Exploring the use of arts-based research in social science academic research
A Literature Review

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VISUAL
EMBODIED
METHODOLOGIES

Saber meter la cabeza en lo oscuro, saber saltar al vacío, saber que la literatura básicamente es un oficio peligroso. Correr por el borde del precipicio

Bolaños, 1999, Caracas

1. INTRODUCTION

Understanding the value of arts-based research (ABR) in the social science starts from recognising that there is an undeniable connection between the arts, the sciences, and research. Both the arts and the sciences engage with processes of knowledge creation and creativity that could be covered under the broad umbrella of research. From Elliot Eisner's (2006) perspective, research intends 'to enlarge human experience and promote understanding', aims that are part of both artistic and scientific processes. However, the connection between the arts and the sciences is less straightforward. For some, with positivist views, the arts and the sciences have no connection, and, in that light, arts-based research appears as an oxymoron because science is what scientist do by following strict and replicable procedures. While arts are what artist do and do not follow the same quests for objectivity. For others, 'the arts provide access to forms of experience that are either un-securable or much more difficult to secure through other representational forms' (2006, p. 11), making them a valuable ally for social science enquiry. This literature review aligns with the latter perspective and it aims to provide an overview about the different forms through which the arts and science interact and to highlight potential new forms of collaboration.

This literature review covers 60+ books and academic papers published mostly since the early 2000s. The search for key publications started by using the keywords 'arts-based research', 'visual methods and methodologies', and 'embodied research' in the Scopus finder and the King's College London library search. Because of the current pandemic, this review only considered documents available online. After the initial results, this review used the bibliography of core texts to explore the use of ABR in different disciplines within the social science and to consider examples of arts-based methods like drawing, photography, and theatre. To present the result of this research process the literature review is divided into six sections: 1) Defining arts-based research; 2) The experience with image and performance in social science; 3) Arts-based research and the quest for a different type of knowledge; 4) Partnerships when working on ABR; 5) Challenges and room for exploration.

2. Defining Arts-Based Research

Arts-based research (ABR) as a methodological genre emerged between the 1970s and the 1990s (Chilton & Leavy, 2014). It can be defined 'as the systematic use of the artistic process, the actual making of artistic expressions in all of the different forms of the arts, as a primary way of understanding and examining experience by both researchers and the people that they involve in their studies' (McNiff, 2007). Researchers as Tom Barone, Elliot Eisner, Gary Knowles, Ardra Cole, Susan Finley, Patricia Leavy, and Shaun McNiff have contributed to understanding the philosophical perspectives, methodological principles and analytical contribution of ABR in social science. For them, ABR has the potential of advancing human understanding, contributing to foster more open and original ways of perceiving situations and problems, and providing access to qualities of life that literal language has no great power to disclose (Eisner, 2007; Barone & Eisner, 2012; Leavy, 2014; Springgay, et al., 2005). Considering artistic processes as part of research differs from 'search activities where the arts may play a significant role but are essentially used as data for investigations that take place within academic disciplines that utilize more traditional scientific, verbal, and mathematic descriptions and analyses of phenomena' (McNiff, 2007, p. 29).

Arts-based research draws the subversive, transformational, embodied, sensorial, and flexible characteristics of the arts for research. Barone & Eisner (2012) observe that 'arts-based research is an approach to research that exploits the capacities of expressive form to capture qualities of life that impact what we know and how we live' (p.1). Patricia Leavy writes that 'the capability of the arts to capture process mirrors the unfolding nature of social life' (2014, p. 12) and highlights that the kind of dialogue promoted by arts-based practices allows an inductive design that works evoking meanings, not denoting them. In the practice, that means that ABR avoids preconceived language, code categories, and guiding assumptions creeping into the research process (Leavy, 2014, p. 14). Research becomes less entangled with the researchers' bias and fosters a process based of self-reflexion.

The experience of the individual and the value to its perspective is core to ABR. In that sense, the practice of ABR fits into qualitative research that pursue a feminist, critical, or postcolonial approach (Keifer-Boyd, 2011). While ABR is not necessarily born as a feminist methodology, it does resonate with the aims of feminist epistemologies to understand and provide a critical response to power dynamics in the research process (Leavy, 2014; Brooks, et al., 2020; Kara, 2015; Cahnmann-Taylor, 2008). Particularly relevant is to consider that 'feminists developed standpoint epistemology as a means of acknowledging that a hierarchical social order produces different "standpoints"', meaning experiences and corresponding perspectives'[1] (Leavy, 2014). Furthermore, feminist methodologies also seek to produce

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[1] Referring to Harding, 1993; Hartsock, 1983; Hill-Collins, 1990; Smith, 1987.

partial and situated truths.[2] In its practice, ABR follows the principles of seeking situated truths and recognising individual experiences. Using this approach, ABR 'responsibly listens to subalterns' voices and entangled histories, while bears witness and reveals power structures that control people, cultural narratives, and hegemonic worldviews' (Keifer-Boyd, 2011, p. 3). Susan Finley (2007) has also characterised ABR arts-based inquiry as a 'methodology for radical, ethical, and revolutionary research that is futuristic, socially responsible, and useful in addressing social inequities'. For her, by integrating multiple methodologies used in the arts with the post-modern ethics of participative, action-oriented, and politically situated perspectives for human social inquiry, arts-based inquiry has the potential to facilitate critical race, indigenous, queer, feminist, and border theories (Finley, 2007).

Education researchers, mental health researchers and practitioners, as well as art therapies, have been amongst the first to experiment with ABR, followed by academics working in sociology, social anthropology, geography and political science. This process of experimentation with the research design, the type of research questions, the artistic methods, and the setting of the research have contributed to having a wide range of definitions and characteristics in the implementation of ABR. While in this literature review, we have used the term 'arts-based research', there are least other 26 names that relate to this research practice, as compiled by Chilton and Leavy (2014):

- A/r/tography
- Alternative forms of representation Aesthetically based research
- Aesthetic research practice
- Art as inquiry
- Art practice as research
- Art-based enquiry
- Art-Based Inquiry
- Art-Based Research
- Artistic Inquiry
- Arts based social research (ABSR)
- Arts-based qualitative inquiry
- Arts in qualitative research
- Arts-based educational research (ABER) Arts-based health research (ABHR)
- Arts-Based Research Practices
- Arts-Informed Inquiry
- Arts–Informed Research
- Critical Arts-Based Inquiry
- Living Inquiry

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[2] Haraway, 1988

- Performative Inquiry
- Practice-Based Research
- Research-Based Art (RBA)
- Research-Based Practice
- ScholARTistry
- Transformative Inquiry through Art

The distinctions relate to differences between art or art creation processes. For some, art or art creation processes could be used as means to produce data, as a means to analyse data, as a means to represent data, and/ or multiple varieties and combinations of these uses. For example, according to Stephanie Springgay, et al. (2005, p. 899), 'To be engaged in the practice of a/r/tography means to inquire in the world through a process of art making and writing. It is a process of double imaging that includes the creation of art and words that are not separate or illustrative of each other but instead, are interconnected and woven through each other to create additional meanings'. In contrast, quoting Lorri Neilsen, Cahnmann-Taylor (2008) explains 'scholARTistry' as a 'hybrid practice' used by educators and other social scientist 'which combines tools used by the literary, visual, and/or performing arts' to explore the human condition.

Despite the variety of definition and characterisations of its potential, there is a general agreement that ABR is a methodological option that gives nuanced understanding of situations and contributes with the 'ability to empathize with others' (Eisner, 2007). Barone and Eisner remark that ABR 'is an effort to extend beyond the limiting constraints of discursive communication in order to express meanings that otherwise would be ineffable' (2012, pp. 1-2). For them, the contribution of arts-based research 'is not that it leads to claims in propositional form about states of affairs but that it addresses complex and often subtle interactions and that it provides an image of those interactions in ways that make them noticeable' (2012, pp. 1-2). Researchers as Stephanie Springgay, et al. (2005, p. 898) consider that in its most basic stance, ABR needs to be understood as 'enacted living inquire'. Hence, when teaching ABR, it becomes clear that ABR is about what there is to learn from the research process. Springgay, et al. (2005, p. 898) explains that, when working with students in understanding the concepts surrounding this methodology, one question that continually resurfaces is 'how do I engage in arts-based research?' replacing 'what does it look like [to do ABR]?'. The change on the question emphasises a differentiation from 'product driven representation of research' to an active participation of doing and meaning making within research (Springgay, et al., 2005).

3. The experience with image and performance in social science

ABR is participatory, collaborative and insightful. Those characteristics make it an attractive research methodology for academics working in social science. Researchers could work in two broad areas: using visual methods and using performative methods. At this point, it is important to recognise that arts-based research relates but is not the same as using images or performances as pieces of data to be observed and analysed or to communicate research. Susan Finley made an interesting clarification. 'Arts-based inquiry creates and inhabits contested, liminal spaces. It takes form in the hyphen between art and social science research. It creates a place where epistemological standpoints of artists and social science workers collide, coalesce, and restructure to originate something new and unique among research practices' (2007, p.72). She meant that ABR is not about studying the art, the image or the performance but about creating something new from the collaboration between two areas and two different ways of knowing. This section will provide a brief overview of the relationship between image, performance and social science to remark their long-lasting connexion. It will also highlight the change from using arts as the object of research or an element on the research process to a methodology than benefits from art-based experiences. This section will start by delving into the importance of visual methods and will finalise with an explanation of the use of performative methods in social science.

Images as producers, carriers and reproducers of meaning are a relevant part of social science research. As explained by Gillian Rose, 'visual images are made, and maybe moved, displayed, sold, censored, venerated, discarded, stared at, hidden, recycled, glanced at, damaged, destroyed, touched, reworked. Images are made and used in all sorts of ways by different people for different reasons, and these makings and uses are crucial to the meanings an image carries' (2001, p. 10). Her work points to the importance of having a 'critical approach' to interpreting visual images. For Rose (2001, pp. 15-16), there are three basic principles to a critical visual methodology. The first one is taking images seriously, i.e. avoiding the assumption images are simply reflections of their social 'contexts'. The second is thinking about the social conditions and effects of visual objects. Rose considered that 'cultural practices like visual representations both depend on and produce social inclusions and exclusions, and a critical account needs to address both those practices and their cultural meanings'. Finally, the third principle is 'considering your own way of looking at images'. Rose highlighted that 'if ways of seeing are historically, geographically, culturally and socially specific, then how you or I look is not natural or innocent'. Rose's explanation of visual methodologies contributed to understanding the valuable insights that images could offer for research, as well as the complexity of using visual methods.

There are extensive ways of using and engaging with images. Broadly, this review focuses on three basic categories to classify the more 'traditional' use of images in social research. 1)

Images as an inventory of findings and evidence. From this perspective, images are not dynamic elements with relative interpretations, but more visual depictions of data. 2) Images as elements used to uncover broader cultural significance. This description relates to the work of researchers such as anthropologies, ethnographers, and geographers. 3) Images used to communicate research. This latter approach is explained by Tiina Kukkonen and Amanda Cooper (2017). They highlight that 'arts-based knowledge translation (ABKT)' contributes to communicate research findings, reach non-academic audiences, and increase research impact. As in the other two categories, ABKT uses art for research purposes. However, this does not imply the use of art to raise research questions or to learn from artistic processes.

In their genealogy of visual methods, Knowles and Sweetman (2004) observed that social anthropologists have used photography and film to convey meaning 'beyond words' and to reflect about people, communities and landscapes since the 1940s. They mentioned the photographs and film footage of Gregory Bateson in his work with Margaret Mead, Balinese Character: A Photographic Analysis (1942). Similarly, John and Malcolm Collier (1986) used film in anthropology as a technique for producing inventories of material culture. Going a step further, Sarah Pink (2004) wrote that, by the late 1990s, visual anthropologist as David MacDougall, Elizabeth Edwards, and Marcus Banks urged to consider the potential of visual methods in ethnography research. They pressed to understand the potential of historical images to articulate submerged realities and to consider 'the visual' as an integral part of anthropology, as it encourages a critical and reflexive voice and means of communicating understandings that are 'accessible only by non-verbal means' (MacDougall 1997, p.292 cited in Pink 2004, p. 1). Since the early 2000s, according to Pink (2014), key concepts for using visual methods are reflexivity and collaborative and participatory perspectives to research and representation. As Banks explained 'all image production by social researchers in the field, indeed all first-hand social research of any kind, must be collaborative to some extent' because 'the researcher's very presence amongst a group of people is the result of a series of social negotiations' (Banks, 2001, p. 119).

Beyond the research of anthropologists, ecologists, demographers and geographers have worked creating flow charts, tables and maps demonstrating how images and their meanings are connected to the study of people and communities. Citing the work of Mary Radnofsky (1996), Dawn Mannay (2010) remarked that images offer 'an opportunity for participants to metaphorically describe their social and physical environments' leading to a more complete and thorough understanding of a given phenomenon or culture (p. 98). One key example shared by Mannay is the research designed by Vivian Nossiter and Gerald Biberman (1990). They used drawing to provide insight into management and corporate organisation. Their findings suggested that drawing helped to focus participants' responses so that they concentrated on the most salient features of their organisation. At the same time, it also motivated people to reflect on their experience (Mannay, 2010). Collage production and 'memory book design' are another two methods used alongside more traditional ones as

interviews. In 2010, Rachel Thomson and Janet Holland (2005) worked on creating 'memory books,' i.e. a combination of a diary and a scrapbook, as a methodological tool to document young people's changing constructions of self over time. Their research provided valuable results, pointing to how the use of a narrative and visual approaches enabled a research experience that was less driven by the researcher's agenda and more led by the participants. The use of an alternative form of narration 'facilitated the expression of a 'different voice' compared with approaches based on the solicitation of retrospective biographical narratives' (Thomson & Holland, 2005, p. 204). As portraited by these examples, multiple disciplines within the social science have found the benefits from including visual method as a complementary, parallel, or alternative approach to more traditional research methods.

The use of performative methods in social science follows a different pattern than visual methods. While researchers have used practices as theatre to gather data or present findings, the nature of performative methods, meaning the role of the body and the relevance of practice and experience, make it more prone to using arts as a form of knowing. According to Roland Pelias (2007, pp. 185-186), scholars have approached performance from three general stances. First, scholars have viewed performance as a cultural and artistic object worthy of investigation. This approach questions 'how a given performance might best be understood as a communicative act and as a moment within theatrical practice, and how performance fosters meaning making and social change' (2007, pp. 185). Second, scholars have called upon performance as a generative vocabulary for understanding human behaviour. As familiar examples, Pelias refers to the work of Kenneth Burke's (1945) *dramatistic* scheme, Irving Goffman's (1959) notion of the presentation of self, Victor Turner's (1982) model of social dramas, and Judith Butler's (1990) conceptualization of stylised repetitive acts. Third, academics have operated from the assumption that performance itself is a way of knowing (Pelias, 2007). The latter stance is the one that relates the most with this literature review's interest in ABR. Pelias' explanation of why performance is a way of knowing rests upon 'a faith in embodiment, in the power of giving voice and physicality to words, in the body as a site of knowledge'. Embodiment and its role in ABR are could be explored in section 3.

Within performative arts, theatre is a key example of the use of participatory research methods. Most practitioners and researchers draw on the philosophies and techniques of Brazilian theatre practitioner Augusto Boal (Opfermann, 2020). Boal developed a theatrical practice that he named Theatre of the Oppressed, inspired in Paolo Freire's Pedagogy of the Oppressed. Boal practice relied on dialogic exchange as a tool to create awareness around issues related to social injustice and oppression (Boal, 1979). This 'dialogue' refers to the interaction between spectators/audience and actors. To generate this interaction, 'Boal deliberately blurred the lines between actors and audience in order to transform spectators from passive beings into active participants that form part of the dramatic action' (Opfermann, 2020). Boal considered that 'the spectator is less than a man and it is necessary to humanize him, to restore to him his capacity of action in all its fullness. He too must be a subject, an

actor on an equal plane with those generally accepted as actors, who must also be spectators' (2013, p. 98). The elements of participation and inclusion presented by Boal are core to the use of theatre as a participatory method.

Alongside, visual and performative research methods, social science researchers have also explored the use of literature and narration to access and process information. In an early form, the use of narrative-focused approaches was considered an alternative way to explore communities as part of ethnographic research. Melisa Cahnmann-Taylor (2008, p.5) mentioned the relationship between ethnography and linguistics developed by poet and scholar Jerome Rothenberg, who – in 1968 – coined the field ethnopoetics, an area focused on differences in aesthetics between indigenous verbal artists and western literary traditions (2008, p.5). Ethnopoetics was of central concern to linguistic anthropologist, Dell Hymes, who was the first to propose the 'ethnography of communication' as a merged field between linguistics, education, anthropology, and poetry (Cahnmann-Taylor, 2008, p. 5). In more recent times, contemporary academics have experimented with narrative and narration as embodied experience and another arts-based research practice. From that perspective, writing and sharing stories, as well as metaphor development and collage technics are not only used as methods to extra data but as practices to create a new type of knowledge.

4. Arts-based research and the *quest* for a different type of knowledge

This section will explore three key terms used when conducting arts-based research: embodiment, experience and practice. These words are crucial to explain the role of 'the body' in ABR, as is it a methodology that embraces knowledge developed through the senses, emotions, memories, and what exists intelligibly and intangibly as part of the self. Rachelle Chadwick (2017) teased that social science's interest in embodiment 'is old news', as academics including Donna Haraway (1988), Trinh Minh-ha (1989), Arthur Frank (1990), Dwight Conquergood (1991, 2013), Margaret Lock (1993) and Elizabeth Grosz (1994) have remarked the importance of 'the body' since the late 1980s. However, Chadwick (2017) also acknowledged that there is still a lot to learn from the methodological challenges and implications of 'embodying' qualitative research. This section will start by introducing the problematic mind/body dualism. Later, it will explain the role of embodiment in research – in theory and practice – and, finally, it will provide examples of scholars learning from practices of several artistic disciplines like theatre, dance, drawing, photography and narration to design, conduct and interpret research.

Feminists researchers and philosophers have played a central role in dismantling the dualisms on which positivism hinges, subject–object, rational–emotional, and concrete–abstract (Leavy, 2014), as well as in challenging the Cartesian mind–body splits and its effect on research practices (Vacchelli, 2018; Leavy, 2014). A clear example is Minh-ha's explanation of how interpersonal communication is experienced through the senses. In the process of storytelling, she wrote, 'speaking and listening refer to realities that do not involve just the imagination. The speech is seen, heard, smelled, tasted, and touched' (1989, p.121). Moreover, she remarked that we 'write-think and feel-(with) our entire bodies rather than only (with) our minds or hearts. It is a perversion to consider thought the product of one specialized organ, the brain, and feeling, that of the heart' (1989, p.36). In a similar fashion, Conquergood denounced that 'the dominant way of knowing in the academy is that of empirical observation and critical analysis from a distant perspective: "knowing that", and "knowing about"' (Conquergood & Johnson, 2013, p. 33). This way of knowing, he explained, 'is a view from above the object of inquiry'. In contrast, Conquergood proposed another way of knowing 'that is grounded in active, intimate, hands-on participation and personal connection: "knowing how", and "knowing who"' (2013, p. 33). He described it as 'a view from ground level, in the thick of things'. This perspective followed what Donna Haraway had already called 'situated knowledge' (1988). Finally, Grosz (1994) – following Maurice Merleau-Ponty's perspectives – claimed that 'the body and the modes of sensual perception which take place through it are not mere physical/physiological phenomena; nor are they simply psychological results of physical causes. Rather, they affirm the necessary connectedness of consciousness as it is incarnated' (1994, 86). Grosz's explanations, as well as

Minh-ha's and Conquergood's, located the researcher's body and its experience at the centre of the research process, remarking the value of 'embodying' qualitative research.

Embodiment in theory and practice

Despite the extensive discussion about including 'the body' in qualitative research and rethinking the body–mind split, Elena Vacchelli remarked that the legacy of the Cartesian dualism approach is still very present. As an observation, she explained that 'techniques, which include interviewing, focus group, and ethnographic research mainly rely on data drawn from spoken words, text and observed reality and tend to downplay perception and experiential aspects of research participants' lives' (2018, p. 172). From Vacchelli's perspective, it is not enough that the researcher reflects on its positionality or tries to promote more participatory and inclusive forms of research when the final stage of that interaction still relies heavily on verbal description and discursive approaches. But, then what does it mean to conduct embodied research and practice embodied methodologies? This section of this literature review will discuss embodiment and the embodiment of research from two angles: 1) researchers' definitions of embodiment, and 2) embodied practice, i.e. meaning the experiences of scholars designing and conducting research using embodied methodologies. This last point links back to the value and relevance of ABR in social science.

Embodiment could be defined in two broad ways. On the one hand, it is considered 'the human experience of having and simultaneously being a body. The term conceptualises the body as a dynamic, organic site of meaningful experience rather than a physical object distinct from the self or mind' (Hudak et al. 2007, p.32 cited in Vacchelli 2018, p.2). In that sense, embodiment in research relates to what Springgay, et al. (2005) have called living inquiry, i.e., 'an encounter constituted through visual and textual *understandings and experiences* rather than mere visual and textual *representations'* (2005, p. 902). Hence, embodied research is conducted by acknowledging the value of the lived experienced, rather than the discursive account of it. From this perspective, all the members of the research process – such as researchers, participants, and collaborators – can explore and share what was learned as part of the process itself. On the other hand, a second definition of embodiment relates it to performance (Pelias, 2007). From that perspective, performance is an embodied practice that relies in 'the performer' learning to trust what the body teaches. For this approach, 'the performer' learns from embodying characters on stage. Then, embodied research is not a set possibility habilitated by having a body, but by the conscious decision to open to empathy and exploration through performance. From Pelias' perspective, 'performative inquiry cannot be accomplished from an observational stance; it demands participation' (Pelias, 2007, p.187). He clarifies, 'the question here is not how the performer might feel in a certain situation but how the other might feel. This process of taking on others, of letting one's own body be open to others, provides performers an entry, albeit always incomplete, into others' life worlds. The empathic body, because of its ability and willingness to coalesce with others, is essential to

embodiment and to performance as a method' (Pelias, 2007, p.187). In both cases, the centre of the concept is the body and what is to be learned from it and its interactions. However, the first one considers embodiment as a given feature of the human experience that needs to be reflect upon when conducting research, while the other, refers to it as an act of becoming other to learning from this process.

Researchers' experience with embodied research – including arts-based research – show how these two standpoints contribute to different research approaches. For example, **the viewpoint of embodiment as a 'living enquiry'** provides an 'approach to research that is attentive to the sensual, tactile, and unsaid aspects of artist/researcher/teachers' lives' (Springgay, et al., 2005, p. 899). In this case, the research process involves 'a relational aesthetic inquiry approach' which envisions 'embodied understandings and exchanges between art and text and between and among the roles of artist/researcher/ teacher and the viewer/reader' (Springgay, et al., 2005, p. 900). In this case, there is no transmutation from researcher to performer or from participant to performer, everyone explores their own and personal circumstances and shares it with the other. Pranee Liamputtong and Jean Rumbold[3] (2008) explain that conducting arts-based/collaborative inquiry does not necessarily change the power differentials between researchers and participants. However, they note these methods have the potential for nurturing 'ethical relationships and social change' (Liamputtong & Rumbold, 2008, p. 3). Also, Liamputtong and Rumbold consider that these methods are particularly suited to working with participants who may not respond to the more verbal research methods of survey forms, interviews and focus groups. For example, in their edited book *Knowing differently*, they mentioned research cases that engage with 'marginalized and vulnerable peoples', meaning prisoners, homeless and at-risk' youth, Latino youth, victims of domestic violence, the chronically ill and the dying (Liamputtong & Rumbold, 2008). In these cases, the artistic process is used as embodied methods to help the participants explore and share new type of information.

One of the examples presented in *Knowing differently* is the work of Norma Daykin[4] and Christine Jonas-Simpson[5]. Daykin (2008) highlights that there is little methodological writing on **music in arts-based research**. Nonetheless, she points out that 'music is often seen as a powerful tool for expressing feelings and ideas that may be difficult to express in speech or through other media' (Daykin, 2008, p. 238). Christine Jonas-Simpson offers one practical research case. Jonas-Simpson aimed to explore the meaning of 'being understood'. To do so,

[3] Pranee is a medical anthropologist and Jean has experience as a counselling psychologist and family therapist

[4] Norma Daykin is Professor of Arts as Wellbeing in the Centre for the Arts as Wellbeing, part of Winchester University's Health and Wellbeing Research Group. She is also an experienced musician.
[5] Christine Jonas-Simpson studies the experience of transforming and growing with loss. Her arts-based research focuses on dementia and bereavement, now she works with film. She is a member of the School of Nursing, Director of the York-UHN Nursing Academy.

she used a sample of ten women, all of whom were facing ongoing health challenges. 'Participants were invited to describe their lived experience of being understood, after which they were asked to direct the researcher to play desired notes on the flute. Participants continued to direct the music using hands and arms or through words or by singing. The researcher played and transcribed the music, which was recorded along with the interview dialogue on audio and videotape. Once the musical expression was completed, participants were asked to discuss the meaning of feeling understood while listening to the music' (Jonas-Simpson, 2001 cited in Daykin, 2008, p. 237). According to Jonas-Simpson, 'creating the musical expressions gave more time for the participant to explore the phenomenon while reaching new depths of understanding. The participants seemed very ready to engage with this approach, and some had already thought or dreamed their melody prior to the dialogical engagement process' (2001 cited in Daykin, 2008, p. 237). Despite the benefits of the method, Jonas-Simpson described the experienced as 'labour intensive' and remark the need 'to refine' aspects of the methodology (2001 cited in Daykin, 2008, p. 237).

Julia Marshall[6] offers another example of engaging with artistic processes to learn from embodied information. Her case is based on artmaking of **visual images**. Following Ricoeur's hermeneutic perspective, she remarks the importance of considering that 'meaning emerges in the dialogue between the mind and the image; it is not in the image itself but in the active interpretation of the viewer' (Marshall, 2007, p. 35). In this light, Marshall questions, 'what are the implications of this for meaning making or learning in practice-based research?' to which she responds 'audience participation in the construction of meaning casts practice-based research as a social endeavour—as learning that is personal and individual for the artist but also as learning by the audience through their interpretations' (Marshall, 2007, p. 36). As an example, with no direct research implications, she explains the project of contemporary artist Matthew Ritchie, Proposition Player (2004). In Proposition Player, Ritchie invited 'audiences to participate in the creation of the paintings and learn through experience. Viewers play a digitized visual craps game and as they play the game, they build the paintings. When the audience creates the paintings in actual space, they manifest in literal, physical visual form a collaborative, collective cognition; they create the visual image and they participate in the interpretation and construction of knowledge' (Marshall, 2007, p. 37). Both Marshall and Jonas-Simpson's cases presented open-ended and experimental experiences, trying to fit practice and creation with meaning-making and knowledge-sharing. While the process does not seem straightforward, their assessments point to understanding the possibilities and the opportunities of the arts-based research methods.

In contrast with experimental and unstructured approaches, there is another type of research that includes a more straightforward research design. Those are the cases where researchers use artistic methods – for example, **drawing** and **collage-making** – to collect data in a

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[6] Julia Marshall is Professor Emerita of Art Education at San Francisco State University.

participatory, creative, and sensory manner. Then, there is an exploration of the embodied knowledge of the participants. However, the position of the researcher remains the same as in traditional designs, meaning still focused on 'knowing about'. Two cases that could portray this type of research and its limitations is Elena Vacchelli[7] (2018) and Harel-Shalev, et al (2017). Vacchelli (2018) worked with migrant, refugee and asylum-seeking women accessing mental health services in London. She carried out an 'art-informed focus group which required the use of collage-making as a strategy for eliciting discussions over sensitive issues such as research participants' mental health needs'. In her approach, collage-making was 'an analytical memo which is non-linear, unstructured and pre-conscious where intuitions are as legitimate and structured as logical thinking. In addition, because it involves 'making' as opposed to just 'thinking' it can be understood as a more bodily practice if compared with answering researchers' questions or telling stories about one's life experiences' (2018, p. 176)'. In the case of Harel-Shalev, et al (2017), the research topic was women's experiences in military service. Harel-Shalev, et al (2017) asked women to draw 'a stressful event from their military service, explained the image, and elaborated on how they coped with the situation' (2017, p.299). Later, they proceeded to do a 'content analysis of the pictures and the narratives produced' (2017, p.299). In both cases, while using artistic methods contributed to the way participants talk about their experiences. They were more open, focused and engaged. However, these research designs were not necessarily planned to discover through the research process itself but learned and extracted new type of data.

To consider embodiment as performance offers another starting point to researchers. As explained by Pelias 'performative inquiry cannot be accomplished from an observational stance; it demands participation' (2007, p.187). In this light, the practice of arts-based research becomes more radical and disruptive as it involves interactive participation from all the members of a *research team*. One interesting example is the work on '**ethnotheatre**' and '**ethnodrama**' produced by Johnny Saldaña[8]. Ethnotheatre refers to employing 'traditional craft and artistic techniques of theatre or media production to mount for an audience a live or mediated performance event of research participants' experiences and/or the researcher's interpretations of data'; while ethnodrama refers to the process of writing 'a play script consisting of dramatized, significant selections of narrative collected from interview transcripts, participant observation field notes, journal entries, personal memories/experiences, and/or print and media artifacts' (Saldaña, 2011, pp. 12-13). These two methods involve opening to others, learning from their perspectives and embodying that new knowledge by living it. Saldaña points to four distinct approaches to ethnodramatic playwriting: ethnodramatic dramatization of interview transcripts, ethnodramatic adaptations of documents, original autoethnodramatic work, and collective creation of ethnodrama

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(Saldaña, 2011). His experience producing the ethnodrama entitled 'Street Rat' gives an idea of this type of creative processes. 'Street Rat' focused on the lives of some homeless youths in pre-Katrina New Orleans. The play was the result of a collaboration by arts-based researchers Johnny Saldana, Susan Finley, and Macklin Finley, the first two of whom are academics. The script was adapted from a research story composed by the Finleys and from poetry written by Macklin Finley (Barone & Eisner, 2011, pp. 17-18). This story and poetry were in turn the products of participatory and observational social research engaged in primarily by Macklin Finley. Several stagings – under the direction of Saldana – have resulted from the script (Barone & Eisner, 2011, pp. 17-18).

In a similar fashion, researchers like Diane Conrad[9] (2004), Luisa Enria[10] (2016) and Lena Opfermann[11] (2020) have used other theatre-based techniques to create embodied research processes. For example, following Boal's techniques, Conrad (2004) created a popular theatre project with a group of high school drama students in a rural Alberta community, Canada, to collectively draw out, represent and question their experiences through theatrical means. This project 'helped students re-examine their beliefs and helped me reframe the notion "at-risk" to include the perceptions of youth'. Conrad explained her approach as 'research "for," "with" and "by" the people rather than "on" the people' (2004, p. 15). She highlighted that there was a conscious aim to break down the distinction between researchers and researched, meaning the subject/object relationship of traditional research, and instead creating a subject/subject relationship (Conrad, 2004, p. 15). Ideally, she added, participants involved in this type of methods would stay as part of the research process from beginning to end, in the attainment, creation, and dissemination of knowledge.

Dance is another method used in arts-based research. For instance, Karen Barbour[12] (2011) talks about choreography as a process allowed her to bring 'personal experiences, themes and academic theories together to explore new relationships, juxtapositions and connections between them through movement' (Barbour, 2011, p. 32). Her experience highlights the importance of the kinaesthetic sense to learn more 'about ourselves, our relationships to others and the world' (Barbour, 2011). Following those ideas of exchange and interaction thorough movement, Helle Winther[13] (2018) created a project that aimed to promote learning and teaching by using several performative methods. The project included the collaboration between a researcher and (university and dance) teacher, a documentary film instructor, a musician, and a creative film editor. They worked in examining how to develop somatic awareness, creativity, and embodied leadership through innovative educational processes. The research process involved multiple stages of experimentation. From working with the

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[11] Lecturer in Applied Social Studies in University of Bedfordshire.
[12] Karen Barbour is a senior lecturer in the Faculty of Education at the University of Waikato in New Zealand.
[13] Helle Winther is an associate Professor Sport, Individual & Society, University of Copenhagen.

students/participants to develop somatic awareness, and their ability and courage to create, take, and hold a room (as they were studying to become teachers) to the process of filming and editing the visual material. By using both '**the lenses of film and dance**' the researchers tried to 'show the "heartbeats" of all the young people, and thereby carefully open, express, and enrich making sense of the phenomena' (Winther, 2018). The project finalised with the production of the short film 'Dancing Days with Young People'.

The afore explained research projects, while very different, have the similarity of including more than one person as part of the research designed, meaning that all the cases above have researchers, participants and collaborators. Nonetheless, that is not the only way to work using arts-based research methods. For instance, there are also cases where the researcher is also the artist and the process of research does not involve embodying other but emerging in the process of self-examination and introspection alone. One example is the research project of Brenda Downing (2015). Downing produced an 'autoethnographic somatic inquiry' to explore her own experience of sexual violence. She combined embodied methods: "**writing-as-inquiry and performance-making-as-inquiry**". For the latter, she had the guidance of Alice Cummins, a Body-Mind Centering practitioner and dance artist. Downing explains that in her writing process she opted for poetry and journaling. She wrote, 'poetic writing acted as "a device of memory" (Cook, 2000, p. 18) to animate my trauma memory through the use of a creative vocabulary more connected to my body than more conventional forms of academic language" (Downing, 2015, p.2). In her performance-based inquiry, she created and presented a 'solo movement theatre piece'. Both the process of creation and performance with public contributed to her process. 'My presence as a raped woman-researcher-performer in the performance space offered a visceral and dynamic interface with the audience, giving flesh to, and illuminating my story in ways not possible in the written work' (Downing, 2015, p.5). Her research process let her to conclude that sexual trauma begins, in the first instance, not at a psychological level, as much of the literature asserts, but rather, at the level of the body (Downing, 2015).

Another example of a one-person project is the 'Imaging the Intangible' by Tony Whincup[14] (2004). He used **photography** to create a detailed study of object attachment and examine the role of ritual practices in contemporary society in New Zealand. Whincup worked by photographing objects and living space as a way to observe how in 'the struggle to maintain memories by charging objects with their safekeeping, the relationship between the owner and the object changes' (Whincup, 2004). In his experience in conducting sociological research through photography, he found that 'the challenge for those who wish to use photography in sociological research is to transcend the readily available surface descriptions of the photographic image and, through the construction of compelling symbolic relationships, assert powerful readings of the intangible aspects of lived experience" (Whincup, 2004, p. 86).

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[14] Tony Whincup was an Associate Professor at Massey University.

Whincup explained that 'the full potential of photographs as significant visual texts in sociological research can only be achieved by a sophisticated and sensitive appreciation of the complex role of objects in our existence. This awareness informs both the initial 'gaze' and also subsequent approaches to image making' (Whincup, 2004, p. 92). Whincup reflected about how through images and the emotional resonance they reproduce, both process and experience are united and how through photography we could reach 'towards a revelation of our humanness in the lived experience of others' (2004, p.92).

5. Arts-based research. Introspection and participation

By giving value to embodied experience, the artistic process and dynamics learned through practising dance, theatre, photography, drawing, or collage-making provide new forms of generating knowledge. Because of the differences between and within the arts, the research projects, the research designs, and the researchers, there are not two research plans that look the same. Moreover, some projects evolve while they are being conducted. For example, Winther's 'Dancing Days with Young People' did not start considering the value gained by filming. As explained by Winther's (2018, pp. 2-3), at first, filming was considered documentation, until the filmmaker pitched the value of considering filming as part of the research process, and the research transformed into a co-production. Winther's case also works as an example of the importance of partnership and collaboration during arts-based research projects. The interactions between the members of the *research team* will have a great impact on the final outcome of research project.

As mentioned before, arts-based research projects have at their core the principles of encouraging participation, disrupting hierarchies, promoting decolonial thinking and building ethical relationships. However, preserving these ideals demands constant effort as there are pre-existent meanings and expectations of the roles of researcher, researcher, collaborator, co-producer, artist, and participant. Negotiating and re-stablishing the meaning of these roles is one of the challenges of arts-based research projects. Consider that this literature review has mention a variety of dynamics including:

- **The research as an artist**. One example is Shaun McNiff's work. He identifies himself as a painter and a researcher and, while he might have participants as part of his research projects, he is the one conducting and evaluating the process. In this same category, there is also the case of Tony Whincup, who used photography to research social dynamics, but his approach is a one-person inquiry.

- **Researcher(s) using arts-based methods with participant(s).** The researcher might not have an artistic background but appreciate the valuable of arts-based methods. For instance, that is the case of Elena Vacchelli (2018). Until her latest project with migrants and refugees, she had never used collage as a data collection strategy. However, she was convinced that a traditional focus group would not achieve her research aims and decided to use a more creative approach (Vacchelli, 2018, p-177). Researchers as Samuel Spiegel (2020) reflect on the challenges of working with participants when using arts-based methods. Thinking about his experience with photovoice, Spiegel calls not to overromanticize participatory visual methods and to work with feminist epistemologies that carefully attend to the situated ethics and the performative powers of visual storytelling. (Vigurs & Kara, 2017). Katy Vigurs and Helen Kara (2017, p. 520) wrote that creative methods demand different dynamics more than traditional methods. 'Improvised methodologies differ from traditional

methodologies in that they are not something a researcher can set out to use, but something that can benefit research if researchers are able to stay open to the possibility' (Vigurs & Kara, 2017, p. 521).

- **Researcher(s) collaborating with artist.** This dynamic points to challenges in the co-production of research and art, but also creates endless possibilities. Karen Keifer-Boyd (2011) provides several examples of this dynamic, one of them is the work of Cynthia Hellyer Heinz and Deborah Smith-Shank to create visual surrealist narratives.
- **Researcher(s) collaborating with artist(s) from different disciplines.** For example, the case of ethno-theatre, Saldaña (2011) offers an example of learning and collaborating with different experts during the process of writing the script, directing the play, rehearsing, and evaluating the impact of the play.
- Researcher(s) collaborating with artist(s) and participants.

The interactions between the members of the research team will determine the quality of the process and the type of final outcome (Pentassuglia, 2017; Finley, 2007). Finley (2007) remarked that diversity of worldview, of media, of levels of preparation to perform "arts" is potentially one of the strongest features of critical arts-based research (p.76). She added that 'not all community researchers will be educated in the specifics of research methodology, and not all community researchers will be trained artists. Instead, the performative, arts-based researcher needs to facilitate community-based inquiry without taking the stance of either expert researcher or expert artist. Equalizing the roles of researcher and participant is one way to value diversity and inclusivity in field-based research. Debunking the need for researchers to be experts who stand above and outside the community of participants is a good place to begin' (p.76).

6. Challenges and room for exploration

The literature about arts-based research comprises a lot of material reflecting on the benefits of its practice, its history in academia, theoretical underpinnings, and practical examples of its use. However, there is little discussion about the challenges between thinking and doing ABR, meaning the tension that exists when conducting the research and trying to encompass two different worlds, the arts and research. These 'tensions' appear in different ways through the literature. Some of them include:

- **The hierarchy of the fields.** Are the arts subordinated to the research and researcher's aim? Or are the arts and research in a partnership? Or, in other words, is art a tool of extraction or is the artistic practice the process of research itself.
- **The aesthetic quality of the research or the 'criteria of excellence'.** Is there a need for 'aesthetic quality' in the process of ABR or in its final outcome? For Saldaña, there is sometimes tension when a researcher's criteria for excellence do not harmonise with the standards for excellence held by artists for a particular art form (Saldaña, 2005 cited in Finley, 2007, p.73). In contrast, Finley considered that the final aesthetic quality is not a central part of the ABR process. 'If only certain skilled individuals who can navigate both research and art domains are empowered to meet these criteria, the participatory and critical possibilities of ABR are halted' (Finley, 2003, 2008, 2011 cited in Leavy and Chilton, 2014).
- **The scope of the research**. According to Finley (2007, p.73), there is the 'tension between place-specific and sociopolitical goals for arts-based research, and between the primacy of ephemeral, rapid local change in dynamic communities and cultures and historically situated, cultural pride that enhances self-identity'.
- **The ways to share the final outcome of the research process**. How should the results of an ABR process be analysed without falling into traditional patterns of representation and interpretation, and then, how should they be shared with the audience, either the general public or the artistic community and academic community?

About this final point, there are several articles in this literature review that show the possibility of negotiating partnership between the art and the research, and the artist and the researcher. For example, while the articles quoted in this review are all published in academic journals, there are several papers that have intertwined edited dialogues about the arts-based research process using a script format (Finley & Knowles, 1995), final poetic writing with extracts of analysis and reflection (Finley, 2003), theatre dialogues and discussion of the process (Saldaña, 2011) and conversations about interpretation and analysis of drawing (Rumbold, et al., 2012). That is to say, even the final academic output of a research process can include and present more voices than that of the researcher.

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