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To cite this article: Lindsay Eales & Danielle Peers (2016) Moving Adapted Physical Activity: The Possibilities of Arts-Based Research, *Quest*, 68:1, 55-68, DOI: [10.1080/00336297.2015.1116999](https://doi.org/10.1080/00336297.2015.1116999)

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Moving Adapted Physical Activity: The Possibilities of Arts-Based Research

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ABSTRACT

Where is the moving body in our written bodies of work? How might we articulate truly unspeakable and deeply moving moments of understanding? In what ways can we reflect and honor the knowledge of those who do not use academic words, English words, or any words at all? How might art move us to answer these questions differently—and more importantly, to ask different questions? These lines of inquiry have driven arts-based research movements within many fields including nursing, medicine, and education. In this article, we explore existing and potential uses of arts in adapted physical activity research and practice. We weave theoretical exploration, artistic engagement, and our personal experiences as researchers, practitioners and disabled movers. We do so in order to demonstrate how artistic epistemologies can enrich and expand our inquiry, understanding, and engagement in adapted physical activity.

KEYWORDS



Arts-based research;
qualitative methods;
disability; critical disability
studies

The interpretive practice of making sense of one's findings is both artistic and political. (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p. 23)

[Arts-based research] may serve to motivate the viewer or reader to reflect more deeply about the issues that are embodied so vividly ... and even to act differently in the nearby world. (Barone & Eisner, 2012, p. 154)

The art and difficulty of moving bodies

In both research and in practice, adapted physical activity (APA) has at its very core the body in motion. We poke, prod, examine, and question bodies of difference who may throw, dance, or balance in non-normative ways. Our engagements with APA also often move us. Our bodies often move, literally, alongside those with whom we study or work. We are sometimes also moved emotionally and intellectually by those with whom we research, and by the knowledges that emerge from them. These encounters spark new directions of thought that become ephemeral, confusing, or elusive at times. We throw around ideas, we dance with our assumptions, and we balance ever so delicately: the tips of our fingers aching to grasp that theory or phraseology that precisely represent the experiences we research. Our hands find the keyboard, and they shape our ideas into

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words, but they often fail to capture that elusiveness—the embodiment and emotions of our work languish as the unspoken (seemingly unspeakable) remainder.

In other words, our APA research, practice, and knowledge seek to move bodies. Our knowledgeable bodies move through our research and practice. Those bodies we research and practice with, in the most important moments of our careers, will push us to move our bodies of knowledge forward. Bodies are central to our work in APA, and yet the intimate, sweaty, visceral, complex, and expansive pains and pleasures of those bodies are largely missing within our traditional ways of representing research.

According to Reid (2003), APA is “a cross-disciplinary body of knowledge and practice that enables professionals to interact with people experiencing difficulties with movement” (p. 20). Like many fields and disciplines, however, APA might have some movement difficulties of its own. We move in stops and starts, struggling to keep up with the “difficult” bodies that we study as they move toward the disability paradigms they have created (DePauw, 2000). We could benefit from an increased range of (e)motion in our research; we could benefit from mobilizing, accepting, and connecting to a wider range of epistemological approaches (Bouffard, 2001; Bouffard, Streaan, & Davis, 1998). We caution students and future practitioners of the dangers of *sure-footed knowing*; we challenge them to beautifully stagger into the more rigorous play of critical thinking (Bouffard & Streaan, 2003) and the *insecure footing* of contextual understanding (Standal, 2008).

Movement can be difficult. As our shared passions within APA would attest, however, it can also be beautiful, healthy, invigorating, connecting, and pleasurable. All of the above movement difficulties, like many of those we study, hold within them incredible creative and connective potential. We argue here that arts-based research (ABR) might be one tool that could help mobilize our field in the face of these movement difficulties. ABR can evoke curiosity, spark criticality, shift us politically, and help us to think much more deeply about our thinking, our feeling, and our moving. ABR offers us exciting opportunities to think through our moving bodies, and through the emotions that move us.¹ It offers us opportunities to think, feel, and mobilize our knowledges differently.

In this article, we weave traditional academic writing with more artistic writing—using examples from some of our previous ABR publications to introduce the possibilities of ABR to the field of APA. Both artistic and traditional sections will draw from APA literature, but will also engage with the literature base, and the aesthetic mediums, of performance (Conquergood, 1998, 2003; Denzin, 2003), literary representation (Barone & Eisner, 1997, 2012), poetic transcription (Glesne, 1997), dance creation (Boydell, 2011; Snowber, 2012), and film (Woo, 2008). We begin with a short discussion of APA’s broader engagement with art. We then move to an overview of ABR in terms of its historical roots, some commonly shared characteristics, and a few of the possible criteria for assessing its quality. Next, we discuss ABR’s usefulness in the context of disability research in general, and in APA in particular. We finish by acknowledging some of those in APA who are already creating greater space for this kind of research, and we seek ways of translating this kind of research for publication in our field.

The uses of art in APA

We recognize that we may not be the first to articulate the usefulness of art² within APA (e.g., Goodwin, Krohn, & Kuhnle, 2004). APA practitioners, for example, might use dance

or painting to motivate clients to move their bodies in ways specifically designed to increase health, skill, capacity, or a sense of well-being (e.g., Steadward Centre's [2013] *Movin' & Groovin'* dance class). One could paraphrase this as professional interventions that use art to enable. There are APA researchers, also, who have chosen to study how particular populations experience or move within arts-based recreational programs (Goodwin et al., 2004). One might call this a research intervention into art's enabling qualities. Also, there are cases where researchers or professionals within APA have been involved in removing disabling barriers to participation in art, and the aesthetic, social, political, recreational, and movement opportunities that art practices provide (Eales, 2012). One might call this professional or research interventions to enable art.

All three of these APA engagements with art (using art to enable; researching art's enabling qualities; or enabling the art world) can be extremely important interventions into APA, art, and the lives of those with whom we work. What we propose is a use of art that may engage with some of the above practices, but that also offers something quite different, if not the exact reverse, of all three interventions above. Rather than asking how APA research and practice can enable (with) art, we ask herein: how might art, and ABR in particular, enable APA research and practice? How might it shift our ways of researching, knowing, and learning about moving bodies of difference, as well as our ways of intervening in relation to those bodies?

ABR: A brief introduction

ABR, according to McNiff (2008):

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. (p. 29)

In other words, ABR is not simply the use of art as a data collection tool within traditional methodologies. Rather, it requires an epistemological and paradigmatic shift: engaging art in ways that are foundational to, and generative of, the process of meaning making and knowledge production (McNiff, 2008; Rolling, 2010).

Research in ABR draws heavily from fields related to the arts, such as art education, as well as performance, theater, and dance studies (Boydell, 2011; Conquergood, 1998, 2003; Kupperts & Marcus, 2009; Kupperts, 2008; Rolling, 2010). ABR has also developed a strong literature base within fields that are not so obviously related to the arts, including medicine and allied health professions (Boydell, 2011; Brown, Halabi, MacDonald, Campbell, & Guenette, 2011; McNiff, 2000, 2008), feminist research (Lather, 1986; Richardson, 2000), and education (Barone & Eisner, 1997, 2012; Cahnamann-Taylor & Siegesmund, 2008; Conrad & Campbell, 2006; Snowber, 2012). Covering the breadth of ABR's different uses in each field is far beyond the scope of a single article (see, for example books by Barone & Eisner, 2012; Cahnamann-Taylor & Siegesmund, 2008; McNiff, 2000). We focus, therefore, on outlining some of the characteristics and evaluative criteria for ABR, as outlined by prominent education-based ABR scholars Barone and Eisner (1997, 2012). First, however, we will briefly discuss the crisis of representation from which ABR emerged.

Crisis and creation

ABR has grown significantly in response to what some scholars have called the “crisis of representation,” which came to the forefront of qualitative research in the 1980s and continues to this day (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p. 16; cf, Finley, 2003). The crisis of representation refers to an increasing recognition of the socially constructed and subjective nature of knowledge in general, and in particular, the inseparability of the authorial subject position, the research content, and the written academic text (Denzin, 1997; Lather, 1986). In other words, the researcher’s subject position shapes research content and the resulting text (e.g., what questions one asks, which data one finds relevant, what one emphasizes in the reporting of findings, etc.). The textual form of the research, likewise, can mask or acknowledge the subjective nature of research content as well as the influential effect of the researcher’s subjectivity (e.g., objective third person voice versus reflexive first person researcher voice in the text, versus collaborative multi-voiced texts).

This crisis was not simply spurred by a poststructuralist epistemological turn. It was also an explicitly ethical and political response to vehement feminist, critical race and post-colonial critiques about the ways that standard research practices might serve to reproduce sexist, racist, and colonizing cultures (Lather, 1986; Mertens, 2007). As Conquergood (1998) noted, “the move from scholarship about performance to scholarship as, scholarship by means of, performance strikes at the heart of academic politics and issues of scholarly authority” (p. 33). Responses to the crisis of representation have included a push for more reflexive writing and research practice; local, specific community-relevant micro-theories rather than grand narratives; alternative textual forms, methodologies and quality measures; the interlocking of research and activism; and more consciously negotiated relationships between the researcher and the researched (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Mertens, Sullivan, & Stace, 2011). A number of significant (sometimes overlapping) methodologies have emerged from this continued critical re-imagining of research. These include participatory action research (Conrad & Campbell, 2006; McDonald, 2012), transformative research (Mertens, 2007; Mertens et al., 2011), auto-ethnography (Ellis & Bochner, 2000; Richardson, 2000), and ABR (Conquergood, 1998; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000).

Selected characteristics of ABR

Barone and Eisner (1997) defined seven features that are present in many iterations of ABR. Their list is not intended to be exhaustive, nor is it intended to dismiss works that may not adhere to each of the following seven features.

First, ABR “possesses a capacity to pull the person who experiences it into an alternative reality” (Barone & Eisner, 1997, p. 73). It does not seek to be realistic, but draws the audience into a shifted, perhaps unfamiliar or challenging perspective that they can nonetheless relate to.

Second, ABR is porous: it is imbued with gaps, or a sense of ambiguity, wherein the audience can insert themselves. Martin Heidegger, recounted Greene (1987), “wrote that the arts ‘make space for spaciousness’: they often open worlds. Openings, beginnings, initiatives, new understandings, more intense engagements” (p. 12). These spaces demand of the reader an active engagement in knowledge-making, and thus can create a personal



Figure 1. In her porous and evocative performance ethnography, *(Dis)quiet in the Peanut Gallery*, Eales (2013) and the dancer-participants co-created an alternative reality on stage, in which the dancers question and act back against dominant disability stories. The 15-minute dance can be viewed at <http://www.cripsie.ca/disquiet.html>.

investment in the research. ABR therefore “encourages a multiplicity of readings,” as well as enabling a multiplicity of knowledges and perspectives to emerge from the same piece of research (Barone & Eisner, 1997, p. 75).

Third, as demonstrated in [figure 1](#), ABR includes elements that are expressive, metaphorical, and evocative in order to engage the imaginations of participants, researchers and the desired audience. ABR seeks to use imaginative capacities to open possibilities of questioning rather than closing down upon definitive answers.

Fourth, Barone and Eisner (1997) suggested that ABR must be—or at least must have some articulations of the research that are—understandable by non-researcher audiences. It should include language, imagery, and/or movement vocabularies utilized by those participating in the research, because such language helps to articulate the complexities and specificities of these communities in ways that are more likely to be meaningful to them.

Fifth, much like the example in [figure 2](#), ABR engages the above features to create “vivid depictions” that promote empathy, solidarity, and/or a sense of connectedness with communities that the audience may not be a part of (Barone & Eisner, 1997, p. 77). The



Figure 2. In the 8-minute autoethnographic video *Gimp Bootcamp*, Peers and Brittain (2008) used humor, the language of their Paralympic sport community, and vivid imagery to engage academic and non-academic audiences in disability theory and politics. The video can be viewed at <http://www.kingcripproductions.com/gimp-boot-camp.html>.

audience is asked to know and experience with, rather than knowing about the experience of, another person or community.

Sixth, each work of ABR “embodies the unique vision [sic] of its author” (Barone & Eisner, 1997, p. 78). That is, the author(s) is/are actively engaged in subjective meaning-making, artistic interpretation, and shaping knowledge throughout the research process.

Seventh, ABR research tends not to take the same form as traditional research texts. Examples can come in the form of performances, literary or poetic texts, images, video, or film. They can also come in hybrid forms, where aesthetic forms merge or alternate with more traditional academic writing. Importantly, the art is treated as a form of knowledge, rather than merely an object of knowledge. In characterizing ABR, it is important to remember the political and epistemological movements from which ABR emerged. On top of these seven aesthetic and methodological characteristics, many arts-based researchers share an explicit political and ethical commitment to the communities with which they study (Conquergood, 1998, 2003; Conrad & Campbell, 2006; Denzin, 2003). ABR is often employed with radical and activist intention (Conquergood, 1998; Finley, 2003). In relation to performative ABR, Conquergood (1998) wrote: “instead of construing performance as transcendence, a higher plane that one breaks into, I prefer to think of it as transgression, that force which crashes and breaks through sedimented meanings and normative traditions” (p. 32). ABR research politics demand that we challenge normative traditions by, for example, recognizing and respecting the local and specific contexts of our work; engaging alternative ethical research practices, such as ethics of care; and representing this research in ways that are meaningful to the individuals and communities we study (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Finley, 2003).

Lindsay rolls off of Danielle’s back, crutch arms slicing the air in a curving arch above their heads. Danielle melts from her chair to the ground, expanding onto one side, stretching into an inflated air mattress in the centre of the lecture theatre floor. Lindsay rolls to kneeling behind Danielle, palms her with one hand on either side and wraps her fingers to lace between Danielle’s ribs. Lindsay and Danielle meld into a collective breathing sculpture, Danielle directing time with her inhalation, Lindsay squeezing exhalation to an audible wheeze from Danielle’s lips. The audience fuses with this breathing assemblage, casting a sunbeam of heat and warmth and over this intimate scene, painting Lindsay and Danielle’s cheeks with a faint blush.

The above is an excerpt from Peers and Eales (in press), in which they use poetic transliteration to represent a social justice-oriented performance based on their experiences of mobility, disability, and collective care ethics.

Barone and Eisner (1997) argued that some of these ABR characteristics have been taken up, in varying degrees, within forms of qualitative, and perhaps even quantitative, research that is not formally regarded as ABR. Most notably, they point to the use of thick description, and stylized, personalized, and/or evocative writing forms. We will return to this point below, when we apply ABR characteristics to APA literature.

Evaluative criteria for ABR

ABR scholars—just like traditional researchers and artists—have developed and continually debated criteria for judging the quality of their work (Barone & Eisner, 2012; Finley, 2003; Lather, 1986). Barone and Eisner (2012) offered a non-exhaustive list that includes

the following six quality criteria: incisiveness; concision; coherence; generativity; social significance; and evocation and illumination. Incisiveness is the degree to which one “gets to the heart of a social issue” (p. 148). Concision is the capacity to communicate key messages without extraneous material that dilutes the impact of the work. Coherence refers to how the content of the work fits together into a strong and substantial whole work. Generativity is essentially the question of what a work does: its capacity to compel understanding and/or action. Social significance refers to the importance of the questions being raised and the issues being explored, in terms of their capacity to impact people in ways that are highly meaningful to them. Evocation and illumination refers to how a work moves audiences emotionally in ways that bring forth new understandings, meanings, or questioning. As in other fields, debates over what constitutes quality research, and what criteria should be used to evaluate such research, continues ([Clough, 2000](#); [Ellis & Bochner, 2000](#); [Finley, 2003](#); [Lather, 1986](#)). Most, however, would agree that standardized quality criteria for traditional forms of research alone cannot do justice to the distinct epistemological and methodological underpinnings of ABR.

ABR in APA: Art moving our knowledge of moving bodies and disability

We argue that ABR could be particularly useful for APA, first, because ABR can help us to access knowledges that cannot easily be shared through words alone.

How do I do justice to the members of my community?

When they are too young to know the words.

When there are no words.

When she doesn't have the words in English, and I don't speak Polish.

When they call him non-verbal, and yet his movement speaks volumes.

When I can't explain the depth and joy in a dancer's movement-inspired laugh.

When we have communicated so intimately but never have spoken.

We deal with topics like movement, sensation, pain, emotions, and interrelationships, descriptions of which often fall short of the complexity and/or intensity with which they are experienced. In addition, sometimes, more is communicated by the *way* things are said than by *what* words are actually spoken. In such cases, video, performance, or poetic transcription may better reflect the data than verbatim transcription. For example, in Spencer-Cavaliere and Watkinson's (2010) research on children's experiences of inclusion in play, one participant, Jacob, says to other kids: “Sure, you can play.” Is this phrase meant as emphatic inclusion? Mere tolerance? Mocking and ironic exclusion?

Sally approaches the boys and sheepishly asks to join. Does Jacob toss her the ball, gesture for her to enter the field, and emphatically exclaim, “Sure you can play!”? Does Jacob keep playing, barely looking at Sally, and mumble, “Sure, you can play?” Or does Jacob quickly pass the ball away from Sally, and sarcastically chirp, “Sure, you can play,” laughing with his friends as they keep the ball far from Sally's reach?

Second, we research the moving body, we write the moving body, we talk about the moving body, and yet our academic sharing is largely sedentary and disembodied. How might we show, instead of simply tell, our moving knowledges? How can we enable our knowledges to move others: to evoke emotion; to incite change? As Bouffard and Streaan (2003) argued, “we bother to think critically because it will help us to make a decision about what we will do in our lives or what we will believe” (p. 6). ABR can help us

translate our academic thinking into formats that engage a wide variety of audiences in critical thought, increasing the likelihood that our research will impact upon their beliefs, actions, and lives (Rolling, 2010).

Disability research: Ethical and political implications

The above reasons why ABR can expand research in APA are also supported by ethical and political justifications rooted in disability movements. Within the original crisis of representation, discussed above, disability perspectives were rarely taken into consideration. More recently, however, disability communities have begun critiquing research on and about disability communities, in similar ways to the feminist and post-colonial movements before them (Barnes & Mercer, 1997; Charlton, 1998; Mertens et al., 2011). Many of these critiques can be summed up by the disability activist slogan, “nothing about us without us” (Charlton, 1998, p. 3). The political demands behind this slogan cannot be satiated by researchers simply consulting with disability service organizations (mostly run by able-bodied professionals), or with parents of disabled children, before conducting research. “Nothing about us without us” is a much more fundamental, ethical, political, and epistemological demand. It includes the claim that seemingly-objective disability research by non-disabled professionals can unintentionally reproduce ableist³ worldviews and disabling social structures (Barnes & Mercer, 1997; Charlton, 1998; Oliver, 1992). It makes a bold assertion that those who experience disability often have access to fundamentally different ways of knowing, and fundamentally different kinds of knowledge, because their subjectivities, experiences, and embodiments are structured by a constant barrage of disabling social contexts and normative expectations. The claim is not, in the majority of cases, that non-disabled people cannot or should not do disability research. Rather, it is a demand to critically question the structural barriers that enable some areas of disability research to remain largely absent of researchers who experience disability (Barnes & Mercer, 1997). It is a demand to research *with* not *on* disabled people and communities (Mertens et al., 2011). It is a demand, above all, for researchers of all subjectivities to engage more ethically, reflexively, meaningfully, respectfully, equitably, and inclusively with the communities and individuals that our research is about (Barnes & Mercer, 1997; DePauw, 2000; Oliver, 1992).

What kinds of changes in our APA research practices might we need to consider in order to take this demand seriously? Research with disabled communities requires significant and meaningful consultation with the specific communities (or individuals) involved about the relevance and impact of research on their everyday lives (Mertens et al., 2011; Oliver, 1992). It often involves engaging with the knowledges produced by disability community members (scholars, researchers, artists, activists, etc.; Bredahl, 2008; Oliver, 1992). It means ensuring that the very communities we study have opportunities to (co-)create and disseminate knowledge about their own bodies, lives, and communities (Barnes & Mercer, 1997; DePauw, 2000). It is also imperative that those whom we research about have access to the knowledge that has been generated with and about them (Barnes & Mercer, 1997). Lastly, it requires a deep reflexivity about the (unintentional) ableist biases in our work, and the structural barriers to full participation in our fields and universities (Campbell, 2009; DePauw, 2000; Withers, 2012).

Implications of disability research—ABR in APA

Aligned in varying degrees with the disability research practices offered above, ABR has been taken up within numerous disability-invested fields, including critical disability studies (Kuppers & Marcus, 2009; Kuppers, 2008; Sandahl & Auslander, 2005), medicine and allied health professions (Boydell, 2011; Brown et al., 2011; McNiff, 2000, 2008) and education (Barone & Eisner, 1997, 2012; Cahnmann-Taylor & Siegesmund, 2008; Conrad & Campbell, 2006; Snowber, 2012). These fields, interestingly and importantly, have significantly contributed to the development of APA, and their literature bases continue to inform APA research and practice (Reid, 2003; Wall, 2003). APA, however, has yet to develop a strong literature base that explicitly engages with ABR. This does not mean, however, that some epistemological, methodological, and ethico-political aspects of ABR have not been meaningfully engaged in APA research to date.

Some authors, for example, are helping to create epistemological room for what ABR might bring to APA. There is an increasing appreciation for multiple ways of knowing and thinking in APA that are not unlike some of the epistemological movements emerging from the crisis of representation. For example, Bouffard and Streaan (2003) emphasized the importance of critical thinking in professional education. They articulate critical thought as a tentative, uncertain relationship to knowledge in which one is always questioning one's own assumptions and exploring alternative ways of understanding. They wrote: "one definition can harness your mind. Answers stop thinking. Questions encourage more thinking" (p. 5). According to Barone and Eisner (1997), ABR seeks to use imaginative capacities toward similar ends: to open possibilities of questioning rather than closing down upon definitive answers.

The critical tentativeness and uncertainty called for by Bouffard and Streaan (2003) and Barone and Eisner (1997) are echoed by APA scholar Standal (2008). He argued for the importance of insecure practitioners in the face of a growing movement toward the epistemic security of "evidence-based" research and practice. Paraphrasing Schwandt, Standal argued that "understanding is practical-moral activity that is concerned more with engaging with that which is to be understood, than grasping the content of it" (p. 211). This reflects ABR's quality of porosity: the epistemological space wherein practitioners, researchers, audience members, and/or students have the room to interpret, consider, co-create, and apply knowledge according to the specific ethical and practical contexts in which they find themselves. "It could be suggested that the outcome of insecure practices," Standal argued, "is not accumulation of experience in order to become more secure, but rather developing ways of handling the inescapable insecurity" (p. 211). ABR, we argue, can provide a pedagogical tool for preparing future practitioners and researchers for handling this insecurity with increasing critical and creative capacities.

As noted in earlier sections, the aesthetic and methodological qualities of ABR have often been firmly rooted in explicitly ethical and political intentions. Interestingly, APA research that echoes ABR aesthetically or methodologically seems to also often demonstrate a politically and ethically motivated engagement with disability perspectives, communities, and scholars. For example, in Howe's (2008) anthropological study on the Paralympic Movement, he engages in thick, and at times evocative, ethnographic writing from the perspective of a Paralympic athlete: He wrote:

My body is poked and prodded. It is measured. I am asked to walk, run and jump in a room that is really not suitable for any physical activity whatsoever. Too small to build up a head of steam while running, and lacking ventilation so that I am grateful that I cannot run. This is unfortunate, because my impairment means that I have trouble controlling my muscles and stopping is as tricky as starting to run The classifiers see me as a difficult character. On several occasions I am told to simply ‘do as they ask’ and not to bother them with ‘trivial’ questions. (p. 71)

Howe’s (2008) work has a number of the ABR characteristics listed by Barone and Eisner (1997). In particular, his stylistic insertion of himself into his work creates a distinctive authorial signature, and his writing evokes a sense of solidarity and empathy as he recounts his claustrophobic and disempowering experiences of classification. Notably, he offers one of the few APA texts written from the perspective of a scholar who is a member of the very disability community under study (see also, [Bredahl, 2008](#); [Spencer-Cavaliere & Peers, 2011](#)). Perhaps partially because of his subject position, his work takes up an explicitly politicized reading of disability, engaging with the work of numerous disability scholars.

[Goodwin et al. \(2004\)](#) also engaged with methodological and political qualities of ABR. They elicited creative journal entries (including stickers, drawings, photos, and writing) from children who dance with the use of wheelchairs. Importantly, the authors used these journal entries not only as a means of data collection, but also included photos of the journal entries in the final published text, thereby recognizing these artistic contributions as valuable sources of knowledge in their own right. In accordance with ethical suggestions for research with participants experiencing disability ([Bredahl, 2008](#); [Spencer-Cavaliere & Watkinson, 2010](#)), these authors provided the opportunity for participant-generated knowledge to be fore-fronted. In fore-fronting this knowledge, the authors’ work also echoes the ABR quality of including the language and imagery used by participants ([Barone & Eisner, 1997](#)), thus making the work more evocative of the complexities under study, and more understandable by the communities being researched.

The seeds of ABR are here, in APA, already. The scholars listed above are viewed as hopeful signs that with a little critical thought, creativity, and embracing of uncertainty APA may soon develop a thriving literature base that expands the pedagogical, political, and transformative possibilities of ABR in motion.

Recommendations

It is our contention that artistic epistemologies and methodologies can enrich our field and can expand our methodological tools, our research questions, our dissemination potential, and perhaps even our relevance within some of the communities we study. Creating an environment within APA where ABR can thrive, however, will require the posing of some critical questions, the generous and curious engagement in discussion, and the willingness to push for some creative interventions.

As discussed above, the groundwork for ABR’s introduction into APA will be partially laid by those who critically question and openly debate the range of ontologies, epistemologies, methodologies, ethics, and pedagogies that are valued by APA journals and conferences (e.g., [Bouffard & Streat, 2003](#); [Bouffard & Watkinson, 1998](#); [Goodwin & Rossow-Kimball, 2009](#); [Standal, 2008](#); as well the articles in this special issue). This debate,

however, will also need to spark some creative interventions into our field. Journal editors, for example, can create (or look to other fields, like disability or performance studies, for) ways of representing a wider range of research formats. Editors can also commit to assessing the quality of non-traditional research through its own assessment criteria. Conference organizers can invite ABR researchers to give keynote addresses, or at the very least, can provide options for non-traditional presentations. Scholars who use ABR can work at ways of translating the non-written components of ABR into publishable forms without diluting and flattening the very qualities that make ABR so valuable. Scholars can submit high quality ABR research to APA journals and conferences in hopes of compelling some of the above changes. Finally, scholars can create forums for sharing, supporting, and advancing ABR approaches to APA research: sharing within our field, and between our parent disciplines.

Though this article has focused on how to bring ABR into the field of APA, early presentations of these same ideas have often led to a different question: how can a scholar who is compelled by this argument bring ABR into their own research? Prior artistic experience can be very useful, however researchers do not necessarily need to consider themselves artists to conduct ABR, or to include components of ABR in their work. ABR is not defined by the artistic credentials of its practitioners. As outlined above, ABR is defined by the researcher's systematic engagement with artistic practice (McNiff, 2008), the output's resonance with the above-listed ABR characteristics (Barone & Eisner, 1997), and the quality of the research as defined by ABR criteria. One way to get started is to collaborate with other ABR scholars, with artists, or, importantly, with study participants who already use art to express themselves. Rather than focusing on getting the right answers, we urge burgeoning ABR scholars to expand their focus to include the new questions ABR will undoubtedly spark (Bouffard & Streat, 2003). We urge scholars to follow these, at times uncomfortable (Standal, 2008), questions and to use them to perpetually challenge and rebuild their relationships to knowledge, to the field of APA, and to the communities that drive their research. This cycle of innovation and challenge, after all, lies at the very heart of research, and drives the kinds of artistic engagements that change minds, hearts and worlds.

Notes

1. We intend to acknowledge that ABR can be useful for understanding bodies and emotions differently. We also, however, imply that ABR can glean knowledge directly from bodies: that our bodies are sites of knowledge generation (Snowber, 2012).
2. *Art*, within this article, refers to explicitly aesthetic and creative practices and products (e.g., painting, dance, film, poetry), in contrast to *the (liberal) arts*, which refers to a grouping of academic disciplines (e.g., history, sociology, English).
3. Ableism refers to a (often unacknowledged) set of prejudices or discriminatory behaviors that are based upon historically and politically produced structures of disability and normativity (Campbell, 2009; Withers, 2012).

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