

notes on methodology

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[I]n practice-based research, the creative act is an experiment (whether or not the work itself is deemed “experimental”), one designed to answer a directed research question about art and the practice of it, which could not otherwise be explored by other methods.

Skains

argumentation and methodology

- the *claim* (an arguable statement)
- the *evidence* (to support the claim)
- the *backing* (context and assumptions that support the validity of the evidence) (Gray and Malins 97)
- your *methodology* is essentially the process by which you gather *evidence* to support your *claim*

what goes in the methodology section

- a description of *what you made and how you made it* (focusing on the parts important to your claim)
- a description of *the techniques you used to gather evidence* from the thing that you made in order to support your claim
- the actual evidence is usually best reserved for the *results* section, but can also be discussed alongside particular experiments in the methodology section

methodology considerations

- as artists and designers, sometimes we have to invent our own research methods! Gray and Malins propose the following criteria for evaluating a research method:
 - responsive to the research context and appropriate for use in it (relevant and ethical);
 - valid – acceptable to other researchers; useful in reality; meaningful to users within a particular context (‘internal validity’); wherever possible generalizable to wider contexts (‘external validity’); as dependable and trustworthy as possible...
 - used with the utmost rigour (applied consistently, with discipline and care);
 - documented and described thoroughly and clearly in any report of the research, so that it might be usable by other researchers (accessible, explicit and transparent). (Gray and Malins 102)
- you may find it necessary or desirable to use multiple research methods!

some research methods

- for art projects, consider *reflective analysis* or "auto-ethnomethodology" (Skains): research logs, draft materials, revision notes, research diaries, self-observation, sketchbooks, etc.
- social science methodologies:
 - observation
 - case studies
 - interviews
 - questionnaires
- scientific methodologies, etc.

the "hermeneutic-interpretative spiral" model (Trimingham)

- most suitable (but not mandated) for arts practice projects
- "[A]sk as open a question as possible... the aim... is ask a better question, not to reach a point where no more questions need to be asked" (57)
- "Progress is not linear but circular; a spiral which constantly returns us to our original point of entry but with renewed understanding" (56)
- "Setting tasks... guided by clear aims and objectives, keeps the research on course" (56)
- "Evaluating... work... then formulating and articulating *new* aims and objectives and *new* tasks... is a necessary discipline" (57)
- Individual steps of "evaluation" may involve aspects of the scientific method (hypothesis, experiment) (58–59)

works cited

- Gray, Carole, and Julian Malins. *Visualizing Research: A Guide to the Research Process in Art and Design*. Ashgate, 2004.
- Skains, Lyle. "Creative Practice as Research: Discourse on Methodology." <https://scalar.usc.edu/works/creative-practice-research/index>
- Trimingham, Melissa. "A Methodology for Practice as Research." *Studies in Theatre and Performance*, vol. 22, no. 1, Apr. 2002, pp. 54–60.