



Book Review:
Perspectives on Arts Education Research in Canada,
Volume 1: Surveying the Landscape

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Abstract:

Canadian arts educators recognize the dominance of American texts and curriculum standards in both teacher education programs and in public classroom settings. In *Perspectives on Arts Education Research in Canada, Volume 1: Surveying the Landscape*, the late Bernard W. Andrews (1950-2023) showcases curriculum ideas that consider the uniqueness of the Canadian experience in arts education and arts-based research. This and the subsequent volume are an important contribution to arts education research and curricula, in Canada and around the world.

Keywords: arts education; arts education research; arts-based research; Canadian experience; Canadian research

Recension

Résumé :

Les éducateurs artistiques canadiens reconnaissent la prédominance des textes et des normes américaines dans les programmes de formation des enseignants et dans les salles de classe publiques. Dans *Perspectives on Arts Education Research in Canada, Volume 1: Surveying the Landscape*, le regretté Bernard W. Andrews (1950-2023) présente des idées de programmes d'études qui tiennent compte du caractère unique de l'expérience canadienne en matière d'éducation artistique et de recherche fondée sur les arts. Ce volume et le suivant constituent une contribution importante à la recherche sur l'éducation artistique et aux programmes d'études, au Canada et dans le monde entier.

Mots clés : éducation artistique; recherche sur l'éducation artistique; recherche axée sur les arts; expérience canadienne; recherche canadienne

Book Review

Andrews, B. W. (Ed.). (2019). *Perspectives on arts education research in Canada, Vol. 1: Surveying the landscape*. Brill/Sense.

Approximately 50 years ago, Elliot Eisner started encouraging the implementation of the arts in research about education. *Arts-based research* (ABR), a term first identified by Eisner and Barone, has become a metaphorical umbrella with spokes branching out to multiple disciplines (Leavy, 2016). Since the turn of this century, and Liora Bresler's (2007) first *International Handbook of Research in Arts Education*, a wave of academic publications has supported examples of how the arts can be used to enhance education. It is exciting to participate in this movement and observe its growth to include curriculum design (Andrews, 2004; Abeles, 2016; Aróstegui, Perales & Bautista, 2019), spirituality (J. Boyce-Tillman, 2007; McCarthy, 2013), social justice (Woodford, 2018; Elliott, Silverman, & Bowman, 2016; Harrison, 2013), environmental education (York, 2014) and the development of understandings of self and others (Leavy, 2016; Pinar, 2010; Greene, 1995). ABR has also shown its potential to inspire reflexivity and positionality, generate data and disseminate results of studies (Leavy, 2018).

There are numerous Canadians who play a leading role in ABR. However, introducing them to Canadian students typically comes through textbooks written by or edited by academics in the United States. The students in the classes I teach have pointed out their discomfort studying in a Canadian university and using textbooks that seem "US-centric." As a dual citizen of both Canada and the United States, I understand that while our cultures may appear similar, our histories and politics are not necessarily aligned. It is important that students have examples of professionals from their own cultures with whom they can identify. Therefore, I was thrilled to receive my copy of *Perspectives on Arts Education Research in Canada, Volume 1: Surveying the Landscape*, a 2019 compendium of peer-reviewed chapters by both established and new researchers edited by Bernard (Bernie) W. Andrews, a Canadian leader in Arts Education. Andrews passed in 2023, and I consider his two-volume handbook part of his legacy, and this book review a tribute to him.

Common themes embedded throughout this 160-page book (and I note that a second volume, focused on "issues and directions" is now available) include potentials for ABR to inform both imagination and holistic education, attributes that will be necessary to help students (and others in community) recover from the devastation that COVID-19 has deposited. Sameshima, Wiebe and Hayes remind us, in Chapter 2, that "Imagination is the creative impulse through which we co-emerge with the world" (p. 21); therefore, "imagination as method" has a place in ABR (p. 19). A prevalent influence in the authors' contributions is the concept of *a/r/tography*, a term coined by Rita Irwin (2004). This term encourages a shift from identifying the artist, the researcher and the teacher as separate entities, to a vision where these roles are plied. Indeed, a call for a post-qualitative methodological approach becomes tangible through the imbedded examples, where meanings are layered and non-linear, and there is room for emergent spaces where artists, educators, researchers and spectator-participants can perform together.

Genevieve Cloutier, in Chapter 5, describes the diversity that exists in ABR. Some seek to explore the arts for its potential to serve as a tool to open students' understandings in core school subjects; others want to learn how the arts has and can act for societal and personal transformation; and some use the arts as methodology to encourage imagination and make space for new ideas to emerge. Indeed, the arts have a long history as a tool to disrupt and challenge the status quo. Educators are requesting a call to action to expand practices in arts education. While many report that teaching students to critique their work is equivalent to critical thinking, others encourage critical thinking that includes social contexts of their art form (Harrison, 2013).

With a nod to poetic inquiry (Butler-Kisber, et al. 2017), Nané Jordan, in Chapter 1, maintains the lineage of intimately crafted words that lead us to new ways of understanding. Jordan describes the concept of life-writing inquiry as she retells of her "inner and outer footsteps" that seem to haunt her as she travels through Paris, France, conducting her post-doctoral research. Her gratitude toward Louise DeSalvo's recognition that writing can be a "way of healing" (p. 5) and her reflections on Gabor Maté's writings play prominently in her storytelling. I found myself engulfed in her narrative as she compares herself to a midwife who seeks "to be-with research that honours life and gives birth to new meanings" (p. 5). This theme is modulated as she describes the comfort that she gains from Cixous' writing as "linguistic midwifery" (p. 7).

The written word comes to life in the plentiful pallet of aesthetic delight in the poetic, dramatic and narrative inquiry interspersed throughout this publication. Caterina Migliore, in Chapter 9, uses poetry to unearth tensions that can exist between mentor and mentee; Julia Brook and Susan Catlin, in Chapter 8, use storytelling to explore life as an artist from an Indigenous perspective; Kathryn Ricketts, in Chapter 3, creates "fluid border and hybrid identities" (p. 36) in her dramatic displays of re-imagined stories. These creations help awaken the possibilities that performing offers a way to look at things as if they could be otherwise (Greene, 1995).

I was delighted to read reference of Augusto Boal, whose *Theatre of the Oppressed* (1979) blurs divisions between actor and audience, thus disrupting the hierarchal elevation of the performer. His influence is fundamental to the *Pre-text methodology*, which stimulates literacy, innovation and citizenship, and has been recognized by UNESCO as "Education for Peace" (Sommer, n.d.). In 2020, I was fortunate to become certified as a Pre-text practitioner through a course in Santiago, Chile, run by its innovator, Doris Sommer, Director of Cultural Agents Initiative at Harvard University. Sommer invited me to explore the use of Pre-text in music education. While Boal's legacy has been demonstrated primarily in theatre education and literacy education, colleagues and I are designing ways to implement Pre-text into musical learning, as well.

Experiences and understandings grown *sans* the written word are also showcased in the works by Kate Greenaway, Sajani (Jinny) Menon and Yuriko Gillard (in Chapters 4, 7 and 6, respectively). Their chapters demonstrate how contemplations about history, others and the self can be stimulated through tactile objects such as fibre, glass, stones and other gifts that nature has given us to play with and enhance. The artistic creations shared throughout Andrews' publication add to the

awakening that ABR can be non-linear, multi-layered and rhizomatic in nature. Sharing examples of its usage as well as imagined potentials is essential for educational and pedagogical growth.

ABR can inspire reflexivity and positionality, generate data and, as is most common, disseminate results of studies (Leavy, 2018). In many situations, however, expectations require that arts education research be molded to fit into a qualitative or quasi-experimental box. This book helps us imagine ways to climb out of the box into a post-qualitative and perhaps even a post-colonial environment. In the concluding chapter, Andrews highlights the vast transformations possible in ABR through the use of technology. He posits that with our ability to now connect with cultures from around the globe, our creations can meld oral and literate traditions, thus encouraging acute awareness of sociological and anthropological perspectives and the patterns that have endured with an excuse of previous isolation. This perspective and others shared in this book are valuable resources for those interested and working in Arts Education Research. Indeed, the arts have the ability to act as a vehicle for imagining a better world (Hess, 2021).

It is impossible to read the contributed essays in this book without reminders and pangs of gratitude toward the late Carl Leggo (1953-2019), whose soul-touching poetry and ABR leadership taught us that our artistic work can provoke thoughts and imagination, and therefore teach us what it means to be human. Imagine the possibilities if we allow teaching itself to be a form of artistic expression. If we guide future arts educators to consider their own teaching as art and, thus, own the potential to invoke multi-layered understandings in students, we can, as humans, become more humane.

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