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Archiving a Career

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Arts-Based Research Methods as Innovation and Aesthetic Responsibility

Symposium for the Arts & Inquiry Special Interest Group

The Annual Conference of the American Educational Research Association

Toronto, Canada

April 2019

Paper 1: Creativity and Validity: An Exploration of Arts-Based Research, Third Space and

Impostor Syndrome Intersections

Tabitha Dell'Angelo & Alan Amtiz, The College of New Jersey

Paper 2: Archiving a Career

Charles Vanover, University of South Florida

Paper 3: Theorizing Assessment in Arts-Based Education Research

Graham W. Lea, University of Manitoba

Paper 4: Fake Art? Fake Research? Aesthetic and Public Responsibility in Arts-Based Research

Melisa Misha Cahnmann-Taylor, University of Georgia

Chair

Tiffany Octavia Harris, University of Illinois

Discussant

Carl Bagley, Queen's University – Belfast

Abstract

This symposium discusses efforts to increase legitimacy of arts-based educational research (ABER). Central to each paper is Eisner's belief that ScholarARTists must be judged by the care shown in their research practice and the aesthetic skill demonstrated by each work. ABER gains legitimacy through deeds. The most persuasive means of increasing the credibility of ABER are projects that communicate to the public with power and grace. The session begins with a brief introduction by the Chair. Panelists present on topics ranging from the use of ABER to create a third space between academia and activism, to the development of generative assessment practices, to practical suggestions for developing expertise in ABER practice and communicating the work.

Arts-Based Research Methods as Innovation and Aesthetic Responsibility
The question for education researchers is how, in a so-called “post-truth” political era when evidence is shunted and emotion is exploited, can we make our research matter?
—2019 AERA Theme

Session Summary—494 Words

The challenges to the legitimacy of educational research outlined in the *2019 AERA Theme* are not new to arts-based educational researchers. Charges of fake art and fake research have been leveled at arts-based research since its inception. These attacks have been so profound and long lasting that issues connected to the marginalization and illegitimacy are explicitly theorized by the field’s founders (e.g. Barone, 2001, 2007; Eisner, 2001, 2008). For many practitioners, the decision to engage in arts-based research (ABER) practice is experienced as a radical break with from their previous career path and the beginning of a journey into an unknown land (Bhattacharya & Payne, 2016; Bickel, 2005; Leavy, 2016; Vanover, 2017). For every published account of a successful passage and the consequent re-affirmation of hope and commitment (Denzin, 2009), there are tales of broken dreams and abandoned projects.

Marginalization hurts our field in many ways, but it is felt most profoundly in the absence of people and projects that might have broadened our community (Bagley & Castro-Salazar, 2012; Brown, 2012). We know what our field of arts-based research is—we do not know what it might be and how each of our careers might expand if we worked in a more supportive environment.

Marginalization also has its uses. Perhaps one of the foundations of the rich tradition of theorizing in ABER (e. g. Bagley, 2008; Boydell et al., 2016; Brown, 2012; Carter, Beare, Belliveau, & Irwin, 2011; Springgay, Irwin, & Kind, 2005) is the constant need to explain and justify the work. One approach to gaining legitimacy we oppose is through quantification. Yes, it would be possible to create survey instruments that evaluate audience response to works of art according to various researcher derived constructs and criteria. One might imagine a research landscape, as is the case in Charles Vanover's field of educational leadership, where the authors of such instruments are the leading voices. It is our view that art will always be more than an algorithm and impact more than a metric. A unique work of art demands a unique response from its audience, such dialogue cannot be standardized.

This session provides a set of practical and theoretically based suggestions on how to craft arts based research that matters. Central to these papers is the recognition of the power of craft in both research and artistry. As Eisner (2008) advised "deeds, not words, may be in the end the most persuasive source of support and the source that yields the highest levels of credibility".¹ We ask: What do we do to train ourselves as scholARTists (Knowles, Promislow, & Cole, 2008), to train others, to critically evaluate the work and enrich it, push it, stretch it? What kinds of networks of support are helpful to positive and productive methodological change?

Session Plan

The Chair will provide a 5 minute introduction; each Author and the Discussant will receive 12 minutes; the last 25 minutes will be spent in discussion.

Paper 2: Archiving a Career—491 Words

Charles Vanover, University of South Florida

While it is possible, with Favorini (1995), to trace research-informed theatre to the ancient Greeks, I do not believe it unreasonable to trace the current round of scholarly performance to the efforts of anthropologists and aligned researchers to reconstitute their fields in the aftermath of the attacks leveled against naïve, positivistic ethnography (e. g. Clifford & Marcus, 1986; Fabian, 1983; Rosaldo, 1993). Rather than talk about ritual, performance provides INNOVATION AND AESTHETIC RESPONSIBILITY 7 a means to create it (Turner & Turner, 1982). Rather than describing injustice, performance creates a way for people to feel it (Bagley, 2008; Conquergood, 1985, 2002; Mienczakowski, 1995). Performance offers more than a technology to evoke the everyday world, it provides the means for scholars to engage in a new way of life (Goldstein, 2012b; Gouzouasis, 2006; Madison & Hamera, 2006; Saldaña, 2011; Springgay et al., 2005; Spry, 2001).

One irony is how little impact performance has had on the core academic disciplines of the humanities, social sciences, and the professions. Outside of conferences and special interest groups explicitly devoted to the arts and, occasionally, qualitative research, performance is practice of the periphery. Almost all formal, face-to-face communications in university settings are organized around PowerPoint lectures and other computerized presentation technologies. As much research shows, reliance on such practices has profoundly negative implications for dialogue (Craig & Amernic, 2006; Tufte, 2003; Wecker, 2012). The world is more than headlines and clumps of bullets.

A practical problem for anyone whose work violates these taken for granted communication routines is that few people within academic life understand what performance does or, more importantly, how attending an ethnodrama, a research informed dance, or an art installation would be interesting to *them*. As someone who has done performative work for more than a decade, it has been my experience that despite years of theory building (Barone & Eisner, 2012; Boydell et al., 2016; Brown, Carducci, & Kuby, 2014; Cahnmann-Taylor & Siegesmund, 2008; Chilton & Leavy, 2014; Denzin, 2009; Finley, 2011; Rossiter et al., 2008) few people outside our field understand what arts-based research looks like or why it matters. A practical solution to this dilemma is archiving. I have spent years photographing the performances I produce and posting photos, programs, and other records online. I regularly post INNOVATION AND AESTHETIC RESPONSIBILITY 8 on a Facebook page that features my work and I frequently use this platform to subvert more mainstream social media by, for instance, posting on pages managed by AERA Divisions.

Perhaps more importantly, I have spent years working with my university library to post rehearsal and performance photos from my practice on the library's electronic archive. These records document my performance practice and illustrate how it has changed over time. The records also provide "proof of concept" when I discuss my work with people unfamiliar with ABER and begin to work with them to stage new performances.

In this presentation, I will show examples of my practice as an archivist and discuss how these records shape my published work (e. g. Vanover, 2014, 2016a, 2016b, 2019).