

Dance into the unknown. A heuristic inquiry.

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Attestation of authorship

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work, and that to the best of my knowledge and belief it contains no material previously published or written by another person (except where explicitly defined in the acknowledgements), nor material which, to a substantial extent, has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning.

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Abstract

We live in a society that places great value on rational thought and verbal communication. This bias is embedded in mainstream approaches to mental health and wellbeing. However, increasingly contemporary psychotherapeutic understandings are recognising the value of non-verbal, body-oriented interventions and wellbeing practices, such as dance and movement. Neuroscience, relational psychotherapy and developmental theory are converging to recognise the need for such interventions for emotional regulation, developmental repair, trauma treatment and overall mind/body integration. This dissertation expands and illuminates the above knowledge through a heuristic inquiry into the researcher's own lived experience of dance and movement. Utilizing the six stages of heuristic self-inquiry and core methods such as indwelling and self-dialogue, an in-depth investigation into the experience of these practices is undertaken. This is the idiosyncratic story of one woman's "dance into the unknown." The findings reveal that while internally driven improvised dance and movement can evoke unexpected and challenging emotional responses, it can also help to integrate mind and body, elevate mood, regulate emotions and enhance creativity and change. The study synthesizes and integrates these findings with current literature on this topic and psychotherapeutic understandings. Ultimately, this dissertation offers greater understanding of the ways in which dance/movement can improve mental wellbeing and potentially enrich clinical practice.

Chapter One: Introduction

This dissertation is a foray into the world of improvised dance and movement. I have been interested in this subject for a very long time. In this chapter I explain what lead me to this research. I also present a basic outline of the nature of the inquiry, the research questions, the intention of the study and my overall understanding of the significance of this research within the context of psychotherapy.

Dancing in the bush

When I was a little girl, our house backed onto a large spread of beautiful native bush. Every so often I would take myself into this bush to a set of four trees. The distance between each of these tree trunks created a rectangular shape, which became my “special place”. In this special place, amidst the quiet of the bush, I would sing and dance. I would sing to, and dance with, each of these trees, as though they were actively attentive and emotionally involved beings. At times, in my young mind, it seemed as though these trees sang back to me and, from time to time, even swayed or moved. One day, deep in my singing/dancing trance I heard the unmistakable sound of stifled laughter. It was my older brother and sister spying on me. The laughing induced shame. It hit me like a rock. The moment was both humiliating and shattering. I never returned to my special place again—at least not as a child.

It seems that there was an implicit rule in my family—that no one was to sing or dance. Such freedom of body and spirit was simply too threatening. When I think back to my surrounds as a child, it is amazing to me that I danced at all. My parents were both quite disembodied in their own ways. My mother, it seemed, lived entirely in her head. She was obsessed with the world of ideas, philosophy, literature, and religion. My father, too, carried his own form of disembodiment; different to my mother’s, but perhaps with features in common. Having survived World War II, he developed various ways of avoiding the body. I think that the body probably carried too much memory and feeling of those terrible times. Better to zone out.

Years later, as a young adult, my flatmate took me to her “creative dance class” that she ran. I had told her that I always wanted to dance, but was afraid. She convinced me to come along. As I walked towards the small community hall I felt terrified. However, after 10 minutes in this dimly lit hall, with a handful of people, something else kicked in. Perhaps something I had not felt since I was a little girl. Liberation? Exhilaration? Integration? All three. As I danced, it was like all of me came together.

This was the beginning of a reignited love affair, which would sustain me for the next 20 years.

Salire – To leap

The word dance derives from the Latin verb “saltare” which is frequentative of the verb “salire” meaning “to leap” (Online Etymology Dictionary, 2018). This dissertation is a heuristic exploration of dance and movement. It requires a leap into the unknown territory of my own unconscious. The heuristic approach is based on an epistemological perspective that learning takes place through experience. Heuristic inquiry asks us to delve beneath the rational, to the underneath, the tacit, intuitive, and unconscious levels of being (Moustakas, 1990).

Dance and movement

Dance can be thought of in a number of ways: as a performance, a creative outlet, a cultural tradition, a ritual, a fun activity, and as a therapeutic practice. It is dance and movement as an internally driven, improvised, and creative practice that is the primary focus of this study. According to Juhan (2003), when we dance we call on universal elements that are inherent to any moving body, such as breath, gravity, centering, expansion and contraction. Juhan defined dance and movement as “any action or impulse experienced in the body, whether or not the action or impulse creates an outward movement in posture or location of the physical body, in whole or in part” (Juhan, 2003, p. 7). This definition captures something of the subtlety and internal orientation of the dance explored in this dissertation. This type of dance is not a performance; in fact, at times, you may not even be able to see it happening. Further, this mode of dance tends to be a continuum between dance and movement; rather than one or the other. Therefore, throughout this dissertation I use the terms dance, movement, and dance/movement interchangeably to refer to this concept of dance/movement.

5Rhythms dance – Inviting spirit

Not long after my first dance class, I stumbled upon a form of dance called 5Rhythms, which would become my main mode of dance. 5Rhythms is a shamanic practice founded by Gabrielle Roth (1990). It is structured around a movement cycle called the “wave” which encompasses a journey through five rhythms: flowing, staccato, chaos, lyrical, and stillness. I was told that there was no set way to dance these rhythms; and encouraged to listen to my internal impulses, to follow the music and surrender to my personal interpretation of each rhythm, moment by moment. As I delved into this dance

form, I found that I quickly became entranced with the layers of myself to be accessed, and the range of non-verbal interactions with others that became possible in this environment.

Roth's (1990) main message is that by dancing we invite spirit in and, in doing so, are able to feel whole again. This is the essential power of dance. When we dance we integrate mind, body, and soul, which is profoundly healing. Roth asserted that the "split" of these parts of ourselves is not our natural state and creates a lot of misery in our everyday lives. We get stuck in our heads and our personality. She believed connection with spirit can rescue us from this painful existence, which is a trap that keeps us in the shallows of ourselves. Roth asserted that the dynamic improvisational nature of 5Rhythms dance can get us out of our rigid patterns. She stated that head, ego, and personality cannot keep up with us when we dance. The wildness of dance allows us to break free from our smallness, our chains. Dance allows us to connect with our fullness and bigness. She described this state as "ecstasy" or the "silver desert."

The dancing path leads us from the inertia of sleepwalking to the ecstasy of living the spirit of the moment.... It is a Silver Desert – an illuminative, visionary level of consciousness. (Roth, 1990, p. 3)

Psychotherapy training – Inner tensions

Several years later, when I began my psychotherapy training at AUT, I went through a range of feelings around the absence of any teaching regarding the power of "being in your body", "expressive movement", or "breath". While I deeply appreciated many aspects of psychodynamic theory, I was frustrated by the "intellectual", "rational", "verbal" focus of this modality, and what I perceived as the lack of incorporation of what the body and movement had to offer. In some ways, the training was a repetition of my childhood; an environment that seemed to ignore and dismiss the body. Too trapped in the mind! I felt a bit like that child in me that knew of an alternate reality but could not speak of it, could not mention it. Surely, I would be shamed, just as I had been as a child. Better not to create a stir. Anyway, how could I communicate the power of my non-verbal experiences? That was the very point—they were non-verbal! So, I sat through the training with a growing tension in me between the verbal therapist and the free-spirited dancer/mover. Perhaps, on some level, I hoped that the latter would just gradually die, so that eventually I would be able to move forward confidently into my work as a verbal therapist, without all these inner tensions, turmoil, and disjunction.

Mind-body split

During my training I increasingly found myself thinking about the concepts of mind and body and how we relate to them generally. Historically, it seems that they have often been thought of as opposites or dualities. This attitude can be traced back to the 16th century philosopher, Descartes, who viewed the mind and body as distinctly separate aspects of ourselves. This view incorporated the idea that mind is somehow superior to the body and was linked to a range of other dualities; for example, rationality versus emotions, light versus dark, man versus woman, heaven versus earth, and spirituality versus sexuality. The body has tended to be associated with the latter qualities that were inferior: emotions, dark, woman, earth, and sexuality (Jahner, 2001). I think that these attitudes linger in our society today, and have important implications for how we continue to relate to our bodies, and the movement of our bodies, as a culture, and as individuals.

It is inevitable that medicine and psychoanalysis, specifically, is infused with this cultural legacy. The psychoanalytic idea that body based experience is somehow primitive, less mature than the capacity to use language and to think, seems directly related to this larger cultural attitude regarding mind and body (McDougall, 1989). The concern that psychoanalysis is too head oriented and fails to address bodily experiences reoccurs in the literature by psychotherapists incorporating body oriented approaches in their work. Bloom (2000) spoke of “the dearth of practical exploration in psychoanalysis of the relationship between a mental event and a bodily event” and described psychoanalysis as perpetuating “a frustrating gap between soma and psyche” (p. 167).

Open Floor dance – Presence and embodiment

For Juhan (2003), founding member of Open Floor, dance is not so much about reaching a heightened state of consciousness (although this often happens); rather, it is about developing the capacity and presence to explore and engage with whatever arises in your movement practice, and in your life (Juhan, 2014). In the final clinical year of my psychotherapy training, I undertook a two-year training in Open Floor dance. This movement practice builds on Roth’s body of work, but offers movement based resources that seek to develop physical, emotional, and relational intelligence. To complete my practice hours, I provided a series of group sessions for an inpatient trauma group. In a supportive and gentle manner, I invited these clients into movement. We explored themes such as grounding, centering, activating, expanding, contracting,

releasing, and settling. During these sessions, I was struck with how receptive the participants were to the resources offered and the overall experience of inhabiting their bodies.

My question

So where does all this lead me? What is my key point of concern? Reflecting on my past experience has led me to realise I wish to integrate something in myself. I want to see how psychotherapy and dance/movement fit together for me. How they relate to each other—if they relate to each other. At this point, despite my previous experience of dance and movement, I realised I did not really know what this practice meant to me, or to my work as a psychotherapist. Therefore, the core question I arrived at was: “What is a psychotherapist’s lived experience of dance/movement?”

Aim of the study

This dissertation is a heuristic inquiry into my own experience of dance and movement. I have chosen heuristic method so that I can investigate this phenomenon on a deep level. The process will incorporate the six stages of heuristic inquiry and core methods such as indwelling and self-dialogue. Ultimately, the inquiry will entail a synthesis and integration of individual experience with contemporary understandings from relevant literature.

On a personal level, my aim is to deepen my understanding of the practice of dance/movement and to integrate this understanding with my psychotherapeutic knowledge and perspectives. At a broader level, my intention is to add a unique voice to the current body of literature on the meaning and value of dance and movement. Ultimately, I hope to offer greater understanding of the ways in which dance/movement might potentially enrich and deepen clinical practice for the profession of psychotherapy, and for the wider mental health sphere.

Significance of the study

In general, traditional psychoanalysis has not recognised dance/movement as a medium for healing and wellbeing. However, contemporary psychoanalytic and psychodynamic thought has undergone important shifts into the 21st century that are allowing greater recognition, and even endorsement, of non-verbal, body-oriented interventions, such as the use of dance/movement (Bloom, 2006; Shuper Engelhard, 2017; Siegel, 1984). A number of influences have converged to make this possible: important discoveries in the fields of neuroscience, traumatology, and developmental science, along with the growth of relational and intersubjective thought in psychoanalysis (Totton, 2003). In this new

light, dance/movement might be seen as an important means of self-expression, a way to both access and regulate difficult emotional states, and a method for preverbal developmental repair, as well as many other things (Apfel & Simon, 2013; Bloom, 2000; Trevarthen & Fresquez, 2015a; Van der Kolk, 2014). This dissertation aims to offer an in-depth, personal, and psychodynamic perspective on the practice of dance/movement. I believe that increased insight into the value of body-oriented interventions and practices, such as dance/movement, holds the potential to importantly expand both theoretical and methodological knowledge within the profession of psychotherapy.

Overview

This chapter is an introduction to the nature of my inquiry and the core elements that have lead me to this inquiry. I have elucidated my question, the underlying aims of this research, and the potential significance of this study within the context of psychotherapy and mental health. Chapter two provides an explanation of heuristic methodology and my rationale for choosing this particular vehicle for my research. It includes a description of the six phases of heuristic research and the way that I have worked with these phases through my exploration of movement and dance. Chapter three offers a theoretical context for my inquiry into the phenomenon. It is a consideration and synthesis of dance/movement literature. Chapter four is an account of my experiential exploration of movement and dance, which is loosely chronological and thematically organised. In this chapter I provide a detailed description of my discoveries and reflections on what has arisen. Chapter five is the conclusion of my dissertation. It entails a discussion of my findings in relation to the literature examined and consideration the implications and meaning of these findings to myself, as a psychotherapist, and more generally to psychotherapy as a profession.

Chapter Two: Methodology and Method

Heuristic methodology

In the heuristic process I am personally involved. I am searching for qualities, conditions and relationships that underlie a fundamental question, issue or concern. (Moustakas, 1990 p. 11)

The methodology and method for this dissertation is heuristic research (Moustakas, 1990). My research question asks: What is a psychotherapist's lived experience of dance and movement? Heuristic research is based on self-inquiry. Derived from the Greek word *heuriskein*, heuristics means "*to discover or to find*" (Moustakas, 1990, p. 9). Heuristic research aims to discover the nature and meaning of experience. It involves a disciplined, immersive, exploratory process which is both rigorous and intuitive.

Learning about heuristic methodology gave me permission to consider using myself as the central tool for exploring my area of interest. This presented as both a liberating and somewhat unsettling idea. After some consideration of other research methodologies, such as hermeneutic and thematic analysis, I chose heuristics because I thought that it was the best match for my research aims. The heuristic process offered me a comprehensive and compelling vehicle for an in-depth exploration of the experience of dance/movement. Further, and importantly, the philosophical ideas underpinning heuristic research align well with my values and beliefs as a psychotherapist, dancer, and human-being.

Philosophical foundations

Philosophically, heuristic research falls within an interpretivist paradigm. Interpretivism is a response to the deterministic and reductionist approach of the positivist research paradigm.

Rather than seeking the truth of an experience, interpretivism is interested in what it is to be human and what meanings people attach to their lives. (Grant & Giddings, 2002, p. 16)

As a psychotherapist, my work is steeped in such questions: What are the subjective experiences of my clients? How do they make sense of them? What is my own experience in relation to these clients? What meaning do I make of these experiences? These kinds of questions sit at the heart of the profession of psychotherapy. It is only fitting then that I bring the same orientation to my research

topic: What is the nature and meaning of my experience of dance/movement? How does this relate to what other people might experience? What do my findings mean for my work and understandings as a psychotherapist? Interpretivism values subjective human experience. Generally, it does not believe that the researcher can be separated from the research. Interpretivism holds that, in fact, it is the researcher's subjective experience that gives meaning, depth, and value to the research (Giddings & Grant, 2002).

Within the interpretivist paradigm, heuristic research draws primarily on the beliefs and understandings of phenomenology, as well as existentialism and humanistic psychology (Moustakas, 1994). Phenomenology is a philosophy founded on the work of Edmund Husserl, who believed that we learn primarily through our experiences, as opposed to prior knowledge, hypotheses, and rationality (Sultan, 2018). However, heuristic research differs from phenomenological research in that it goes a step further regarding the importance of the researcher's subjectivity. Whereas, Husserl's phenomenology makes some attempt to separate the self of the researcher from the phenomenon being experienced (through bracketing and reduction), heuristic research places the subjectivity of the researcher at the heart of the research process. Development and transformation in the researcher is valued and expected as an inevitable and important aspect of the heuristic process. Heuristic research seeks understanding of the phenomenon within the context of the researcher (Douglass & Moustakas, 1985; Moustakas, 1994; Sela-Smith, 2002).

It is the focus on the human person in experience and that person's reflective search, awareness, and discovery that constitutes the essential core of heuristic investigation. (Douglass & Moustakas, 1985, p. 42)

My research question is premised on the belief that our individual experiences are of value; that we can learn something from them and that they can offer universal meaning and significance to others. I have chosen a methodology which supports these beliefs. My methodological process for this research will not involve co-researchers, as Moustakas (1990) advised. In this way I adhere to Sela-Smith's (2002), rather than Moustakas's, concept of heuristic research, which holds that heuristic research is essentially about self-search and, therefore, must stay grounded in the territory of the researcher's self. Sela-Smith views involvement of co-researchers/participants as essentially a distraction to one's own internal process of discovery through the self, that can happen only when one surrenders fully to this process.

However, the above understandings are not without conflict within me. As mentioned earlier, on discovery, the heuristic approach presented as both inspiring and unsettling to me. Could I really validate my own experience to this level? Was I willing to trust in my own process to this degree, to enter an in-depth self-inquiry and believe it might have value and worth to others? I chose to take that leap. This did not mean that the research process became certain or straight forward in any way. I had to take myself with me, which included all my doubts and concerns.

Heuristic concepts, psychotherapy, and dance

The core guiding principles of heuristic research consist of six key concepts that are integral to the research process: focusing, indwelling, self-dialogue, intuition, the internal frame of reference, and tacit knowing. Of these concepts, tacit knowing is the most fundamental and lies at the foundation of heuristic methodology (Moustakas, 1990).

Moustakas (1990) drew on Polanyi's understandings of tacit knowing. Polanyi (1983) observed that "we can know more than we can tell" (p. 4). According to Polanyi (1983) all knowledge consists of, or is rooted in, our capacity for tacit knowing. Moustakas told us that tacit knowledge allows us to sense the unity or wholeness of something from an understanding of the individual qualities or parts. He used the example of a tree to demonstrate how this might work:

Knowledge of the trunk, branches, buds, flowers, leaves, colours, textures, sounds, shape and size – and other parts or qualities – ultimately may enable a sense of the treeness of a tree, and its wholeness as well. This knowing of the essence or treeness of a tree is achieved through a tacit process.

(Moustakas, 1990 p. 21)

Moustakas (1990) held that tacit knowledge is the "basic capacity of the self of the researcher" (p. 22) and believed that ultimately it increases our capacity for new awareness and new understanding. He suggested that we contact that knowledge in our research process through "living the question internally in sources of being and nonbeing, and recording hunches, ideas and essences as they emerge" (p. 40).

The core concepts of heuristic research align with both psychotherapy and my topic. There are significant similarities between the concept of tacit knowledge and the notion of the unconscious. The idea of the unconscious is a core component of psychodynamic practice and theory. This is why psychotherapists tend to pay attention

to aspects such as: body language, tone of voice, slips of tongue, fantasies, and dreams. Much of our work is premised on the idea that both, as clients and as therapists, *we can know more than we can tell*. In fact, it seems that all six concepts of heuristic research relate to the process of psychotherapy in some way. As a psychotherapist, I dwell and reflect deeply on the clinical material that presents, I bring immense focus and presence both in and out of sessions, I consistently use my intuition, and I draw deeply from my own frame of reference as well as my clients. There is also strong resonance between heuristic concepts and the practice of dance/movement. As an internally driven, bodily felt, non-verbal, improvised, and highly experiential practice, dance/movement calls on all of the concepts of heuristic research in one form or another. To fully engage in improvised movement requires one to tune in deeply, to focus, to non-verbally dialogue with the different parts of oneself, to follow intuitive impulses and, inevitably, to enter the realm of the unconscious or tacit dimension. The heuristic ethos is embracing of creative practices, non-verbal and non-rational modes of communication, the unknown, experimentation, and the deeply personal. At the most general level, I have chosen this methodology because it aligns with my values and resonates with my own particular way of being in the world.

The exploration process – Rhythms and cycles

You are meant to move; from flowing, to staccato, through chaos into lyric and back into the stillness from which all movement comes. (Roth, 1990 p. 204)

Like the wave of rhythms in 5Rhythms dance or the gestalt cycle of Open Floor movement (Open Floor, 2016), heuristic research is its own ‘dance,’ incorporating a sequence of distinct phases that each contribute to the unfolding process of the inquiry. Although Moustakas (1990) presented these stages as a linear progression, this form of research is commonly circular and meandering, and the stages may range from linear to more cyclical, depending on the researcher’s particular approach (Sela-Smith, 2002). My experience of the stages of this research veered more towards the cyclical than the linear, which is in keeping with the unpredictable and circular nature of improvised movement and dance. I found that I moved in and out of the heuristic phases in accordance with what I felt was needed (sometimes experienced as blind fumbling) as my research process unfolded.

Initial engagement

Flowing is fluid, round and permissive. It is continuous movement, which is grounded and earthy and accents the receptive nature within us. Staccato, on the other hand, is percussive, angular, defined and beat-oriented. Its movements build potency and express the passions of the heart. (Juhan, 2003 p. 76)

Like the first two rhythms of Roth's wave (1990), flowing and staccato, the first stage of heuristic research requires both openness and active engagement in order to clarify the research question. This stage constitutes a sustained focus and concentration to uncover the essence of a passionate interest. It requires an inner receptiveness which leads to a clarification and expansion of knowledge. By allowing intuition to run freely, the question takes "form and significance" (Moustakas, 1990 p. 27).

Initially, I was drawn to a heuristic exploration of movement and dance in a clinical setting, as this was an area of interest to me. I wanted to experiment with using movement and dance therapeutically and document my experiences. However, this idea presented a few problems: a) I was not specifically trained to work in this way and did not have clients whom I was currently working with in this way, b) I did not have a supervisor oriented to this mode, and c) I learned that I was unlikely to gain ethical approval because of the amount of vulnerable client material such a research project would engender. So, eventually, I began to turn my attention towards the possibility of exploring my own experience of dance and movement. I suppose, in some ways, I felt a bit like some people feel at their first dance class; self-conscious and sure that they are going to get every move wrong. However, as I opened myself to the range of feelings arising about the prospect of such a study, I came to believe that I was heading in the right direction, in regard to my "passionate interest" despite the somewhat stuttering rhythm within me. Contexts such as my dissertation class, the heuristic group, supervision, personal therapy, conversations with my partner, and inner self-reflection all provided places where I could explore and actively engage with my research topic. Through trial and error, and a fair degree of anxiety and self-doubt, I was able to clarify my research interest, which eventually took shape as a specific question.

Immersion

Chaos is ...an internal dissolving of all known structures and the complete surrender to what is—or at least a practice in that direction. (Juhan, 2003 p. 76)

Like the rhythm of chaos, the immersion stage requires a type of surrender that allows the researcher to live the question in “waking, sleeping and even in dream stages” (Moustakas, 1990 p. 28). In consultation with my supervisor, I decided on a daily practice of improvised internally-driven movement/dance to immerse myself in the experience, in combination with regular journaling of my experiences, including such elements as dreams, conversations, emotions, thoughts, self-dialogue, poetry, drawing, imagery, hunches, and associations. I also set an intention to attend local 5Rhythms and Open Floor dance classes (whenever my parenting schedule permitted), of which I would record my experiences. Further, I booked in a number of residential dance/movement workshops over the course of the year, one of these being the final module of my Open Floor training. All these dance/movement contexts provided opportunities for me to immerse myself in my topic and journal my experiences.

My initial attempts to begin a regular dance and movement practice engendered much personal resistance, which I describe in some detail in the following chapter. However, despite the experience of fits and starts, I eventually found myself entering a process of regular dance and movement, and began a detailed recording of the experiences that were arising for myself. I think that once I accepted that my resistance, anxiety, and self-doubt were all part of the process and let myself become curious about everything that was arising internally, I was more able to “surrender” to my immersion in the way that Sela-Smith (2002) explained is necessary for an in-depth and meaningful self-study.

Recording of my immersive experiences mostly took the form of journaling but, at other times, I used mediums such as drawing or poetry, in an attempt to translate experiences that did not necessarily feel that easy to put into words or sentences. My supervisor suggested that I allow either a night or a day between my dance/movement and recording of this experience, so as to provide time for whatever arose in me to travel into the deeper layers of myself—the tacit dimension. I found that allowing this space brought depth to the process and one manifestation was the close attention I began to pay to my dreams, which were often rich with imagery and emotions. Moustakas and Douglas (1985) described a feeling of lostness and letting go – “relinquishing control and being tumbled about with the newness and drama of a searching focus that is taking over life” (p. 47). I can relate to this as the immersion stage progressed and I began to enter into unfamiliar aspects of myself through my exploration. My initial immersion was sustained over a period of 5-6 months. There

were also returns to immersive states at later stages, during intervals in writing about my findings, the literature, and during the final stage of concluding my dissertation.

The immersion phase required me to come from what Moustakas called an internal frame of reference, that is, to stay in touch with the “innumerable perceptions” and “awarenesses” that were purely my own (Douglas & Moustakas, 1985 p. 47). The process of indwelling was also important. Moustakas and Douglas (1985) described this as allowing oneself to “go deeply into an image, sensation or realisation and pause to explore its meaning (p. 47). In movement I would do this by allowing myself to become deeply curious about a particular movement impulse and following it, playing with it, and fully exploring what emerged in myself as I did so. Alternatively, poetry and drawing became a useful way to indwell on an image or thought process or emotion that emerged through movement, in order to delve deeper into layers of self and meaning.

Incubation

Stillness ...a place to integrate and regenerate—resting, feeling, waiting for the impulses, playing in the spaciousness of a body, mind, heart, soul, and spirit...(Juhan, 2003 p. 76)

Like the rhythm of stillness, it seems like not much is happening, but underneath a lot is going on; “the seed undergoes silent nourishment, support, and care that produces a creative awareness [and] creative integration” (Moustakas, 1990 p. 29). In the stage of incubation the researcher is “no longer absorbed in the topic in any direct way or paying attention to things, situations, events, or people that will contribute to an understanding of the phenomenon” (Moustakas, 1990, p. 28).

Throughout my heuristic process there were various phases where I actively stepped out of direct engagement with movement and dance. The first time I did this was after my initial long phase of immersion, where I had gone deep into my unconscious material. I felt full and knew instinctively that it was time to come out of immersion. I stopped moving and dancing, and for a period I also stopped documenting my internal processes and experiences. This time of incubation lasted about three weeks after which I felt ready to re-immersify myself in the material that had emerged and begin to give it form and coherency through a narrative—*Dance into the unknown* (chapter four). I do not think I could have begun to explicate my experiences without the preliminary time of incubation that preceded it. A further period of incubation arose

after writing the narrative of my data chapter which, again, felt important in regards to the unfolding process.

Illumination

Lyrical is the energetic result of chaos, a light emptiness, a freedom, a sense of ease or mindless effortlessness, an expanded, timeless, completely awake trance. (Juhan, 2003 p. 76)

This stage of heuristic research has elements of the rhythm of lyrical in that, like this rhythm, illumination happens naturally without conscious striving or concentrated effort (Moustakas, 1990). It is as though something falls into place. Experiences of illumination happened throughout my heuristic process. Some of these moments of expanded awareness and insight felt like subtle shifts; whereas others were more obvious and stood out. Regardless, it seemed that these periods of illumination had their own timing and were certainly not something I could manipulate or control in any way.

An example of one of these moments took place a couple of days after my dissertation presentation. I had a shame attack following my presentation. The following evening I was reading an article by a Jungian psychotherapist about the meaning and history of dance. While reading, some important new awareness came to me regarding the shame I had experienced in relation to my presentation, but more generally, shame in relation to dance and movement.

Was it a combination of the harsh light of rationalism and/or puritanism that I feared having shone on me? If dance links to the essence of my feminine self as Hayes asserts, then perhaps it was not just my relationship with dance that I wanted to hide, but something of my feminine nature, something essential to my nature that could be damaged or hurt by what I perceived as a patriarchal gaze. Perhaps the stunned silence that I experienced in the department held the message there is no place for this part of you here - the rhythmic, irrational, emotional, imaginative, moody, non-verbal - deeply feminine part. I wonder if it was not just the shame of this part of me, but shame of not feeling able to adequately communicate these aspects of myself, therefore exacerbating the feeling of being somehow incomprehensible and alien. Journal 15.08.18

It would take me another few months to further integrate what came into consciousness in this moment, nevertheless this illumination was an important addition to various other moments of illumination that happened throughout my discovery process.

Explication

Moustakas (1990) asserted that the purpose of the explication phase is to “fully examine what has awakened in consciousness, in order to understand its various layers of meaning” (p. 31). Like initial engagement, this process seemed to contain elements of both the rhythms of flow and staccato. The focusing and indwelling of this phase required receptivity and, at the same time, directionality and clarity in order to refine, shape, and articulate the data.

Like the other phases, the process of explication was cyclical throughout my heuristic inquiry. Explication happened at various stages. During the first phase of explication I took a week off from all my other commitments and simply gave myself over to two large journals full of writing, drawing, and poetry that I had compiled in relation to my movement/dance explorations. I began to piece my data together into depictions and themes, focusing on what drew me in or called out to me. I began to find links between various passages in my journal. I spent time writing down my thoughts, responses, and insights in relation to the data; interspersed with long walks through the bush and countryside where I live. This extended time alone created a very different atmosphere and headspace to the usual hustle and bustle of family life to which I was accustomed. It felt important to create this quiet space where I could dwell and reflect on my experiences.

Explication was followed by another period of incubation where I simply did not think about or look at my data for a number of weeks. Towards the end of this second incubation I began my literature review. I had looked at select amounts of literature during my immersion phase, now it was time to delve more fully into the literature I had found on dance and movement; articulating, analysing, and synthesising that to which my discovery process had drawn me. As I wrote, I began to integrate the ideas and thoughts in the literature with my own experiences of dance and movement. This process echoed something of the previous explication phase, again requiring me to indwell as well as articulate and clarify. After a further period of removing myself from the content of both the data chapter and the literature, I returned to my data to bring further thoughts and reflections to my depictions and themes. Not long after, aware of my dissertation deadline, I began writing my discussion chapter that required further explication interspersed with re-immersion in my data. Eventually it was time to step back and take a look at the bigger picture, which is ultimately what the concluding chapter required.

Creative synthesis

A new whole is born. In this stage the researcher tells their story. (Sela-Smith, 2002, pp. 68-69)

According to Moustakas (1990), once the researcher has mastered knowledge of the material that illuminates and explicates the question, the researcher is in a position to put the components and core themes into a creative synthesis. The major concepts underlying a creative synthesis are tacit dimension, intuition, and self-searching.

Moustakas asserted that

the researcher must move beyond any confined or constricted attention to the data itself and permit an inward life on the question to grow, in such a way that a comprehensive expression of the essences of the phenomenon investigated is realized. (p. 32)

Each of the drawings and poems that appear throughout this dissertation represent moments of creative synthesis along the way, individually capturing the “essence” of a specific experience in the inquiry process. However, the ultimate synthesis of this research comes at the very end of this dissertation in the concluding statements, a brief metaphorical description of my process, that connects back to the story of dancing in the bush as a child, told in chapter one, and a painting that relates to this description (see Figure 8). These last offerings, synthesize and distil my entire exploration process, as well the core illuminations that arise out of that process.

Validity and limitations

The deepest currents of meaning and knowledge take place within the individual through one’s sense, perceptions, beliefs, and judgements. This requires a passionate, disciplined commitment to remain with a question intensely and continuously until it is illuminated or answered. (Moustakas, 1990, p. 15)

Heuristic research is a qualitative approach; therefore, its credibility and value lie not in statistics and correlations, but in its ability to convey meaning. Moustakas (1990) asserted that the validity of heuristic research is inherent in the methods used and the full commitment of the researcher to these methods. The researcher undergoes a “rigorous, exhaustive self-searching” (Moustakas, p. 32). This approach aligns with Lincoln and Guba’s (1981) emphasis on the importance of prolonged engagement

and persistent observation for building credibility in qualitative research. Moustakas (1990) described heuristic research as an “extremely demanding process” (p. 37), my understanding of which, is that one must be prepared to whole-heartedly commit to all of the processes of this methodology. It calls for authentic self-dialogue, a high degree of self-honesty, and unwavering diligence in investigation of the phenomenon. The ability of the researcher to turn inward to gain a deep and extensive comprehension of the topic (indwelling) is essential throughout this methodology (Moustakas). Moustakas told us that in the explication phase the researcher must return again and again to the data—reflecting, sifting, exploring, and judging. It is this exhaustive “appraisal of significance” that eventually allows the researcher to present the essence of their experience “comprehensively, vividly and accurately” (Moustakas, p. 32).

This inquiry is limited to my self-experience. A critique of heuristic research is that it can become too self-referential and restricted by the researcher’s blind spots, biases, and resistances (Ings, 2011). Sela-Smith (2002) suggested that “using others input without removing the focus from the self” is a good way to bring attention to possible areas of resistance in the researcher, such as “denial, projection or incomplete search” (p. 78). In order to address these concerns, despite finding it difficult and exposing at times, I made a commitment to ongoing open dialogue regarding my process with my supervisor, dissertation class, heuristic group, and therapist. These intersubjective experiences provided feedback and fresh eyes at important moments, helping me to perceive my own blind spots and resistances and, overall, kept me orientated to the core tasks of the methodology.

The study is also limited by the particular form of movement/dance that I have chosen to explore in this inquiry and which I have described as ‘improvised internally-driven dance and movement.’ This study does not investigate other dimensions of dance such as performance, cultural, or ritual aspects. Further, the improvised dance/movement I explore in this inquiry is influenced and guided by my own particular experience and understanding of, –specifically, 5Rhythms and Open Floor dance/movement, which inevitably bring with them their own set of values and ideas about the phenomenon. Underlying understandings of these modalities will be further elaborated in the following chapter, offering greater transparency and clarity in regard to the particular perspectives and biases I bring to this study.

Summary

In this chapter I have described the core ideas and philosophy of heuristic research and my rationale for choosing this methodology. I also provide an outline of my research process, clarifying the main concepts and steps of heuristic research and describing the way in which these methods have facilitated my inquiry into dance and movement.

For this research, I commit to a heuristic process, allowing myself to go through a deeply personal exploration which inevitably changes and grows me. In my own unique way, I immerse myself in the phenomenon and make time and space for an in-depth examination and explication of what arises through this immersion, including my anxieties and self-doubt. As best I can, I offer honest descriptions of the processes that allowed me to arrive where I arrived; that is, at the meanings, essences, and illuminations found. These are described in chapters four and five.

Chapter Three: Literature View

Introduction

This chapter explores literature on the nature and meaning of internally driven, improvised movement and dance. I begin with a brief consideration of historical perspectives on dance/movement. I then examine contemporary understandings of dance/movement from the field of mental health and wellbeing. Three important aspects of dance/movement are explored: dance/movement as a bodily process, dance/movement as a developmental process, and dance/movement as a creative process. I consider each of these elements individually with the overall purpose of understanding the phenomenon more fully. This is a “literature view” rather than a “literature review,” in line with the heuristic nature of my dissertation (K. Tudor, personal communication, February 25, 2018). The aim is not a critical assessment of all the literature on dance and movement; rather, further elucidation of dance and movement in relation to my own unique self-search.

Dance, movement, and history

As far back as can be remembered, people have gathered around fires to make music, sing, and dance. From historical accounts, whether improvised or structured, it seems that dance has played an important part in the daily life of many ancient cultures (Halprin, 2003; Jahner, 2001; Stromsted, 1999). In her overview of the history of dance, Jahner (2001) described the intricate relationship between ritual and dance in early pre-patriarchal societies.

Primal dances encircling funeral pyres encouraged mourners to process their grief; spiral dances celebrated fertility, and dances into and through the labyrinth helped people confront their inner and outer demons... (Jahner, 2001, p. 33)

Jahner (2001) particularly focused on women’s experiences of expressive movement and ritual. She describes how through the ages dance/movement changes from being an integral part of our lives to being reduced to a refined and increasingly abstract form of entertainment. This shift is linked to the mind/body split originating in Greek philosophy, where all aspects of reality are split into separate pieces to be analysed and examined. There are gains, as well as losses, to this change in paradigm. As Jahner put it, “this worldview elicited extraordinary amounts of knowledge about the

individual parts, at the considerable expense of the whole. It led to the domination of reason and the oppression of the sensual” (p. 29). The diminishment of dance/movement through history is also attributed to the wider forces of patriarchy and Christianity. Jahner described how gradually women’s life affirming dance rituals celebrating the rhythmic, cyclical nature of life were replaced by masculine rites associated with militaristic domination and advancement. She asserted that religious rites became increasingly “sombre, silent, sedentary and stiff” (Jahner, 2001, p. 33).

In response to this historical perspective, I find myself reflecting my own sense of shame and hiding regarding the body and movement. If, at some point, such things as the body, sensuality, the feminine and rhythmic movement were systematically denigrated and suppressed, it would make sense that these aspects of self might still feel hidden, dormant, even dead. In her dissertation on *Authentic Movement*, Stromsted (1999) spoke of the particular effects of patriarchy on the female psyche and on women’s relationship to their bodies:

Many women experience a split from their own embodied experience in the course of being raised as females in our mechanized Western culture, deeply internalizing a negative self-image, accompanied by a poor or distorted body image. In the process, they devalue or deny their instinctual wisdom, in order to identify with the patriarchal paradigm into which they were born.
(Stromsted, 1999, p. iv)

Like Jahner (2001), Stromsted (1999) focused specifically on the experience of women, and the value for women in “re-inhabiting” their bodies through movement. However, Stromsted did not see the feminine principle as gender bound. She thought that both genders need a well-differentiated masculine and a well-differentiated feminine, and that the power structures of patriarchy have profoundly wounded both of these aspects of ourselves (Stromsted, 1999).

The 20th century saw another important shift in the history of dance/movement, the emergence of modern dance, dance movement therapy, and creative therapeutic dance (Jahner, 2001). Jahner (2001) asserted that essentially modern dance represented a move towards greater authenticity and self-expression, which paved the way for dance/movement as a therapeutic modality— dance movement therapy (DMT). It seems the idea of internally-driven movement, that is, “moving from the inside out” captured the imagination of a number of modern dancers, for example Mary Whitehouse, Marion Chace, Trudi Schoop, and Franziska Boas. These early pioneers of dance/movement

therapy gradually disengaged with choreographic and performance aspects of dance, instead immersing themselves in exploring the connections between the mind, body, and emotions. Developing the “inner dance” and allowing oneself to “be moved” by internal impulses became the focus (Jahner, 2001, p. 40).

I am aware of a certain curiosity regarding this transitional moment in dance/movement history. What was it that caused these female performers to move off the stage and into the internal world of themselves and others? Further, what is the meaning of the formation of dance/movement therapy? What does it speak to of the nature of improvised dance and movement? It seems significant that dance movement therapy was founded not just by a group of professional dancers, turned therapists, but that these founders were also predominantly women. This lies in stark contrast to psychoanalysis which possesses a predominantly medical and male foundation. Jahner (2001) suggested that modern dance, and the therapeutic modalities that grew out of it, represent some form of return to our more ancient relationship with both our bodies and the movement of our bodies.

The radical works of these modern dance pioneers revived the pre-patriarchal concept of the ‘spiritual body’ and revolutionized not only dance, but also contributed to the deconstruction of an entire Victorian world view... For women at the turn of the century, the freely dancing body became a metaphor for social, political, and cultural negotiations around identity, expression, art, sex and politics. (Jahner, 2001 p. 35)

I am left pondering the political and psychological potential of dance/movement in relation to oppression of the feminine. Perhaps, even today, dance/movement continues to act as a symbolic reclamation of the body, of the instinctual self, and of the feminine soul?

Dance/movement as a body process

Gabrielle Roth (1990) began her book *Maps to Ecstasy* discussing the relationship between dance and the body. For her, the first purpose of dance is to “free the body” (Roth, p.29). If we can do this, we can claim what she called “the power of being” (Roth, p. 29). The power of being is about becoming present to ourselves and our lives.

As you free your body to receive the power of being, all kinds of feelings start to flow – old feelings, new feelings, dark and light. Being alive is

dangerous. It means feeling, feeling things you might not want to feel or thought you never would. (Roth, 1990, p. 59)

Roth (1990) wrote about the nature of the body, the relationship between our body and our self, our disconnection from the body, and the power of dance/movement to reconnect us to our bodies and to ourselves.

Your body is the ground metaphor of your life, the expression of your existence. It is your Bible, your encyclopaedia, your life story... So the body is where the dancing path to wholeness must begin. Only when you truly inhabit your body can you begin the healing journey. So many of us are not in our bodies, really at home and vibrantly present there. Nor are we in touch with the basic rhythms that constitute our bodily life. We live outside ourselves – in our heads, our memories, our longings – absentee landlords of our own estate. (Roth, 1990 p. 29)

Despite coming across Roth's writing many years ago, I notice that I am still moved by her description of what it is to be a human being living in a body and the power of dance to reconnect us to our bodies.

Consideration of the relationship between dance/movement and the body, inevitably leads to the question of the nature of the body, the mind, and the relationship between them. Most contemporary literature on dance/movement I have come across, including neuroscientific understandings (Damasio, 1994), trauma research (van der Kolk, 2014), and systems theory (Bateson, 1976), seems to concur with Roth's (1990) understanding, that ourselves and our bodies are indivisible.

...current research describes the relationship between the mind and the body as a process or a continuum, in which neither the mind nor the body are separate entities. (Miller, 2016, p. 3)

If, as Damasio (1994) put it, "the mind is probably not conceivable without some form of embodiment" (p. 234), then the relationship of dance/movement to body is essentially about the relationship of dance/movement to self. From this perspective, dance/movement is not just a "body process" but a "whole-being" process. This seems to be the view taken by the profession of dance movement psychotherapy (DMP), who see the key purpose of dance and movement in DMP as facilitating the experience of integration of all aspects of ourselves, that is in fact our nature. DMP is:

A relational process in which client/s and therapist engage creatively using body, movement and dance to assist integration of emotional, cognitive, physical, social and spiritual aspects of self. (ADMP UK).

The idea that dance/movement can bring us into a greater sense of connection with our bodies and ourselves, is a dominant theme in the literature (Helprin, 2003; Jahner, 2001; Stromsted, 1999). Like 5Rhythms, Open Floor Movement theory (Open Floor, 2016) holds that, inevitably, when we move our bodies many things can arise in our consciousness. If we include rather than push away what arises (at times the unpleasant or challenging), ultimately, we can become more integrated and whole. This idea aligns with the process of heuristic research in which one strives to open one's consciousness to all that is arising for the purpose of discovery and self-transformation (Moustakas, 1990; Sela-Smith, 2002). It also links to the psychoanalytic practice of free association, where the patient strives to associate to whatever arises in her psyche (Freud, 1913). In Open Floor Movement language, this is called “move and include” (Open Floor, 2016, p. 4).

Anything we try to push away can become our limitation. On the Open Floor we move and include the juicy moments of joyful release, as well as the challenging ones: pain in the body, shyness, self-limiting beliefs, a sense of isolation. This is how we learn to be true, fluid and whole (Open Floor, 2016, p. 4).

However, contrasting the “language of movement” with verbal language, psychoanalyst and movement psychotherapist, Bloom (2006), pointed out that neither dance nor words have a monopoly on the expression of feeling. She asserted that, although bodily movement can undoubtedly give us a sense of connection to our bodies and to our feelings, in a powerful way, movement, just like words, can also be used to avoid feelings. In psychoanalysis this is generally referred to as acting out. Although this happens, Bloom thought that to reduce all expressions of bodily movement to the idea of acting out would be to deny the fact that the body and its movement can provide “a powerful means of making contact with deep layers of the self” (Bloom, p. 6).

Dance/movement as a developmental process

Initially we exist in a “non-verbal realm of expression” (Bloom, 2006, p. 6). In other words, to begin with, our bodies and the movements of our bodies are our primary way

of being in the world and communicating. Based on this premise, Bloom proposed that Freud got it right, we are “first and foremost a body ego” (Freud, 1923b as cited in Bloom, 2006 p. 6). This perspective fits with Winnicott’s (1965) idea that the “true self” (p. 9) is developed primarily through the “spontaneous gestures” (p. 76) of the infant; or Stern’s (1985) idea of the “core self” (p. 69) as developed through non-verbal expressions in infancy. Observational infant research backs up these understandings, telling us that mother and infant attune to each other through bodily rhythms and sounds. This relational dance, described as “proto-conversations” (Trevarthen & Fresquez, 2015b, p. 195), is the non-verbal vehicle through which the mother infant dyad forms their vital attachment or bond. Development experts believe that babies learn to modulate emotions through this attachment relationship (Schorre, 1994). Infant attachment patterns are important in our development because they form the early relationship behaviours that set the stage for all future relationships (Bowlby, 1988). In essence, psychoanalysts and researchers concur that we lay down the foundations of our sense of self, and our way of being with others, early on in life; primarily through the non-verbal world of movements and gestures (Bloom, 2006).

So, what might be the implications of body, movement, and rhythm being our central mode of existence early in life? Bloom (2006) has proposed that working with the body and the body’s movement is a powerful way to rediscover and rework preverbal patterns. Juhan (2003), somatic psychotherapist and dance/movement practitioner, has also understood dance/movement as holding enormous potential for reworking, repairing, and re-integrating early experiences. She described how the energetic and non-verbal nature of movement is ideal for developmental healing:

Many people have, to a greater or lesser degree, impairment in [their] ability to synchronize or regulate emotion, especially in relationship to others. Due to the nonverbal and energetic connection, dancing with others can be profoundly reparative. People can relearn and reexperience embodied synchrony and can rediscover a simple, organic nonverbal way to regulate their emotions in relationship with those around them. (Juhan, 2003, p. 96)

However, Juhan (2003) also acknowledged that these kinds of experiences can evoke early trauma in dance participants which practices, such as 5rhythms and Open Floor, are not necessarily equipped to deal with. Juhan adhered to the notion that working through early trauma is best done in the context of a therapeutic relationship,

and that dance/movement practitioners need to be adept at referring on participants who exhibit trauma symptoms in movement/dance classes (Juhan, 2003).

Dance/movement as a creative process

The creative art process generates an energy much like that of light, so that as we travel into dark places we can break through into new experiences of reality and new ways of being. (Halprin, 2003, p. 84)

Much of the literature I have found on improvised movement highlights the creative aspect of this practice (Chodorow, 1991; Halprin, 2003; Jahner, 2001; Young, 2012). Halprin (2003), movement-based art therapist, described dance and movement as creative because, like other art forms, it engages the unconscious, the non-linear, and the non-rational. She described the essence of creative process as “a creative dialogue with the unconscious,” which is often “circular, meandering and sometimes fragmented” (p. 87).

The creative process connects us with the unconscious, opening us up to the impressions of the psyche that lie out of reach during our ordinary daily routines. Working in a nonlinear way, which creative process engenders, brings forth content from the unconscious – images, memories, sensations, and sources of knowledge or ideas that we do not get at directly through analytic thinking or the censoring mind. (Halprin, 2003, p. 86)

According to Chodorow (1997), although this process has a receptive quality to it, the creative element lies in the “interweaving of [both] conscious and unconscious involvement” (p. 6). Whitehouse (1958), founder of authentic movement practice, described the elements of both moving and being moved as integral to engagement with the creative process:

The core of the movement experience is the sensation of moving and being moved. There are many implications in putting it like this. Ideally, both are present in the same instant and it may literally be an instant. It is a moment of total awareness, coming together of what I am doing and what is happening to me. It cannot be anticipated, explained, specifically worked for, nor repeated exactly. (p. 4)

Whitehouse’s approach to dance and movement draws on the Jungian concept of ‘active imagination’. This concept was at the centre of Jung’s theory and has been an

important influence in the field of dance movement therapy (Stanton-Jones, 1992). Authentic movement practice is but one form of active imagination, using the body and movement as an instrument for exploring images, affect, mood, and energy from the unconscious as it arises (Young, 2012). For Chodorow (1997) the starting point of active imagination is an emotional state that may take the form of “a dream image, a fragment of fantasy, an inner voice, or simply a bad mood” (p.104). The process of active imagination is to open to the unconscious and give free rein to fantasy and, at the same time, to maintain an alert, attentive, active point of view (Chodorow, 1997).

Halprin (2003) and others (Jahner, 2001; Juhan, 2003; Stromsted, 1999; Young, 2012) understood the creative aspect of dance/movement as importantly related to wellbeing. When we are tuned into the creative flow, we experience a freedom of our energy and expression, and an unusually heightened sense of awareness. We feel encouraged to take risks, to put ourselves out there, to explore and consider all of our material arising as grist for learning. The creative process is perceived as both enlivening and illuminating. At the widest level, Halprin thought that the creative nature of dance and movement is valuable to us because it connects us to the larger creative force, which she saw as intrinsic to the universe we live in. She described the nature of the universe as: “the dance of life” with “all the variations of energy moving – flowing, fragmented, gentle, forceful, expanding, contracting, dense, light, dissipating and regathering” (Halprin, p. 84). This “creative play of the life force” consists of the “flux between creation and death, harmony and conflict, like elements and opposite elements forming in relationship to one another” (Halprin, p. 84). Halprin thought that tapping into this life force can develop in us “the capacity to tolerate tension and let go of static and constricting forms that block the healthy and creative flow of life energy, the very flow that makes change possible” (Halprin, p. 85). Halprin suggested that, ultimately, this kind of meaningful engagement with our own creative process can lead us to a sense of unity – even to communion with the divine.

Conclusion

This exploration of the dance and movement literature has provided insight into various ways of thinking about and understanding the phenomenon. I began by considering dance/movement within a historical context, specifically the influence of cartesian philosophy, patriarchy, western religion, and modern dance. This evoked curiosity regarding the influence of these forces on my own relationship with dance, movement, and the body. It seems highly probable that there is a relationship between personal

experiences of shame and historical oppression of the body, sensuality and the feminine. The practice of dance/movement was then considered from three different perspectives: as a bodily process, a developmental process, and a creative process. Each of these elements of dance/movement provide their own unique contribution to the meaning of the phenomenon. Dance/movement as a bodily process provides a powerful sense of mind, body, spirit integration, making dance and movement not just a bodily experience but a whole-being experience. Dance/movement as a developmental process has the ability to evoke pre-verbal experiences, offering the potential to rework and repair early ways of being. Finally, dance/movement as a creative process can offer fresh perspectives, new ways of moving, being, and seeing. It can connect us to the larger creative element of the universe and to ourselves. These ideas and understandings offer a rich context within which to consider my own unique in-depth experiences of dance and movement which is the essential aim of this inquiry and the topic of the next chapter.

Chapter Four: My Journey – Dance into the unknown

Introduction

This chapter is the story of my personal experience of dance and movement over the course of several months. These experiences incorporate both solitary dance/movement in my own home and dance/movement in group settings, such as community classes and workshops. The major themes that arise are presented in a loosely chronological order. Essentially, they are the feelings, challenges, discoveries, and break-throughs that arise along the way.

Stepping out of the closet

I was originally a “closet dancer.” Up until beginning this research, I thought I had come out of the closet. It seems I had not entirely. In claiming this topic for my dissertation, I have been somewhat taken aback by the level of vulnerability, shame, and anxiety that has emerged. The drawings below portray the aspect of myself that feels she needs to hide and who feels somehow wrong and ashamed (see Figure 1 & 2).



Crunched shoulders
No space to breath
Trying to be a good girl
Not take up too much space
Not cause any trouble
 Journal – 11.04.18

Figure 1: Good girl

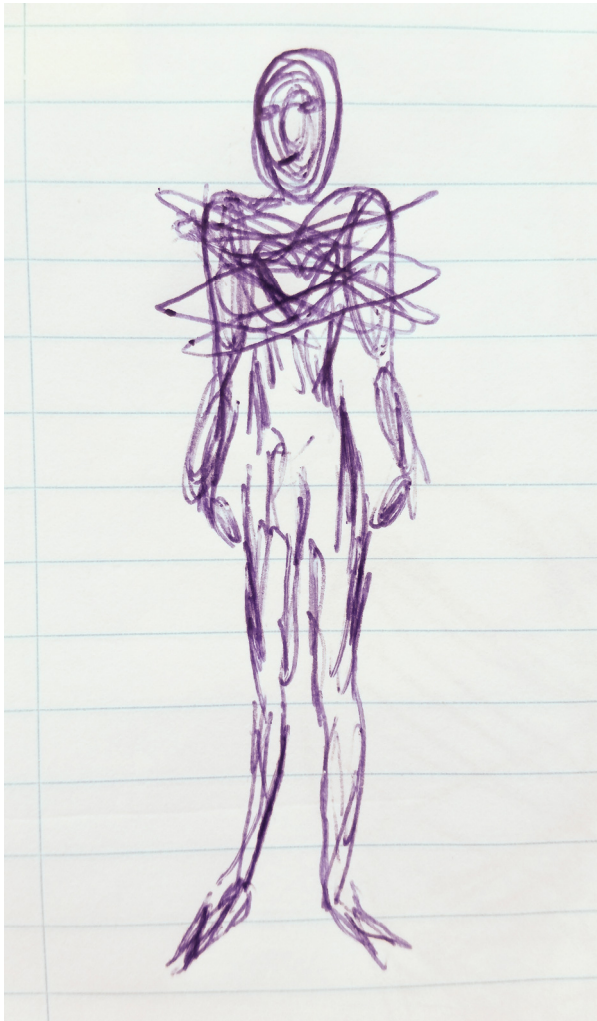


Figure 2: Shame

Why are you doing this? What are you doing? You are weird. You are a freak. You are so self-indulgent. You are pathetic and lonely. What you are doing is pointless. It won't get you anywhere. You won't be able to write about it. It won't make any sense. No one is interested anyway. Journal - 23.03.18

These voices and awkward feelings haunt me through my initial engagement and early immersion stages and infuse every aspect of the process of this research, from coming forward with my topic, choosing my supervisor, to doing my dance/movement practice, writing, and sending my work to her. To make things worse, I am embarrassed about this embarrassment. I feel like I should be able to stand tall in my choice of topic. What is wrong with me that I feel like I need to hide?

The shame and anxiety culminates in the event of presenting my topic to the department. In the lead up to presenting my dissertation I am aware of a building dread. This dread feels deep rooted and cannot be explained by not feeling prepared or shyness about public speaking. It feels like it sits at the core of me and nothing I do or think can seem to soothe it away. There is this feeling like I am about to undergo some sort of unbearable exposure. I want to remain hidden. But I cannot. I have to present!

I have wondered about the intense shame and anxiety I experience in this phase. Clearly some of these feelings link to my family history—of being shamed by my brother and sister, and generally not feeling like dance/movement were an acceptable form of self-expression. Undoubtedly, I transfer something of this experience onto the psychotherapy department that has become a “home”. But, from a wider cultural perspective, it seems likely that the shame and anxiety that arise in me also relate to historical oppression of such things as the body, movement, and the feminine. I am reminded of Stromsted’s (1999) assertion that in Western culture many women internalise a negative self-image and devalue and deny their own instinctual wisdom. It seems that some part of me still wants to be a “good girl,” to not take up too much space and not cause any trouble. I wonder what sort of “trouble” I think I will cause in writing this dissertation? And how much space do I feel I needed to take up? Am I afraid there might not be enough space for my voice amongst the others? Further, the word dread stands out. I associate it with terror. What am I so afraid of? Is it possible that remnants of experiences, such as alienation and annihilation linger on through the generations? Perhaps somewhere inside I imagine myself being burnt at the stake? This sounds too dramatic when I write it down; yet it resonates with the feelings I experience inside.

Moving and not moving

I haven't danced for two days. I feel like I am failing to do something important. Letting myself down. I feel disappointed that I haven't been able to make it important. Journal - 4.03.18.

I need to claim and carve out a space in my day to consistently engage in dance/movement practice and to allow myself to enter into my own spontaneous movement. Initially I struggle to do so. The illustration below (see Figure 3) attempts to express something of the internal barriers I encounter during this stage.

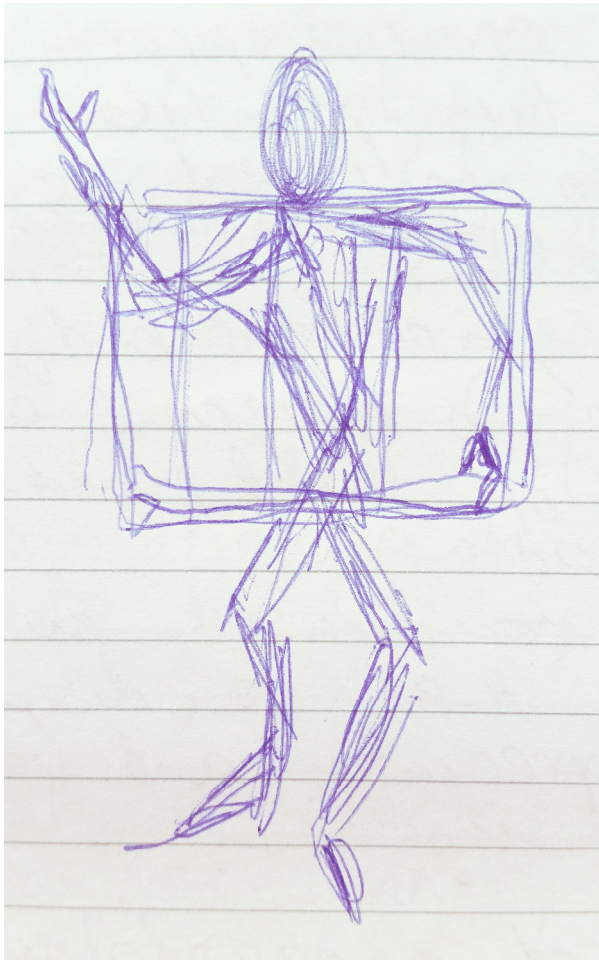


Figure 3. Caged dancer

No doubt the feelings described above have some influence. I am unsure about the validity and worth of my research topic, and how it will be received. But I think that there are also other elements as to why this is difficult for me. One of these centres on my relationship to the important people in my life. Can I take time out from my child or partner to fully absorb myself in my own embodied experience? What will this mean if I do? Will I either feel like I am abandoning or will be abandoned? Will there still be someone to come back to? Is it relationally safe for me to become absorbed in my own movement process?

*So much more comfortable to talk about what I am reading, thinking, feeling.
Much harder to get up out of my chair and be with myself – in a deeper way.
Fear came up that he (partner) will walk away. Fear that he will judge me.
Shame me. Want him to stay in the room. Don't want to hide myself away. I've*

done so much of that. Don't want to send him away. Feels familiar too. Journal - 5.03.17

A second element seems to be to do with my relationship with myself. Am I willing to be with myself in a meaningful way, through body, breath, and movement? Am I willing to encounter what such embodied absorption into my own process might bring up?

Why aren't I dancing? I'm afraid. I'm kind of frozen in something. I might feel something I don't want to feel if I dance. If I let myself move freely. It's lonely dancing by myself. I will go into my shame and inadequacy. What else might I get in touch with? Desire and longing? Tiredness? Journal - 02.04.18

Making space for myself

I have a dream about my mother. In the dream she is squeezing me too tight around the ribs. I tell her off in a very direct, but loving, way. Journal - 06.02.18

Alongside the strong resistance to entering into a movement/dance practice, there is also an ongoing deep hunger in me for embodied connection to both myself and others. To push through my resistance, I need to explore aspects of my internal world. I ponder what is getting in my way and what might be needed:

What would it mean for me to abandon myself to something? To become fascinated with something and follow that? I have an image of leaving the lid off the vegemite, the dishes in the sink, the coffee half drunk. Perhaps I could trust in those who love me to pick up the pieces. Can I allow myself to indulge in my own deep curiosity, pleasure and fascination? I didn't have that luxury growing up. Can I give that to myself now? Journal - 21.05.18

I have realised I have this receptive sponge like aspect to my personality, that soaks everything up. And an accompanying belief that if I don't soak up all the problems, feelings and issues in those close to me I will be abandoned. I've got to somehow reverse the gaze back onto myself – and keep it there! Journal - 25.05.18

As I become more receptive to claiming my own internal space, I realise I also need to create an actual external space. I need a place in my house where I can dance/move and document my experiences. I unclutter the upstairs spare room. I put a desk in this room and a large mat for dancing on. I should add that this “claiming of space” does not go entirely smoothly. There are two incidents. The first is that a heated conflict erupts regarding who the space belongs to and how it should be used. This dispute is eventually worked through with time, energy and a concerted determination on my part not to collapse my own needs. The second thing that happens is that I injure myself. I drop a very heavy desk on my foot while shifting it into the room. I am incapacitated for at least three days. These two incidents feel symbolic of, and importantly related to, my internal struggle at this time. To claim my space, it seems like I have to do battle on all fronts! In the new space, I notice that my dance/movement takes on a more internal quality.

Allowed myself to have a dance for me today. Allowed myself to be slow, small, to come to a halt, to get distracted, to not try to please anyone (in my mind). Even to be ok with not fully ‘dropping in’. I let myself go with my own capacities – to even be a bit lazy. I allowed myself to feel my own inertia, to daydream, and to fall unwittingly into a rhythmic movement. Journal - 02.06.18

Reflecting on the abandonment fears that arise in me, in relation to my partner and my child, leads me to think about my early developmental experiences and Winnicott’s (1965) ideas regarding child development. From everything I know about my mother, I understand that she was very preoccupied when I was a baby. I think it likely that, in general, I adapted to her needs and expectations rather than exploring and developing my own “spontaneous gestures” (Winnicott, 1965, p. 76). Winnicott believed that expressing one’s own spontaneous gestures and having these validated by one’s caregiver is crucial in the development of an integrated “true self” (Winnicott, p. 9). Thinking about this, it seems likely that an attempt to return to this task in adulthood – exploration of my own spontaneous gestures through dance and movement, could generate certain early anxieties. I think that the abandonment fears I experience at this time likely derive from my responses to the micro-abandonments of my mother in my early life. From a developmental perspective then, claiming my space and engaging in my own authentic movement, despite powerful early anxieties arising, represents an important step forward.

Leaps and bounds

As I begin to allow myself to dance and move more regularly, I come to increasingly appreciate moments of feeling uplifted or expanded, sometimes both (See figure 4).

Made it to a dance class today. It was lovely to move, to feel my body, to follow the movement inclinations of my body, to drop into the music. I danced with others – shyly, loosely, playfully, intimately. I dropped into myself. I forgot myself. Experienced my heart open as my body opened. Walked home in the rain. Journal - 15.04.18

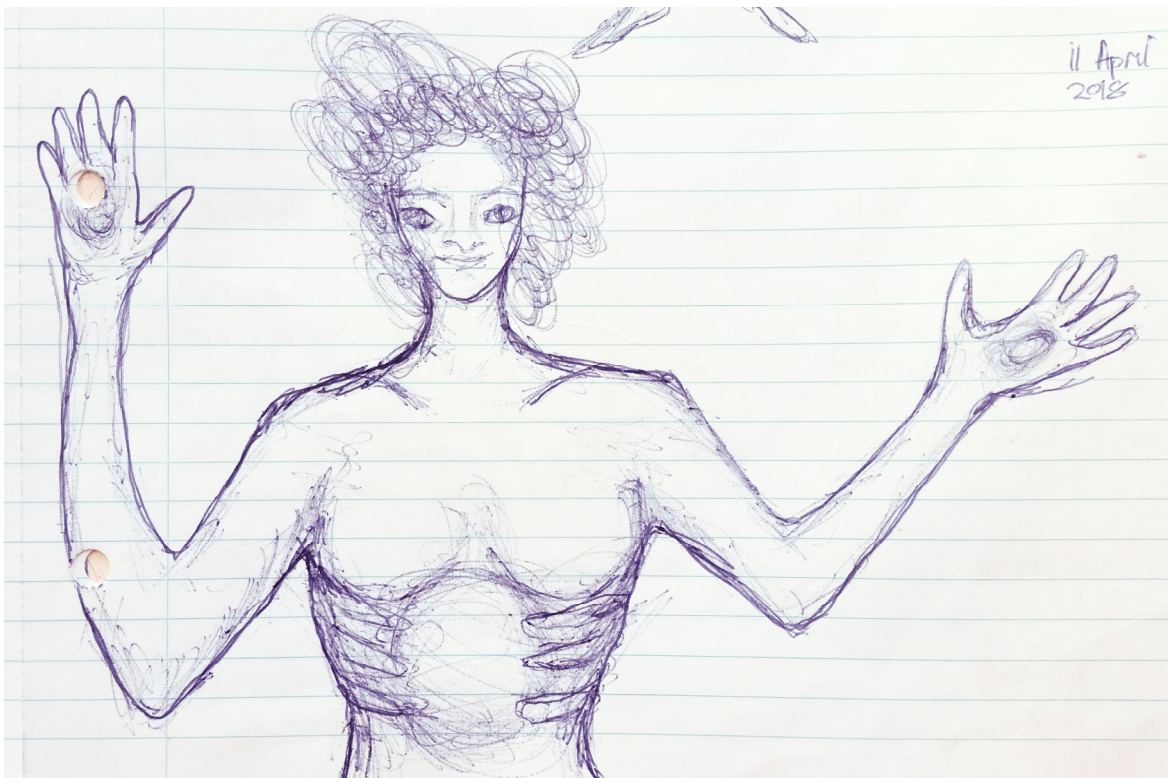


Figure 4: Expansion

It was wonderful to dance space into my shoulders, to expand my chest, to allow my rib cage to open. I breathed into the tight muscles connecting my shoulders and reached my arms out in all directions. When I open up space between my shoulders and in my chest, it feels so different. I feel like I have choice. And I am finally not being driven by my anxiousness. Like something slows down in me and I can decide things. I can breathe. Journal - 10.04.18

Rising joy for no particular reason. Journal - 06.02.18

In my dance I keep returning to this urge to open up my shoulders. They feel like wings that have been crushed too tightly together for a life time. I focus on allowing

movement into my arms and shoulders, in doing so creating a sense of space between my shoulders. In one of these sessions I have an experience of significantly opening up my shoulders and, in conjunction, a powerful shift in my sense of how or who I could be in the world follows. An image comes to me of myself as a bird-like woman (see Figure 5):



Figure 5: Bird woman

Bird woman

At peace in her power

Bird woman can breathe

Wide and deep

She is not ashamed or small

Bird woman's wings

Are slightly ajar

Ready for flights of fancy

Bird woman can

See and think

Bird woman is aeriated

Bird woman is not afraid to take up space

Bird woman stands tall and wide

Journal - 07.07.18

During dances with other people I observe moments where I am actively exploring my own interpersonal patterns. In these explorations I feel like I can take risks, push my own boundaries, try things out and gain insights into my particular way of being with others.

I have a playful dance with a group of four. I also have a shy/coming out dance with a woman. I actively seek a dance with an awkward looking man. I move with my own awkwardness as well as his. I contact compassion for him and for myself. Journal - 23.03.18

I was able to play with the polarity in myself of wanting to be invisible and wanting to be seen. This enriched my dancing interactions with others. I got more in touch with both these parts of myself. Perhaps particularly the part of me that systematically tries to hide. Journal - 19.02.18

I also notice how the elevation or expansion of myself through dance (both in my solitary dance and with others) seems to have a positive knock-on effect into my interactions and relationships off the dance floor.

Feel more relaxed than I have felt for a while in my body – and a sense of freedom. Like something has settled down in me. Lightened by the playfulness in the dance class last night. The playfulness extended in to interactions between my partner and myself into the night and the next morning. Journal - 24.02.18

I dance with my daughter for twenty minutes this morning. It is wonderful to see her engaging with her own creative movements. I notice my pleasure in the sensation of my own fluidity and movement. After the dance we play pick up sticks with a huge pile of straws. I feel present, relaxed and at ease. My daughter is laughing a lot. There is something about the quality of this laughter that feels very free. Perhaps I haven't heard her laugh in quite that way for a while. Journal - 23.04.18

Clearly there is an uplifting element to movement and dance. This is why Roth (1990) called her book *Maps to "Ecstasy"* and what Juhan (2003) meant by "positive vibrations" (p. 218). Dance also seems to create a sense of expansion. It allows me to feel larger and wider in myself. The two aspects interact with each other organically and reciprocally—feeling uplifted can lead to feeling more expansive and feeling expanded in myself can elevate my mood. The idea that physical exercise or movement can improve mood is by no means new. Cardiovascular exercise, such as running, is well documented as an effective antidote to both depression and anxiety (Harrison, 2018). But, what is it specifically about dance and movement that creates a sense of elevation and expansion? According to Roth (1989), dance is elevating and expanding because we come to feel more connected to ourselves—physically, emotionally, mentally, and spiritually. This is our natural state, so coming into this state inevitably brings us joy and a sense of wellbeing (Roth, 1989). Open Floor movement theory concurs with these ideas, and highlights the relational side of dance, which can further contribute to a feeling of wellbeing. Dancing with another person can provide a sense of connection and intimacy. Dancing with a group can offer a sense of belonging (Juhan, 2003). Both of these experiences are basic human needs.

Here I am

Another aspect that I increasingly notice is the way moving/dancing brings me into my emotions; often emotions that I did not really know were there. It is regularly this feeling like, ah here I am! This is me. This is what I am feeling. I notice the feelings that spill out are often tears. Sometimes when I cry I realise just how emotionally numb I have been up until then for hours, even days.

Early on in my immersion process I have to go to the hospital to have a large lump on my throat examined (see Figure 6). The results of my scan show the lump to be larger than my specialist expects it to be. I spend the entire day at the hospital undergoing further tests. As I leave, I am told I will receive the results within a week.

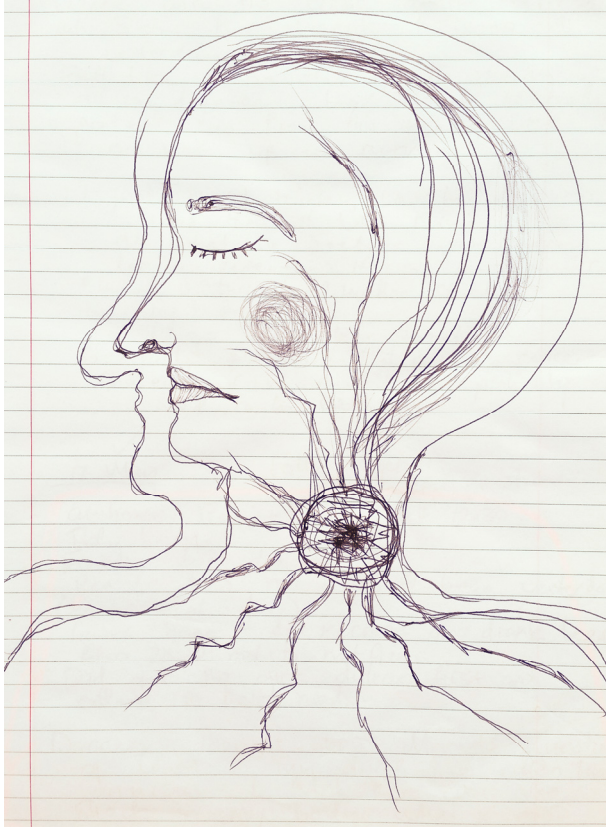


Figure 6: Lump in my throat

That evening, as I enter into my movement session I consider my supervisor's question from our last meeting: What is your dance like when you are anxious?

I am scared. What if it's cancer? Am I going to die? My legs and feet feel frozen. I want to bring movement to my hips. I keep this repetitive circular movement going. I can't seem to find much movement in my upper body. But there is this urge to keep persisting with my lower body. At some stage I find myself having an in and out of the floor kind of dance. I am now moving more of my upper body. There comes a moment where things feel like they begin to unlock. My upper body suddenly begins to free up. My breathing frees up. Emotionally things begin to flow. I start to sob gently. I bring my knees to my chest and rock from side to side in a foetal position. Arms, shoulders and neck loosen. I have this sense of coming back to life. Journal - 17.05.18

In another session I have just had an argument with my partner:

My mind is racing as a result of our argument. The movement and music are soothing and calming. Gradually my mind calms. I get in touch with the energy of my body. I sense my own creativity and freedom. I keep bringing my attention back to my movement and my body trying to include everything going on in me into my dance. Finally, some tears come. I surrender to my tears and discover some thoughts that go with them: that I feel torn in different directions, that I have been trying to please everyone - and still my partner is not happy with me. The strain of that role. Journal - 23.05.18

The ability of movement to bring me into deeper emotional connection with myself is an aspect of dance/movement I find myself curious about. I wonder why bodily movement frequently connects me to my emotional world? Sheets-Johnstone, (2010) asserted that “we move in ways consonant with our emotions” (p. 7). It does seem that emotions are often felt and expressed on a particularly visceral level. When I inhabit my body and my body’s internally-directed movement it often feels like I enter the immediate territory of my emotions. According to current neuroscientific understandings, emotion depends on communication between the autonomic nervous system and the brain. “Visceral afferents [nerve fibers] convey information on our physiological state to the brain and are critical to the sensory or psychological experience of emotion” (Porges, 1997, p. 65). Based on this understanding, Totton (2003) asserted that emotion is by nature both a mental and somatic phenomenon. He described emotion as a form of experience which “transgresses the supposed ‘mind/body boundary’” (Totton, p. 33). The link between our body and emotions is also understood as importantly related to the non-verbal, embodied nature of early development. Based on this reality, it is thought that we are more likely to access and express certain emotional states through the body. As Rayska (2017) put it “some states of fear, rage, longing and hunger may date back to a time when no words were available” (p. 27).

Meeting my edges



Figure 7: Distress

As I deepen into my heuristic process, I become increasingly anxious and overwhelmed, leading to two separate moments of inner and outer crisis (see Figure 7). The above illustration is an attempt to express something of the distress and inner chaos of this time. These feelings first emerge in my dreams.

Someone is attacking me in my solar plexus, rib cage area, stealthily while I lie resting. Strange thing is that there is no pain, just a knowing that someone is attacking that part of my body. I'm not sure if their intentions are lethal or not. It felt serious but perhaps not entirely bad – like some sort of transition from life to death. Journal - 2.02.18

I'm driving a double-decker bus. Feeling like I am not quite managing it. I'm out of my depth. My family of origin are the passengers – upstairs. I have to pull over at some stage to try to prevent losing control. Stressful. Journal - 5.06.18

People are throwing big rocks into the upstairs room (my office and dance studio). They are in party mode. Acting like they are being playful. But the rocks are big and disruptive, dangerous even. Journal - 10.06.18

First thing on waking in the morning, increasingly, I experience high levels of anxiety. My relationship with my partner becomes difficult and volatile. Arguments become more regular and I find myself emotionally dysregulated as a consequence. It gets to a point where it is hard to know what is causing what. I become physically unwell with the flu. I worry about getting behind with my dissertation. These feelings culminate in a weekend of emotional break-down, where I spend a lot of time in bed sobbing uncontrollably. I feel like I am falling apart – unravelling.

Sense of breaking down inside. Started coming on Friday afternoon, but perhaps rising all week in conjunction with flu. As I become more desperate I look to my partner to comfort me, help me, offer something. But I can't seem to communicate my level of need. I take myself to the bedroom and curl into a ball of tears. Journal - 23.06.18

In my vulnerability and despair, I eventually turn to my movement practice as a way to resource myself. The idea of trying to do improvised, creative movement in this state seems nearly impossible. However, I find myself drawn to simple repetitive movements, nothing too complicated. I want movement that I can simply follow, that takes me gently into my body and breath. I try some slow walking. This feels good.

I go to the bush track (leading down to the beach) to do some mindful walking up and down. I become emotional quite quickly. Begin sobbing. There is something really young about the way I am holding my mouth open and crying out loud. I let myself breathe into my body. I let myself feel my body. I become mindful of my movement, my breath and the sensations inside. I let myself relax into my walking. My pace slows down. Eventually I bring attention to my arms. I let them move out from my body, creating space under my armpits. My breath deepens. I try raising my arms to shoulder height – like spread wings. I find myself feeling calmer and more spacious inside. Journal - 23.06.18

A couple of months later I have another experience, with similar elements, but perhaps even more intense. After my dissertation presentation experience, I become dejected and despairing. My daughter develops the flu and is off school for a couple of weeks. During this time I cannot seem to write or do anything productive. I decide to reduce my dance/movement practice, start moving out of my immersion phase, and instead take up running. I hold the hope that the vigorous element of running will help

shift my despair and anxiety. I take to going into the sea after these runs. The water is ice cold as it still late winter. The experience of pain and pleasure seem to come in equal measure. However, despite my efforts to keep forging on, I cannot seem to manage my anxiety. This leads to stress in my relationship. I have a dream:

I'm in a boat, which is roofed. It's just me and my partner in the boat. He is relaxed and calm, assuring me everything is going to be fine. Next thing there is a storm and we head towards giant jagged rocks. The boat smashes against the rocks. It's terrifying. I don't know if the boat or we will survive. We are in a very dangerous position. The dream ends with this scene of us crashing against the rocks. The waves are massive. We are inside being thrown around. It feels like only a matter of time before the rocks smash the boat apart and water enters the interior. It seems inevitable that we will drown or be cut to pieces on the rocks.

Journal - 16.07.18

The intensity and frequency of the arguments between us increases two-fold. I collapse into emotionality and a terrible inner desperation that seems to have no solution. After a particularly fraught weekend, my partner walks out. Three days later I become extremely ill. I cannot get out of bed for four days. I cannot do anything. I am feverish and delirious. By the fourth day I reach a point of feeling utterly helpless. I feel like I am going to die. My mother comes. She takes my daughter back to her place for a night and a day. When they return I am finally up out of bed; however, my child has become sick again. I spend the next week attending to her while still recovering myself. As well as being sick, my daughter develops some symptoms of separation anxiety. She insists I carry her around the house and panics if I leave the room without her. By the time she goes back to school the following week, I am exhausted. The combination of relationship breakup, dissertation anxiety, and debilitation through sickness leaves me in a place of deep despair.

In reflecting on this difficult time, it is hard to determine the exact nature of what happened. Did anxiety arise in response to the dissertation process and then contribute to the relationship troubles, or did the relationship difficulties make it hard to concentrate on my research and this generated anxiety? It seems likely it was not one or the other, but a convergence of factors that lead to this distress. The question arises, what was the influence of my dance/movement practice? It seems clear that gentle, repetitive movement was able to support me in my overwhelm and upset. However, is it also possible that the cumulative effect of my dance/movement practice intensified or

even facilitated what happened? If dance/movement has the capacity to take one into unconscious experience, as has been described in my previous findings and the literature explored (Bloom, 2006; Chodorow, 1991; Helprin, 2003), then perhaps in some way dance/movement led me deeper into my own unconscious vulnerabilities.

In her dissertation on authentic movement Stromsted (1999) discussed the unconscious territory that dance/movement can take us into. She described a “descent process” (p. 227) which she considers both necessary and beneficial to participants traversing the depths of their own psyche through dance and movement. She likened this experience to the Sumerian myth in which the goddess Inanna descends into the underworld to visit her dark sister Erishkigal. This journey requires her to keep “dropping down until she is naked and vulnerable, falling toward the dark, creative void to which all forms must return and out of which all new life emerges” (Stromsted, p. 227). Stromsted’s work is steeped in Jungian psychology, which views exploration of our shadow parts as extremely important. In psychoanalytic language this essentially equates to the parts of ourselves that have been suppressed, repressed, split-off, or disavowed. Like Jungian psychology, psychoanalysis also holds that exploration and integration of these aspects of ourselves is important and lies at the heart of the work (Bloom, 2014).

I am not an island

Stuck
Unstuck
Feelings starting to flow
Tears
Easing up on myself
As I talk to others
Surrendering to what is
The relief of facing in to my reality
Pain
Struggle
Maybe I can get through this
Maybe there is even some sense in it
Something has been trying to grow
 Journal - 18.09.18

Just before I become ill with the flu, I ask my therapist if I can increase my sessions from fortnightly to weekly. Over the weeks, coming out of the flu, I am so grateful for these sessions. I feel very young and sometimes it seems that all I can do is cry and mutter a few incoherent words. On a cold rainy day, I reluctantly take myself into my dissertation class. I really do not want to go. I feel like a complete failure. Over the last

month I have barely written more than a page and a half. But I also know that I have been isolated and more isolation is not going to help me. I need to make contact with the networks that support me. In class I feel very raw when it is my turn to speak. I cannot stop crying; or coughing. I reveal my despair. To my relief, my peers and lecturer are sympathetic. I feel held, but also encouraged and supported to try to think about what has been happening. What is the unconscious meaning of my debilitation? I begin to contemplate the idea there might be some underlying coherence to the chaos and misery I have experienced. I go to my heuristic group. The atmosphere is also warm and holding. I find the courage to read out some of my writing. Keith and Margot both tell me that my writing is good. I am heartened by the positive feedback and warmth. I go home feeling like perhaps I can continue, perhaps I am not as hopeless as I have been thinking.

The next time I see my therapist he is struck by how much stronger I seem and the fact that I am back into my writing. It seems that I am no longer regressed. What a relief for both of us! We reflect on the significant impact of the contact with my supervisor and peers. He observes what a big difference even a relatively small amount of support and encouragement has made to me. The underlying theme seems to be the importance of reaching out and letting other people in.

There has been much written on improvised dance/movement in the context of relationship, particularly the value of being witnessed and held in movement and dance experiences (Stanton-Jones, 1992). In the practice of authentic movement there is generally a mover and a witness (Chodorow, 1991). The idea is that the witness acts as a kind of container for the mover, with the long-term aim of facilitating the mover to develop a benevolent internal witness for themselves (Young, 2012). In a therapeutic context, such as dance movement therapy, the therapist generally provides something similar to this role, sometimes more active, interchanging between movement and language (Stanton-Jones, 1992). On reflection, I realise much of the dance/movement I have done for this dissertation has been solitary. The experience of my descent into despair and emotionality has given me pause to think about the difference between dancing on one's own and dancing with support, a witness or simply some company. I have wondered if it might have been wise to organise a witness to "dance into the unknown" with me. It also seems possible that the solitary nature of my dance/movement allowed me to go into my own territory, in a way that I might not have with another present. Outside of these wonderings, I am aware that I became more

emotionally settled on increasing my therapy sessions to weekly. Perhaps the witness or therapist does not need to be in the room, at the time, but just alongside and available.

Conclusion

My “dance into the unknown” provided a range and depth of experiences. There were many surprise elements that required me to become more curious, to ask questions, delve deeper, and ultimately to trust in the process and surrender. The intensity of some of the emotions that arose, such as shame, anxiety, and distress, challenged me and changed me. On some level I am still grappling with and integrating these experiences. Certainly, the emotional crisis I went into was not something expected—or wanted! However, it seems that it was all part of my inquiry process; both inevitable and important. There are other elements to this exploration that I am inspired by and remain curious about, such as the power of dance and movement to uplift, to connect, to shift things, and to take me into a different state or different way of seeing things. I do not have any set answers. There has been nothing neat or tidy about this exploration process. However, I am grateful for the opportunity to explore my own unknown territory, and for all the ways it has enriched and expanded me.

Chapter Five: Discussion

Introduction

In this chapter, I offer my perspective on my findings within the context of the current body of literature that I have examined thus far. I consider what these findings might mean to me, in my work as a psychotherapist, and for the profession of psychotherapy in general.

Summary of findings

This piece of research provided a rich journey of discovery, offering me much learning both about myself and the practice of internally-driven, improvised movement. In setting out on this research I desired to bring the psychotherapist and the dancer in me closer together. I felt like dance/movement held important meaning for me that I wished to bring to light, to understand more fully, and to think about in the context of my work. But I did not want to do this solely by investigating and synthesising the literature on dance/movement. I wanted to learn something about these things through my own embodied experience of dance/movement, particularly through the subconscious and intuitive level of myself, which the heuristic research process allows.

What did I discover? Firstly, my exploration revealed an enormous amount of personal shame and anxiety regarding my interest in dance and movement, particularly in the context of my academic training and profession as a psychotherapist. In reviewing the literature, I was able to find a cultural and historical context for this shame and anxiety that is essentially rooted in patriarchal oppression of the feminine, and qualities associated with the feminine, such as the body and sensuality. I was also able to make links between the shame and anxiety and the familial environment of my upbringing. Further, the process of beginning a regular dance/movement practice revealed deep seated fears of abandonment and self-intimacy. Both of these fears manifested as strong ongoing resistance to dancing and moving. On eventually succeeding in committing to a personal practice, I experienced a sense of self-reclamation that felt valuable and developmentally significant. As my exploration progressed, I noticed how dance/movement often uplifted my mood and provided an expanded sense of myself. I also observed how this practice consistently connected me to my emotional world.

My heuristic exploration eventually evolved into a personal crisis where I became emotionally dysregulated, overwhelmed, and totally lost confidence in my

abilities. The heart of this crisis seemed to be fuelled by early unconscious fears that surfaced and intensified in me: fear of abandonment and fear of annihilation. I told my supervisor that during this time I felt like I was being “hacked to pieces by my superego”. The crisis offered me an experience of intense vulnerability, isolation, and, eventually, greater insight into my internal world. Fortunately, I received “good enough” support from my therapist, supervisor, and heuristic group and was able to move through this difficult time. The support offered coming out of this experience was deeply reparative and gave me opportunity to consider the value of relationship when “dancing into the unknown”. As well as taking me into my vulnerability, my heuristic exploration of dance/movement also strengthened and empowered me. I eventually found the confidence in myself to stand up and be seen, adding my own unique voice to the kaleidoscope of others, through this dissertation.

Movement, shame and oppression

Roth (1989) and many others (Highwater, 1978; Jahner, 2001; Stromsted, 1999) have acknowledged the historical oppression and suppression of the body, sensuality, rhythmic movement and its damaging effects, which can manifest as feelings of shame, wanting to hide, and not feeling able to dance and move freely in many people. The shame I experienced on beginning this dissertation appears to be multifaceted. It is the long-carried shame specific to my family, of having an inner life and interest that does not feel in line with the values and interests of that family. It is the shame of feeling “other” or “wrong” within the AUT psychotherapy department. It is also the fear of being seen and heard, and “judged” as a beginning psychotherapist by the “elders” of the psychotherapy community. More widely, it is the collective shame of the culture at large; the shame of aligning with what is still to a certain degree devalued, unacknowledged, and unseen in our culture: the body, movement of the body, the non-verbal, the non-rational, the mysterious, the creative, the child-like, and the sensual. An important illumination for me was making the link between my personal shame and the cultural and historical forces that contributed to this shame.

I have found echoes of this experience in the voices of other psychotherapy students attempting to examine aspects of themselves and/or interests that they felt jarred with mainstream psychoanalytic/psychodynamic values. Schorr-Kon (2017) feared that she would be seen as “flakey” (p. 14) for her interest in using her intuition in her work as a psychotherapist. In writing about the value of the body within psychotherapy, Beever (2015) acknowledged her sense of vulnerability in exploring a

topic that she pointed out was given little attention within her psychotherapy training. Before starting this dissertation somewhere inside I thought that, through years of dancing in community, I had overcome experiences of shame in regard to my non-verbal, instinctive, dancing self. However, the act of bringing this part of myself into the AUT psychotherapy department, through the dissertation, proved hugely confronting. I discovered that all those years of thinking that I had “come out,” had been just another form of hiding—albeit communal hiding. I had been safe from judgement in my “alternative,” “mostly women” dancing community. The intensity of the shame that arose forced me to question and confront it in a way that I do not think I would have done otherwise. In doing so, I feel significantly less isolated and confounded by this shame. I am more able to see that the problem is not just within myself but all around me and possesses a deep-rooted history. The amount of fear that has accompanied this shame has also given me pause to think about my relationship with authority and power. I have realised how afraid I have been of not complying with the status quo (whatever that might look like in my head) and have been able to become more curious about the nature of these fears within me.

What does this mean to my work as a psychotherapist? I think that I am more able to contemplate the relationship that my clients have with their own physical self-expression not just as personal and unique to them, but as containing a cultural legacy of denial and oppression. This insight seems important to hold in mind. I find myself more interested generally in this form of oppression and how it plays out in people’s lives. Further, I also wonder how this might be experienced differently for men and women. As Stromsted (1999) pointed out, feminine ways of knowing and being have a long history of oppression. If women are more inherently aligned to certain aspects that have been oppressed and devalued historically, then is it possible there is more repair work to do, or at least certain differences in the way this legacy might need to be addressed? Clearly, all forms of cultural oppression are important to have knowledge of when working in mental health. Indigenous oppression was richly explored in my psychotherapy training. I think that awareness and understanding of patriarchal oppression is also important for psychotherapists, given the deeply embedded nature of this form of oppression, and the significant consequences for both women and men.

Movement and the mind-body

Through a regular dance/movement practice over several months I found that I became more present to my body, and my inner self. As described, in the previous chapter, I got

in touch with hidden parts of myself, emotions, strengths and vulnerabilities, manifesting in my actions, resistance, dreams, drawings, relationships, as well as dance and movement. It seems in moving my body I have been moving my whole being. Dance and movement have helped me to get more in touch with all aspects of myself; bringing a greater sense of overall integration. This aspect comes through most strongly in the section “Leaps and bounds,” where a powerful sense of expansion is experienced. These findings align with the idea discussed in chapter three that there is an innate interconnectedness between the mind and body, and that improvised movement can provide a greater sense of this interconnectedness within. Although, our innate nature is interconnectedness, (from this perspective), it seems that we do not always experience ourselves this way. For example, in chapter four, I described how after going to the hospital I was aware of particular thoughts going through my head, but that emotionally there was a sense of numbness, and that I also had difficulty feeling the physical sensations of the lower half of my body. During the movement/dance session that followed I found that improvised movement helped me to connect more fully to these parts of myself, so that eventually I contacted my emotional distress and a range of sensations throughout my body. There was incredible relief in this shift to feeling more in touch with the full range of myself. It was as though these aspects, that together construct me, could now talk to each other. Variations of the above experience, a sense of self-expansion and self-integration, happened throughout this dance/movement exploration. These repeated experiences have increased my understanding of the power of dance/movement to widen and deepen the self-experience.

What are the implications of these understandings for me as a psychotherapist and for psychotherapy in general? This knowledge brings up questions in myself about the potential role that this aspect of dance/movement could play in clinical work. For example, if a client cannot find words to describe what she feels inside, might it be helpful for her to explore her inner world on a non-verbal level, through such mediums as breath, gesture, or movement? Likewise, for people who have little awareness of the sensations in their body, and operate on a very intellectual level, could it be helpful to guide them towards exploration of their embodied experience? According to Rayska (2017), moving can help to organise one’s thought process, “but also allows one to create a common space where worded and wordless voices can co-exist” (p. 103).

Movement, the unconscious and early experience

Many psychotherapists who work with the body and movement concur that all of one's history is structured in the body and embodied, and can be accessed through movement (Bloom, 2014; Chodorow, 1997; Rayska, 2017). The experience of entering into my unconscious territory has been a consistent strand throughout this exploration of dance/movement, from the emergence of intense shame, my struggle to establish a consistent practice and claim my space, to deepening into my emotional world and eventually entering a point of internal crisis. It seems as I ventured further into my dance practice I went deeper into everything I struggle with: shame, anxiety, fear of abandonment, and eventually what seemed like incomprehensible terror—fear of annihilation. I have wondered about the meaning of this deepening into the unconscious, eventually leading to internal crisis, and how it relates to movement and dance.

I have come to understand these extreme states, that I eventually found myself in, as early unresolved trauma. From what I have been told, I know that my early life was at times chaotic and disturbing. In my first six months I was separated from my mother for an extended period. I was also an ongoing witness and recipient of violence, and as a young child I was repeatedly locked in a dark wardrobe with little air. I think that some of these experiences began to surface in my dance/movement practice. Because they are so early in my life I have no conscious memory of them. However, somewhere inside, it seems that my body remembers them. The terror and distress I began to feel aligns to these experiences—un-nameable distress, incomprehensible terror.

I have wondered if I could have accessed this same material through verbal means. It seems that there were no words for them. However, during my crisis I was emotionally held by my therapist, receiving care and support that was not available to me as an infant/child, which allowed me to begin to move through and integrate these experiences. These findings relate to the understanding of bodily expression and movement as intrinsic to our early life and that moving the body can connect us to early experience, as discussed in chapter three. Rayska (2017) asserted that increasingly, “the body is understood as a channel of access to those parts of the psyche and those problems that arose in the preverbal stage of human development, or to those experiences that are too painful to verbalize” (p. 44). Empirical studies of trauma clients have demonstrated the use of breath and movement as an effective tool for accessing emotions related to early trauma and regulating them (Van der Kolk, 2012 as cited in Rayska, 2017). I recall how calming breath awareness and simple movement became for

me in moments of intense distress, as described in chapter four. Van der Kolk (2014) stated that body awareness, that allows one to track sensations, helps in developing pathways between feeling and bodily responses, that increases overall self-awareness as well as subjective perceptions of agency.

My experiences of movement/dance in a social setting also align with the idea of dance/movement as developmentally reparative. When I made it to a dance/movement class and found myself in a movement interaction with another person, at times I felt like I was exploring something quite young in myself—on an embodied, non-verbal level. What is possible here? How close can I be? How far away? How much can I show you? These experiences often took me into a playful state, as described in the previous chapter. According to Behrends, Müller, and Dziobek (2012) creative and spontaneous movement interactions among trauma group members offer opportunities to experience reparative relational experiences through implicit body-to-body relating, kinaesthetic empathy, and creative expression. Pierce (2014) asserted that, for clients recovering from the isolation, shame, and deficits in relational functioning that result from prolonged child abuse, group dance/movement can provide “an experimental zone where they may explore the merging and differentiation so crucial to early right brain development and adult relational functioning” (p. 11). But perhaps group dance can be helpful to not just those with abuse histories? Rayska (2017) pointed out that development deficits are likely the norm rather than the exception in most populations. From this perspective then, embodied relational experiences are potentially beneficial to a wide range of people (Rayska, 2017).

These experiences have given me a chance to think more deeply, as a psychotherapist, about both the disorganising and the integrative potential involved in accessing early traumatic experience through improvised movement and dance. I have found myself somewhat shaken as well as profoundly enriched by my experience of “dancing into the unknown”. The experience of going into my early traumatic material was at times dysregulating and overwhelming, and initially I probably did not have enough support with this. However, it also provided me the opportunity to begin a process of integration and repair that would not have been possible had I not accessed these parts of myself. The psychotherapeutic support I eventually received offered me a new relational experience which was undoubtedly reparative (Aron, 1999). The literature on working with trauma clients using body-oriented interventions consistently emphasises the importance of a strong and holding therapeutic relationship and going slowly and carefully (Van der Kolk, 2014). Although, I have known this on a theoretical

level, for some time, I think that this knowledge is now more grounded in me through my own in-depth exploration of movement/dance and my experiences of intense vulnerability within this exploration.

Movement, creativity, and play

As unconscious material arose throughout this dance/movement exploration, I entered into “creative dialogue” with it through movement responses, as well as drawing, poetry, journaling, and conversation with others. These experiences fit with the idea of improvised internally driven dance/movement as a creative process found in the literature and Whitehouse’s (1958) understanding that creativity in dance/movement is paradoxically both receptive and active in nature, as discussed in chapter three. Undoubtedly, improvised movement consistently opened me to my unconscious, whether manifesting as sensation awareness, new movement patterns, underlying emotions, awareness of resistance, imagery, or connection to early experience. Two aspects of myself came to the forefront of my attention through the process of these movement inquiries: harsh, self-critical voices within and an entrenched tendency towards compliance. These aspects presented particularly in relation to important roles such as mother, partner, and student. They are depicted in my poem in chapter four “Good girl”. In this poem I describe my body as having “crunched shoulders” and “no space to breathe”. During movement sessions I explored “opening space” through my shoulders. In one particular exploration I was able to visualise new possibilities for myself—physically and mentally. The image of a “bird-woman” arose; a mythical character who is perhaps the needed antidote to my crunched-shouldered-good-girl. I observed that the creative element of dance/movement did not transform me overnight (i.e. from good-girl into bird-woman); however, it seemed to offer new possibilities. Over the next few months, I noticed “bird-woman” reappeared in my mind in various situations, particularly when I felt susceptible to collapse or unhelpful compliance. It would appear that through this dance/movement exploration something new and important emerged in my consciousness. The creative element of dance, then, has been a way that I can counter my own harsh and rigid internal voices and expand outwards from my “good-girl” mode of being. Through internally-driven, improvised movement I have been able to experiment with “taking up space” and being “strong” and “powerful,” on a physical, relational, and metaphorical level.

Winnicott (1971) asserted that if we are not relaxed we cannot play and that without play there is no creativity. Undoubtedly, there is a powerful element of play in

the practice of improvised movement and dance. According to Winnicott creativity is essentially about finding the self. I noticed that when I really dropped into my own improvised movement I relaxed, and it seemed in this state of relaxation that I felt able to play. Further, when I entered this state of play my experience was that at times I connected with something of my essence or what Winnicott (1965) described as one's "true self" (p. 5). Winnicott (1971) asserted that to find one self in play requires "a specialized setting" (p. 55). Here he was talking about the therapeutic relationship, where the therapist offers holding and containment like that of a good enough mother. Through my explorations, I noticed that an experience of play was more consistently evoked in myself in an interactive context, rather than during solitary movement practice. It seemed that the embodied presence of the other was an important factor for being able to enter this state of play.

This experience of play or what Helprin (2003) has described as "creative flow" (p. 83), seems to be directly related to the sense of expansion and elevation, described in chapter four. Helprin's and others (Jahner, 2001; Juhan 2003; Young, 2012) idea that the creativity inherent in improvised dance and movement can lead to a sense of unity or connection with something greater than ourselves aligns with my own experience. Roth (1990) described this experience as no longer dancing but rather becoming the dance. I found that the feeling of expansion and elevation within generally lead to a sense of connection to the life force within me and surrounding me. There are many different ways to conceptualise this experience: connection to spirit, communion with the divine, inhabiting one's higher self, becoming one with the universe etc. Perhaps this transcendent experience is the ultimate reward of the creative element of dance/movement? Certainly, I found it to be profoundly nourishing and a strong motivating factor for continued practice.

I think that overall these experiences have deepened my understanding of the unique value of dance/movement as a form of self-exploration, self-expression, and communication. Dance and movement are a powerful form of self-inquiry that happen through the mode of the body, the non-rational, the non-verbal, the right-brain, and the intuitive capacity. Dancing daily and documenting the details of my experience has given me a chance to see close up the rich material that emerges through this practice. Paying attention to the range of material coming up such as shame, resistance, self-reclamation, expansion, elevation, and meeting my edges has given me greater respect for, and insight into, the creative power of improvised dance and movement. My

experience has been that improvised movement can put me in touch with unconscious material and allows me to play with it in a way that is different to verbal communication, writing, or simply thinking about things.

What are the implications of this creative element of dance/movement for me as a psychotherapist and for psychotherapy? My curiosity regarding the therapeutic potential of this medium is strengthened. The question arises, how might this creative aspect of dance/movement be made use of within the clinical space? Bloom (2006) describes dance/movement as simply another form of communication “the language of movement”. It seems possible that for some clients, movement and dance could offer but another way to communicate creatively with both themselves and with therapist within treatment, potentially opening up new ways of being with themselves and other. This might be particularly useful for those who struggle to access their inner world through verbal means alone.

General implications for psychotherapy

This story of my “dance into the unknown” is essentially a raw and very personal account of my journey from shame and dread to self-reclamation, self-expression and opening to relationship. Despite my own resistance, fear and anxiety I enter a self-inquiry which takes me to unknown and uncomfortable territory within myself. Every step along the road takes me deeper into my own process and yields important shifts and expansions within myself. In this way my story reflects the therapeutic process. It is a story about what can happen when we allow ourselves to become curious about our own process, become willing to listen in, to stay with and to share these experiences with another (in my case, mostly with my therapist). In describing the psychotherapist’s role, Roth (1987) asserted “nature [of the client] is not created by the therapist, but rather deeply respected, vaguely comprehended, and sensitively evoked...” (p. 269). Perhaps the most powerful illumination that arises through this exploration is an expanded understanding of the need for other, that is the importance of reaching out, the need to be seen and heard, in essence, the need for relationship, as described in the final theme of chapter four ‘I am not an island.’ This is relevant to psychodynamic psychotherapy because it is essentially what this treatment modality is all about - deepening our capacity to be with other and healing old wounds through the power of the holding relationship (Roth, 1987).

The value of this research is not in providing answers, but rather in offering insight into the nature of self-development and healing, how I moved from such things

as fear and hiding to greater visibility, from enmeshment to increased individuation, from emotional dysregulation to greater stability and resilience, from social isolation to increased capacity for relational interdependence. And within this process, this research explores the important role that movement and dance can play in this. The value of attunement to the body and breath, of listening and following the impulses of the body - and of exploring, integrating and sharing those experiences.

This research then is for anyone, both clients and therapists, interested in self-development, self-actualization and the healing journey. In particular it will be of interest to those who may be unfamiliar with the practice of improvised movement and dance, but who are curious to learn more about this medium. This could be for various reasons a) to explore dance/movement for their own wellbeing and development, b) for those whose clients are engaging (or planning to engage) with this medium, who as therapists wish to know more on behalf of their clients c) for those with the desire to incorporate non-verbal interventions, such as dance and movement, in to their work. (Although this study does not explicitly explore dance/movement within the treatment space, I think that the experiences described and thought about are relevant to clinical work). Finally, this study may also be of value to those who already use movement and dance therapeutically, who wish to further their own insight and knowledge on this topic.

Limitations

The most obvious limitation of this study is the fact that it involves but one participant-researcher who is a 45-year-old Pākehā woman with a particular life history and educational background, to name just some of the qualities specific to myself. In this way, the study is limited by these factors, and one would expect the findings of other similar inquiries to vary according to the above factors such as gender and ethnicity, as well as according to more subtle differences, such as personality, attitudes, and beliefs. While keeping these limitations in mind, it seems important to recapitulate that the underlying aim of heuristic research is not to produce a set of generalisable findings; rather, to increase depth of understanding and meaning in relation to specific human experiences, with the understanding that the findings will inevitably be highly subjective and specific to the self of participant-researcher.

Moustakas (1990) asserted that the heuristic researcher is the ultimate judge of the validity of the inquiry, because it is only themselves that have gone through the exhaustive and deeply personal journey of discovery. This piece of research presents

both strengths and limitations, within the expectations and aims of this mode of research. Regarding its weaknesses, I think that there were elements in my personality and emotions that arose that hampered the heuristic process. In discussing the challenges of heuristic research Ings (2011) described this method as one that engenders “a multitude of considerations” and asserted that the researcher who does well needs to have a strong capacity for “critical overview” (p. 231) to manage the inquiry. At times it seemed that my overbearing self-critical voices, combined with the compliant and self-doubting aspect of myself, were in conflict with the confidence, self-trust, and agency required to direct and carry out a potent self-inquiry. Further, the shame and anxiety that arose in relation to both my topic and the reality of exposing myself through this dissertation, at times, seemed to jar with the flow and energy required to progress the inquiry deeper towards my passionate interest. How might this have affected the final presentation of my research? This is difficult to predict, but perhaps my final depictions would have been richer had these aspects not been so strong in myself. On the other hand, this is who I am and how things actually progressed, and, on the positive side, my confrontation with these parts of myself required me to find new levels of self-acceptance that I might not otherwise have found.

On going to sleep that night, I sense the return of my self-critic and a potential barrage of critical commentary and shame to accompany her. I have the urge to send her out of the room. But then another image comes to me. I imagine her snuggling in close to me. Her back against my stomach, her body curved into a foetal shape. She feels like a young child who I am offering comfort to. She seems somewhat shrunken and shrivelled - a shadow of herself: brittle, delicate and small. I fall asleep with this image in my mind. Journal - 19.04.18

Other more practical obstacles hampered my inquiry. Living in a rural area and single parenting a young child meant that opportunities to engage in social improvised movement and dance were limited. Because of these realities, my heuristic inquiry became more weighted towards solitary movement and dance. Although this context was important and interesting to me, I was also frustrated that I was not able to more deeply explore the experience of improvised movement in relationship with others. Further, the immersion that heuristic research requires often felt in conflict with the unrelenting demands of parenting. The need to find time to immerse myself challenged me to carve out personal space and boundaries as a parent (described in chapter four) that I might not have done otherwise; or at least, perhaps, would have done more

slowly. However, despite these important developments, the processes of immersion, focusing, and indwelling jarred with the noise, chatter, and emotional needs of a young child. Other heuristic research (Grennell, 2014) suggests that I am not the only parent who has struggled with such competing demands in undertaking this methodology. The most obvious way such circumstances affected my research was simply the demand on my time and energy, which otherwise might have gone towards my inquiry process.

Despite these limitations and challenges, I think that overall, I was able to commit to a heuristic research process and the result is an in-depth personal story which offers significant insight into the experience and meaning of internally-driven improvised movement and dance. The whole process was both demanding and richly rewarding. My hope is that the authenticity, self-honesty and deep commitment I brought to this study offers lasting resonance to the reader.

Future research

This self-study elicited a range of themes in relation to dance and movement, elucidated in chapter four: shame, resistance, self-reclamation, a sense of self-expansion, elevation of mood, emotional regulation, emotional dysregulation and the need for relationship. Regarding future research, I think that all the themes could be further explored, whether through heuristic methodology or through other qualitative methods, with the overall purpose of expanding the knowledge base on this topic. I think it would be useful to focus on some of the core themes of this study individually in order to take a more in-depth look into particular areas of interest. For example, this study made a small inroad into understanding the way dance/movement can connect us to our emotions (described and explored in the section ‘Here I am’). An investigation focusing specifically on this topic could expand on the knowledge and insight offered. For instance, one might ask, are there particular aspects of improvised movement more likely to evoke emotional responses? Are certain emotions more likely than others to arise through this medium? And how do these emotional responses tend to be processed when they arise in a movement/dance context? What is needed? What is most helpful? Further, one might choose to involve co-researchers/participants, who could provide a greater range of data regarding this experience.

From a wider perspective, while research in the field of dance/movement psychotherapy (DMP) is growing, there is potential for further research on this topic that increases understanding and integration between the fields of verbal psychotherapy and body-oriented psychotherapy (Rayska, 2017). Finally, as with many other areas of

interest explored through qualitative research, I think it would be valuable to hear from a greater diversity of voices on this topic, for example the experience of Māori, of men, and of the younger generation, to name just a few. Such diversity could importantly widen and enrich understanding of the phenomenon of internally-driven improvised dance and movement.

Conclusion and creative synthesis

This inquiry has significantly deepened my understanding of internally-driven, improvised dance and movement at a very personal level. It has exposed to me the well of shame and resistance that existed within me regarding dance and movement, that has reduced somewhat through this study. It has revealed to me how afraid I am to speak about what I love, and it has also forced me to speak about what I love—to be less afraid! Perhaps most of all, my exploration has taught me about the way dance and movement can bring all the missing parts of the self together and the importance of relationship in regard to that process. Through relationship I was eventually able to anchor myself in all that was arising and from this place of stability reach new levels of healing, self-awareness and growth. While, this research has not provided me with any set formulas or clear answers as to how dance/movement might be integrated with psychodynamic work, what seems more important is that it has given the dancer within myself a voice. This means that an internal conversation can continue and evolve in its own way and time. The cycle of heuristic inquiry draws to an end, however, the “dance” of self-inquiry and exploration lives on, in ever unfolding circles.

As this dissertation reaches its conclusion, I am aware that, as well as a deep appreciation for the gains and rewards of my research journey, there is a sense of grieving something. Perhaps this is the loss of my old relationship with dance and movement - which has inevitably shifted and changed through the heuristic research process. I am reminded of Sela-Smith’s (2011) description of how in the heuristic inquiry the furniture in the house of oneself all gets shifted around. This is disorienting and unsettling, but it also signals that a transformation has taken place and “the new worldview has taken up residence...” (p.68). The little girl in me that used to go into the bush and dance by herself has had to come to terms with something. Dance/movement cannot replace the need for relationship. No matter how committed and vigilant I am to my practice, dance/movement cannot offer me self-sufficiency. Even though this understanding seems obvious when I write it down, I think that on some level it was

obscured in me by some deep unconscious belief that dance and movement could provide a sanctuary, which could give me all that I need.

In some way, this dissertation was a trip back into the bush of my childhood. I attempted to take up what had been interrupted by my older sister and brother, through an in-depth inquiry, however, despite many moments of joy and wonder, it seems that my inner demons arose. It was lonely, cold and I realised I needed others. Eventually I invited others into my personal space. Things got better from there. I learned to trust in my human brothers and sisters again. They did not laugh at me. They listened, and they joined their own voices to the conversation—a conversation that, ultimately, is not just about me, but about the human condition.



Figure 8. Trust

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