

CALL FOR PAPERS
SPECIAL ISSUE OF QUALITATIVE INQUIRY

Ethics in Research-based theatre: Stories from the field

Research-based theatre (RBT) is an emerging methodology that integrates theatre and research, both as a means of inquiry and as a form of knowledge translation/exchange. To be effective, RBT requires stakeholders to work collaboratively and in ways that balance methodological and ethical rigour with the aesthetics that theatre requires. This raises many challenges for researchers, artists, and audiences. For example, playwrights may wish to exercise dramatic license to reimagine research findings in order to craft an aesthetically powerful piece while researchers may express a strong affinity for more realistic representations. Resulting tensions between fidelity to research findings and the aesthetics of performance may bring competing sets of values into play within the context of RBT. These differing norms and values raise many salient ethical questions. There are currently few guidelines addressing ethical challenges in RBT, and RBT practitioners may find that the norms of ethical practice in various forms of theatre do not map easily onto institutional research ethics.

In this special issue we invite contributors to explore ethical challenges in doing RBT and, where possible, to identify actual or potential avenues for resolving or creatively circumventing such challenges. Emphasizing the importance of RBT practitioners' 'stories from the field', we encourage authors to share experiences of ethical issues arising in their work, how these issues were addressed, and what is perhaps (un)resolved. We will prioritize submissions that openly reflect on ethical entanglements, lessons learned in hindsight and ongoing quandaries. By vulnerably sharing these narratives of practice, we hope this special issue will increase awareness of neglected as well as more familiar ethical issues and focus explicit attention on ethical process and decision-making. This will be useful to institutional research ethics committees that seek to minimise harm to research participants, and researchers/artists who seek to maximise the benefits of RBT for community engagement and social change.

Here are some possible questions that may invite response (adapted from Preston, 2008):

- How appropriate is RBT for engaging with the politics of speaking *with, for or about* participant communities?
- How do we deal ethically with moral and/or political tensions at the heart of the stories and texts that are created in RBT?
- How can we work sensitively, and create a genuine ethical climate of dialogue and reciprocity with participants and participant communities?
- How are issues of voice, authority and ownership reconciled ethically in the process of constructing narratives and representations that result in RBT projects?
- How will RBT representations that have been created impact in diverse, unpredictable and political contexts?

Other aspects that authors are encouraged to consider include:

- Whether there are specific ethical issues or tensions that arise during various stages of an RBT project (i.e. during script development, production, performance, witnessing, or evaluation)?
- How various kinds of stakeholders in the project might experience specific ethical issues (i.e. artists, researchers, audience members, crew members, evaluators)?
- Where there may be tension between differing sets of norms and values around ethical practice, as for example, in the cultures of artistic practice and the principles deriving from institutionally driven research ethics.

All papers must follow the guidelines for QI publication and will be of typical manuscript length (maximum of 8000 words). Shorter submissions are also welcome.

Contributors will be expected to participate in peer review of one or two other papers in the collection prior to publication.

Expressions of interest will be in the form of an abstract (250-300 words) due on or before October 1st, 2020. Please send the abstract (with full contact information for all authors) and/or any inquiries to: Dr. Susan Cox at susan.cox@ubc.ca.

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Reference: Preston, S. (2008). Introduction to ethics of representation. In T. Prentki & S. Preston (Eds.), *The Applied Theatre Reader* (p. 68). New York, NY: Routledge.