

**Opening to the multisensory nature of employee experience to
discover new lines of inquiry**

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ABSTRACT

Employee Arts Based Research (ABR) which in this instance refers to studies that use methods that require employee participants to undertake an “act of creation” (Prosser and Loxley, 2008,p.33) that includes drawing, painting or collage, is the focus of this study, as organisational research has predominantly used photography with employees, rather than participant generated creative methods (Ward and Shortt, 2020). Additionally, the types of employees that are included are professionals within the sectors of health, education and management, within which researchers have used ABR methods to enable employee emotional expression but how ABR methods support this has not been explored.

Consequently, the aim of this research study is to explore and learn about the process through which employees can convey and express their emotions using ABR, to answer the research question of: “*How does reflection through ABR methods support or hinder employee participants’ emotional expression?*” To achieve this, a longitudinal, multi-modal qualitative design was used, within a generic qualitative methodology. Employees from a single Higher Education Institution (HEI) participated in two ABR group sessions, (separated by a minimum of five months) and a final 1:1 interview. Participants were requested to create visuals depicting their working experiences and share narrative meanings in a group setting, face to face and online. The visual and verbal data were thematically analysed to identify meaningful patterns across the data set.

The analysis revealed three core themes: Gateway into My Experience, Seeking Emotional Balance, and Manoeuvring through Boundaries, detailing what supports and hinders employee emotional expression using ABR. The findings indicate that the repeated application of ABR can act as a visual emotional barometer, providing a dynamic measure of affective change over time, which can simultaneously create positive feelings in the participants. Additionally, this study makes a methodological contribution by analysing the relationship between visual and verbal ABR data through the thematic

exploration of opposites. This analytical lens, prompted by the coding of emotional opposites and identifying opposites within the visuals, e.g. pictures of people walking uphill and sliding downhill, informed the emergence of the core theme, 'Seeking Emotional Balance,' and offers a pathway for future ABR researchers to bridge the analytical gap between visual and verbal data, and track the dynamic construction of employee emotional reality, over time.

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Last but no means least, thank you to my participants who took part in the research, and made this possible.

Dedication

This is dedicated to my dad, who had dementia and died in 2022. Despite having dementia, he always asked me how the PhD was going, and my response was often “slowly”. I am sorry he is no longer physically present, but I am so grateful to the interest he showed, even when cognitively he struggled to understand what was going on around him, yet somehow, he was able to remember me and what was important to me. Thank you, dad. This is for you.

Declaration

I declare that this thesis is my own work and has not been submitted in substantially the same form for the award of a higher degree elsewhere.

Chapter One: Introduction

1.1 Background of the Study

The use of arts-based research (ABR) methods within organisational research, is a growing area of research, that has developed from the need to understand the perspective of the employee and support access to employees' tacit experience of work that is less easily accessed using the spoken word. For example, Zuboff (1988) researched the experience of employees working in a printing factory whose work had been computerized. Zuboff had difficulty with understanding the employees' changing experiences through purely verbal means, as the employees had had a physical relationship with the printing presses themselves, holding tacit knowledge within their bodies, that was difficult for them to express in spoken language, particularly to someone (the researcher), with no direct experience of their work. Consequently, Zuboff spontaneously requested the employees to draw their experiences to help her to see and understand the challenges they now faced with the computerization of their work, to attain understanding that Zuboff could not access using the spoken word alone.

Another example of early use of ABR methods with employees is Nossiter and Biberman (1990), whose use of drawing was planned, unlike Zuboff (1988). Nossiter and Biberman (1990) asked employees to draw their organisational culture, in the form of an animal, as part of a word-based questionnaire. They discovered that some employees only completed the drawing and no other aspect of the questionnaire, possibly indicating a preference or ease for some employees to express themselves creatively, through drawing. Nossiter and Biberman (1990) reported this observation regarding the response and engagement the drawing created from the employee respondents and highlighted that drawing could be a method through which knowledge regarding organisational culture could be attained.

1.2 Background and the Researcher's Position

I am a Chartered Occupational Psychologist and a qualified relationship counsellor with a leaning towards all things psychodynamic, particularly Jungian (Jung, 1957, 1995). Within my work as a Psychologist, I have facilitated workshops and group development for employees, including team building, well-being workshops and support for train drivers who have experienced fatalities whilst working. It has involved intense emotional work at times, dealing with relational conflict within groups, individuals and between couples too.

This study reflects the importance I give to relationships and how I view them as foundational and central to organisational life (and life generally), which is reflected in the quote “*all social research is, like it or not, a relational activity*” by Cummins and Williams (2019, p.xiv). Through this research study, I have aligned this underlying interest I have in relationships, with using art with employees.

I am not an artist, and my drawings were laughed at, as a child by others, yet the experience I had when using art, during my training to become a relationship counsellor had a strong impact upon and has stayed with me for 20 years. Working as a relationship counsellor requires me to sense what is being said beneath the words and support the couple through vocalizing this, although this level of perceptivity seems natural to me, as I am the youngest of three children and the observer of the family. I had two older siblings who were verbally articulate, but I was the sensitive non-verbal one, who picked up on the underlying, unspoken dynamics. This perceptive capacity has been a double-edged sword as I am able to sense things but do not necessarily understand or can easily express in words, how I have gained these understandings. It is why I am drawn to qualitative research to explore and reveal what is being said, beneath the spoken words; and can simultaneously appreciate the difficulty of demonstrating this in research writing (Braun & Clarke, 2019).

1.3 What are ABR Methods?

ABR methods encompasses different forms including art literary (Grisoni & Collins, 2012), performance art (Giaver et al, 2016), and visual art such as photography (Warren, 2002), to explore and create new knowledge (Leavy, 2020; McNiff, 1998). ABR methods is in its infancy relative to other methods used within organisation research. However, the research method is starting to find its place, with the use of photography being the most popular (Ray and Smith, 2012; Vince and Warren, 2012), whilst the participant generated creative methods such as drawing are “considered secondary in the visual field” (Ward and Shortt, 2020, p.9) and are being used less.

Consequently, participant generated ABR methods, that require the “act of creation” (Prosser and Loxley, 2008, p. 33) such as drawing, painting or collage, will be the focus of this thesis. It is the participant’s “act of creation” which helps to define ABR methods used in this study and simultaneously differentiate and distinguish them from other types of visual data (Prosser & Loxley, 2008; Pain, 2012), such as photography (Warren, 2002) and photo elicitation (Harper, 2002). ABR methods used in this study, requires the participants to act and create the visual themselves.

1.4 Gap in the Literature

The participant generated ABR methods such as drawing, painting and collage is a relatively new method that has been used less frequently by researchers (Ward & Short, 2020) and therefore less explored and understood in relation to its potential and possibilities of use with employees. Employees in this context are health professionals, education professionals, managers or office-based employees. It has been accepted that ABR methods support the expression of emotion for employees (Vince and Broussine, 1996) but how it does this, is not clear and has not been questioned through research and is therefore a gap in the literature. Consequently, the aim of this research is to explore and learn about the process through which ABR methods support employees to convey and express emotion and the impact of this for organisational research.

Chapter Two: Systematic Literature Review

2.1 Aim of the Systematic Literature Review

The aim of this review is to gain clarity of how researchers are using the ABR methods, including drawing, painting or collage with employees, in order to answer the review question: *What are the benefits, challenges and limitations of using ABR methods with employees?*

A systematic review of the literature, therefore, was undertaken to explore the use of ABR methods, with employees, up until October 24, 2023. ABR methods tend to sit within the field of qualitative research (Kara, 2015), and the findings for qualitative studies in research articles are word or narrative-based themes. So, a thematic synthesis was employed for this study, to help synthesize the ideas held within the research papers and clarify the challenges, benefits and limitations of using ABR methods with employees, in the workplace.

2.2 Method of the Systematic Literature Review

As the research articles in this review are all qualitative, using ABR methods, a thematic synthesis (Thomas and Harden, 2008) was used as the framework for the review, and CASP (2023) Qualitative Study Checklist was chosen to clarify the quality of the research articles.

2.2.1 Defining the review question

The participant generated ABR methods such as drawing, painting and collage is a research method that has been used less frequently by researchers, with employees (Ward & Short, 2020) and therefore less explored and understood in relation to the benefits and challenges of its use as a data collection method, with employees. Therefore, the review question asked is: "What are the benefits, challenges and limitations of using ABR methods with employees?"

2.2.2 The Search Strategy

A sensitive search strategy was created with support from the librarians at the University of Lancaster, to identify relevant studies for inclusion in the analysis and synthesis process. The Specialist Faculty Librarians provided support to develop the key terms for the systematic review. (See Appendix A, for the first terms developed with for the terms of “employees” and art-based research” on August 19, 2022). This search highlighted that the terms used were not effective for identifying research papers that had used ABR methods with employees, particularly as the focus of this study was not on the use of art therapy with employees.

2.2.3 Selection of the relevant databases

The development of the search terms initially occurred across multiple databases, that included scientific journals in the psychological, social, management, health, education and technological fields of study were searched:

- PsychINFO, PsycARTICLES, PubMed, Academic Search Ultimate, Business Source Complete, CINAHL, and Web of Science.

The databases initially searched, reflected that the systematic search was not being limited to organizational research (including business and charity sector) but included research conducted with education and health professions, as preliminary searching had indicated the use of arts-based methods with teachers and health professionals (Fraser & Sayah, 2011; Pain, 2012). However, the initial searching also highlighted that PubMed and CINAHL identified the same research articles, but CINAHL had greater sensitivity to qualitative papers, so the decision was to focus on CINAHL. Additionally, PsychINFO seemed to be identifying ABR with employees, but PsychARTICLES was not, so again it was decided to focus on PsychINFO, and the seven databases became five (see appendix B):

- 1) Business Source Complete
- 2) Academic Search Ultimate
- 3) CINAHL
- 4) Web of Science
- 5) PsychINFO

The choice of databases reflected the across discipline approach to gain understanding of how arts-based methods are being used with employees across different working professions. The databases that were searched encompassed psychology and medicine (PsycINFO, Cinahl); social sciences (Web of Science); education (Academic Search Ultimate); and business (Business Source Complete). The reason for this range of databases was to gain access to research with employees from a variety of sectors including teachers, nurses and managers. Terms were developed to encapsulate the employee participant in ABR methods. The type of employee research was focusing on office workers such as civil servants, corporate, banking, or engineering roles, as well as those who worked in the health or educational professions (see appendix B). Those who worked in retail, catering or the sex industry were not included, as well as those in very unique roles such as sailors sailing at sea (Pipere et al, 2020). The databases were all searched up to October 24, 2023.

2.2.4 Inclusion, exclusion criteria

As the review focuses upon participant generated visuals, the search did not include photography in any form. It is the participant's "act of creation" which helps to define ABR methods and simultaneously differentiate and distinguish them from other types of visual data (Prosser & Loxley, 2008; Pain, 2012). Therefore, ABR methods in this systematic review include drawing, painting and collage. Taking a photograph of something, is not considered to be part of ABR methods in this study, as the participant did not create what they are taking a photograph of. This differentiation was incorporated within the inclusion, exclusion criteria. Art-based workshops or interventions that did not involve research were not included (see Appendix C for inclusion, exclusion criteria).

2.2.5 Screening for Relevance & Peer Review

All articles identified using the search terms, in the five databases were exported to Endnote X9. Before they were transferred to the software Rayyan, the articles were assessed for duplicates. Duplicate research articles found in Endnote were deleted prior to transference to Rayyan. Once the articles were uploaded onto Rayyan software, the research articles were again assessed for duplicates. Once this was completed screening of the title and abstract in relation to the inclusion/exclusion criteria (appendix C) commenced. The first reviewer and primary researcher (EC) began the screening and placed any articles that was not a clear yes or no, into a “maybe” folder, for the second reviewer, in Rayyan. This maybe folder contained 300 articles. The second reviewer (DC) screened 20% of the research articles in Rayyan, including all those contained within the maybe folder. The second reviewer (DC), met with the first reviewer (EC) face to face to check understanding of the inclusion/exclusion criteria. This session was invaluable for the primary researcher, for assessing the accuracy of the inclusion/exclusion criteria, to ensure that what the primary researcher was communicating verbally as the criteria, matched the written criteria. In addition, the primary researcher was able to evaluate and review their decision making in relation to the articles that met the criteria for selection, or not. For example, it was through this process that all research dissertations i.e. research not published in peer reviewed journals, were excluded. The primary researcher (EC) gained confidence in the screening process and decision making, through this interaction with the second reviewer (DC).

If the second reviewer (DC) was also unsure as whether the article needed to be included or excluded, based on the title and abstract, this article was then read in full by both of the reviewers, discussed and a joint decision made. All research articles were initially screened on their title and abstract using the software raayan. 106 articles papers were read in more detail, to ascertain their relevance, which resulted in 22 articles being included in the review.

2.2.6 Ancillary Search Strategies

In addition to electronic searching on relevant databases, hand-searching references of included studies was used, to identify further articles. This resulted in two further research articles being included.

2.2.7 Quality appraisal of the research articles

The research articles included in this review are all qualitative, so the selection of the quality assessment tool needed to be appropriate for qualitative studies (Boland, 2017). Two checklists were reviewed as a possible method to assess the quality of the research articles: The COREQ (Consolidated criteria for Reporting Qualitative Research) checklist and the Critical Appraisal Skills Programme (2023), CASP (Qualitative Studies) Checklist. The COREQ consists of 32 items and is aimed at research that has used qualitative interviews and focus groups (Tong et al, 2007); whereas the CASP (Qualitative Studies) checklist is composed of 10 questions that are broader and less specific than the COREQ.

CASP's ten questions essentially cover the different elements of the research process, similar to COREQ including the choice of research design; recruitment strategy; appropriateness of data collection method; and how rigorous the data analysis was. However, the CASP also includes two questions that the COREQ does not include. One question asks about the consideration of ethical issues and the second questions enquires as to the value of the research undertaken. The last question is inherently value laden but actually provides an opportunity for the reviewer to reflect on their thoughts and opinions in order to provide an overall statement, that indeed will likely reflect their own values and thus bring greater awareness to the researcher of their own values as well as their own likely biases. So, on discussion with my supervisors, the CASP (Qualitative Studies) checklist was viewed as a more appropriate choice for use with ABR methods as it provides an opportunity for the researcher to reflect on their own values, in relation to the paper and in effect, include and acknowledge themselves in the process. Although, it was thought unlikely that papers would

be excluded from the study due to a lack of quality, this did occur (see appendix D). For example, the research article Barner (2008) was removed from the systematic review, as there was no indication in the article that a data analysis had occurred. The lack of analysis indicated that the article needed to be categorised as a consultancy project and not research, therefore it was not included in the final review.

2.2.8 Prisma flow diagram

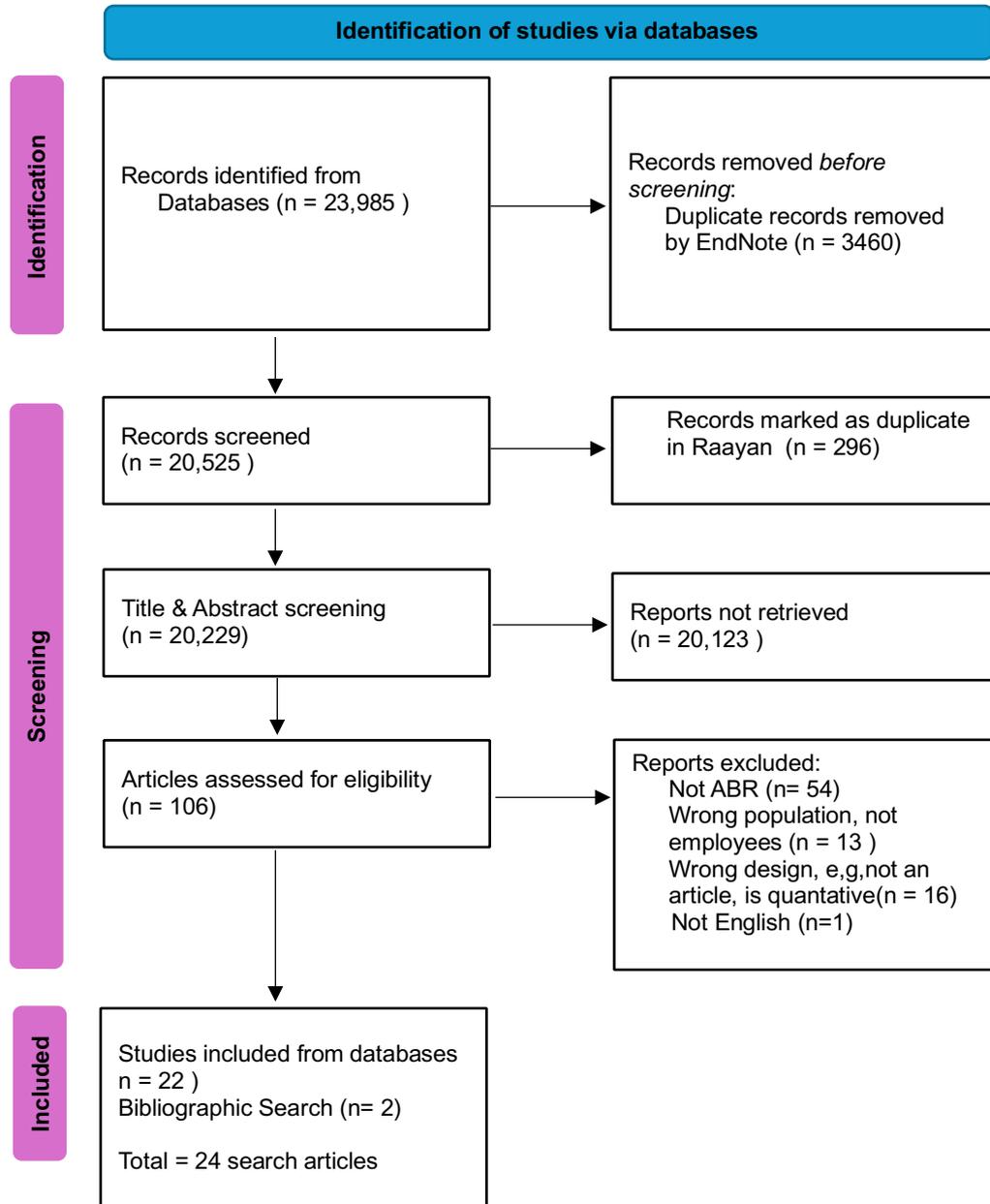


Figure 1: Prisma flow diagram

2.3 Data Extraction

The aim of the data extraction of the 24 articles, was to support the synthesis process and gain a sense of how researchers are using ABR methods with employees, in order to answer the review question: *What are the benefits, challenges and limitations of using creative ABR methods with employees?*

The data extracted from the articles (see table 1) included:

- The setting within which the research took place
- With what type of employees
- Number of participants
- How the researchers have used it – which methodology
- How the data was analysed
- Why the researchers chose it as a method
- What the researchers learnt from using the method

The intention was held when reading the articles and extracting the information, to focus on the benefits, challenges and limitations of the method. The data extraction table was held within excel, and from this information a series of codes and descriptive themes were formed and developed, through writing and sharing this information with supervisors, peers and academic support staff.

Table 1: Data extraction chart

Citation	Title of Research Paper	Rationale researcher provides for using creative ABR methods	Employee Type and number of participants	Study Methodology	Data collection method	Data analysis method	Researcher learning from using creative ABR as a data collection method.
Atherton et al (2020)	"We've done so much on our journeys". An exploration of pioneering the profession of speech language pathology in Vietnam.	<p>(i) The researchers included drawing to evaluate it as a method, and capacity to answer the research aims.</p> <p>(ii) To allow participants to express the uniqueness of their experience</p> <p>(iii) Creating a visual image requires engagement and time which supports participant reflection, which has the potential to provide greater insight into a</p>	<p>(i) Speech and Language Therapists, in Vietnam.</p> <p>(ii) Five</p>	Phenomenology	<p>(i) Graphic Elicitation Techniques</p> <p>(ii) Written narratives</p>	Thematic Analysis (Braun & Clark, 2006).	<p>(i) Using the "structure" of a river, the visual acted as a support or a scaffold, for the participants to organize their feelings and thoughts as they reflected on their journey of becoming a Speech and Language Therapist.</p> <p>(ii) The researchers learned that the visuals the participants created helped them to identify the "interrelatedness" of different factors</p>

		<p>phenomenon or experience.</p> <p>(iv) It empowers participants to choose what they wish to share verbally, after creating; and to share their experiences in a way that is meaningful to them (and not the perspective of the researcher).</p>					<p>(people, events, institutions) and enabled them to access "deeper insight" than might have been possible with interviews alone.</p> <p>(iii) The method helped "visualise the essence of their journey," which supported the study's goal of understanding the participants' experience (phenomenology) and their subjective meanings.</p>
Banegas (2022)	Ethnic equity, Mapudungun, and CLIL. A case study from southern Argentina.	The use of ABR methods was for the researcher to gain access to the participants lived experience.	<p>(i) Teachers</p> <p>(ii) Four</p>	Case Study, using an interpretivist paradigm.	<p>(i) group discussions</p> <p>(ii) journal diaries</p> <p>(iii) creating a visual by collage, drawing or photo.</p>	Content Analysis	The drawing and creating a visual helped to depict the participants sense of personal identity, in relation to their professional identity.
Barton et al (2023)	Publishing in the academy: An arts-based, metaphorical reflection	(I) Art was included in order to address one of their research questions:	<p>(i) Academics in an Australian University.</p> <p>(ii) Six</p>	Qualitative study. Collective autoethnography.	Included a variety of ABR methods including	Metaphor analysis.	(i) The focus was on the process of creating and not the final product, which gave

	towards selfcare.	<p>“To what extent does an artsbased approach to reflecting on the writing process and pressure to publish assist in the preservation of the self?”</p> <p>(ii) ABR methods were chosen to support the reflection process and give voice to emotions and the “felt” insights.</p>			making a collage.		<p>participants a break from the attainment of external outputs.</p> <p>(ii) The activity of creating supported the participants to express vulnerability and their feelings with each other.</p>
Baxter & Brumfit (2006)	Once a week is not enough: evaluating current measures of teamworking in stroke	To help visualize team dynamics, and relational aspects which are difficult to verbalize, and the process aspects of teamworking which tend not to be discussed.	(i) Three study sites in the UK, encompassing acute hospital ward based care: specialist stroke unit care and community care. The participants included: Nurses (10); Physiotherapists (6); Occupational Therapists (7); Speech and	Case Study	(i) interview (ii) drawing	The transcripts of the semi structured interviews were analysed thematically but the visual data was not reported to have been part of the analysis but used to strengthen the analysis of the words.	The researchers reported that the participant drawings strengthened the findings and recommended other researchers used drawings to help gain understanding of team membership and relationships.

		socialeco systems and			created individually)		
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	practice amid the pandemic. An art-based grounded theory study	the internal world of the participants.	<p>in Western Canada.</p> <p>(ii) 13 (11 were female and 2 were male)</p> <p>(iii) 9 of the participants were white; 4 were "indigenous or visible minority".</p>		(ii) reflective writing.		nurse – during their first year of employment.
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Chang et al (2015)	Registered Nurses and Discharge Planning in a Taiwanese ED: A Neglected Issue?	<p>(i) To gain a deeper, more subjective understanding and tacit knowledge, of Emergency Department (ED) nurses' perceptions of factors influencing discharge planning, in Taiwan.</p> <p>(ii) To help discover aspects of professional decision making that can be difficult to express and/or verbalize.</p>	<p>(i) registered nurses</p> <p>(ii) 25</p>	Qualitative Study, with an Interpretivist paradigm	<p>(i) interviews</p> <p>(ii) drawing</p>	Thematic Coding	<p>(i) The use of drawings enabled the interrelated factors such as heavy workload, poor communication, patient attitudes, to be seen and more easily expressed and understood.</p> <p>(ii) Supported the nurses to express their emotional experiences and work experiences they find difficult.</p> <p>(iii) The visual supported the dialogue with the researcher through the provision of a visual focus.</p>
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<p>Cristancho et al (2014) and Cristancho et al (2015)</p>	<p>What's behind the scenes? Exploring the unspoken dimensions of complex and challenging surgical situations and Seeing in different ways: Introducing "rich pictures" in the study of expert judgement</p>	<p>The aim was to reveal the unique viewpoints or perspective of a situation, that are beyond or outside the explicit or dominant narrative or view, to help identify multidimensionality, and therefore aid understanding and clearer seeing.</p>	<p>(i) Surgeons working in two University Hospital in Canada. (ii) 5 surgeons from 4 surgical specialities including: hepatobiliary, colorectal, cardiac and vascular.</p>	<p>Qualitative Study focusing on visual methodology involving a Systems Engineering (SE) approach</p>	<p>(i) Visual Method: "Rich Picture" (ii) interview</p>	<p>Aesthetic approach to visual analysis, which occurred in two stages: (i) individual aesthetic analysis of each drawing occurred first. This involved developing an "inductive description of the individual drawings by first focusing on the concrete elements in each and moving gradually to considering the meaning of the elements individually and in relation to other elements" (p.1541). But</p>	<p>(i) The researchers found the process demanding of their time and therefore felt that future research involving this method needed to have focused questions within small scale studies. (ii) The researchers proposed that what is not included (in a picture (akin to what is not said) could be a way of emphasizing a lack of balance but this would need further exploration and research.</p>
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						<p>what does this actually mean?</p> <p>(ii) The second phase involved compare and contrast of multiple drawings, to “identify common visual elements and to begin exploring dimensions shared across the drawings (and stories). Those dimensions constituted the emergent themes of the study” (p. 1541)</p> <p>(iii) Team analysis, with the researchers and the participants.</p>	
Culshaw (2019)	The unspoken power of collage? Using an innovative arts-based research method to	(i)Culshaw wanted to use a method that allowed for deeper reflection and	(i) Classroom teachers, middle leaders and two headteachers and of secondary schools, in England.	A qualitative approach that took a constructivist ontological stance, whilst acknowledging	(i) 1:1 interview (ii) use of collage – where the materials are placed, rather	Culshaw created her own data analysis method, that she developed through exploring the	(i) Culshaw observed that some of what appeared visually in the collage, was not spoken about during the

	explore the experience of struggling as a teacher.	<p>Engagement.</p> <p>(ii) ABR methods can enable new things to be communicated, and/or communication to occur in a new way i.e. accessing words visually and not purely linguistically.</p> <p>(iii) ABR can support and enable verbal communication.</p> <p>(iv) use of collage frees participants from the challenge of drawing and does not rely on artistic ability.</p>	(ii) 14	the value of arts-based methodology (Rose, 2007); of the social semiotic approach (Jewitt and Oyama, 2001), the potential for visual ethnography (Mannay, 2018) and the learning from phenomenology (van Manen, 1997).	than stuck, so that they can be moved around	approach used in arts-based methodology and semiotic analysis	<p>interview; conversely some of what was spoken about in the interview, was not represented in the collage.</p> <p>(ii) “collage creation can evoke powerful emotion” (p.291)</p> <p>(iii) How some of the participants felt in their bodies was expressed through the collage.</p>
Gourlay et al (2021)	Lockdown Literacies and semiotic assemblages: academic boundary work	To support the expression of emotion at a time of unexpected change and help understand the changing of	<p>(i) Academic and professional service staff in a UK University.</p> <p>(ii) 32</p>	Qualitative arts informed inquiry	(i) Drawing (ii) Interview	Semiotic Assemblage Analysis	(i) The method was able to encapsulate the employee’s home life and working life simultaneously i.e. treating life as

	in the COVID-19 crisis.	boundaries of academic work at a time of fluidity.					<p>a whole experience that cannot truly be separated into different elements.</p> <p>(ii) The employees' emotional experience was able to be expressed.</p> <p>(iii) Helped to understand the individual's internal experience of what the boundary between home and working life means and looks like.</p>
Gudyanga et al (2019)	Zimbabwean secondary school guidance and counselling teachers teaching sexuality education in the HIV and	<p>Drawing was used to support the participant to engage with the topic under study and support their thinking.</p> <p>The researchers' hoped that</p>	<p>(i) school guidance and counsellor teachers, in a Zimbabwean secondary school.</p> <p>(ii) 8 Female Teachers</p>	Participatory Action Research methodology	<p>(i) Focus Group</p> <p>(ii) Drawing</p> <p>(iii) Reflective journaling</p>	Thematic Analysis (Braun & Clark, 2006).	<p>Researchers thought that drawing: (i) enabled an easier group discussion, with a sensitive subject area – sex.</p>

	AIDS education curriculum.	drawing would describe, reflect and evoke emotions; to add another dimension to verbal communication and look at the study topic, in new ways.					(ii) increased participant participation (iii) small group sizes were more conducive to the method.
Kado et al (2023)	'I Would Have Never Told You that' - Using Rich Pictures as a Qualitative Tool to Uncover Tacit Perspectives on Leadership	(i) To reveal tacit knowledge that would not otherwise be revealed in an interview alone. (ii) To include feelings and emotions, culture and context.	(i) Health Practitioners, in a position of leadership in a major Pacific University. (ii) 10	An interpretivist case study approach.	(i) The visual elicitation technique Rich Picture. (ii) interview	(i) Data analysis of Rich Pictures used the framework developed by Bell et al (2016, 2019) (ii) Thematic analysis of written interview transcripts using Miles and Huberman's approach (2014).	(i) A participant commented: "I would never have told you this in an interview" (p.4). (ii) Researchers felt the participants were able to draw something without their influence (iii) Tacit knowledge was revealed through the method. (iv) The participant created the picture at home and were given several days to contemplate what to draw. The

							<p>researchers think this time to ponder could be advantageous and add to the richness of it and reducing the researcher influence.</p> <p>(v). Participants were hesitant to draw but felt that the process supported their reflective process.</p>
(Lindsay & Schwind (2015))	Arts-informed narrative inquiry as a practice development methodology in mental health	<p>(i) to support and encourage a self-reflective practice.</p> <p>(ii) To help elicit and reveal clarity in relation to the participants' thoughts and feelings</p>	<p>(i) Nurses employed within a mental health centre, in Canada</p> <p>(ii) 4</p>	Arts informed narrative inquiry.	A variety of creative art including collage, writing poetry and creating a mandala.	Thematic narrative analysis	Use of collage supported the participants to move from intuitions and feelings to thoughts and ideas.

Morey et al (2018)	Visualizing Academic Librarians: An Arts-informed inquiry.	(i)The researcher's aim of using drawing and collage was to enable participants to formulate their	(i)Australian University academic staff and library staff (ii) 29 (18 academic staff	Arts-based visual methodology	(i) Drawing and collage, within a focus group. (ii) 1:1 interview	(i) visual analysis of the drawings or collage creations	(i) The researchers felt that the data collection method enabled academics' views of liaison
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		<p>ideas in a new way and create links between verbal and nonverbal concepts.</p> <p>(ii) to enable participants to express themselves uniquely and authentically, that might not have arisen in a purely verbal context</p>	<p>and 11 librarian staff). Of which 19 staff were female and 10 were male.</p>			<p>(ii) Textual data was coded in accordance with Grounded Theory (Charmaz, 2005).</p>	<p>librarians to occur in a sensitive manner that did not negatively impact the relationship they have with the librarian staff.</p> <p>(ii) The researcher's thought that the method supported participants to be thoughtful and considered.</p> <p>(iii) The researchers commented that the method seemed to elicit mainly positive comments from the participants.</p> <p>(iv) The researchers also commented that the use of different textural materials seemed to allow greater expression of feminine qualities that might not</p>
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							have been verbalized but was clearly expressed through the visual creation.
Robertson et al (2021)	Reflective practice during action learning in management development programmes.	(i) Drawing supports active reflection, that helps to bring to the surface attitudes, feelings and assumptions. (ii) Drawing was used during the interview to stimulate recollection.	(i) office-based managers in South Africa including: Group Accountant; Communication Specialist; Client Care Manager. Group Accountant Manager. Compliance Manager. Business Performance Manager; Supply Chain Manager. Consultant; Quality and Training Manager. Business Controller; Solutions Architect and information Security; Development Manager;	Action Research	(i) Drawing (ii) Interview	Thematic Analysis	The researchers advocate for drawing as a method to stimulate the act of reflection, whilst also acknowledging that participants need to move through the initial discomfort of it.

			Production Manager; Finance Manager; Claims Manager.				
			(ii) 16 - 10 Female - 6 Male				
Sadler et al (2017) and Manathunga et al, (2017)	Teaching is...opening up spaces to explore academic work in fluid and volatile times. and Rendering the paradoxes and pleasures of academic life: using images, poetry and drama to speak back to the measure University.	(i)To answer one of their research questions: <i>How effective are arts-informed and participatory approaches in opening up new possibilities for academics to collaborate and consider complex notions of identity and collegiality?</i> (ii) Researchers wanted to include a sensory approach that encompassed more than just words and allowed for	(i) University academics from one Australian University. (ii) 22	Arts informed participatory research.	Postcard creation framed through collage.	Participatory Visual analysis that involved using visual analysis questions created by Cousin (2009), Weber (2007), and Grbich (2007). The focus was on what images of text resonated or disturbed. The visual analysis questions and observations were thought through and talked about in three face to	(i) voicing absences and resistances. The visual and textual data revealed what was "missing" or "absent" from their professional lives. For example, the frustrations were expressed of the administrative tasks required for the role that undermined their professional values. (ii) initiating layers of reflexive moments, through interpretation, conversation and re-interpretation.

		<p>emotional responses</p> <p>(iii) Researchers' hope that the inclusion of ABR methods would generate deeper and more reflective conversation, rather than find specific answers.</p> <p>(iv) To equalize any potential power relationship dynamics.</p>				<p>face meetings with the researchers and participants: to discuss the balance between the interpretations of the group and the interpretations of the individual.</p>	<p>Through this process one participant realized they were absent from their image, which provoked additional reflection about assumptions and approaches to teaching.</p> <p>(iii) expressing complexity through collage. The postcards helped to express and make visible academics' thoughts, feelings, and ideas about teaching practices.</p> <p>(iv) Researchers experimented and learnt about the exploration of visual analysis itself.</p>
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							(v) Researchers commented on the variety of text provided to describe the art varied from a single sentence to long paragraphs, thus allowing for subjective expressive.
Shin (2023)	Draw and Tell: Uncovering Korean infant Teachers' play experiences and their views in supporting infants' play.	(i)The aim is for drawing to help reveal deep seated belief sand memories. (ii) Drawing can help the expression of that which is not easily expressed in words. (ii) Whole ideas can be expressed through drawing,	(i) infant teacher at a university based childcare centre in Seoul, South Korea. (ii) Ten (all the participants were female).	Grounded Theory.	In a group, participants were asked to individually create a drawing, which they then talked about in the group, following a semi structured format.	Thematic Analysis	(i) drawing supported the teachers' self-reflection and supported them to communicate this to others. (ii)The researchers were aware that some of the participants felt uncomfortable with drawing. (iii) Some participants expressed confusion as to what to draw but this also demonstrates

							engagement in the process too.
Smith et al (2014)	An exploration of a restorative space: A creative approach to reflection for nurse lecturer's focused on experiences of compassion in the workplace.	<p>(i) To facilitate access to thoughts, feelings and experiences that may not be apparent when using purely word focused questions and responses.</p> <p>(ii) to facilitate reflection and support open and transparent communication.</p> <p>(iii) To nurture the imagination, to facilitate creative action.</p>	<p>(i) Nurse Lecturers who worked in a large school for Nursing and Midwifery in the UK.</p> <p>(ii) 8</p>	Participatory Action Research	Collage	Thematic Analysis.	<p>(i) Through the process, the workshops developed a life of their own, as the participants took ownership of their reflective process, culminating in a group collage being created in the final workshop, which had not been anticipated or planned. This final collage was then presented to the senior management team, of the organisation.</p> <p>(ii) The employee participants had difficulty finding the time to attend all the sessions and so the researchers thought that the practical details such as venue,</p>

							length and frequency of workshops needed researching, in order to optimize participation.
Tracy et al (2006)	Nightmares, demons and slaves. Exploring the painful metaphors of workplace bullying.	<p>(i) The drawing exercise was “designed specifically to get at the emotional pain of workplace bullying” (p175), to support the expression of emotion and that which is difficult to verbalize.</p> <p>(ii) As well as accessing the emotional pain, drawing was also included as a therapeutic emotional support.</p> <p>(iii) use of drawings aligns with action research as it allows the researchers to</p>	<p>(i) Participants are employees from multiple organisations across different sectors of work including: education; service and sales; local and state government (United States); professional and technical fields; mental and medical health; construction; and recreation.</p> <p>(ii) 17 (9 participants in one focus group and 8 in the other focus group)</p>	Action Research	Drawing occurred within two focus groups.	Metaphor Analysis. The researchers identified metaphors from the writing and the drawings. They used open coding and the constant comparative method (Charmaz, 2001), looking for patterns within the metaphors.	<p>(i) Drawings helped to make visible, what is generally an invisible experience (being bullied).</p> <p>(ii) The drawings revealed the persecutor/victim dynamic in some participants, whilst other participants chose to use the drawing to empower themselves. The relative size between people and objects in the drawing helped to depict the power differential in either a disempowering or empowering way.</p> <p>(iii) “Although the metaphorical</p>

		work with participants, rather than impose on them.					imagery is a powerful tool for analysing the emotion of work life, the vividness of understanding emotion is limited by the printed page” (page 177).
Van Staden-Payne & Nel (2023)	Exploring factors that full-service school teachers believe disable their self efficacy to teach in an inclusive education system.	To support the visual expression of feelings, in relation to their sense of self efficacy as a teacher and gain greater understanding, of participant experience.	(i) Teachers from two schools in South Africa (ii) 10	Multiple Case Study	(i) collage (ii) Focus Group	Constant comparative method	The feeling component was particularly evident and expressed through the collage. The participants expressed feelings of frustration and confusion through the collage in relation to working in an inclusive education system in South Africa. The emotion expressed through the collage combined with their words depicted a general sense of the teachers

							lacking in self-confidence.
Vince and Broussine (1996)	Paradox, defense and attachment. Accessing and working with emotions and relations underlying organizational change.	Having a psychodynamic perspective, the researchers are aiming to uncover more unconscious, emotional and relational aspects of employee experiences, through drawing.	(i) Senior managers and staff members from various public and private sector organizations, including NHS and local government, in the UK, undergoing significant change. (ii) 49	Action Learning	(i) Drawing (ii) Group discussion, following individual reflection.	Psychodynamic and relational interpretation.	(i) The use of drawing helped to reveal relational dynamics and perceived power structures, within the participant's organisation. (ii) The drawings supported having a group dialogue about organisational dynamics – expressing topics that are difficult e.g. conflict, without it causing or creating more of the same.

Ward & Greene (2018)	Too much of a good thing? The emotional challenges of managing affectively committed volunteers.	Drawing was included as there was a research focus on emotions and drawing, the researchers thought, provided the participants more	(i) Managers working in the National Trust. (ii) 16 (but just 10 of them created drawings)	Art based research design	(i) participant produced drawing focus groups (ii) participant produced photography.	Thematic analysis.	(i) The drawings helped to reveal a power dynamic between the managers and volunteers, highlighting some relational conflict, which is difficult to express in words.
		freedom to express this, with less researcher influence.			(iii) semi structured interviews (iv) participant observation of managers interacting with volunteers.		(ii) The research helped to express the emotional challenges faced by the managers.

2.4 Analysis

The data extracted from the 24 included articles was analysed to answer the review question: *What are the benefits, challenges and limitations of using ABR methods with employees?*

2.4.1 Impact of the philosophical basis

The review demonstrates that researchers can access new knowledge through ABR methods' capacity to gain access to previously unseen (theme two) or hidden (theme one) aspects of participant's working lives or experiences, such as their vulnerabilities or experience of team dynamics. It highlights the methodological lens through which the researchers view ABR methods, with a small number of the studies explicitly stating they have chosen a constructivist ontological basis (Culshaw, 2019; Chachula et al, 2023) whilst the majority of studies have reported using an interpretivist epistemological paradigm (Banegas, 2022; Sadler et al, 2017; Kado et al, 2023). This lens through which researchers view ABR methods is aligned with subjectivity and reality being multiplicitous, meaning there is no fixed objective reality and is unique to the individual. ABR methods is used to access the participants' individual beliefs and experiences of reality but why use ABR methods, when interviews (kvale, 1996) can already achieve this?

It is the uniqueness that ABR really helps to expose, relative to other qualitative research methods, that purely use narrative, verbal words. For example, as highlighted in Theme 2, Atherton et al (2020, p.71) the use of the image of a crab by different participants was used to depict (and have differing meanings), "severe clinical cases" for one participant, whilst for another it represented "all the colleagues from other professions like doctors and physiotherapists but in a positive way". This highlights how the same visual or word can have different meanings for people and creating art can help to expose these differences in meaning, that would otherwise be taken for granted, using the philosophical lens of constructivism, that we can all see reality in our own unique ways.

ABR can support access to the individual's reality, through the creation of something external to the individual, by the individual themselves. This is demonstrated through several of the studies (Baxter & Brumfiit, 2006; Cristancho et al 2014) as the individual participants reflected on the team dynamic or work situation through the creation of a drawing, which supports the constructing and revealing of their own perspective to themselves first, before being able to share it and discuss it with the researcher and/or other participants. ABR therefore enables the individual participants to externalize their internal experiences and reality through it, (through the lens of Constructivism), and support the articulation of knowledge which has not previously been seen or accessed prior to the creation of the visual. ABR method supports the participant to process their understanding first, through the art making process; and then to share it. This is different to providing a verbal response to interview questions, that requires the linear ordering of thoughts which comes from a linguistic knowing, rather than a bodily knowing (Culshaw, 2019), used within ABR methods, and again acknowledges that ABR supports the revealing of the participants' constructed reality to themselves first, before they can express it, to the researcher.

ABR helps to differentiate between "unseen" and "hidden" as demonstrated between the two analytical themes of "*revealing deep, tacit and systemic relational knowledge (unseen)*" and "*employee expression, empowerment and self-reflection (hidden)*" developed through this synthesis of ABR research undertaken with employees, providing greater depth to the meaning behind words. This is how ABR brings depth. Depth is often a rationale for undertaking qualitative research – to reveal data that is "thick" and full of meaning (Flick, 2007) but ABR can clearly demonstrate this, through the combination of words and visuals (Briody et al, 2022), that add detail and nuance. As Morey et al (2018) highlights in theme two, with the researchers wondering if the choice of textures, such as lace and wool, enabled the participants to have greater expression of feminine qualities, that might be more difficult to verbally articulate, like softness and gentleness. This in a sense adds

breadth, as well as depth. Words that people can understandably think they know what they mean (Culshaw, 2019) but ABR can add the clarity, that you did not know was needed. However, the uniqueness of meaning is what adds complexity to the analysis of ABR methods for the researcher, as highlighted in theme four.

2.4.2 Impact of the employee context

In this systematic review, the organisational contexts that the employees worked in were in the employment fields of health, education, office-based roles and management. ABR has been used with employees in stressful and demanding roles including surgeons, (Cristancho et al, 2014); nurses (Chang et al, 2015); teachers (Culshaw, 2019); managers (Ward & Greene, 2018); academics (Barton et al, 2023) and employees experiencing a vulnerable situation at work (Tracy et al, 2006). The use of drawing, or collage however, can simultaneously act as a release valve for employees emotions (Barton et al 2023), such as frustrations (Van Staden & Payne, 2023) and a lack of confidence (Gudyanga et al, 2019), bypassing the linear, rationale mind that employees might not verbally state out loud in a research interview (Kado, 2023) due to professional norms and contexts (Cristancho et al, 2014), but the ABR method enables them to expose their vulnerabilities (Atherton et al, 2020) and sensitivities (Tracy et al, 2006), in a way that supports and gives the employee control of their story (Culshaw, 2019) and narrative.

ABR methods and the creation of a visual, can act like a mediatory focus to support the discussion of potentially conflict inducing work situations such as organisational change (Vince and Broussine, 1996) and enable conversations and thoughts to be revealed, without having a negative impact on colleague relationships (Morey et al, 2018). Thus, highlighting how ABR method reveals the theme one of Employee expression, empowerment and reflection, through supporting the conversations of work topics that could be sensitive and hard to do, such as the relationship teachers have to teaching sex education (Gudyanga et al, 2019) and exposing their practice. It reveals the capacity of the participant to be vulnerable in front of colleagues, whilst simultaneously

helping them to be open to receive support (Cristhancho et al, 2014), through the sharing of vulnerability.

The positive feelings reported by researchers (Sadler et al, 2017; Barton et al, 2023) seem to contrast with how the pressure of participants' working life had been making them feel, and taking part in the project, gave them an opportunity to experience positive feelings through participation and the action of taking part.

2.4.3. Interconnection, paradoxes and mirroring experience between researcher and participant.

ABR supports the participant to tell their story, their way (theme one). It can allow them to express emotion and vulnerability, without the use of words. However, In order for this to occur the researcher needs to relinquish control of the participant's creative process (Shin, 2023) and expression. It is the relinquishing of researcher control that allows for the equality of relationship between the researcher and the participant, as the researcher is dependent on the participant informing the researcher of the meaning of their visual (Smith et al, 2014; Cristancho et al, 2014; Sadler et al, 2017; Morey et al, 2018; Culshaw, 2019; Atherton et al, 2020; Barton et al, 2023). ABR therefore supports the employee participant to emotionally express themselves and be vulnerable, but in order for this to occur the researcher too can feel vulnerable, with not being in control of the participant's creative process and narrative and what the participants choose to reveal or not (Sadler et al, 2017; Culshaw, 2019).

There is an interconnection that occurs between the researcher and the participant, when both implicitly agree to surrender and allow in the not knowing (Shin, 2023) in order to reveal a new insight or understanding (that could support professional development). The participant relinquishes fear of being emotionally vulnerable in front of the researcher (and colleagues), whilst the researcher relinquishes control of the direction, which is more evident in interviews when the researchers can lead the conversation through the use of

semi-structured and pre thought through questions. ABR is more open to what the participant presents and so is more likely to be used by researchers for exploration and gaining clarity of a situation (Baxter & Brumfitt, 2006; Cristancho et al, 2014), from the participant's perspective.

However, ABR does not negate the value or need for verbal communication. Atherton et al (2020) reported that as the participants were Vietnamese and the researchers were Australian that creating the drawing "reduced reliance upon verbal communication" (p.76), and the potential limitation caused by the language barrier, stating that that it reduced their reliance on the interpreter. Yet, the meaning of the creation is still attained from the participant. It also does not necessarily guarantee that the participants will express in words, what they might have felt more comfortable expressing in visuals (Culshaw, 2019), which can maintain the participant's boundaries, as ABR allows the participants to choose and decide for themselves what to create (Sadler et al, 2017) and how much to verbally share with the researcher (Ward & Greene, 2018).

Finally, the researcher needs to be able to tolerate and have capacity to manage the uncertainty of dealing with ambiguous data. The discomfort of the participant in relation to creating and knowing what to create can therefore also mirror the uncertainty of the researcher. Although managing this uncertainty is not reported in the literature. ABR methods require that both participant and researcher surrender to the process and let go of knowing what to do, of having a fixed, desired outcome, which is also why ABR tends to be used for exploratory and expressive reasons.

2.4.4 ABR as a “tin-opener for emotional expression”

ABR has been cited as a “tin-opener for talk”, (Culshaw, 2019) and a way of researchers to create an environment that supports participants to reveal more within a 1:1 interview. However, this review demonstrates that ABR is more than just a method for initiating talk. It is a mechanism through which participants can get in touch with how they view and construct their world. The participant creation or construction reflects back to them, their perspective and their feelings, (Culshaw, 2019). Simultaneously the external visual acts as a framework through which the participant formulates and weaves a narrative into words, for others to understand, which can reveal new self-knowledge to the participant (Gudyanga et al, 2019), new ideas (Morey et al, 2018) and knowledge (Kado, 2023) to the researcher. ABR is therefore more than just a “tin opener for emotional expression” - it can support the “aha” moment of awareness and understanding that would not exist without the participant creating something during the research, which then forms the talk. It is not therefore the “tin-opener for talk”, it is the talk.

2.5 Key Themes and Findings

The extracted data from the 24 papers, was thematically synthesized (Thomas and Harden 2008), to answer the review question: *What are the benefits, challenges and limitations of using ABR methods with employees?* (see Table 2 for the key themes and findings)

Table 2: Key findings and themes

Key Findings	Descriptive Themes	Analytical Themes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “tin opener for talk” as cited by Culshaw (2019), which is a common rationale for using ABR methods by researchers • Helping to make visible experiences that can be invisible experience (e.g. bullying), and depicting the power differential (Tracy et al., 2006). 	Giving Voice to the hidden	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The expression of suppressed or not normally spoken about feelings in a professional context (e.g., frustration, vulnerability) and made visible the "feeling component." (Chang et al., 2015; Van Staden-Payne & Nel, 2023) • Positive Emotional Outcomes: Participation provides a "liberating experience," creates self-awareness, and fosters vulnerability and support among colleagues who realize they share similar feelings. (Cristancho et al, 2014) 	Emotional Expression	Employee expression, empowerment and reflection
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Active reflection, leading to insight (Cristancho et al, 2014) • "Drawing is an opportunity to reflect on what happened, rather than to just list step one, step two, step three" (Cristancho et al., 2014). Uncertainty in interpreting the brief demonstrates engagement and the need for 	Employee Empowerment	

<p>reflection on one's own stance (Shin, 2023).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participants took ownership of their reflective process, which was not planned, culminating in an un-planned group collage. (Smith et al., 2014) 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Researcher needs to hear from participant to receive the meaning (Atherton et al., 2020). • The visual maintains participant boundaries by allowing them to choose what is "silent" or "absent." (Sadler, et al, 2017; Culshaw, 2019) • Drawing was included to provide "more freedom to express... with less researcher influence," implying concern about censoring in standard methods. (Ward & Greene, 2018) 	<p>Equality between Participant and Researcher</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Embodied Knowledge: The method captures how employees relate to experience through their body and physical feelings, not just their cognitive mind. Collage elements represented bodily reactions, e.g., coiled springs representing the "knots in her tummy" (stress) (Culshaw, 2019). • Multi-sensory expression (Morey et al, 2018; Atherton, 2020) • Helped professionals "deflect from their tendency to simply descriptions," accessing what they "would never have told you in an interview." (Cristancho et al., 2014; Kado et al., 2023) 	<p>Embodied Knowledge</p>	<p>Deep Insight Through Tacit/Embodied Knowledge</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revealing relational group dynamics that words failed to 	<p>Uncovering Relational Dynamics</p>	

<p>express. (Ward & Greene, 2018)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Individual surgeons created drawings to reflect different perspectives of a team, that collectively revealed new knowledge (Cristancho et al, 2014) Bringing unspoken team dynamics into awareness (Baxter & Brumfitt, 2006). 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Researchers provided small paper (5x7 inch) so the size of the blank sheet did not overwhelm participants (Shin, 2023). Others offered verbal reassurance that artistic skill was irrelevant (Vince & Broussine, 1996; Gudyanga et al., 2019). 	Participant Discomfort	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participants had "difficulty with attending all of the workshops" (Smith et al., 2014). Sample size limited due to "labor intensity for participants and researchers alike" (Cristancho et al., 2014) and can be in conflict with organizational time autonomy. 	Organisational Recruitment Barrier	<i>Logistical and Practical Constraints</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Involves collecting and synthesizing multiple forms of data (Drawing, Interview, Observation), increasing the logistical load for participant and researcher (Ward & Greene, 2018; Lindsay & Schwind, 2015) 	Resource and Time Heavy for participant and researcher	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The research revealed a "disconnect" where visual elements were created but not spoken about, requiring researchers to manage the meaning of absence. (Culshaw, 2019) What is not being spoken about or drawn in the drawing (Sadler et al, 2017). 	Managing Ambiguity of participant realities	<i>Researcher uncertainty; Researcher Burden – managing ambiguous data and interpretation complexity</i>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Challenge of "intermingling the verbal and visual data" (Culshaw, 2019). The unique meaning of the crab symbol required specific participant narrative for analysis (Atherton et al., 2020). • manage symbols with multiple, unique meanings across participants (e.g., the crab). 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Requires specific skills for interpretation and a time-intensive multi-stage process (Drawing + Interview + Analysis). (Shin, 2023; Atherton et al., 2020) 	Time and Skill Required	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wide variety of methodological choices with: • Qualitative Study (Barton et al, 2023; Chang et el, 2015; Cristancho et al, 2014; Culshaw, 2019). • Action Research: Tracy (2006); Vince and Broussine 1996; Smith et al, 2014; Gudyanga, 2019); Robertson et al, 2021) • Phenomenology (Atherton et al, 2020) • Case Study (Baxter & Brumfit, 2006; Kado et al, 2023; van Staden-Payne & Nell, 2023) • Ethnography (Briody et al, 2022) • Grounded Theory (Chachula et al, 2023; Shin, 2023) • Qualitative Arts informed inquiry (Gourlay et al, 2021) • Arts informed narrative inquiry (Lindsay & Schwind) • Arts based visual methodology (Morey et al, 2018) • Arts informed participatory research (Sadler et al, 2017) 	Complexity of Choice: Methodological/ analytical	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The rich, unique meaning of the visual is difficult to accurately express in a written research article, leading some researchers to simplify analysis or underrepresent the visuals (Tracy, 2006; Atherton et al, 2020; van staden & Payne, 2023; Gudyanga, 2019; Chachula et al, 2023; 	Reporting meaning of visuals in research articles	

<p>Gourlay et al, 2021; Vince & Broussin, 1996)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "The written word naturally does dominate" in research papers (Sadler et al., 2017). 		
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2.5.1 Organizational Context

The majority of the research articles in this review occurred within health care settings, such as hospitals and recruited health care professionals as their participants (Baxter and Brumfitt, 2006; Cristancho et al, 2014; Lindsay & Schwind, 2015; Chang et al, 2015; Atherton et al, 2020 & Chachula et al, 2023). There was also a high percentage of research in this review (approximately 30%), that occurred in the University setting that recruited academic staff (Sadler et al, 2017; Morey et al, 2018; Gourlay et al, 2021; Briody et al, 2022; Barton et al, 2023). Although there was a cross-over with the University setting that recruited academic Nurse lecturers (Smith et al, 2015) and Kado et al (2023) recruited healthcare professionals in a university leadership position. The teaching profession also strongly featured in the review with (Culshaw, 2019; Gudyanga et al, 2019'; Banegas, 2022; and van Staden-Payne & Nell, 2023) recruiting secondary school teachers and Shin (2023) recruiting infant schoolteachers, approximating 20% of the research in this review. The least represented in the review were the non-specialist management roles within private and public sector (Vince and Broussine, 1996; Ward and Greene, 2018; and Roberston et al, 2021) whilst Tracy et al (2006) recruited a mixture of employees from a variety of backgrounds including mental and medical health; professional and technical fields, in order to study bullying, across employment settings.

2.5.2 Description of the Key Analytical Themes & Key Findings

The review indicates two key analytical themes in relation to the benefits and two key analytical themes developed in relation to the challenges and limitations.

The two key analytical themes in relation to the benefits of using ABR with employees are:

Theme One: Employee expression, empowerment and self-reflection

Theme Two: Revealing deep insight through tacit/embodied, knowledge

The two key analytical themes in relation to the challenges and limitations of using ABR with employees are:

Theme Three: Logistical and practical constraints

Theme Four: Researcher burden and interpretation complexity

The meaning of each analytical theme will be described in this section.

2.6. Theme One: Employee expression, empowerment and self-reflection (hidden)

This theme focused on the participant's experience of taking part in ABR methods and the potential impact of it on them. The method supports emotional expression (Chang et al, 2015; van Staden-Payne & Nel, 2023), even when the issues are sensitive (Tracy et al, 2006; Gudyanga et al, 2019). Through this process of participants' reflecting on and engaging with their thoughts and feelings, employees could take ownership of their experience, and result in them leading the ABR process (Smith et al, 2014). Participants can benefit from the experience through the pleasure of creating and taking a pause from the demands of their working life (Barton et al, 2023). ABR has been used to reveal the emotional experiences of employees (Tracy et al, 2006; Ward & Greene, 2018), to support reflection for professional development (Cristancho et al, 2014; Lindsay & Schwind, 2015; Atherton et al, 2020; Gudyanga et al, 2019) and promote employee self-care (Barton, 2023).

2.6.1 Participants experience pleasure from taking part

Feelings are both directly expressed through the art created (Tracy et al, 2023) and also felt as a by-product of taking part in the research, with Sadler (2017) and Barton (2023) research participants, who highlighting the sense of pleasure from taking part in ABR. This pleasurable feeling seemed to be a by-product of taking part and was not necessarily expressed through the art created by the participants but was shared afterwards with the researchers. Cristancho et al (2014) described the participants experience of surgeons' drawing as being a liberating experience for them, so it seems that being a participant in an ABR study has the potential to induce positive feelings, as well as express them.

2.6.2 Receiving support from fellow participants (who could be colleagues)

ABR can support colleague relationships when it occurs within a group setting (Smith et al, 2014; Lindsay and Schwind, 2016; Gudyanga et al, 2019 and Chachula et al, 2023) and participants are given the opportunity to verbalize and share what they have created with their colleagues. It provides space for participants and colleagues to be more honest and vulnerable through the creating and sharing of experiences as one participant stated: “in all honesty, I still feel a little bit like you’re letting someone see a little less veneered version of yourself” (Cristancho et al, 2014, page 1545), with another participant saying “most people will be almost semi-relieved if (they sense) that there are other people (who) feel the same way”. Thus, acknowledging that whilst creating a visual can feel exposing and vulnerability inducing, participants can have the potential to receive support and understanding from their colleagues.

2.6.3 ABR methods have the potential to create equality between researcher and participant

ABR can provide the space to hear more of the voice of the participant, (Morey et al, 2018) with the researcher providing employees support to do this through the vehicle and facilitation of ABR. It is generally accepted and recognized that the meaning of what has been created is decided by the participant who creates the visual (Smith etl al, 2014; Cristancho et al, 2014; Sadler et al, 2017; Morey et al, 2018; Culshaw, 2019; Atherton, 2020; Barton et al, 2023), so in a sense the researcher is dependent upon the participant, for understanding. The researcher needs to hear from the participant to receive the meaning of the visual from the participant who created it. So, it is not the researcher leading the narrative but the participant.

The research data is created by the participants and from their frame of reference and not the researchers, which can “challenge any preconceived notions the researchers or others may have had about the participant’s experiences” (p67). This means that researchers need to be open to the participants’ realities and perspectives and therefore be prepared to change

their perceptions in order to hear the participant, as the method “invites stories, rather than request reports” (Cristancho et al, 2014, p. 1545). This therefore increases the capacity for hearing the participant’s voice, and their perspective of their experience (Morey et al, 2018), with the interpretation of the meaning of an experience such as play (Shin, 2023) “challenge” (Cristancho, 2014); or struggle (Culshaw, 2019) being decided by the participant through what they choose to draw or create (Shin, 2023) and what the participant chooses to share of the meaning of their drawing, using words. For example,

Sadler et al (2017) commented that it was noticeable that a few postcards that were created to express what “teaching is” did not contain the image of a teacher or a classroom within them. The researchers noticing this, were identifying the question about what is omitted from drawings and how to identify that something is absent. The researcher’s choice of words here seems important, because had they said that the images were “missing”, it would imply that it should have been there, but meaning is created through both what is present and what is absent - through what a person says and what they do not say. Through what the participant makes visible through art and what they do not make visible through art. It is the participant’s choice, maintaining their autonomy, as they choose.

ABR methods can support participants to express themselves and move beyond the cultural boundaries of silence on talking about certain subjects (Gudyanga et al, 2019) or that imposed by speaking a different language (Atherton et al, 2020). “Saying the unsaid” through visuals (Vince & Broussine, 1996; Tracey, 2006), which could be due to cultural reasons or expectations; of what is allowed and not allowed to be talked about; or the boundaries of the participant themselves, of what they are comfortable talking about.

ABR can also support continued reflection over the duration of the research session as it can promote engagement through thoughtful conversations between the participants (Gudyanga et al, 2019) and supports understanding (Sadler et al, 2017), through the reflection that is enabled through the creation of a drawing or a collage (Chang 2016) which can provide a scaffolding for formulating new ideas (Morey et al, 2018) and a new level of self-knowledge (Gudyanga et al, 2019). Additionally, reflection can also be actively promoted when the participants are drawing to remind them or suggest to them that they can “add to and alter their images as their reflection continues” (Atherton et al, 2020 p. 67), thus acknowledging that reflection is active, and alive; and can change and develop through time, as the participant continues to engage with creating their visual. Indeed Culshaw (2019 p. 268) wanted to promote this development of thinking over time, by using a form of collage where “materials are placed rather than stuck”, to allow for movement to occur, over the period of time that it took for the participant to create the collage.

2.7 Theme Two: Revealing deep insight through tacit/embodied knowledge (unseen)

This theme focused on the knowledge that could be exposed through using ABR method. ABR supports the access of tacit knowledge – knowledge that is hidden but is there (Vince & Broussine, 1996). For example, team dynamics that exist but not necessarily spoken about until brought to awareness through drawing (Baxter & Brumfit, 2006). Knowledge that is held in the body (Culshaw, 2019; Atherton et al, 2020). Knowledge that could be linked to the context of a situation, or viewing the situation holistically, which uses a visual style of understanding, rather than a linguistic one (Gourlay et al, 2021; Culshaw, 2019). Knowledge that could be revealed therefore by bypassing the rational mind. Knowledge that comes from a deeper place, than surface level responses to interview questions (Kado, 2023).

2.7.1 Relating to experience using body and mind

Culshaw (2019) found that the use of collage supported the teacher participants to get in touch with the meaning of struggle through their bodies, as elements of the collage expressed their bodily reactions that defined what struggle meant to them. For example, Culshaw (2019, p277), stated “the coiled springs at the bottom of the page on the left, which are made of blue pipe cleaners wrapped around a pen are the “stress element” of struggling. She explained (the participant) that the coils represent the knots in her tummy”. ABR therefore offers the possibility of connecting to experience through the body, revealing knowledge through the physical feelings, felt in the participant’s body and symbolized through the art materials. ABR method therefore allows for individual participant understandings or relationships to a subject to be revealed more clearly – to themselves, as well as others (Gudyanga, 2019).

ABR therefore can help to create clarity of how individuals relate to their experiences through their bodies, minds, emotions and time. Allowing for experience of meaning through the body and not just the mind, to gain a fuller sense of the participant’s experience. For example, Morey et al (2018) suggested that the materials they offered had impact upon the creations of the participants, allowing them to get in touch with softer, feminine elements of experience through the femininity and softness of the materials. Morey et al (2018 p.840) thought that the description the participant gave to describe their perception of librarians of “She is kind, gentle, and listens, and maternal and comforting” was reflected in the materials of lace and wool, the participant used to represent the head and hair of the librarian.

Atherton et al (2020) asked Vietnamese participants to depict their professional journey of becoming a Speech and Language Pathologist, using the image of a river. Within their creations, several participants used the image of a crab in their depictions but assigned different and unique meanings to the crab. One participant stated that it represented “severe clinical cases (p.71), whilst another stated that it “represents all the colleagues from other professions like doctors and physiotherapists but in a positive way” (p. 71). So, one participant had

used and viewed the crab from a positive frame of reference, whilst the other had used and viewed it from a negative frame of reference.

2.8 Theme Three: Logistical and practical constraints

The analytical theme of “logistical and practical constraints” centred around the very practical challenges of employee participation in research using ABR methods. The employees from this thematic synthesis, included professionals within the health and education sectors, alongside office workers and managers, who were experiencing stress from their employment experiences, that included time pressures (Culshaw, 2019; Barton, 2023) which required a level of permission from their employer, in order for the employee to attend and take part in the research (Smith et al, 2014). Additionally, there was a time commitment required from the employee participant because of the demands of the method, that impacted their capacity to participate in the research too. This time commitment Cristancho et al (2014), felt restricted the number of participants able to take part, although participant group sizes for ABR methods tends to be small.

The process of drawing, or creating a collage, often occurs within a multi-modal research design, and is an addition to an interview (Vince and Broussine 1996; Tracy et al, 2006; Chang et al, 2015; Smith et al, 2014; Ward & Greene, 2018; Culshaw, 2019; Banegas, 2022; Chacula et al, 2023), and not instead of, so it is more demanding of the participant’s time but also of the researcher’s. This also results in an increase in the data attained through ABR methods, that naturally requires more time to analyse it (Gudyanga et al, 2019), particularly when the participants are also involved in the analysis (Cristancho et al, 2014; Sadler et al, 2017), alongside of the researchers. Similarly, there is also a time commitment required from the researcher to the process of using ABR.

Unlike other types of qualitative research, where the researcher could choose to use the data collection method of an hour-long interview to discover the subjective experiences of participants, the time demands of ABR methods can be higher. For example, Cristancho et al (2014 p.1545) commented that sample size could be limited due to “the labor intensity for participants and researchers alike”, stating that participants were required to “devote about two hours to interviewing and drawing per observed case and an additional two hours for analytical group discussions”. This time commitment they felt restricted the number of participants able to take part in the data collection, as the participants were also asked to make time for the analysis of the data too, which they estimated being approximately six hours per participant. Difficulties in participation due to time commitment was also affirmed by Smith et al (2014). Their study required that participants attended multiple workshops over a period of time and in order to support maximum attendance, the researchers offered multiple workshop times so that participants could find a time that fitted in with their work commitments.

However Smith et al (2014 p.1231) still stated that the participants had difficulty with attending all of the workshops despite the researchers offering multiple workshop times citing a lack of autonomy over their time which left participants with a “sense of frustration and disappointment” indicating that the participants did not feel supported by their organisation, to attend all the sessions. These difficulties with attending could therefore also impact employee recruitment to ABR, as the number of participants that take part in ABR tends to be small, with the minimum sample size identified in this review as 4 (Banegas, 2022; Lindsay and Scwhind, 2016), and a number of studies in this review, having 10 or less participants (Van Staden-Payne and Nel, 2023; Shin, 2023; Sadler et al, 2017; Lindsey and Schwind, 2016; Smith et al, 2014; Cristancho et al, 2014; Atherton et al, 2020; Gudyanga et al, 2019).

2.8.1 Discomfort of participants using art

A sub theme within the challenge of using ABR methods are the feelings of discomfort the participants can feel at using art (Vince and Broussine, 1996; Cristancho et al, 2014; Smith et al, 2014; Morey et al, 2018; Gudyanga et al, 2019; and Atherton et al, 2020). Some researchers put measures in place to support participants through this process. For example, Shin (2023) stated that they gave participants blank sheets of white paper and coloured pens for drawing, specifically giving participants the 5 x 7-inch size paper, so that the size of the blank piece of paper itself, did not overwhelm the participants. Not all researchers reported accommodating this discomfort, although they did acknowledge it (Smith et al, 2014). Vince and Broussine (1996) actively aimed to counteract this at the start when they asked their participants to draw a picture that expressed their feelings about a change in the workplace by essentially informing them that their artistic ability was not important or relevant. Gudyanga et al (2019) also verbally told their participants the same. Atherton et al (2020) provided a participant with reassurance to help them manage their insecurities around drawing “I can depict it with words but not with pictures”. After reassuring the participant, they chose to draw a draft first, which helped them to manage their anxieties. Morey et al (2018) played music in the session to help “to create a calm atmosphere” (page 834) and support participants to relax. These examples demonstrate the thought and time the researchers need to acknowledge and address participants’ potential insecurities.

2.9. Theme Four: Researcher uncertainty; Researcher burden - managing ambiguous data; and interpretation complexity

The analytical theme of “Researcher uncertainty; managing ambiguous data; and interpretation complexity” focuses on the challenges and limitations experienced by the researcher, of using ABR methods with employees. Researcher uncertainty is inherent within the use of ABR methods, as the visual creations are understood to be symbolic representations, and bestowed meaning by the participant creator, which therefore could be multiple, allowing and enabling uniqueness of perspectives, viewpoints (Cristancho et al, 2014;

Morey et al, 2018; Atherton et al, 2020) and experiences. However, the meaning cannot be assumed by either the researcher (or fellow participants), from the visual created, which means that the researcher needs to be able to sit with the uncertainty of not knowing and being dependent on the participant for understanding and not being in control of the process. For example, Culshaw (2019) stated that some visual elements were not talked about by the participant during the interview. Similarly, Sadler et al (2017) highlighted that aspects they might have expected to have been in the participant visual, was omitted. Both examples demonstrate that the researcher is not in control of the process and is reliant on the participant's openness to learn about them, from them. The difference between ABR methods and interviews is that the researcher can see from the visual, what the participant is choosing not to talk about.

The use of ABR methods also tends to be multi-modal, including a variety of data collection methods, with the presence of both visual and narrative text, adding complexity to the data analysis process. Culshaw (2019 p. 268) described it as "the analytical challenge of intermingling the verbal and visual data" and Cristancho (2014) recommended that researchers only use small groups of participants due to the challenge and time-consuming process of the analysis. Sadler (2017) also highlighted the labour intensiveness and cognitive challenge involved with balancing the interpretations of the group and the interpretations of the individual, that required three face to face meetings to negotiate the meanings, using participatory visual analysis, in their study.

There is a wealth of choice as to how to analyse the visual data, indicated by the systematic review but how the data is actually analysed is difficult to ascertain (Cristancho et al, 2014; Sadler et al, 2017; Van Staden & Nell, 2023) even when the researcher explains the reasoning behind their choice of analysis (Culshaw, 2019). The struggle and challenge of the analysis is reported by some researchers as indicated, whilst other researchers deal with the challenge by only analysing the words (Smith et al, 2014; ward and Greene, 2018; Gudyanga et al, 2019; Robertson et al, 2021). Although how researchers

deal with the complexity of analysing visual data is not easy to ascertain from the research articles, with Atherton et al (2020, p.69) stating that the drawings were included in the analysis but were “not analyzed in detail” and Van Staden & Nell (2023) attributing one paragraph in their article for the meaning of 10 collages participants created in their study, after reporting that “one segment of data (collages) is compared with another (semi-structured interviews) to determine similarities and differences” (Van Staden & Nell, 2023, p.03) using the constant comparative method.

2.9.1 Conveying visual meaning and reporting findings in a written research article

Conveying participant generated meaning of a visual, in written form in a research paper is a recognized challenge (Sadler et al, 2017) as the representation of drawings in the research articles reviewed here is limited. For example, Tracy (2006,) depicted one drawing in their article, stating: “the battle metaphor is perhaps most complexly illustrated in a drawing”. Yet, despite this description and providing this reason for presenting this drawing in the article, it was not clear what the researcher was meaning through using these words or the drawing presented in the article. Other researchers have managed the situation by using the exact words of the participants in their article (Morey et al, 2018) or converting the visual into words, for example, Culshaw (2019, p. 277): “top left of the collage is blue cotton wool...bottom right are pieces of blue paper that Veronica tore up”, which in effect described the participants visual, but there is no standard process to represent visuals in the articles that form this review.

The researchers Van Staden & Nell (2023) did not include any photos of the collages yet state that the collages “highlight a sense of frustration and a lack of confidence in the participant teachers” (Van Staden & Nell (2023, p. 04). This seems that the narrative is given more weight than the visual, or maybe conveying the meaning held within the visuals, is just harder to express than words. Although expression using the written word does take priority in research articles as Sadler et al (2017) created a poster of participant postcards in order

for them all to be published in an article, due to the limits and restrictions of visual expression imposed by the journal itself.

However, the presence of the visual in the article, can support trustworthiness, transparency and congruency between the visuals and the text (Briody et al, 2022) and understanding the meaning of the research (Morey et al, 2018; Shin, 2023; Kado et al, 2023). For example, Culshaw (2019) in her research article, provided two pictures of the collages created by two different teacher participants in her study, to represent what struggle meant for them, in their working experience.

The two images presented in the article, were chosen to depict a contrast in the type of visual meaning, with one representing an abstract level of meaning and the other, representing a symbolic level of meaning. The pictures included in the article, clearly demonstrated the contrast between them, helping the reader to see the meaning and create transparency, yet generally, conveying meaning of the participant generated visual is more challenging for the researcher to represent in a written journal article.

2.9.2 Summary, Conclusion and Aims

The aim of this systematic review was to explore the existing employee literature to answer the question: *What are the benefits, challenges and limitations of using ABR methods with employees?* By extracting and synthesizing the data within 24 research articles, the review has answered the review question through highlighting the benefits, challenges and limitations of using ABR methods with employees, demonstrating the interconnectedness between the identified benefits, challenges and limitations. However, it seems likely that the researchers do not fully report the challenges they experience, and the representation of visual data in written research articles, is also likely to be diluted, due to journals restricting the number of visuals permitted in an article, thus limiting the potential transparency that ABR can offer – positively and negatively.

2.9.2.1 Summary of Key Findings: Interconnectedness

The benefits, challenges and limitations of using ABR methods with employees are interconnected. The benefit expressed by Theme One: Employee expression, and empowerment through reflection supports the employee to express the hidden or unsaid aspect of the employee experience which can include their feelings (Tracey et al, 2006; Chang et al, 2015; Gudyanga et al, 2019; van Staden-Payne & Nel, 2023). ABR can support the employees to reflect, which may result in them taking the lead in the research process (Smith et al, 2014), or increasing their professional development (Cristancho et al, 2014; Lindsay & Schwind, 2015; Atherton et al, 2020; Robertson et al, 2021; Shin, 2023) whilst simultaneously creating positive feelings in the participants (Cristancho et al, 2014; Sadler et al, 2017; Barton et al, 2023).

Theme one requires the presence of equality between the researcher and participant and enables the researcher to hear the true voice of the participant (Morey et al, 2018), through the unique meaning that they give to their visual creation (Atherton et al, 2020). This naturally leads to the researcher benefit of Theme Two: Revealing of Insight (unseen) through tacit/embodied knowledge. The participant is able to access awareness through their bodies by drawing (Baxter & Brumfit, 2006) or creating a collage (Culshaw, 2019) that has previously not been revealed or known before, such as team dynamics and can come from a deeper place than surface level responses to interview questions (Kado, 2023).

However, in order to access this knowledge it requires participants to draw or create collages which can be challenging for participants (Theme Three), as drawing and creating collages can take them outside of their comfort zones, (Atherton et al, 2020) creating uncertainty (Shin, 2023) that can reveal participant concerns and anxieties in relation to how they are perceived by their colleagues (Cristancho et al, 2014). These aspects can cause difficulties for recruiting employee participants, alongside of the time commitment required by both the participants and researchers, which can impact and limit the number of participants able and willing to take part (Lindsay & Schwind, 2016). Indeed, the time pressures employees experience can affect their capacity to participate

(Culshaw, 2019; Smith et al, 2014) irrespective of the length of time required for data collection. Although the small sample sizes can support the depth of knowledge gained through ABR methods (Cristancho et al, 2014), which again demonstrates the interconnectedness of the benefits and challenges of using ABR methods, with employees.

Additionally, while the use of ABR can be challenging for participants, the research studies did not tend to report on the researcher's discomfort or uncertainty when navigating through the ambiguity of data collection and the analytical challenge of interpreting visual and verbal data, that has unique meanings to the individual participants, as represented by Theme Four. This theme also included the challenge for researchers to meaningfully represent the visual data in a written research article (Sadler et al, 2017), particularly given that the number of drawings or images permitted in research articles can be restrictive, which can impede transparency, as well as understanding.

The four key themes identified in this review are presented separately, although they are interconnected. The themes demonstrate that the use of ABR methods with employees can be a positive experience for the participants, as it provides them with reflection time to emotionally express themselves, through the body as well as the mind. However, the mechanism through which ABR methods can support employees to express their emotions has not been questioned and is not clear.

This study therefore seeks to explore the gap in the literature in relation to understanding the mechanisms through which employee emotions are expressed through ABR and what can be learnt about employees from it, that goes beyond the straightforward labelling and naming of employee emotions. Consequently, the aim of this thesis is to explore and learn about the process through which ABR methods support employees to convey and express emotion and what the impact of this is for organisational research. This study aims to specifically explore the how question of ABR methods: *“How does reflection through ABR methods support or hinder employee participants’ emotional expression?”*

Chapter Three: Methodology

3.1 Nature of Study

This study is essentially an exploratory one, with the aim of exploring how employees can and cannot express themselves emotionally, using creative ABR methods. Qualitative methodologies naturally enable and support exploration (Hakim, 2000; Braun & Clarke, 2013; Silverman, 2016) and is where ABR methods tend to be located (Kara, 2015).

3.2 Philosophical Foundation

The foundation of this study ontologically is constructivism and epistemologically in interpretivism, which are discussed and elaborated upon, in turn.

3.2.1 Ontology: Constructivism

The ontological basis of relativism was first thought through before deciding upon constructivism. Both relativism and constructivism acknowledge the presence of multiple realities, which fits with ABR methods, and this research study which is applying the method to explore individual employee's emotional experiences and realities. The different experiences or perceptions of reality fits within the ontological perspective of relativism (Harrison, 2002; Easterby-Smith, 2018) as relativism acknowledges the presence of multiple realities and supports the hearing of different voices expressed by the employees (Hansen Ketchum & Myrick, 2008), which are true, for that moment in time. There are multiple ways of experiencing and perceiving the world, thus forming multiple realities. "Relativists have an epistemological commitment to choose methods that enable participants to interpret and to give meaning to their individual and unique experiences (Harrison, 2002, p. 208). ABR methods can therefore provide an opportunity to reveal this uniqueness of the participants' realities, which is multi-layered. However, relativism holds the perspective that reality is dependent on the mind (Hansen-Ketchum & Myrick, 2008), but the use of ABR methods, involves and includes the body (Culshaw, 2019). Therefore, the perspective that reality is dependent on the mind does not include the full

expression of reality, that includes the body, and those aspects that the mind is not yet aware of (Vince and Broussine, 1996).

So, whilst acknowledging the value of the ontological perspective of relativism in relation to ABR methods, the ontological position of constructivism is taken for this research, which views reality through subjective experience, in the sense that reality is “continually being reviewed and reworked...through social interactions and reflection” (Matthew and Ross, 2010, p.25). Constructivism has the perspective that reality is essentially an internal process, and the individual is continually reviewing and updating their sense of reality, as they move through life, and new information is revealed to them, taking the time to reflect and assimilate what the new information means to them, and their sense of reality. It is the participant’s unique emotional perspective, over time, that is being explored through ABR methods and not a generalised definition or universal truth. Constructivism allows for the individual experience, that is not purely dependent on the mind and includes the embodied experience of being a human who has the capacity to grow and learn, change and adapt, through their life experiences.

3.2.2 Epistemology: Interpretivism

The epistemology of constructionism was first explored before deciding upon interpretivism as the basis for this study. The reason for this will now be clarified.

The constructionist views reality as co-constructed through the interrelationships we have with each other (Grunwald & Thiersch, 2009), based on our perceptions of our past, present and future (Rudes & Gutterman, 2007). We are continually co-constructing our reality, which is being influenced and shaped by the interactions we have with others, particularly through language (Gergen, 1994). This co-construction indicates an interdependency and relational aspect of truth (Pring, 2000; Rose, 2007). Peoples’ perceptions and realities are inter-twined, all shaping the experiences of the other (Crotty, 2003) although some realities maybe more dominant than the other (Hook, 1995).

Constructionism also acknowledges that the researcher is part of the research process, alongside other participants during group data collection methods (Harrison, 2002). It recognizes that despite being separate individuals, we are all connected, shaping our own and each other's realities. Knowledge in relation to social constructionism, is perceived as being socially constructed, so is connected to the group perspective, and how it is constructed through the group interactions, particularly through the language of the group. This therefore does not seem to fit with this research study, which despite involving data collection within a group setting, the research focuses on the individual's interpretation of reality. It is not exploring the reality of the individual, through the language of the group, but the language that they use to interpret the visual, as well as the visual itself i.e. the research is exploring beyond the use of verbal language.

It also seems in relation to constructionism, that we can individually experience the world but have less ability to alter it (Gergen, 1999), which seems to deny the power of the individual (Nightingale and Cromby, 1999) to express and create their own reality, which is separate from the group. Constructionism also believes that knowledge is constructed through language and discourse (Harre, R, 2002; Varpio et al, 2017) and does not recognize knowledge that is held in the body (Nightingale and Cromby, 1999). However, as this research is focusing on the employee participant's subjective experiences of using ABR workshops to express themselves, that involve the creation of visuals, using their bodies, social constructionism does not seem the most appropriate epistemology. Verbal language is used by the participants in this study to describe what they have created, to their fellow participants but this is after the participants have used their bodies, emotions, instincts and intuition to create the visual. Knowledge in this instance is created through the act of creating (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013) and language is formed afterwards, to describe it. It seemed therefore that an epistemology of interpretivism is more fitting, as it focuses on the individual's, subjective experiences, and their personal interpretations and beliefs (Matthews & Ross, 2010), that are unique to them.

Interpretivism, acknowledges humans are social beings but is not as deeply connected to knowledge being held as a social construct. Instead, knowledge is discovered through viewing individual experience and their individual interpretations and constructions, as their own and different from others, as well as the group. Additionally, interpretivism is open to the interpretation of experiences that are not solely conveyed and carried through language. It seems that social constructionism does not fully acknowledge or validate the embodied experience (Nightingale and Cromby, 1999) that is accessed through ABR methods, whereas interpretivism can allow for the interpretation of experiences accessed through the body, when creating art (Culshaw, 2019), to reveal the knowledge embedded within embodied experience, as well as that expressed using verbal language, by the participants.

3.3 Methodological Position: Generic Qualitative Approach

To ensure coherence, quality and appropriateness of methodological choice, several methodologies need to be thought through in order to check the methodological fit for the research question (Mason, 1996), so arts-based methodology, phenomenology and a general qualitative methodology were thought through as frameworks to discover the most coherent and aligned way to answer the research question:

How does reflection through ABR methods support or hinder employee participants' emotional expression?

Arts based methods can sit within an arts-based methodology (Leavy, 2015; Barone & Eisner, 2012) and as this study focuses on subjective experience, it can support expression to our interior worlds (Pink, 2012) through making tangible our beliefs (Allen, 1995) and our feelings known (Pink 2012; Leavy, 2015). Art based methodology allows for the presence of ambiguity and uncertainty (Barone & Eisner, 2012), which is important, as we can simultaneously hold conflicting and dichotomous thoughts and/or feelings (Campos, 2003; Ryff, 2003). These contrasting experiences can be given expression and form through arts-based methodology, so a more complete understanding can be made known (Leavy, 2015), particularly as it is not a common methodology to use within employee research. However, as stated earlier, the focus of the research is on participant expression and does not include or involve researcher expression. This then does not suit an arts-based methodology, as arts-based methodology requires researchers to respond to participant creations, through their own expressions of art, which becomes part of the analysis and the research (Hervey, 2000). Additionally, as the research question focuses on the participant's experience and not an interaction between the researcher and the participant, arts-based methodology does not provide the best methodological fit.

Phenomenology however is participant focused and unlike arts-based methodology does not include the researcher, with Husserlian phenomenology based on the philosophy of Edmund Husserl (1859-1938) asking “What is this experience like?” (Lavery, 2003, p.22). Husserl believed that in order to see the world as it is, the researcher needed to bracket out their individual biases, prejudices, pre-conceived ideas and assumptions (Ashworth, 1996), to enable the focus of the research being on the participant and reducing the impact and influence of the researcher on them. This highlights the value and importance of reflection and the maintenance of a diary to support this (Sandelowski, 1993) but in reality, it is not possible for a researcher to stop themselves from having an impact on the participants (Taylor et al, 2011). Heideggerian Phenomenology borne of Martin Heidegger (1889-1976) recognized that it is not possible to bracket away experience, as it is implicit and becomes the person (Lavery, 2003); and has been both cited and advocated as an appropriate methodology to use with ABR methods (CohenMiller, 2018; Flick, 2022; Gupta & Zieske, 2024). Art was valued as a form of expression by Heidegger (2002, 1950), and as method for seeing how people view and interpret their worlds (Heidegger, 1971). However, the aim of phenomenology is to reveal the “essence” of a phenomenon, of an experience to gain an understanding of what it is like to live with an experience, from the inside. “The Phenomenologic researcher asks the question: What is the essence of this phenomenon as experienced by these people?” (Polit & Hungler, 1997, p.203). This does not seem to fit with the research focus and question of this study which is: How does reflection through ABR methods support or hinder employee participants’ emotional expression? This research study is not about the participant’s lived experience but focused on the learnings from the ABR method itself.

Therefore, it seems that the most suitable methodological fit is a generic approach to the qualitative research which “simply seek to discover and understand a phenomenon, a process, or the perspective and worldviews of the people involved” (Merriam, 1998, p. 11). This study is an exploratory one to learn more about the ABR method and what can be learnt about employees’

emotions through it. It is not focusing on learning about a specific phenomenon, so although the participants were asked to create a visual of their working experience, the working experience itself was not the focus of the research but the method. Indeed, there has been a growth in the use of a generic, qualitative approach (Caelli, 2003), due to research studies “not fitting in” with other methodological approaches, which is true in this instance too.

3.4 Trustworthiness and methodological standards for ABR

The quality of qualitative research seems to contain a plethora of terms and expectations (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013; Morse, 2022): with Lincoln and Guba (1985) citing credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability; whilst Whitemore, Chase and Mandle (2001) include authenticity, explicitness, creativity, vividness, thoroughness, sensitivity; and Calderon-Gomez (2009) focusing on epistemological and methodological adequacy, relevance, validity and reflexivity. What is underneath these different terms is the question of trustworthiness. Can the research/researcher be trusted? Leavy (2017, p. 580) linked trustworthiness in ABR with authenticity, and identified the following three questions to support the uncovering of this:

- Does the work resonate?
- Does it ring true?
- Does it feel authentic?

Leavy is therefore linking the concept of trustworthiness with the researcher and reader’s internal sense of feeling and intuitive knowing about the research, rather than providing an external structure that must be adhered to and followed, like the inclusion of member-checking. What constitutes trustworthiness, other than a gut knowing? Or is gut feeling enough (Brown, 2019)?

3.4.1 Enhancing relational and methodological rigor

Through the synthesis of the systematic review, the quality of the research process and its trustworthiness, became apparent through researchers reporting that they established credibility and transparency of the data, through the triangulation of the visuals and the words (Briody et al, 2022), by combining interviews with the creation of art (Culshaw, 2019). Additionally, the equality of the relationship between the researcher and the participant supports the revealing of truth and authenticity from the participant (Lindsay & Schwind, 2015) but how is this demonstrated through this study and the written word?

This study addressed trustworthiness by including the following elements, in the research process (see figure 2), the researcher created for this study:

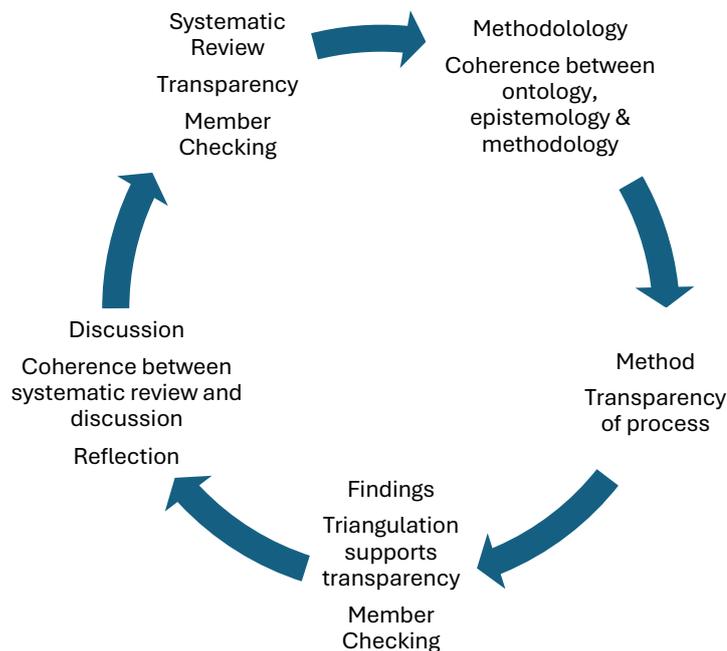


Figure 2: Trustworthiness Cycle

3.4.2 Triangulation supports transparency

The aim of the research is to explore participant emotional expression through ABR methods in the workplace i.e. it is process focused rather than outcome driven so multiple methods, with multiple time points provides richness and triangulation of the data (Briody et al, 2022), rather than gathering information in order to “get it right” and identify an undeniable truth (Varpio et al, 2017).

Seeing the visual that a participant creates and hearing the words the participant uses to describe their creation, provides greater space and opportunity to understand the participants’ perspectives and emotional worlds at work, as well creating greater transparency between the visual story and the hearing story. The addition of 1:1 interviews can support reflection over time (Sadler et al, 2017), as the participants can reflect on what they have created in the workshops and the meanings they attributed to them then, thus aligning with the constructivist ontological stance and that of an interpretivist epistemology too. Multi-modal methods and the inclusion of participant’s visual and verbal meaning provides data triangulation (Briody et al, 2022), which supports transparency and trustworthiness of the data.

3.4.3 Peer reviewing and member checking supports transparency

The researcher recognizes that their life experience will impact what they see but they will also have blind spots and aspects of their perception which is implicit to them. Therefore, self-reflection is important (Sandelowski, 1993) but so is peer reviewing and sharing the research with the participants and supervisors (Creswell and Miller, 2000; Savin-Baden and Major, 2013). Peer reviewing occurred in the systematic review (see section 2.2.5). In addition, at the start of the second workshop, the participants heard and received a written transcript containing the meaning of their first visual. A typed transcript containing the meaning of the visual the participant created in the second workshop was then given to the participants in the 1:1 interview, to reflect upon and check for accuracy of meaning for the participant.

3.4.4 Transparency of the visual can diminish language barrier and access to art materials can support authentic expression

The ABR method is open to those who maybe speak a different language to the researcher (Atherton et al, 2020; Banegas, 2022), which can also help to reduce cultural or sensitivity barriers (Gudyanga, 2019), to the participant expressing themselves, honestly and being understood by the researcher. The materials provided by the researcher can be as simple as providing the participants with a pen and piece of paper (Gudyanga, 2019), include a greater variety of art materials such as “pencils, stickers, small, coloured stones, pipe cleaners, cork, wool, and pieces of material in the shapes of animals, people and buildings” (Atherton et al ,2020 p. 68), to support transparent and authentic expression to reveal participant truths (Morey et al, 2018; Culshaw, 2019).

3.5 Researcher Reflexivity

I chose to study Psychology at 18 years because I wanted to learn more about “why people behaved the way that they did”. Over time I realized that what I was truly interested in, was relationships and I simultaneously trained to be a Relate Counsellor, whilst becoming an Occupational Psychologist. It was during training to be a relationship counsellor that I was first exposed to art and the power of it, as an exploration tool.

I initially wanted to combine these interests to explore the relationship between employees and their senior management team, using art-based workshops. Data collection started in February 2020 but was stopped abruptly due to the pandemic. Organisations needed to concentrate on surviving and essentially became inward facing, so data collection paused. Workplaces appeared abandoned as employees turned to working from home. It no longer felt appropriate to research the dynamic between employee and senior management teams due to the stress that was being experienced within organisations and without. Pragmatism needed to step in, to make the study feasible and do-able. It felt much more appropriate to purely focus on

employees and undertake a methodological study to explore the use of creative ABR methods, in the workplace.

My original desire of using art-based methods with employees and senior management team, was to support the hearing of all voices. I was (and am), interested by the oppositional nature of looking at those at the top and those at the bottom of an organisation – those typically with the most and the least power. I still am intrigued by the bringing together of opposites. Jung (1957 p.4) believed that “psychology depends upon balanced opposites”. This balance between the opposites is present within creative ABR methods that encompasses both visuals and words (to describe the visuals). It is the uniting of two ways, of making sense of the world, that could also be viewed as contrasting.

ABR methods supports the hearing of quieter voices (Huss and Cwikel, 2004) and is a reason why I am drawn to its use, as in workplace meetings I have not felt heard at times and I wanted to facilitate a research project that enabled everyone to be and feel heard. I have a tendency towards feelings and looking underneath the surface of them. The use of creative ABR with employees may help to gain a fuller understanding of their working lives and looking beyond what is most easily accessed or voiced.

I am biased towards wanting to hear those that are considered by society to be “the underdog”. I am the youngest of 3 children who found it hard to get my voice heard within the family, so I observed and listened a lot instead. I am a reflector and enjoying thinking slowly about ideas. I am not a fast person who easily multi-tasks. I am the opposite to this needing time to feel and think things through.

The tension between the opposites brings energy ((Furth, 1988). Foucault (1991) believed that with power, comes resistance i.e. energy. These ideas seem to fit with Newton's third law: "To every action, there is an equal and opposite reaction". If there are no opposing forces, then there is no resistance. Resistance seems to indicate the presence of a relationship and that there is movement between the positions. It is not static. In a sense, resistance could be viewed as a link or a doorway between those with more power and those with less.

3.6 Limitations of ABR methods

The meaning of knowing may be dependent upon who is involved and how safe they feel to express themselves and to explore. For example, Culshaw (2019) discovered that that some participants did not talk about all of the visual elements. Similarly, not all the salient aspects of a subject are depicted in the visual (Sadler et al, 2017) and seem to be omitted or absent. This suggests that ABR methods does not answer all questions that verbal questions do not, but the use of a visual can make it known that something is not being spoken about whilst the participant retains their right to privacy.

An assumption of ABR methods in this study is that the meaning of the art will predominantly be expressed and articulated using verbal language. However, a limitation of this is that the participant creating the art might not know or understand its meaning (Jung, 1972). This does not mean that the creation is devoid of meaning, just that it is unknown to the participants, at that moment in time. This could also be true for an element of the visual a participant creates, and not necessarily the entirety of the visual.

A further limitation of ABR is that the boundaries of what the participant draws or creates is set by the researcher. For example, Shin asked her participants: “could you draw a picture about your own play?” whilst Atherton et al (2020, p.66) asked their participants to “draw their professional journeys as a river and to use the visual images as they described their experiences”. A different statement or question is likely to have resulted in a different set of pictures which would also have been perceived and thought about using a different frame of reference. This does not negate or deny the participant’s truth that is uncovered using art, but it does acknowledge the influence of the researcher upon this and the boundaries of the research created. As Eisner stated, the meaning of knowledge is “dependent upon the inquiry undertaken and the kind of problem one pursues” (as cited in Knowles & Cole, 2008, p.4). So, the focus and the lens through which the research is viewed, is connected to the meaning that is created, highlighting the interconnection between the researcher and the participant.

Chapter Four: Methods – Pilot Study

The study is exploratory, with the purpose of learning about the use of ABR methods with employees and specifically what researchers can learn about employees' emotions from the use of creative ABR methods, in a workplace group setting. The aim of the research is to explore and learn about the process through which creative ABR methods can support or hinder employees to convey and express emotion, and answer the research question:

How does reflection through ABR methods support or hinder employee participants' emotional expression?

4.1 Purpose of the Pilot Study

In discussion with supervisors, as a novice researcher who has not previously facilitated ABR sessions either as a researcher or in a professional capacity, it was decided to incorporate a pilot study to practice the process of collecting data using ABR sessions, to support the rigour of the method (Ismail et al, 2018). The aim of the pilot study therefore would be to serve as a support for a novice researcher to practice facilitating ABR sessions and provide space to reflect on this experience in supervision. This could help develop the internal confidence and external competence, of a new researcher. (Wray, 2017) and enhance the trustworthiness of the data collected in the main study. Additionally, the introduction of the pilot study aimed to inform and verify the design of the main study.

4.2 Pilot Study Design (Original)

The original design of the pilot study incorporated two groups of participants, taking part in three face to face ABR sessions. The literature highlighted that participants' level of comfort with expressing themselves creatively, using arts-based materials could impact their participation (Atherton et al, 2020), so by incorporating three workshops it could allow for participants to become more comfortable with expressing themselves, using art materials over multiple

sessions. Additionally, as the number of participants of creative ABR methods can be few (Lindsay & Schwind, 2016)), having multiple workshops could help increase the data collected and support trustworthiness in the data.

Having two groups of participants, rather than one group, also enhanced the trustworthiness of the data collected (Shenton, 2004), as two groups could help to ascertain themes across multiple groups, rather than the data being representative of solely one group of participants, which could be atypical of a population. Generalising the findings to wider population is not possible with qualitative research, due to the lower participant numbers (Lindsay & Schwind, 2016) but having multiple participant groups could enhance rigour and allow for greater breadth in the data.

4.2.1 Pilot Study Design (Adapted)

Data collection for the pilot study started February 6th, 2020. The intention for the pilot study, had been for it to occur over a two-month period and be completed by mid-April 2020. However, in reality, the timeline of the pilot study lengthened due to the commencement of the COVID-19 pandemic (see table 3 for pilot study timeline), with the UK entering into a national lockdown on the 23rd of March 2020 and the periodic national and local lockdowns following this, into 2022.

The pandemic changed working practices and the location from where employees worked (except front-line staff) with the majority of employees being prohibited from entering their workplaces and were instead obligated to work from home. This change impacted data collection and required the design of the study to be adapted. Consequently, the third face to face workshop for the office-based workers from the Head Office environment in the pilot study became an online workshop; whilst the second and third face to face workshops for the front-line staff took place outside, as was their preference (see table 3 for the timeline).

Table 3: Timeline for pilot study

Group One											
	Feb	Mar	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	
Workshop One (face to face)											
Workshop Two (face to face)		UK wide lockdown started on March 23 rd 2020									
Workshop Three (online)											
Group Two											
Workshop One (face to face)											
Workshop Two (face to face outside)		UK wide lockdown started on March 23 rd 2020									
Workshop Three (face to face outside)											

4.3 Participants

4.3.1 Sample and Sampling Method

The desired aim for the pilot study was to use purposive sampling. However, the reality was that convenience sampling was used, as all participants that approached the researcher from the one housing association, were included in the study. All employee roles from this one organisation could have participated as the main criteria for attendance was that the participants were employed by this organisation and were open to participating in ABR sessions.

4.3.2 Inclusion Criteria

The primary focus of the study is exploring the use of creative ABR methods with employees, so the participants need to be employed and meet the following criteria, in order to be included in the study:

- are a minimum of 18 years old
- be employed and work at least part-time hours
- are male, female or gender neutral.
- there is no minimum or maximum years of working tenure, within the organisation
- the employees work in the UK.

4.3.3 Exclusion Criteria

The employees needed to be willing to undertake face to face art-based workshops with their colleagues. Employees not comfortable with group workshops, with their colleagues would be excluded from the study.

Additionally, the employees would be excluded, if they were not fluent in the English language, as they needed to be able to share the meaning of their creations to other group participants.

4.3.4 Sample Size of the Pilot Study

Generally, when facilitating research groups, for example, focus groups, the minimum number of participants is 3, with a maximum of approximately 12 participants (Morgan et al, 1998). The presence of three participants allows for differences of opinion to be present, rather than the possibility of two opposing voices, if there are just two participants. The maximum of 12 participants helps to ensure space and time for all participants to speak and be heard, during the group.

On discussion with my supervisor who had previously facilitated ABR sessions for research (Bingley, 2003), it was decided to aim for a minimum of 3 participants for each of the two groups, and a maximum of 10 people, due to the physical space that would be needed to facilitate the workshops and ensure that all participants would have time to verbally share the meaning of their creations, to the rest of the group, within the time limit of the workshops. Therefore, the aim overall was to recruit a minimum of 6 and a maximum of 20 participants, to the pilot study. (See table 4 for the number of participants who attended each of the pilot study workshops).

Table 4: Number of pilot study participants per ABR session

	Number of Participants	
	Group One	Group Two
Workshop One	4	2
Workshop Two	4	2
Workshop Three	3	2

4.3.5 Strategy for the recruitment of organisation & participants for the Pilot Study

Two housing association organisations were initially contacted, through a third-party contact who knew senior management personnel, in the organisations, and emailed them the research study brief. Both organizations expressed an interest and contacted the researcher. However, one of the organizations was undergoing a restructure at the time, and could not take part imminently, so the researcher contacted the second organisation, with the possibility of undertaking the research with them. The researcher met with this second housing association organization for a face-to-face discussion at their head office to discuss the study and the facilitation of the ABR sessions, on their premises, with their employees.

The participants for the pilot study were all recruited from this one housing association organization. Posters were placed in locations with high foot fall, for example the toilets and the Communication Manager cascaded an email to all employees advertising the workshops. In addition, a video of the information session was created and put on the organisation's intranet. Participant Information Sheets were provided to all who were interested, either in response to the posters, email or information session. The employees who expressed an interest in taking part were informed of the ABR session date and on arrival were all given a physical copy of the participant information sheet and the consent form. The researcher presented the participant information and consent forms to the group; and responded to any concerns or queries, before the employees signed the forms and became research participants. The participants were then given a copy of the demographic question sheet (appendix H), and photographic release form (appendix I) to complete. Finally, on initiating data collection the researcher verbally reiterated to the participants that they could still withdraw and have their data removed from the study, up to 2 weeks, after the data had been collected.

4.3.6 Pilot Study Participant Demographics and Setting

The pilot required each employee participant to attend a series of 3 face to face art-based workshops. Two groups of participants took part in the pilot study, from two different parts of one housing association organisation, situated in different buildings, in different geographical locations. The two different locations, allowed for different types of employees to participate. One location was the organisation's head office. The second location was where the front-line staff of the organisation worked, in a different building and town, who would not have been able to attend the workshops at the Head Office.

The six participants were aged between 25 and 64 years old, with five of the participants being female and one male (see table 5 for the pilot study demographics). The mother tongue of two of the participants was not English but they were both fluent second language English speakers. They were all worked for the same organisation, with the length of employment for this employer starting from 8 months up to 24 years. The average length of employment with this employer was 8.85 years.

Table 5: Pilot study demographics

Pseudonym	Sex	Age Range	Occupation	Career Stage	Length of time in Current Role	Location of Group
Mavis	F	55-64	Office Manager	End of career	6 years	Head Office
Annabel	F	25-34	Business Intelligence Developer	Early-career	1.5 years	Head Office
Julia	F	35-44	Business Development Officer	Mid-career	3 years	Head Office
Daisy	F	25-34	Governance and Compliance Partner	Early career	5.5 years	Head Office
Anne	F	35-44	Community Link Worker	Early - Mid career	8 months	Hostel
Michael	M	25-34	Relief/Support Worker	Early career	2 years	Hostel

4.4 Pilot Study Data Collection

Group One was from what could be considered as the “head office” of the company where the CEO’s office was. The four participants were all white, British and aged between 25-64 years old. The first two face to face sessions took place in a meeting room, where all of Group One were based.

Group Two were in customer, public, facing roles, in a separate building and town to Group One. The two participants of Group Two could be considered as “nonBritish” and aged between 33-44 years old. The first face to face session took place in a meeting room, where they were both based.

Data collection started in February 2020, with GROUP ONE of four employees, who completed two workshops pre-pandemic; and a GROUP TWO of two employees, who completed one workshop pre-pandemic. These two groups were face to face. As a result of the pandemic GROUP ONE met online for the third and final workshop in the autumn of 2020; and GROUP TWO met face to face but outside, due to covid restrictions preventing us from meeting inside, for their final two workshops (see table 6 for the pilot study timing and attendance)

Table 6: Timing and attendance numbers for the pilot study ABR sessions

	Group One	Group Two
First Workshop – Face to Face	4 participants – 6 th February 2020	2 participants – 27 th February 2020
Second Workshop Face to Face	4 participants – 3 rd March 2020	2 participants – 10 th September 2020. (took place outside, in a park)
Third Workshop Online	3 participants – 17 th November 2020	n/a
Third Workshop Face to Face	n/a	2 participants – 22 nd September 2020 (took place outside, in a park).

4.5 Procedure for the Face-to-Face ABR Data Collection Workshop

The following points describe the procedural stages of an ABR data collection session.

1. The participants are given a question or statement to answer or express using art.
2. Once all participants have completed their creations, each one is asked in turn, for their own meaning of interpretation of what they have created.
3. Researcher then ask the participant questions about their creation, followed by those of the group.
4. The participant is able to develop their ideas or interpretations, as a result of these observations or questions.
5. Thoughts the researcher has about the art and the person's interpretation and responses.
6. This process is repeated for each person.
7. Collective responses from the group about the art that has been created and how together it represents working experiences in their organisation.
8. The researcher verbally summarizes the collective response from the group.

This process enables the interactions between the researcher and the participants to elaborate on the meaning of the visuals they created, which becomes data to analyse.

4.5.1 Overview of Face-to-Face ABR Workshop (Pilot Study)

The aim of the ABR session as a researcher was to create a facilitative environment in order for participants to feel comfortable creating without fear of judgement, given that the anxieties of participants has been previously highlighted by other researchers (Vince and Broussine, 1996; Cristancho et al, 2014; Morely et al, 2018), whilst also ensuring the researcher's focus is on the research aim of exploring the use of ABR methods with employees, to answer the research question, and not on the session being a therapeutic process (Bingley, 2003). This also emphasizes the importance of having a pilot study, as the researcher had not taken on the role of researcher, in this capacity previously.

The face-to-face ABR session followed the schedule below:

- i) On arrival, consent forms were read and signed, alongside the completion of the demographic information.
- ii) The groups rules and boundaries were then established encompassing: confidentiality; respect; anonymity; the photographs taken will not include anyone's face; phone on silent; and a spirit of open-ness and non-criticalness.
- iii) The ABR session itself, started with an icebreaker and the participants were asked to choose an animal from the selection provided, that best described how they felt that day.
- iv) It was verbalised that aim of the workshop was to have fun, and explore what it is like to work here, using art materials. The brief was described as "show what it is like to work here and do what you do". There was a table containing pictures that had been cut out of magazines for them and the researcher suggested the participants chose two or three images that they associated with their job and working for their organisation. They could also use any of the other art materials provided which included coloured tissue paper, pipe-cleaners, threads, play doh and coloured pencils. Additional verbal prompts included: "what comes to mind when you think about your organisation?" and "What images,

colours, forms, feelings arise?”. The participants were allocated 30-40 minutes to create a visual.

- v) Once the participants had completed their creations, the researcher asked them to create a title for it.
- vi) Each participant in turn, individually described and shared, what they had created and what it meant to them, verbally, to the rest of the group. This was followed by the researcher asking questions on what the participant had created, followed by the comments and thoughts of other group members.
- vii) There was an opportunity to reflect on the process at the end, together.

4.5.2 Overview of Online ABR Workshop (Pilot Study)

Art packs had been sent through the post to the participants, at least 24 hours prior to the start of the workshop, so that the participant could take part online from their homes. (see appendix K for art materials sent). When the art packs were posted to the participants, the researcher ensured that the participants knew that the art pack did not contain any cut and paste pictures from magazines. Given that previous research has highlighted the anxieties that employee participants can feel in creating (Vince & Broussine, 1996; Cristancho et al, 2014; Morey et al, 2018), the researcher decided to inform the participants of this prior to the workshop, with the aim of minimizing or reducing any anxieties they might have around creating art without the use of cut and paste pictures.

- i) The online ABR session took place via Zoom, and the link was emailed to each participant a week before and again, the day before, to ensure the participants had the link for it, to be able to attend.
- ii) The online session itself, started with an icebreaker. The researcher had given each participant, in their art pack a small bottle of bubbles, and asked all the participants to open it at the beginning of the ABR session, and blow some bubbles, to help them to relax, use a different part of their brain and simultaneously create a break or a boundary from what they had been doing in work, and the start of the ABR session.
- iii) As the session was in November 2020, following the full UK wide lockdown and at the time of the workshop there were continued local lockdowns in Wales, that were impacting all of the participants, who had not been allowed to return to work in their Head Office since the start of the lockdown in March 2020, where they were all based, the researcher requested the participants to: “create something to express what it’s like for you to be working during lockdown and since all these changes to see what it’s like for you now?”

4.5.3 Materials provided for online workshop

See Appendices K for list of materials given to each participant.

4.6 Learning reflections from the pilot study and its impact on the main study.

The value of the pilot study for the novice researcher was experiencing the facilitation of ABR methods face to face and online, receiving feedback from the participants in relation to the process and using art materials. The experience of the pilot study also allowed the researcher to reflect on the difference between facilitating a therapeutic or teaching group, and that of a research group.

4.6.1 Developing confidence as a novice researcher, through reflective practice in using ABR as a method, and understanding the needs of the participants

The researcher had facilitated groups with employees, as an Occupational Psychologist but not previously facilitated a research project with employees. The researcher had previously worked online prior to the online ABR session but again, had not facilitated a research process online. The pilot study therefore provided an opportunity for the researcher to experience the process, observe the participants and learn about the practicalities of facilitating an ABR session. For example, through the online session, the group experimented with focusing the computer camera on themselves or on what they were creating. It was decided to retain the camera on themselves, so that they could see and interact with each other more easily. This learning was then used in the main study, and the computer cameras were purely focused on the participants during the ABR sessions. Additionally, the pilot study supported the researcher to release doubts and fears around the participants not being able to create a visual. The researcher appreciated that the method required them to surrender to the process and recognize that the employee participants were in control of what they created, so needed to trust the process, trust the participants and

allow their creative process to unfold, through the session. The researcher's confidence in the process and the participants increased through the experience of the pilot study.

4.6.2 Lengthening of the Pilot Study Timeframe

The intention for the pilot study, had been for it to occur over a two-month period and completed by mid-April 2020. However, in reality, the timeline of the pilot study lengthened due to the pandemic and the resulting lockdown so consequently spanned nine months. This lengthened and widened the span of time, over which the

ABR sessions occurred and naturally allowed for the expression of this change visually, demonstrating the value of using the method over a wider period of time, than originally planned. It was the value of having multiple workshops over a period of time (longer than two months) that supported the change to be made visible to both the participant and the researcher. The increased length of time however, resulted in a participant in the first group, not being able to attend the final online workshop. Consequently, on discussion with supervisors the number of ABR sessions that each participant was required to attend decreased from three to two, to support participant attendance.

4.6.3 Difficulty with recruiting employees as participants.

Recruiting employees to take part in research is not easy, as they can drop out at the last minute due to work demands (Atherton et al, 2020). This occurred in both of the groups, in the pilot study. Two participants from Group One emailed the day before the first workshop, stating they could no longer attend, and two more participants did not show up, on the day itself. Three participants were due to attend the first workshop of Group Two, but one participant emailed to say that due to a change in work priorities they could no longer take part in the study, on that day. The workshop went ahead that day anyway, as it was the pilot study and so would not impact the overall study, but the ideal minimum number of participants was not met, highlighting the difficulty of recruiting employees, as participants.

4.6.4 Participant access to a computer

Front facing staff in the pilot study, Group Two, chose to have their second and third session outside in a park, as opposed to online. This contrasted with the office-based staff, Group One, whose third session took place online, from their individual homes. As a consequence of this difference, in order for employees to take part in the main study, having access to a computer at home, became a pre-requisite to help ensure employees who participated, could attend both of the sessions and create consistency between the groups.

Chapter Five: Methods – Main Study

5.1 Design of the Main Study

The study is exploring the use of ABR methods with employee participants, with a focus on how it can support or hinder employee participants' emotional expression. It is therefore qualitative research which centres upon the use of ABR sessions with employees. The design of the main study was informed by the experience gained through the pilot study and the learning achieved through the systematic review and work of other researchers, to answer the research question: *How does reflection through ABR methods support or hinder employee participants' emotional expression?*

The learning from the pilot study, highlighted the value of the workshops, spanning a longer period of time than two months, so the main study spans approximately 10 months (see table 8, for the main study timeline), alongside of using both face to face and online employee sessions, to mirror the new hybrid working practices of employees and support the recruitment and retention of employee research participants. The location of the face-to-face ABR sessions were planned to take place on the organisation's premises, whilst the online sessions could occur from the place that the employee participant chose, to support recruitment and retention. The time period between the face-to-face workshop and online workshop was a five-month period for two of the groups and a seven month time period for one (see table 10 for the main study timeline), with the face to face workshops occurring in the HEI academic spring term 2022 and the online workshops occurring in the HEI autumn term 2022.

As the number of employee participants that take part in ABR methods tends to be small (Lindsay & Schwind, 2016), having multiple workshops increases the data collected and therefore the trustworthiness of it. A 1:1 interview was added to the design, following the pilot study, to enhance the reflective processes of the employee participants to support data triangulation and trustworthiness, whilst balancing the ease of employee participation.

5.2 Participants of the Main Study

5.2.1 Sample and Sampling Method

The majority of the researchers who used ABR methods that were identified through the systematic review used purposive sampling (Baxter & Brumfitt, 2007; Lindsay & Schwind, 2015; Gudyanga et al, 2019; Briody et al, 2022; Shin, 2023) to focus their research on specific employee professions such as teachers (Gudyanga et al, 2019; Shin, 2023) or nurses (Lindsay & Schwind, 2015; Robertson et al, 2021). In this study however, the focus is on the use of ABR methods with employees generally, rather than targeting a specific profession or job role. Additionally, the study is one of exploration about the method itself, rather than a topic area, so although the participants need to be employees, the truest reflection of the type of sampling used is convenience sampling (Miles et al, 2020), as although there were multiple sessions offered to the employee participants (Smith et al, 2014), they needed to be able to attend all the group sessions, which could not be attuned to their individual needs, unlike scheduling a 1:1 interview. Consequently, for this study, gaining access to the employees as participants was the focus, rather than recruiting one specific type of employee, as the aim of the research was exploring the use of ABR methods, with employees, generally, and accessing employees for research purposes.

5.2.2 Inclusion Criteria

This study is exploring the value of using arts-based research methods with employees, so the participants needed to be employed and meet the following criteria, in order to be included in the study:

- are a minimum of 18 years old
- be employed and work at least part-time hours
- are male, female or gender neutral.
- there is no minimum or maximum years of working tenure, within the organisation
- the participants need access to a computer at home, in order to participate in the second workshop, which is online (*included as a consequence of the pilot study*)
- the employees work in the UK.

5.2.3 Exclusion Criteria

The employees needed to be willing to undertake art-based workshops with their colleagues both face to face; and online. The workshops are group based, therefore anyone who was not comfortable with this, was excluded from the study.

Additionally, the employees would be excluded, if they were not fluent in the English language.

5.2.4 Sample Size of the Main Study

Researchers from the systematic review have stated that ABR method can be difficult to recruit large number of employee participants (Lindsay & Schwind, 2016) whilst Cristancho et al (2014), state that the method is better suited to a smaller number of employee participants. So similar to the pilot study the aim was to have a minimum of 3 participants per ABR session, and a maximum of 10, to help ensure there is physical space in the room to create and time for all participants to share their visual creations. However, in response to the pilot study, to aid participant retention over a longer period of time, it was decided to have three groups of participants, participating in two ABR sessions (and not two groups of participants, participating in three ABR sessions like the pilot study), so the minimum sample size was 9 participants, with a maximum of 30. The two ABR sessions would be followed up with 1:1 interviews, with the aim of interviewing a minimum of 8 and a maximum of 12 participants (see table 7 for participant numbers in the main study ABR sessions).

Table 7: Number of participants for main study ABR sessions

	Number of participants	Number Interviewed
Workshop One	3	2
Workshop Two	4	3
Workshop Three	3	3
Total Number of Participants	10	8

Data saturation is an aim and a sign of rigour for qualitative studies (Braun and Clarke, 2021), and an indicator of “quality” (Morse, 1995) through the researcher ascertaining saturation of coding, or meaning (Hennick et al, 2017). However, as this study has an ontological basis of constructivism, with individuals having their own unique perspectives of reality; data saturation is in essence unattainable. ABR methods enables participants to uniquely express their experiences (Tracy et al, 2006; Culshaw, 2019). Additionally, researchers that employ ABR methods report having difficulty recruiting participants (Smith et al, 2014) and can have a lower number of participants (Lindsay and Schwind, 2016) because of this. Researchers who employ ABR methods instead advocate for the depth of knowledge that can be gained through having lower participant numbers and indeed can advocate that the method requires it (Cristancho et al, 2014). This study acknowledges the value of data saturation within qualitative research, but the aim of this research is an exploratory one, to learn about the process through which creative ABR can support or hinder employees to convey and express emotions. It is acknowledged that meaning saturation can be gained through interviewing between 16-24 participants (Hennick et al, 2017) but having an ontological basis of constructivism and an exploratory research aim, data saturation is unlikely to be achieved, as ABR methods reveals the uniqueness of experience, at a depth that can be greater than that of 1:1 interviews (Baxter & Brumfitt, 2007; Kado et al, 2023), so it is not possible to transfer the ideal number participants to achieve data saturation from that of a 1:1 interview, to the ABR method.

5.2.5 Strategy for Recruiting Participants for the Main Study

The strategy employed for the main study of inviting employees from one organisation to participate, was adapted due to the pandemic, and changes to working practices, of greater online working from home and less face-to-face office interaction. The strategy was therefore widened, so rather than recruit an organisation to work with, employees were directly (and indirectly) invited to take part. An advert was placed on linked In and researcher placed flyers (see appendix J) in the local HEI about the ABR data collection sessions. In addition, the researcher asked the Manager of the Disability and Well-Being service in the HEI to email their staff too, with information regarding workshop date and times, giving the potential participants the researcher's contact details, if they wished to attend or contact the researcher to learn more about the research.

The researcher talked through the participate information sheet (appendix F) and the consent form (appendix G) at the start of each face-to-face ABR session. Ideally, there would have been a separate participant information session but due to the logistics of the employees working partly on campus and partly at home, the pragmatic decision was taken to respond to any preliminary queries to individual employees via email or the telephone, prior to the workshop and re-iterate this collectively, at the start of the first face to face workshop that they attended.

Once questions and queries had been answered by the researcher, and consent forms, demographics forms (appendix H) and photographic release forms signed (appendix I), data collection commenced.

5.2.6 Demographics of Participants of Main Study

The ten participants were all aged between the ages of 22 years old and 64 years old, with 9 of the participants being female and one male (see table 8 for the main study demographics). The mother tongue of two of the participants was not English but they were both fluent second language English speakers. They were all worked for the same organisation, with the length of employment for this employer started from 3 months up to 24 years. The average length of employment with this employer was 8.85 years. One of the ten participants reported having a mental health difficulty; one cited being neurodiverse; another stated they were epileptic, and one participant said that they had a disability but did not explicitly say what this was. During the time that the workshops took place, a second participant became diagnosed with neurodiversity, so 20% of the participants experienced neurodiversity.

Table 8: Main study demographics

Pseudonym	Sex	Age Range	Occupation at University	Career Stage	Length of time in Current Role	Disability
Lesley	F	45-54	Admin Manager	Mid-career	2 years	n/a
Joyce	F	35-44	Disability Advisor	Mid-career	8 years	No
Eleanor	F	Under 25	Administrator	Early career	3 months	Anxiety
Rachel	F	25-34	Specialist Mentor – autism and mental health	Early Career	9 months	ADHD
Rhiannon	F	35-44	Disability Advisor	Early - Mid career	7 years	n/a
Peter	M	35-44	Project Partner	Early – mid career	9 months	No
Bee	F	35-44	Counsellor	Early – mid career	10 months	Yes
Angela	F	55-64	Technician	End of career	11 years	No
Jackie	F	35-44	Subject Manager and lecturer	Mid career	1 year	Epilepsy
Katherine	F	25-34	Lecturer	Early career	4 years	No

5.2.7 Dropout rate

Of the 10 participants, who completed the first face to face art-based workshop, one participant did not attend the online workshop. No feedback was obtained from this participant to understand why this was. This person was contacted via email, twice following the face-to-face workshops to inform them of the online workshop but as no contact was received from this participant, no further communication occurred, so as not to be perceived as coercing or pressurizing them to take part in the online workshop. Nine participants completed both the in person, face-to-face workshops and the online workshops

5.3 Main Study Data Collection

ABR, in the form of group sessions were used, alongside of 1:1 interviews. The pilot study confirmed that having more than one session supported the participants to develop their experience and comfort in using art materials, as participant discomfort has been cited in the literature from the systematic review as being a hindrance to participation (Vince & Broussine, 1996; Morey et al, 2018; Gudyanga et al, 2019; Atherton et al, 2020 & Shin, 2023). All participants were asked to attend two ABR sessions, the first being in person, face to face and the second being online. (see table 9 for number of participant attendance per ABR session and interview). The second session was conducted online to ease access to participation for employee participants, as since the start of the pandemic in 2020, more employees were working from home with 24%, reporting this according to Office for National Statistics (ONS), in the Spring of 2022. Those who attended both ABR sessions, were then invited to take part in a 1:1 interview (see table 10 for the main study timeline and table 11 for the overall timeline for both the pilot study and the main study).

Table 9: Number of participants attended ABR session and Interview

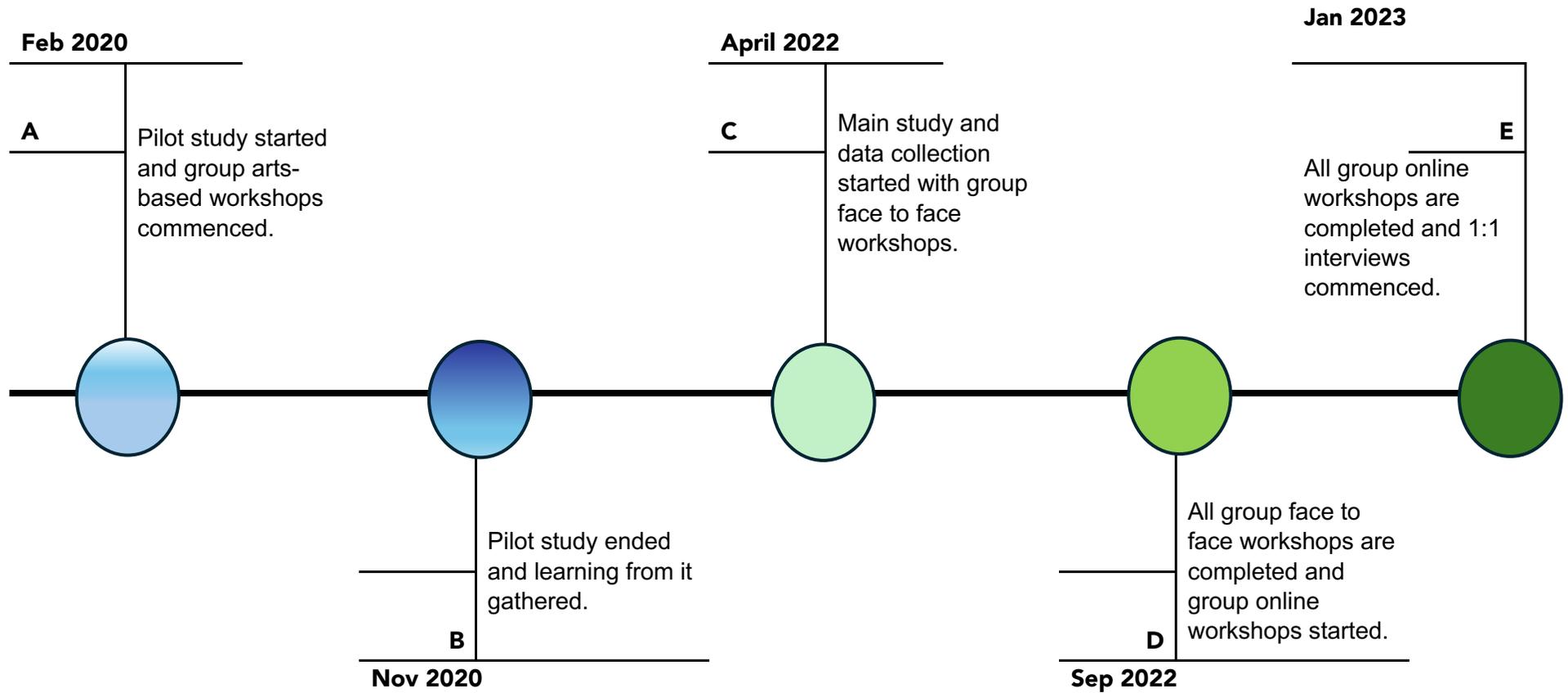
	Face to face ABR session	Online ABR session	1:1 Interview
Group One	3 participants	4 participants	3 participants
Group Two	3 participants	3 participants	3 participants
Group Three	4 participants	2 participants	2 participants

Table 10: Main Study Timeline

Group A											
	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb
Workshop One (face to face)											
Workshop Two (online)											
Interviews 1:1 (face to face or online)											
Group B											
Workshop One (face to face)											
Workshop Two (online)											
Interviews 1:1 (face to face or online)											
Group C											
Workshop One (face to face)											
Workshop Two (online)											
Interviews (face to face or online)											

The first ABR sessions that took place in April and May 2022 are face to face, whilst the second ABR sessions occurred online in the autumn between September and November 2022. Following the completion of both ABR sessions, the participants were asked to attend a 1:1 interview, either face to face or online, depending on their preference.

Table 11: Overall timeline for pilot and main study



5.3.1 Procedure overview of face-to-face ABR workshop (Main Study)

- (i) On arrival, consent forms were read and signed, alongside the completion of the demographic information. Any questions were responded to, and participants were reminded they could leave at any point, during the process. It was highlighted to the participants that they were agreeing to take part in a research process, that included two ABR data collection sessions and a 1:1 interview.

- (ii) The groups rules and boundaries were then established encompassing confidentiality, respect, anonymity, the photographs taken will not include anyone's face, phone on silent, and a spirit of open-ness and non-criticalness, towards each other and the process.

- (iii) The ABR data collection process itself commenced with an icebreaker. Participants were asked to choose an animal from the selection provided, which best described how they felt that day. The aim of this was to give the participant an opportunity to focus on themselves, reflect on how they felt, and start to use the visual part of their brain, rather than their logical, rational mind.

- (iv) Following the icebreaker, the researcher talked through the materials provided for them, to give them time to familiarize themselves with the art materials, before informing them of the theme for the session. The researcher placed a blank piece of white A3 paper in front of each of the participants, on the table and asked them to "create something that describes or depicts what it's been like to work during the pandemic"

The rationale for asking the participants to create something that depicted what it was like to work over the past two years, was due to the pandemic starting in March 2020, and despite the workshops taking place in April, May 2022, working practices had not returned to everyone

working in the office, as they had been in February 2020. The pattern of work had therefore changed due to the pandemic, and it felt important to acknowledge this with the employee participants. In addition, it helped to create continuity between the pilot study that finished in the autumn of 2020 and the start of the main study in the spring of 2022.

- v) Once the creations had been completed, each participant talked about the meaning of their visual, one at a time, to the group. (The ordering of the participant sharing was discussed and those who needed to leave early, shared first).
- vi) Questions were asked of the participant, following their narrative of the visual, first by the researcher and then the other participants. Although this was not rigidly applied and some questions naturally arose. The questions centred upon understanding the participant's meaning and elements of the visual which had not been included by the participant, were probed by the researcher but without pressure to respond. Thoughts and questions from the group to the participant were also expressed. This part of the process was encouraged to occur organically, to support the flow of the participant, verbally talking about the meaning of their creation.
- vii) Any further reflections were noted at the end, although the ending was messy or blurred due to participants needing to leave, to deal with appointments or work they needed to attend to, sometimes after they had explained their creation and before being able to listen to the other participants in the group.
- vii) The aim was for the participants to be able to take part in the workshops during the lunch-hour, during the working day but all three groups were over an hour in length (see table 12 for length of time per face-to-face, main study ABR session)

Table 12: Length of time per face-to-face, main study ABR session

Group:	Length of Workshop
One	83 minutes
Two	71 minutes
Three	97 minutes

5.3.2 Procedure overview of online arts-based workshop

Art packs had either been sent through the post to the participants or given to them in person, at least 24 hours prior to the start of the workshop, so that the participant could take part online from wherever they wanted to – either at home or in work (see appendix K for art materials sent). When the art packs were handed or posted to the participants, it was highlighted to them that the art pack did not contain any cut and paste pictures from magazines. This information was given to the participants prior to the workshop with the aim of minimizing or reducing any anxieties they might have around creating art without the use of cut and paste pictures, so they could be mentally prepared, given that other researchers who have used ABR methods have used strategies to alleviate participant anxiety in relation to drawing and using art materials (Vince & Broussine, 1996; Cristancho et al, 2014; Morey, 2018; Shin, 2023).

- i) The online workshops took place using Microsoft Teams. The link for the session was emailed to each participant a week before and emailed again, the day before the session, to ensure the participants had both received it and had access to the link, to be able to attend.
- ii) The online session itself, started with an icebreaker. Each art pack contained a small bottle of blowing bubbles, and at the start of the session, the participants were invited to open the bottle and blow some

bubbles, to help them to relax, to use a different part of their brains and simultaneously create a break or a boundary from what they had been doing in work, and the start of the session.

- iii) The participants were then requested to have a look at the materials provided in the pack, place the contents of the pack on the table next to them and see what they felt drawn to. Following this, the participants were asked “to create what it’s been like to work in the last few months? What work is like now? Have a look at what’s in there (referring to the art pack) and see what colours or what materials you feel drawn to. There’re no rules, you can do whatever you like”
- iv) Once the creations had been completed, each participant was invited to talk about what they had created in turn, in front of the group, online. The decision of the ordering was decided by the group.
- v) The researcher asked the participants questions of aspects that had not been understood or explained. Thoughts and questions from the group to the participant were also expressed. This was not an ordered process, but was quite organic, to support the flow of the participant verbally talking about the meaning of their creation.
- vi) Any further reflections were noted at the end, although the ending was messy or blurred due to participants needing to leave to return to work, sometimes after they had explained their creation and before being able to listen to the other participants in the group.
- vii) Two groups took place online at lunchtime and one took place, at the end of the working day at 5pm. (see table 13 for the length of time per online, main study ABR session) The reason for the late starting group was because one of the group members had commenced maternity leave, having had a baby since the completion of the first group. This time

therefore accommodated all the group members so that they could all participate.

Table 13: Length of time per online, main study ABR session

Group	Length of Workshop
One	89
Two	86
Three	134 minutes

5.3.3 Materials provided for online workshop

See Appendices K for list of materials given to each participant.

5.4 Semi – Structured Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were used on a 1:1 basis with participants who had attended both the face to face, and online art workshops. The reason for including interviews in addition to the workshops was to give the participants an opportunity to further reflect on the experience of the workshops and to give them the space to share anything that they had not felt comfortable to share in the group. The use of interviews supports the revealing of undisclosed thoughts and feelings, in a sensitive manner (Dempsey et al, 2016). This is important when working with employees, as how they are perceived by their colleagues in the workplace (Bolino et al, 2016; Atherton et al, 2020), is a concern.

Providing the participants the space to reflect on the two workshops and their creations, was also necessary to explore the impact of the space in time between the workshops and the 1:1 interview. The first face to face workshops took place in the spring 2022, in the months of April and May. The second online workshops took place in the autumn of 2022 in the months of September, October and November. The gap between the workshops was not intended to be this long but due to the death of my father, there was a longer pause in between. The 1:1 interviews then took place early 2023 and were completed by March 2023. The original intention was to complete all the workshops before starting the 1:1 interviews. Data collection therefore spanned approximately 11 months.

5.4.1 Interview Guide

The interview provided an opportunity to reflect on the two workshops, on what the participant created and their experience of taking part in arts-based research. To help me to reflect on what questions to include in the interview I reviewed what other researchers who had specified what they had asked their participants following the completion of a drawing or a creative exercise (Kearney & Hyle, 2004; Barner, 2006; & Sharafizad et al (2020). This encompassed enquiring how comfortable they were with using the technique they were asked to use (Barner, 2006) and their initial feelings when they were asked to draw as part of the research process (Kearney & Hyle, 2004). Kearney & Hyle (2004) also enquired whether what the participant had created, captured the “heart or the “core of their personal experiences (p366); and asked the participant to describe the mental process the participant went through in order to create the drawing.

Alongside reviewing what other questions researchers had asked, the researcher also discussed the use of questions with main supervisor, whilst knowing that the exact wording of the questions would likely change in the interview itself (Flick, 2007). As the participants were creating and sharing their art, in a group situation, it was initially decided to predominantly focus on two main themes: the creation of the art and the sharing of it. However, Rose (2007) advocates that three aspects need to be critically considered: where the image is created, its context or site; the image itself and the viewers of the image, so where the image was created was also incorporated into the interview too (see appendix N).

5.4.2. Reflections on conducting the Interviews

The reality of doing the interviews themselves, was different to the idealized version based on the interview guide (appendix N). The research's aim was to learn about the process of taking part in ABR from the employee's perspective, so it was also important to go with the flow of the conversation too and support the participant to speak openly and freely (Flick, 2007). Consequently, questions were not rigidly adhered to. For example, in the moment of an interview the researcher asked, "What do you feel now, when you look at what you created in May?" instead of "Does the art capture the essence of your experience?", as written in the interview guide.

Two of the interviews took place face to face and the remaining occurred online through Microsoft Teams. The minimum interview length was 44 minutes, the maximum length was 77 minutes, and the mean length was 61 minutes.

5.5 Ethics

Full ethical approval was sought and gained from Lancaster University Ethics Committee (appendix E). It is not anticipated that the study will cause the participant discomfort, inconvenience or danger. However, a participant may choose to talk or draw about topics that they find upsetting, but the aim of the study is not to place the participants in a vulnerable position, nor for the researcher to be a counsellor for the participants. All participants are however given participant information sheets (appendix F) where they can access support through their organisation and externally, prior to obtaining their written consent (appendix G).

If a participant becomes visibly distressed during an interview or a workshop, the participant would be free to stop the interview or leave the group, if this is what the participant felt was right for them. The researcher who's a qualified relationship counsellor has a natural propensity to engage emotionally with others but is mindful of the role she is assuming as the researcher and recognizes the boundaries between being in the role of researcher and being in the role of counsellor, particularly during the data collection process.

Arts based methods also bring unique ethical concerns of their own, which are affected by the type of method used (Glegg, 2019). For example, ownership surrounding the art that is created, has been voiced as an ethical concern (Warr et al, 2016 & VRC Guidelines). In this study the artwork will belong to the participants who created it. The researcher will however seek permission to take photographs of the art, which will purely be of the art and will not include the participant(s). If participants ask to have their photographs taken with their artwork, they will be asked to sign the Photograph Release Form (appendix I).

5.6 Data Analysis

The data for this study is in the form of participant visual creations and participant words, so the analysis is held within the union of the two forms. There is however a plethora of options, choices and ways to analyse ABR methods, as reported in the systematic review research articles including: constant comparative method (Van Staden-Payne and Nel, 2023; Chachula et al, 2023); Metaphor analysis (Tracy et al, 2006; Barton et al, 2023); grounded theory (Morey et al, 2018; Shin, 2023); content analysis (Chang et al, 2016); content analysis for text and visual analysis for drawings (Briody et al, 2022); visual analysis (Sadler et al, 2017); aesthetic approach to visual analysis using their own developed analytical questions (Cristancho et al, 2014); thematic coding (Gourlay et al, 2020); and thematic analysis (Smith et al, 2014; Ward and Greene, 2018; Gudyanga et al, 2019; and Robertson et al, 2021). This choice is greater because of including the visuals created by the participant; unlike the analysis of a verbal interview which brings with it less analytic choices. Another difference to the analysis of purely interview data, in comparison to ABR methods is that participants are viewed as the ones revealing the knowledge and giving meaning to their creations (Westwood, 2007), whereas with qualitative interview data, it tends to be the researcher whose perceiving and understanding the data.

5.6.1 Aim of Analysis

The aim of this analysis is to answer the research question:

How does reflection through ABR support or hinder employee participants' emotional expression?

Given the wealth of analytic choices, key articles from the systematic review (Shin, 2023; Kado, 2023) influenced the choices made, whilst bearing in mind that data analysis within qualitative research can still be perceived as being less tangible, as the researcher is using themselves - their bodies, minds, and intuition to reveal the patterns of meaning in the data (Braun & Clark, 2006; Brown, 2019).

5.6.2 Influence of the literature on the analysis

The intention of the analysis was to include the visuals and the words in the analysis, so different ways of analysing visual data were considered such as systematic visuo-textual analysis (Brown and Collins, 2021) and that used by rich picture researchers (Bell, 2019). Other studies and researchers have created and developed their own method to support the analysis of visual data (Cristancho et al, 2014; Culshaw, 2019), and two key articles Kado, 2023; Shin, 2023 from this systematic review; and Bell et al's (2019) framework for the analysis of rich pictures influenced how the visuals and words were viewed and analysed, alongside of the text, in this study.

Kado et al (2023, p3) applied the framework developed by Bell et al (2019) which comprises of seven steps:

- (i) Locate Style –what context was the rich picture located in
- (ii) Descriptive Features – colour, shapes, drawing
- (iii) Primary Features, which are central, bold or big
- (iv) Value Features – linkages between components
- (v) Low Level Interpretation – the overall picture
- (vi) High level interpretation – description given by the artist
- (vii) Critical judgement – putting all of the above together

This structure provided support and a starting point in how to relate to the visual data, in this study. Kado et al (2023)'s article also presented their findings of the three themes, through six of the pictures created by the participants. This enabled the seeing of the thematic themes, in the pictures presented in the article. The presence of the themes, in the research article pictures, also occurred in the article of Shin (2023) where the Teacher participants' relationship to play through time, were transparent, in the visuals. This opened the viewing of the visuals created by the participants in this study, to the possibility of themes being visibly present in the visuals created by the participants.

5.6.3 Framework of this Analysis

The intention of the analysis is to include the visuals and view the visual holistically, as a whole contextual unit, similar to Shin (2023)'s application of thematic analysis, whilst also looking for themes, within the text of the participants. This analysis essentially follows a thematic analytic approach (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Braun & Clarke, 2019), involving iterative cycles of reading, understanding the participant's meaning, and writing reflectively. The iterative nature involved repetition, and a spiralling between repeated reading, reflecting through writing and writing to communicate with supervisors. There were also pauses and returning to the data which developed the connection to the data. The process included the creation of a structured approach similar to Bell et al (2019) (see table 14) to extract the data from the visuals and support the understanding of the visuals created by the participants, in order to answer the research question:

How does reflection through ABR methods support or hinder employee participants' emotional expression?

Table 14: Data extracted from visuals created by the participants in the ABR sessions

(i)	Main colour(s) used in the creation
(ii)	Secondary colour(s)
(iii)	Symbolism used i.e. what pictures symbolized for the participants
(iv)	Feelings expressed through the visual by the participant
(v)	Non-verbal observed response by the participant, for example crying, smiling
(vi)	Researcher feelings or impressions of the visual creation
(vii)	Other participant responses to the visual
(viii)	What participants did with their visual creations and their thoughts in relation to participating

The visual data was categorized using table 4, (see appendix O for extract) for each participant's face to face and online creations. The categories were aimed to record the emotions of the participants, the researchers in response to the creations, as well as the emotions held and expressed within the visual itself. Alongside of this, the words of the participants were coded, to support the

identification (or not) of emotional themes. For ease of noticing, feelings included in the participant's narrative of the meaning of the visual are also included in the table, in order to help to see the congruence or incongruence between the visual and the narrative.

5.6.4 Familiarization with Data and Coding

The verbal data was transcribed and cleaned up before coding but doing this also helped with familiarization of the data. The narrative data was read several times before coding commenced. The different elements of data for each participant were grouped together and read in the order that the data was collected. So, familiarisation was conducted by reading all the face to face workshop transcripts, alongside of looking at the visual created by the participants, then all the online workshop transcripts, alongside of looking at the visual and finally the 1:1 interview transcripts, in order to become familiar with the data before coding, using the research question as a reference point for identifying any points of interest to include in the analysis.

Coding of the transcripts occurred alongside the visual analysis of the photographs of the visual creations. See table 14 (and appendix O), for the information noticed and gathered on the visuals, to support the analysis, alongside of the narrative. As the research question focuses on emotional expression, the emotions held within the verbal data was coded (table 15), and as coding continued the pattern of opposites emerged (table 16 and appendix P).

Table 15 & 16: Example of Emotional Coding; Example of Coding of Opposites

Example of	Example of
Emotional Coding: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Depression• Lucky• Sense of panic• distraught• overwhelmed• hope• relief• amazing• bliss• alone• isolated• uncertainty	Coding of Opposites: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• depression and hope• distraught and relief• predictable and uncertain• freedom and restriction• connected to nature and detached from nature• I'm not a computer person and I am computer literate• what I missed and what I did not miss• I had it easier than others and It was so difficult• stagnant and growing

5.6.5 Creation and development of themes through observing contrast

Noticing what stood out and what appeared interesting (Bazeley, 2013), similar to the verbal data, resulted in seeing opposites arise within the visual data too (see appendix Q). The opposites in the visual data, particularly in relation to colour was more clearly seen over time, when some participants chose to create a second visual that contrasted with their first creation a few months later (see appendix M for photographs of participant creations). The noticing of opposites is likely to have been influenced by the learning of “rich picture” (Cristancho et al, 2015), through the systematic review. Rich Picture is a systemic method of depicting a situation. The aim of it is to show the “multiple forces acting on the components of the situation and the interactions between those forces” (p.714) which can reveal potentially opposing forces i.e. the method acknowledges that there could be oppositional forces present which in this study could include the feeling or expressing of opposing feelings (Campos, 2003; Ryff, 2003) and/or experiences.

The final theme to be developed was Gateway to my Experience, although it is the first to be presented in the Findings. From noticing and categorizing the visual data, which occurred alongside the coding of the verbal data, the researcher moved to writing up the reflection on the themes involving the emotions, for my supervisors when as Bazeley (2013, p. 248) states: “you can’t complete your analysis of the data and then write it up because qualitative analysis is writing”, and noticed the themes that the visuals held, from looking at them as the container for the participant’s narrative. The visual showed the context and the point of access for the participant, through which they framed their narrative. The viewing of the participant’s visual creation, as a theme in its own right, was influenced by the research articles of Kado (2023) and Shin (2023), from the systematic review. Both researchers had included visuals created from the participants that demonstrated themes within the visuals. Kado (2023) demonstrated three distinct themes from the visuals entitled: temporal; metaphorical; and holistic pictures. Additionally, Shin (2023) also highlighted through the participant visuals presented in her article on the meaning of play to infant schoolteachers, that they could be categorised into different clusters of meaning including: physical play; quiet and imaginative play; relationship to play over the life span of the participant; and connection to play through the memories of past experiences. The temporal aspect of meaning that Kado (2023) and Shin (2023) revealed in their research, also prompted the viewing of the participant visuals in this study through the perspective of time too, and the overall meanings held in the visual, as a whole. Yet the meanings still presented through observing the contrast.

5.6.6 Researcher experience of thematic analysis

I first had experience of thematic analysis as an undergraduate student, using it within my third-year dissertation project. I received up to date training and supervision of it during the taught element of the PhD Blended learning programme at Lancaster University and previous Supervisors; as well as completing training courses from the Social Research Association (SRA) on Qualitative Data Analysis and Writing Up Qualitative Data, in preparation for the analysis.

However, it is acknowledged that the emergence of themes from within the data are viewed as subjective (Varpio et al, 2017) and indeed cannot be viewed as separate to the researcher (Brown, 2019) as a different researcher would likely see different themes, depending on their own prism through which they view their world. So, reflecting and reflection is important, throughout the process, to support transparency through supervision and keeping a reflective diary through regular journaling (Fleming et al, 2003) to support visibility of process (Sandelowski, 1993) and promote rigour (Rolfe, 2006) and authenticity.

5.6.7 Example of reflective practice

Data analysis effectively started at the point of data collection, whilst observing the participants create their visuals during the art-based workshops, inciting curiosity and interest, even before the participants started talking about what they had created. This noticing of what I found interesting is what I paid attention to and thought about, asking myself the questions of “What’s interesting? Why is it interesting? Why am I interested in that?” (Bazeley, 2013,). For example, Jackie’s creation appeared intriguing before she started talking because she was the only participant in the face-to-face workshop to not use any cut and paste pictures and purely use the art materials from which to create her visual. It looked like a piece of abstract art and this curiosity in effect is where the analysis and the reflection began and continued. Observing my own emotional responses and interest in the content, allowing for pauses to reflect in between looking at participant visuals and reading their words,

alongside of writing reflections, having discussions with my supervisors, helped in revealing insights and intuitions about the data. For example, it was only after reading Jackie's description of her visual creation in the first face to face workshop several times, that the meaning of Jackie's message, as described through her choice of words, became clear. Jackie was telling me how she felt working in the pandemic by using the expression "trapped" three times. Jackie also stated "and that was part of it, the planning and the uncertainty. You couldn't plan. You couldn't. On first reading the emphasis appeared to be on planning and uncertainty but after several readings and pauses for reflection, it became clear that Jackie's implicit feeling, which was not being verbalized, was powerlessness. A feeling of being stuck in a situation, she felt powerless to change. This sense of being stuck and powerlessness was reinforced by Jackie's visual creation of the sunshine glaring onto her work computer, demonstrating visually that the sun glaring onto her computer was not something she felt she could control.

Chapter Six: Findings

The central aim of this study was to explore and answer the question:

How does reflection through ABR methods support or hinder employee participants' emotional expression?

6.1 Participant Context

The study included 10 employee participants from one Higher Education Institution (HEI) who engaged in a longitudinal multi-session ABR data collection process over a ten-month period, starting in the academic spring/summer term of 2022 and ending in the academic winter term of 2023.

6.2 Overview of the Analytical Process

The findings are organized around the analytical framework developed for this thesis. Through noticing and coding the pattern of emotional and visual opposites (see appendices P and Q), creating a framework that supported the inclusion and comparison of visual, narrative and temporal data points, revealed the process of emotional expression, as something dynamic and in movement, rather than something that is fixed and static, that can be portrayed through pure narrative.

Two key aspects that informed the analysis, alongside the coding of emotional and visual opposites included the temporal sequencing and noticing visual and narrative changes over time: visual and narrative triangulation of data to identify congruence and/or incongruence between the participant's visual and their narrative. These two aspects informed the overall meaning of the data, to understand if and how ABR methods supported or hindered the participant's emotional expression (see table 17 for the codes, sub-themes and themes)

The first theme Gateway into my experience developed through looking at participant's visual, alongside the overall sense of the narrative, which revealed differences in the outlook and perspectives of the participants – the framework through which they used to make sense of their world and view reality – supported by looking at contrasts between the participants.

Table 17: 1 Codes, Sub-Themes and Themes

Codes	Sub-Themes	Themes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “the sun was blazing outside” • “I remember it being really sunny” • “deep dark woods” • “genuinely scared” • Very dark and very light colours in visuals 	Emotional Contrasting	Seeking Emotional Balance
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Change in colours from dark to bright colours in visuals • Static visual • Moving visual 	Emotional Movement	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lone animals in visuals • Group animals in visuals 	Emotional Needs and Nourishment	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lone dress hanging in visual 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Walking up hill visual • Running uphill visual • Going down a slide visual • Going downhill (words) 	Emotional Ease	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “I don’t feel supported” • “I didn’t miss my chair” • “I couldn’t print anything” • “I couldn’t photocopy anything” 	External Limits	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “I am not creative” • I love playdough but I can’t use it” • “I am not skilled enough to do what I want” 	Internal (self-imposed) limits	Manovering through Boundaries

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• “I reached my limit”• “They were the ones inspiring me”• “I can do other things with them (lollypop sticks)• Physically breaking lollypop sticks	Breaking Through Limits	
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6.3 Themes

6.3.1 Gateway into my Experience

This theme emerged through the combination of the overall appearance of visual creation, alongside the verbal narrative. It is the bridge into the participant's frame of reference and how they chose to frame and share their experiences. This theme is presented through the contrast of:

- (i) creation of one visual image that encapsulated a moment in time OR creation of a visual that represents and spans a period of time
- (ii) narrative of the experience predominantly through the emotional, perspective OR narrative of the experience through the logical perspective
- (iii) the multisensory perspective using colour to predominantly represent experience OR the multisensory perspective, predominantly using touch.

6.3.2 Seeking Emotional Balance

The second theme of Seeking Emotional Balance emerged from the sub-themes of emotional contrasting, emotional movement, emotional needs and nourishment and emotional ease. Seeking Emotional Balance is an overarching theme as it presented itself as an underlying driver of what the participants are seeking that was indicated over the two art-based workshops and the 1:1 interviews.

The theme of seeking emotional balance arose through the four sub-themes as each theme contained opposites. For example, emotional contrasting demonstrated how the external weather was used as a way to contrast how the participants felt internally. The contrast of the sunny weather was presented as a reminder to the group of the collective memory, of how much the sun shone during the pandemic, in the UK and how they should have felt happy because of the sunshine, yet the contrast of how some of the participants felt, also

highlighted the differential between the external sunshine and their internal feelings. These feelings included intense feelings of aloneness, isolation, and powerlessness, which were lower in mood, relative to the sunny weather outside and providing emphasis of their low mood through this contrast.

Additionally, the sub-theme emotional movement highlighted visual change in the creations created in the second workshop, in comparison with the first workshop, that represented emotional change. Whilst the sub-theme emotional needs and nourishment encompassed visuals of lone items and animals and groups of animals. The use of lone and group animal pictures were used to emphasize feeling, representing positive or negative feelings in connection to others. The narrative was needed to support the clarity of whether their perception of the participant was positively or negatively focused, in relation to their connection to others. Whilst the final sub-theme encompassed visual metaphors of essentially moving up or down hill to express emotional ease and speed.

6.3.3 Manoeuvring Through Boundaries

The third theme is Manoeuvring through Boundaries is connected to participants' boundaries and barriers. These are the limits that participants either perceives the external world places on them, or the limits that they place on themselves, through their thoughts and beliefs that they have about themselves represented by the sub-themes external limits and internal limits respectively. The third sub-theme that forms the theme manoeuvring through boundaries is breaking through limits. Through the experience of the creative workshops, some participants experienced emotional relief and changes in their thoughts, breaking through their limits and enabling them to return to a state of emotional equilibrium, they were happier with.

6.4 Theme One: Gateway into my Experience

6.4.1 Creation of one visual image that encapsulated a moment in time OR Creation of a visual that represents experience using a timeline



Figure 3: *Visual of journey through time (created by Katherine)*

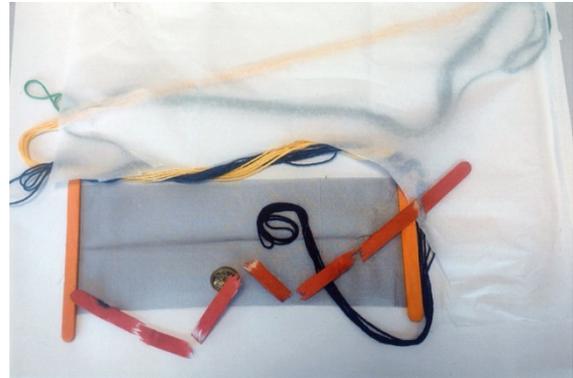


Figure 4: *Visual representing a moment in time (created by Jackie)*

The element of time can help to structure and provide a frame of reference to the experience of working through the pandemic, helping to provide a scaffolding for both creating a visual of the experience and creating the narrative for it, as it did for Katherine (figure 3). However, for Jackie she stated: *“I think if you said to me suddenly, we’re going back into this. This is what would come into my head”* referring to her visual creation (figure 4), indicating that Jackie’s creation came from a visual image that she saw in her head, when she thought about working during the pandemic.

Jackie described her creation as being “gloomy” and represents her computer screen, with the golden button towards the centre bottom of the picture, near the broken red lolly pop sticks being the sunlight reflecting onto her computer screen. The broken red lolly pop sticks represent the daily figures in relation to covid deaths & vaccinations. The yellow thread symbolizes the *“sun was absolutely blazing”* and the green thread symbolized *“felt a bit closer to nature”*. The white tissue paper over the top represents a cloud literally and metaphorically:

“so I sort of umm presented if you like, the world outside but I have clouded over a bit. I associate (the time) with staring at the screen in the dark, so that’s not a very pleasant or deep metaphor but if I close my eyes and think, that’s what I’m doing”

The visual therefore is a re-creation of a static situation of sitting in front of her computer screen, working through the pandemic, which contrasts with Katherine’s timeline approach and her sense of movement through time and also included homelife. Jackie’s did not represent what was occurring in her homelife which Jackie consciously chose not to, but nevertheless, her homelife was impacting her and intensifying her feelings towards work too, as she said:

“I left it out of all cos, but you know well I wasn’t living on my own. I had all these caring things coming up. My sister came to live with me for a while. She’s, well she needs a lot of support basically and er, then suddenly she was gone. I left it out of that but it kind of squeezed the pressure on, on work”.

By Jackie creating this one image of a computer screen with the sun shining and nature outside therefore focuses on the intensity of the situation, of monitoring and watching the reported figures going up and down, whilst feeling trapped, as Jackie stated she felt *“trapped by the intensity of the work”*. This intensity seemed to represent an unspoken sense of powerlessness and of experiencing a sense of loneliness she had not experienced before.

In contrast, Katherine (*figure 3*) represented her experience of working through the pandemic using a timeline approach. Katherine’s creation of a timeline, of life before, during and after, helped to incorporate the sense of movement through time. Katherine indicated this sense of movement when she started her narrative by saying *“I’ve used this mid-line here to illustrate a path, but it’s an upward path”* The mid-line is the orange voile that runs from the bottom left to the top right of the page, highlighting that this passage through time, had been positive for her, and wanting to clearly state the direction of her life was upwards.

Katherine chose to create sections describing what life was like collectively before covid on the left-hand side of the page. The central section highlighted with blue coloured paper, depicts the time when covid arrived and the impact of it on her personal life and her working life. The zig zags Katherine drew around the blue paper are like shock waves: *“these lines are supposed to represent the drama of the event as it happened”*; with the right hand side, representing the positive change that has occurred as a result of covid, in its aftermath: *“we’ve all upskilled ourselves in terms of different hardware, software that we use”*.

Rhiannon and Joyce also included visual markers of time, in their creations, without using the before, during and after template. Rhiannon created two visual blobs out of thread, one green and one yellow, in the top central position of her creation. They represented the passing of the seasons and the time period of two years. Joyce used flowers and stars to represent the changing of the seasons to acknowledge *“how long this has gone on, so kind of Spring, Summer, Christmas and then kind of going back through the cycle again”*.

Rachel did not include any visual markers of time but did verbally highlight the impact of the passing of the time during the pandemic, had on her life, stating *“but I feel like I’ve been so deprived and like I said I feel like I wasted my 20. My 20s have been completely wasted, that’s how I felt. So I’m thinking I’m trying to really make up for that now and whether you know, whether that has consequences or not, like I don’t kind of, don’t care I feel like I’m just reliving my 25 self.”*

Katherine, Joyce, and Rhiannon all found a way to use elements from the art materials provided, to symbolize and represent the passing of time. Rachel did not include visual symbols in her creation but verbally acknowledged the passing of time in relation to what she felt she had lost. This contrasts with Katherine, who’s visual is centred on the element of time but chose to view her visual and narrative through what she felt had gained.

6.4.2 Narrative of the experience predominantly through the emotional, perspective OR Narrative of the experience through the logical perspective



Figure 5: Visual for the narrative journey through Angela's emotions



Figure 6: Visual for Peter's narrative journey guided by logic

Angela and Peter contrast with each other, in relation to the place from which their narrative formed. Angela created a visual using multiple pictures and words cut out from magazines (figure 5), that she chose from a selection already cut out, and then started her narrative with how happy she felt having time with her family, and spending time in nature, whilst working during the pandemic stating:

"I was just on happy street. I mean literally on happy street". Angela proceeded to share her narrative through the lens of her emotional experience. Angela initially expressed her fears in relation to her mother-in-law, but Angela continued to describe the *"bliss"* of having time with her family. This contrasted with how she felt when she needed to return to the workplace *"I was mostly on my own when I was in work"*, using the word *"disconcerting"* to describe how she felt. Angela spoke of her underlying feelings related to the experience of unpredictability and uncertainty *"you never knew when things were going to end"*, saying that her love of nature and spending time outdoors sustained her through this period of instability that she felt.

Stress in work increased when Angela needed to move office space during the pandemic, in the summer of 2021 which also gave her a “*sense of achievement*” once she had completed this physical move. Angela finished her narrative through the lens of her emotions by saying “*there’s been a lot of positives but then in work it’s been a struggle for half of that, but I feel that’s a nice balance you know. I’ve had good times*”. The array of emotions that Angela shared in her narrative contrasted with Peter (figure 6), who spoke logically through his visual, depicting his experience of working through the pandemic saying:

“I can just go logically really. So, welcome to your work slash home because we’re working from home, living from home and if you dig deeper, the barrier was technology, blurring the lines from work and home that brought us all together. It was both a barrier because you can see people but also a benefit of technology that was bringing us together. So that’s the main part in the middle. The lone sea turtle, the secret genius that’s my house mate. He’s very introverted, so the pandemic was almost music to his ears. He was just very comfortable working from home. You know I had friends who couldn’t sit still but he was very comfortable liking the routine. The mask is self-explanatory, I think. The chickens all looking the same way is more sort of a pack image”.

Peter himself described his description as logical, which seems true because Peter does not express himself emotionally through his words in the narrative. However, in the visual he created, there is an indication of positive feelings with the pair of puffins and additional felt hearts he glued onto the picture, on the top right of the page but Peter did not elaborate on this aspect other than saying:

“and then the beautiful weather, the outside environment, the ability to go out, to love and cherish the moment”. The last six words consisting of “to love and cherish the moment” were the only indicators in his narrative of emotion and on reflection, there probably was more to this picture than Peter verbally expressed but it did not seem that he wanted to share this. Peter spoke succinctly, choosing what he wanted to share and say, and what he did not.

6.4.3 The multisensory perspective of predominantly using colour to represent experience OR The multisensory perspective, predominantly using touch.



Figure 7: Bea's visual and narrative journey of her working experience, using colour



Figure 8: Katherine's package she created to contain her visual, seen in figure 9 below



Figure 9: Visual to depict the journey of experience using touch, created by Katherine.

Colour was used by all of the participants across the two workshops but Bee's use of colour in the first workshop, to help narrate the experience of working through the pandemic is the clearest, emphasizing and talking about the colours in her creation (*Figure 7*). For example, within the first two sentences, Bee starts talking about her experience through colour saying:

“the bottom left is like somebody sitting all scrunched up, tapping on a computer that's too far away from them. I think that and then I've broken up a lolly stick, that's a red lolly stick. That was the pain, the physical pain....I just had really bad back pain, really bad physical pain”.

There is a thick blue vertical line to the left of the centre of her creation which Bee used to mark the end of the first year of the pandemic *“dividing the first lockdown from everything else”* and *“the green picture at the top right this was the end of 2021 onwards”* so here Bee used colour as a way of demarcating and symbolizing different periods of time, as well as highlighting what was important to her. Bee created fingerprints using paint in the colours of orange, blue and yellow, which are to the right of the man (but are not easily seen in the photograph) to symbolize *“I've been here. This is me. It's to show the next person who came along that you know Jo had been around or Bob had been around”*. So, Bee used colour to punctuate and show meaning, using the symbolism of colour, stating the purple she used in the visual to represent self-respect and how she has raised her standards whilst working during the pandemic.

6.4.4.4 Physicality of touch for emotionally connecting and releasing.

The materials given to each participant for the second online workshop did not include cut and paste pictures but a variety of art material such as threads, buttons, tissue paper, corrugated card, and natural items such as acorns and leaves. These materials (except for the acorns and leaves) had been available to use in the first face to face workshop but all participants, except one did not use them, preferring to use the cut and paste pictures. So unexpectedly in the online workshop, Katherine narrated her experience through the sensory nature of the materials she chose (*figures 8 and 9*). Katherine verbally described what she created in the second workshop, non-verbally smiling throughout the experience, having created a unique wrapping for her creation and displaying a relationship to pleasure, beauty and touch through it saying:

“So somehow, I just love the, and the look and the feel of this flower. And to me, that kind of represents the growth that I mentioned on my last art workshop. Somehow, I just love the feel of this fabric because it’s, it’s lovely and soft....It just feels really nice and soft, so that’s why I’ve included that. And then I’ve got these acorns. And again, I loved how the kind of the little cup fits into that little acorn. It’s just that I found that really therapeutic trying to fit that in and I must have done that about 100 times today. I don’t know why, it just felt lovely finding the correct little hat for my little acorn, but I got it in the end. And I don’t know if this is playdough or what this was but that felt very odd but very interesting and good in my hand, so that’s why I’ve included that”.

Katherine summarized her creation by stating how she felt:

“So overall, very connected but very disconnected, very peaceful and in harmony. I would say everything feels like it’s where it’s supposed to be”.

Katherine’s summary encapsulated the physical action of placing the acorn in a cup and then taking it out, repeating the action of connecting and disconnecting over and over, during the workshop. Katherine verbally expressed feeling “*very connected but very disconnected*” giving a sense of balance of being at opposite ends of the spectrum and simultaneously being in balance - that her

life is in balance despite feeling both connected and disconnected; and although to an outsider might seem potentially nonsensical, made complete sense for Katherine.

In addition to Katherine, Rhiannon expressed the importance of physical touch through her non-verbal body language in the first face to face session. In Rhiannon's first workshop, she created two visual blobs out of thread - one colour green and the other the colour yellow. Rhiannon positioned them in the central position, at the top of her creation. Whilst Rhiannon was talking about her working life through her visual creation, she kept touching these two visual blobs of thread, so I asked her:

Researcher: so you kept touching these, so what is it, what is it about those two?

Rhiannon: like the deep dark woods, that was like the passage of time, (you) look back and you forget how long it was (takes a breath). So obviously got the trees and changing of the seasons, also I suppose this was like, and the woods, and the, so yeah, it was weird cos if I say it was two years ago

Researcher: so that represents the two years?

Rhiannon: yeah, the changing of the seasons and the time passing.

Rhiannon's intake of breath, when she explains the meaning and importance of the two-coloured blobs of thread, seemed to reinforce a sense of loss that she felt, through the passing of the two years.

6.5 Theme Two: Seeking Emotional Balance

6.5.1 Emotional contrasting “It was sunny but...”

The theme of the sun shining whilst working during the pandemic presented itself in the visual and the narrative of some of the participants as a way of providing a context to the situation and a complete contrast to how they actually felt. The juxtaposition seemed to be used as a way of expressing emotional health.

For example, Rhiannon created a sun from felt in the face-to-face workshop and placed it at the top left of her visual creation (see figure 10). In contrast to this sunshine, Rhiannon also placed a black piece of tissue at the bottom left of the page on which she wrote the words “deep dark woods”. (These words are not visible in the photograph).



Figure 10: Visual created by Rhiannon

Rhiannon goes on to say “*sense that it was always sunny but there’s a sense of kind of, foreboding in these deep dark woods and it was really intense*”. The implication is that despite it being sunny outside, Rhiannon did not feel this way inside. The sun is shining but there is something negative going on underneath, as Rhiannon had placed the black tissue paper at the bottom of the page, underneath the sun (although there was an image in between the sun and the black tissue paper). The visual of the sun helps with acknowledging the external sense of reality. Rhiannon, Jackie and Rachel were all aligning themselves with the external truth of the sun shining and then stating their internal truth – which was also true for them - their feelings, and their

relationship to that experience which felt the opposite to the weather how they felt they should have been feeling.

The felt expectation was that they were supposed to feel happy because the sun was shining but they did not feel this happiness. In fact, Rhiannon said: *“you look back on your phone and (see these) kind of like sunny pictures outside, and selfies with my mum a couple of metres away with a gin. You forget how genuinely scared you were right at the beginning”*. This is giving the sense that in the photographs of people smiling with a gin in their hands, was not the full truth of their subjective experience. Those images did not present the wholeness of her truth, and she recalled it like it was a mask for the underlying fears that she felt at that time.

This emotional contrast was also clearly articulated by Rachel *“and all the beautiful photos I’ve got on my phone of the nature happening and like the light catching you know the windows at different times of the day, I was like “Oh my god these photos are so beautiful”. We haven’t had a summer like this since, but it was so depressing”*.

This use of emotional contrasting, relative to the weather was used by the participants who expressed experiencing the lowest moods in relation to working during the pandemic with Rachel stating, *“I was actually suicidal during lockdown as well, but I just felt like, there was nobody you could really ask for help and things”*. The external sunshine contrasted with her internal state, and it felt like there was nothing she could do about it. These three participants seemed the most negatively impacted by the experience of working during the pandemic.

Jackie started talking about her visual creation by saying *“do you remember the early days when the sun was absolutely blazing?”* Rhiannon in a different face to face group said something similar: *“I remember it being really sunny and being outdoors a lot”*.

6.5.2 Emotional Movement -Expressions of change and continuity

6.5.2.1 Example One

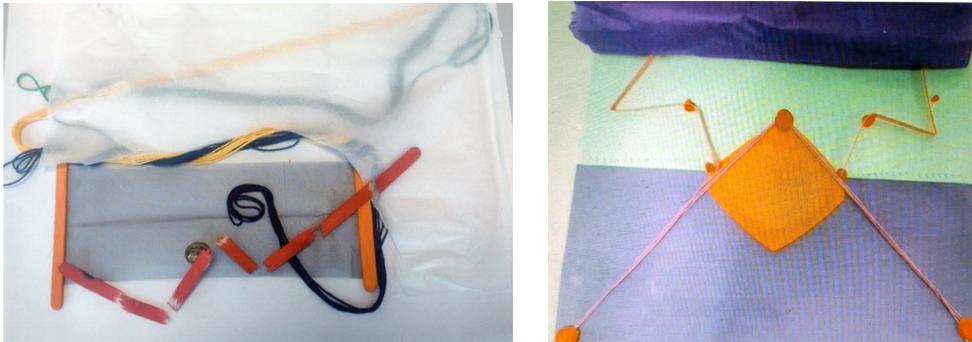


Figure 11: 1 The visual on the left is Jackie's first creation and the visual on the right is her second creation

Emotional movement shows the internal change and continuity demonstrated in the visuals created by the participants. For example, Jackie (*figure 11*), stated at the start of sharing the meaning of her creation at the second workshop:

“the starting point was what I did last time and that was really helpful actually because making that was the beginning of the reflection. It gave me a way of doing an abstraction to kind of react to that, and, so, what I am experiencing and trying to express here is that life and work are more boundaried now”.

Jackie expressed continuity through using similar materials such as the tissue paper and use of threads but expressed change through making different colour choices. So rather than having a static or stuck piece of white tissue paper, shown in the top of the left hand picture (*figure 10*), Jackie chose purple tissue paper and created it so that she could roll the purple tissue paper at the top of the visual, up and down, to represent being able to put work away and have greater balance between her home and working life. It also represented a change in her feelings moving from a sense of powerlessness, in the first workshop to a sense of empowerment, in the second workshop. Jackie was demonstrating through the second creation she felt in charge of her life, through creating the capacity to physically create change, in the second creation.

In the second workshop Jackie stated: *“so looking back at the last one, I found it was quite asymmetrical and quite random and its colours and so on. I have a much stronger sense of a divide between home and work now..I would say home life is now down here in the purple area, so I chose a quite warm colour, not trouble free, but going reasonably well and a much stronger sense of things holding together”*.

Jackie just used two colours in the second visual of purple and orange, which seemed to represent different aspects of her life – work and personal, although Jackie did not specify the meanings of the colours. Jackie had described a warm relationship with the colour purple but did not talk about the colour orange. I commented on this and said: *“There’s something about the purple and the orange. It’s a strong contrast isn’t it – the purple and the orange?”* Jackie’s fellow participant Angela then responded: *“And I think aren’t they opposite ends of the colour wheel? I think so. They’re like balancing”*. To which Jackie said: *“balancing is a good one, yeah”*. This observation by a fellow participant seem to add clarity and meaning for Jackie and also reflect what Jackie was expressing through the second visual.

6.5.2.2 Example Two



Figure 12: 1 Rachel's first creation is on the left, and her second creation is on the right

Rachel expressed continuity through the two workshops (*figure 12*) with her choice of materials of tissue paper and the lolly pop sticks. In the first workshop Rachel chose black and white coloured tissue paper and in the second workshop she chose purple. Rachel broke blue lolly pop sticks which she used to encase a single fish, in the top right of her first creation and used multiple coloured lolly pop sticks of yellow, orange and blue, at the top of her second creation. Rachel also acknowledged this in the 1:1 interview with her when she referenced the broken-up pieces of lollipop sticks, as a way to express continuity saying: *"I used the blue ones (lollipop sticks) last time. Then I used them as like a cage for the fish. So I felt drawn to use them again. It's like some kind of like cohesive, something to tie the pieces together if you know what I mean"*.

In the first workshop, Rachel described her experience using words such as *"feeling so depressed, so overwhelmed, alone, depressing....."* and in the second workshop Rachel used words and phrases such as *"grounded, feeling more complete, I love me, I feel more myself"*. The change in the two visual creations is clearly visible from the use of dark colours in the first and vibrant colours in the second, indicating a brightening of her mood which also seemed to be reflected in Rachel's words with her saying *"since we last spoke I've undergone, like a personal transformation"*. Rachel also acknowledged her different choice in colours saying: *"This time (meaning the second workshop) I use different colours. I use like multicoloured ones, just to maybe show the multifaceted nature of how I feel right now, just a bit brighter, a bit happier"*

6.5.2.3 Example Three



Figure 13: Rhiannon's first creation is on the left, and her second creation is on the right

In Rhiannon's first workshop experience, in which she creates an image (figure 13), that depicts working life during the first lockdown period in the Spring of 2020, Rhiannon's creation seemed to be expressing her desire for life to be normal again and wanting the routine of her life to be as it used to be.

Rhiannon spoke of all the things that she missed, particularly highlighting that she missed the milkshake (the word is written in green, at the top right of her first creation on the left – figure 13), she used to regularly buy and drink for lunch, but she could not understand why it meant so much to her.

"I miss like, I wrote milkshake there because it was really weird. I went in a frenzy in the beginning because I used to (laughs) when I used to go to Cardiff and Newport, I used to get a meal deal from Boots whatever and I used to get this, occasionally get this, occasionally, not even all of the time. I got obsessed with this meal deal. How much I missed this meal deal. So in the end I went on the website of the people who manufacture these milk shakes and ordered like a crate of them. I literally became obsessed with wanting this and it seems weird now...it was really strange"

The milkshake felt like a way for Rebecca to express how different her life had become but in a way that struggled to make sense to her. Rebecca tried to bridge this gap by buying herself the drink that on some level represented normality, in attempt to recapture her old life.

Rhiannon used the image of a donkey to express *“that’s the missing of the commute, the colleagues, everybody sort of being on top of each other. At first I felt kind of really err a really needy person I missed that and no-one in my team seemed to. I felt I must be such a needy person and maybe I am emotionally”*. Rhiannon was describing how different she felt and the sense of loss that she felt, at feeling this difference. That no-one else in her team, felt the way that she did, and attributing this difference to an emotional need that other team members did not have, which seemed to intensify Rhiannon’s feeling of isolation, also depicted through the lone hanging dress.

In the second workshop which took place online approximately six months later, Rhiannon deepened this sense of feeling different, both visually and in words. When asked the meaning of the sticks she had used in her creation, she stated that she had included them: *“partly to add a bit, just a different texture, different layer”*. Rhiannon used the word “different” multiple times in her narrative; to highlight how different the world felt to her and was persisting to feel different to her. Rhiannon emphasized this feeling of difference by also using an analogy that she had heard previously which she felt depicted and described how she felt:

“and there is a boy, he’d lost his grandfather and he just kept shaking this snowstorm, a snow globe and the bits would go back down, and he would get really upset. The mum took off him one time and said look there, it’s all back to normal and the boy was like, “No. It’s not. All the pieces are in a different place” And I was like yeah; that’s kind of a good analogy that’s it. All the pieces are in a different place”.

This seemed to epitomize for Rhiannon, the sense of loss that she felt and continues to feel. The loss of her life, not being how it used to be and continuing to witness it, like an onlooker, in disbelief, that the change has occurred and life and working life is not returning to how it was. Rhiannon had used the word “different” in the first workshop, but it really stood out in her

narrative in the second workshop. Rhiannon used the word “different” four times in the first workshop and 11 times in the second workshop. This seemed to indicate that Rhiannon’s sense of feeling different had clarified and intensified by the time of the second workshop.

Indeed, Rhiannon’s second visual, which in appearance is bright and colourful, is also chaotic with a darkness at the centre. This is less noticeable than the darkness represented in her first workshop through the black coloured tissue paper, at the bottom left of her visual, because of all the bright colours Rhiannon issues in the second workshop. However, It feels that Rhiannon is trying to be colourful, which is how she wants to be but is continuing to struggle to bridge the gap between her old life and her new one.

6.5.3 Emotional Needs & Emotional Nourishment expressed using lone animal/items & group animal depictions.

6.5.3.1 Animals and Objects to emphasize feelings

Some participants used pictures of lone animals or lone items to symbolize unhappiness and a sense of isolation; of how they did not want to feel and emphasize how they felt. For example, Rachel used five pictures of lone animals and a lone chair in her visual creation and stated: *"I felt like my life was completely me on my own. I didn't have anybody else around me, no friends, no partner, no socialisation. So, I've done like a lot of lone animals, so my little elephant, the bird up there like a frosty cool bird because it's just like, it feels more isolated, like the monkey umm even the robin. So, when I was outside and like listening to music and you know that's usually something that I do, I even felt alone then. And the lone chair. That's me at work, just in front of the laptop, the whole time"*. The multitude of lone animals and the lone chair repeatedly emphasized, how lonely Rachel felt and how she could not remove herself or distract herself, from this feeling of aloneness.

Rhiannon used the image of a group of donkeys as an expression of sadness, of missing her colleagues and the busyness of sharing an office with them. Rhiannon reinforced this, through using the image of a lone dress hanging, that she chose for her visual. Rhiannon said, *"I felt very very isolated and that image there, just jumped out at me, the dress hanging"*. This single, hanging dress felt so poignant, a complete statement in itself of how Rhiannon felt, which also emphasized the feeling of aloneness.

6.5.3.2 The use of animals and objects to depict internal conflict and group conflict

The use of the lone animal and a group of animals was used to display a sense of separation between how the participants wanted to feel and how they actually felt. For example, Katherine used a picture of a group of puffins and a different picture of a lone puffin. The group of puffins represented the occurrence of online meetings via teams during the pandemic, whilst the lone puffin represented her and symbolized her feeling “*very isolated*” as a consequence of not having in person contact with her colleagues. Thus, emphasizing the gap and the internal conflict between what Katherine wanted to happen and what was actually happening.

Lesley used the picture of a group of penguins huddling together, to describe and encapsulate her team interactions with each other, and subtly indicate a divide and a conflict in the team, without being confrontational. Lesley stated “*oh the penguins were the team I suppose cos the penguins, when they get cold, they’ve got to huddle together haven’t they and they take it in turns, so when the centre ones, the centre ones come out the ones that were in the centre, they go outside...so it was depicting that but it was also depicting the divide in the team*”.

Using the visual to describe how Lesley felt her team were interacting, indicated something was stuck as some of the penguins were not moving to help or support the others. Lesley did not directly say this in words, but this was the implication from the use of the visual of the penguins and how she described the meaning of the picture. Lesley was able to say this, in front of fellow team members in the group without being confrontational and stated it in a way that others could choose to hear what she had said, or not.

Peter used a single turtle to represent his housemate, rather than it representing an emotional aspect of himself. Angela also had the image of a lamb lying on top of its mum, which symbolized the positive aspect of spending more time with her family, whilst working at the start of the pandemic. So, the meanings of single or groups of animals cannot be assumed to represent negative emotions. For example, Rachel responded to Rhiannon's donkey image by stating *"I love that photo. When I looked at it I loved it. It made me feel warm and happy"*. Yet for Rhiannon the donkey photo represented the missing and the longing for the past, for how working with her colleagues used to be. The use of pictures of animals and objects therefore seemed to support the expression of emotions, including emotional vulnerabilities and emotional needs.

6.5.4 Emotional ease

Images of people walking, running or climbing up a mountain; or coming down a slide were pictures used by several participants. For example, Eleanor, Joyce and Angela had chosen pictures within their visual creations of people walking, running or climbing a mountain. To support the visual and during their narratives, they used metaphors such as uphill battle or struggle, to help describe how they felt in connection to work and working during the pandemic.

6.5.4.1 Example One

Eleanor stated: *“I’ve got the kind of turning over a new leaf kind of uphill just because this was all new to me. I’ve never been in like a full-time job before so to come in and kind of felt like, it may have been a bit of a kind of an uphill battle, trying to kind of get used to working within a team”*.

6.5.4.2 Example Two

Joyce said:

“a never-ending uphill struggle of work umm, because of the downside of potentially working from home. You can’t just go and speak to people when you want to”.

6.5.4.3 Example Three

Angela said:

“the hardship I found in work during the last year and a half, it felt like a bit of an uphill struggle but I’m still outdoors look. I like to be outdoors, but I’m going uphill and there’s people behind me but I feel like you know I’m the one kind of leading the way”.

The visual pictures helped to give voice to the internal and difficult aspects of working life encapsulating the fears, the frustrations, the burdens, for these participants, with a sense that their internal feelings were not easy to manage but they are able to continue moving, even if it is slowly.

The uphill struggle is a way of externally representing and acknowledging the internal feelings to themselves and to others in the group, in a way which demonstrates how hard it has been to deal with their feelings in relation to working during the pandemic. The use of an uphill struggle can also symbolize something that is taking longer and requiring more effort than they would typically like, requiring more energy from them. Thus, representing emotional ease, effort and speed through which they are moving through their emotions or not.

Speed is also non-verbally indicated through the picture that Lesley chose to have within her visual creation in the first workshop. Lesley chose the picture of a slide, stating:

“that’s me on that slide because I didn’t know. It was like a fear thing cos I wanted to come, it was lovely to come back but I was in a fear I think of what am I coming back to? What type of team is it?...so that was like me on that slide slotting, coming down that shoot a bit frightened and apprehensive but I, but I came back into the team”.

The image of someone coming down a slide encapsulating the fear of coming back to work in a team she did not really know and the simultaneous desire to do so, representing the fear and the excitement i.e. the image encapsulates the negative and the positive feelings simultaneously. It also indicated the speed with which the change happened, of slotting back into the team.

6.5.4.4 Direction of Travel

Opposite to moving uphill was the description of going downhill as verbalized by Rachel: *“I know that I was heading down hill”*. Here Rachel was referring to her mental health and expressed a sense of knowing she was not in a great place and that her mental health was deteriorating, with a sense of inevitability. This use of the verbal metaphor is one directional, downhill, clearly indicating that Rhiannon’s mental health is worsening and she is powerless to stop it.

6.6 Theme Three: Manoeuvring through Boundaries

The third theme is Manoeuvring through Boundaries is connected to participants' boundaries and barriers. These are the limits that participants either perceives the external world places on them, or the limits that they place on themselves, through their thoughts and beliefs that they have about themselves represented by the sub-themes external limits and internal limits respectively. The third sub-theme that forms the theme manoeuvring through boundaries is breaking through limits. Through the experience of the creative workshops, some participants experienced emotional relief and changes in their thoughts, breaking through their limits and enabling them to return to a state of emotional equilibrium, they were happier with.

6.6.1 External Limits

This sub-theme highlighted the ways in which the participants felt limited due to the perceived impact of the external world on them. For example, Rhiannon spoke of being impacted by the change in working environment at the start of the lockdown period and after a while her manager said that she could go into the office. Rhiannon described how she would have been the only one going into the office and exclaimed, *"I didn't miss my chair"*. Rhiannon did not want to just go into the office and sit in it by herself. She missed her colleagues and yet none wanted to join her in the office.

Joyce also spoke of the external limit of not being able to go into the office at the start of the pandemic and rather than missing her colleagues, Joyce talked about missing the printer and photocopier. Joyce described how she did not miss her colleagues but really miss having access to it stating, *"I couldn't print anything off"*.

Similarly, Rachel stated "I don't feel supported" when she described starting a job during the pandemic and not having face to face support to help her to learn what she needed to which resulted in her feeling overwhelmed and wanting to leave her job.

6.6.2 Internal or self-imposed Limits

The internal limits were particularly exposed through the participant's relationship to creativity, expressed here through a continuum of discomfort, and perceived lack of skill. For example, in the online workshop Bee had wanted to use the plasticine to create footprints stating:

"well, yeah, they were meant to be footprints. I wanted to do little footprints in them. And then I realized I could, I wasn't really skilled enough to do what I wanted, so I just kind of yeah, they kind of like muddy ditches, like wading through the mulch and muddy forest floor".

Lesley also commented on plasticine that another participant had used in their creation online saying:

" I love the texture, I could play with plasticine all the time. I didn't put any on my picture. But I love playdough and plasticine but I know I can't actually. Something I don't make anything that looks brilliant but even if I just roll it into a ball and then squash it, it's my favourite thing to do. But I didn't put it on my picture". Thus highlighting her love of the feel of plasticine yet she did not feel able to create anything with it. Lesley also stated in her 1:1 interview the self-belief she held in relation to her creativity which arose due to the arts and crafts second workshop online saying:

"I always think ohh because, remember at the start I went into a bit of panic mode because I am not creative".

The fear of using arts and crafts materials in the second workshop also impacted Angela who when informed that no cut and paste pictures would be provided, she brought her own, stating *"I'm not creative"*.

6.6.3 Breaking through Limits

6.6.3.1 Example One

Rachel's broke blue lollipop sticks in the first workshop which represented restriction and feeling imprisoned. She also broke lollipop sticks in the second workshop and for this she chooses bright colours of yellow, orange and red to represent liberation. Rachel described how she chose to use the lollipop sticks in the 1:1 interview. Choosing to use lollipop sticks involved her challenging her thoughts and preconceptions and breaking herself free from her old views and ideas, in order to use them. It highlighted the importance of other people for her, to do this.

Rachel: "I remember people picking up materials and then me looking at those materials and being inspired to pick up those materials too, even though we use them in like really different ways. I remember I probably wouldn't have gone for the lollipop sticks because they looked too like childlike, like infantile, you know, like the colours were primary colours. And I was like, oh, why would I go for them? But then I saw someone pick them up and they like cut them in half, and I was like, ohhh I don't have to keep the lollipop sticks intact. I can do other things with them. I was like, if I break the lollipop sticks, they no longer have that (childlike) essence to them, they now look like rough and raw and rugged. And I just picked up the blue ones which went with the colours I had and I was like yeah. I like that they now look dangerous. And yeah, I think I probably wouldn't have picked those up if I didn't (have the) inspiration of the others".

6.6.3.2 Example Two

When Bee was asked after she created her visual in the online workshop, how she felt when she looked at her creation and she responded by saying:

"A lot calmer. I've been feeling really anxious today and it was really good to sit down with something I could do with my hands, and like reflect quietly. Yeah it was good. It was good. It was relaxing, calming, yeah relaxing".

6.7 Participant Reflections

During the 1:1 interviews that took place, and the participants were reflecting on the two workshops and the process of creative ABR methods several of them commented that it was only through creating the visual that they recognized how they were feeling. For example, Lesley said in her interview

“I really enjoyed doing it and I didn’t realize what I was feeling until I was asked to make that picture”. Whilst Rachel said using creative ABR in her interview: “You’re able to discover new things about your feelings and how you felt. And it brings out the elements that maybe you wouldn’t have spoken about if you had not had that prompt”

When Rachel talked about taking part and creating visual in the workshops in the 1:1 interview she said

“It makes it more tangible, so the experience is like in front of you in pictures isn’t it? So it feels...it feels like an abstract idea is tangible now and you can have like have that visual of, this is my feeling in a picture, in colours, in symbols, in textures and it kind of makes it, brings it to the forefront. It makes you feel seen and it makes you feel heard by yourself as well, not just other people but yourself and it just brings that other element to it, that sometimes you don’t. There’s not enough words like in any language to kind of describe how feelings feel, and that’s where art and making fills in the gaps.”

Lesley spoke of putting what she created in the workshops on her office wall (which is open plan): *“So when we came back in the office and I was proudly putting the pictures on the wall...and every time, every person that asked me what it was saying, I told them why I chose those pictures and verbalize it exactly like I did in the meeting. I said about the penguins, and I said about the people having the core strength”* (from 1:1 interview) (see figure 14).



Figure 14: Photo of the art created by three of the participants, displayed on their office wall

This photo (*figure 14*), displaying the art created by three of the participants, who shared an office together, being displayed on their office wall. The top three creations were made in the face-to-face workshops. (They did not all attend the same workshop). The bottom three creations were made by the same three participants in the online workshop, which they attended together, in the office, that they shared with other employees.

Chapter Seven: Discussion

7.1 Overview

The systematic review completed for this thesis highlighted the benefits of ABR within organisational, employee research for making visible processes that could be described as subjective, individual or internal i.e. experiences that are perceived as hidden from view (Tracy et al, 2006; Culshaw, 2019). It offers a reflective space for employee participants to express their emotions through the creation of a visual by drawing or creating a collage (Gudyanga, 2019; Robertson et al, 2021; Van Staden-Payne & Nel, 2023; Barton et al, 2023). Indeed, emotional expression is a reason often cited by researchers as to why creative ABR is the preferred data collection method (Tracy et al, 2006; Smith et al, 2014; Ward & Greene, 2018; Barton, 2023; Van Staden-Payne & Nel, 2023), yet the mechanism through which ABR supports employees to express their emotions is not clear. It seems to be an accepted given by researchers that ABR supports employees in expressing their emotions, yet the how question has not been asked. This study has sought to explore the gap in the literature in relation to understanding the mechanisms through which employee emotions are expressed through ABR and what can be learnt about employees from it, that goes beyond the simple naming of emotions.

The aim of this thesis has been to explore and learn about the process through which ABR supports employees to convey and express emotion, in order to add to the literature of employee organisational research and state how ABR methods support or hinder employee participants' emotional expression. The specific research question being answered in this study is:

How does reflection through ABR methods support or hinder employee participants' emotional expression?

In order to answer this question, the participants took part in two ABR group sessions and a 1:1 interview. The participants formed three different groups. In the first face to face ABR session, participants were asked to create visuals that depicted their experience of working during the pandemic and five months later

the same participants were asked to create a visual that depicted their experience of working life at that time, in a group online workshop. What they created was thematically analysed visually and verbally, to identify meaningful patterns across the data set. From this analysis, three themes emerged: Gateway into My Experience, Seeking Emotional Balance and Manovering through Boundaries. The meaning of these themes in relation to understanding what supports and hinders emotional expression using ABR, in order to answer the research question will be discussed here, in relation to the literature from the systematic review.

7.2 Philosophical Stance and its impact on the understanding of the data

This study has a Constructivist ontological basis with an Interpretivist epistemological paradigm. This frame of reference impacts how the data is viewed and analysed. For example, the Constructivist ontological basis believes that reality is subjective and individually constructed (Culshaw, 2019; Chachula et al, 2023). Multiple individuals = multiple realities. Consequently, the meaning and interpretation of the visual comes from the participant whose created the visual, and not the researcher, as the meaning is unique to the participant, that only they can know and reveal (if they choose). For example the use of the broken lollipop stick demonstrated the uniqueness of meaning that it held for the different participants who used it: for Jackie it was used to represent a graph of figures; for Bea it symbolized her physical pain; and for Rachel it initially represented a restrictive prison type environment which turned into a sense of liberation in her second workshop. This aligns with Atherton et al (2020) who highlighted the different meaning the crab symbolized for two of their participants

This uniqueness of meaning that was demonstrated through the participants' verbal sharing in the group context with their colleagues, helped to distil the differences of experience, that could have been easily perceived as "us all going through the same thing" – the pandemic. It highlighted the participants differences in the interpretation of the "same experience", demonstrating the value of the method itself, as well as the ontological and epistemological stance, that supported this seeing.

This study also enabled the seeing and hearing of difference between the visual and the verbal interpretation expressed by the participants, which helped in understanding the congruence or incongruence present and gain further knowledge through this. For example, Rhiannon's bright visual contrasting her grieving narrative, was able to be witnessed and increased understanding of the emotional learning that can be gained as it expressed emotional transparency, emotional coherence and emotional stuckness or movement, through the boundaries of the visual and the verbal. This focus on the process of meaning making directly enabled the discovery of the themes Gateway into My Experience and Seeking Emotional Balance, which explain how ABR methods support or hinder emotional expression.

7.3 How does reflection through ABR methods support or hinder employee participants' emotional expression?

It is accepted that ABR is able to support the expression of emotion as accessing emotions has been specifically and explicitly cited as the reason for using creative ABR methods (Tracy et al, 2006; Smith et al, 2014; Ward and Greene, 2018; Barton et al, 2023 and Van Staden-Payne and Nel, 2023). Yet the mechanism through which employees are able to express themselves emotionally has not been examined or explored. Although Tracy et al (2006) did recognize when they asked their employee participants to draw their experience of being bullied, that a pattern emerged in their drawings in relation to feelings of power and powerlessness. This feeling was depicted in the drawing through the sizing of the objects or subjects in their drawing, relative to the other objects or subjects in the drawing. For example, some of the participants drew themselves as being a superhero, larger than the other people or objects in the picture, in order to help empower themselves in relation to the bully, because the experience was inciting feelings of powerlessness in them. This study however specifically looks at the expression of emotion in employees to explore how ABR methods can help or hinder this.

7.4 Theme One: Gateway into my Experience

7.4.1 ABR supports access to emotions through choices of materials

Each employee participant individually navigated their way through the task of creating a visual in the two workshops highlighting what was important to them. The participants were asked to create a visual that depicted their working experience, but they were not given any limits as to what and how they could create, unlike Atherton et al (2020) who asked their participants to create a river to depict their journey of becoming a Speech & Language therapist. The research in this study did not use the word “journey” or define the parameters of how to describe their experience, but the participants needed to create a visual using the materials provided, which included cut and paste pictures as well as a variety of arts and crafts materials. However, despite not using the word “journey” with the participants in this study, the researcher did feel like they were taken on a journey of the participants’ working experiences, through their visuals and the narratives they shared.

The visuals the participants created in this study, alongside of their narratives, represented their frame of reference and the lens through which they viewed their experience and what they chose to focus upon, think and feel, thus putting them in charge of their experience (Morey et al, 2018). For example, the Gateway into my Experience theme revealed the importance of time and how much ownership the employees were able to have in relation to their emotional experience and time. This was demonstrated through Katherine’s representation of her experience using a timeline and Jackie’s image representing one moment in time.

These two images contrasted because of the difference in their representation of time but interestingly they also contrasted in relation to their emotions. Katherine had placed an orange voile diagonally across her creation from the bottom left to the top right and verbalized that that illustrated or symbolized her path which was on an upward trajectory. Katherine felt hopeful and expressed

this through the verbalisation of the meaning of the orange voile, telling us that she was in charge of her life and in charge of her narrative. Additionally, Katherine shared the meaning of the voile right at the start of sharing her narrative, setting the scene and telling us that her life was on the up, in doing so. Jackie, in contrast to Katherine's orange voile has a broken red line made out of lollipop sticks, that goes down, up, down, up, indicating that her experience of life is a little bit broken and the emotion Jackie expresses through her visual is one of powerlessness and therefore not feeling in charge of her life.

7.4.2 ABR methods can help emotionally transparent employees to express their emotions

Through the creation of the visuals and sharing of the narratives as indicated in the theme Gateway into my Experience, it was possible to see how accessible their emotions were to the participants. For example, Angela's depiction of a journey through her emotional landscape indicated that some people find it easier to access their emotions than others. Angela expressed her story through an emotional narrative, indicating how in touch she is with her emotions, almost as if Angela did not need to create the visual. However, for Angela the creation of the visual and the narrative served a different purpose and supported her in deepening her understanding of herself (Culshaw, 2019, Gudyanga, 2019), developing insight about herself and her emotional needs that she was previously unaware of. This realization appeared through Angela's 1:1 interview, when reflecting on what she had created and looking at her visuals, she realized that they were telling her that she needed to look after herself. At the time of the 1:1 interview Angela was on sick leave from work with stress.

In contrast to Angela's ease with expressing herself emotionally, Pablo seemed to be the opposite, creating a visual that had concrete elements to it. The meaning of Pablo's creation was therefore more surface level and even he used the words "*what you see is what you get*" in relation to his visual. Pablo also spoke logically about what he had created and was not transparent emotionally, in the sense that his emotions were not expressed. Pablo expressed the least emotionally visually and verbally, suggesting that ABR methods may not be a method that can support him to express himself emotionally, or maybe he chose not to be emotionally transparent in the workshops and bounded what he chose to share with his colleagues (Sadler et al, 2017)

Indeed, maybe the method suits employees who are more emotionally connected, transparent and expressive. For example, Rachel, within the subtheme of breaking through limits, within the theme of Manovering through Boundaries expressed her ease with connecting to and expressing herself through the art materials provided. Rachel spoke of how breaking lollipop sticks supported her to cathartically release anger and described how she could put how she felt into ripping up paper; to support the external expression of the emotion she felt inside of her. This seems to extend upon Culshaw's (2019) finding that her participants connected to their bodies when creating a collage, to this study where Rachel expressed releasing her emotions through connecting to the feeling inside of her.

There was also a sense of Rachel being able to play with the materials and sense how they were impacting her emotions on the inside. Rachel clearly stated this in her 1:1 interview in relation to connecting to the pictures in the first workshop and connecting to her emotions through them:

“The decision you’re making, like am I going to put this picture or this picture into it you know, it’s like clarifying how you feel. So I remember having loads of pictures I felt drawn to but I was like, oh actually now I’m looking at the piece, I feel like this is the one that needs to go in and not these, even though I felt that these kind of represented...it was like our decision process to clarify how you felt”

7.4.3 Use of contrasting colours over time

Rachel described how the ABR session had supported her to release the emotions she had felt as a result of working through the pandemic and move on, stating at the end of the first session that she had not known that she had needed it. However, whilst Rachel had been able to release these emotions through the session that she confirmed verbally in the 1:1 interview. Rachel also demonstrated this through the creation of her second visual, in the subtheme emotional movement, creating a visual with bright, positive colours of pink, yellow and orange which contrasted with her first creation consisting of the colours blue, white and black. Rachel's narrative was also in alignment with these bright colours, indicating a positive change in her emotions since the first session.

Rhiannon's second visual that she created online also had contrasting colours to the creation she created in the first workshop, in the sub-theme emotional movement. However, Rhiannon's narrative was not in alignment with this bright visual indicating a mismatch and incongruence to what she was presenting visually on the outside and her internal narrative. This indicated that Rhiannon was emotionally stuck and had not been able to release her emotions or move on, like Rachel. In the second workshop Rhiannon's narrative continued from the first workshop to include emotions of loss, feeling different to her colleagues and not being able to connect with them. Rhiannon's visual and verbal data indicated that she was able to emotionally connect to the art materials and was comfortable with the process of being creative and creating but emotionally she seemed stuck and grieving for how work used to be, before the pandemic. Rhiannon's creations over time therefore seemed to indicate a level of distress for her. This contrasted with Pablo who did not indicate having any signs of emotional stress or distress visually or verbally, through the ABR sessions. Creating visuals and sharing the narrative meaning of them over time, therefore can provide a barometer of the employee's emotional balance.

7.5 Theme Two: Seeking Emotional Balance

The second theme of Seeking Emotional Balance emerged from the subthemes of emotional contrasting, emotional movement, emotional needs and nourishment and emotional ease. Seeking Emotional Balance is an overarching theme as it presented itself as an underlying driver of what the participants are seeking that was indicated over the two ABR sessions and the 1:1 interviews.

7.5.1 Meaning of Opposites

The theme of seeking emotional balance arose through the four sub-themes as each theme contained opposites. For example, emotional contrasting demonstrated how the external weather was used as a way to contrast how the participants felt internally. The contrast of the sunny weather was presented as a reminder to the group of the collective memory, of how much the sun shone during the pandemic, in the UK and how they should have felt happy because of the sunshine, yet the contrast of how some of the participants felt, also highlighted the differential between the external sunshine and their internal feelings. These feelings included intense feelings of aloneness, isolation, and powerlessness, which were lower in mood, relative to the sunny weather outside and providing emphasis of their low mood through this contrast.

Additionally, the sub-theme emotional movement highlighted visual change in the creations created in the second workshop, in comparison with the first workshop, that represented emotional change. Whilst the sub-theme emotional needs and nourishment encompassed visuals of lone items and animals and groups of animals. The use of lone and group animal pictures were used to emphasize feeling, representing positive or negative feelings in connection to others. The narrative was needed to support the clarity of whether their perception of the participant was positively or negatively focused, in relation to their connection to others. Whilst the final sub-theme encompassed visual metaphors of essentially moving up or down hill to express emotional ease and speed.

The theme seeking balance emerged across the two ABR sessions and is stronger because there were two sessions. Most of the previous studies using creative ABR methods in this systematic review were not able to comment on emotional change, because they were one off experiences for the participants (Ward and Green, 2018; Atherton et al, 2020). There were a minority of studies in the systematic review who did have multiple workshops, but these studies were not using ABR methods to (Lindsay & Schwind, 2016) seek understanding in what could be expressed emotionally through the use of ABR methods and therefore did not report on emotional change through the sessions.

7.5.2 Capacity to express emotion through the use of arts-based materials

It was as a consequence of having two arts-based workshops that movement and change could be seen in the visual art created, as an expression of emotional movement. Both Jackie and Rachel demonstrated emotional change through their use of the art materials. Jackie used a piece of tissue to roll up like a blind, in order to represent having greater control over her work/life balance. Rachel used the use of the lollypop sticks too, where in the first workshop they were used to represent a kind of prison but in the second workshop were used to highlight the widening of perspective that she felt, as they were used to boundary the visual creation around the perimeter edge of it, which felt more liberating. The capacity to express emotional movement with Rachel and Jackie also seemed to indicate a level of comfort with creativity and expressing themselves using a variety of art materials and not just cut and paste pictures.

However, maybe not all participants have this level of ease with arts-based materials. Indeed, Atherton et al (2020) expressed in their study the discomfort that a participant was experiencing in their study relation to expressing themselves using art and the participant resolved this by practising what they wanted to create first. So maybe the emotional expression open to employees through the use of arts-based materials is impacted by the participants comfort or discomfort (Cristancho et al, 2014; Shin, 2023), in relation to using art

materials and creating a visual, through drawing, collage, or cut and paste pictures. The participant boundaries could be physical limitations of not being able to create what they want to, with the materials provided, or psychological limits related to what the participants believe in relation to their creativity and capacity to create and not attempting to use some of the materials due to their own beliefs of how creative they are, or not – as indicated in this study through the theme *Manovering through Boundaries*.

However, with the use of cut out pictures, participants can display movement through the pictures they choose. For example, participants, Angela, Joyce, Eleanor chose pictures of people walking or running up hill whilst Lesley chose a picture of someone going down a slide. These pictures in relation to movement seem to represent emotional ease or difficulty and the emotional work they were experiencing in relation to their thoughts and feelings, connected to work. So even with the use of cut out pictures, the participants can display movement through pictures of people moving up hill or sliding downwards on a slide, to represent emotional ease or difficulty, whilst being mindful of the narrative because the representation of the slide for Lesley depicted the speed with which the change happened, and the simultaneous fear and excitement of starting a new job role. A slide can also represent a sense of inevitability, of once you started down the slide, there is no getting off or stopping; and a sense of not being totally in charge but requiring a letting go. Yet both the picture of the slide and people walking or running uphill can be indicative of how hard or easy the movement it but there is movement.

But, even with participants' perceptions and limits around their relationship to creativity, it is also possible to show emotional changes over time, through the use of colour. For example, colour themes chosen by the participant can change over time – Jackie, Roisin and Rhiannon's use of colour – with the creations becoming brighter and potentially demonstrating a change and upliftment in their emotions and moods, whilst a darkening of colour could indicate a lowering of mood, for example, Bee. The narrative of the visual needs to be taken into consideration. For example, in the second workshop

Rhiannon's creation was visually brighter and more colour filled, relative to the creation she made in the first workshop, yet her narrative indicated otherwise. A change of colours can indicate an emotional change, over time but the narrative needs to be congruent and in alignment with it. Without this narrative congruence, it can indicate that the employee is not truly feeling how they want to and could be putting on a "brave face" as the surface appearance is not expressing the fullness of their experience.

However, maybe it is not possible to put the meaning of a creation into words (Jung, 1972) and is impacted by the level of emotional awareness an employee has. For example, Jackie's broken red lollipop sticks in the first face to face ABR session. She did not assign it any meaning beyond the representation of the monitoring of the daily number of deaths during the pandemic. Bee also broke red lollipop sticks in her first face to face ABR session (different group to Jackie's) but she states that they represent physical pain. Finally, Rachel's broken blue sticks in the first ABR session for her represented restriction and feeling imprisoned. All three physically broke the lollipops to indicate something that is not working for them, but Jackie is not aware of the symbolism of the broken lollipop whilst Bee and Rachel are. Jackie is also the most logically orientated of the three, in accordance with the visuals she has created, relative to Bee's and Rachel's.

7.6 Implications and Contributions

ABR methods widen the options of choices, available to the participants to express themselves, through the use of art materials and cut and paste pictures from magazines. Experience of life and work is not a purely linear, logical, black and white process but can be illogical, intuitive, and filled with colourful possibilities that can include sensory experiences encompassing pleasure and beauty (Morey et al, 2018; Barton et al, 2023). It offers participants ways to uniquely express themselves that can more fully express the experience of their working lives, by using the full spectrum of colour, widening the visibility of emotions, thoughts and experiences.

Creating a tangible visual, that is separate to the participant and can be witnessed and observed by the participant themselves and the researcher can support them both to see the participants' internal worlds and the participant's relationship to it. For example, a researcher could choose to find out about employee experiences using a semi-structured interview. There is nothing tangible that the employee creates, when using this method. There is no physical object to reflect upon, that the participant has created, so the researcher learns about the participant's world solely through the words that the participant chooses to vocalize. Figure 15 is a pictorial representation of this, where the arrows highlight the intersection, that represent the participant's knowledge or experience of the subject, accessed through interview.

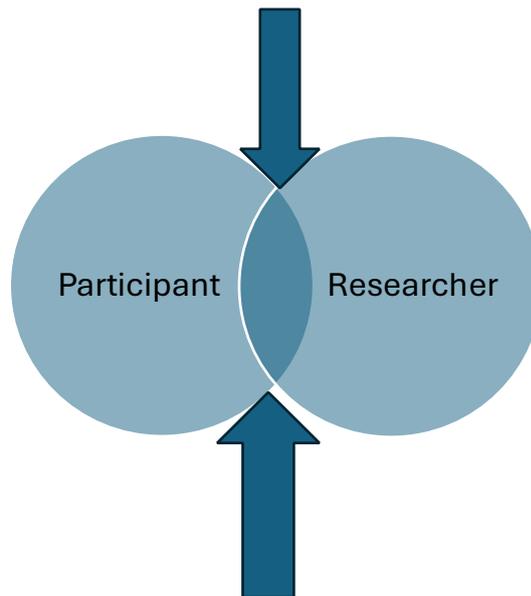


Figure 15:

In contrast, when art is created by the participant that represents and expresses their experience, they have created an external object to themselves. Figure 16 is a pictorial representation that indicates there are multiple intersections of learning possibilities, when the participant creates an object outside of themselves. Rather than there being one point of intersection with an interview; there are multiple points of intersection when the participant creates a piece of art, external to themselves, which the participant and the researcher can relate to as well.

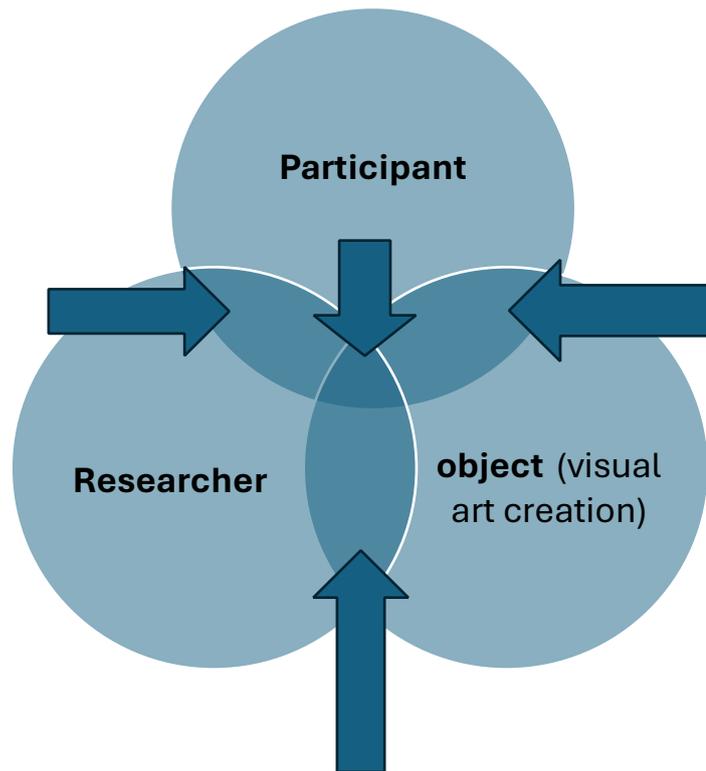


Figure 16:

The greater number of intersections represent the multisensory nature of ABR methods that include the possibilities of colour, touch, visibility as well as experience of the tangible creation itself and expression using words. ABR methods therefore widens the options of choices available to participants in how and what they express and share.

7.6.1 Lasting impact on the participants

The participants' behaviour after the ABR sessions included: meeting up with fellow participants for coffee, and placing the physical, tangible, visual creation on their office wall, potentially widening the impact beyond the participants who actually participated and created visuals as they shared the meaning of their creations to their colleagues who did not attend, helping them to appreciate how the participant's think and feel. ABR methods therefore have the potential to impact real work relationships (Cristancho et al, 2014) and ripple out beyond the research in acting as "tin-openers" for talk (Culshaw, 2019), both describing experience and effecting experience through the support and encouragement in having honest conversations with their colleagues.

7.7 Challenges of using ABR methods

The challenge of using ABR is using words to express meaning that has been created through the visual, in the data analysis. For example, themes were created to help see the meaning in the visuals, but this can give the impression that categories do not overlap, when they can. Jackie's visual expressed the intensity of working during the pandemic yet during her narrative she described the meaning of it, as coming from a place of logic, yet it was not categorized under the logical reference but representing a moment in time. ABR methods can uncover more meaning than words alone, so discrete, non-overlapping categories are likely to be less, making the analysis of the data challenging as it can uncover both breadth and depth of experience.

7.7.1 Discomfort of creating art

A challenge that researchers using ABR methods frequently cite, is the discomfort that participants can experience of using art (Vince and Broussine, 1996; Morey et al, 2018; Gudyanga, 2019; Atherton et al, 2020; and Shin, 2023), highlighting measures that they take to support the participants to overcome this and still take part, with Vince and Broussine (1996) saying that they emphasized to the participants that the quality of the art that they were creating did not matter and Shin (2023), providing a small piece of paper to draw on (5x7inches) to not overwhelm them with a large blank space, whilst Morey et al (2018) played music in the session to help participants to relax. Discomfort around creativity was also expressed in this study by several participants but not all.

For the second online workshop, all the participants were provided with individual art packs (see appendix M, for its contents), which did not contain any cut and paste pictures from magazines. Being mindful that this could cause discomfort for participants, they were all verbally informed of this by the researcher, so that they were not surprised by this, on the day. Additionally, the participants were given the art pack at least 24 hours prior to the online workshop, to familiarize themselves with the pack, if they chose. One

participant however, Angela, was uncomfortable at the thought of there not being any cut and paste pictures, so she chose to gather some magazines in readiness and cut out pictures from them during the online session, from which she created her visual. Angela did also include some materials from the art pack but having access to magazines reduced her level of anxiety and enabled her to participate and indeed enjoy it, stating at the end “I loved, loved, loved doing that. Loved it.”.

The online, second workshop of the, seemed to highlight more anxieties around being creative, than the first face to face workshop, with two other participants expressing this during their 1:1 interviews. Eleanor commented that the cut and paste magazine pictures in the first workshop inspired her stating: “you didn’t have to think too deeply at that moment, until you sort of got into”, whereas without the cut and paste pictures in the second online workshop, Eleanor stated:” I’ve got to sit and think about my feelings first in a little bit more depth before I can sort of start the picture”, which Eleanor said, she found more challenging and difficult to start, staring at a blank page (Shin, 2023). Eleanor said that she overcame this by looking at the colours in the art pack that she “felt inviting” and noticing if she felt drawn to a type of material, requiring her to engage with herself more. Similarly, Lesley who also cited anxieties in relation to the second workshop, focused on the colour first, using the colours that she felt most drawn to, in the moment, in order to start to fill the blank paper.

7.7.2 Time pressures of employee participants

There were practical, salient challenges around data collection in relation to the time needed for employees to participate in the workshops. This is in alignment with the experience of other researchers (Smith et al, 2014), with Cristancho et al (2014) advocating that the method suits a small number of participants because of the time required. In this study, every ABR group whether face to face or online, had a participant who was not able to stay for the entire duration

and listen to every participants' narrative in relation to their visual creation. In all of the three face to face groups, at least one participant needed to leave after they had shared the meaning of their creation, and before they were able to listen to all of the other group members' narratives. In one of the groups, two participants left before they were able to share the meaning of their creations, so it was arranged to see them at a different time, for a 1:1 to discover the meaning of their creations. This occurred despite arranging the sessions either during the lunch hour and in a room in the organisation, where the employee participants worked for the face-to-face session; with one group even occurring at the end of the working day at 5pm, to adapt to the participant needs.

However, it did mean that in all three of the workshops, there were two people listening to the participant who was verbally sharing, helping to provide an intimate space, for sharing. Although it was clear that having the time for the employee participants to take part was not easy yet the employees who did attend felt they benefitted from participating (Robertson et al, 2021). For example, Katherine stated "*I didn't think I had time to attend but it gave me a break from thinking and I feel energized for it*". So similar to the potential for participant discomfort, it seems that it is the thought of a problem that can create anxiety or tension around participating, but the participation itself can alleviate it and indeed create a sense of positive energy from taking part. This is in alignment with other researchers from the systematic review including Barton et al (2023) whose participants felt that they had surprising benefits that alleviated the stress from their job roles.

7.7.3 Challenges of Online Group Facilitation

The online workshop provided technological challenges. In the online workshop for group three, all three of the participants' narrative flow was interrupted by technological issues experienced predominantly by one of the participants whose internet connection dipped in and out, when the participants were sharing the meaning of what they had created. Also, this workshop started at

5.30pm to allow all participants to attend. The consequence of this was that within this group, one of the group members was concerned they were going to be locked in their office at work. This happened to be the longest workshop too, as there was a delay in the participants arriving for it and due to the technological issues experienced, elongated the duration of the workshop. There were also problems with sharing what the participants had created online too as the researcher could not take photos of what each participant had created online. The researcher was reliant on the participants taking and sharing photos of their creations, which they did.

In workshop one, three of the four participants were taking part in their open plan office space, with the fourth participant taking part from their home. The online workshops were designed so that participants could take part from wherever they chose. However, Eleanor stated that she was conscious of not being part of the group, in the same way because she was the only one, not taking part from the office space. In addition, Eleanor's camera was not working, so the rest of the group could not see her either. Eleanor was asked about her experience of this during her 1:1 interview after the two workshops had taken place. Eleanor stated that she had preferred the face-to-face session as it had given her more opportunity to chat to her colleagues away from their desks. Eleanor also volunteered that creating in the same space as her colleagues' face to face: *"Gives you sort of a little bit of inspiration as well. Not in a sort of a copycat way but you know it's through sort of talking and things other people sort of bring up, you sort of then think "oh yeah that's reminded me of this part of how I was feeling...reminding each other of things that we may have otherwise sort of forgotten and put to the back of our minds a little bit more"*. As a witness to this online group, the participants seemed more distracted by what was occurring in the office space and less in their own worlds, relative to how they were in the face-to-face workshop.

This contrasted to the online experience of workshop three, which occurred at 5.30pm. One of the participants took part from their home, the second participant took part from their office and the third found a spare room in the

office building she was working from, at that time. The group was asked how they found the online experience and one participant, Angela, stated: *“apart from wondering who might come in when nobody was here...I had a massive big space all to myself in the centre of a big room, so it felt like luxury, pure indulgent luxury...and I felt like it was more private, more intimate and I felt more relaxed”*. As a witness to this online group, it felt more private, that the participants were more in their own internal worlds and creating from that space.

As the researcher, the online workshops were more challenging to facilitate due to feeling more uncomfortable with silence and pauses from the participants. Face to face ABR sessions seemed to allow more reflective space for the researcher. It also seemed that participants who benefitted the most from the online ABR sessions are those most in need of space from intrusions from others, and time for themselves.

7.7.4 Multiple Meanings and Multiple Layers

The meaning of the visual creation is unique to the individual who created it, yet others can interpret it differently. For example, Rhiannon’s creation she made during her first face to face workshop included the picture of a group of donkeys. For Rhiannon this picture represented the feeling of sadness and missing, as she remembered how the team that she worked with enjoyed working together before the changes that occurred as the result of the pandemic. It represented a sense of loss and a grief for once was. Yet another group member Rachel, stated whilst Rhiannon was sharing her narrative about the picture of the donkeys in her visual creation: *“I love that photo. When I looked at it made me feel warm and happy”*, Rachel’s feelings towards the picture was at odds to what it represented for Rhiannon and the sadness she was expressing. Highlighting the importance of space for the creator participant’s expression of their meaning but also that the process can highlight

misunderstandings and simultaneously deal with them, helping to create a neutral space for discussions (Vince and Broussine, 1996).

7.8 Strengths and Limitations

7.8.1 The use of multiple ABR data collection points over a period of time, can reveal the direction of employee emotional movement (or not).

Through the observation and comparison of the different elements: colour; materials; narrative, over a longitudinal period allows the direction of emotional movement to be seen and interpreted. Having multiple sessions that involve creating, supported the seeing of how the employees constructed and made sense of their reality, over time, highlighting that reality is not a fixed state and is in alignment with constructivism. The clarity of the direction of emotional movement is easier to notice over multiple sessions, as it allows for the participants to repeatedly reflect on their experience of reality, and the multiple visual creations supports the seeing of how the participants construct their reality, over time, which other ABR studies with employees that included multiple sessions, did not report on (Smith et al, 2014 & Lindsay & Schwind, 2015). Maybe this is also the strength of the ontological and epistemological stance.

7.8.2 Philosophical congruence with the method

The alignment between the ontological and epistemological stance of constructivism and interpretivism supported the seeing of the participant's emotional movement over time. The creation of the visual by the participant allowed the researcher and the other participants to see the participant's reality; and hear the interpretation of the visual by the participant, through articulating its meaning using the verbal word, enabling the researcher and the participants to understand the meaning of the visual, given to it by the participant. The seeing and the hearing revealed the congruence or incongruence between the visuals and the words, the similarity or the difference between the internal

desire of the participant and their external reality (or vice versa). This alignment also enabled seeing changes within the participant's emotional worlds (or not), over time, which acknowledges the dynamism and multisensory nature of life.

7.8.3 Limitations of a small sample size and logistical constraints of employee participants

This study is typical of most of the other ABR conducted research, in the systematic review, of having a small sample size (van Staden-Payne & Nell, 2023; Shin, 2023; Sadler et al, 2017; Lindsay & Schwind, 2016; Smith et al, 2014; Cristancho et al, 2014; Atherton et al, 2020), so it is not possible to generalize the findings. Additionally, the study experienced difficulties with the practical time constraints that are typical of undertaking research with employees (Smith et al, 2014) and recruiting participants that have the time to take part in two, one-hour long ABR sessions, despite them occurring during a lunch-time period to increase the likelihood of employees being able to attend. Three employees of the ten participants recruited, could not stay for the entirety of the workshop; 1 employee dropped out following the first workshop and a further employee dropped out after the second workshop.

8.0 Conclusions

The aim of this thesis was to explore and learn about the process through which ABR methods can support employees to convey and express emotions and what the impact of this is for organisations on how they support their employees. This was achieved by recruiting employees from one HEI to participate in a longitudinal, multi-modal, qualitative design, who attended two ABR group sessions, at least five months apart and a 1:1 interview. Participants were requested to create visuals that depicted their working experiences and share the narrative meaning of them to their colleagues. The visual and verbal data was thematically analysed to identify meaningful patterns across the data set. From this analysis, three themes emerged: Gateway into My Experience, Seeking Emotional Balance and Manovering through Boundaries which helped in understanding what supports and hinders emotional expression using creative ABR methods and answer the research question.

The longitudinal element of the study shows the importance of multiple workshops, to reveal emotional change, which can provide organisations with a visual emotional barometer of the employee's emotional balance and track employee affective change, over time. It allows individuals to access their emotions in ways that suit their level of emotional transparency and awareness and can indicate the direction of emotional movement, even when using cut and paste pictures, which also supports employee participation and alleviates anxieties around their perceptions of creativity.

ABR supports the expression of different kinds of feeling including that of beauty and pleasure, which are not feelings that you would normally associate with research participants. This access to participants' previously hidden or tacit emotional worlds enables the researcher to ask questions that are more pertinent to the participant, that the researcher could not have previously known

to ask, without the access to the participant's unseen or hidden emotional world, using ABR.

ABR is not absent of words, and words are needed to express the meaning held within the visual, representing an inter-dependence between them. The difficulty as a researcher is to show the analysis of this link, of this interdependence, which is not easy, as it pushes the boundaries of the researcher too, pushing us into new, and unfamiliar territories.

Finally, this is the first study to present a methodological contribution: the analysis of visual and verbal data through the thematic exploration of opposites, which informed the core theme of "Seeking Emotional Balance". The opposites were revealed through the coding of emotional opposites and identification of visual opposites through the pictures the participants chose and also arose in the narrative. This analytical lens enabled the interdependence of the visual and the narrative to be seen through the connection of the opposites and analysed together.

8.1 Future Research

This study has identified the potential for a number of future research opportunities linked to the exploration of emotional well-being in employees.

The term that is not used in relation to the use of ABR methods with employees is "well-being", despite researchers talking about the surprise positive effect that creating has on the participants (Cristancho et al, 2014; Barton et al, 2023) and the capacity to focus and express negative feelings such as frustration (Gudyanga et al, 2019) and powerlessness (Tracy et al, 2006), as well as feminine expressions of softness and gentleness (Morey et al, 2018). The method can therefore support the expression of the whole emotional spectrum. Future research could therefore capitalize on this communication vehicle to formally assess its capacity to simultaneously promote well-being and informally measure it, through the safe expression of emotion and simultaneously increasing intimacy between colleagues, through emotional sharing.

Finding that ABR can act as an "emotional barometer" over time is highly significant for organizational interventions. A longitudinal study specifically designed to test the predictive reliability of incongruence (like participant Rhiannon) between visual data (colour, mood, movement) and verbal data could be valuable in establishing whether this incongruence can serve as an early, non-intrusive diagnostic tool for HR/Wellbeing teams to identify employees who are putting on a "brave face" and are at a higher risk for burnout or emotional withdrawal. This could lead to the development of personalised interventions based on evidence provided by individual employees, directly linking ABR to supporting a proactive organizational wellbeing strategy, which also has the potential of being a barometer of collective, organisational well-being that could too, be evaluated.

Appendices

Appendix A: Example of preliminary search terms

Search Terms created with Specialist Faculty Librarian, on 19th August 2022 using Ebsco Academic Search Ultimate:

(DE "EMPLOYEES" OR DE "AGRICULTURAL laborers" OR DE "AIRLINE security personnel" OR DE "AIRPORT employees" OR DE "ARTISTS' assistants" OR DE "AUTHORS as employees" OR DE "BLUE collar workers" OR DE "BUILDING trade employees" OR DE "BUSINESS enterprise personnel" OR DE "CALL center agents" OR DE "CASHIERS" OR DE "CASUAL labor" OR DE "CHILD care workers" OR DE "CHURCH employees" OR DE "CIRCUS workers" OR DE "CLOTHING workers" OR DE "COMMERCIAL aeronautics employees" OR DE "COMMUNITY development personnel" OR DE "COMPUTER industry personnel" OR DE "CONTRACT labor" OR DE "DISPLACED workers" OR DE "ELECTION workers" OR DE "ELECTRONIC commerce personnel" OR DE "EMPLOYEE inventors" OR DE "EMPLOYEE seniority" OR DE "EMPLOYMENT of older people" OR DE "EMPLOYMENT of people with disabilities" OR DE "ENTRY level employees" OR DE "EQUALITY in the workplace" OR DE "EXEMPT employees" OR DE "FOOD service employees" OR DE "FORCED labor" OR DE "FOREIGN workers" OR DE "GREEN collar workers" OR DE "HIGH technology industries personnel" OR DE "HOME labor" OR DE "HOTEL employees" OR DE "HOUSEHOLD employees" OR DE "INDIGENOUS labor" OR DE "INDUSTRIAL learners" OR DE "INTERMITTENT employees" OR DE "JANITORS" OR DE "JOURNEY workers" OR DE "KEY employees" OR DE "LGBTQ+ employees" OR DE "LIBRARY personnel" OR DE "LOAN officers" OR DE "LONG-term employees" OR DE "MALE employees" OR DE "MEDICAL personnel" OR DE "MIDDLE-aged workers" OR DE "MIGRANT labor" OR DE "MODELS (Persons)" OR DE "NEW employees" OR DE "NONUNION employees" OR DE "PAPER industry workers" OR DE "PARAPROFESSIONALS" OR DE "PART-time employees" OR DE "POLITICAL campaign personnel" OR DE "PRIVATE police" OR DE "PROBATIONARY employees" OR DE "PROBLEM employees" OR DE "PROFESSIONAL employees" OR DE "PSYCHOLOGICAL contracts (Employment)" OR DE "PUBLIC relations personnel" OR DE "REDUNDANT employees" OR DE "SANITATION workers" OR DE "SCHOOL employees" OR DE "SERVICE industries workers" OR DE "SPORTS personnel" OR DE "SUPERVISORS" OR DE "TEACHERS' union personnel" OR DE "TELECOMMUNICATION personnel" OR DE "TELEPHONE operators" OR DE "TEMPORARY employees" OR DE "TEXTILE workers" OR DE "TOURISM personnel" OR DE "TRANSPORTATION industry workers" OR DE "WHITE collar workers" OR DE "WOMEN employees" OR DE "WORKAHOLICS" OR DE "YOUNG workers") OR TI employee* OR AB employee* Show Less

AND

DE "ART therapy" OR DE "ART therapy education" OR DE "ART therapy for older people" OR DE "ART therapy for youth" OR DE "ART therapy research") OR TI ((art* OR creative OR paint* OR music OR drawing OR drama) N3 (therap* OR methods OR intervent* OR treatment* OR approach*))) OR AB ((art* OR creative OR paint* OR music OR drawing OR drama) N3 (therap* OR methods OR intervent* OR treatment* OR approach*)))

The terms identified 2044 articles.

Appendix B: Search terms and databases used in systematic review.
October 24, 2023.

Database	BUSINESS SOURCE COMPLETE	Number of Articles
Search Terms Used in the Title, Abstract and Subject	<p>qualitative research OR qualitative study OR qualitative methods OR interview OR research methodology OR research protocols</p> <p>AND ("art-based" OR visual) n4 (methods OR data OR metaphor OR research) OR drawing OR collage OR story* OR stories OR paint*</p> <p>AND organi?ational research OR organi?ation* OR workplace* OR business organi?ation* OR organi?ational behavio?r OR corporate OR corporate culture OR industrial management OR banking)</p> <p>AND employee OR management personnel OR executives OR worker OR Teams in the workplace OR officers OR management OR personnel OR adulthood OR colleague OR staff)</p>	2,591
ACADEMIC SEARCH ULTIMATE		
Search Terms Used in the Title, Abstract and Subject	<p>qualitative research OR qualitative study OR qualitative methods OR interview OR research methodology OR research protocols</p> <p>AND ("art-based" OR visual) n4 (methods OR data OR metaphor OR research) OR drawing OR collage OR story* OR stories OR paint*</p> <p>AND organi?ational research OR organi?ation* OR workplace* OR business organi?ation* OR organi?ational behavio?r OR corporate OR corporate culture OR industrial management OR banking OR education)</p> <p>AND employee OR management personnel OR executives OR worker OR Teams in the workplace OR officers OR management OR personnel OR adulthood OR colleague OR staff or teacher</p>	4,687
CINAHL		

<p>Search Terms Used in the Title, Abstract and Subject</p>	<p>employee OR management personnel OR executives OR worker OR Teams in the workplace OR officers OR management OR personnel OR adulthood OR colleague OR staff OR nursing staff OR nurse* OR doctor* OR physician OR healthcare worker* OR health professional or allied health professional OR nursing</p> <p>AND</p> <p>art-based" OR visual) n4 (methods OR data OR metaphor OR research) OR drawing OR collage OR story* OR stories OR paint* OR sculpture OR drama OR poetry</p> <p>AND</p>	<p>1,728</p>
	<p>organi?ational research OR organi?ation* OR workplace* OR business organi?ation* OR organi?ational behavio?r OR corporate OR corporate culture OR industrial management OR banking OR mental health service*</p> <p>AND</p> <p>qualitative research OR qualitative study OR qualitative methods OR interview OR research methodology OR research protocols</p>	
WEB OF SCIENCE		
<p>Search Terms Used in the Title, Abstract and Subject</p>	<p>((TI=("arts-based methods" OR "arts-based research" OR "arts based activities" OR "arts based research method" OR "art workshops" OR collage OR paint OR "visual data" OR metaphors))</p> <p>AND</p> <p>"organi?ational research" OR organi?ation OR workplace* OR "business organi?ation" OR "organi?ational behavio?r" OR corporate OR "corporate culture" OR "industrial management" OR banking OR education OR "tertiary education" OR "mental health services" OR "organi?ational change" OR 'secondary school"</p> <p>AND</p> <p>(TI=(Employee* OR "management personnel" OR executive* OR worker* OR Team* in the workplace OR officer* OR management OR personnel OR adulthood OR colleague* OR staff OR teacher* OR tutor* OR "academic staff" OR " university lecturer*" OR "allied health personnel" OR "nursing staff" OR academics OR Work Group))</p>	<p>3,757</p>
PSYCH INFO		

<p>Search Terms Used in the Title, Abstract and Subject</p>	<p>experiences OR perceptions OR feelings OR emotions OR emotional expression OR perspective OR reflection</p> <p>AND</p> <p>employee OR management personnel OR executives OR worker OR Teams in the workplace OR officers OR management OR personnel OR adulthood OR colleague OR staff OR work group OR team member OR participant</p> <p>AND</p> <p>organi?ational research OR organi?ation* OR workplace* OR business organi?ation* OR organi?ational behavio?r OR corporate OR corporate culture OR industrial management OR banking OR education OR mental health services</p> <p>AND</p> <p>("art-based" OR visual) n4 (methods OR data OR metaphor OR research) OR drawing OR collage OR story* OR stories OR paint* OR sculpture OR drama OR poetry) OR SU ("art-based" OR visual) n4 (methods OR data OR metaphor OR research) OR drawing OR collage OR story* OR stories OR paint* OR sculpture OR drama OR poetry</p>	<p>11,222</p>
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Appendix C: Inclusion, Exclusion Criteria

Inclusion Criteria	Exclusion Criteria
Type of Research Article	
<p>Primary research article is qualitative and uses creative arts-based methods including, drawing, collage, or painting, that are participant created.</p>	<p>Main study is quantitative and does not use creative arts-based methods</p> <p>Studies that use photography, photo-voice, photo-elicitation i.e. not participant created art-based research methods</p> <p>Studies that use portraiture or artifacts that are objects that are not participant created</p>
Type of Participant	
<p>Main participant group are paid employees – in full-time or part-time employment.</p>	<p>Participant group are not employees, for example, students</p>
Format and Design of Research Article	
<p>Primary research study is in the format of a journal article</p>	<p>Format Paper is not a journal article, for example a book or a dissertation.</p> <p>It is not a primary research study and is a systematic review, literature review, document review, news, briefs, commentary article, including a review paper on someone else's research.</p>
Language of Research Article	
<p>Full paper is written in English</p>	<p>Paper is not written in English, which includes abstracts in English with the main text of the research article written in a different language.</p>

Appendix D: Extract from CASP (2023) Quality Appraisal

CASP (Qualitative Studies) Checklist	Research Article			
	Atherton et al (2020)	Barner, R (2008)	Culshaw (2019)	Shin (2023)
	'''We've done so much on our journeys.' An exploration of pioneering the profession of speechlanguage pathology in Vietnam.	The Dark Tower: Using Visual Metaphors to facilitate emotional expression during organizational change	The unspoken power of collage? Using an innovative arts-based research method to explore the experience of struggling as a teacher.	Draw and Tell: Uncovering Korean Infant Teachers' Play Experiences and Their Views in Supporting Infants' Play
	Yes/No/Can't Tell	Yes/No/Can't Tell	Yes/No/Can't Tell	Yes/No/Can't Tell
Was there a clear statement of the aims and research?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Is Qualitative Methodology Appropriate?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Was the research design appropriate to address the aims of the research?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Was the recruitment strategy appropriate to the aims of the study?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Was the data collected in a way that addressed the research issue?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Has the relationship between researcher and participant been adequately considered?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Have ethical issues been taken into consideration?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Was the data analysis sufficiently rigorous?	Yes	No/Can't Tell The type of analysis used was not reported.	Yes	Yes
Is there a clear statement of the findings?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
How valuable is the	(i) Australian	It shows the	(i)The research	(i) It is of value as

<p>research?</p>	<p>researchers were working with Vietnamese Speech and language therapists, so the research method, helped to overcome the language barrier, and potentially cultural barriers too,</p>	<p>value of drawings, as forms of expressions for negative feelings that are present within employee teams.</p>	<p>helps to provide evidence for the value of using collage to help express and individualize concepts such as “struggle” that have a general acceptance of meaning. Using collage can help to unpick what struggle actually means for individuals and convey that meaning to others.</p> <p>(ii) Using collage also helps to demonstrate using how the body holds information.</p>	<p>it is highlighting the developmental needs of teachers, to reflect on their own relationship to play.</p> <p>(ii) It also highlights the themes that can naturally develop from the use of drawings in research.</p>
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Appendix E: Ethics Approval



Applicant: Elizabeth Carter
Supervisor: Amanda Bingley and Mark Limmer
Department: Health Research
FHMREC Reference: FHMREC18088

27 June 2019

Dear Elizabeth

Re: Exploring how the relationship between employees and the senior management team impacts organisational culture: an art-based dialogue.

Thank you for submitting your research ethics application for the above project for review by the **Faculty of Health and Medicine Research Ethics Committee (FHMREC)**. The application was recommended for approval by FHMREC, and on behalf of the Chair of the Committee, I can confirm that approval has been granted for this research project.

As principal investigator your responsibilities include:

- ensuring that (where applicable) all the necessary legal and regulatory requirements in order to conduct the research are met, and the necessary licenses and approvals have been obtained;
- reporting any ethics-related issues that occur during the course of the research or arising from the research to the Research Ethics Officer at the email address below (e.g. unforeseen ethical issues, complaints about the conduct of the research, adverse reactions such as extreme distress);
- submitting details of proposed substantive amendments to the protocol to the Research Ethics Officer for approval.

Please contact me if you have any queries or require further information.

Tel:- 01542 593987

Email:- fhmresearchsupport@lancaster.ac.uk

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "RE Case".

Becky Case
Research Ethics Officer, Secretary to FHMREC.

Appendix F: Participant Information Sheet



Participant Information Sheet (workshops)

Title: Exploring using creative art, employee experiences of work during the pandemic and the sense-making and integration of this during a period of uncertainty.

My name is Elizabeth Carter and I am the principal researcher for the study. The study forms the research for my PhD, in the Organisational Health and Well-Being programme at Lancaster University, Lancaster, United Kingdom. The research is independent, and I am an outsider to this organisation with no previous connections to it.

What is the study about?

The purpose of this study is to explore through creative art employee experiences during the pandemic and how they are continuing to make sense of and work during this period of uncertainty.

This will be explored using 1:1 interviews and art-based workshops. All employees are welcome to take part, from all levels and roles of an organisation.

Why have I been approached?

You have been approached because the study values your experiences of what it is like for you to have worked during the pandemic and how that is continuing to affect your working life.

Do I have to take part?

No. The study is completely voluntary, and it is completely up to you to decide whether or not you wish take part. Even if you decide to participate you would still be free to change your mind at any point before or during the workshop. There is no obligation to take part or to see it through until the end. You are also able to withdraw what you say during the workshop, up until the workshop is transcribed. The researcher will answer any queries or concerns you might have about participating.

What will I be asked to do if I take part?

If you decide you would like to take part, you will be asked to take part in a confidential face to face and online workshops, which will occur at a time and place suitable to you. The workshop will last for approximately one hour and your experiences of working in the organisation will be explored, using drawing. Your thoughts and experiences will be treated

with confidence and anonymised. If you would like to participate, please complete the expression of interest form.

Will my data be Identifiable?

The information you provide is confidential. Pseudonyms will be used in the write up and anything which could identify you, for example job role or title will be removed. You will have an opportunity to see a summary of the findings before those external to the workshop see it, to ensure that the findings are fully anonymised. It is likely that direct quotes from the workshop will be written up, but a pseudonym will be used.

The data collected for this study will be stored securely according to the General Data Protection Act 2018 and the **Data Storage policies of Lancaster University**. Only the researcher conducting this study and two Supervisors will have access to the data:

- Audio recordings will be destroyed and/or deleted once the project has been examined.
- The files on the computer will be encrypted (that is no-one other than the researcher and their Supervisors will be able to access them) and the computer itself is password protected and encrypted.
- The electronic transcripts of the workshop will be stored for 10 years and then destroyed.
- The typed version of the workshop will be anonymised by removing any identifying information including your name. Anonymised direct quotations from the workshop may be used in the reports or publications from the study, so your name will not be attached to them.
- All your personal data will be confidential and will be kept separately, from your workshop responses.

There are some limits to confidentiality, however. If what is said in the workshop indicates to me that you, or someone else, is at significant risk of harm, I will be obliged to break confidentiality and speak to Human Resources, Occupational Health and my Academic Supervisor about this. If possible, I will tell you if this situation arises.

What will happen to the results?

The results will be summarised and written up for submission as a PhD Thesis and may be submitted for publication in an academic or professional journal.

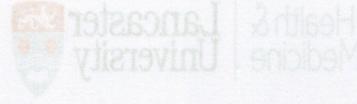
Are there any risks?

There are no risks anticipated with participating in this study. However, if you experience any distress following participation you are encouraged to inform the researcher and contact the resources provided at the end of this sheet.

Are there any benefits to taking part?

Although you may find participating interesting, there are no direct benefits in taking part, although taking part in creative arts has been found to reduce stress and increase wellbeing. You will also be contributing to the knowledge and understanding of working through the pandemic and the significant change of working practices and expectations.

Appendix G: Participant Consent Form



Consent Form (for face to face workshops)

Study Title: Exploring using creative art, employee experiences of work during the pandemic and the sense-making and integration of this during a period of uncertainty.

We are asking if you would like to take part in a confidential research project to explore what being an employee of this organisation means to you. Your thoughts and feelings are valued and respected.

Before you consent to participating in the study we ask that you read the participant information sheet and mark each box below with your initials if you agree. If you have any questions or queries before signing the consent form please speak to the principal investigator, Elizabeth Carter

- | | Please initial each statement |
|--|-------------------------------|
| 1. I confirm that I have read the information sheet and fully understand what is expected of me within this study | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2. I confirm that I have had the opportunity to ask any questions and to have them answered. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3. I understand that the workshop will be audio recorded and then made into an anonymised written transcript. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4. I understand that audio recordings will be kept until the research project has been examined. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason, without my legal rights being affected. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 6. I understand that once my data has been anonymised and incorporated into themes it might not be possible for it to be withdrawn, though every attempt will be made to extract my data, up to the point of publication. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 7. I understand that the information from the workshop will be pooled with other participants' responses, anonymised and may be published. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 8. I consent to information, quotations and drawing from the workshop to be used in reports, conferences and training events. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 9. I understand that the researcher will discuss data with their supervisor as needed. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 10. I understand that any information I give will remain confidential and anonymous unless it is thought that there is a risk of harm to myself or others, in which case the principal investigator will need to share this information with their research supervisor | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 11. I consent to Lancaster University keeping written transcriptions of the workshop for 10 years after the study has finished. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 12. I consent to take part in the above study. | <input type="checkbox"/> |

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Consent Form (for face to face workshops)

Name of Participant _____ Signature _____ Date _____

Name of Researcher _____ Signature _____ Date _____

We are asking if you would like to take part in a confidential research project to explore what being an employee of this organisation means to you. Your thoughts and feelings are valued and we will be grateful for your contribution.

Before you consent to participating in the study we ask that you read the participant information sheet and mark each box below with your initials if you agree. If you have any questions or queries before signing the consent form please speak to the principal investigator, Elizabeth Caher.

Please initial each statement

- 1. I confirm that I have read the information sheet and fully understand what is expected of me within this study.
- 2. I confirm that I have had the opportunity to ask any questions and to have them answered.
- 3. I understand that the workshop will be audio recorded and then made into an anonymised written transcript.
- 4. I understand that audio recordings will be kept until the research project has been examined.
- 5. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason, without my legal rights being affected.
- 6. I understand that once my data has been anonymised and incorporated into themes it might not be possible for it to be withdrawn, though every attempt will be made to extract my data, up to the point of publication.
- 7. I understand that the information from the workshop will be pooled with other participants' responses, anonymised and may be published.
- 8. I consent to information, quotations and drawing from the workshop to be used in reports, conferences and training events.
- 9. I understand that the researcher will discuss data with their supervisor as needed.
- 10. I understand that any information I give will remain confidential and anonymous unless it is thought that there is a risk of harm to myself or others, in which case the principal investigator will need to share this information with their research supervisor.
- 11. I consent to Lancaster University keeping written transcripts of the workshop for 10 years after the study has finished.
- 12. I consent to take part in the above study.

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Appendix H: Participant Demographic Information



Demographic Information Sheet:

1. How long have you been employed?

.....

2. How long have you been in your current role?

.....

3. What is your job title?

.....

4. Within which age bracket are you? (please circle)

Under 25 25-34 35-44 45-54 55-64 65 and above

5. Do you have a disability – seen or unseen?

Appendix I: Photograph Release Form



Study Title: Exploring using creative art, employee experiences of work during the pandemic and the sense making and integration of this during a period of uncertainty.

Photograph Release Form

<p>Project Name:</p> <p>Date:</p>

Project Event and Photographs used from the session (add session (s) number):

I give permission for photographs or audio recordings taken of me at the session (s) listed above to be used as photographs for the project "Exploring using creative art, employee experiences of work during the pandemic and the sense making and integration of this during a period of uncertainty" without payment.

I understand that this release only applies to photography collected as part of the sessions and projects listed on this document.

I understand that my image may be edited, copied, exhibited, published or distributed, but only in relation to the core goals of the project; and I waive the right to inspect or approve the finished products in which my likeness appears.

Additionally, I waive any right to royalties or other compensation for the use of my image.

I also understand that within the purposes listed; this material may be used / distributed in diverse settings within an unrestricted geographic area. I understand the permission I give to the use of my images is not limited to a specific time.

I will be consulted about the use of the photographs for any purpose other than those listed here.

In addition, I understand that I can if I wish, have my images removed from the project data by contacting the Research Support Team, who manage the Data Archive at Lancaster University, via this generic email: rdm@lancaster.ac.uk

The project "Exploring using creative art, employee experiences of work during the pandemic and the sense-making and integration of this during a period of uncertainty" complies with the General Data Regulation Protection (GDPR, 2018). This means I have the right to know what data about me is held (e. g my name, a photograph of me). If the data is incorrect, I can ask to have it removed or corrected.

I understand that if I am photographed for the project "Exploring using creative art, employee experiences of work during the pandemic and the sense-making and integration of this during a period of uncertainty", I can ask at any time for my photograph to be taken out of the project data and no longer be used for further outputs in the future.

Essential details*:

*Name _____

*Signature _____ Date _____

Appendix J: Certificate of Course attendance, professional development and poster prize.



[External] SRA course - Qualitative Data Analysis - your feedback

Lindsay Adams <Lindsay.Adams@the-sra.org.uk>

Mon 15/02/2021 09:31

This email originated outside the University. Check before clicking links or attachments.

I hope you enjoyed the course on Friday with Karen.

We would be very grateful if you could take a few minutes to complete our feedback form. It is very short with only 9 questions and space for comments, if you wish to make any. Your response will be anonymous.

You should go to <https://scroll.infotap.uk/s/sra/course-feedback?event=ODA120221>

The link will stay open for around 7 days.

If you would like a certificate of your attendance please email admin@the-sra.org.uk and my colleague, Gabrielle, will be able to arrange this. Just forward this email to the Admin address and add – CERTIFICATE REQUEST – in the message header.

As always, if you have any queries don't hesitate to contact me.

Best wishes, Lindsay

Lindsay Adams

Social Research Association



Lindsay.Adams@the-sra.org.uk
www.the-sra.org.uk



the british
psychological society
professional development centre

Poster Prize 2nd Place

This is to certify that

Elizabeth Carter

Was awarded 2nd prize

At the

Division of Occupational Psychology Annual Conference

*At Crowne Plaza, Stratford-Upon-Avon.
08 – 10 January 2020*

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'F. A.', written over a horizontal line.

.....
Signed on behalf of the Society

Appendix K: Participant Poster for Recruitment



What has working through a pandemic been like for you?

Participants NEEDED for an art-based workshop.



Workshops will be run by Elizabeth Carter, an Occupational Psychologist and a PhD student at Lancaster University.

Would you like some time out to be creative?

What is involved:

- One hour of your time to create and share some art, to express your working experience over the past two years.
- **ALL are welcome, no artistic talent is needed**
- Refreshments will be provided.

Workshop is Wednesday 25th May at 12.00pm in

For more information, please contact me, Elizabeth Carter on:
Telephone: 0779306 3722
Email: e.carter@lancaster.ac.uk

Appendix L: Materials used for online workshop

Art packs for online workshops included the following materials:



Photographs of an actual pack given to participant

- PVA glue set
- Pritt stick
- Scissors
- Two A3 sized pieces of white paper
- Small pack of 14 different coloured pencils
- 12 different coloured pipe cleaners
- Two pieces of different coloured felt
- A piece of fabric
- Two pieces of different coloured strips of plasticine
- Some thick thread
- 8 pieces of different coloured paper
- Coloured piece of corrugated card
- Two different colours of tissue paper
- A coloured, shiny piece of card
- 15 different coloured lolly sticks
- Some different colours and sizes textured balls
- A felt coaster
- Stick on paper flowers & some shiny stars
- Two different coloured crayon like paint sticks
- Textured felt hearts of different colours
- Stick on wooden items, for example swans, flowers
- Some acorns and oak leaves
- Small bottle of blowing bubbles

Appendix M: Photographs of Participant Creations

Katherine Face to Face Workshop:



Katherine Online Workshop:



Rhiannon Face to Face Workshop:



Rhiannon Online Workshop:



Rachel Face to Face Workshop



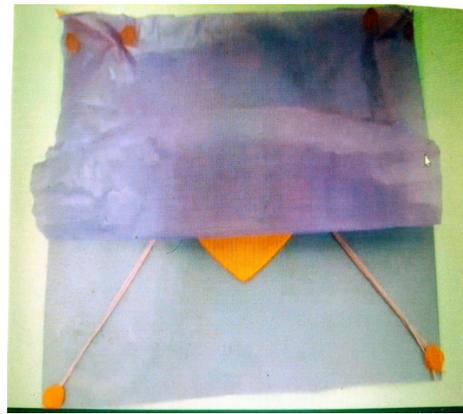
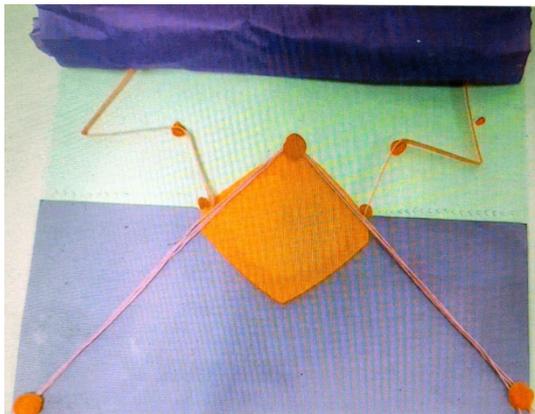
Rachel Online Workshop:



Jackie Face to Face Workshop:



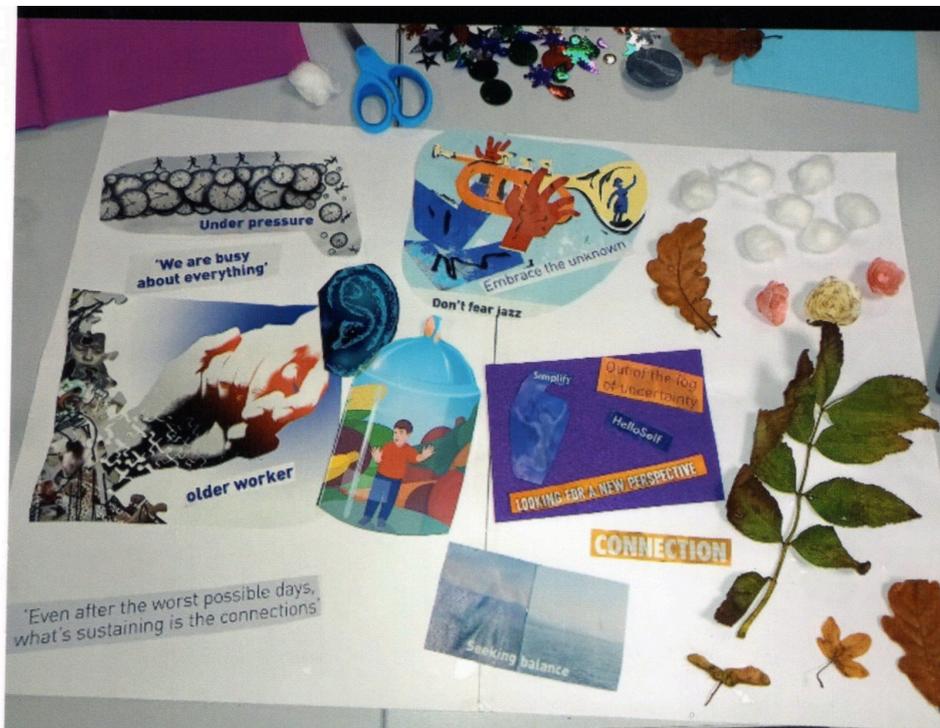
Jackie Online Workshop:



Angela Face to Face Workshop:



Angela Online Workshop:



Peter Face to Face Workshop:



Peter Online Workshop:



Eleanor Face to Face Workshop:



Eleanor Online Workshop:



Lesley Face to Face Workshop:



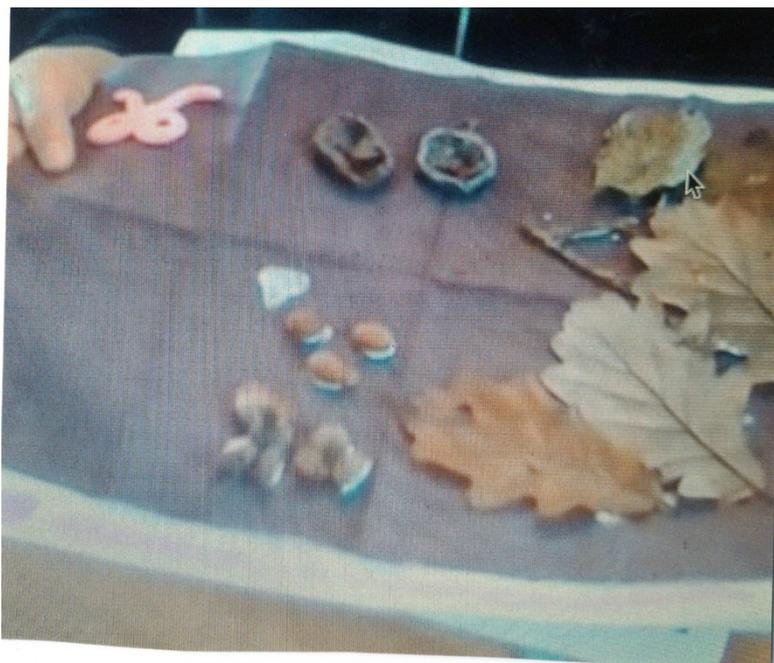
Lesley Online Workshop:



Bee Face to Face Workshop:



Bee Online Workshop:



Joyce Face to Face Workshop



Photos of Group One Face to Face and Online Creations:



Photos of Group Two Face to Face and Online Creations



Photos of Group Three Face to Face and Online Creations:



Appendix N: Revised Interview Guide

A) Meaning of the art to the participant

1. How comfortable were you in taking part in the art-based workshops?
2. What were your initial thoughts and feelings in relation to taking part?
3. Does the art capture the essence of your experience?
4. On reflecting what you did create in the workshops, would you want to change anything?

B) Place of making the art

5. How did you find creating the art in a face-to-face group workshop?
6. How did you find creating the art in an online group workshop?
7. How did you find the timing of the workshops and the space in between them?

C) Sharing Experience

8. Do you believe that creating the art, meant that you shared something different than you would have done, if you had just described your experience verbally?
9. Would you have shared anything else had the experience been 1:1?
- 10.. What do you think another person would learn about you, from what you created?

11. How might your manager or organisation learn about you, from what you created?

12. What, if anything, did you personally learn or gain from this exercise that was valuable to you?"

Appendix O: Data Analysis of Visuals

Workshop Three Participants

	Jackie Face to Face	Jackie Online	Angela Face to Face	Angela online	Katherine Face to face	Katherine Online
Main Colour(s)	Grey, orange, red, yellow, navy and green	Purple and orange	Green and white	Purple, green and white	Blue and orange	Blue
Secondary Colour(s)	n/a	n/a	Orange and pink		yellow	Orange and yellow
Symbolism Used	n/a	Jackie could roll up the top piece of purple tissue = being able to roll work away and have balance between home again.	(i) Sheep with a baby sheep on top of it = family (ii) group of people climbing up a hill = uphill struggle (iii) puff of magic = tired and needing a break and the lockdown gave her that break from work.	(i) hands = connection with colleagues (ii) ear = colleagues sitting and listening to each other (iii) “don’t feel jazz” = embracing fears and the unknown. (iv) man in the glass jar (in the centre) = not having enough space to work with colleagues constantly popping in. (iv) Leaves = connection to nature (vi) purple piece of fabric in the middle = “almost like my security blanket”	(i) breakfast plate with eggs = normality, before “covid hits”. (ii) Cup of coffee with a cross drawn over it = prison (iii) picture of a solo puffin and a picture of a group of puffins = disconnection from colleagues (iv) three flowers representing new beginning, new growth and good energy.	

Feelings expressed in The visuals by the participant.	No emotion seemed to be expressed by the visual creation.	No emotion seemed to be expressed by the visual.	Love, connection, pride.		Love and hope.	
Feelings the participant creator, expressed in words, in the narrative.	(i)"I couldn't think of anything positive" (ii)"feeling trapped by the intensity of work" (iii)"there was this kind of pressure" (iv)"it wasn't loneliness as I had previously understood it"	(i)"I feel more structured" (ii)"It's not necessary that everything is wonderful, but it just feels settled"	Tiredness, love, happy, blissful, feel very lucky, fears for others, shock, disconcerting, stress, uphill struggle.	(i)"I feel like I'm one of those older workers" (ii)"I feel like we're so lucky" (iii)"not being so anxious" (iv)feel comforted.	Lucky, uncertainty, disconnected, isolating, hopeful	
Non-verbal responses by the creator participant		Jackie showed non-verbal happiness that she could roll work away when she demonstrated rolling up and down			Katherine worked silently whilst making the creation.	Smiling and enjoying the pleasure of making.

		the top piece of purple tissue.				
Researcher feelings, impressions	Intrigued by the creation because it looked abstract and without form but on reflection with the narrative, there is an emptiness or a sense of disconnection present.	Although Jackie's creation did not indicate a feeling, when Jackie demonstrated rolling up the tissue paper, it felt that this movement represented empowerment.	It felt positive with the hearts and pictures of nature and plants, although the narrative expressed the difficulties experienced and clarified the meaning of the picture of people walking uphill.	After listening to Angela's narrative, I had a sense of peace. I said this to Angela after listening to her narrative and she said, "There definitely is and I almost included a little peace, a little dove for peace".	There was a sense of her needing the time and space to herself, as she was creating the visual. When describing her visual Katherine's narrative was clear and focused. Katherine started by saying: "So I've used this mid-line here (pointing to the orange voile from the bottom left to top right) to illustrate a path. She felt in charge of her narrative and how she viewed her working life, so ownership of her story felt strong.	Pleasure from seeing so much joy from Katherine; and witnessing the creativity of Katherine wrapping her creation into what looked like a gift wrapped present.

<p>Other participant responses</p>	<p>(i)"it's really lovely to hear someone's truthful experience. You really thought about it and I'm really fascinated by that" (ii)"that was just interesting to hear (you) reflecting that way Jackie. I really liked listening to that".</p>	<p>(i)"I love the depth you go to, with such simplicity. I'm just blown away, that you can create art to convey all of that you know, in that abstract way. Honestly, I am blown away by that. It's just beautiful and simple but really deep. You are clearly a really creative person. I love it" (ii)"And that's why I'm really admiring of you Jackie, of how you can, you can use just the materials and create something abstract. It tells such a deep and meaningful story".</p>	<p>"It's so clever, the way you pulled it all together, like the puff of magic, and the whole narrative, from just what happened to be here...you were able to go and pick out something to make such a narrative. That's really clever".</p>	<p>"I like the way you talked about that purple as almost a security blanket. I think the same, for me, that (the colour) is sort warmth in winter. It's quite interesting that you've described it like that. And the way you talk about autumn, and winter is really quite unusual isn't it. Most people complain about this time of year. I can remember last time – did you have the same under pressure?" "The cloche made me think of that sort of lack of control, isn't it. Of whose going to come into your space and so on. I remember Angela showing us the space she had created the last time we met and that was her space, her and her team. You get invaded at this time of year".</p>	<p>"I love how detailed that was Katherine. Loved that and the way you could represent that so clearly. Quite amazing".</p>	
<p>What participants</p>	<p>Left it behind with me.</p>	<p>n/a</p>	<p>Kept it and took it home.</p>	<p>n/a</p>	<p>Left it behind with me.</p>	<p>n/a</p>

<p>did with their creations and thoughts in relation to being a participant</p>			<p>“This is delightful. This is DE – lightful. It’s a beautiful think to do”.</p>		<p>(i)”Just never have the time to do this, in work or in life really. I am busy all the time”.</p> <p>(ii)”I really enjoyed it. I must say. It was amazing just to get that hour or so to do something, not having to think about work, it was just so enjoyable. I feel rejuvenated after doing that”.</p>	
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Appendices P: Development of Coding

I created emotional codes (see table **X**) which did not seem particularly meaningful, until I noticed the pattern of opposites (**See table Y**).

Example of Emotional Coding:
• Depression
• Lucky
• Sense of panic
• distraught
• overwhelmed
• hope
• relief
• amazing
• bliss
• alone
• isolated
• uncertainty

Table X.

Example of Coding of Opposites:
• depression and hope
• distraught and relief
• predictable and uncertain
• freedom and restriction
• connected to nature and detached from nature
• I'm not a computer person and I am computer literate
• what I missed and what I did not miss
• I had it easier than others and It was so difficult
• stagnant and growing

Table Y.

Appendix Q: Coding of Visual Opposites

Coding of Visual Opposites	
(A) Use of contrasting colours in the two workshops (by the same participant)	
Example in face to face workshop <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Blue, black, white i.e. use of dark colours 	Example Colour(s) in online workshop <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • pink, red, yellow, orange i.e. use of bright colours
(B) Visual representing a one off situation OR a visual that spans time	
Creating a visual of a one situation and moment in time. For example Jackie's creations (see appendix L for photo)	Creating a visual that spanned a period of time. For example, Katherine's creation in the face to face workshop (see appendix L for photo)
(C) The use of visual metaphor	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • people climbing, walking or running up a hill • picture of a single, lone animal 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a person on a slide moving downhill • picture of a group of animals

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