that researchers *pay attention to the artistic craft* they are adapting and *learn the rules and tradition* they are borrowing from (and not simply assume that they can "dabble" in poetry, for example, without any research into the discipline itself). In this regard, cross-disciplinary col-

laborations are vital with respect to strengthening the aesthetic dimensions of research.

Interdisciplinary Collaboration and Reflection

Working with innovative methodologies often requires researchers to cross disciplinary boundaries, leave their comfort zones, and seek the expertise of researchers/practitioners in other areas (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006a, 2008). In order to produce engaging texts Jones (2006, p. 4) advocates "cross-pollination." The best of arts-based practices calls on scholars to work with professionals outside their disciplines in order to maximize the aesthetic qualities and authenticity of the work. Moreover, the more effective the artistic aspects are, the more likely the research is to affect audiences in their intended ways.

Arts-based research often evokes emotional responses (intentionally) from audiences. Ascertaining information about audience response may therefore serve as another validity check (as well as a data source). Cho and Trent (2005) recommend getting feedback during all phases of the research project, a plan for which can be built into the research design. A variation on this is incorporating a specific "external review phase" or "external dialogue" in which experts, colleagues, or interested subpopulations are invited to consume the data and offer their feedback. Kip Jones (2006) uses *reflection teams* in his narrative analysis research, so that analysis is a collaborative process. Given that arts-based practices are often used as representational vehicles in social justice–oriented studies, many researchers have a postperformance or postviewing *dialogue with the audience.* During this time researchers can gauge how well appropriate emotions were evoked and that no harm was done. Additionally, researchers can assess how well other research objectives were met. For example, did the findings promote connections and community, increase awareness or consciousness, instigate political or social action, or inspire social justice across differences? Moreover, did the audience experience the representation as "truthful"? Did the audience have an unintended or worrisome response? For example, did audience members seem enraged, depressed, or otherwise adversely affected? What safeguards are in place to protect audience members?

Creating a space for dialogue with the audience is also vital to the negotiation of meanings and incorporation of multiple perspectives. As noted, accessing multiple meanings and integrating diverse perspectives is often a goal of qualitative research, and therefore building a dialogue into the research design facilitates this objective while also adding a dimension of validity to the data.

Subject–Object

Arts-based research practices change the traditional subject–object relationship (Sinner et al., 2006). Researchers using these methods are necessarily engaged, working on projects of import to both self and others (Sinner et al., 2006, p. 1238). In recent decades qualitative researchers influenced by feminism and other critical perspectives have claimed that researchers need to actively use and account for their emotions (and other aspects of subjective experience) in the research process (see Harding, 1993; Jaggar, 1989). The call to merge the rational–emotional and subject–object dichotomies challenges positivism, which teaches researchers to disavow their feelings. Because emotions play an important role in artistic expression they can also serve as important signals in the practice of arts-based methods. Researchers can use emotions as a "validity checkpoints." For example, researchers can engage in an "internal dialogue," as termed by Tenni, Smyth, and Boucher (2003), in which they monitor their emotional, psychological, carnal, and intellectual responses throughout the process. Keeping a diary, a practice similar to memo-writing in traditional ethnography, is one method for systematically engaging in this kind of internal dialogue (Tenni et al., 2003).

Theory

Researchers using arts-based practices of inquiry are also adapting traditional qualitative research design features in order to authenticate their research findings. *Using theory explicitly* during data analysis is one way to generate new interpretations and alternative meanings. For example, looking at a particular dataset through a multicultural lens allows the researcher to "see" things that might otherwise not stand out. Applying a macro perspective to data collected from individuals can help researchers situate individual biographies in the larger sociohistorical context, as is discussed in Chapter 2, with respect to autoethnography and narrative inquiry.

Literature Review

Literature reviews may also play an important role in arts-based research projects. As theory can be used to link micro and macro contexts, so too can existing scholarship be employed in this way. As some arts-based practices involve the explicit use of autobiographical data and/or fiction, literature reviews become a key source for adding multiple voices into the project, providing context and creating inferences. In addition,

differing from conventional research practices, which typically start with a series of hypotheses and/or research questions, an arts-based project may stem from a literature review or other source (such as a work of art). Sinner and colleagues (2006) note that in some cases "sources [are] both the process and product of arts-based research" (p. 1242).

Analysis Cycles

In addition to using theory and existing scholarship during analysis, *engaging in cycles of analysis* throughout the research process, advocated by grounded-theory approaches to research, can also help researchers utilizing these methods to locate themselves within the process, cycle back to reexamine earlier interpretations, and better recognize the point of data saturation (Tenni et al., 2003). Traditional approaches such as *triangulation* can also be employed. Researchers can also highlight anomalies and juxtapose different data during representation in order to expose differences and contradictions. These strategies add to the trustworthiness of the data.

Ethics

As many researchers utilizing conventional qualitative research methods advocate, full *disclosure* with respect to methodological choices (both the context of discovery and context of justification) strengthens the resulting knowledge. Methodological disclosure is particularly important with arts-based practices as they struggle to find their place within the larger world of social inquiry. Arts-based practices such as short story writing may incorporate elements of fiction, making full methodological disclosure critical to an audience's understanding of a particular study as well as contributing to the legitimacy of knowledge constructed via artistic methods more generally.

The Organization of This Book: From Word to Image

Arts-based research practices open up a new range of research questions and topics, expand the diversity of audiences exposed to social research, and enrich the qualitative paradigm. This book explores six new areas of methodological innovation: narrative inquiry, poetry, music, performance, dance, and visual art. For each topic, I have written a chapter that reviews how the method developed, the methodological variations of

the method, what kinds of research questions the practices can address, examples of studies conducted with the method, and other issues such as validity and representation. These chapters also include pedagogical features such as discussion questions and activities, as well as features designed for researchers, including checklists of considerations and annotated lists of journals, websites, and recommended readings. These features allow interested readers to pursue particular methodological innovations in greater depth and are also meant to assist researchers who wish to pursue scholarship with these methods.

This volume also includes previously published articles by scholars who have worked with the various methods covered. The pairing of the introductory review chapters with published research articles provides a context for understanding each arts-based innovation as well as empirical and theoretical examples of their use. With this said, some of the results of using the methods in this book cannot be properly captured in a written text. For example, dance and creative movement cannot be transcribed textually. In research projects these artistic formats either exist in the moment only, or are partially retained via videotaping. Similar issues are true for performance as well as music-based practices. Therefore the research articles following the introductory chapters should not be taken as full representations of how these methods are used. Researchers interested in working with these methods can, however, consider using the Internet as a site for storing and sharing sound files or streaming video. In this way, recordings of the results of performative methods can be made accessible in a way that traditional books or journals prevent. Many arts-based researchers also publish color imagery on the Internet at far less expense than traditional publishing.

Finally, the organization of the book mirrors one way of conceptualizing the journey of arts-based practices, as well as the interconnections between these practices. In this vein, Chapter 2 covers narrative inquiry, which constitutes an extension of what many qualitative researchers already do. Narrative inquiry draws more explicitly on the arts than traditional qualitative research, but still relies on "the word" as its main communication tool and "(re)storying" as its mode of writing. Chapter 3 reviews the use of poetry in social research. Poetry merges the word with "lyrical invocation" and therefore represents both an extension of and departure from traditional representational forms. Music as a method is explored in Chapter 4, picking up on the lyrical nature of poetry. Music comes into being via performance, and therefore extending the tenets of music as method, Chapter 5 reviews performance-based methods of inquiry. This vast methodological genre has exploded in recent decades, encompassing many methodological practices. Arguably, the

most abstract form of performance is dance (or movement), which is the topic of Chapter 6. The final practices reviewed center on the visual arts (Chapter 7), completing the arc *from word to image.*

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