



Methodological Reviews

Researchers under the spell of the arts: Two decades of using arts-based methods in community-based inquiry with vulnerable populations[☆]

Sara Coemans^{a, *}, Karin Hannes^b^a *Laboratory for Education and Society, University of Leuven, Andreas Vesaliusstraat 2 - bus 3761, 3000 Leuven, Belgium*^b *Social Research Methodology Group, Centre for Sociological Research, University of Leuven, Parkstraat 45 - bus 3601, 3000 Leuven, Belgium*

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 26 January 2017

Received in revised form 1 August 2017

Accepted 9 August 2017

Available online 14 August 2017

Keywords:

Arts-based research

Art in research

Community-based research

Participatory methods

Scoping review

Vulnerable participants

ABSTRACT

In the last decade, we have witnessed a growing number of published articles featuring arts-based methods. These methods have been picked up by researchers interested in education in, through and for communities. This scoping review focuses on the use of arts-based methods in community-based research. It was undertaken to provide an overview of how these methods are applied in research practice. Different databases were systematically searched, covering literature published over twenty years (1993–2013). We identified different types of arts-based methods. We described the reported rationales, benefits and limitations, and presented a definition of arts-based methods as used in community-based inquiry. Four challenges were reported: the need to support researchers to explore alternative analytical approaches, the need for methodological reflections, the need to reflect on the voice-component in this work, and the need to push the boundaries of what counts as ‘the’ academic standard. Despite the challenges involved in working on the thin line between art and research, the learning curve it creates for researchers, its value in terms of creating understanding and its capacity to engage participants makes it a worthwhile endeavor to invest in.

© 2017 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

1. Introduction

Since the early nineties, the interest of researchers in the use of arts-based methods as a research approach has grown substantially. The term arts-based research (ABR) was first coined by the educationist scholar Elliot Eisner during an educational event in 1993 to explore educational research that integrated creative work (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013).

In the last two decades, researchers from various disciplines have successfully adopted ABR methods in their work. These have been recognized as legitimate research approaches in artistic and design research (e.g. Hannula, Suoranta, & Vadén, 2005) and in the broad field of humanities including social and cultural sciences, public health and educational sciences (Brazg, Bekemeier, Spigner, & Huebner, 2010; Conrad & Kendal, 2009; Hornsby-Miner, 2007). From its very beginning, it has been picked up by researchers interested in education in, through and for communities. The use of arts-based methods in

[☆] The protocol of this literature review has been published in the International Journal of Educational Research.

* Corresponding author.

E-mail addresses: sara.coemans@kuleuven.be (S. Coemans), karin.hannes@kuleuven.be (K. Hannes).

community-based settings may seem a natural fit due to its participatory nature and openness for different ways of understanding.

However, a consistent overview of which ABR approaches are used, for which reasons and how this methods base is applied in community-based research practice is lacking. In addition, there is no shared vocabulary that can facilitate the communication about what constitutes ABR in community-based research. We conducted a scoping review to synthesize the literature on the use of ABR methods in this area of research and in order to clarify the challenges that are inherent in working on the thin line between art and research (Pham et al., 2014). We covered the literature reporting on the use of arts-based methods in the area of community-based research practice. We selected papers reporting on ‘art in research’ type of projects. In these projects art is used in one or more phases of a research process, with an active involvement of the researchers in the process of art-making or in guiding research participants in creative processes.¹ The review was inspired by a social pedagogical lens to inquiry, hereby cutting across disciplines such as sociology, social welfare and educational sciences.

1.1. Arts-based research

Traditionally, ABR methods have been applied either as a data collection technique or as a dissemination technique. In the first case, the art forms are considered as research data in their own right. Images, sculptures or collages replace the traditional interview excerpts or observational data or support the interpretation process of the researcher. In this case, art is used as a medium that allows research participants to ‘communicate’ with researchers about their situation, experiences, concerns, challenges or obstacles in daily life. In the second case, ABR methods are used as a medium to translate an outcome of a particular research project, replacing a traditional research report and moving away from the traditional focus on textual accounts of phenomena under investigation (Foster, 2012). In this case, the art form is considered the vehicle for dissemination of research findings. The findings may present themselves as a drama or dance performance, an exhibition of images or a visual representation, an artifact or a collage (Bach, 1998; Bagley & Concienne, 2002; Gray et al., 2000; Harrington & Schibik, 2003; Saldana, 2003).

Researchers using ABR methods are often situated within the qualitative research tradition, many of them questioning the triumphs of science and rationality (Butterwick, 2002). They are motivated to challenge existing conventions and assumptions about what constitutes research. Not surprisingly, the whole debate on the place and role of ABR methods in scientific and academic inquiry has been fueled by paradigm shifts such as the emergence of the postmodern period welcoming a more pluralistic attitude towards research (Leavy, 2009).

1.2. The review case

A scoping review was conducted to synthesize available research evidence (Pham et al., 2014). Although there is no one agreed upon definition for scoping studies, they can broadly be defined as projects that are exploratory and map the literature available on a topic hence identifying the key ideas and gaps in a systematic way (The Canadian Institute of Health research). This mapping involves displaying “the ideas, arguments and concepts from a body of literature” (Hart, 1998, p. 162). Because their aim is to provide a snapshot of the existing literature, scoping reviews typically don’t include a quality assessment of the included studies (Armstrong, Hall, Doyle, & Waters, 2011). Its goal is to provide an overview of the state of the art in an emergent research field. This mapping exercise of the arts-based literature serves as the starting point for an in-depth study exploring the potential of multisensory methods for place-based and community-based research, traditionally dominated by visual methods (Ingold, 2000).

1.2.1. Study rationale and research questions

As more researchers become interested in using ABR methods, more overviews of the literature have become available. Pain (2012) reviewed the literature on the use of visual methods in a wide range of disciplines focusing on articles featuring visual research methods only. Fraser and Al Sayah (2011) and Boydell, Gladstone, Volpe, Allemang, and Stasiulis (2012) reviewed the literature on the use of ABR methods in health care. A review from Hergenrather, Rhodes, Cowan, Bardoshi, and Pula (2009) assessed the use of ABR methods in community-based participatory research, but only focused on photo-voice as one visual research technique applied to health and disability topics.

Our review project differs from these projects by: (a) taking a social pedagogical lens to inquiry that defines the disciplinary boundaries for the review and (b) including a broad variety of different ABR methods and techniques. The review addresses ABR projects in the area of community-based research targeting vulnerable populations. The community focus was inspired by the fact that many of the researchers working in this field are trained to unlock the potential of the often vulnerable populations they work with. Traditional research methods have not always been able to fully engage with particular groups in society. This is certainly the case for vulnerable people, for instance those who have limited language

¹ In our classification framework, we “distinguish between (a) research about art, where researchers are studying art or artistic topics without an intention to (re)create various forms of artwork; (b) art as research, where the creation process of an art object is subjected to further investigation, leading to a better understanding of what the art form is and what it can do; and (c) art in research, where artistic forms are actively applied in a research process aiming to study a particular social or behavioral phenomenon”. (Wang, Coemans, Siegesmund, & Hannes, 2017, p. 7).

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/4938352>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/4938352>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)