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In Allegranti’s philosophical and reflexive report of her research work *Becoming Bodies* (2013) she encouraged the creative arts therapy community to resist the re-iteration of the “stifling politics of the status quo” (p. 402). As Editor-in-Chief of *The Arts in Psychotherapy* Allegranti’s work compels me to explore how a new imaginary of practice and research can continue to be shared and shaped in this journal. By stimulating the theoretical, political, and expanded epistemological thinking that Allegranti’s work exemplifies, a journal can prod, poke, and jostle the field, overwhelming the conservative sensibility of wanting to be safe and belong and instead encourage the radical, the different, and the new. In turn this can bring creative thinking to the fore in health and education environments.

Authors are therefore prompted to bring the political into their research reports. How is the client viewed within the system? How does change happen? Who has what power and how do they use it? How are the hidden mechanisms of authority and truth engaged? How can they be disrupted and what is the effect? With Susan Baines I have been able to think about and present ideas around normative medical models of research practice and to explore the more innovative opportunities offered by social models of research practice. With Allegranti (2013) we have sought to consider our own privilege and positioning within a tradition of healthcare research, and to illuminate the disadvantages of sticking to conventions in generating and reflecting on knowledge. This can be easier as a long time researcher than as a PhD candidate where so many people have to be satisfied with what is conducted and produced including supervisors, panels, and examiners. Nonetheless in seeking to be published in *The Arts in Psychotherapy* new authors are encouraged to be bold and courageous in staking claim to understanding through taking up multiple positions in relation to their topic and engaging a sensibility of innovation.

Newer authors are encouraged to read and reflect on the writings of those seasoned in practice and research. Seek from their writing new bold ways to describe what happens in a therapeutic process. Reject the idea that the creative arts therapies are something that happen to a client or patient, something done to them by an expert. Consider for example Helen Payne’s glorious description of how a group facilitator is when working with clients with Medically Unexplained Symptoms.
The facilitator cultivates her sense of purpose, ‘presence’ and non-judgemental attitude. She does not aim to fix anything nor change thought patterns but by ‘being alongside’ makes space for action, imagination, sensations, thoughts and feelings witnessed as they arise and are reflected upon. The facilitator’s task is highly complex involving simultaneously the perception of the participants’ verbal and non-verbal expressions and the self-regulation of one’s own perceptions and counter transferences.

Payne, 2015, p. 20

In a final comment on the state of the art in research in the Creative Arts Therapies it is disappointing that our research so rarely includes arts based processes through which knowledge is explored and shared. In a review of Arts Based Research (ABR) I undertook with Alison Ledger (Ledger and Edwards 2011) we found that music therapists were reluctant to describe their work as arts based even when they had, for example, used movement to reflect on or analyse data. Although arts based practices were present in research processes they were hidden. Einstein and Forinash (2013) describe this as, “Fear that art is not enough and will not be understood” (p. 84). Since we are experienced in arts based processes it seems logical that creative arts therapists should lead innovation in ABR research. There is more to be done. May the Arts in Psychotherapy journal continue to honour sites of knowing and knowledge that reject and disrupt the boring inanity of the status quo.

References


