

Game Changer 2019: The Future of Arts-based Research-a Global Initiative

Game changer

Written by the Global ABR Initiative

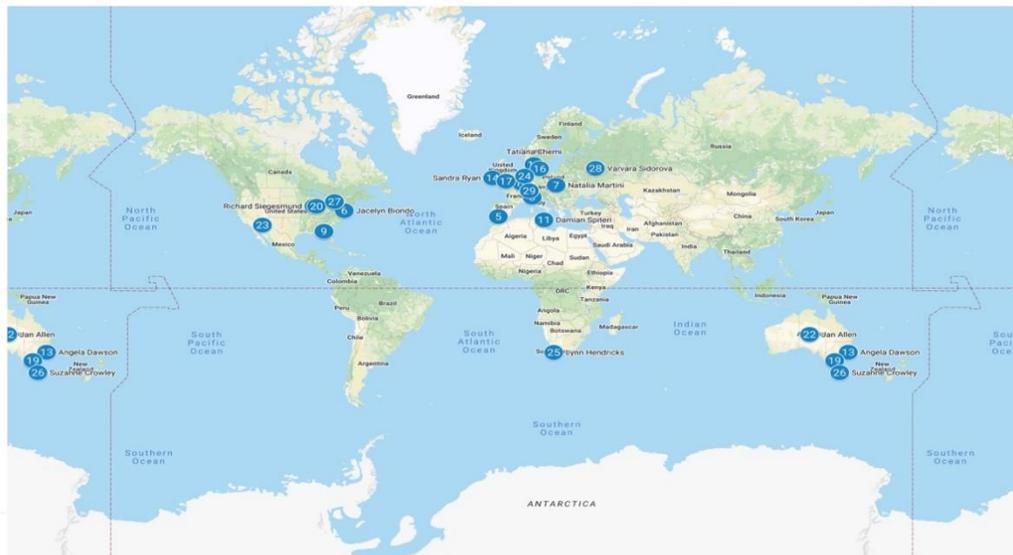
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Contextual Description

The impact of current trends in technology, digitalization, reductionism, and mass media on our global culture raises questions regarding the philosophy, role, responsibility, and ethics of research decisions in contemporary social and health sciences. Within our current socio-political climate, the values of empathy, understanding, introspection, and truth, relative to the human condition and the nature of meaningful intersubjective social discourse is at a critical point. The positioning and sustenance of these human values depends upon how we perceive our roles and agency in constructing our global community, advancing and disseminating knowledge in this community, and evaluating the impact on our social systems, global compassion, and intersubjective evolution. This current status of our human condition invites a form of epistemic activism, embracing non-dominant modes of scientific production countering totalizing discourses that tend to reproduce the status-quo in the social and health sciences.

Arts-Based Research: Benefits and Challenges

Arts-based (ABR) and arts-informed or arts-related research have emerged as philosophical and methodological approaches that are aligned with social activist views positing values of evocative illumination, social accessibility, and radical discourse. Furthermore, through a post-qualitative reinvigoration of aesthetics, arts-based and arts-related research are positioned as cutting-edge innovative approaches to research that can potentially transcend embedded socio-cultural divisions and epistemological hierarchies, promoting new insights about the human psyche, intersubjective discourse, social constructions, and socio-cultural transformation.

Despite the obvious benefits and increasing popularity of arts-based and arts-related research in the social and health sciences, arts-based researchers face multiple challenges including implicit transdisciplinary biases, paradigmatic dominance, and methodological obstacles impeding the global valuation, appreciation, and advancement of ABR research. These challenges require the critical rewriting of narratives and discourses concerning: pluralistic ontological perspectives, epistemic rigor and an axiology of the arts within a post-positivist, neoliberal culture; contributions of arts research to improve the human condition and social justice; the alignment, divergence, and complementarity with other research traditions; paradigmatic shifts for the critical evaluation, re-positioning, and global inclusion of arts-based research; and, typical and atypical funding and dissemination methods and formats required to maximize impact.

Strategic and Action Plan

Acting upon these challenges requires creative collaborative strategies to develop a global activist arts-based research agenda, identify relevant issues and stakeholders, construct global research partnerships, and fund progressive arts-based research projects. We invited scholars from multiple disciplines, cultures, and countries into a game-changer initiative to conduct in depth critical discussions and formulate a strategy relating to these primary issues.

Our results, as outlined in this synopsis, illustrate the status of our current initiative for advancing our global ABR research agenda. Our aim is increased knowledge about and the visibility of arts-based research by developing a global ABR network of researchers working collectively towards fostering radical pluralistic intersubjective perspectives and epistemically relevant practices addressing global topics for social reform.

A first step in this process is the publication of a document addressing a critical worldview and defining best practices in arts-based research furthering the development of an active ongoing global ABR consortium. As a part of this first initiative, we are publishing an article in an international journal on arts-based research as social activism. Secondly and concomitantly we have been developing a global network of arts-based scholars. The goal is to develop trans-geographical, interdisciplinary research teams to address relevant global issues using arts-based research approaches. Third, as we develop our best practices document and our global research teams, we hope to begin networking with stakeholders and potential funders to educate them about the value of ABR in addressing critical issues enlisting them as partners and economic supporters. At the ECQI 2020 we presented a symposium to discuss our preliminary findings and strategy for moving the project forward as outlined in this document.

Past, Present and Future Contributors

At the ECQI 2019 in Edinburgh, Scotland we facilitated a three day game changer agenda where we invited participants to work in small groups to address specific issues in ABR relative to our mission and purpose. We were fortunate to have had an enthusiastic and committed group of participants who collaborated with us in developing our ideas about critical issues in ABR. More specifically they worked with us to discuss and debate philosophical assumptions, definitions, methodologies and evaluative strategies. As a result of their active participation and creative contributions our mission for this group was significantly energized and mobilized. From this group we invited them to become partners in our Global ABR Network and to continue to work with us to actualize our strategic goals and action plan. We invite additional participation in our project and our Global ABR Network and recently started to explore further collaboration with the Psychological Society of South Africa that hosted an ABR workshop at their 2019 conference with several members active in ABR wanting to liaise with our Global ABR Initiative. Interested participants can contact Dr. Nancy Gerber at ng27@drexel.edu.

Core References

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