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## What is “Arts Based Research”?: 5 different types of research projects

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**Presenter Information**

Young Imm Kang Song, Katina McClain, Meaghan Harigan, Yamel Rizk, Julie Cangrand, and Amanda Miller

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# An artistic exploration of the life narratives of five veterans

Julie Cangrand\_Arts-Based Research\_Dec 2017

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# Topic

- To **explore the commonalities** between the biographies of five veterans at the end of their life
  - Research hypothesis suggested that conducting life interview has the **power to break down barriers** and dispel myths about isolated communities
  - The result of this research is a 1'55" **video-poem**
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# Research questions

- How do veterans' life stories help me understand this community and America?
  - Which artistic medium would be appropriate to respect their privacy and do not perpetuate stereotypes?
  - Could my research contribute to challenge assumptions about veterans and open up a dialogue?
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# Connection to existing literature

- **Narrative Medicine**: Most used research method in arts in health as people's stories are the most common data in healthcare. NM studies the stories of patients to give voice to their suffering. Proven to alter staff's perceptions and foster social interaction (Fritsch et al., 2009).
  - **Veterans and the Arts**: Several governmental initiatives (National Intrepid Center of Excellence) promote creative arts therapy to help veterans heal from PTSD, TBI, and MST. **Limited research** about the benefits of the arts to help the general public understand the veterans' experience.
  - **Life interview in ABR**: Kips (2006) and Lapum (2014) have translated life interviews into visual mediums to and provide audience a direct access to their participants' reality.
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# Selection of participants

- Took place at the **Boston VA Medical Center** between October and December 2017 as a volunteer in the **My Life My Story Project**
  - **I interviewed five male Veterans between 55 to 90 years old** (two served during the Korean Conflict, two during the Vietnam Era, and one during the Gulf War)
  - **A veteran, in this context**, is anybody who served in any service branch of the US military and who has medical benefits from being injured on active duty or is retired
  - **End of life**: life review helps build integrity
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# Data collection and analysis

- Conducted **30-45 min structured life interviews**
  - Wrote **stories of approx. 1000 words each** (cleaned of any private information)
  - **Used poetic transcription** to identify commonalities between the stories.
  - **Edited a video-poem** to create a rhythmic background for the poem presentation and evoke the military, medical, and end-of-life experience of the participants
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# Conclusion

- **The veteran's identity** is not defined by their service to the country
  - **Structured life interview** is a valid method to work with veterans and build cross-cultural connections
  - The **video-poetry methodology** can be easily replicate in arts in health contexts to connect with different and isolated communities, as well as taught to younger generations
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# Discussion

- A classmate said that the video made her think of a **movie teaser**. Same impression throughout this process
  - The **simple act of asking specific questions, not having an agenda,** and **dignifying their experience** can open up the opportunity for people to communicate and share their values
  - **Discrepancy** between what is meaningful for veterans and what the society may think of them, i.e., **VA interior design** reflects patriotism and military motifs (pictures, flags, quilts) while discarding more personal expressions of the veterans (photographs, writings, etc.)
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