

# Methods for researching arts-based interventions

Dr Rosie Perkins

Centre for Performance Science  
Royal College of Music | Imperial College London

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# Arts-based interventions I

*"Every time I felt more connected after the [drum] session. I was like, 'This doesn't make much sense, because I've not said anything to anyone other than 'Hello. How are you?'" (...). You do sort of connect through that sort of rhythm you've built and that shared experience"*

[Participant in a group drumming intervention]

# Arts-based interventions II

- Complex
- Difficult to blind
- Often short-term or ongoing

# Design options



Music and Motherhood  
Arts Council England 2015-17

# Option 1: RCT

- ✓ High standards of rigour
- ✓ Causality

X Resource-heavy

X No (or little) accounting for the process

# Option 2: Qualitative methods

- ✓ Capture what it's like for those taking part
- ✓ Capture the process – the art
- X Transferability can (not always) be limited
- X Open to bias

## **Option 3: Within-subjects designs**

- ✓ Useful to measure impact of single session
- ✓ Can be less resource heavy
- X Can be transfer across conditions
- X Measurement fatigue

# Option 4: Arts-based designs

- ✓ Use the arts to demonstrate arts' effects
- ✓ Outputs are creative and often accessible
- X Can require arts-specific skills
- X Application is relatively undefined



# To bear in mind

- Complex intervention = complex designs
- This isn't always possible – in which case, best to focus on one specific RQ and do it justice than try to do too much

# Further info

- [MRC Complex Intervention Guidance](#)
- [Music and Motherhood Project](#)
- [Arts-based methods video](#)



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[rosie.perkins@rcm.ac.uk](mailto:rosie.perkins@rcm.ac.uk)  
[@rosielperkins](https://www.instagram.com/rosielperkins)