

Clay, Community, and Care

A Secondary Analyst's Reflections on Participatory Arts-Based Method in Gender-Based Violence (GBV) Against Women with Disabilities in eThekweni, South Africa

Authors: Amylyn De Paz-De Paz

Principal Investigators: Dr. Sahla Aroussi, Associate Professor in Gender and Global Security Challenges at the University of Leeds & Dr. David Duriesmith, Professor of Gender and Politics at the University of Sheffield

Primary Problem Statement

- Gender based Violence rates are 2-4x higher for women with disabilities; the INCLUDE project's aim is to decenter ableist responses through art [1].

My Connection Gap

- Without direct participant contact, secondary researchers risk flattening narratives and must look for ways to preserve their authenticity.

Methodology

Clay Embodiment



- Dr. Aroussi's team adapted Dr. Tricia Ong's Clay Embodiment Research Methodology (CERM), expanding body mapping to 3D [2]. The women created pieces reflecting prompts about safety/unsafety and a love-hate story.

Narrative Interviewing

- After participants created art, they were invited to reflect via narrative interview, which places their voices at the center and limits researcher disruption [3].

Central Research Question

- "How do we prevent and improve responses to violence against women with disabilities in eThekweni, KwaZulu-Natal?"

My Questions Regarding the Role of a Secondary Analyst

- "What is the experience of the data analyst group compared to the field team? Are there big differences in their experiences?"

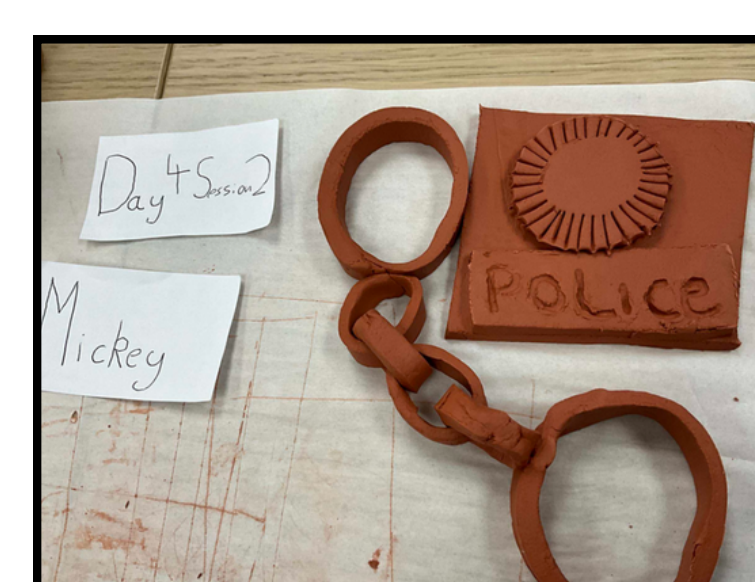
Participant Findings

- Participant Experience:** clay is accessible, dual-edged therapy (hurt to healing), clay takes you places, art as an outlet
- Ethics in Practice:** "make space, give space," facilitator vulnerability, social worker safety net, shifting power dynamics to give participants autonomy
- Research Team Findings:** clay is transformative, but there is risk of surfacing distress; need for trained, tailored approaches

Participants' Artwork



Places of Safety: Mickey created a basketball court to represent a therapeutic outlet.



Places of Unsafety: Mickey made a police badge and handcuffs that showcase distrust in the justice system.



Heroes of my Life: Rocky created her parents, a strong support system.

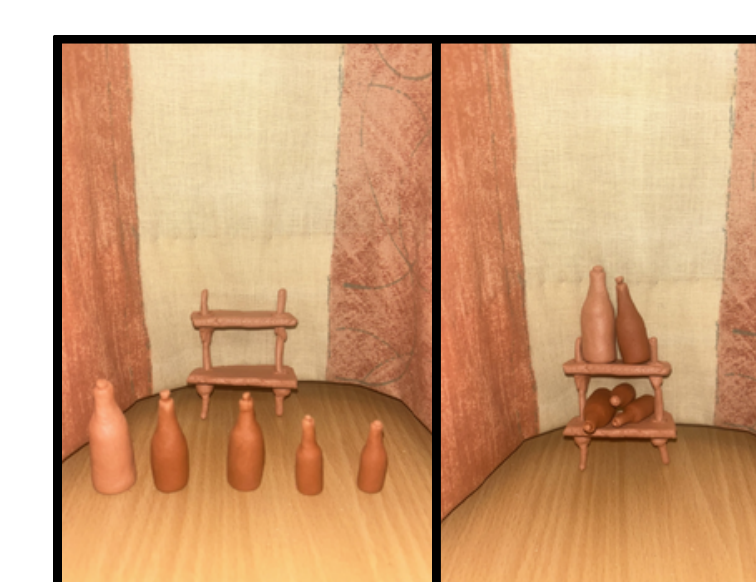


Types of Violence: Rocky created a "tree that symbolizes the challenges faced by a person with albinism."

My Artwork



Places of Safety: The farm I work at reminds me of my roots and serves as my therapeutic outlet.



Places of Unsafety: Alcoholism has caused a divide in my family and has caused me pain.



Heroes of my Life: Antonella, my reminder to show the world agape love.



Heroes of my Life: A love that transcends regardless of race, sexuality, immigration status, or religion.

My Bridging of the Connection Gap

Emotional Labor

- Field teams carry emotional labor through direct encounter with participants; secondary analysts carry it through immersion in transcripts and audio, a documented pathway to vicarious trauma [4].

My Connection

- During transcript organization, quality control, and quote interpretation, I connected with participants through the audio. I cried when they cried, and laughed when they laughed.
- I recreated each clay prompt and documented my feelings to better understand their experiences and improve the fidelity to their stories in my analysis.

Recommended Next Steps

- Expand workshops** to reach a broader range of disabilities, and keep giving women with disabilities space to share their stories and advocate for their needs.
- Formalize guidance** for arts-based GBV research with women with disabilities; no such guidance currently exists.
- Translate findings into action** by equipping policymakers, medical providers, and community members to apply this research to how they care for this population.
- Support secondary analysts'** connection with participants to ensure their stories and experiences are represented accurately.

Acknowledgements

This work would not have been possible without the INCLUDE project team and collaborators. Thank you to Dr. Sahla Aroussi and Dr. David Duriesmith for their guidance and support in my data analysis for the Clay Embodiment workshops. I also appreciate the contributions from Prof. Jill Hanass-Hancock and Dr. Elisabet LeRoux, which shaped our approach to disability-inclusive GBV research. This project, "INCLUDE: Innovative Co-Creation for GBV Research to Uplift Diverse Experiences," is funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC), UK. A heartfelt thank you to the women participants of eThekweni, KwaZulu-Natal, for sharing their stories and trust with us.

Key Sources

- [1] World Health Organization. "Disability." World Health Organization, March 7, 2022. <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/disability-and-health>; van der Heijden, I., Harries, J., & Abrahams, N. (2018). Ethical considerations for disability-inclusive gender-based violence research: Reflections from a South African qualitative case study. *Global Public Health*, 14(5), 737-748. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17441692.2016.11542016>
- [2] Ong, Tricia. *A Feminist Approach to Sensitive Research*. Taylor & Francis, 2022.
- [3] Anderson, C., & Kirkpatrick, S. (2018). Narrative interviewing. *International Journal of Clinical Pharmacy*, 38(3), 631-634. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11088-016-0222-0>
- Forcer, S., Shutt, H., Martin, L. S., Coetzee, M.-H., Ibrahim, A. F., & Fitzmaurice, S. (2022). Embracing aporia: Exploring arts-based methods, pain, "playfulness," and improvisation in research on gender and social violence. *Global Studies Quarterly*, 2(4). <https://doi.org/10.1093/gsq/gsab003>
- [4] Reed, R. M., Morgan, L. M., Cowan, R. O., & Birtles, C. (2023). Lived experiences of human subjects researchers and vicarious trauma. *Journal of Social, Behavioral, and Health Sciences*, 17(1), 164-180. <https://doi.org/10.55890/JSBHS.2023.17.1.12>; Irwin, S., & Winterton, M. (2011). Debates in qualitative secondary analysis: Critical reflections (Timescapes Working Paper Series, No. 4). University of Leeds. <https://doi.org/10.5518/200/04>