Use of Arts-based Research to Uncover Racism

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ABSTRACT *The article provides an overview of arts-based research (ABR) within social work and general healthcare practice in Canada, and how it can be used to uncover racism within vulnerable populations, particularly youth, women, immigrants and refugees, the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and intersex (LGBTQI) community, and Indigenous peoples. This is a general review of the literature. A literature search was conducted using the University of Western Ontario's Summons database, with coverage from January 2000 to February 2019. Data exploring participant experiences, personal identity, voice, and invisible powers were extracted, and analyzed using a critical race lens to examine the intersection of societal and cultural practice with race and power. Results indicate that ABR can support therapeutic recovery from oppression by enhancing self-expression of feelings and thoughts, and affording participants the agency to reclaim and reframe their personal narrative. ABR can further generate a sense of community by creating connections between participants with similar oppressions to overcome disconnection and marginalization. Within a broader community context, ABR permits the sharing of stories and insights with others, which can generate dialogue on important social*

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issues to expose areas of social inequity and oppression alongside potential solutions for transformative social action. This dialogue can also extend to discussions with policy makers on the impact of social inequities to guide recommendations that address system gaps for broader community-level change. The paper concludes that ABR can move beyond merely reflecting on social conditions toward actively addressing them by promoting sustainable social change. The voices expressed through ABR illustrate possible solutions to overcome racism through inclusive social practice, deconstruction of the racial status quo, and movement toward an equitable distribution of power.

Introduction

Arts-based research (ABR) is a transdisciplinary approach to building knowledge that uses creative art processes and practices to holistically address all stages of the research process (Leavy, 2017). ABR is a relatively new and emerging qualitative methodology that capitalizes on the use of artistic forms and expressions (i.e., written, visual, sound, and performance art media including but not limited to photovoice, digital storytelling, the movement of sound and music and its interaction through listening, and theatre) to analyze, understand, and embody human experiences, generate and convey meaning and awareness, and enhance reflexivity and empathy (Leavy, 2017; Mullane, 2010; Savin-Baden & Wimpenny, 2014). Multiple media forms can also be integrated together, for example, through the merger of visual imagery and written word to create an original a/r/tography, which is a method of arts-oriented and educational research (Springgay et al., 2008).

ABR is grounded in a philosophy that recognizes the power of making and responding to art to convey truth and awareness, and generate preverbal forms of knowledge that engage sensori-emotional, perceptual, kinesthetic, embodied, and imagined ways of knowing as part of an "aesthetic intersubjective paradigm" (Chilton et al., 2015; Gerber et al., 2012). The reference to "intersubjectivity" pertains to the experience of knowledge-sharing as relational, where individuals can generate meaning with others and nature (Conrad & Beck, 2015). Despite its affiliations with qualitative research, ABR is still considered somewhat distinct as it is rooted in a "groundless theory" approach instead of the more common "grounded theory" (Neilsen, 2004). In addition to being informed by varied philosophical underpinnings, advances in areas such as creative art therapies, the study of arts and learning, and qualitative research have also propelled ABR forward (Leavy, 2017).

To support knowledge generation, ABR operates within a participatory action framework that incorporates more inclusive and empowering methods to engage participants directly in the research itself rather than to merely be a

subject of it (Conrad & Campbell, 2008). Participatory methodology can be used to furnish marginalized individuals more control over the research process (Wang & Redwood-Jones, 2001), such as by shifting the power to identify and discuss important social issues from the researchers to the participants (Wang & Burris, 1997). Under this design, the process of producing the art becomes equally as significant as the art itself (Flicker et al., 2014).

Through ABR, participants can enhance the self-expression of their feelings and thoughts (Darley & Heath, 2008; Huss, 2009), while researchers benefit from capturing perspectives that may otherwise be overlooked by more mainstream research methods (van der Vaart et al., 2018). Although ABR can extract personal truths from participant experiences, these outputs must be framed within an understanding that the knowledge is subjective, context-dependent, and in constant flux (Finley, 2008). Therefore, the products of ABR cannot be analyzed outside of the intended context, as the art reflects complex interrelationships between people, places, and social conditions of a specific milieu (Flicker et al., 2014).

There is significant value in identifying personal expressions of knowledge, particularly its ability to inform and propel social change. When participants are given an opportunity to share their voice on larger social issues, it can create a powerful dialogue that exposes areas of social inequity and oppression alongside potential solutions for transformative social action (Finley, 2008). As participants publicly share how their personal truths have been shaped by broader sociocultural, political and economic influences, the audience is challenged to re-evaluate their understanding of the current social climate and examine new ways of existing and interacting with others (Gonick, 2017). Since this dialogue is enriched when more people join the conversation, particularly those whose voices are most often excluded in society, ABR is a practical means to present information in a manner that is more accessible and relatable to the masses (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013), such as by overcoming educational and language barriers that are common within traditional research (Wang & Burris, 1997). Due to the potential to bridge scholarly inquiry with personal expressions of knowledge, ABR has received considerable uptake across a variety of disciplines including social work, health, and education (Wang et al., 2017).

For this review, the authors will address how ABR can be used within social work and general healthcare practice in Canada to uncover racism in society, specifically among vulnerable populations. The authors will address this research question by exploring participant experiences around personal identity, voice, and invisible powers, and including the stories of marginalized population such as youth, women, immigrants and refugees, the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and intersex (LGBTQI) community, and Indigenous peoples. The inclusion of Indigenous groups in a discussion of racism within a Canadian context is of utmost importance. Although the authors recognize that the experiences, historical oppressions,

and social locations of Indigenous peoples are distinct from other marginalized groups, due to space limitations, an in-depth exploration of these topics is beyond the intended scope of this review.

Methodology

A literature search was conducted using the University of Western Ontario's Summons database, with coverage from January 2000 to February 2019. Search terms were:

> ('racism' OR 'discrimination' OR 'marginalization' OR 'microaggression' OR 'othering') AND ('arts-based')

Results were restricted to peer-reviewed, English language articles using data from Canadian populations. Conference and dissertation abstracts and papers were excluded. Reference lists from review papers were also examined for additional articles of relevance. Results were individually reviewed for concordance with search criteria.

Data were analyzed using a critical race lens to examine the intersection of societal and cultural practice with race and power. Stovall (2010) outlined three main tenants of critical race theory, which will inform our analyses: First, race is a social construct that is not fixed, but instead, has political implications for marginalized versus dominant social groups. Outside of biological determinants, societal understanding of race and racism are influenced by macro-level (e.g., sociopolitical) and micro-level factors that shape the experiences of marginalized groups with respect to how race goes on to intersect with other identities, such as gender and class. Second, economic and social policies that are intended to yield racial equality are often enforced only to the extent that they benefit dominant racial groups. Third, narratives are a central element to articulate the experiences and understandings of marginalized racial groups that have otherwise been silenced, in order to shape education, policy, and the law.

How Can ABR be Used to Explore Racism?

Racism is a socially constructed ideology that is heavily integrated into society through institutions, policies, and general social practice (Robinson, 2017). ABR is a useful tool to uncover the effects of racism in society by providing a forum for discussion that allows stereotypes and oppressive discourses to be exposed and challenged, rather than passively accepted, and replaced with more empowering and culturally-accepting ideologies (Flicker et al., 2014). The inclusion of diverse voices in this dialogue can also shed light on how race intersects with other social locations such as gender, sexual orientation, religion or socioeconomic status, to influence one's personal

experience(s) of oppression (Collins, 2000). The process also offers an opportunity to build connections across individual experiences to reveal how racism functions at the broader social level (Bell & Roberts, 2010).

Within this discussion, there are different voices expressed through ABR and each reveals their own personal truth on racism. The voices of those who are marginalized and stigmatized reveal lessons on invisible social barriers and struggles but can also be a testament to self-affirmation and resiliency in response to oppression. Voices of resistance illustrate possible solutions to battle racism through inclusive social practice, while other voices aim to deconstruct and challenge the racial status quo and promote social change (Bell & Roberts, 2010; Strack et al., 2004). In this way, ABR can move beyond merely reflecting on social conditions toward actively changing them.

Voices, Identities, and Balancing Power

There is a great deal of artistic variety within ABR (e.g., medium, method, style), which permits complex expressions of personal identity through both the final product and the creative style or process itself (Flicker et al., 2014; Malandra, 2007). The medium also allows participants with intersectional experiences of multiple oppressions to share their stories and insights with others, offering knowledge that would not otherwise be accessible to those outside of the experiences (Bochner & Ellis, 2003; Wang & Burris, 1997). This knowledge dissemination can promote social action to change inequitable or oppressive social conditions and give agency to participants to become community-level advocates (Strack et al., 2004; Wang & Burris, 1997).

In this advocacy context, dialogue can extend to discussions with policy makers on the impact of social inequities to guide recommendations for broader community-level change (Wang, 1999; Wang & Redwood-Jones, 2001). This arrangement is supportive of mutual knowledge sharing (Wang & Burris, 1997), where participants can equally participate in decision-making processes, share skills, and create counter-narratives that make visible the identities or experiences that would have otherwise been silenced (Flicker et al., 2014). By creating a more equal balance of power between those in positions of power and participants of ABR (Huss & Cwikel, 2005), dialogue becomes more participatory than hierarchical, where the art not only conveys impactful messaging but also provides a transformative opportunity to engage with power structures, culture, and personal identity development (Flicker et al., 2014).

Using ABR to Uncover Racism in Different Populations

In recognizing that ABR has significant utility in empowering marginalized peoples toward individual and broader-level social transformations, this methodology has been used to address racism within distinct vulnerable subgroups.

Children and Youth

ABR has application across both young children and older youth populations. Among children, ABR is a developmentally-appropriate medium that has been leveraged as a therapeutic tool to support participant healing from oppression, as observed among racialized children during the Holocaust (Green, 1969). To support this outcome, ABR allows children to process and overcome oppression by documenting their experiences directly in their pieces or reframing them to reflect alternative (e.g., more positive) outcomes (St Thomas & Johnson, 2007). The artistic process is also highly valuable as it provides a means for emotions and critical elements of past experiences to become visible and actively explored within a safe, therapeutic context, which can help children to gain a better understanding of themselves and also learn emotion regulation, impulse control, and viable coping strategies (Levine, 2015).

ABR can further be used as a vehicle to generate positive social change among youth. For example, the Anti-Racism Arts Festival is a national anti-racism event in Canada that features local artists, many of whom are youth, in a movement to use the arts to bring about social change and challenge racism (Canadian Cultural Mosaic Foundation, 2019). In other cases, through the deliberate use of racialized language within their personal narratives, youth reclaim and reframe derogatory terms as a stance against racism, which is especially powerful within "colour blind" contexts where discussions of racism are often ignored (Roberts et al., 2008). The ability to control the presentation of the artistic product appears to contribute greatly to the healing process of the younger demographic by giving them agency to reclaim their oppression.

Women

The use of ABR to share experiences among women has notable effects in generating community through a connection over similar oppressions, which can overcome disconnection and marginalization (Coholic et al., 2012; Grassau, 2009; Walsh et al., 2013). In high-risk situations, performance ABR, particularly acting, has been advantageous; acting has allowed women to express the depth of their oppression(s), such as the intersectional

oppressions of racism and sexism, through multiple voices without having to divulge too much information about themselves (Lee, 2005). Photography has also become a popular ABR method, permitting a more comprehensive glimpse into participant experiences (Sethi, 2016), while maintaining high levels of participant engagement (Chio & Fandt, 2007).

Through this dialogue, women are able to co-create reflective knowledge and critical self-awareness regarding the presence of invisible powers and inequalities in their lives (Lee, 2005; Sethi, 2016). By validating and giving voice to these personal narratives, ABR empowers women to turn invisible oppressions into visible realities that can be leveraged as a tool for education and advocacy (Sethi, 2016; Walsh et al., 2013). An enhanced understanding of oppression can help to improve community conditions and address system gaps to ultimately mitigate experiences of racism and oppression for others (Walsh et al., 2013).

Immigrants and Refugees

The stories of immigrants and refugees can provide insights into the adjustment process of relocating to a different nation and bring to light the various pre- and post-migratory stressors that can influence personal outcomes. In particular, this subpopulation is often faced with ongoing racism, dehumanization, and discrimination within the employment sector (Sethi, 2012, 2017), as evidenced by poor recognition of participant education, skills, and abilities (Sethi, 2016). These discriminatory experiences can further manifest themselves as either an inability to secure employment or being forced into positions characterized by low wage, poor conditions, and persistent racism from colleagues or customers, coupled with a fear of reprisal to speak up against these inequities (Sethi, 2016).

In recognition of this fact, ABR provides participants with a safe forum to give voice to their lived experiences of racism and discrimination (Sethi, 2016). ABR also supports participants in maintaining a sense of hope in the face of oppression by integrating their self-concept to better understand and reframe their experiences to develop a more positive outlook (Ratkovic & Sethi, 2017). The same phenomenon can be observed among refugee children who use ABR to improve understanding of their perceptions and experiences across different contexts, and to reframe their focus onto hopeful imagery (Yohani, 2008). Moreover, ABR is useful in the presence of language barriers, as it allows participants to share personal narratives on oppressive experiences through non-linguistic mediums, such as photography, to bypass the difficulties of articulating details in a foreign language (Sethi, 2016).

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, and Intersex (LGBTQI) Community

ABR has significant utility toward addressing social injustice within the LGBTQI community, as the arts have a long and productive history of being heavily repurposed as a powerful activist tool to address various social issues including HIV/AIDS and the intersectionality of sexuality with race and gender. For example, the Black Lives Matter Global Network, which is an activist organization that aims to liberate African Americans from violence and systematic racism across all intersectionalities (e.g., sexuality, gender, ability, class), uses art and culture to unite and empower the marginalized and promote positive social change by exposing ongoing oppressions, disrupting the status quo, and challenging how members of the Black community are viewed (Black Lives Matter, n.d.; Fogg, 2016). Visual art has also been used to promote collective action in response to the AIDS epidemic, while documenting the emotions and meanings behind both the crisis and the social change (Sember & Gere, 2006).

Similarly, the AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power (ACT UP), an activist group that aims to mitigate the AIDS crisis by speaking up against stigma and discrimination and increasing the accessibility of accurate medical information, formed the arts collective, Gran Fury, to leverage the power of art for their cause (ACT UP, n.d.). The artistic pieces that Gran Fury produced most notably included installations of a pink triangle that was reclaimed from its historic use during the Nazi regime to mark homosexuals for genocide to now signal the struggle for sexual rights and the urgency to end the AIDS epidemic, in addition to featuring the popular SILENCE=DEATH logo, which was originally developed by the SILENCE=DEATH Project (Sember & Gere, 2006). ACT UP has also integrated theatre into their work by staging events to publicly challenge dominant discourse around AIDS and promote alternative representations (Gamson, 1989).

Inspired by the transformative potential of Gran Fury, Aids Action Now!, a community HIV/AIDS activist group, followed suit and developed collaborative artistic posters as part of their Poster Virus project, which is a street and online art initiative to respond to the AIDS crisis (Aids Action Now!, 2012). The Poster Virus project contributed to social change by documenting the current realities of people living with AIDS and pushing the boundaries on how AIDS is discussed publicly (Alexander McClelland, n.d.; Kerr, 2016). The activist organization, Visual AIDS, which is an online network for artists living with and responding to HIV/AIDS, is a vital location of ABR as it similarly utilizes art to promote dialogue by allowing contributors to showcase their practice-based work (and accompanying statements) through a personalized profile with the intent to educate and reach larger public audiences (Visual AIDS, n.d.). Collectively, these works, among others not mentioned here, have inspired a new wave of social

activism that has reframed the AIDS epidemic as a social crisis and transformed public health messaging by inviting persons with lived experience to join the conversation on AIDS (Sember & Gere, 2006).

Indigenous Peoples

Indigenous peoples in Canada have been subject to considerable racism and cultural oppression. This is most evidently observed by colonization and assimilation efforts (MacDonald & Steenbeek, 2015), in addition to ongoing exposure to racialized stereotypes and stigmatization, racial violence, and structural racism through various sociopolitical institutions within Canada (Loppie et al., 2014). Together, these oppressive experiences have intersected to produce disproportionately high rates of social and health inequities among Indigenous peoples (Reading & Wien, 2009) that can be explored through ABR.

   ABR can be used as an anti-oppressive strategy to yield therapeutic effects for Indigenous peoples by linking traditional healing practices with cultural identity (Trépanier, 2008), which allows participants to reconnect to their heritage and value systems (Herring, 1997). In recognition of the relationship between the arts and Indigenous wellness, health programs often aim to include creative methods, where possible (Archibald & Dewar, 2010). Both the art and the creative process are integral to therapeutic outcomes by not only providing an outlet for emotion exploration but also tapping into strengths- and resiliency-based approaches by connecting participants to their culture through the use of traditional art forms (Flicker et al., 2014). The qualitative methods of ABR also support decolonization by empowering participants to share their subjective truths and by moving toward balancing power dynamics with researchers (Castleden & Garvin, 2008).

   Moreover, ABR can yield positive effects for Indigenous communities by uniting people in solidarity and empathy under common experiences (Coholic, 2012), and using art to connect to broader cultural practices for intergenerational teaching and knowledge transmission (Herring, 1997; Trépanier, 2008). ABR empowers participants to engage in a critical dialogue about the effects of colonization on Indigenous peoples and potential resolutions for these injustices (Flicker et al., 2014). The positive effects of ABR have also been noted among Indigenous youth who experience increased pride in an art practice that allows them to serve as change ambassadors, relaying important cultural messaging and generating awareness of broader social issues (Flicker et al., 2014). In considering these outcomes ABR may offer an effective strategy to support decolonization intergenerationally.

   Despite the noted benefits of ABR to address social, historical, and structural oppressions affecting Indigenous peoples in Canada, researchers are cautioned to ensure that the voices of Indigenous participants are not

constrained within the boundaries of Western research processes. Brayboy et al. (2012) highlight the overemphasis of singular and objective truths within academic research, which is a more positivist approach that mimics imperialism and colonialism by suggesting that Western scientific methods and ideological frameworks are the only legitimate forms of knowledge production and output. Consequently, this can make researchers susceptible to analyzing ABR outputs for an objective meaning that becomes estranged from its complex subjective truths and the context from which it was created and intended to be understood. The application of Critical Race Theory and Critical Indigenous Research Methodologies (CIRM) becomes integral to conducting ethical research with Indigenous peoples by promoting anticolonial and emancipatory agendas that prioritize the self-determination and sovereignty of Indigenous participants, in addition to broader community-level interests (Brayboy & Chin, 2018). The application of CIRM within ABR can assist researchers and institutions move away from limited definitions of knowledge and more openly consider the unique ways that Indigenous peoples can contribute to scientific knowledge inquiry (Brayboy et al., 2012).

Strengths and Limitations

To the authors' knowledge, there is a paucity of data examining the utility of ABR to uncover racism in the context of Canadian social work and healthcare practice. This general review of the literature aims to address this gap using a critical race lens. Moreover, in recognizing that oppressive experiences are unique to different groups based on the intersectionality of their various social locations, the authors examine the use of ABR separately within distinct marginalized subdemographics. However, this review is not without its limitations. For one, the inclusion of marginalized groups within this review is not an exhaustive list, and ABR has applicability to broader topics beyond racism and oppression. In addition, although the authors focus on the application of critical race theory to ABR, other theories and texts beyond what is featured in this paper also have utility to better understand ABR and its uses. Secondly, due to the scope of this review, the authors are only able to address ABR as a general overview and highlight specific examples of its use, which may result in intricacies of member experiences or other expressions of ABR being overlooked.

Another limitation to consider is the role that privilege plays within academia with regard to interpreting the outputs of ABR. As previously mentioned, Western scientific methods and ideological frameworks tend to privilege knowledge that aligns with objectivity and singular truths, which can restrict the types of artistic pieces that are deemed acceptable for ABR, and bias interpretation away from recognizing complex subjective meanings that are rooted in the context and experiences of the participant (Brayboy et

al., 2012). If not carefully managed, these biases may inadvertently exclude certain subdemographics from participating in ABR because their methods and forms of artistic expression are not considered legitimate forms of knowledge. If this were to occur, the accounts of these subdemographics would be silenced from the literature, which distorts the available knowledge base and violates the principles of empowerment and inclusivity upon which ABR is based. Consequently, effects related to the structural power and privilege inherent in the policies, institutions, and systems where ABR is delivered must be examined to ensure that ABR does not become a vehicle to reinforce systemic discrimination (Kaiser, 2017). It is therefore imperative that the use of ABR is accompanied by the goal of narrowing the gap in expectations and practice between more formal clinical or research hubs and community-level sites to ensure that perspectives of privilege are not reproduced. One potential way to achieve this goal is by applying an intersectional framework to ABR that acknowledges differences across power, oppressions, and the social construction of meaning within art to better understand differences in participant experiences (Kuri, 2017). This goal further requires that those in privileged positions, whether as a researcher or art therapist, engage in an exploration of their own use of power with participants to ensure that it remains ethical (Karcher, 2017) and does not stray from the goals of ABR by shifting away from social care and knowledge exploration toward social control.

Even among those who are included in ABR processes, it is important to ensure that researchers refrain from promoting ageist or ableist biases that may infantilize the participants or their final artistic products or minimize the power of the artistic process (Anacleto, 2018). This consideration further extends to ensuring that, when applying an external lens to an ABR output, the power inherent in the position of the researcher does not result in the content being pathologized or responded to with an intent to "fix" the artist (Maclagan, 2005). Instead, the artist must be given fair opportunity to explain their art and define the meaning and function of any symbols or imagery that are used, for example, to maintain their connection with and ownership over their art piece. Beyond the content, respect must also be afforded toward participant selection of their artistic processes and methods of production, such as those pertaining to medium, technique, and style. An examination of the artistic process as part of ABR is particularly important when considering how an artist's connection to their various identities, social locations, and communities can influence their choices. For example, when examining the role of culture, participants may opt to select traditional art forms to connect to broader cultural practices that have intergenerational value (Flicker et al., 2014; Herring, 1997; Trépanier, 2008). The consideration of these factors is important to ensure that the meaning of the art does not lose its connection to the artist's subjective truths and the context from which it was created and intended to be understood, otherwise ABR can become another tool of

oppression within power-imbalanced relationships with researchers and clinicians (Huss & Sela-Amit, 2019).

Collectively, these limitations in how ABR outputs are interpreted can be applied to the literature that has been included in this review, as the presented themes would have been influenced by the lens of the researcher(s) who extracted them, and thus, may reflect a biased interpretation that does not hold true to the intended meaning ascribed by the artist (Graeme, 2010). These limitations must therefore be taken into consideration when reflecting upon the conclusions that are drawn within this review. Going forward, to minimize the likelihood of biased outcomes, it is recommended that researchers avoid imposing strict submission criteria for ABR projects that may limit applicant eligibility or constrain artistic vision and voice. In addition, member-checking should be included as a mandatory step within data verification to ensure that the themes and meanings attributed to a given art piece accurately align with the subjective intent and context assigned by the artist.

Conclusion

ABR can be an effective methodology when it includes people from different ableist, economic, gendered, racial, and sexual backgrounds as equal participants in an ongoing dialogue on racism, discrimination, and general experiences of oppression. The knowledge extracted from these narratives is integral to identifying system gaps and building recommendations to create equitable social practices. As part of this dialogue, ABR can be used to generate a comprehensive picture of an individual's experiences of oppression that acknowledges the complex interrelationships between various social locations and contextual factors. For example, ABR can be used to expose hegemonic binaries around what is or is not deemed socially respectable based on comparisons against dominant groups, and by exploring how these conceptualizations affect access to status and rights for marginalized groups (Higginbotham, 1994; Vasudevan, 2019; Wilson, 2019). By creating awareness on how these norms are legitimized and their oppressive effects, ABR can initiate a dialogue to promote positive social change by diffusing hegemonic effects and fostering greater equity and inclusion (Rivers, 2020). ABR can also be used to mobilize change within larger social systems by renegotiating new meanings toward traditional symbols and imagery, which may translate into more positive behaviours, solutions, and social organization (Huss & Sela-Amit, 2019).

This important work also needs to occur alongside efforts to increase the visibility of marginalized groups, which can yield similar outcomes toward the acknowledgement and acceptance of difference, and social transformation. Although care must be exerted to ensure that art processes within research and clinical work are not pathologizing or oppressive, ABR

can nevertheless function to increase the visibility of marginalized groups by making their experiences, perspectives, and identities more publicly visible, which provides a platform to share voices that may have otherwise been silenced (Whittier, 2017). This public disclosure has the potential to emotionally and cognitively shift both personal perceptions of identity and cultural conceptualizations of larger oppressed groups, which can alter public attitudes to reduce "othering" and discrimination within social institutions and policies (Whittier, 2012, 2017).

ABR can also be therapeutic, allowing participants to process and reclaim their oppression(s) and reframe focus toward more hopeful outcomes, such as by building connections with others who have comparable experiences. Taken together, ABR is a highly effective research methodology that can support individual-level change toward healing and recovery alongside imbuing participants with the agency to become change advocates that work toward improving community conditions to mitigate racism and oppression.

These advantages of ABR can also be used to inform social work and healthcare practice. Since ABR provides an efficacious and low-cost option for personal healing, it should be provided as a therapeutic option for clients within clinical practice. ABR could be delivered on an individual basis to safely allow clients to process and reclaim their oppressive experiences, or within group settings where shared experiences can foster a sense of belonging and community to overcome marginalization. ABR can even be taken outside of clinical settings and incorporated into community-level programming that provides preventative or early intervention supports to people affected by racism and oppression. Since ABR has demonstrated utility across all ages, its inclusion in early- and school-age programming could also yield promising results. The opportunities to customize the delivery of ABR, such as through integration with cultural art forms, can offer greater meaning to participants and a deeper level of experiential processing. The products from ABR can also be used as a powerful educational tool to disseminate knowledge on social injustices that require collective action. Community exhibits that showcase the works of participants can provide a forum for knowledge exchange to occur and increase the potential for ABR to educate lay audiences by using a relatable and accessible methodology that transcends educational and language barriers. This work can bridge into broader community-level initiatives to encourage open discussions of important issues that can promote social change and inform the development of tenable solutions.

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