

Preface

The first edition of the *Handbook of Arts-Based Research* was the first handbook devoted solely to “arts-based research” (ABR). In 2008, J. Gary Knowles and Ardra L. Cole released the *Handbook of the Arts in Qualitative Research*, a groundbreaking volume that chronicled various approaches to using the arts in research. I applaud these editors and their contributors. However, as there has been a great deal of growth in the field over the past decade, as well as recognition that ABR is a paradigm, it was time for a new handbook. I elected to employ the commonly used term “arts-based research” as a means of further legitimizing this approach to research. Just as there are handbooks devoted to quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods research, I felt it was important to publish a handbook on “arts-based research,” an umbrella term for a variety of approaches to research that employ the creative arts.

The response to the *Handbook* showed me that the book filled a need. The first edition of this handbook became a bestseller and was translated into multiple languages. More importantly, through my speaking engagements around the world I learned that the *Handbook* was of enormous value to the teaching and practice of ABR. I’ve heard countless stories from students, as well as novice and experienced researchers, who found the inspiration—and indeed a pathway—to engage in their own creative work as a result of reading about the contributors’ experiences. I’m humbled that many readers have shared with me the projects they’ve done that were enabled or inspired by the *Handbook*. In fact, a few of those readers were invited to contribute to this new edition.

As valuable as the *Handbook* has been, there has been tremendous growth in the field, and it was time for a new edition. Looking back a bit further, the explosion in the field over the past two decades is even more remarkable. The first edition of my book *Method Meets Art: Arts-Based Research Practice* was released in 2008. I wrote it roughly 20 years ago. At the time, there was no other methods book on the topic (now there are many), few nonpractitioners had heard of ABR (now most scholars are aware of ABR), and I had trouble locating enough literature to cite in the book (now there is far too much to cite). When the third edition of *Method Meets Art* was released in 2020, I marveled at how the academic landscape had changed. Curating the new edition of

this handbook was challenging, as there is a balance between including new material, retaining what's most useful from the original, and keeping the *Handbook* to a manageable size.

What's new in the second edition?

- Chapters have been updated and revised, with new references and examples throughout the *Handbook*.
- The *Handbook* is now divided into nine parts (formerly eight parts). There is a new section devoted to Perspectives from Around the Globe. This section features entirely new chapters on ABR in Taiwan, Japan, and the United Kingdom.
- There are additional new chapters in the *Handbook* on critical approaches to ABR and documentary film.
- The *Handbook* contributors are more diverse, and the book is more inclusive.

With professors and students in mind, the *Handbook of Arts-Based Research, Second Edition*, is designed to be highly user-friendly. It is heavy on methods chapters in different genres. What readers often need most is more chapters on actual methods that include methodological instruction and examples, so this is what the *Handbook* provides. Also, ample attention is given to practical issues, including evaluation, writing, ethics, and publishing. Contributors have made their chapters reader-friendly by limiting their use of jargon, providing methodological instruction when appropriate, and offering robust research examples from their own work and that of others.

This handbook can be used as primary reading in courses on arts-based or artistic forms of research and also in a variety of courses in art education, creative arts therapies, qualitative inquiry, and research methods, as well as courses devoted to thesis work. It is also useful to individual graduate students and researchers interested in arts-based approaches to research.

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction to Arts-Based Research

- Patricia Leavy

The universe is made of stories, not of atoms.
—MURIEL RUKEYSER, “The Speed of Darkness”

Art, at its best, has the potential to be both immediate and lasting. It is immediate insofar as it can grab hold of our attention, provoke us, or help to transport us. Our response may be visceral, emotional, and psychological, before it is intellectual. Art also has the capacity to make long-lasting, deep impressions. Recent research in neuroscience, on which I elaborate shortly, indicates that art may have unmatched potential to promote deep engagement, make lasting impressions, and therefore possesses unlimited potential to educate.

While the arts are worthy unto themselves, purely for the sake of artistic expression and cultural enrichment, they are also invaluable to research communities across the disciplines. How do researchers decide what to study? How do they determine the best course for doing so? How do they share what they have learned with others? With whom do they share? Art educator Elliot Eisner (1997, p. 8) noted that our “capacity to wonder is stimulated” by the tools and forms of expression with which we are familiar. He observed that we seek “what we know how to find” (p. 7). Sharlene Hesse-Biber and I (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006, 2008) have suggested that researchers need to “come at things differently” in order to ask new questions or develop new insights. Researchers tapping into the power of the arts are doing so in order to create new ways to see, think, and communicate. Cumulatively, they have built a new field: arts-based research (ABR).

ABR exists at the intersection of art and science. Historically, art and science have been polarized, erroneously labeled as antithetical to each other. However, art and science bear intrinsic similarities in their attempts to explore, illuminate, and represent aspects of human life and the social and natural worlds of which we are a part (Leavy, 2009, 2015, 2020). ABR harnesses and melds the creative impulses and intents between artistic and scientific practice.

What Is ABR?

ABR is a transdisciplinary approach to knowledge building that combines the tenets of the creative arts in research contexts (Leavy, 2009, 2015, 2020; McNiff, 2013, 2018). I have described ABR practices as methodological tools used by researchers across the disciplines during any or all phases of research, including problem generation, data or content generation, analysis, interpretation, and representation (Leavy, 2009, 2015, 2020). These tools adapt the tenets of the creative arts in order to address research questions holistically. This process of inquiry therefore involves researchers engaging in art making as a way of knowing (McNiff, 2013, 2018). Inquiry practices are informed by the belief that the arts and humanities can facilitate social scientific goals (Jones, 2010). Arts-based practices may draw on any art form and representational forms that include but are not limited to literary forms (essays, short stories, novellas, novels, experimental writing, scripts, screenplays, poetry, parables); performative forms (music, songs, dance, creative movement, theatre); visual art (photography, drawing, painting, collage, installation art, three-dimensional (3-D) art, sculpture, comics, quilts, needlework); audio-visual forms (film, video); multimedia forms (graphic novels); and multimethod forms (combining two or more art forms).

It is important to note that while I use the term “arts-based research” to categorize the research activities I have outlined, there are numerous equally valid terms that practitioners use to describe artistic forms of research. Table 1.1 depicts many of the terms that appear in the literature.

A/r/tography	Arts-based health research (ABHR)
Alternative forms of representation	Arts-based research practices
Aesthetically based research	Arts-informed inquiry
Aesthetic research practice	Arts-informed research
Art as inquiry	Critical arts-based inquiry
Art practice as research	Living inquiry
Art-based enquiry	Performative inquiry
Art-based inquiry	Performative social science (PSS)
Art-based research	Poetic science
Artistic inquiry	Practice-based research
Arts-based research (ABR)	Research-based art (RBA)
Arts-based social research (ABSR)	Research-based practice
Arts-based qualitative inquiry	Scholartistry
Arts in qualitative research	Transformative inquiry through art
Arts-based educational research (ABER)	

Note. From Chilton and Leavy (2014). Copyright © 2014 Oxford University Press. Adapted and updated by permission.

Some authors are quick to point to subtle differences between these terms (Chilton & Leavy, 2014, 2020; Leavy, 2015, 2020). While these assertions are sound, the attempt to continually label this work has created confusion, difficulty synthesizing the work being done, and has posed challenges to graduate students seeking to legitimate their thesis work (Chilton & Leavy, 2014, 2020; Finley, 2011; Leavy, 2015; Ledger & Edwards, 2011; McNiff, 2011; Sinner, Leggo, Irwin, Gouzouasis, & Grauer, 2006). Therefore, I adopt the popular term “arts-based research.” The popularity of the term can be seen through its repeated appearance in the literature (some of which is cited in this volume) as well as the many conferences, special journal issues, and professional association special interest groups that have adopted the term. Most recently, the 2022 founding of the London Arts-Based Research Centre (LABRC), by Roula Maria Dib, an organization solely devoted to conferences, courses, and special events on ABR, illustrates the widespread use of the term. My intention is to use this term to describe an umbrella category that encompasses all artistic approaches to research. Some other terms are noted throughout this handbook, including chapters in Part I devoted to “a/t/ography” and “performative social science,” which have strong research communities within the larger ABR community.

There is also some debate in the research community as to whether ABR is a paradigm. Some suggest that ABR is a methodological field within the qualitative paradigm, and others assert that it is its own paradigm. As I explained in recent editions of my book *Method Meets Art: Arts-Based Research Practice* (Leavy, 2015, 2020), I have come to understand ABR as a paradigm. In support of this claim, Gioia Chilton and I (Chilton & Leavy, 2014, 2020) have written that ABR requires a novel worldview and covers expansive terrain. James Haywood Rolling (2013) and Nancy Gerber and colleagues (2012) also assert that ABR is a paradigm. Lorri Nielsen (2004) implicitly distinguishes ABR from qualitative inquiry by suggesting that ABR uses a “groundless theory” approach, in contrast to the “grounded theory” approach on which some qualitative research relies.

While Chapter 2 is devoted to ABR philosophy, it is important to explain briefly how we might conceptualize this paradigm. Epistemologically, ABR assumes the arts can create and convey meaning (Barone & Eisner, 2012; McNiff, 2018). ABR is based on *aesthetic knowing* or, as Nielsen (2004) suggests, “aesthetic work.” With respect to the aesthetics or “beauty” of the research product itself, the beauty elicited by ABR is explicitly linked to how it fosters reflexivity and empathy in the consumer (and researcher) (Dunlop, 2001). Aesthetics are linked to advancing care and compassion (McIntyre, 2004). ABR is grounded in a philosophy that Gerber and colleagues (2012, p. 41) suggest:

- Recognizes that art has been able to convey truth(s) or bring about awareness (both knowledge of the self and of others).
- Recognizes that the use of the arts is critical in achieving self–other knowledge.
- Values preverbal ways of knowing.
- Includes multiple ways of knowing, such as sensory, kinesthetic, and imaginary knowing.

The philosophical beliefs form an “aesthetic intersubjective paradigm” (Chilton, Gerber, & Scotti, 2015). Aesthetics draw on sensory, emotional, perceptual, kinesthetic,

embodied, and imaginal ways of knowing (Chilton et al., 2015; Cooper, Lamarque, & Sartwell, 1997; Dewey, 1934; Harris-Williams, 2010; Langer, 1953; Whitfield, 2005). ABR philosophy is also strongly influenced by philosophical understandings of “the body” and, specifically, advances in embodiment theory and phenomenology. “Inter-subjectivity” refers to the relational quality of arts as knowing, as we make meanings with others, and with nature (Conrad & Beck, 2015).

A Brief Historical Overview of ABR

The term “arts-based research” was coined by Eisner in the early 1990s, and has since developed into a major methodological genre. However, larger shifts occurring in prior decades set the stage for ABR. Specifically, the development of creative arts therapies, advances in the study of arts and learning (especially in neuroscience), and developments in qualitative research have all influenced the emergence of ABR at this historical moment.

Creative Arts Therapy

While the idea of harnessing the healing and therapeutic power of the arts is an old one, the development of art therapy as a field is significant. Creative arts therapy¹ is a hybrid discipline primarily grounded in the fields of psychology and the arts (Vick, 2012). The field emerged from the 1940s to 1970s (Vick, 2012), with major growth in the 1960s and 1970s (McNiff, 2005). Margaret Naumburg is considered the “mother of art therapy” in North America, and in 1961 Elinor Ulman founded the first art therapy journal, the *Bulletin of Art Therapy* (Vick, 2012). From the 1970s to the 1990s, a major shift occurred in the academy, with researchers turning to arts-based practices (Sinner et al., 2006). Shaun McNiff, a contributor to this handbook and the pioneer who wrote the first book expressly about ABR in 1998, suggests that the field of creative arts therapy paved the way for ABR by showing that art and science can be successfully merged in inquiry processes. Noted creative arts therapist Cathy Malchiodi, a contributor to this handbook, has also been a leading champion for ABR, building bridges between fields for decades (e.g., see her 2023 book *Handbook of Expressive Arts Therapy*).

Arts and Learning

Advances in our understanding of how the arts can impact learning, and make deep impressions, have also been pivotal. George Lakoff and Mark Johnson (1980) suggest that metaphor is not characteristic of language alone, but it is pervasive in human thought and action. Mark Turner (1996) explains that the common perception that the everyday mind is nonliterary and that the literary mind is optional is untrue. He suggests that “the literary mind is the fundamental mind” and observed, “Story is a basic principle of mind” (p. v). We need not rely on philosophy, as there is increasing “hard science” in support of the unique impact art has on our brains.

The growing body of scholarship on the relationship between neuroscience and literature, often dubbed “literary neuroscience,” has implications for why fiction might

be a particularly effective pedagogical tool. Natalie Phillips has studied how reading affects the brain and why people often describe their experience of reading fiction as one of immersion (Thompson & Vedantam, 2012). She and her team turned to the fiction of Jane Austen and measured brain activity as research participants engaged in close versus casual reading of an Austen novel. They found that the whole brain appears to be transformed as people engage in close readings of fiction. Moreover, there appear to be global activations across a number of different regions of the brain, including some unexpected areas, such as those that are involved in movement and touch. In the experiment, it was as if “readers were physically placing themselves within the story as they analyzed it” (Thompson & Vendantam, 2012). Research in this area is taking off. For another example, Gregory Berns led a team of researchers in a study published in *Brain Connectivity* that suggests there is heightened connectivity in our brains for days after reading a novel (Berns, Blaine, Prietula, & Pye, 2013).

In February 2015, I was one of 50 participants worldwide who were invited to the Salzburg Global Seminar in Austria. The title of the 5-day seminar was “The Neuroscience of Art: What Are the Sources of Creativity and Innovation?” The majority of the participants were either world-class neuroscientists studying creativity or accomplished artists. It was an extraordinary experience, during which I learned that there is extensive, funded research being conducted on how our brains function while we are engaging in creative practices such as art making, comparisons in brain activity during art making between novices and accomplished artists, and how our brains are affected as we consume art. It is clear to me that (1) research in this area is taking off and (2) our brains respond in critical ways as we engage in art making, as we enter “flow” states of creativity,² and as we consume art.

The history of neuroscience itself is intertwined with fiction. Silas Weir Mitchell (1824–1914), the founder of American neurology (Todman, 2007), was also a fiction writer who published 19 novels, seven poetry books, and many short stories. Many of his works of fiction were inextricably bound to patient observations made during his clinical practice and centered on topics dealing with psychological and physiological crises. Charlotte Perkins Gilman’s famous short story “The Yellow Wallpaper” (1892) is used in some neurology and neuroscience programs to this day in order to illustrate concepts in mental illness and doctor–patient relationships with respect to sociohistorical and cultural understandings of gender (Todman, 2007).

There is also an important relationship between art therapy and neuroscience (Franklin, 2010; Hass-Cohen, Kaplan, & Carr, 2008; Malchiodi, 2012) that further suggests great potential for ABR and engagement. Historically, scientists posited that the two hemispheres of the brain have different functions: The right holds creativity and intuition, and the left, logical thought and language (Malchiodi, 2012). However, the left hemisphere of the brain is involved in art making and, indeed, both hemispheres are necessary for artistic expression (Gardner, 1984; Malchiodi, 2012; Ramachandran, 1999, 2005). A study by Rebecca Chamberlain, Ian Christopher McManus, Nicola Brunswick, and Ryota Kanai in the journal *NeuroImage* (2014) debunks right-brain and left-brain thinking to argue that those with visual artistic talent or those who identify as visual artists have increased amounts of gray and white matter on both sides of the brain. There is an emerging field called *neuroaesthetics* that considers how our

brains make sense of visual art. Nobel laureate Eric Kandel (2012) explains that visual art activates many distinct and at times conflicting emotional signals in the brain, which in turn causes deep memories.

Daniel J. Levitin (2007, 2009) has been at the forefront of studying the cognitive neuroscience of music. His popular work combines psychology (including evolutionary psychology), music, and neuroscience in order to look at the evolution of music and the human brain. Levitin writes, “Music, I argue, is not simply a distraction or pastime, but a core element of our identity as a species” (2009, p. 3). Like those exploring creative arts therapies and neuroscience, Levitin (2007) notes that music is distributed throughout the brain, in both hemispheres. Levitin (2007, 2009) suggests that music is, in essence, hardwired in our brains. He even points to patients with brain damage who can no longer read a newspaper but can still read music.

Qualitative Research

Over the past few decades, developments in the practice of qualitative research have also led many social researchers to explore ABR. This can be attributed to factors, including the narrative turn, the emergence and growth of creative nonfiction inside and outside of the academy, and researchers with arts backgrounds leading the charge in delineating the synergies between artistic and qualitative practice.

Arthur Bochner and Nicholas Riggs (2014) have documented a surge in narrative inquiry across different disciplines in the 1980s through the end of the 20th century. By the start of the 21st century, the “narrative turn” had occurred (Bochner & Riggs, 2014; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). Narrative researchers attempt to avoid the objectification of research participants and aim to preserve the complexity of human experience (Josselson, 2006). The rise in autobiographical data (and emergence of autoethnography) has greatly influenced the turn to narrative or critical storytelling.

The emergence and proliferation of creative nonfiction approaches to news reporting, and later academic reporting, is also part of the context for both the narrative turn and the emergence of ABR more broadly. Creative nonfiction arose in the 1960s and 1970s to make research reports more engaging while remaining truthful (Caulley, 2008; Goodall, 2008). Journalists and other writers developed ways to use literary tools to strengthen their reporting. Lee Gutkind (2012), founder of *Creative Nonfiction* magazine, proclaims creative nonfiction to be the fastest growing genre in publishing, and says that, at its core, the genre promotes “true stories well told” (p. 6).

Artists turned qualitative researchers and researchers with art backgrounds have also propelled ABR forward. For example, art educators Elliot Eisner and Tom Barone each brought their experience in painting to bear on inquiry processes. Joe Norris and Johnny Saldaña have each brought their theatre arts backgrounds to bear in the qualitative community. What these artist–scholars (or “artist–scientists” in Valerie Janesick’s [2001] terminology) and many others have ultimately done is flesh out the synergies between qualitative and artistic practice. They have shown how qualitative and artistic practices are not as disparate as some may think, and how they can be used in service of each other. Both practices can be viewed as *crafts* (Leavy, 2009, 2015, 2020). The researcher is the instrument in qualitative research as in artistic practice (Janesick,

2001). Moreover, both practices are holistic and dynamic, involving reflection, description, problem formulation and problem solving, and the ability to tap into, identify, and explain the role of intuition and creativity in the research process (Leavy, 2009, 2015, 2020).

What Are the Advantages of ABR?

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By reading other chapters in this handbook you will gain a fuller picture of how practitioners are using ABR and what the strengths of these approaches are. ABR has numerous strengths, so this brief review isn't exhaustive (these ideas were first developed in Leavy, 2009).

- *New insights and learning.* Like other approaches to research, ABR can offer new insights and learning on a range of subject matters. ABR offers ways to tap into what would otherwise be inaccessible, makes connections and interconnections that are otherwise out of reach, asks and answers new research questions, explores old research questions in new ways, and represents research differently and to broad audiences. The research carries the potential to jar people into seeing and/or thinking differently, feeling more deeply, learning something new, or building understandings across similarities or differences.

- *Describe, explore, discover, problem-solve.* Arts-based practices are particularly useful for research projects that aim to describe, explore, or discover, or that require attention to processes. The capability of the arts to capture process mirrors the unfolding nature of social life; therefore, there is congruence between subject matter and method. ABR is also often employed in problem-centered or issues-centered projects, in which the problem at the center of research dictates the methodology.

- *Forge micro–macro connections.* ABR can be particularly useful in exploring, describing, or explaining (theorizing about) the connections between our individual lives and the larger contexts in which we live our lives. This benefit of ABR is particularly appealing to researchers in social science–related disciplines such as communication, social work, sociology, and women's or gender studies.

- *Holistic.* ABR developed in a transdisciplinary methods environment in which disciplinary methodological and theoretical borders were crossed, blurred, and expanded (Leavy, 2011, 2019, 2021a, 2021b, 2021c). Furthermore, these research strategies have the ability to integrate and expand on existing disciplines and synergies between and across disciplines (Chilton & Leavy, 2014, 2020). Arts-based research practices may be a part of a holistic or integrated approach to research (Hunter, Lusardi, Zucker, Jacelon, & Chandler, 2002; Knowles & Cole, 2008; Leavy, 2009, 2015, 2020). This is a process-oriented view of research in which a research topic is considered comprehensively, the different phases of the research project are explicitly linked, and theory and practice are married (Chilton & Leavy, 2014, 2020; Hesse-Biber, 2016; Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011; Leavy, 2009, 2011, 2015, 2019, 2020).

- *Evocative and provocative.* The arts, at their best, can be emotionally and politically evocative, captivating, aesthetically powerful, and moving. Art can grab people's attention in powerful ways. The arresting power of "good" art is intimately linked with the *immediacy* of art. These are some of the qualities that researchers are harnessing in their ABR projects, and what makes the arts very different than other forms of expression. As a representational form, the arts can be highly effective for communicating the emotional aspects of social life.

- *Critical consciousness, raising awareness, and empathy.* ABR can be employed as a means to create critical awareness or raise consciousness. ABR can expose people to new ideas, stories, or images, and can do so in the service of cultivating social consciousness. This is important in social justice-oriented research that seeks to reveal power relations (often invisible to those in privileged groups), to raise critical race or gender consciousness, to build coalitions across groups, and to challenge dominant ideologies. ABR is also uniquely capable of cultivating empathy. Elizabeth de Freitas (2003, 2004, 2008) has written extensively about the ability of fiction-based research (and I suggest, by inference, ABR more generally), to promote "empathetic engagement."

- *Unsettle stereotypes, challenge dominant ideologies, and include marginalized voices and perspectives.* ABR is often useful in studies involving identity work. Research in this area frequently involves communicating information about the experiences associated with differences, diversity, and prejudice. Moreover, identity research seeks to confront stereotypes that keep some groups disenfranchised, while other groups are limited by their own biased "commonsense" ideas. ABR is also used often in social justice work because it can be configured inclusively and has the potential to jar people into seeing and thinking differently (critical to challenging stereotypes and the ideologies they promote).

- *Participatory.* First, in projects in which participants or nonacademic stakeholders are involved in ABR, they may be treated as full, equal collaborators (Finley, 2008). ABR values nonhierarchical relationships. Second, ABR necessarily brings others into the process as an audience. People consume or experience ABR. People *engage* with ABR.

- *Multiple meanings.* Arts-based practices are able to get at multiple meanings, opening up multiplicity in meaning making instead of pushing authoritative claims. ABR can democratize meaning making and decentralize academic researchers as "the experts." Furthermore, the kind of dialogue that may be stimulated by a piece of art is based on *evoking* meanings rather than denoting them. This issue is not only about how participants experience the art-making process or how audiences consume ABR, but also how researchers design their studies.

- *Public scholarship and usefulness.* ABR is uniquely capable of producing public scholarship and correspondingly conducting research that is useful. Differing from traditional academic articles, which are jargon-filled and circulate in peer-reviewed journals to which only academics have access, ABR may produce research outcomes that are accessible in two regards: (1) they are understandable (jargon-free) and (2) they circulate in venues to which public audiences have access. Historically, there was a mandate

within the academy to *publish or perish*; however, in recent years, there has been a push to go *public or perish* in order to demonstrate that research matters beyond the limited world of the research academy. ABR produces research that can have an impact. I revisit this topic in the conclusion of this handbook.

What Skills Do ABR Practitioners Need?

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Arts-based researchers are carving new tools, forging new pathways to knowledge, and imagining new shapes for the outcomes of research. As an evolving and growing set of practices, there is no rigid set of skills that practitioners must exhibit. Furthermore, any given project may require experience in one or more specific art forms, as well as other research techniques that may be quantitative, qualitative, community-based, or involve mixed methods. Each project is structured differently based on its goals. Therefore, the skills brought to bear on a project vary greatly, as does the disciplinary expertise of researchers.

There are general skills (which I first developed in 2009) that often come to bear, in various combinations and to various degrees, on a case-by-case basis. I discuss these in general terms; however, first, I want to ask you to take these as broad and evolving criteria. ABR requires creativity and innovation; thus, no set of skills should be taken as fixed. As Shaun McNiff writes (Chapter 2, this volume, originally appeared in the first edition), one of our goals moving forward should be “the protection of . . . freedom of inquiry.” Furthermore, even when a project necessitates particular skills sets, we can still begin from where we are, learn as we go, and improve over time. This is the case with all forms of research. Survey researchers and interviewers tend to get significantly better over time. I believe my fifteenth novel was a vast improvement over my first. When I write a sixteenth, I hope and expect that it will be better yet. I developed my skills over time. I belabor the point only because having received countless emails and questions at conferences from students and novice researchers, I am certain there are a fair number of researchers interested in this kind of work but afraid to try it because they don’t feel qualified. Begin where you are. Learn as you go. It is my hope that the following set of skills, useful to many arts-based practitioners, will offer you some direction as you develop your own practice.

- *Flexibility, openness, and intuition.* Artistic practices make room for spontaneity and emergence, and ABR requires the same (Leavy, 2009, 2011, 2015, 2020). As a process of discovery, ABR may transform the practitioner throughout the process (Barone & Eisner, 2012). Creativity often requires trial and error, changing course based on new ideas and insights, and relying on one’s internal monitor or “hunches.” Don’t forget, all research involves experimentation—trying things out. Be guided by curiosity, not fear.

- *Thinking conceptually, symbolically, metaphorically* (Saldaña, 2011), *and thematically.* ABR requires us to think in these different ways as we develop projects, make sense of what we have learned, and transform the essence of what we have learned into a coherent expression.

- *Ethical practice and values system.* All research requires an ethical substructure and rigorous attention to our values system (Leavy, 2017, 2023); however, this is heightened in ABR because of the unique potential of advance caring and democratic participation in the research experience and the outcomes of research. Some suggest that, as we engage “the aesthetic,” we further “capacities for caring” (McIntyre, 2004, p. 259). Because ABR can be publicly accessible, collaborative, resistive, and emotional, there is great potential to contribute to research on identity politics (Holman Jones, Adams, & Ellis, 2013), political justice work (Finley, 2008), and research that aims to increase compassion (Freeman, 2007). With the potential to evoke change, Susan Finley calls ABR “a people’s pedagogy” (2008, p. 73). She further suggests that practitioners emphasize ABR as a “public, moral enterprise”; view researchers, participants, and audience members as equal collaborators; respect the views of street critics and street artists; focus on issues such as diversity and inclusion; carefully consider the role of the audience during research design; and remain open to all art forms (p. 75).

- *Thinking like an artist.* Bear in mind the *artfulness* of the resulting work. This requires attention to craft and aesthetics, and specifically paying attention to the craft you are working with or adapting (Faulkner, 2009, 2019; Leavy, 2022d; Saldaña, 2005, 2011). If you are coming into an ABR project without formal artistic training or experience, then you should learn about the craft you are using, which may involve a literature review, immersion into examples of the field (e.g., seeing plays, reading scripts), taking classes, and/or collaborating with artists from your genre (Leavy, 2015, 2020). While artistic craft is important, ABR is not art for art’s sake. You are delivering content with a larger goal beyond making “pure” art. While it is important to pay attention to craft, ABR is better judged based on its *usefulness* (Leavy, 2009, 2011, 2015, 2020, 2022). Aesthetics can increase usefulness (the better a play, film, or novel is, the more of an impact it will have on audiences). As McNiff notes in Chapter 2 (this volume, originally in the first edition), artistic ability affects a research project just as “language skills influence research in all disciplines.” Therefore, if any researcher can engage in research that requires writing, any researcher can learn to work with an ABR approach. Thinking like an artist also requires an emphasis on the big picture, the essence, and presenting it coherently. Pay attention to both the forest and the trees.

- *Thinking like a public intellectual.* As I have written before (see Leavy, 2015, 2019, 2020, 2022a, 2022b, 2022c), thinking like a public intellectual means thinking about how to make your research relevant and accessible to the public. How can you reach relevant stakeholders? How will you frame, label, and disseminate the work? I feel a responsibility to point out that there may be a personal cost to producing public scholarship (Mitchell, 2008). When you put your work and ideas out there, you cannot control what you get back from those who disagree with you or offer bad reviews or public critiques of your work (Leavy, 2015, 2020, 2022d). Despite the potential challenges, those who do this work usually claim that the rewards far outweigh the costs (Leavy, 2015, 2019, 2020, 2022a, 2022b, 2022c, 2022d; Mitchell, 2008; Zinn, 2008). I revisit this topic at the conclusion of this handbook.

The Contents of This Handbook

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Although still an emerging paradigm, ABR has been rapidly growing across disciplines and art forms. Therefore, it was quite a task to decide how to shape the content and organize this handbook.

Beginning with the former, I decided to offer a basic overview of the field, including philosophical, ABR communities, and an international perspective; common practices within the different genres of ABR; overviews within disciplinary areas; and practical considerations from evaluation through to publishing. Contributors represent a who's who in the field, as well as emerging artist-scholars. I believe artists and scholars need to be afforded the freedom to do what it is they do, so my instructions were minimal. I asked contributors to make their chapters reader-friendly, limit their use of jargon, provide methodological instruction when appropriate, and offer robust research examples. Then I moved out of the way, trusting in the expertise of those who graciously signed on to the project.

With respect to the organization of this handbook, I have attempted to keep reader ease in mind, as well as feedback reviewed from the first edition. This handbook is divided into nine sections (elaborated shortly). The sections are not arbitrarily ordered. I begin with an overview of the field. The next five sections focus on practices within different artistic genres. Here, I began with literary genres, which are closest to what people in various disciplines are familiar with (as they are text-based), then followed a natural progression to other art forms, going from those that rely on one arts technique to those that involve “multiple fields” (Rose, 2000) and multimethods. Next, ABR within disciplines is reviewed, followed by perspectives from around the globe; finally, there is a section on other considerations, from evaluation through to publishing. While I put care into the organization of topics, and the handbook chapters can be read in order, they can also be read as individual sections, or individual chapters of particular interest may be read out of order, on their own.

Part I, “The Field,” offers an overview by considering philosophical issues, different communities within the larger ABR umbrella, and international perspectives. We begin with Chapter 2, “Philosophical and Practical Foundations of Artistic Inquiry: Creating Paradigms, Methods, and Presentations Based in Art,” by Shaun McNiff. This chapter is the perfect entree into the field as McNiff, author of the first book published on ABR (1998), takes us into the field through his personal experience with artistic ways of knowing. McNiff uses his professional journey to pose a discussion about what “research” is, what it might be, and how we might come to understand and present it. In Chapter 3, “A/r/tography as Living Inquiry,” Rita L. Irwin, Natalie LeBlanc, Jee Yeon Ryu, and George Belliveau present an overview of the field of *a/r/tography*, in which artist-researcher-teacher identities intersect. After highlighting what makes *a/r/tography* unique as a way of knowing, they beautifully illustrate *a/r/tographic* approaches to inquiry through examples in various artistic media. In Chapter 4, “Dreaming Bigger: Culturally Congruent and Contemplative Approaches to Arts-Based Research” Kakali Bhattacharya explores expanding ABR methodologies, focusing on cultural relevance and contemplative practices. Bhattacharya emphasizes “dreaming bigger” to challenge systemic oppression and

the existing status quo. She introduces the concept of de/colonizing ontoepistemologies, highlighting the ongoing struggle against colonial oppression and the significance of resistance in research. The chapter also addresses the challenges academia faces in accepting nontraditional methodologies and advocates for creative inquiry, mentorship, and pedagogy, fostering holistic and diverse research approaches. In Chapter 5, “Creative Arts Therapies and Arts-Based Research,” Cathy A. Malchiodi, a leader in the field, provides an overview of creative arts therapies; the emergence of ABR within the creative arts therapies; the unique “brainwise” attributes of creative arts therapies; and an opportunity for readers to conduct their own small-scale ABR to learn more about the intersection of creative arts therapies and ABR. The chapter concludes with the importance of “translational research” in applications and investigations of ABR within the scope of creative arts therapies. In Chapter 6, “Creativity and Imagination: Research as World Making!,” Celiane Camargo-Borges explains how early in her career she focused on one question: “How can I develop an organic research program that involves people, communities, cities, and social transformation while simultaneously receiving academic recognition by demonstrating the rigor, quality, and relevance of my research?” This question led her to explore the role of creativity and imagination in the inquiry process. This chapter provides an overview of movements away from “traditional” research practices, unpacks the concepts of creativity and imagination as ways of forming new ideas and possible connections between ideas, reviews how to design research using the principles of creativity and imagination, and offers a research example from a project in Uganda.

Parts II through VI are practice or methods focused. Part II, “Literary Genres,” reviews literary ABR practices. I organized this section, moving from narrative inquiry, in order to begin with a textual form that bears similarities to other approaches to research with which researchers may be familiar and ending with poetry, which has a lyrical nature and therefore provides a transition to the following section on performative genres. Mark Freeman’s “Narrative Inquiry” (Chapter 7) begins, fittingly, with the author’s own story of turning to narrative. As he shares his story, Freeman describes the field of narrative inquiry and his own changing position within it, including his interest in “poetic science.” For illustrative purposes, the chapter includes his attempt to tell his mother’s story in a way that does justice to it in numerous respects, including aesthetically. Chapter 8, “The Art of Autoethnography,” by Tony E. Adams and Stacy Holman Jones, begins with a discussion of the relationship between writing and art, then details the aesthetic processes and practices, skills and crafts, designs and imaginations of doing and writing autoethnography. The authors define and describe autoethnography and discuss its artful techniques, including the art of conducting fieldwork and relating to others, the art of textual representation, and the art of integrating theory and practice. They conclude by offering two examples of autoethnography and discussing the artful techniques they used to craft them. Chapter 9, “Revisiting Long Story Short: Encounters with Creative Nonfiction as Methodological Provocation,” by Anita Sinner, Erika Hasebe-Ludt, and the late Carl Leggo, proposes creative nonfiction (CNF) as a viable method of inquiry that enables arts researchers to creatively show through story and tell through research the conceptualization of methodology (process), the techniques and methods applied (practice), and the resulting research account (product). The authors provide an overview of their praxis: theory and practice, considerations, challenges,

and their varied approaches to CNF using various writing forms. Beautiful examples from their own work are included illustratively. I wrote Chapter 10, “Social Fiction,” as an overview of fiction as a research practice, or what I have termed “social fiction.” The chapter includes background context about changes that led to the emergence of social fiction; the strengths of this approach, including recent trends in neuroscience that point to the unique ways people engage with and process fiction; and the research design process, including all of the elements of building a project. The chapter concludes with published examples and a robust discussion of my experience writing novels inspired by my research. Chapter 11, “Poetic Inquiry: Poetry as/in/for Social Research,” by Sandra L. Faulkner, rounds out this section of the *Handbook*. A well-published poet herself, Faulkner examines the use of poetry as a form of research, representation, and method used by researchers, practitioners, and students from across the social sciences and humanities. She details what doing and critiquing poetry as/in/for research entails by beginning with a discussion of the power of poetry, moving to the goals and kinds of projects that are best suited for poetic inquiry, and describing the process and craft of that writing. She further answers questions about how we can use poetry to represent research and the research process.

Part III, “Performative Genres,” reviews performative ABR practices. Picking up on the lyrical nature of poetry, this section begins with Chapter 12, “A/r/tographic Inquiry in a New Tonality: The Relationality of Music and Poetry” by Peter Gouzouasis. The author, a lifelong musician, begins with the question: “What do I do in music making—in composing music, in musicking—and how does that relate to my musicianship, philosophical stance, research, and teaching?” Through exploring this question, Gouzouasis expresses what it means to live musically, what music contributes to life and research, explorations with music and poetry, and how music ABR might look, act, and be understood as a form of rigorous inquiry. In Chapter 13, “Living, Moving, and Dancing: Embodied Ways of Inquiry,” Celeste Snowber explores dance and movement as embodied forms of inquiry. An experienced dancer, she provides a rich discussion of what embodiment means, how to theorize and conduct research with one’s body as instrument, and dance as an ABR practice. She provides engaging examples from her own research and that of others in the field. In Chapter 14, “Ethnodrama and Ethno-theatre,” Joe Salvatore, a playwright and director, takes us into the world of drama and theatre as research practices. The author demonstrates that the process by which he creates new theatrical works mirrors the way a researcher conducts research. Salvatore takes readers through the entire process of going from interview research to ethno-drama, with clear methodological instruction and examples throughout the chapter. Part III concludes with Chapter 15, by Joe Norris, “Reflections on the Techniques and Tones of Playbuilding by a Director/Actor/Researcher/Teacher,” which details collective creation and playbuilding as research methodologies. Norris details the process of playbuilding, providing ample methodological instruction, and includes numerous examples from his lengthy career in the field.

Part IV, “Visual Arts,” reviews visual arts ABR practices. The section begins with Chapter 16, “Arts-Based Visual Research,” by Gunilla Holm, Fritjof Sahlström, and Harriet Zilliacus. This chapter presents a comprehensive review of visual arts research, including the reasons for conducting this work, its uses in the social sciences,

participatory photography, video, and key issues such as analysis, dissemination, and ethics. The authors also take contemporary issues into account, including the roles of popular culture, social media, and mobile phones. Barbara J. Fish, the author of Chapter 17, "Drawing and Painting, and Story as Research," describes her positions as an artist, therapist, clinical supervisor, educator, and activist, and how her drawing and painting research, used with intention, guides and informs her work. She offers illustrations throughout the chapter and discusses what her artistic approach to inquiry brings to her practice. In Chapter 18, "Collage as Arts-Based Research," Victoria Scotti and Gioia Chilton draw on their experience as artists, art therapists, and arts-based researchers to review collage as a research technique. They define key terms, introduce creation of collage as a postmodern philosophical position, and describe how collage can be employed as an ABR method. They offer examples of both design and analysis. Scotti and Chilton also offer practical advice to novices for using collage in research, and they touch on related ethics issues. In Chapter 19, "Installation Art: The Voyage Never Ends," Jennifer L. Lapum invites readers into her journey of exploring, creating, and wandering through installation art. To do so, she provides an overview of the conceptualizations and characteristics of installation art, followed by a sketch of its shift into adoption in the health and social sciences research world. Next, she offers robust examples. The chapter also includes a discussion of the methodological considerations surrounding design, interpretation, and representation in the field of installation art and research. The last chapter in the section could have just as easily been placed in Part II, "Literary Genres," or in Part VI, "Multimethod and Team Approaches," because it relies on both visual imagery and text. Chapter 20, "How to Draw Comics the Scholarly Way: Creating Comics-Based Research in the Academy," by Paul Kuttner, Nick Sousanis, and Marcus B. Weaver-Hightower, reviews creation of comics as a research practice. The authors define key terms, provide a discussion of what comics afford researchers, present illustrations, and discuss key design issues, including collaboration, data collection, and analysis. They also review pragmatic issues such as publishing, evaluation, and ethics, and generously offer activities to help novices get started.

Transitioning from primarily still to moving images, Part V, "Audiovisual Arts," reviews audiovisual ABR practices in two chapters. Chapter 21, "Film as Research/ Research as Film," is a spirited dialogue between Trevor Hearing and the late Kip Jones about film as a performative research practice and means of disseminating research. Hearing comes to the conversation with a background in documentary filmmaking for television, while Jones was a qualitative researcher who turned biographic research data into the story for an award-winning short film. The authors collaborated on the trailer for that film, as well as documenting its production on video. They worked together for over a decade on several projects and presentations, which offers a starting point for their conversation about the power and potential of film for researchers. In Chapter 22, "Documentary Film as Arts Based Research" Yehudit Silverman reviews documentary film as a form of arts-based research by sharing her personal journey. She explains her use of documentary film in four distinct research projects, outlining the steps taken, addressing challenges, surprises, and new insights encountered. Silverman also examines the creative process stages with more conventional aspects of qualitative research, providing a comprehensive framework for each project.

Part VI, “Multimethod and Team Approaches,” reviews team approaches to ABR and the use of two or more art practices in a single project. Chapter 23, “Sea Monsters Conquer the Beaches: Community Art as an Educational Resource—A Marine Debris Project,” by Karin Stoll, Wenche Sørmo, and Mette Gårdvik, describes a community art project in the field of environmental studies. The authors suggest that community art is an effective way to inform society and schools about environmental issues such as marine pollution. In Chapter 26, “Multimethod Arts-Based Research: Considerations of Space and Place in Arts Research,” Jaime Lynn Rice and Susan Finley address the use of one or more art forms in a single research project. Robust examples emphasizing social justice are offered throughout the chapter.

Part VII, “Arts-Based Research within Disciplines or Area Studies,” reviews the use of ABR in five highly distinct disciplinary areas that illustrate its utility across a wide range of disciplinary and subject areas. We begin with Chapter 25, “Arts-Based Research in Education,” in which James Haywood Rolling, Jr., states that “the practice of contemporary education is fundamentally interdisciplinary, featuring a vast array of intersecting bodies of knowledge to facilitate more effective teaching and learning.” Rolling suggests a flexible architecture for theory building to guide educational researchers in structuring hybrid pathways and arts-based models for conducting social research. In Chapter 26, “An Overview of Arts-Based Research in Sociology, Anthropology, and Psychology,” Jessica Smartt Gullion and Lisa Schäfer show that, although the social sciences have been slow to embrace ABR, there are notable examples across these disciplines. The authors review the work in various sectors of sociology, anthropology, and psychology, including visual sociology, social fiction, sociology of art, action research, ethnodrama, ethnographic fiction, ethnographic poetry, ethnomusicology, art and music therapy, and photography. The authors propose that ABR is one way that social scientists are addressing “the crisis in representation.” In Chapter 27, “Deepening the Mystery of Arts-Based Research in the Health Sciences,” Jennifer L. Lapum explores ABR in health-related fields. The chapter reviews the history of the arts in the health sciences; methodological issues, including researcher positionality, data collection, and dissemination; challenges; and ethical issues. Rebecca Kamen, in Chapter 28, “Arts-Based Research in the Natural Sciences,” invites readers into her personal interest in the intersection of art and natural science. The chapter focuses primarily on the extraordinary commissioned works Kamen has created in the fields of chemistry, physics, and neuroscience. Keiko Krahnke and Donald Gudmundson, the authors of the final chapter in this section, “Learning from Aesthetics: Unleashing Untapped Potential in Business,” situate the chapter in a discussion of traditional research practice, then note shifts occurring in the business world. They suggest that a more holistic worldview is increasingly valued in business, and notions such as creativity, empathy, and mindfulness are receiving more attention as important aspects of people in organizations. Business leaders need a different set of skills, deeper awareness, and higher consciousness to navigate through new challenges. As such, the chapter explores the role of aesthetics in organizational learning and explores the question “How can aesthetics expand our hearts and minds, and help us to unleash our untapped potential?”

Part VIII, “Perspectives from Around the Globe” offers chapters written by scholars working outside of North America and addresses the state of ABR in different

regions of the world (although this is not the only section of the handbook that includes chapters written by scholars outside of North America). We begin with Chapter 30, “Arts-Based Research Traditions and Orientations in Europe: Perspectives from Finland and Spain,” by Anniina Suominen, Mira Kallio-Tavin, and Fernando Hernández-Hernández. The authors present two contextual perspectives and approaches to ABR and artistic research (AR) in Europe: Finnish and Spanish. In Chapter 31, “Arts-Based Research in Taiwan: An Agency for Change,” Yichien Cooper highlights how *a/r*tography, as an arts-based inquiry, takes root in enhancing the self-development of art teachers and researchers. Various community-based arts practices are showcased to illustrate the intricate relationships between arts-based inquiry and community-based arts. The chapter concludes that arts-based methods create organic and authentic dialogues for transformative actions in the community. In Chapter 32, “Personal Reflections on 10 Years of Arts-Based Practices in Japan,” Masayuki Okahara reviews the pivotal moments bringing ABR to Japan. In the final chapter of Part VIII, “The London Arts-Based Research Centre: The Creative Psyche as Knowledge Generator,” Roula-Maria Dib details the process of creating the groundbreaking LABRC, its innovative programming, and how it is spreading ABR and creating a vibrant community.

Finally, Part IX, “Additional Considerations,” reviews a range of additional issues, including evaluation, translation from one medium to another, writing, ethics, pedagogy, publishing, and going public. This section begins with Chapter 34, “Criteria for Evaluating Arts-Based Research,” in which I review a broad range of criteria that can be used to assess ABR on a case-by-case basis. In addition to providing a description of each criterion, I pose guiding questions to ask yourself as you attempt to determine whether each criterion has been met. In Chapter 35, “Translation in Arts-Based Research,” Nancy Gerber draws on a broad range of work in the field to construct an integrated, living definition of translation and its mechanisms for arts-based researchers (as the transformation from one knowledge form to another). The author begins with a brief critical reflection about worldview transparency relative to her own disciplinary and ABR worldviews, then explores historical and contemporary perspectives on the ontological and epistemological origins of arts-based phenomena; she concludes by defining concepts central to ABR translation, introducing a multiphasic cyclical model for translation and describing the translational mechanisms associated with the phases. In Chapter 36, “Arts-Based Writing: The Performance of Our Lives,” Vittoria S. Daiello and Candace Jesse Stout offer a lively discussion about the writing and representation of ABR. From “openings” all the way through to “closings,” the authors show, instead of tell, how to write “arts-based research”—a term used broadly to encompass a wide range of representational strategies. Through the use of in-depth examples, the chapter takes readers on a journey through the writing process. In Chapter 37, “Art, Agency, and Ethics in Research: A Posthumanist Vision of Goodness in Arts-Based Research,” Jerry Rosiek addresses the question “What is the relationship between ethics and ABR?” In this pursuit, he also explores an older and broader question: “What is the relationship between ethics and art?” Rosiek reviews philosophical theories that address this relationship, as well as a constellation of theories that some refer to under the heading “New Materialism.” In the following chapter, “Seeing More: Aesthetic-Based Research as Pedagogy of Self-Cultivation,” Liora Bresler explores arts-based pedagogies. How

can ABR create new spaces in which unlearning and learning can occur? What kinds of spaces does ABR create? How can we cultivate curiosity? How can we use empathy as a learning tool? Chapter 39, “The Pragmatics of Publishing the Experimental Text,” by the late Norman K. Denzin, is written as an experimental text. In a nod to the very forms the chapter addresses, the challenges of publishing, Denzin takes on critics, editors, and disciplinary structures that marginalize arts-based researchers, and all those who work on the margins. As with all of his work, there is hope: Denzin urges that we won’t always be on the margins if we work to build new houses and new structures. In Chapter 40, “Going Public: The Reach and Impact of Ethnographic and Academic Research,” which closes this section, Phillip Vannini and Sarah Abbott make a powerful case for popularizing research in order to reach more stakeholders, and with humor and wit bemoan the “dinosaur” mentality that structures some academic institutions. Rich examples from public ethnography and film illustrate contemporary ways to think about the outcomes of research, so that research matters beyond the “career” of individual researchers.

Finally, I conclude the *Handbook* with a short Chapter 41, “On Realizing the Promise of Arts-Based Research,” in which I build on the two final chapters of this handbook and suggest changes in the research landscape, including the move to transdisciplinarity and the push for public scholarship, have made the ground fertile for continued growth in the field. I close with a multifaceted plea to our community to engage in specific teaching and publishing practices that will move the field forward.

NOTES

1. Creative arts therapy is often housed under the larger category of expressive arts therapy (Leavy, 2015).
2. If you’re interested in learning more about the neuroscience of creativity and how our brains respond when we’re engaged in various forms of art making, read the work of Charles Limb, MD, who has conducted many studies using functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) to study people’s brains as they engage in musical improvisation, freestyle rapping, and other creative activities—mapping what parts of their brains are activated as they enter “flow states” of creativity. He was recently a part of a team that studied musicians’ brains as they played “happy” versus “sad” music (see www.nature.com/articles/srep18460).

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