

A Poetics of Crip Time and Pandemic Time: Arts Education and Disability Justice

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Biography

Jennifer (Eisenhauer) Richardson is an Associate Professor in the Department of Arts Administration, Education, and Policy and also an affiliated faculty member with the Disability Studies Graduate Interdisciplinary Specialization at The Ohio State University. Her current work, at the intersection of post-qualitative inquiry and genre-queer writing, considers the intersection of artistic practice, normalcy, and the politics and poetics of diverse embodied realities. The author of numerous academic articles and book chapters in the areas of arts education, gender studies, and disability studies, she also publishes poetry and creative nonfiction. She is currently the chair-elect for the Disability Studies in Art Education caucus of The National Art Education Association.

Biography

Karen Keifer-Boyd, Ph.D., Professor of Art Education, Bioethics, and Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies at The Pennsylvania State University, co-authored several books: Including *Difference* (NAEA, 2013); *InCITE*, *InSIGHT*, *InSITE* (NAEA, 2008); *Engaging Visual Culture* (Davis, 2007); co-edited *Real-World Readings in Art Education: Things Your Professors Never Told You* (Falmer, 2000); and numerous journal publications. Her research on transdisci-

plinary creativity, inclusion, disability justice, feminist art pedagogy, transcultural dialogue, action research, and eco-social justice art education has been translated and published in Austria, Brazil, China, Columbia, Finland, Oman, and S. Korea. Co-founder and editor of *Visual Culture & Gender*, she has received Fulbright Awards (Austria, 2012; Finland, 2006) and residencies (Austria, 2009; Uganda, 2010). She serves on the International Disability Studies, Arts, and Education Board, and Kennedy Center's VSA Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee. In *Creativity, Disability, Diversity and Inclusion* (Routledge, 2018), she draws on Disabilities Studies theory and practices that change attitudes and environments to create an inclusive world of difference.

As guest editors, we are pleased to introduce this special issue of the academic journal *Research in Arts & Education* (RAE) derived from papers presented at the 2nd International Conference on Disability, Arts and Education held at Moore College of Art & Design in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, USA, 3–5 October 2019 (see <https://www.dsae2019.com/>). In the first essay, conference coordinators, **Mira Kallio-Tavin** and **Lauren Stichter** (2020), provide context and background of the forming of the international biannual forum to engage with all forms of art, arts education, and arts-based research that advocates for first-person accounts of disability, disability identities and cultures, as well as addresses institutional, systemic, and societal barriers to disability justice. In the second essay, Jeremy Johnson and Amanda Newman-Godfrey, curators of the featured exhibition of the 2nd International of the Conference, discuss the archives of photographs of disability rights activism. In the editorial that follows, we situate the three articles and book review selected for this special issue of RAE within the lived-realities of 2020.

Biopolitics of Breathing Interdependency in a Pandemic

Even within our cultural bubbles, the air we breathe is not contained. We share the air. Inhale, exhale. Care for one another is deeper than the mess of our current situation. Breathing

has become a 2020 theme from “I can’t breathe” suffocation at the knees of police brought to the world’s attention through the Black Lives Matter Movement (Turan, 2020) to the politics of mask-wearing, jeopardizing civic compassion and responsible stewardship (Rabinovitch-Fox, 2020). Accessibility during the pandemic raises new concerns for “meaningful participation of disabled people in the construction and implementation of crisis standards of care” (Guidry-Grimes, et al., 2020, p.28). For example, who has access to assisted breathing when lungs are impaired by the coronavirus? With many hospitals reaching over capacity (Stone, 2020) will people with pre-existing or multiple disabilities, chronic illness, and/or minimal support networks (such as means to reach medical facilities) experience discrimination in healthcare treatment? Further, essential workers, especially healthcare workers, are experiencing trauma and exhaustion. Ableist perspectives, often so deeply entrenched that critical conscious awareness is absent, have grave consequences during the raging exponential increase of coronavirus cases (Pulrang, 2020, Schiffmann, 2020)². Moreover, the disproportionate rate of death among Black communities calls for recognition of the intersections of discrimination and the need for an ethical crisis of care and a disability justice commitment to interlocking notions of cognitive and distributive justice (Golden, 2020; Guidry-Grimes, et al., 2020). Democracy is caring for each other. Democracy is fierce love for one another, and the courage to do so. Courage is having heart. En-Courage each other. EnCOURAGEMENT may be the best we can do. Inhale, exhale.

Assumptions of freedom of mobility or to shelter-in-place may be means of social/economic/biopolitic control through surveillance and data scraping technologies. While many educators and students express discomfort with Zoom meetings, courses and conferences, others who experience discomfort or even violence in educational spaces, or cannot participate in physical meetings, offer a counter-perspective on accessibility during the pandemic in the current biopolitics. In a desire to return to “normal” so often normalcy itself is in need of further discussion.

In this issue, **Christopher Bass** (2020), in his article, "Establishing a *Presumption of Competence* through the Tattoo", discusses his rationale for introducing the art genre of tattoos in his high-school English Language Arts course to develop asset-based rhetoric for an inclusive anti-ableist curriculum. Such an approach values autistic communication as purposeful, for example, in associating sounds of words with their meaning (Straus, 2013). Similarly, some artists experiment with and perform language to challenge the rhetoric defining/confining identities. Parameters of competence set according to how well individuals perform misses recognizing and fostering the lived-reality of interdependent competence, a necessity for learning civic responsibility.

Intersectional Identities, Poetics, and Embodied Practices: Approaches to Dialogue and Arts-Based Research

A discussion of disability justice in relationship to artistic practice and research in a moment of pandemic time emerges from a recognition of the interrelationship of white supremacy, ableism, colonialism, heteropatriarchy, and capitalism (Berne, 2015). The intersections of embodiment with other systems of oppression raises questions about artistic practices as not simply offering content to be communicated, but as asking important questions about predominant understandings of arts-based research (ABR), writing, and artistic practice. In this issue, **Michelle Attias** describes a neuroqueer embodied AD(H)D arts-based methodology, which she calls *mind-meandering*, as a means to rethink ABR through her embodied experience and engagement with critical disability studies. Her research includes dialoguing with neurodivergent artists' journals. The journal entries she creates are in response to two artists' work (Kurt Cobain and Lee Lozano) and include post-conceptual poetry and artmaking as process-oriented approaches.

Attias's *mind-meandering* builds from the notion of crip time, which is also important to

consider in this moment of pandemic time. As Alison Kafer describes “rather than bend disabled bodies and minds to meet the clock, crip time bends the clock to meet disabled bodies and minds” (as quoted in in Samuels, 2017, para. 1). In **Alexandra Allen, Timothy Smith, and Amanda Newman-Godfrey’s**(2020) article, they experiment with the utilization of a trio-ethnographic dialogue (Breault, Hackler, & Bradley, 2012) to have a conversation between themselves exploring their discovery of and turning toward critical disability studies. Within their trioethnographic dialogue, they reflect on their experiences as graduate students and their post-graduate roles in academia. Personal narrative by disabled authors and artistic or pedagogical practices helped them to challenge internalized stigmatization. Both Attias’s and Allen et. al’s articles describe the struggle associated with normative structures including spaces of employment and education that are structured around normative bodyminds and particular framings of “productivity”.

Both Attias’s (2020) and Allen et. al’s (2020) articles reflect the important role that encountering first-person narratives has played in their work. John Derby and Alice Wexler (2020), editors of *Contemporary Art and Disability Studies*, ask: What disability arts and culture *do*? “[D]isability arts and culture affirm an alternative system of seeing, valuing, and understanding that disrupts dominant notions about human experience and cultural production” (p. 13). They describe how first-person narratives challenge “medical and other deficit models” (p. 1) and can function as an “act of defiance” (p. 9). They highlight that prose, poetry and other forms of artistic practice are, as Swan (2002) suggests, not only “about the body but of and from the body too” (as quoted in Wexler & Derby, 2020, p. 1). Derby and Wexler’s book is reviewed in this issue by **Courtnie Wolfgang** (2020).

All three articles in this issue rethink artistic forms, research, and pedagogical practices. Writing specifically about poetry and research practices, Candace Boyd (2013) states, “we should not ask what a poem means, but ‘what does it do?’ Rather, as readers we pass “through

the landscape of a poem” embodying “the poem for the duration of the performance” (p. 213). Therefore, in considering poetics, including a discussion of arts-based research practices, Boyd’s discussion highlights an understanding of poetry beyond it simply being a representational form, but also one of sensation as poetic inquiry encompasses theoretical and philosophical practices developed through lived experience and the body. Ally Day (2017) in “Chronic Poetics, Chronic Illness,” discusses the poem as a body and proposes reading poetry bioethically through a feminist practice that “uncover[s] spaces of unknowing” (p. 92) recognizing that readers interpret poetry “through their own bodily engagements” (p. 94).

In June 2020, *The New York Times* asked two recognized U.S. poets, Claudia Rankine and Pulitzer Prize winner Jericho Brown, to write poems in response to a summer in which the United States had just watched the murder of George Floyd by police as cases and deaths continued to increase due to COVID-19.

Rankine (2020) writes in her poem, “Weather”:

Drop by drop. Face / covering? No. yes. Social distancing? Six feet / under for underlying conditions. Black. / Just us and the blues kneeling on a neck / with the full weight of a man in blue. / Eight minutes and forty-six seconds. / In extremis, I can’t breathe gives way/to asphyxiation /to giving up this world / and then mama, called to, a call / to protest, fire, glass say their names, say / their names, *white silence equals violence...*

Rankine’s poem *did* something in that moment that extends beyond the notion of writing simply as communication and expression, that was captured in a comment on the *NYT* webpage by a reader, C Whiting, who responded as many others did in the comments section by writing a poem:

You read the news. / You read a poem. / But maybe we need a different name / for

different kinds of reading. / Because when I read through the news this morning /
It left a dull grey crust, like March snow. / And then I read Ms. Rankine's poem /
the snow melted into fire / and I said aloud / 'That's it.'

Rankine's poem functions differently than prose, opening a new space at the intersection of a newspaper and news articles, a digital space with news articles divorced from paper and now with the ability to comment, the pain of the moment itself that she captures and the subsequent reader's pause... this is an embodied kind of reading. As artists, writers, researchers, we can reflect on our engagement with Rankine's poem and consider how our writing and other forms of artistic practices can function as forms of inquiry (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2018). In the DSAE International conference and in these subsequent articles, the authors and presenters offer multiple examples of the ways the arts and writing can *do* something differently.

Disability Studies and Arts Education Resources

We conclude our editorial with a selection of resource sites to support artists and educators in efforts toward critical disability justice.

Access Living Youth Programs
Beyond Access: Disability Justice 101
Changing the Framework: Disability Justice
Disability & the Arts: A Playlist Syllabus
Disability Arts International
Disability in Art History
Disability Justice—Project LETS
Disability Justice & COVID-19
Disability Justice Resources
Disability Rights Education & Defense Fund

Disability Social History Project

Disability Visibility Project

Indisposable: Structures of Support After the Americans with Disabilities Act

Mapping Access

Queer Futures Collective

Sins Invalid

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Notes

¹This editorial, as well as our approach to editing the journal, has been equitably distributed, and involved many rich zoom discussions. Our editorial is equally co-authored and there is no first author but rather names are listed alphabetically.

²See Jennifer (Eisenhauer) Richardson (2020). “Disability and Justice COVID-19,” *NAEA News*, 62(5), 26.