

Reinterpreting arts based data through multiple theories
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ABSTRACT:

Introduction

The field of deaf education continues to be highly polarized through positions taken up by medical specialists, educators, audiologists, speech pathologists, and academics concerning the best practices in educating DHH people. Binarized thinking promotes forced choices: to be educated using only available technology (hearing aids, cochlear implants, assistive listening devices) and using spoken languages or through implementing bilingual models of education using sign and spoken languages. These binarized choices have an impact on identity development and community membership in that educators and parents decide which community (hearing or Deaf community) and which identity the DHH child will adopt (Deaf or hearing). This study focuses how arts-based research can contribute to the discourses pertaining to belonging/not belonging to communities, and more specifically to the Deaf and hearing communities.

Purpose

In 2013, an autoethnographic study was conducted on the conflict between a Deaf teacher and hearing interpreters who were opposed to using sign language native to the Deaf community in Canada. Polarized debates between the two camps resulted in an unresolved and untenable work environment. Artwork produced by the author during this period of conflict and during the study and interpreted in the light of post-colonial theory (Mignolo, 2000) allowed for a more nuanced and compassionate retelling of the story (which was initially told in the author's creative non-fiction work, *The Deaf House*). Post-colonial theory however has often been criticized for its failure to overcome binarized thinking (Spivak 2013; Braidotti, 2013). The question becomes, "What does the same arts based data reveal when the same narrative concerning identity, language and community belonging is reinterpreted in the light of the material turn, specifically post-human theorizing (Braidotti, 2013)?"

Method

This current autoethnographic study used the original artwork (six images) generated by the author through the process of imagework (Edgar, 2004). Mazzei and Jackson (2012) have proposed a new methodology of interpreting selected data according to several theories in order to uncover nuances and multiple meanings. The original set of artwork will be reinterpreted according to Braidotti's interpretations of Deleuze and Guattari's theorizing concerning becoming animal, earth, and machine and with view to uncovering the transversality between the three within a posthuman framework (Braidotti, 2013).

Results

The reinterpretation of the artwork resulted in an even more nuanced retelling of the selected narrative, providing possibilities of overcoming polarization and binary thinking. For instance, the study successfully bypassed polarization and binary thinking through the consideration of cyborgian states associated with being bilingual (ASL and English).

Conclusions and Implications

Concepts concerning becoming animal, machine and earth can be used to steer parents, educators, and medical professionals away from overly simplistic and polarized discourses (Mauldin, 2016) concerning the education of DHH children and youth.

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