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*Metaphysics of Presence and Difference:  
A Comparison of Belief Systems  
Inherent in the Methodologies  
of Arts Based Research and A/r/tography*

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**Abstract:**

Arts-integrating approaches to research are increasingly engaged in the field of education. Arts-integrating approaches offer exciting opportunities for engaging creativity and imagination in research. However, researchers should be aware that the field of arts-integrating research encompasses a number of distinct methodologies, which entail varying understandings of what constitutes knowledge. From my (arts-integrating and phenomenological) comparative inquiry into two research methodologies, arts based research and a/r/tography, I conclude that they differ in their conceptions of knowledge, and that this difference is underpinned by differing beliefs regarding the nature of reality and being. Arts based research, as elaborated by Elliot Eisner and colleague Tom Barone (Barone & Eisner, 2006; Eisner, 1991) aligns with what may be called a metaphysics of presence, while a/r/tography, as elaborated by Rita Irwin and colleagues (Irwin & de Cossan, 2004; Springgay et al., 2008) espouses what may be called a metaphysics of difference. My inquiry parses the essential elements of these contrasting belief systems through two categories that I term primacy and unity. My findings provide a useful reflection on the unavoidably paradigmatic nature of all research.

**Keywords:** belief systems; metaphysics; metaphysics of presence; metaphysics of difference; metaphysics of participation; arts-integrating research; arts based research; a/r/tography

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## Biographical Note

Holly Tsun Haggarty is an artist, educator and scholar. Prompted by the parser of philosophy, she parse-snips, but prompted by its muse, she muses, amuses and bemuses, as she redacts her arts-integrating dissertation on the metaphysics of research. Holly also serves as Managing and Associate Editor of the Journal of the Canadian Association for Curriculum Studies (JCACS). Holly has engaged a number of art forms in her research, including poetry, drama, comics and photo-art. When not art-working, she loves art-playing with her dear ones.