



CREATING DESIGN CONNECTIONS: ARTS-BASED METHODS AS A PATHWAY INTO TRAUMA-INFORMED DESIGN FOR OLDER HOMELESS ADULTS

GSA 2024

AIRP | **VABE**
Aging in the Right Place
PARTNERSHIP
Vieillir au Bon Endroit
PARTENARIAT

Plan:

1

**Define AIRP arts-based methods
(photovoice and sensory)**

2

**Explore trauma-informed design
(TID) principles and findings**

3

**Share importance of TID for older
adults with experiences of
homelessness (OPEH) in our
research**

4

**Arts-based methods & TID
potentials**



Project Overview: Aging in the Right Place (AIRP)

Objective: To evaluate promising practices being used within housing services for Older Adults Experiencing Homelessness (OPEH), while also illuminating areas for improvement.


Population: Older Adults Experiencing Homelessness are identified as being anyone over the age of 50 that has had previous or current experiences of homelessness residing in Vancouver, Calgary, or Montreal

Project Partners: more than two dozen co-applicants and collaborators, forty partner organizations, three universities, and nine older advisors with lived experience of homelessness.

Project Length: Five years



Arts-Based Methods



Including non-linguistic dimensions in qualitative research by adopting arts-based methods offers meaningful perspectives for research (Bagnoli, 2009; Leavy, 2020).

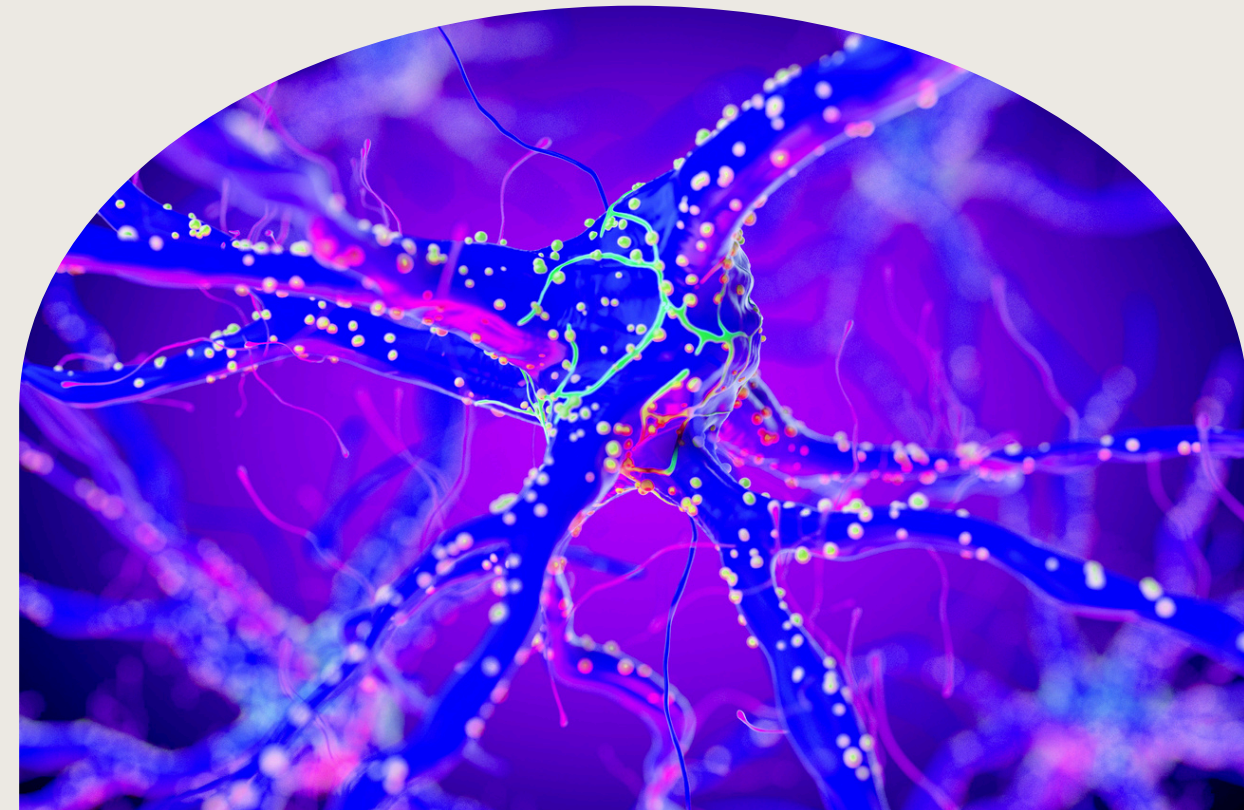
The AIRP Project creatively mixes methods to expand the domain of investigation beyond standard interviews and provide new possibilities for understanding complex social problems (e.g., aging & homelessness)

Arts-Based Methods



Photovoice

Record and reflect on
experiences through
photography



Sensory Methods

Sensory perception of the
physical world



Photovoice

Photovoice is a participatory action research strategy, where research participants are asked to take photographs of subject matter that reflects their unique experiences and asked to explain the story of their photo (Hergenrather et al., 2009; Sutton-Brown, 2014).


AIRP Project in Calgary, AB, Canada, conducted photovoice interviews with 20 OPEH at two emergency/temporary/transitional shelter/housing with supports sites (4 sites & 45 photovoice interviews overall in Calgary)



Sensory Methods:


1) Cultivate **multisensory-experiential** understandings of how to *feel* to be in the world (Grittner, 2021).

2) Posit that many experiences are beyond textual explication (Pink, 2009) and our senses convey/process more information than we typically consciously process (Rosenblum, 2010).



Sensory supportive environments are critical for individuals who are aging (Mahoney et al., 2019) and living with trauma (Harricharan, McKinnon, & Lanius, 2021). Homelessness and trauma intersect (Wiewel & Hernandez, 2021).

Calgary AIRP project sites included sensory methods as part of built environment assessments. Researchers used photography, video shorts, and fieldnotes to illuminate how the two emergency/temporary/transitional shelter/housing with supports sites feel.



Trauma Informed Design (TID):

“Most of the conversation for trauma-informed organizing focuses on the implementation of services... Missing from this framework is any sense of material space” (Huffman, 2018, p. 48)

TID seeks to support wellbeing and ameliorate trauma’s physical, psychological and emotional impacts via environment

TID Principles:

- ① Safety & Security
(visibility, concealment, escape & secure boundaries)
- ② Sensory control
(sight/sound/touch/smell of environmental stressors)
- ③ Control & Agency
(access to spaces, HVAC control, gardening, separate spaces)
- ④ Enriched Environment
(nature, personalization, & aesthetics)

(Ajeen et al., 2023; Owen & Crane, 2022).





Our Research:

1. Identifies the importance of TID principles from OPEH's perspectives
2. Highlights successes and gaps in TID within emergency/temporary/transitional shelter/housing with supports

TID Insights:

- ① Safety & Security
(building, mail, storage, sleeping, bathrooms, outdoor, neighbourhood)
 - ② Sensory control
(noise [traffic, speech, TV], smell [cooking], temperature [heat], lighting)
 - ③ Control & Agency
(private sleeping and bathrooms, choice for common areas)
 - ④ Enriched Environment
(outdoor spaces/nature, art, individual customization of aesthetics)
- 

TID 1: Safety & Security



Photo taken by James House Resident

This is the front entrance of the building. So, there is a security building and, you gotta use your own key to get in. And, no one else is, not many other people can get in without the permit of the building. ...

So, it seems to really give me a lot of privacy and security...everyone's asked for that, the privacy where they live and safety...when I stayed in the downtown area, I mean, people stealing things off my bed. And people waking me up in the middle of the night...

That doesn't happen [now]. I guess when you get older, you get a little more vulnerable when the environment is complicated. It's nice to have privacy and safety.

– James House Resident

TID 2: Sensory control



Photo taken during sensory assessment

These floors are pretty much hollow. The, the, the flooring is not cement. It's ... wood. And then the laminated stuff is acrylic flooring, whatever it is very, very crystal clear sounds right? If you tap them, meaning going right through the floors and the ceilings, whatever.

I have a staff living below me and I got to tip toe around basically not to make noise...

There's no sound barrier insulation. It's like knocking on a thin piece of glass with a hammer. Pow. Pow. Crystal clear. I had it out with a guy that was living below me. To this day. We don't even talk. Because he was being hypocrite about the noise.

– James House Resident

TID 3: Control & Agency



*I can go to my room when I want, close the door.
– Kerby Shelter Resident*

*There is a common space when you want to
communicate with people, but if you don't want to
see anyone, you have your own room where you
can go and stay there.
– Kerby Shelter Resident*

*This photo is very pleasant for me to look at. So I can sit,
I can spend evenings beside this lamp and read, actually
study my Bible, and I really like the sound of the clock.
And it creates a specific certain atmosphere and this
soft light as well, so I like it really much very much....
– Kerby Shelter Resident*

Photo by Kerby Shelter Resident

TID 4: Enriched Environment



Photo by James House Resident

The outside space is wonderful. When I first came in here ... I said, well, well look at this little beautiful courtyard.

I feed the birds every morning. I do. And I'm on the courtyard side kind of thing. So we know that from yesterday and as bored as you could be with vision, it's always just looking at that little area, which is nothing special, but [it] always makes me feel a little, not happier, but kind of more enthusiastic, about being here

– James House Resident

Arts-based Methods & TID

Potentials:



In the AIRP project, arts-based methods provide rich information concerning TID in emergency/temporary/transitional shelter/housing with supports

Arts-based methods emphasize OPEH's embodied experiences and stories as well as sensory environment of shelter/housing towards:

- Increasing understandings of how-to implement TID
- Catalyzing designers, funders, and service providers to implement TID as an AIRP support

Connect with me: Alison L. Grittner, PhD, MArch alison_grittner@cbu.ca

Aging in the Right Place / Vieillir au Bon Endroit

Building capacity for promising practices that support older people experiencing homelessness in Montreal, Calgary, and Vancouver.

Développer les capacités pour des pratiques prometteuses qui soutiennent les personnes âgées en situation d'itinérance à Montréal, Calgary et Vancouver



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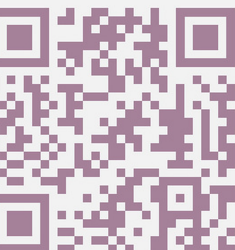
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