

PROLEGOMENON FOR A BODY-ORIENTED RESEARCH METHOD IN PSYCHOLOGY

VOLODYMYR SLYVKA

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## **Abstract**

Mainstream psychology often adheres to a reductionist perspective on the body which is founded on a biomedical framework. In this view, the body is regarded as an object which can be studied from a third-person perspective, and the body's functioning is investigated as merely physiological correlates of mental processes. I argue that to fully understand psychological phenomena, there is a need to address the issue of the body at all levels of the research process, including both theoretical foundation, as well as the practical implementation of a psychological method. The main objective of this thesis is to offer a prolegomenon for a research method in psychology which would systematically work with the bodily expression through gesture and movement as an empirical evidence for understanding psychological questions. First, I discuss historical and theoretical underpinnings of body image scholarship, nonverbal communication work, phenomenology, and feminist theory. I employ their findings in order to develop an elaborate theoretical understanding of the body, which will lay the groundwork for the body-oriented method (BOM) in psychology. Second, I examine the existing methods from applied fields of body psychotherapy and dance practices with an attempt to extrapolate their principles to the BOM. Finally, I provide a possible format of the BOM, including the stages of data collection, data description, data interpretation, and representation of results.

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## Introduction

The main goal of this thesis is to propose a method in psychology which systematically employs bodily expression through gesture and movement as a form of empirical evidence for addressing psychological questions. To achieve that, the work discusses some of the existing psychological and philosophical perspectives on the body and utilises their findings to offer a theoretical foundation for the body-oriented method (BOM) in psychology. They include body-image scholarship, nonverbal communication work, phenomenology, and feminist theory. In addition, this thesis examines two applied fields which place the body at the core of their practice, among which are body psychotherapies and dance practices. They offer conceptual and empirical instruments to work with the body as a carrier of subjective experiences; therefore, their principles are employed to design the structure of the BOM.

This thesis draws selectively on immense body of scholarly work and applied fields which concern the topic of the body. Since this work is exclusively built upon theoretical reflection, it should be regarded as a *prolegomenon*: it aims to create conditions for the possibility of a new methodology which employs bodily expression as viable psychological evidence. Furthermore, this thesis offers a structure of the research method itself; however, to assess its effectiveness, it has to be tested empirically. The perspectives discussed are chosen for pragmatic reasons; namely, the purpose of such an examination is to extrapolate their principles to the format of the BOM, including the stages of data collection, data interpretation, and representation of results.

The body plays a pivotal role in everyday experiences. Whether it is understood as a mechanical and quantifiable object which obeys the abstracted mind (Stam, 1998), as an intentional entity which provides the basis for human subjectivity (Merleau-Ponty, 1945/2012),

or as a symbolic slate of cultural and societal influences (Burkitt, 1998) – the body is inescapably present in psychology (Stam & Mathieson, 1993). Yet whatever theoretical stance one might take on this issue, the very fact of the diversity of viewpoints demonstrates that it is impossible to avoid the question of the body if one attempts to address psychological questions.

Mainstream psychology often employs a biomedical perspective on the body (Sampson, 1998), according to which the bodily significance is reduced to the functioning of a nervous system, while the intentional acts are explained in neurophysiological terms (Gallagher, 2006). In this view, the body is regarded as an object which can be studied from a third-person perspective, and the body's functioning is investigated as merely physiological correlates of mental processes. This view disregards the lived experiences of the body and their role in shaping subjectivity. It has received criticism from various perspectives, among which are phenomenology (Merleau-Ponty, 1945/2012; Sartre, 1956), feminist theory (Price & Shildrick, 2017), and theory of embodied cognition (Johnson, 1987). Despite conceptual differences, they disagree with the notion that the body is simply a reactive and subordinate machine-like object.

According to a phenomenological perspective, this dualistic view fails to recognize the intertwined relation between the body and the mind, namely that being bodily involved in the spatio-temporal dimension of the world gives the very foundation for mental life (Merleau-Ponty, 1945/2012). What follows from this argument is that having a living body is a precondition for the active interaction with the world, which then creates a possibility for the development of subjectivity (Bullington, 2013). Feminist theory provides a critique of a universalized body; instead, it emphasises the dependence of bodily experiences on a variety of contexts through which these experiences are lived, such as gender, race, and class. (Behnke, 2010; Lennon, 2010). According to the embodied cognition thesis, basic features of cognition are

informed by the entire body of the organism. In other words, abstracted higher cognitive activities emerge from the recurring patterns of bodily experiences (Johnson, 1992; Lakoff, 1987). Drawing upon these perspectives, in this thesis, the body is conceptualised as a living entity which is experienced subjectively and shaped by cultural and social influences.

Even though these theories give credit to the significance of the body for understanding subjectivity, this acknowledgement does not go beyond theoretical reflections. That is, the major research methods (used in these traditions) do not include the body as a viable source of data which then can be described and/or interpreted in relation to the psychological events under investigation. Instead, they are similar to more traditional methods which predominantly operate with the verbal forms of data. Because the body is an important source of knowledge about psychological phenomena, it is argued that there is a need to address the issue of the body at all levels of the research process, including both theoretical foundation, as well as the practical implementation of a research method.

*Chapter one.* The purpose of this chapter is to develop an elaborate theoretical understanding of the body which lay the groundwork for the BOM in psychology. First, it discusses the existing views on the body in mainstream psychology. It gives attention to body-image scholarship and nonverbal communication work by examining their historical and theoretical underpinnings. Second, it outlines the alternative accounts of the body, including phenomenology and feminist theory. The chapter integrates their findings into a cohesive theoretical framework which emphasises the multifaceted nature of the body. Specifically, informed by their findings, the body is conceptualised as a fluid entity through which subjective experiences are lived and communicated to others, as well as the means to provide commentary on social, cultural, historical, and political contexts in which these bodily experiences exist.

Despite these perspectives provide an advanced understanding of the body, they have little to offer methodologically. Since the current project pursues a practical aim, in the following chapters it investigates areas which employ the body as a research instrument.

*Chapter two.* This chapter examines the methods of psychotherapy which actively address the question of the body. In addition to approaches in psychotherapy that rely upon verbal intervention, there are schools within this field which employ bodily experiences for psychological treatment (Smith, 1985). The historical and theoretical foundation of body psychotherapies are examined to demonstrate their relevance to the BOM. Furthermore, the format of the focusing technique (Gendlin, 1978) is discussed in more detail. The chapter outlines the main principles underlying this technique for the design of the BOM. Specifically, it provides a six-step model for the BOM at the stage of data collection. Additionally, the chapter discusses micro-phenomenology (Petitmengin, 2007) which draws upon the focusing technique to systematise pre-verbal bodily experiences for research purposes. Finally, the chapter summarizes an empirical research study on the formation of self-concept in athletes (Stelter, 2000), which is built upon focusing technique. The purpose of this assessment is to show the application of focusing technique outside of the psychotherapeutic field and use this study to inform the format of the BOM.

*Chapter three.* The focus of this chapter is to assess dance theories and practices and apply their findings to the BOM in psychology. First, it outlines theoretical understanding of dance, including its definition, seven perspectives of considerations, four components and functions. Afterwards, it discusses the relationship between philosophy and dance, emphasising the phenomenological descriptive approach. In the following part, the chapter investigates two dance practices in particular: authentic movement (Whitehouse, Adler, Chodorow, & Pallaro,

1999) and contact improvisation (Bull, 1997; Novack, 1990; Paxton, 1975; Sheets-Johnstone, 1981). It examines the format of authentic movement to incorporate it in the BOM at the stage of data collection. Since contact improvisation puts emphasis on the non-linguistic forms of psychological meaning (Merritt, 2015; Pini, McIlwain, & Sutton, 2016), it is suggested that its principles may lay the groundwork for the BOM.

*Chapter four.* This chapter gives a possible format of the BOM. First, it outlines the data collection stage by addressing three questions: (1) what constitutes psychological evidence; (2) from whom the data can be obtained; and (3) in what fashion can this data be obtained in the BOM. Second, the chapter discusses the data description stage. It employs a Prownian analysis (Prown, 1982) as a model for describing psychological data. Third, the chapter outlines the data interpretation stage which consists of deduction and speculation. The BOM incorporates both of these stages with their corresponding steps. Forth, the chapter discusses the representation of results stage that aims to provide a coherent organisation of the accumulated data in the manner which can be communicated to other researchers. Finally, it offers a few theoretical case examples which can be studied using the BOM.

I would like to conclude this introduction by offering an anecdote from my personal experience to illustrate the potential of bodily expression for understanding psychological questions. Despite general stylistic requirements for writing a thesis, I have decided to use informal language to describe my personal experiences and include information which, traditionally, may be seen as insignificant and irrelevant. I have done that to allow the reader to experience themselves the essence of the proposed method.

*After completing one year of my Master's program, in the summer of 2017, I took part in a conference, organized by the International Society of Theoretical Psychology. It was held in*



*Tokyo, Japan. I was at this conference to give a presentation on bodily interaction through dance for empathetic understanding. To my positive surprise, there were many presentations which discussed the importance of embodiment in psychology. I attended a few of them, but I found one, in particular, memorable. It was a symposium consisting of four individual presentations, unified by the theme of the bodily borders of individuality. I found each one insightful and well-articulated. I was intrigued by the presenters' ability to use a precise language in discussing subtleties pertaining to the body. Despite my intellectual fascination with the discussed topics, there was something unsettling for me in that moment. I looked around the room, filled with the audience. Everyone was sitting in their chairs, barely moving, being physically detached from each other. I directed attention to my own experiences. It was the last panel in the day, so I was feeling exhausted, and this was exacerbated by my uncomfortable sitting position in the conference chair. Suddenly, I was struck by the absurdity of the present situation: the room was full of unmoved bodies, including my own, holding serious expressions on our faces, while discussing what it means to be an embodied subject. In that moment, I came to the realisation that I, along with everyone there, betrayed our own bodily existence.*

*First, we made a surgical separation between the body and the mind. Second, we tried to recover this split by intellectual pursuits, pushing the body to the margins of awareness, denying its primal existence, and missing, again, what it really means to be an embodied subject. The irony of this made me realize the danger of the emerging scholarship on the body. Delineating the body as a research topic is undoubtedly a positive change. But in a subtle way, it somehow disappeared once again under the refined layers of philosophising. It became clear to me that reclaiming its existence is not enough. If resolving the first betrayal required us to say that the body is, resolving the second demands us to live it.*

*When the panel was over, I felt frustrated with the whole situation. I wanted to rest, I needed to release the intellectual overload that I had accumulated during the day. I felt a strong desire for human connection, as directly as it is ever possible, as simply as it can get, **across borders** of cultural and social conventions. Across personal histories.*

*I came home and searched for a contact improvisation dance jam in Tokyo. Luckily, there was one happening that evening. I immediately got ready and left the house. All I knew was the address. I was going to a session with total strangers with whom I had no cultural nor linguistic commonalities. It was a risk. It could be an adventure out of comfort zone for many people. It was different for me because I strongly believed that one should live by what they preach. So, if I came all the way to Japan to say that the true understanding comes from us acknowledging our embodied presence, I should fear not the encounter of the Other. I thought that the upcoming experience could empirically prove or completely debunk my own hypothesis: is it actually possible to reach a reciprocated psychological understanding with someone you have so little in common, or is it just an idealised dream that I had made myself believe?*

*I arrived at the designated subway station. I pulled out my phone to check the maps for where to proceed next. I used public Wi-Fi which, of course, kept failing on me. So, I realised that I had to rely on my own memory of how to get to the studio. I knew that it should be situated within a few hundred metres from the subway, but I could not remember the exact location. Unlike other neighbourhoods in Tokyo, this one felt deserted. The streets were narrow. There was no one walking, except me. I hoped that I would find the place. Searching around, the time of the event was approaching, so I was gradually getting anxious as I was not able to find the place. I decided that in the worst-case scenario, I would simply return home and never mention my failure to anyone. Suddenly, I noticed a woman walking in the direction where I knew the*

*studio was located. I inferred that she must be heading towards the same place I was going. Since there were no other people around, she noticed my presence. I sensed that she recognised my purpose for being in the neighbourhood, but I did not possess the courage to approach her directly. Instead, keeping a safe distance from her, partly to avoid coming across as a stalker, I observed where exactly she was going. I followed. After making a few twisted turns, I winningly discovered that I achieved my goal: I found the exact building I sought, having previously looked up a photo of it online.*

*I entered. The woman who unknowingly helped me to get to the place smiled at me and in her best effort to articulate in English, she told me that when she saw me, she had wondered whether I was here to dance. Indeed, I was.*

*The studio was tiny. There was a foyer where I was asked to take my shoes off. Another room was meant for dancing. Apart from the woman whom I already met, there were four other people. One of them approached me and gazed at me with questioning eyes. As I later discovered, she was the facilitator of the class. Using basic phrases of communication, I let her know that I was not here by mistake, that I was here to dance. She, on the other hand, managed to explain to me that she was the facilitator but would not be able to translate anything in English. If I only could explain to her that it was precisely what I was looking for: a bodily contact unmediated by a linguistic means.*

*We all started moving around. The facilitator was guiding the class in Japanese. I was simply following what everyone else was doing. From the very beginning, I observed a substantial difference from my other experiences with contact improvisation. In Toronto, where I had most of my experiences, improvisation tends to become very athletic. There is a lot of lifting and falling involved. It is usually quite dynamic and fast. My experience at this studio was quite*

*different. The room was not spacious and lightened as the one I was used to in Toronto. It was darkened and small. I observed that instead of expanding the space, the emphasis was put on subtle changes.*

*I came into contact with one of the dancers there. Our shoulders touched. But instead of quickly moving to a different position, we stayed in that moment. From an outside perspective, nothing was happening, two bodies staying still. For me, as a co-creator of the movement, there was a strong feeling involved, the access to the miracle of human encounter. At first, there was a neutral touching, an accidental occurrence between two individuals, who happened to be in same time and place and bumped into each other. What came after was a pause, a deep listening into each other's presence, a naked experience of another living being that is not me. Feeling the presence of someone who is not me. Not only I was sensing her, I was sensing her sensing me, which made me experience a different dimension of my own reality – myself as an objective presence which becomes visible by the touch of the Other. This reflection occurred post-factum. In the moment, however, there was only an unnamed experience, highly complex in its simplicity. It included touching me, my touching partner and the point in-between: the filled emptiness by the act of touching of two subjects.*

*Then followed a suspense. I did not want to rush. I did not want to miss this crucial moment of a first meeting, without which the contact is pointless, regardless of its possible aesthetic virtuosity. Next came a micro-change of pressure, initiated by my partner. It carried a deep meaning: it signified an open invitation to a shared co-creation without any pre-established rules. The dance unfolded. To be fully present in the dance is a very challenging task. It requires a fine balance between my own rhythm, the rhythm of my partner, and the rhythm of the environment we are in. That cannot be achieved, however, by thinking about it, for thoughts are*

*too slow to keep up with the happenings. I saw the smile on her face. I smiled back. We were present. I knew that. I knew that she knew. I knew that she knew that I knew.*

*There were numerous borders between us. We came from two different cultures, her being Japanese and Ukrainian-Canadian myself. We did not speak the same language. We did not know each other's names nor occupations. There were gaps between our worlds. But somehow, despite the myriads of distances that kept us away from each other - we met. Did I know what it was like for her to experience whatever she was experiencing? Did I know exactly what she thought or felt? No, of course I did not. I would never be able to get under her skin and feel the way she did. But this was the closest I could get. We looked at each other. We quietly smiled and bowed. We departed.*

*There were other dances. Each one different. Then the facilitator introduced an activity. I paired up with a new partner. I did not know what we were expected to do. After explaining it to others, the leader came up to me to demonstrate. She started with a sitting position on the floor. Then she gracefully fell while her partner gently cradled her head. While falling, she made a light whistling sound. At first, I struggled to understand. Everyone else was making the same sound. I was still confused. Someone said, "like sand, falling like sand." Then I understood. Like the sea sand slipping between fingers.*

*My task was to overcome my tension and the fear of hitting the ground. I had to allow myself to fall naturally without any pre-reflective interference. To achieve that, I needed to trust that my partner would catch me. It was not an easy task to do. I failed several times because I was stiff. While falling, I kept suspending myself in the air. I was fearful to hit the ground. So, I looked at my partner to search for reassurance that he would actually make my falling safe. I read that in his eyes and his smile. Only then, I allowed myself to let my fears go. I finally*

*experienced the liberating feeling of falling, which was only achievable by me fully trusting the Other.*

*We engaged in many other activities. We laughed, we hugged, and we played. Tired and relaxed, we finally laid on the floor. This was the end of the jam. We formed a circle with our heads touching. We all made funny childish sounds. We laughed more. Then slowly the silence filled up the room. There was a moment of quiet contemplation, shared by us all. I felt at home.*

This is only one of many uncountable memories that I, personally, experienced through my exposure to various dance practices. These events allowed me to meet new people and learn from their unique experiences which I would not be able to discover otherwise. I danced with a choir conductor who, then, explained to me how she perceives sound by drawing parallels with the patterns of dance. Once I had a memorable dance with a person in a wheelchair who exposed to me my own deeply-rooted stereotype of what an ideal body ought to be and bringing to light the sweetened politeness which I use to keep this belief at bay. I danced with a blind woman who allowed me to see what I have not seen before – the ability to experience life fully without seeing it. I danced with a professor of theoretical mathematics whose rhythm of movement intrigued me with its irregularity and unpredictability.

I also had dances where there was a clear miscommunication and inability or desire to find any mutual ground for understanding. Although hurtful in the moment, in retrospect, those were valuable experiences. They made me think about my personal boundaries and choices and that of others. I started to reflect upon how to leave an interaction which I do not want to be part in a respectful way, and how to accept someone else's "no" without taking it personally.

I watched children dancing from whom I learned not to anticipate the next step. Sometimes I was intimidated by the strength and athleticism of my partners, and sometimes I was the one who possessed more power in dance. I encountered many men and women in dance, and from their rich expression I learned the detrimental impact of our categorising people into rigid gender roles. I danced with individuals with backgrounds from around the world- white-Canadians, Chinese-French-Canadian, Indian, Serbian, Belarusian, Japanese, German, Mexican, Israeli, Egyptian, Iranian, and many others. Away from political turmoil of the present time, away from bombarding messages of who is a friend and who is enemy, I was able to meet them on neutral territory. Respecting the heritage of others and taking pride of my own – these are but a few of the insights I discovered through dance.

I experienced dance in a guiding role that led me to experiment with the borders of healthy leadership. I also took the role of a follower: I learned about obedience and personal choice from this position. I danced out my hurt, and I watched other people expressing their own suffering in dance. I shared dances which celebrated life and dances that allowed moving through difficulties towards a place of peace. I experienced the emergence of a group organism when individual dances had gravitated towards one group contact, consisting of more than ten dancers. Importantly, many of my dances did not end in the studio. They turned into long-lasting friendships which have been feeding my need to understand and for being understood.

As a psychology student, I started to think whether this unique phenomenon of nonverbal bodily understanding can be systematically used in psychological research, particularly in those instances where the main goal is to gain understanding. This is the essence of the proposed BOM in psychology.

## Chapter 1

### Existing Psychological and Philosophical Theories of the Body

The main purpose of this chapter is to develop a theoretical knowledge of the body which will serve as a basis for the body-oriented method (BOM) in psychology. Since the existing theories emphasize diverse aspects of the body, they often resist and contradict each other. There are various points of tension which divide the views on the body into competing camps. One such significant tension refers to the distinction between *body-as-a-subject* and *body-as-an-object*. Another controversy revolves around a primary nature of the body; namely, whether it is personal, or rather social, cultural, and political. Developing a BOM is primarily a pragmatic task. Therefore, instead of holding a particular perspective, this work endeavors to discern those theoretical aspects pertaining to the body that could be successfully implemented in the method, regardless of their philosophical origins.

This chapter comprises two interrelated parts. First, it explores the view on the body in mainstream psychology. It gives attention to the body image scholarship and the research on nonverbal communication. Afterwards, it briefly outlines the alternative theorizations of the body, including phenomenology and feminist theory. It combines their discoveries into a cohesive theoretical framework which recognizes the multifaceted nature of the body. Specifically, in this work the body is theorized as a fluid entity through which subjective experiences are lived and communicated to others. Furthermore, it is conceptualized as an indicator of social, cultural, and political factors which have influence on this body.

It has to be acknowledged, however, that the objective is not to offer an overarching assessment of these traditions. Each theoretical perspective, including those within mainstream psychology, have varied viewpoints on the body. Moreover, there is a considerable overlap



among those approaches (e.g., feminist psychology or phenomenological perspective on body image) which makes it challenging, if not impossible, to separate clear-cut philosophical views on the body. Thus, such divisions are employed solely for analytical purposes, while being mindful of the diversity of viewpoints within each of those approaches. Despite many nuances, however, there are general patterns which can be discerned.

People invest enormous resources in caring for their bodies by means of nurturing, clothing, decorating, and disciplining (Foucault, 1988; Sampson, 1998). However, in dealing with the question of the body, mainstream psychology adopts a reductionist perspective which is based on a framework, borrowed from medicine and neuroscience (Voestermans, 1995). Within the psychological traditions that adhere to a biological framework, the body is conceptualized as a neurologically sophisticated object which exists among other objects in the world (Stam & Mathieson, 1995), or as a *corpse* in a medical research (Romanyshyn, 1992), as opposed to a living, culturally and socially inscribed body, experienced from a first-person perspective (Leder, 1990).

To quantify and measure psychological phenomena in the physicalist paradigm, subjectivity was excluded from psychological investigation, and as a result it was replaced by the mechanized and quantifiable body (Stam, 1998). Besides, this traditional psychological stance on thinking, meaning-making and knowledge acquisition is based on the ontological mind-body dichotomy, known as a Cartesian dualism, which prioritizes the role of the mind over the body in meaning-making (Johnson, 2007). This viewpoint takes its roots in the work of the French philosopher René Descartes (1640/1968) who contends that the mind and the body are divided and irreducible to each other.

Descartes' argument suggests that the self, which is the inner reference point of the experienced "I" or internal subjectivity, cannot be placed in any part of the body, as it would remain intact with a change or failure of many of the bodily attributes (Burkitt, 1998). For example, an amputated limb would not drastically alter the self-identity of an individual, nor would the experience of an aging body. By applying his method of doubt, Descartes examines the validity of knowledge about oneself and the external objects obtained through various modalities and concludes that the sensory and perceptual experiences of the body are not reliable sources of knowledge. He asserts that "it is certain that I, that is to say my mind, by which I am what I am, is entirely and truly distinct from my body, and may exist without it" (Descartes, 1640/1968, p.156). Therefore, according to Descartes, only the intellect can provide certainty about oneself and the world.

This philosophical tradition seems to be prevalent in contemporary psychology and cognitive sciences. In his assessment of the philosophical foundation of the contemporary cognitive sciences, Gallagher (2006) holds that Cartesian dualism is unanimously rejected; however, since the mental events are reduced to brain processes and intentional acts are explained exclusively in the neurophysiological terms, the mind-body dualism, as an underlying philosophy in psychology and cognitive sciences, persists in a latent form.

Based on this reasoning, a prevailing group of assumptions follows, according to which understanding and formation of meaning emerge as a result of a pure and disembodied thinking process, while the body is conceptualized as a mere biological object meant to be guided and controlled by the rational mind (Merritt, 2015). In this fashion, it is also assumed that reality can be explained by language which is believed to convey unmediated essence of objects and their

properties. Moreover, rationality is assumed to be abstracted from bodily experiences, while meaning-making is considered being objective.

### *Body Image Scholarship and the Body*

One important field of psychology in which the question of the body is located at the core of its subject-matter is the psychological research on body image. Body image scholarship has immensely expanded over the last few decades (Cash, 2004). Its popularity especially expanded in the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, as the conceptual, psychometric, and psychotherapeutic improvements in this field have indicated (Cash & Smolak, 2011). Furthermore, the proliferation of this research area is demonstrated by the number of body image publications. Specifically, two large research databases, PsychINFO and PubMed, show that the publications on this subject have doubled from 2000 through 2010, compared to the 1990s (Pruzinsky & Cash, 2002). Along with the increasing interest on this topic in scholarly research, popular journals and magazines have popularized body image work in the public sphere (Blood, 2005), which led sociologist Bryan Turner (1992) to coin the term “somatic society” to delineate this trend (Grogan, 2017).

The initial scientific research on body image begun in early 1900s (Cash & Smolak, 2011). It was predominantly focused on the clinical research of neuropathological forms of body perceptions induced by brain damage (Grogan, 2017). The investigated unusual body experiences included such phenomena as “phantom limb,” “autopagnosia,” “hemiasomatognosia,” and “anosognosia” (Fisher, 1990). The initial understanding of body image was equated with the concept of body schema (Cash & Smolak, 2011). This term was proposed by neurologist Henry Head (1861-1940) who described it as a nonconscious postural model of the body which actively monitors body posture and movement (Gallagher, 1986).

In the 1920's the work of Paul Schilder (1886-1940), who was trained as a neurologist, modified the study of body image, shifting it away from the pathological body experiences caused by brain damage (Fisher, 1990). Instead, he suggested to reconsider body experiences within both psychological and sociological frameworks, which has contributed to increased attention to body image in psychology and sociology (Grogan, 2017). In his work *The Image and Appearance of the Human Body* (1950/2013), which is entirely dedicated to body image, he defines this concept as “the picture of our own body which we form in our mind, that is to say the way in which the body appears to ourselves” (Schilder, 1935/2013, p.11).

Two other historical body image scholars who merit mentioning due to their considerable impact on the field are Seymour Fisher (1922-1996) and Franklin Shontz (1926-2015). Fisher contributed to the psychodynamic understanding of body image (Bailey, Gammage, and van Ingen, 2017; Cash & Smolak, 2011), while Shontz, who was critical of that approach, tried to employ theoretical and empirical findings about perceptual and cognitive dimensions of body experience from various areas of experimental psychology (Bailey, Gammage, and van Ingen, 2017; Cash, 2004). In addition, Shontz used body image concepts to contribute to the study of physical disability and health psychology (Cash & Smolak, 2011). Currently, body image is theorized as a multi-dimensional psychological experience of embodiment, which is not confined to its aspect of physical appearance, and because of its complexity, it has been proposed to use the term “body images” instead to give justice to the multifaceted nature of this phenomenon (Cash & Pruzinsky, 1990).

The multi-dimensional nature of the body image construct has raised a conceptual issue. Namely, there is no agreed-upon notion of what this concept exactly implies and therefore, its definition varies depending on a research goal (Bailey, Gammage, and van Ingen, 2017). Among

others, the body image construct incorporates such various meanings as an evaluation of one's own body-attractiveness, body-size estimation, body-boundaries, accuracy of perception of bodily sensations, and emotions associated with body-shape and size (Fisher, 1990; Grogan, 2017). This ambiguity inevitably evokes terminological confusion in the body image research community (Bailey, Gammage, and van Ingen, 2017; Thompson, Heinberg, Altabe, and Tantleff-Dunn, 1999). According to Pruzinsky (2004), the complexity of the issue is further amplified by the three themes regarding body image; namely, (1) it cannot be reduced to the perception of physical appearance; (2) body image experiences are by nature subjective; and (3) those experiences are dynamic.

The scope of body image research is also not limited to a single population. Traditionally, the body image question was deemed to be relevant to girls and women, particularly in the context of reduction and prevention of the negative body image in eating disorders (Cash, 2004). However, this research area has been enlarged in the last few decades to include diverse facets of body experiences. First, body image researchers in the 1980s and 1990s have directed their attention to the psychological and sociological aspects of men's body image, which can be explained by the increased presence of this topic in popular culture (Grogan, 2017). An example of a specific research topic in this area could be the motivation behind the use of body-building and anabolic steroids among men, in face of their negative side effects on health (Grogan, 2017). The field has also witnessed an expansion of its research in older adults and persons with physical disabilities (Bailey, Gammage, and van Ingen, 2017). For instance, body image researchers study the effects of acquired physical diseases and injuries, such as cancers and skin burns, and their treatments on the changes in body image and psychological well-being (Cash, 2004).

The findings of the body image scholarship, described above, apply to the proposed BOM in psychology. First, the increasing popularity of the topic shows the extent to which the body plays a role in human psychological experiences. The demand for producing psychological knowledge on body image serves as a supporting argument for a research method, which defines the body not only as an object of investigation but employs the very experiences of the body as a means to attain knowledge about psychological facts. Second, as demonstrated by the history of body image work, it is limiting to reduce the concept of the body to neuropathological experiences. The existence of psychological and sociological frameworks corroborates the multifaceted status of the body, which is irreducible to a strictly biological view.

Even though the diversity of body image definitions causes misunderstanding among scholars in this field, it also shows that the body is manifold in nature, which should be taken into account. It is not only an imaginary picture of the body or the perception of one's own attractiveness, but also the subjective experience of that body, which constantly changes in varying contexts. Based on the findings in this field, the BOM operates with the elaborate definition of the body. It admits the multifaceted nature of the concept which gains different meanings, depending on a given angle of investigation. Finally, the fact that the body image is studied in different populations indicates the wide relevance of this topic. Thus, the BOM which explicitly addresses the body has a potential to reveal psychological meanings of various groups.

#### *Nonverbal Communication and the Body*

Another significant area in psychology which explicitly addresses the question of the body is the research on nonverbal communication. This field comprises three primary units of investigation, including (1) the characteristics of the environment in which the communication occurs and the impact of nonhuman agents on human interactions; (2) the relatively stable

physical characteristics of the communicators among which are communicators' physique, body shape, skin colour, gender, and so forth; and (3) the manifested behaviours of the communicators, or body movements (Knapp, Hall, & Horgan, 2010). Even though all three components directly or indirectly relate to the question of the body, the third one is most closely associated with it. It includes the following components: gestures, posture, touching behaviour, facial expression, eye and vocal behaviours. Each of those components is further subdivided into simpler units of analysis (Knapp, Hall, & Horgan, 2010).

Nonverbal communication study, which gained prominence in the United States in the 1950's, does not only belong to psychology or any other discipline. Instead, it appears in the work of such fields as psychiatry, linguistics, and anthropology (Hecht & Ambady, 1999). In the early period of this study, there have been various attempts made to develop theories of nonverbal communication in psychology, such as Argyle and Dean's (1965) intimacy equilibrium model or Henley's (1977) theory of social power in nonverbal behaviours. Despite those efforts, there has not been a theory created which would provide an elaborate foundation for explaining nonverbal behavior. According to Hecht and Ambady (1999), the failure to develop a psychological theory of nonverbal communication led to the decrease of this study in psychology, especially in face of the rapid growth of the cognitive revolution. Nonverbal communication does not comprise an independent line of research, for very few psychologists choose this topic as their major research focus. Despite that, Mehrabian (2017) argues that today the interest in the phenomena of nonverbal communication is regaining popularity both in academic and public spheres.

Similarly to body image work, there has been a challenge to define precisely the concept of nonverbal communication. Nonverbal communication is traditionally understood as a form of

communication by means other than words; however, according to Knapp, Hall and Horgan (2010), there are at least two problems with such a definition. First, there is no clear-cut distinction between the concepts of verbal and nonverbal. Specifically, in certain contexts body movements become linguistic (e.g., sign languages), while not all words are necessarily verbal (e.g., onomatopoeic words which phonetically imitate the sounds of words they are meant to convey). Second, such definition does not specify whether the phenomenon of “by means other than words” relate to its encoding stage (i.e., the produced signal) or decoding stage (i.e., the interpretation of the produced signal by the perceiver).

In addition, there has been a misconception that verbal and nonverbal means of communication convey different types of messages, with the former being responsible for concepts and ideas and the latter—for emotional states. In practice, however, as words may be used to convey emotional states, nonverbal behaviours, too, have a potential to communicate concepts and ideas (McNeill, 1992). In contrast to this misunderstanding that verbal and nonverbal systems operate with two distinct types of messages, it has been suggested that there is a larger communication process which comprises both those systems; thus, they are in close interrelation with each other (Knapp, Hall, & Horgan, 2010). More precisely, according to Ekman and Friesen (1969), the complex interaction between nonverbal and verbal systems might take forms of redundancy, contradiction, substituting, complementing, accenting, or regulating.

*Redundancy* implies that nonverbal behaviours are employed to convey the same message that has been expressed verbally. It is suggested that this repetition aims to increase accuracy and precision of communicative interaction (Burgoon & Saine, 1978). *Contradiction* between verbal and nonverbal cues may be used either intentionally (e.g., sarcasm depends on the contrast between the two), or accidentally (e.g., nonverbal cues convey socially unaccepted



feelings which are verbally censored). In *substitution*, verbal signal is completely replaced by the nonverbal one. This function is used for a variety of purposes, such as a rapid delivery of meaning, conveyance of two or more messages simultaneously, or instances when the message is difficult to transmit verbally (Burgoon & Saine, 1978). *Complementing* implies that nonverbal behaviours supplement or modify the verbalized message. This function is meant to expand the meaning expressed verbally by adding to it more nuances. *Accenting* is utilized to emphasize or punctuate the verbally conveyed message. It is most often done by the change of the pitch or rate of speaking, as well as gestures, posture, and facial expressions. Finally, the *regulating* function aims to control communication interactions (Burgoon & Saine, 1978).

These forms of interrelation demonstrate the privileging of verbal over nonverbal means of communication since the nonverbal behaviours here are conceptualized as being subordinate to verbal behaviours, meant to clarify and amplify the verbalized meanings. However, the nonverbal means of communication expands its scope beyond the domain of verbal interaction and can exist without the presence of it, serving such important functions, as “the communication of emotions, the development of interpersonal relationships (known as relational messages), manipulation of one’s self-presentation, and the manipulation of others, in addition to the regulatory function” (Burgoon & Saine, 1978, p. 13).

The traditional approach to study nonverbal communication lies in its comparison to the structure and functioning of the verbal language (Mehrabian, 2017). More precisely, many attempts have been made to identify fundamental units of nonverbal behaviours (similarly as done in linguistics) and explicate the rules by which they are organized together (Duncan, 1969). According to Mehrabian (2017), the attempts to develop the notation and category systems of nonverbal communication proved to be futile. Even though verbal and nonverbal means of

communication share common characteristics, there are features are unique to each of those means, which proves the irreducibility of one to the other.

One particular point of distinction between verbal and nonverbal communication lies in the difference between types of coding systems which underlie them. The verbal system is considered, according to Harrison (1974), to be founded on the *digital* coding system, whereas the nonverbal system is deemed to be *analogic* [*sic*]. The verbal language is digital in nature, meaning it relies upon the finite number of units which are organized together by the well-defined rules of grammar and syntax. Additionally, the units of language (sounds, words, sentences, etc.) are discrete; that is, they are distinguishable from one another. In contrast, the analogic system, which underlies nonverbal communication, has an infinite continuum of values, which merge one into the other. The subtle nonverbal behaviours do not abide by the explicit coding rules; that is, there are only unclear and vague interpretations of the meanings of nonverbal codes, which vary among cultures (Burgoon & Saine, 1978). These properties of nonverbal communication serve simultaneously as a potency and limitation: on the one hand, there are unlimited ways to convey meanings, but on the other, this richness of expression might lead to ambiguity and confusion when these messages are interpreted.

Nonverbal communication scholarship has accumulated knowledge which can be applied in the proposed BOM in psychology. First, the three units of investigation, including the impact of nonhuman agents on human interactions, the relatively stable physical characteristics of the communicators, and the manifested behaviours of the communicators, or body movements are used in the BOM as three points of consideration. Importantly, the proposed method diverges from the nonverbal communication field in terms of its goal; namely, instead of attempting to

explain the phenomenon of expressive body, the BOM aims to describe and interpret it. Despite this difference, the units of analysis are shared.

Another important contribution to the BOM lies in the recognition of a close interconnection between verbal and nonverbal domains. Since they both comprise a shared communicative system, body movement can be used to convey psychological meanings. It is particularly advantageous to use the body as a medium of expression in those instances where verbal means of communication are insufficient to transmit meanings. For example, certain marginalized groups might lack appropriate language skills to express their complex lived experiences. Their bodily expression through gesture, posture, and movement can serve as a source of psychological knowledge.

### *Phenomenology and the Body*

In place of the objective reality, which is the major focus of natural sciences, phenomenological tradition centres on the realm of subjectivity (Moran, 2000). Traditional objectivistic approach, which underlies mainstream psychology, strives for what is known as “the view from nowhere” (Nagel, 1989). This ideal of pure objectivity assumes that the reality is constituted by objects which can be described and explained using concepts of language. Language, in turn, is deemed to provide an unmediated representation of the essence of those objects and their relationships. In contrast, the phenomenological view, which was firstly articulated by Edmund Husserl (1859-1938), prioritizes the way in which the world is subjectively experienced by human beings from a first-person perspective. Unlike the objectivistic approach which tries to eliminate the presence of the subjective in the scientific investigation and treats it as an undesirable occurrence, Husserl (1913/1962) assigns primordial role to the lived experiences in shaping explanations of natural sciences (Buckley, 1992). In

other words, abstract conceptualisations, according to him, are based on and informed by subjective experiences (Bullington, 2013). Thus, the phenomenological approach endeavours to describe direct human experiences as they appear to consciousness; it is preoccupied with the notions of perceiving, meaning and understanding, as opposed to explaining objective facts, as it is done in mainstream psychology and other natural sciences (Giorgi, 1970; Langdridge, 2007).

The body plays an important role in theorizing subjectivity within phenomenological thought. Husserl addressed the question of the body throughout his philosophical work (Behnke, 1996). He is a well-known philosopher who criticized the natural-scientific view, which regards it as a physical substance, distinct from the mind (Behnke, 2011). In contradistinction to that, he introduces the concept of *Leib* (as opposed to *Körper*), meaning the lived body which is constituted by uniquely experienced nexus of sensations by the embodied perceiver (Behnke, 2011). Although he has written on the topic, it is in the work of another phenomenological philosopher, Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1908-1961), where the body gains a pivotal role in understanding subjectivity; for him the body becomes “the vehicle of being in the world” (Merleau-Ponty, 1945/2012, p. 82). He does not only recognize the lived body, but unlike Husserl who placed his focus on consciousness, Merleau-Ponty redefines it as a constituting subject (Kwant, 1963). His central interest in this topic earned him a title of “the philosopher of the body” (Bullington, 2013).

Following Husserl’s argumentation, Merleau-Ponty starts his line of reasoning with the provision of criticism to the natural-scientific notion of the body which revolves around an investigation of chemical and neurological processes (Madison, 1981). He claims that such an approach overlooks the ways in which understanding and meaning are experienced through the body. According to him, the ubiquity of such an understanding makes it challenging to attend to

and recognize the importance of the subjective body experiences in the world. Merleau-Ponty acknowledges the existence of a reality outside of human experiences. However, this reality does not present itself as it is; instead, it is always experienced through bodily senses from a given perspective. He asserts that the “horizon latent in all our experience...and anterior to every determining thought” (Merleau-Ponty, 1945/2012, p.92). Therefore, the world is actively constituted by the embodied subject.

Merleau-Ponty also challenges the traditional subject-object distinction and emphasizes the inextricable relationship between the two (Madison, 1981). He brings attention to the middle point, the realm of the *in-between*, in which interaction takes place between the mind-body unity and the world. Merleau-Ponty recognizes the ambiguity of the lived body; namely, that it is simultaneously physiological, as well as self-conscious entity; however, he does not make a clear cut between those two facets of the body, for they mutually permeate each other (Langer, 1989). To put it simply, as the mind is present in the body, the body is present in the mind. To him, the self, the body and the world form a three-level unity which leads to a uniquely experienced field. In other words, they are neither separate from each other, nor conflated with one another. The perceived world cannot exist without the experience of the perceiver, as well as the experience cannot exist in a vacuum, outside of the world. As Abram (1996) further elaborates on the intertwined relations between the mind-body unity and the world: “considered phenomenologically –that is, as we actually experience and *live* it – the body is a creative, shape-shifting entity” (p.47).

The philosopher Jean Paul Sartre (1956) also makes a significant contribution to the notion of the body in phenomenology by introducing a multi-dimensional approach. More precisely, he identifies three ontological dimensions of the body, including (1) the body as being-

for-itself, or the body-for-myself, (2) the body-for-others, and (3) my body as I am aware that it is an object for others (Drwiega, 2001). The first dimension represents the unity of body and consciousness; namely, it is neither transcendent, nor exclusively physical. It refers to the body as a non-thing, the immediately intuited body which is a medium by which the subject experiences the world. This dimension of the body captures the way it is lived (*le corps-existé*) from within or the first-person perspective, as opposed to the body as it is observed by others from a third-person perspective (*le corps-vu*) (Moran, 2010). The experiences of the lived body are not usually noticed, unless the body draws attention to itself in such instances, as physical pain (Scarry, 1985). This conception of the lived, experienced body corresponds to the Husserl's concept of *Leib* and the Merleau-Ponty's *body-as-a-subject*.

The second dimension emphasizes the material, objective body which is experienced or used by others. It also encompasses experiences of using one's own body from a third-person perspective as an object/tool (Moran, 2010). This dimension represents the ideal of the body in natural sciences, including mainstream psychology. It corresponds to the Merleau-Ponty's *body-as-an-object*. Finally, the third conception of the body introduces the intersubjective dimension by drawing attention to the way one experiences the body as it is experienced by others (Drwiega, 2001). It emphasizes the importance of the presence of another for the constitution of the body. This dimension becomes salient when the person becomes aware of the gaze of another person, as in the case of embarrassment, for example. In other words, the realization of the gaze of the other leads to a new bodily self-conscious experience.

The main contribution of phenomenology for the proposed BOM in psychology relates to its emphasis on the subjective lived experiences of the body, and the acknowledgement of the body as a constituting subject for philosophical inquiry. Since phenomenology breaks away from

the traditional natural-scientific approach which strives for the ideal of objectivity and regards subjective experiences of the body as worthy of studying, it provides the BOM with the solid theoretical foundation. It allows to legitimize and incorporate the domain of subjectivity as a viable source of psychological knowledge. For psychology, subjective layer of body experience may be as useful as its biological aspect.

### *Feminist theory and the body*

Phenomenology has been criticized for the dismissal of social, historical, cultural, and political factors in understanding the body (Behnke, 2010). What has been particularly challenged is the notion of universalized experiences of the body which are deemed to be homogenous across groups. In contrary to that, body experiences may be regarded as dependent on a variety of contexts in which those experiences are lived, such as gender, race, and class. Therefore, to expand a theoretical basis of the body which will set the ground for the BOM in psychology, the feminist theory is examined.

In order to challenge the masculinist conventions which permeate traditional forms of philosophizing, feminism has produced several alternative theories of the body (Price & Shildrick, 2017). These theories oftentimes conceptually diverge from each other, for they rely upon different philosophical origins, among which are psychoanalysis (Grosz, 2017; Irigaray, 1985), phenomenology (Marshall, 1996; Young, 1990), poststructuralism (Butler, 1993), and others. Some feminist theoreticians regard the material body as the central theme of their scholarly work, while others challenge the notion of the universalized natural body and direct their inquiry toward cultural, political, and historical factors which shape the subjective experiences of the body. Despite frequent incompatibility of various accounts of the body within a feminist tradition, a unifying theme among them lies in the acknowledgement that the body is

an important aspect for consideration, or “simply that the body matters” (Price & Shildrick, 2017, p. 7).

Similarly to phenomenology, contemporary feminism questions the Cartesian dualism and the ideal of pure rationality, which was a prevalent motif of the modernist period. More precisely, it attempts to undermine the notion that the body is a fixed biological entity which completely abides by the will of the transcendent mind. Unlike the seemingly ordered male body, which was deemed to be easily abstracted from the mind, the female body was believed to require constant control and regulation. Thus, there has been a strong association between the female body and irrationality, the belief which is often used as a justification for the exclusion of women from the domains which favour rationality (Shields, 2007).

Historically, there have been three approaches to address the body within feminism (Price & Shildrick, 2017). First, guided by the Francois Poullain de la Barr’s motto, “the mind has no sex,” many early feminist scholars of the eighteenth- and nineteenth centuries fully subscribed to the dualism between mind and body (Lennon, 2010). Remained to be influenced by the masculinist standard, these theoreticians insisted on the rejection of the body in order to attain intellectual equality with men. Since the female was seen as deeply rooted in her body which hindered her rational accomplishments, breaking away from the body with its biological needs seemed to be the way to legitimize female intellectual capacities. To reclaim their capacity to reason, it was essential for early feminists to discard the importance of their bodily existence.

In contradistinction to that, the second approach aims to reclaim and celebrate the female body as the core essence of femininity. The first explicit emphasis on the body in feminism is associated with the name of Simone de Beauvoir (1908-1986), and especially her book *The Second Sex* (Beauvoir, 1949/1989). Following phenomenological tradition, Beauvoir, too,



endorses the primacy of bodily experiences for understanding the self; however, unlike Merleau-Ponty and Sartre, she states that males and females experience their bodies differently.

According to Beauvoir, the differences in the way bodies are lived between sexes are dictated by the surrounding cultural norms, rather than being determined biologically (Lennon, 2010).

She provides a descriptive account of females' experiences at different stages of their lifespan to show the impact of cultural and historical factors on the ways female bodies are subjectively lived. For example, in the early childhood boys and girls face different cultural conventions in terms of what behaviours are expected from them. While boys are encouraged to embrace highly physical activities, girls are taught to be passive and inert. They are also conditioned to please others, which leads women at the following stages of their development to treat their bodies as objects of the gaze of others. This last idea has found its place in the recent objectification theory developed by Fredrickson and Roberts (1997), according to which girls and women are culturally forced to internalise the observer's perspective on their bodies which leads to negative psychological consequences, such as shame and anxiety.

Another contemporary scholar who elaborated on the development of embodiment of women is Niva Piran (2017). In her work, she employs feminist theory to discuss girls' and women's experiences of embodiment at different developmental stages. Piran emphasises the importance of such factors as social class and ethnocultural grouping in shaping body experiences via three pathways, including physical domain, mental domain, and domain of social power. The author claims that the interplay among social factors might lead to either adverse or transformative experiences of embodiment of women through their lifespan.

Even though some feminist scholars, such as Shulamith Firestone (1971), intended to liberate women from reproductive obligations, for many others in this second approach the

female reproductive system and their sexuality were not a sight of inferiority, but rather a unique characteristic which gives them power and affirms the value of the female body (Rich, 1979). It is argued that due to their ability to give birth, the women possess unique ethical knowledge, which is founded on the notions of caring, relationality, and responsibility (Price & Shildrick, 2017). It is suggested that those qualities are not only relevant to women themselves, but crucial to the whole society. According to the feminists of this approach, in the current state of affairs, the society is built upon masculinist ideals of autonomy, duty, and rigid hierarchical structures which lead to various forms of oppression. Alternatively, moral principles of caring, relationality, and responsibility, which are inherent to the maternal body, would contribute to a more egalitarian society. This approach has been criticized by subsequent feminist scholars for universalising the male and female body, thus, perpetuating the biological essentialism which has played a detrimental role in women's oppression (Price & Shildrick, 2017).

And the third, most recent approach defines the body as a fluid construct, which is shaped by the prevalent discourses of the given time and place. Informed by the poststructuralist theories of Foucault and Derrida, scholars in this approach, such as Judith Butler (1993), resist the fixed and inevitable status of sexual differences (Lennon, 2010). These scholars call attention to the inextricable relationship between dominant discourses and subjective experiences of physicality, which negates the fixed universalized notion of the body. Instead, the body is regarded as a fluid entity which carries multiplicity of meanings, depending on the available theorizations (Price & Shildrick, 2017).

By attempting to debunk the notion of the homogenized body, this approach is also marked by its emphasis on the contextual nature of the body. It attempts to extend various forms of bodily experiences. For example, theorists such as bell hooks (1981) and Patricia Hill Collins

(1991) object the notion of colourless body and address the embodiment of black people, especially women. As a Martinican philosopher Frantz Fanon (1952/2008) eloquently writes about the experiences of the black body: “assailed at different points, the corporeal schema crumbled, its place taken by a racial epidermal shema....it was no longer a question of being aware of my body in the third person but in a triple person...I was responsible for my body, for my race, for my ancestors” (p.84).

This approach also encompasses bodily experiences of working-class people, people with disabilities, transgender people, to name a few. Currently, feminist theoreticians collaborate with critical race scholars, disability scholars, and health and illness scholars (Lennon, 2010). Therefore, one of the emergent tasks for contemporary feminism regarding the body lies in addressing how racial differences, class differences, and differences due to disability intersect to form varying forms of bodily experiences (Price & Shildrick, 2017).

Because the primary task of this thesis concerns the development of the BOM in psychology, the findings from body image work, nonverbal communication work, phenomenology, and feminism provide a theoretical basis for this new method. Namely, body is theorized as a means by which subjective experiences of individuals can be studied, as well as an indicator of social, historical, and cultural influences. Despite these theories providing an advanced understanding of the body, they have little to offer methodologically. Since the current project pursues a practical aim, in the following chapters I investigate areas which employ the body as a research instrument: somatic psychotherapy and dance practices.

## **Chapter 2**

### **Body in Psychotherapy**

The first part of this chapter examines the approaches of psychotherapy that explicitly attend to the body for psychological treatment. Specifically, it provides a brief historical and theoretical foundation of body psychotherapies to demonstrate their relevance to the BOM in psychology. Afterwards, it examines the focusing method by Eugene Gendlin (1926-2017) in more detail. It discusses main postulates underlying this technique to inform the design of the BOM at the stages of data interpretation. Namely, based on Gendlin's (1962/1997) findings, it is suggested that to study psychological phenomena, the research process should encompass the bodily dimension of experiences which underlie psychological meanings. The chapter also outlines the six steps model of the focusing technique (Gendlin, 1978) and adopts it for the purpose of psychological research in the BOM.

The following part of the chapter examines the work of Claire Petitmengin (2007) whose approach is called micro-phenomenology. Drawing upon the work of Gendlin (1978), Petitmengin attempts to systematise a bodily domain of experiences by identifying its structural characteristics and how this layer of experience can be reached. Finally, the chapter outlines the empirical study by Reinhard Stelter (2000) on the formation of self-concept in athletes. His work attempts to transform pre-conceptual bodily experiences into language, as the medium of communication, by using images and metaphors. The purpose of such an examination is to demonstrate possible ways in which the focusing technique can be applied outside of the psychotherapeutic field. It is also suggested that it is possible to "bridge" the pre-verbal bodily domain of experiences with the concepts of language by using bodily expression via gesture and movement - the premise which the BOM in psychology is built upon.

### *Body Psychotherapy and the BOM*

The main goal of body-oriented approaches discussed in this chapter is of a therapeutic nature. This thesis aims to extrapolate aspects of these practices into research in psychology. The reason psychotherapy is chosen for this thesis in psychology lies in the overlap of the subject-matter between those two fields; that is, both address psychological questions. They both inform each other, so the accumulated knowledge in the latter has a potential to be applied in the former. Therefore, it is suggested that the principles underlying psychotherapeutic methods can be adopted for the BOM in psychology.

Along with more traditional approaches in psychotherapy that can be defined as talk-oriented, there are schools within this field, which work with and through body experiences in order to address issues with psychological health (Smith, 1985; Staunton, 2002; Totton, 2003). These approaches are founded on the holistic understanding of human experiences. In contrast to talking therapies, they emphasize the interconnectedness of perceptual, emotional, cognitive, and physical dimensions of subjective experiences, which are located in the larger psychosocial context (Röhricht, Gallagher, Geuter, & Hutto, 2014).

This field of practice is heterogeneous, as it comprises different schools; however, it lacks any systematic definition (Röhricht, 2009). Among others, the schools which fall under the umbrella of body-oriented psychotherapies and body therapies include character analytic vegeotherapy (Reich, 1972), bioenergetics (Lowen, 1976), biosynthesis (Boadella, 1987), focusing (Gendlin, 1996), concentrative movement therapy (Seidler & Schreiber-Willnow, 2004), hakomi (Kurtz, 1990), dance movement therapy (Payne, 2006), and functional relaxation (Loew, Sohn, Martus, Tritt, & Rechlin, 2000).

The field employs various terms such as “body psychotherapy”, “body-oriented psychological therapy”, “somatic psychology”, to name a few (Röhricht, Gallagher, Geuter, & Hutto, 2014). Those terms are generally used interchangeably, however, there are subtle differences among them. For example, McNeely (1987) argues that while there are therapeutic approaches that work with the body for physical improvement (e.g., massage and aerobic exercise), there are other methods which pursue the goal of increasing awareness and addressing psychological issues. Body psychotherapy, according to her, comprises those methods which focus on bodily dimension of experiencing with the primary goal to resolve psychological questions.

Similarly, Loew, Tritt, Lahmann, and Röhricht (2006) make a clear distinction between body therapy and body psychotherapy. Whilst the former is preoccupied with the functioning of the body, the latter contextualizes body experiences within a psychological framework, aimed to enhance mental health. Furthermore, the field of somatic psychology is conceived as an overlapping field between body psychotherapy and body therapy; namely, it links the meaning of bodily symptoms with psychological implications (Hartley, 2004). Despite differences among body-oriented schools, they share two common features. Specifically, they all consider the body as a viable means of communication and explicitly employ body (non-verbal) techniques in order to strengthen and facilitate therapeutic process between patient and psychotherapist (Heller, 2012).

Röhricht, Gallagher, Geuter, and Hutto (2014) identify four unique characteristics which distinguish these therapies from talk-oriented approaches. First, the body is regarded as a crucial source of psychological exploration of oneself and others; therefore, the experiences of the body are used for both diagnostic and treatment purposes. Second, these approaches focus on

experiential, on-going relationship between patient and psychotherapist as they evolve in the therapeutic process. This process includes aspects of body-awareness, sometimes direct physical contact (i.e., touch), and psychomotor expression. Third, different manifestations of the body are examined, such as posture, facial expression, and movement, which are subsequently used for therapeutic purposes. And finally, these approaches promote creativity and personal resources of the patient for achieving therapeutic goals. For simplicity reasons, to signify the variety of approaches which work with the body for psychological purposes, the term “body psychotherapy” (BPT) is used throughout this work.

The diversity of schools in the BPT field stems from three main roots, including psychoanalysis, pedagogy, and creative dance. Each of them corresponds to the three major modalities of BPT: neo-Reichian methods, concentrative movement therapy, and dance movement psychotherapies (Röhricht, 2009). In addition to that, BPT draws upon various academic fields, including developmental psychology, embodied mind thesis, the phenomenology of body experiences, and affective neuroscience (Röhricht, 2009). In practice, however, there is much overlap among those three modalities.

The first “psychotherapist” who focused on the bodily dimension of experiencing for understanding mental health was Pierre Janet (1859-1947). More specifically, he identified such important aspects of the body in therapeutic process, as muscular blocks, connection between emotional tensions and bodily functions, visceral consciousness, the kinaesthetic sense, movement and intentionality, the close relationship between psychological trauma and impairment in bodily functioning (Boadella, 1997). According to Young (2006), his work preceded Freudian psychoanalysis by at least 3 years and informed its theory and practice. Although the Freudian approach is technically founded on the body-oriented work, its

subsequent development excluded the bodily dimension of experiences which was replaced by an exclusive emphasis on the verbal specialization, known as a “talking cure” (Young, 2006). Since the attention to the body in psychotherapy can be dated back over 100 years, it is an inaccurate assumption that the BPT is a new form of psychotherapy. In contrary, the focus on the body in psychotherapy has been present since its onset (Young, 2006).

The formal beginning of BPT is associated with the work of a psychoanalyst Wilhelm Reich (1897-1957) and his approach, called character analysis (Reich, 1972). In this method, Reich tried to integrate Freudian psychoanalytic concepts on the one hand and his clinical studies with working class people and their body experiences, on the other (Young, 2008). He argued that childhood psychological conflicts are not only responsible for the repression of emotions and the emergence of defense mechanisms in adulthood, but they also manifest themselves in embodied chronic patterns of resistance, which are all meant to provide survival strategy.

According to Reich (1972), these embodied patterns of resistance constitute a muscular “armour”, which is deemed to obstruct the effective functioning of the patient. By releasing locked-up tensions in the body, the purpose of his character analysis lies in the restoration of the patient’s quality of life in both personal and work spheres. Reich claimed, however, that the traditional verbal instruments of intervention are not sufficient means to address psychological traumas; instead, they should be approached by direct body techniques which allow the patient to release muscular tensions, improve breathing patterns, and as a result, enhance the overall psychological quality of life. In other words, the Reichian character analysis predominantly works with patterns in the body systems, rather than discourses and conceptual reflections (Röhrich, Gallagher, Geuter, & Hutto, 2014).



Reich's personal life was controversial, and many of his ideas were characterised as pseudoscientific (Sharaf, 1983). Despite that, his approach contributed to the development of BPT, also known as neo-Reichian approaches. They all agree on the premise of the pivotal role of the body for psychological treatment but differ on method specifics. For example, based on the Reichian findings, Alexander Lowen (1910-2008) in collaboration with John C. Pierrakos (1921-2001) developed their own therapeutic technique, called bioenergetic analysis, which regards psychological life in terms of the human body. This approach predicates that the restrictions in bodily experiences correspond to the limitation of everyday functioning. These restrictions are believed to serve as a survival mechanism against the cultural values which downplay the body in favour of social incentives, including power and prestige (Lowen, 1976). Thus, bioenergetics aims to increase patient's quality of life by modifying such bodily functions as sexuality, breathing, moving, feeling, and self-expression. Concerning the technique itself, Lowen and Pierrakos introduced new elements to BPT, such as "grounding", which promotes working standing up in therapeutic process, as opposed to lying on the couch (Young, 2008).

Some other neo-Reichian followers who made substantial contribution to the BPT field include David Boadella (1987), Eva Reich (1924-2008), Charles R. Kelley (1922-2005), Stanley Keleman (1981), Ron Kurtz (1934-2001), Jack Lee Rosenberg, Marjorie Rand and Dianne Assay (1985), and others. Boadella (1987) developed a model, called biosynthesis which puts special emphasis on the bodily disturbances originated in pregnancy and the first year of life. Eva Reich developed her own method, called gentle baby massage which is an adaptation of the original Reichian approach (Young, 2008). Kelley (1978) designed an educational personal growth discipline which he called radix. Keleman added to the BPT the notion that the patterns of resistance do not only exist in the muscles but are present in soft tissues of the body as well

(Young, 2008). He also contributed to the BPT field by introducing the use of touch for treatment purposes (Hartley, 2004). Kurtz (1990) integrated the general Reichian principles with the work of Gestalt therapy to develop his own technique, called hakomi. Finally, Rosenberg, Rand and Assay (1985) combined Reichian approach with other aspects of bodywork, such as transpersonal and object relations psychology into their method, called integrative body psychotherapy.

BPT practitioners are organised within the European and the American Associations of Body Psychotherapy, the Australian Association of Somatic Psychotherapy, and the South American Association of Body Psychotherapy (Röhricht, 2009). However, the BPT field does not have an independent professional status. Having been a historically marginalized approach in psychotherapy, the BPT is gaining more recognition, as it moves towards evidence-based research (Röhricht, 2009). This trend is simultaneously accompanied by the increase of interest in BPT methods for the treatment of severe mental health problems within clinical field. Specifically, it is applied for the treatment of such mental disorders, as somatoform disorders, anxiety and depressive disorders, PTSD, schizophreniform illnesses, personality disorders, and eating disorders (Röhricht, 2009).

Presently, there is also a conceptual change occurring in the BPT field which aims to reconsider its theory in terms of philosophy of embodied cognition, rather than psychoanalysis (Röhricht, Gallagher, Geuter, & Hutto, 2014). Specifically, the focus of BPT theory and practice is shifting from addressing patterns of resistance in body systems and linking those patterns with psychological traumas towards an emphasis on the interconnectedness between verbal and bodily layers of experiencing in the process of meaning formation. This emerging line of research

concentrates on how the pre-verbal bodily experiences, which are believed to be essential for psychological treatment, can be transformed into the concepts of language.

According to the philosophy of embodied cognition, basic features of cognition and intersubjectivity are informed by the entire body of the organism (Johnson, 1987; Lakoff, 1987). Johnson (1992) provides a critique of a conventional definition of meaning which regards it as exclusively linguistic in nature. This stance puts emphasis on the rational thinking and logic and completely disregards the structures of bodily experiencing in the formation of meaning. Conversely, he suggests that language is not a distinct faculty which generates meanings, but rather, its very structure and functioning are inherited in pre-reflective structures of bodily orientation, manipulation, and movement. He claims that the seemingly abstracted higher cognitive activities emerge from the recurring patterns of the bodily experiences, which he calls image schemata. As a proponent of cognitive semantics, which focuses on the role of embodiment in cognition, Johnson regards language not as an autonomous capacity which adheres to its own rules, but merely as a specification of more general cognitive capacities which are aimed at interaction with the environment.

The theory and practice of BPT are relevant for the proposed BOM in psychology in the following aspects. First, the BOM differs from the traditional psychological methods which predominantly operate with the verbal forms of data. Instead, as the BPT methods put emphasis on the bodily experiences for understanding psychological questions, it demonstrates that verbal forms of data are insufficient means to fully give justice to mental phenomena. The BOM shares the same premise; namely, it aims to work with and through bodily experiences, including posture, gesture, and movement to study psychological questions. Similarly to the BPT approaches, the proposed method does not make a distinction among perceptual, emotional,

cognitive, and physical dimensions of experiencing. On the contrary, it regards mental life as a holistic form of expression which manifests itself not only through cognition, but through bodily expression as well. Importantly, it does not aim to exclude verbal forms of data; but rather, it attempts to widen psychological evidence by introducing non-verbal means of knowledge. Additionally, like BPT approaches, the BOM recognises that mental experiences unfold in various contexts. A significant part of the BOM considers the larger psychosocial context (see Chapter 4). It implies that embodied subjectivity is not only a product of internal processes. Instead, subjectivity is also informed by social, cultural, and political contexts which all should be given their due for psychological research purposes (Teo, 2018).

Second, the variety of approaches in the BPT field shows that the bodily experiences cannot be fully captured using a single theoretical perspective. For that reason, the BOM relies upon various philosophies and the applied field of psychotherapy in working with the bodily experiences in the research process. Unlike the BPT approaches, the BOM does not aim to address the question of mental health. It is used for generating new knowledge pertaining to psychological domains. It shares with the former, however, the assumption that the body serves as a viable means of communication of subjective experiences. Like BPT approaches, the BOM in psychology, in addition to the traditional verbal instruments employs non-verbal body techniques to obtain psychological knowledge.

Third, as it is understood in the BPT methods, the BOM in psychology, too, stresses on the dynamic, on-going relationship between a researcher and a participant. It abandons the traditional subordinate understanding of the research setting, in which the researcher possesses the full control over the research process, whereas the participant adheres to the prescribed rules and expectations. Similarly to the BPT approaches, the BOM recognizes the significant input on

part of both researcher and participant, and regards the relationship between the two in more egalitarian terms. That is, a participant becomes a co-researcher, whereas the researcher serves the role a participant (see Chapter 4).

Forth, the BOM in psychology borrows from the BPT field the importance of body-awareness and psychomotor expression for studying research questions. Importantly, not only the participant's bodily displays, such as posture, facial expression and movement are taken into consideration; but the bodily experiences of the researcher also become important material for analysis. Drawing upon the work of Linda Finlay (2005) who advocates for the reflexive embodied empathy in phenomenological interviewing, it is suggested that for the researcher to analyse psychological phenomena under investigation, she/he needs to reflexively attend to her/his own bodily responses, in response to the obtained data. Unlike the traditional research methods which strive to eliminate subjectivity of a psychologist by promoting a neutral attitude from the detached position, the proposed method recognises the importance of the relational dynamics between a researcher and a participant that occur in the research process and regards it as a significant part of the obtained knowledge. Therefore, at the stage of data description and interpretation, the BOM encompasses the psychologist's own bodily responses in the research process.

Finally, the BOM in psychology shares the current trend within the BPT field to reconceptualise bodily experiences within the philosophy of embodied cognition. It diverges from the psychoanalytically-informed BPT methods which link the patterns of resistance in body systems with psychological traumas. As an alternative, its main goal is preoccupied with the transformation of regular internal bodily experiences, as the basis of any mental activity, into the concepts of language, which is deemed to be an instrument of both mundane and scientific

communication. This is achieved in the BOM by employing the overt displays of the body via posture, facial expression, gesture, and movement.

### *Focusing Technique and the BOM*

This section of the thesis provides an assessment of the theoretical underpinnings of the focusing technique, developed by Eugene Gendlin (1926-2017) to demonstrate its relevance to the BOM in psychology. More specifically, based on Gendlin's findings, it is suggested that in order to study psychological phenomena, the research process should encompass the bodily dimension of experiencing which underlies psychological meanings.

The focusing technique was developed by Gendlin in response to his research on low effectiveness of psychotherapy which he conducted with Carl Rogers (Gendlin, 1978). His findings suggested that clients benefit from psychotherapy most when they attune to their embodied experiences. Thus, his method aims to facilitate clients to access their inner resources. Similarly, the BOM in psychology primarily works with the bodily dimension of experiences in order to reveal psychological meanings. It is argued that employing the verbal forms of data limits the extent to which psychological questions can be understood. Even though the BOM operates with linguistic evidence as well, it predominantly focuses on the embodied lived experiences which manifest themselves through movement.

The focusing technique is founded on the presupposition that prior to any conscious and verbalized thought, clients have a particular experiencing, an inner knowledge and awareness which are anchored in the body. It is suggested that this implicit pre-verbal bodily sensing, which Gendlin calls a *felt-sense*, underlies any mental activity. The goal of the therapeutic process is to attend to the client's bodily felt-sense to reveal psychological meanings which are not yet verbally formed. This work, it is assumed, allows the client to reach an articulated understanding

of their psychological issues which would lead to their further resolution (Gendlin, 1996). In the similar manner, the BOM in psychology employs the notion of the felt-sense to justify its focus on the pre-linguistic layer of experiences. It acknowledges that the inclusion of the bodily dimension of experiencing has a potential to expand psychological evidence.

The focusing technique consists of six steps, which have an ultimate goal to allow the client to reach the felt-sense and represent its meanings verbally. They include the following: (1) clearing a space; (2) felt sense; (3) finding a handle; (4) resonating; (5) asking; and (6) receiving (Gendlin, 1996). At the first step of the process, the client is encouraged to set aside all the internal distractions which are irrelevant to the problem that needs to be addressed, in order to direct attention to what seems to be important to that problem. The second step of the process requires the client to focus on bodily experiences which are currently salient. Those, for example, might include discomfort or pain in any part of the body. At the third stage, the client is asked to remain attention on the bodily experiences but suppress the initial linguistic labeling and rationalization of them which will habitually arise. Instead, while being fully focused on the body, the client tries to find more precise verbal description of the bodily feeling/sensation/experience. For example, the client replaces the habitual verbal labeling “I am feeling depressed” with more elaborate description of the experience, such as “there is an unpleasant sensation I am experiencing in my chest, which has a quality of heaviness and darkness”. In the next step, the therapist asks a number of questions pertaining to this felt sense in order to clarify its meaning. The goal of this step is to employ the meaning of the felt sense to obtain information on the ways the psychological issue at hand might be resolved. Finally, in the sixth step the client acknowledges discoveries that have been made in the session in order to

recognize the embodied nature of psychological experiences. The BOM in psychology adopts the six-step model of the focusing technique to study psychological questions (see Chapter 4).

In his book “Experiencing and the Creation of Meaning,” Gendlin (1962/1997) clarifies what felt sense is and how it relates to language and logic. To him, a felt sense is an ongoing experiencing, a “concretely present flow of feeling” (p. 11) that underlies every moment of living. It is the most immediate phenomenon which, due to its evident presence, is often overlooked. This experiencing is an inward reference point for an individual, thus it constitutes the embodied subjectivity. In other words, the felt sense is the experienced process of being. It is not the content of what one knows and feels, but rather the very process of knowing and feeling.

According to Gendlin, the felt sense is a pre-conceptual domain since it is experienced in the body as an “unfinished” implicit complexity which does not have a definite linguistic label. Language serves as a symbolic system, the purpose of which is to “finish”, or to give a definite form of the felt sense. To fully appreciate the formation of meaning, Gendlin assigns the key role to this pre-conceptual experiencing over logical order. His assertion implies that the pre-conceptual experiencing and language cannot be substituted one for another, and the formation of meaning depends on the interaction between the two. Symbols without an underlying felt sense are as meaningless, as the sensing alone without some form of a symbolic representation. Sensing itself has no definite meaning; instead, it is the possibility for multiplicity of meanings.

Two important points are relevant to the BOM in psychology. First, experiencing should be understood in process terms. It is not a static entity that awaits to be discovered by language. The dimension of the felt-sense does not contain already-defined meanings, but the meanings are formed when the symbolic system is applied to it. This view re-envisioned what embodied subjectivity means. Rather than being a set of characteristics (contents) which define the



individual, whether they are physical, psychological, or cultural, subjectivity is understood as an inward sensitivity of a living body, independent from the contents; namely, subjectivity that is constantly changing depending on the environment.

The second important aspect concerns the relationship between the felt sense and the symbolic system of language. Instead of being *representational*, the symbols of language are *referential* to the felt-sense. It implies that when symbolic system is used, it can never exhaustively represent the felt sense since the latter is always more than the form it takes. There are infinite possibilities for discerning meanings further with new symbols; thus, symbolization can only refer to the experiencing, but it cannot capture/represent it entirely. It can only attend to some aspect of its manifestation. Unlike the focusing technique which uses language as a symbolic system to refer to the felt-sense, the BOM employs bodily expression via posture, facial expression, gesture, and movement to discern meanings of this felt sense.

In his other work “The primacy of the body, not the primacy of perception” Gendlin (1992) discusses the relationship between the body and language in a broader sense, which includes culture and history. This theme relates to the issue of the influence of culture and society on the individual’s subjectivity and bodily experiences. He conceives the living, sensing body as an ongoing interaction with the environment. In fact, he asserts that the body and the situation cannot be separated; the body *is* environmental information. In the similar vein, the BOM in psychology conceptualises the body both as a fluid, constantly changing entity through which subjective experiences are lived and communicated to others, as well as an indicator of social, cultural, and political factors which have influence on this body. Thus, the research which uses the BOM does not only aim to generate evidence on internal subjectivity but provides commentary on inter- and socio-subjectivity (Teo, 2018).

### *Micro-Phenomenology and the BOM*

Claire Petitmengin's (2007), who substantially draws upon Gendlin's theoretical findings, developed an empirical line of research, called micro-phenomenology. Her work examines the pre-reflective and pre-discursive layer of the subjective lived experiences, which she calls a source dimension. According to her, this layer of experiencing is pre-reflective, for it is generally not experienced consciously, yet if the attention is directed towards it, individuals become aware of it. This dimension is also pre-discursive because it precedes linguistic labeling. Moreover, Petitmengin argues that the conceptual layer arises from this pre-discursive layer which is bodily anchored. She claims that this deeper stratum is difficult to situate insofar as it is concealed by the discursive and emotional layers, and it does not represent itself in any sensory modality. Nevertheless, it carries a specific, meaningful value for individuals.

According to her, thought and understanding stem from this undifferentiated, transmodal experiencing. She claims that this layer is concrete and embodied, rather than conceptual and linguistic, and it lays the groundwork for the emergence of thought. She provides a number of examples in which the source dimension is the most pronounced, such as experiencing music, the emergence of a new idea, switching between languages, psychotherapeutic relationships, and so forth. However, Petitmengin claims that the source dimension is active in all areas of existence, even when it is not noticed. It is challenging to precisely relate to this subjective experiencing as the language lacks proper vocabulary to do that. Therefore, drawing upon the theoretical framework of Gendlin (1978), Petitmengin attempts to give a conceptual elaboration of this psychological phenomenon by identifying its structural characteristics and the means by which this layer of bodily experience can be reached.

Among others, Petitmengin discerns the rhythmic and gestural aspects of this dimension, thus characterising it as a subtle internal movement. Concerning its rhythmic structure, she uses an example of the interaction between pre-linguistic infants and their caregivers. Such interaction does not happen by verbal means of communication, but rather, it relies on the process of synchronization of the internal rhythms of both. Basing her argument on the experimental work of Stern (1985), the author proposes that the pre-linguistic infants make sense of the world around them not by the well-established perceived acts, but rather through the subtle dynamic modifications of the intensity and rhythm of the source dimension. Additionally, she argues that this type of experiencing does not get overpassed in the process of maturation. To the contrary, adults preserve this way of relating to the world as well, but the perceptions, emotions, thoughts, and actions prevent it from being explicit.

In order to illustrate the gestural characteristic of the source dimension, she discusses the meaning of the overt co-verbal gestures which accompany verbal expression. According to her, the gestures people use should be considered as an extension of the internal cognitive movements, as opposed to a means of transmitting information to a collocutor, as it is widely assumed. She provides a number of empirical studies which support her claim. For example, the fact that people use gestures even without presence of the listener (Iverson & Goldin-Meadow, 1998) implies that the main function gestures serve does not lie in communicating information to others, but rather as a means to access the internal source dimension where meaning formation occurs. Another empirical study that Petitmengin refers to in order to support her claim concerns the use of gestures among blind people (Iverson & Goldin-Meadow, 1998). The fact that blind people gesticulate demonstrates that co-verbal gestures reflect the internal gestural characteristic of the source dimension. And finally, it has been empirically shown that the density of gestural

expression is positively associated with the complexity of verbal messages (McNeill, 1992); therefore, Petitmengin argues that gestures do not serve as an accompaniment of the verbal expression; instead, they refer to the rhythmic and gestural internal mental activity, from which both overt gestures and verbal ideas emerge.

Petitmengin also identifies four steps which lead to the expression of the source dimension, including (1) coming into contact with the felt meaning; (2) transposing the felt meaning; (3) comparing the expression with the felt meaning; and (4) transformation of the felt meaning. She speaks of different modalities through which the pre-verbal dimension can be expressed, such as verbal, written, pictorial or musical. The work of Petitmengin directly relates to one of the main argument of this thesis; namely, there is a pre-linguistic layer of subjective experiencing at which the meaning is generated, and this layer is grounded in a bodily realm. The conceptual meaning which is linked to the abstract thought also derives from this embodied experiencing; therefore, there is no fundamental separation between the body and the mind. Bodily displays through posture, facial expression, gesture, and movement can be regarded as a means to overtly express the source dimension, including its rhythmic and gestural characteristics. Specifically, the spontaneous movements that participants produce are not the pre-mediated acts, nor the manifestations of the internal thought, but rather the overt expression of the rhythmic and gestural movements of the source dimension which gives rise to thought.

*Stelter's Empirical Study and the BOM*

In his paper “The transformation of body experience into language”, Stelter (2000) discusses the empirical study on the formation of self-concept in athletes. In the theoretical part of this work, he examines strategies which allow to transform pre-conceptual subjective bodily

experiences of athletes into language, as the medium of mundane and scientific communication. He proposes that this goal can be accomplished by using images and metaphors.

He starts his argument by contrasting the objectivist and non-objectivist approaches to perception, meaning-making, and understanding. Whilst the former assumes the existence of an external reality independent from the perception of a subject, the latter posits the inter-dependence of the two; that is, there is an ongoing reciprocal influencing between the subject and the world. In defining meaning, Stelter claims that individuals assign meaning to their experiences through embodying the world. The body in this view is conceived as a means by which both intellectual and practical knowledge is acquired. However, the author states that the meaning in relation to the environment emerges at the pre-reflective level of bodily experiencing; therefore, it is challenging to study it empirically. One of the important questions which Stelter addresses is the possibility for the transformation of this bodily experiencing of the situation, or felt sense, into a linguistic form.

In order to make this bodily felt sense explicit, Stelter suggests employing images and metaphors in order to transform the felt sense into a symbolic form of language. His work is focused on sport psychology and the role of sports and movement in the construction of the self-concept. Based on the in-depth interviews with several athletes, Stelter identifies positive and negative metaphors in relation to interviewees' experiences with sports. He asserts that those metaphors give access to experiential dimension of athletes and provide understanding of the role which the sport involvement plays in the construction of their self-concept.

The most interesting point of Stelter's work for the BOM in psychology concerns the "bridging" between the pre-reflective bodily experiencing and its symbolic representation. In his case, Stelter employs linguistic metaphors to reveal the felt-sense, whereas the BOM employs

bodily expression to explicate the pre-conceptual domain of knowing. If one looks at the categories of the metaphors which Stelter identified from his interviews, they strikingly resemble qualities by which bodily experiences are often described, such as “easiness,” “energy,” “euphoria,” “heaviness,” and “pain”. Those metaphors were created by the participants’ verbal descriptions, yet they could be expressed through gesture and movement.

One might question the relevance of using bodily symbolization to represent the subjective felt-sense, if this domain can be accessed verbally. The response to this criticism is that verbal means of communication are not always sufficient to describe the subjective experiencing. It is not to claim, however, that the language itself is lacking capacity to provide in-depth symbolization for meaning; most would agree that language is *the* symbolic system which allows humanity to reach its level of development. But while theoretically language is an ever-changing symbolic system which potentially allows infinite possibilities for expression, in practice its goal to convey meaning often fails. This could be even due to the fact that some individuals lack sufficient verbal competencies to precisely express what they imply.

For example, in this current writing I am attempting to express the meaning of a thought that I have and find it quite challenging to do so. After reading this paragraph again, I am not completely satisfied with what I am trying to convey. But writing, at least, gives luxury to edit text, whereas in spoken language it is much more difficult to formulate a verbal thought which would precisely convey meanings. In proposing to use body expression a symbolic means to refer to the domain of undifferentiated experiences, the BOM attempts to expand possibilities for the explication of the implicit experiences which serve as an alternative modality for the expression of meanings. Both language and bodily movement are related to each other only to the extent to which they refer to the felt sense, yet they are irreducible to each other.

### **Chapter 3**

#### **Dance and the Body**

The purpose of this chapter is to examine various dance theories and practices to discern relevant ideas about the body which will be used in the BOM in psychology. Although the field of dance differs from psychology in terms of its goals, the empirical findings in dance might be applicable to the psychological field, inasmuch as the major instrument of its work is the body (Thomas, 2003). The first part of the chapter briefly provides aspects of theoretical understanding of dance, mainly derived from the anthropological study of dance by Judith Lynne Hanna (1979). It covers the definition of dance, seven perspectives of consideration, and four components and functions. The chapter also discusses the relationship between philosophy and dance, putting emphasis on the phenomenological descriptive account of dance by Maxine Sheets-Johnstone (1966/2015) and the notion of the lived body for understanding dance in the work of Sondra Horton Fraleigh (1987). Additionally, it concerns the question of the communicative function of dance considering its resemblance to verbal languages. This aspect is of particular importance for this thesis since the BOM in psychology pursues an aim to obtain psychological knowledge via non-verbal, bodily means of communication. This part of the chapter also highlights cultural and political aspects of dance to show the extent to which the expression of the body is ingrained in larger contexts. Finally, it examines the therapeutic function of dance and its use for treatment of psychological issues.

The second part of the chapter briefly investigates two dance practices, among which are authentic movement (Whitehouse, Adler, Chodorow, & Pallaro, 1999) and contact improvisation (Bull, 1997; Novack, 1990; Paxton, 1975; Sheets-Johnstone, 1981). This short examination aims to demonstrate how empirical findings from dance can be incorporated in the BOM in

psychology. The authentic movement is applicable to the BOM since it involves an expressive improvisational movement to evoke “free associations of the body” and uncover psychological meanings which these bodily expressions convey (Adler, 2002). This chapter discusses the format of authentic movement in more detail for applying it to the BOM. The contact improvisation dance is relevant for this thesis project because it regards body movement as a form of thinking which plays a role in meaning formation (Merritt, 2015; Pini, McIlwain, & Sutton, 2016). Both contact improvisation and the BOM in psychology put emphasis on the non-linguistic forms of psychological meaning; therefore, it is suggested that the principles of the former may lay the groundwork for the latter.

Unlike scientific psychological research which pursues goals of description, prediction, explanation, control, and application (Haslam, & McCarty, 2014), the major objective of dance methods lies in the sphere of aesthetics. In particular, the field of dance is preoccupied with addressing three fundamental issues: appreciation and evaluation, education and performance, and creation and exploration (Karoblis, 2010). Therefore, dance theories and practices do not comply with scientific standards which are essential for psychological enterprise. Despite those differences, the field of dance has been recently recognized by philosophers, especially phenomenology-oriented ones, as a research topic which has a potential to reveal meanings about psychological questions (Frleigh, 1987; Levin, 1983; Sheets-Johnstone, 1966/2015). Specifically, since the phenomenological approach explores direct human experiences and addresses questions of meanings and understanding (Husserl, 1913/1962), the field of dance becomes a research interest in terms of aesthetic judgment. The phenomenological approach to dance evaluates the appropriateness of the aesthetic judgment which is founded on the unmediated experience of perceiving, performing, and creating dance (Karoblis, 2010).



*Seven Perspectives on Dance and the BOM*

Dance is a complex phenomenon which comprises various aspects. It is interconnected with other domains of human life, among which are communication, value and belief systems, social and political dynamics, intimate relationships, and others (Hanna, 1979). Furthermore, dance serves such diverse functions as play, show, competition, therapy, and magic (Karoblis, 2010). Similar to other media of expression, such as written texts and cultural artifacts, dance is a reflexive tool on cultural history, beliefs, values, and feelings (Sklar, 1991). Dance is also viewed as a set of socially acquired patterns of movements, which parallel such markers as social roles, age, sex, and class (Birdwhistell, 1971). Dance is simultaneously universal and culturally-dependent phenomenon. Specifically, irrespective of the social context, dance relies upon the same universal instrument – the human body (Kuper, 1968); however, particular dance practices in various cultures have unique features which communicate different symbolic meanings (Bull, 1997). Similarly, in using insights from the dance field, the BOM is not restricted to intra-subjective psychological questions; by employing the bodily means of communication, it also endeavours to address inter- and socio-subjective domains of human life (Teo, 2018).

Given its multidimensionality, the anthropologist Hanna (1979) discerns seven aspects of dance, each of them having their distinct characteristics. Therefore, Hanna claims that there are at least seven perspectives through which the dance can be researched and understood. They include physical, cultural, social, psychological, economic, political, and communicative perspectives. The BOM in psychology adopts these perspectives to systematically study bodily expression (see Chapter 4). It is suggested that to give justice to the totality of human experiences, the method cannot limit itself to a singular perspective. Even though the BOM is designed for the field of psychology, this does not imply that taking only a psychological

perspective is sufficient to capture phenomena under investigation. Instead, in the BOM the primary focus is given to the psychological domain while keeping and discussing it in the context of all the remaining perspectives.

The first dimension concerns the physical body as an instrument of dance, which has an anatomical and physiological set of capabilities and limitations. Research topics such as muscular structure and functioning of the body fall under this dimension. Importantly, in dance, in contrast to other art forms, the subject of creation (i.e., the dancer) is simultaneously an instrument of creation (i.e., the dancer's body) and the product of creation (i.e., the dance itself) (Fraleigh, 1987). In that respect, the practice of dance is useful for the BOM because it allows to investigate the intricate relationship between the *body-subject* (view from the first-person perspective) and the *body-object* (view from the third-person perspective).

The second dimension of dance refers to its dependence on culture at large. Hanna claims that the conceptual understanding of dance, as well as its style, format, content, and performance are informed by values and beliefs of the dominant culture. Dance is not only influenced by culture, it also has a potential to have an impact on it by critically reflecting upon existing cultural conventions and their underlying systems of thought (Hanna, 1979). Depending on a particular situation, dance aims to either sustain and perpetuate cultural values, or challenge and even subvert them. For example, certain modern dances which promote individualized aesthetic norms deliberately abandon conventions regarding the ideal of the human body (Fraleigh, 1987).

The third, social dimension of dance represents existing patterns of social organization between and within groups. For example, the examination of dance can be utilized as vehicle to comment on prevalent gender norms. Specifically, while the classical ballet is founded on the clear male-female distinction, according to which the male lifts (the sign of strength) and the

female is lifted (the sign of delicacy), in modern dances the traditional gender contrasts of strong-weak are blurred (Fraleigh, 1987). Since in this thesis the body and its expression are theorized as an entity which carries cultural and social inscriptions, the BOM in psychology actively engages with the dance field to uncover social and cultural factors and their impact on intra-subjective psychological experiences.

The fourth, psychological dimension comprises cognitive and affective experiences which are evoked in individuals and groups by dance. Dance serves as a source of psychological knowledge and the mode of emotional relief. Dance movement therapy aims to cover a wide range of psychological concerns (Payne, 2006). For example, dance has been successfully used as a therapeutic tool for treatment of emotional symptoms, associated with complex PTSD (MacDonald, 2006). It has been also utilized with patients with Parkinson's disease (Bunce, 2006), children and adolescents in special education (Bannerman-Haig, 2006), war-affected refugee children (Singer, 2006), to name a few.

There are also economic and political dimensions of dance. For example, academic dance programs fit into the economic structure of universities by charging students a tuition fee. Attending high-end dance performances signifies economic, as well as the social status of the audience. In its political dimension, dance is utilized as a platform to reflect upon political attitudes and values. Additionally, dance can be also conceptualized as the means and the medium of body politics. For example, drawing upon the work of Foucault, Green (2003) argues that dance education in universities serves as a disciplinary power which aims to train students to comply with social standards regarding acceptable ways of bodily behaving and being.

Lastly, the communicative dimension implies that dance might be utilized as an alternative means to express feelings and thoughts. According to Kuper (1968), dance can be

defined as a “text in motion”, for it communicates relationships, emotions, values, and ideas. Considering multisensory preference in communication, Hanna (1979) argues that dance medium is sometimes more useful than the verbal language for conveying affective and cognitive information. According to Collingwood (1983), any language, including spoken language, is an expressive bodily gestural activity. He argues that dance can be conceived as the mother of all languages because “every kind or order of language (speech, gesture, and so forth) [is] an offshoot from an original language of total bodily gesture” (Collingwood, 1983, p. 375). Similarly, Abram (1996) defends the view on language as a form of a felt, bodily expression. According to him, conventional linguistic theories which define language as a formal system that abides to terminological, syntactic, and semantic rules fail in capturing the sensorial nature of language. He proposes to regard language first and foremost as a bodily phenomenon, rather than an abstracted mental one.

It is acknowledged, however, that dance can be understood and interpreted differently, depending on the observer’s culture, age, gender, social status, to name a few (Hanna, 1979). Dance allows multiplicity of meanings to emerge, on the part of a choreographer, a performer, and an observer of the dance. Therefore, any given dance does not have a singular inherent meaning; in contrary, the complexity of dance meaning(s) is seen to be situational and dependent on shared semantic codes (Hanna, 1979). Linked to the ambiguity of interpretations of bodily movements, there is an issue in dance, concerning the appropriate notation system, or verbalization of bodily experiences (Guest, 2005). There have been attempts made to approach dance, based on the study of semiotics, which includes three domains of investigation: syntactics, semantics, and pragmatics (Morris, 1955). In simple terms, the study of syntactics concerns the formal rules and principles by which signs are structured and organized together. Semantics

focuses on the relationship between a sign and what it signifies; in other words, it is preoccupied with the content of meaning. And finally, pragmatics takes into consideration a larger context in which the meaning is conveyed, including such aspects of consideration as the relationship between a speaker and a listener, the shared cultural meaning between the two, and so forth. (Morris, 1955).

In dance, systems such as Labanotation or Kinetography Laban (Laban & Ullman, 1980) is compared to syntactic analysis of verbal language. It is a choreography method, devised to analyse movement, which is based on the structure and functioning of the body. Specifically, it comprises dimensions of space, rhythm, dynamics, and body usage. Even though such notation systems have been used in the research of nonverbal communication, there is a concern that they only analyse movements as motion and lack guidelines for linking them with what they signify, or the semantic level of analysis, as well as the contextual nature of dance, or the pragmatic level of analysis (Hanna, 1979). As Mehrabian (2017) puts it: “reliance on physical description alone for nonverbal and implicit verbal behaviour is inadequate ... it fails to provide guidelines for identifying socially significant implicit behaviour” (p. 179). To account for semantic dimension of dance, Hanna (1979) speaks of various devices for conveying meaning in dance, including (1) a concretization, (2) an icon, (3) a stylization, (4) a metonym, (5) a metaphor, and (6) an actualization. These devices are used in the BOM in order to notate and discern semantic and pragmatic meanings of bodily expression (See Chapter 4).

#### *Four Components of Dance and the BOM*

In order to account for the complexity of dance and distinguish it from other motor activities, Hanna (1979) defines dance as a human behaviour which has four unique components, including purposefulness, intentional rhythmical nature, patterned sequence which is culturally

informed, and inherent aesthetic value. According to her, all four characteristics should be present for any given motor activity to be defined as dance. First of all, dance necessarily serves a certain goal. By employing movement as a primary medium, dance aims to communicate information or evoke emotional response. Importantly, to fulfill its essential function to convey cognitive and affective information, two elements should be taken into consideration; that is, the dancer's intention to communicate, as well as the dancer's transfer of this information through movement (MacKay, 1972). In that respect, dance is conceived as a code system which structures and orders subjective experiences of the dancer for sharing it with observers.

Hanna suggests that due to its nonverbal bodily dimension, dance is capable to convey such kinds of information which cannot be transferred by other means of communication. Specifically, dance as a medium is superior to verbal language in communicating shapes, emotions, and interpersonal attitudes (Hanna, 1979). In addition to cognitive information, dance allows to convey immediate affective experiences. This function has a range of purposes, such as reducing psychological stress and promoting well-being (Jeong et al., 2005), healing trauma (Monteiro & Wall, 2011), and helping with social adjustment (Lobo & Winsler, 2006).

The second component of dance refers to its intentional rhythm, defined as a patterned activity which develops in time. Namely, dance consists of structured intervals, characterized by regularity and recognisability (Hanna, 1979). Rhythmic organization of dance might mimic different time frameworks, such as "objective" time (i.e., clock time), "natural" time (e.g., seasonal and diurnal time), "biological" time (e.g., circadian rhythm), and "historical" time (e.g., chronological period) (Hanna, 1979). Temporal patterns are even present in contemporary choreographies of dance which promote improvisation and spontaneity. Even though improvisation centers around breaking patterned conventions of movement, it nevertheless

possesses rhythmic quality, for it provides some sort of structuring of time. Part of the BOM at the level of data description concerns the rhythmic quality of bodily expression (see Chapter 4).

Whilst some dance forms unreflectively assume a certain time framework, there are dances which are explicitly based on a particular time organisation. A good example to illustrate the latter case is a dance form, called 5Rhythms, designed by Gabrielle Roth (1998). Drawing upon eastern philosophy, Gestalt therapy, and transpersonal psychology, this system is based on a premise that natural and human phenomena unfold in a similar patterned manner. It is assumed that this rhythmic organisation resembles a quality of a wave; thus, the system discerns five sequential rhythms of the wave and applies it to the body movement. Those include flowing, staccato, chaos, lyrical, and stillness (Vargas-Gibson, Wolfaard, & Roberts, 2017).

The third component of dance implies that its patterns and meanings are culturally informed. Even though the instrument of dance is universal (i.e., the human body), the significance of a given dance depends on the cultural context in which it is developed and performed. Thus, dance is the result of interaction between innate capacities of the body and the social environment. The system of dance consists of a range of socially acceptable movement patterns; therefore, it reflects the sociocultural milieu. The BOM, too, recognises the dependence of bodily expression on cultural values and beliefs, and deliberately treats bodily expression as a form of psychological evidence to provide commentary on culture at large.

Additionally, there are sociocultural meanings, assigned to different dance forms which correspond to societal hierarchies. For example, DiMaggio and Useem (1978) suggest that there is a strong association between the consumption of high arts, which include ballet and modern dance, and the social and economic class; namely, the increase in class corresponds to the larger consumption of high art. According to Bourdieu (1984), individuals who have larger cultural

capital (e.g., education and intellectual skills) determine aesthetic tastes in society. Moreover, it has been empirically shown that the subjective attitudes toward dance vary with social class (Sanderson, 2008). Finally, the fourth component of dance concerns its aesthetic quality. Unlike any other body movements, dance utilises motor activities primarily for aesthetic purposes; it emphasises the significance of movement for its own sake (Hanna, 1979).

### *Dominant Philosophical View on Dance*

Traditionally, philosophical discipline has ignored the art of dance as an important area of investigation. Levin (1983) argues that even though there are numerous possible explanations for this state of affairs, including political, sociological, psychological, and anthropological factors, the major reason for such an exclusion lies in the very nature of philosophy. According to him, Western philosophy is inherently patriarchal, for it solidifies male dominance by downplaying the female principle. By tracing the anthropological roots of dance, Levin demonstrates that primarily the dance served a ritualistic purpose to celebrate the fertility of “Mother Earth” which leads him to the assertion that the origin of dance holds a female principle.

He claims that over the centuries, guided by the religious and ethical postulates of Judeo-Christian tradition, the Western philosophy has repressed dance on the grounds of being an inferior art form. Specifically, with its emphasis on the abstracted mind or human soul, the philosophy does not only neglect the sensuous human body but regards it as an obstacle towards the ideal of self-control. Therefore, it is inferred that such an irrational body is not worthy of philosophical inquiry; instead, it should be subjugated by means of punishment and destruction. Levin uses an interesting example of the cross, the major symbol of Christianity to illustrate his point. To him, this symbol signifies the crucifixion of the human body; and even though the religion recognizes the notion of resurrection, there is no corresponding symbol to portray that.



Resurrection is understood as a transcendental event, belonging to the domain of Heaven; it is not a resurrection of the imperfect human body of Earth.

Levin argues that the Western philosophical tradition also inherits from a Judeo-Christian tradition a mind/body dualism, or the split between the spirit and flesh. According to this division, the religious life should be guided by the spiritual practice, whereas the body, which lacks the spiritual quality, needs to be controlled by the ethical discipline. Levin states that this dualism, even if it takes a secular form, becomes perpetuated in philosophy. Philosophical mind-body dualism appears in the works of such influential thinkers, as Descartes (1596-1650), Berkeley (1685-1753), Holbach (1723-1789), and Quine (1908-2000). Inasmuch as dance as an art form relies upon the perfection of physical movement and emphasises the body sensuousness, it naturally gets overlooked in philosophical investigation (Levin, 1983).

Levin also claim that there has been a positive shift occurring in philosophy which reconsiders the status of the body. This change is associated with the emergence of phenomenology in 20<sup>th</sup> century. As mentioned in Chapter 1, phenomenology explicitly breaks away from mind-body dualism by placing the question of the body in the center of philosophical investigation. It recognizes and appreciates the lived experiencing of the body as a foundation for the active interaction with the world and the emergence of subjectivity (Langdrige, 2007). Because of its commitment to the body, it becomes fully justifiable for phenomenology to use dance to address philosophical and psychological question. As Levin (1983) succinctly puts it: "...the art of dance is, ontologically speaking, the art of the human body" (p.91). Additionally, Levin claims that the proper philosophical investigation of dance might serve as a powerful tool for emancipation, decolonization, and democratization (Karooblis, 2010).

*Alternative Philosophical Perspectives on Dance*

One of the most influential contemporary philosophers who made the general connection between dance and phenomenology is Maxine Sheets-Johnstone (Karoblis, 2010). In her book “The phenomenology of dance” (1966/2015) she provides a descriptive account of dance, defining it as a “form-in-the-making”, rather than an already established and well-defined phenomenon. Using the work of Sartre (1905-1980) and Merleau Ponty (1908-1961) as a basis for her research, Sheets-Johnstone speaks of dance as a subjectively lived experience, the meaning of which only unfolds in the very enactment of dance. To her, the significance of dance lies in its immediate lived-through experience which possesses a quality of totality. Contrary to the common-sense understanding, according to which the dance has an intrinsic static significance, she claims that the meaning of dance constantly changes in the process of living it. She states that any conceptual reflection upon dance with an attempt to discern its meaning will inevitably be futile, if it does not take into consideration the lived aspect of it. In other words, the meaning of dance is not a definitive body of knowledge which can be discovered in the process of theoretical analysis where the totality of dance gets fragmented. Even any notation system of dance, according to her, lacks meaning until it becomes embodied in the actual dance.

Sheets-Johnstone defends the use of a phenomenological descriptive method to dance precisely for capturing its dynamic nature. This type of exploration of dance starts with setting aside the preconceived notions about dance and attending to it, as it is experienced in the moment (Karoblis, 2010). Phenomenology does not strive to describe phenomena as they are objectively constituted, nor reach their understanding through logical analysis; rather, it aims to describe them as they are immediately lived and experienced prior to any kind of reflection. She claims that this is an irrefutable advantage of phenomenology for studying dance.

She also argues that phenomenological approach to dance is drastically different from any other kinds of systematic inquiry because phenomenology is not a theoretical system in a traditional sense. It is not preoccupied with uncovering laws which underlie phenomena with the purpose to explain, predict, and control them. The purpose of phenomenological research is to describe the existence of phenomena, and the way they appear to consciousness. Sheets-Johnstone claims that since the phenomenological approach is open-ended, a descriptive account of dance offers a starting point for other phenomenological studies. Furthermore, the original description may be further elaborated on the lived experience of dance.

Another scholar who made a substantial contribution to the systematic study of dance from a philosophical perspective is Sondra Horton Fraleigh (Karoblis, 2010). In her research she integrates existential and phenomenological approaches with somatic therapy and her own work with numerous choreographers of modern dance, among which are Merce Cunningham, Martha Graham, Hanya Holm, to develop an aesthetic perspective of dance. Fraleigh (1987) employs the concept of the “lived body” to account for the existential context of contemporary dance. The reason she focuses on contemporary dance lies in its pursuit of inventiveness and originality. According to her, modern dance strives to discover new modalities of creation, departing from the already established conventions. In that way, modern dance is much more interesting for existential-phenomenological consideration, for it emphasizes the uniqueness of each individual and their creation of dance. She also addresses the influence of culture on dance by investigating the philosophy of nothingness in the Japanese Butoh dance (Fraleigh, 2010).

Fraleigh criticizes the ontological mind-body dualism, which emerges in dance practice in the treatment of the body as an instrument and the view of the movement as a medium for the creativity of the mind. As an alternative, she offers a nondualistic concept of the lived, or *minded*

*body* which emphasises the inseparability of the two. She admits, however, that in the process of dancing the mind and the body can be experienced as dualistic; for example, when dancers fail to perform certain moves, they might perceive their body as an obstacle, as a matter which has to be trained to perform well. However, metaphysically they are indistinguishable. She also explains the difference between body-subject and body-object, both of which are experienced in the process of the dance. Following the argumentation of Sartre, Fraleigh (1987) asserts that “the body-object can be *known*, in the sense that the body itself can become the object of our attention, but the body-subject can only be *lived*” (p.15). It implies that body-subject is a pre-reflective experienced body from the first-point of view. In the moment when one attends to their body, it becomes an object of observation as any other external object.

Dance appreciation is another important area of investigation for Fraleigh. She claims that the ability to understand the dance of others stems from the expressive nature of the observer’s own body. In that respect, the experiencing of dance is primarily an experiencing of one’s own body through the process of emphatic engagement. To her, dance possesses a unique quality, which distinguishes it from other art forms, such as painting. The body in dance is not just an instrument of art creation, nor the object of art. The dance is inseparable from the lived body. If a painting, for example, exists outside of the creator, the dance cannot be separated from the subject of creation, or as she puts it: “I exist my dance” (Fraleigh, 1987, p. xvi).

#### *Authentic Movement and the BOM*

This part briefly examines the discipline of authentic movement with a emphasis on its format. This is done with the purpose to apply it to the BOM in psychology at the stage of data collection. The practice of authentic movement, or sometimes called movement-in-depth, is a case of the broader field of dance movement therapy, which is based on the premise that

movement is a foundation for the emotional, cognitive, physical, and social integration of the individual (Ritter & Low, 1996). The discipline of authentic movement is not restricted to professional dancers; in fact, people with different levels of movement training and physical skill utilize it for various purposes, among which are therapy, choreography, and meditation (Lowel, 2007). It was initially developed by Mary Whitehouse (1911-1979) who, along with Trudi Schoop, are considered two major pioneers of dance therapy (Chodorow, 1991).

Whitehouse was primarily trained as a dancer and worked with such notable choreographers as Mary Wigman and Martha Graham (Hartley, 2004). She combined her thorough knowledge in dance with theoretical underpinnings of Jungian depth psychology to develop a practice which regards movement in terms of the concepts of conscious and unconscious, the self, active imagination, and individuation (Lowel, 2007). Specifically, she differentiates three types of movement, including premeditated (i.e., doing the movement), unpremeditated (i.e., letting the movement happen on its own), and the movement which unites the two; and she regards these movements as functions of ego, unconsciousness, and the self, respectively (Chodorow, 1991). The practice of authentic movement resembles Jungian active imagination method. It involves attention to bodily experiencing in order to evoke expressive improvisational movements, or “free associations of the body” and uncover psychological meanings which these bodily expressions convey (Adler, 2002). Even though the BOM in psychology does not adopt a theoretical foundation of authentic movement, the format of the latter provides useful material for the former, in terms of structuring the session and emphasizing the importance of relationship between a researcher and a participant.

The format of the authentic movement session consists of at least two participants, including a mover and a witness. The session generally happens where there is enough room to

move with minimal amount of interruption, such as a dance studio. Before the session starts, both participants negotiate who will take a role of a mover, or a witness. Importantly, in authentic movement these roles are fluid; that is, there is no rigid division between who does what. Throughout the process, participants might even decide to switch roles. This is a significant aspect relevant to the BOM in psychology. In traditional research settings, there is a clear distinction between a researcher and a participant, with the former having most control over the research process. The BOM reconsiders these roles, employing the standards of authentic movement; according to which, all the parties involved in the process are researchers and participants simultaneously (see Chapter 4). During this prior discussion, participants also decide on the duration of the session (typically ranging from 20 minutes to an hour) and the way the final stage of reflection is done (Hartley, 2004). Significant part of the discussion also concerns the issues of safety and confidentiality. After this negotiation is complete, the actual session commences.

The responsibility of the witness lies in the provision of a safe environment, called the witness circle, for the mover to be able to express the bodily experiences freely (Hartley, 2004). The witness is responsible for indicating the mover when to start to move, as well as when to end the session. This is usually done by using the sound of a bell or chime (Lowel 2007). The process of bodily expression typically starts with the mover closing the eyes. The purpose of it is to be able to focus on the inward sensory processes by reducing any possible external distractions. Afterwards, the mover attempts to give an overt form to those inward impulses via bodily expression. When the process unfolds, the witness remains the attention on the mover, while simultaneously attending to her own bodily responses. The witness cultivates non-intrusive, non-

judgemental, and compassionate attitude towards the process and the participants involved (Hartley, 2004). Those attitudes lay the groundwork for the ethical principles of the BOM.

After the completion of time, the witness signals the mover to end the process. It is followed by a mutual reflection upon the experiences of the movement. If the session pursued a therapeutic goal, this reflection usually takes a form of an analytical discussion. On the other hand, if authentic movement was used in the dance context, the reflection revolves around sharing artistic insight. There is even a possibility to skip this final stage altogether, when authentic movement was treated as a form of meditation (Lowel, 2007). In the context of the BOM, the reflection aims to clarify and elaborate on the meanings pertaining to the question under investigation in order to use this knowledge as psychological data at the stages of data description and interpretation. Both the verbal accounts of the mover and the witness (participant and researcher in the BOM) comprise the material for analysis.

Regardless of the purpose of reflection, it is usually the mover who first starts to share experiences, making decisions on what needs to be discussed and in what manner. The purpose of such a reflection is to verbalize and anchor bodily experiences which emerged in the process of movement. Afterwards, with the permission of the mover, the witness, too, shares experiences of the process, highlighting their own bodily responses. The witness restrains from giving evaluation and interpretation of the meaning of the mover's bodily expression. Instead, the witness tries to articulate their subjective bodily responses to the movement. Since the BOM relies upon the bodily means of communication, one of the crucial aspect for consideration relates to the transformation of nonverbal expressions into a linguistic form. Thus, it is useful to include a reflection stage into the BOM, similarly to how it is done in authentic movement.

### *Contact Improvisation and the BOM*

This part of the chapters examines contact improvisation and its principle of spontaneity of movement to implement it the BOM in psychology. Contact improvisation is an experimental modern dance form, which was initiated by Steven Paxton (1975) in the USA in early 1970's (Thomas, 2003). Its style is influenced by various movement and dance practices. In discussing the origins of contact improvisation, Paxton (1975) notes: "The stuff seems to exist in the wrestling, jitterbug, Aikido, gymnastic, dance area. I feel we have invented nothing; rather, specified a way of activity that is exclusive of the *aims* of other duet forms" (p.40). At the core of contact improvisation lies spontaneous, non-choreographed movement which involves touch, weight sharing, and momentum (Bull, 1997).

The dance is typically performed by two partners who are androgynously paired (Fraleigh, 1987). That is, it breaks away from gender distinctions found in other dances and aspires to non-hierarchical ideals (Fraleigh, 1987). In addition to that, contact improvisation abandons the ideal of the body suitable for this practice. Conversely, it embraces different forms, shapes, and abilities of the body; for example, there are people in contact improvisation who use wheelchairs in their dances (Thomas, 2003). The form also promotes egalitarian relationship between partners, as well as dancers and facilitators. In fact, its ideological roots can be traced back to the counter-cultures of the 1960's which challenged the elitist conventions of the theatre dance (Novack, 1990). In that respect, Foster (1997) argues that contact improvisation is not only an artistic phenomenon, but a form of social movement as well.

Contact improvisation cultivates the principle of reciprocity of movement; that is, partners maintain a physical contact with each other by the means of touch, taking and giving weight, falling, and rolling together (Thomas, 2003). There are no set patterns or vocabularies of



movement in contact improvisation; instead, the form promotes spontaneity and individuality of expression (Novack, 1990). Rather than being preoccupied with the content of the movement (the “what” of movement), it puts emphasis on the form itself (the “how” of movement) (Thomas, 2003). Unlike classical dances such as ballet which predominantly stresses the visual aspect of dance and the outward expression, contact improvisation focuses on the inner bodily experiences. In this form, focus is directed towards subjective bodily experiences, as opposed to the objectified body with its visual appearance to the audience (Thomas, 2003). In other words, aesthetic presentation of the body is not its primary goal.

The theory behind contact improvisation stems from the notion that the body possesses its own intelligence which gets suppressed by cultural and social influences (Novack, 1990). Therefore, the practice aims to regain access to this “body intelligence” by directing attention to the physical sensations of the body and synchronising them with the movement of a dance partner (Thomas, 2003). In her article “Thinking in Movement,” Sheets-Johnstone (1981) uses contact improvisation to investigate the embodied features of thought. She argues that the spontaneous movements in this form do not express thinking, but the movement itself functions as a form of thinking, which she calls “kinetic intelligence” or a “bodily logos.”

Specifically, Sheets-Johnstone attempts to redefine the notion of thinking which is conventionally associated with language and rationality. The reason she utilises contact improvisation for the exploration of the question at hand lies in its format. Despite the fact that the enacted movements in contact improvisation are spontaneous and unplanned, their sequence has coherence, and therefore, the dance appears to have an intentional meaning (Merritt, 2015). Sheets-Johnstone argues that this is a good example of non-linguistic formation of meaning, for dancers in contact improvisation negotiate their actions by attuning to each other through

physical contact that is unmediated by verbalised thought. It allows her to challenge the notion that rational thinking always precedes action.

Similar to contact improvisation, the BOM operates with the spontaneous, non-choreographed movements in order to study psychological meanings. It shares with contact improvisation the premise that thinking (cognition) and bodily movements are intertwined. The BOM aims to expand modalities for collecting, analysing, and representing psychological data. Therefore, empirical findings in contact improvisation regarding the importance of bodily movement in meaning formation is indispensable. To say that this type of making meaning is superior to the linguistic meaning-making is as fallacious as the reverse claim that the linguistic meaning generated by rational thinking is better than the bodily way of forming sense.

## Chapter 4

### Format of the BOM

The purpose of this chapter is to offer a possible format of the BOM. As shown in previous chapters, the proposed method is founded on the premise that embodied subjectivity is experienced as preverbal. Thus, it can and should be described and interpreted in many ways, depending on a taken perspective or a set of perspectives. Traditional quantitative methods in psychology operate with numbers and strive for precision and accuracy. Conversely, the BOM works with bodily expression and its elaborate description and interpretation. As a qualitative type of research, it creates multiplicity of meanings and endorses ambiguity which this multiplicity might entail. The purpose of such research lies in capturing lived psychological experiences as fully as possible, rather than reducing them to a refined numeric representation. In this chapter I discuss the format of the BOM, including data collection, description, interpretation (deduction and speculation), representation of results, and the method's application. The structure of the BOM is built upon theoretical reflection; therefore, it needs further modification, informed by future empirical trials. The goal is not to provide a finished ready-to-use method. The main task is to demonstrate that the pre-verbal and pre-reflective experiences which emerge in dance can be systematically notated, described, and interpreted for psychological research purposes.

#### *Structure of the BOM*

As a model for describing and interpreting psychological data, the BOM adopts a method from the discipline of material culture. This method, known as a Prownian analysis, was devised by Jules David Prown (1982). It intends to study human-made objects as a primary source of data in order to generate knowledge about cultures in which these objects are created. The

Prownian analysis is founded on the premise that artifacts explicitly or implicitly embody the belief and value systems of societies and cultures to which they belong. The kinds of objects which are investigated using this method include art, diversions, adornment, modifications of the landscape, applied arts, and various devices (Prown, 1982).

The rationale for choosing the Prownian analysis as a model for the BOM lies in the nature of bodily expression. Similarly to artifacts, bodily expression through gesture and movement, too, is seen as a reflection of intra-, inter-, and socio- subjective domains of experiences of the mover. Therefore, it can be used as an access to personal psychological, as well as cultural, social, economic, historical, and political factors which have impact on the experiences of the body.

The method comprises four sequential stages, including data collection, description, deduction, and speculation. At the first stage, the investigated object is generated (i.e., bodily expression). The second stage aims to document the objective characteristics of the investigated artifact, which are independent from the researcher's evaluation. The goal of the third stage is to elaborate on the relationship between this object and the researcher. Finally, at the speculation stage the researcher formulates hypotheses which lay the groundwork for the future lines of research (Prown, 1982).

#### *Data Collection Stage*

Three questions are relevant in the data collection stage: (1) what constitutes psychological evidence; (2) from whom the data can be obtained; and (3) in what fashion can this data be obtained in the BOM.

*Psychological evidence in the BOM.* There are two types of psychological evidence generated by the BOM. Participant's bodily expression through gesture and movement serves as a primary source of data. Video recording is used as a tool to document the mover's bodily expression and later use this video representation for further analysis. Second, verbal reflection on the part of the participant and the researcher serve as a complementary source of data. This verbal account is generated immediately after the movement stage. It aims to represent the participant's and the researcher's initial intellectual and emotional response to the bodily expression. It is suggested to use seven perspectives highlighted by Hanna (1979) (i.e., physical, cultural, social, psychological, economic, political, and communicative) to structure and guide the process of reflection. Depending on a given research question, the importance of perspectives changes. Some perspectives might be completely omitted if they are not relevant for the investigated phenomenon, but generally, the more information is gathered, the better elaboration of the question becomes.

*Participants in the BOM.* Similarly to the authentic movement session, the BOM involves at least two participators, a researcher and a participant (i.e., a mover). The BOM pursues an aim to study subjective lived experiences or gain a *thick* account of psychological meanings. Since the BOM is placed within an idiographic as opposed to nomothetic psychological research, intensive study of small number of participants is prioritized over aggregated data from groups of individuals (Barlow & Nock, 2009).

The BOM acknowledges the dependence of subjective experiences on larger contexts, or as Teo (2018) puts it: "...subjectivity needs to be studied as contextually embedded in the world, cultural-historical, socio-economic, active, embodied, and in flux; subjectivity needs to be analyzed on the background of the nexus of *intra-, inter-, and socio-subjectivity*" (p. 26). Even

though the obtained evidence in the BOM belongs to a given individual, it is, nevertheless, capable to provide commentary on inter- and socio-subjective domains. In that respect, the findings in the BOM are relevant for the experiences of others. To sum up, the BOM endeavours to preserve an individual aspect of data, as well as comment on larger domains of subjectivity.

The BOM requires a considerable theoretical engagement. It is not a straightforward technique that can be imposed on a “naïve” participant. For it to be successfully utilized, the participant must be immersed in it on a conceptual level to understand where the intention of the work stems from. This methodological requirement leads to a challenge, so that it becomes harder to recruit participants. But as noted earlier, the method does not strive to work with as many participants as possible. What the method attempts to achieve, instead, is a detailed psychological evidence from one individual. For that reason, the method does not limit itself to a single session. The research might potentially last over an extended period of time in order for the participant to get familiarized with the base assumptions of the method and agree to participate in this psychological exploration.

Additionally, the method confronts the idea that the participant should be ignorant about the research process and abide by the rules, prescribed by the researcher. In a traditional research setting, the researcher is solely responsible for the design, implementation, analysis, and interpretation of a psychological study. In contrast, the BOM aspires to maintain egalitarian and democratic relationship between the researcher and the participant. In that respect, the BOM shares similar principles with the participatory action research (PAR) which promotes inclusive practice by engaging participants at different stages of the research process, such as “designing research questions, methods, analyses, interpretation, and products” (Torre, 2014, p. 1323).

The BOM recognizes the participant as a subject who possesses agency; therefore, he/she gets fully informed about the format of the research study and becomes actively involved in the data collection stage. The participant is encouraged to suggest changes to the research process. Even though in this thesis the conventional terminology is maintained (i.e., a researcher and a participant) in order to indicate some differences in roles between the two, in the BOM, participants serve as participating researchers, or co-researchers, while researchers acknowledge their own subjective input to the acquired psychological knowledge.

Another concern with respect to participants in the BOM relates to their training in bodily expression through gesture and movement. Since the method substantially draws from the dance field, one might assume that the participant needs to possess advanced dancing skills to be able to take part in a study, which would further limit the pool of potential participants. To respond to that concern, the BOM does not pursue aesthetic purposes. The method is not preoccupied with studying movement for its own sake; rather, it investigates movement within the questions of lived psychological experiences of the body and their entanglement in the larger social, cultural, and political contexts. The method accords with the principles underlying contact improvisation (see Chapter 3). Namely, the BOM neglects the visual aspect of dance. On the contrary, the method promotes inner sensuousness of the body and uses that knowledge to comment on intra-, inter-, and socio-subjective experiences.

*Means to obtain psychological evidence in the BOM. Preliminary Stage.* Before the actual movement session starts, there is a preliminary stage which aims to clarify the research process for all the participators involved. It is inspired by the authentic movement format (see Chapter 3). During this stage, participators negotiate their roles for a given session: who will be a mover and who will be an observer. In the BOM, these roles are fluid. In traditional research settings,

there is a clear distinction between a researcher and a participant, with the former being abstracted from the generated psychological data. The BOM reconsiders these roles in such a way that all the parties involved in the process perform as researchers and participants simultaneously. Within a single session, participants might even decide to switch roles.

During this stage, participants also decide on the duration of the session which depends on the context of a research question. Additionally, they agree on the final stage of reflection and the form it is going to take. Finally, the participants discuss ethical issues of confidentiality and safety. Because the nature of its data, the BOM cannot fully meet the requirement of confidentiality in a traditional sense. Even though the identity of participants is maintained anonymous (unless they would like to be explicitly acknowledged as co-researchers), they must make an informed consent to allow video-recordings, or photos of their bodily expression to be accessible to others. It is an unavoidable requirement inasmuch as the movement component is the most essential in the BOM. Therefore, those with whom this research is shared (an academic community and potentially the public at large) have access to the raw material, so they can make their own on-going interpretations on the research question at hand.

Concerning the safety issue, there are potential risks involved that are unique to the BOM. Specifically, since the body and its expression are video-recorded, there is a risk of objectification of the participant's bodily experiences. To address this concern, the BOM does not try to essentialize or universalize bodily experiences. Similarly to the feminist literature (see Chapter 1), the BOM recognizes the embeddedness of human experiences in various contexts. It acknowledges the unique, individual aspect of the accumulated data. Additionally, the BOM necessarily incorporates the participant's own verbal account of data. Having the participant's



reflection on the movement is implemented in order to give agency to the participant and emphasise his/her experience of *body-as-a-subject*, as opposed to *body-as-an-object*.

In terms of physical safety, it is a responsibility of the researcher (i.e., the observer) to provide a safe environment for the participant (i.e., the mover) to be able to express the bodily experiences freely. The observer is also responsible for keeping track of time: when the mover starts to move, as well as when the session ends. Since the procedure involves movement, the study should be conducted in a place which has enough room to move with minimal interruption. After this negotiation is complete, the actual session commences.

Bodily expression and verbal reflection stage. Drawing upon focusing technique, this stage includes the following steps: (1) clearing a space; (2) felt sense; (3) finding a handle; (4) resonating; (5) asking; and (6) receiving (Gendlin, 1996). During the first step, the mover is introduced to a research question, so all the irrelevant experiences which he/she might have are put aside. During the second step, the mover attends to the bodily experiences that are associated with the research question. In the third step, the mover focuses on these bodily experiences and tries to discern their qualities, without naming them. He/she suppresses the initial linguistic labelling and rationalizations which might habitually arise. The fourth step differs from the Gendlin's model. If in the focusing technique the client searches for a *verbal description* of the bodily experiences, in the BOM the mover attempts to express them via *bodily gesture and movement*.

The process of bodily expression typically starts with the mover closing the eyes. The purpose of it is to be able to focus on the inward sensory processes by reducing any possible external distractions. Afterwards, the mover attempts to give an overt form to those inward impulses via bodily expression. When the process unfolds, the observer keeps the attention on

the mover, while simultaneously attending to his/her own bodily responses. Similarly to the authentic movement process, the observer cultivates non-intrusive, non-judgemental, and compassionate attitude towards the process and the mover.

In the fifth step, the observer signals the mover to end the process. It is followed by a mutual verbal reflection upon the experiences of the movement. During this reflection, the observer asks the mover clarifying questions to further elaborate on the emerged meanings. In the context of the BOM, this reflection aims to discern the meanings pertaining to the question under investigation in order to use this knowledge as psychological data at the stages of data description and interpretation. There is no set of standardised questions for this step. They will differ depending on a given research question.

In the sixth step, both the mover and the observer reflect upon the obtained psychological evidence and might choose to go through the process again if more elaboration on the research question is required. Regardless of the purpose of reflection, it is usually the mover who first starts to share experiences, making decisions on what needs to be discussed and in what manner. The purpose of such a reflection is to verbalize and anchor bodily experiences which emerged in the process of movement. Afterwards, the observer, too, shares experiences of the process. At this stage of the research process, the observer restrains from giving any interpretations of the meaning of the mover's bodily expression. Instead, the observer tries to articulate his/her subjective bodily responses to the movement.

### *Data Description Stage*

As previously mentioned, the BOM operates with two types of data, including video-recorded bodily expression and verbal accounts of this bodily expression on the part of both the mover and the observer. These two types of data correspond to the two parts of description. First,

the chapter gives recommendations on the techniques to describe the bodily expression. Second, the chapter discusses the means to systematise verbal accounts. It must be noted, however, that the proposed suggestions function only as a vector for the future development of the method, rather than as a set of accomplished rules and procedures.

*Description of the bodily expression.* To systematise the description section, the BOM adopts the Prownian analysis procedure (Prown, 1982). Prownian analysis is useful as a model for the BOM because it offers clear guidelines on how to extract cultural and psychological meanings from non-verbal artifacts. In the case of the BOM, a video-recorded bodily expression serves as a primary object of investigation. The purpose of the description step lies in documenting the objective qualities of the investigated object, or what Prown calls “internal evidence of the object itself” (p. 7). It is limited to the observed characteristics of the object which means that the description omits any subjective assessments. The BOM follows the Prownian suggestion to start with the largest observations and gradually move to finer details. Because the description pursues an objective account of the investigated object, this step relies upon accurate terminology.

Prown identifies three components of description, including (1) substantial analysis, (2) content, and (3) formal analysis. Substantial analysis aims to describe physical dimensions and the material of the investigated object. In case of the BOM, the object of investigation is the bodily expression through gesture and movement. Bodily expression is a dynamic phenomenon which lacks substantial qualities; therefore, this component is irrelevant to the BOM. The second, content component aims to capture the subject matter of the investigated object, or its overt representation. To describe the content of bodily expression, the BOM searches for six modes for conveying meaning in movement, as identified by Hanna (1979). They include a

concretisation, an icon, a stylisation, a metonym, a metaphor, and an actualisation. Before these modes are discussed, it must be stated that not all movements are necessarily representational. The bodily expression can be highly abstract; in that instance, the content step might be skipped.

*A concretisation* uses movement to imitate the outward aspect of a thing, event, or condition portrayed. An *icon* conveys the most essential properties or qualities. A *stylisation* operates with culturally conventional but arbitrary gestures or movements to convey meanings. A *metonym* device uses a certain gesture or movement to refer to a thing, event, or condition which is closely associated with it. A *metaphor* uses movement which expresses one phenomenon in place of another, both of which having resemblance to each other. Finally, an *actualisation* uses movement to denote social roles and statuses of the mover (Hanna, 1979). Again, if there is a reason to assume that the bodily expression has a literal representation of a thing, event, or condition, these devices are described; otherwise, if the bodily expression is abstract, then the content step is omitted.

The last step of description provides analysis of the object's form and configuration. Prown (1982) suggests describing a two-dimensional organisation of the object, such as lines and areas, as well as the three-dimensional organisation of forms in space. The original Prownian approach works with static objects, such as paintings, sculpture, and architecture. Since the bodily expression is intrinsically dynamic, the BOM modifies this approach by using notation systems of dance to provide formal description.

One of the most used notation systems in the dance field which records and analyses movement is the Laban movement analysis (LMA). The LMA aims to provide an objective description of movement (Laban & Ullman, 1966). Therefore, the BOM considers it as one of the possible approaches to notate bodily expression. Because this system is based on the premise

that movement is a psycho-physical process which explicates the intention of the mover, it is, therefore, assumed that the objective account of movement gives access to the inner psychological intention or motivation of the mover (Groff, 1995). However, it is also noted that the movement itself is not interpretive; that is, it does not contain stable meanings that can be discerned. Instead, it is recognised that various meanings might emerge from the same movement, depending on a perspective of the researcher and participant. The movement itself, nevertheless, can be described objectively.

The LMA includes the following categories of analysis: *body*, *effort*, *space*, and *shape*. The interplay among those categories constitutes a vocabulary of movements. The BOM utilises those categories to describe the video-recorded bodily expression of the mover. The *body* category includes structural and physical characteristics of the moving body, or the general body organisation. It derives from anatomical and kinesiological principles. Specifically, the category of body (1) describes body parts and their connections with each other, (2) discerns parts of the body where the movement starts, and (3) accounts for sequential and simultaneous movements in different parts of the body (Groff, 1995). This category aims to describe such actions, as turning, falling, twisting, jumping, and so forth (Laban & Ullman, 1966).

The category of *effort*, or dynamics, notates subtle qualities of movement with respect to the so-called factors of weight, space, time, and flow (Laban & Ullman, 1966). Each of those effort factors is described in terms of polarities; namely, weight is defined as either strong or light, space as direct or indirect, time as sudden or sustained, and flow as bound or free (Laban & Ullman, 1980). The interplay among eight manifestations of the effort factors create various configurations of movement, defined as “states” and “drives” (Groff, 1995).

The category of *space* describes movement with respect to the environment; thus, it concerns such questions as proximity, direction, pathway, location, and relationship (Laban & Ullman, 1980). Finally, the category of *shape* is preoccupied with plasticity of the body; that is, it describes qualitative arrangements of body parts and their interplay within space. Bodily movement can be described as curved, angular, symmetric, or assymmetric (Groff, 1995). Importantly, in the LMA shape is viewed as a dynamic process rather than a static entity. The constant changes in shape reveal varying inner attitudes (Laban & Ullman, 1980).

*Description of verbal accounts.* Both the mover and the observer generate verbal form of data by engaging in the reflection process after the movement. The original verbal account unfolds in a spontaneous manner to allow the diversity of meanings to emerge. The description stage merely aims to organise the accumulated verbal data, so it can be represented in a more systematic way. It is suggested to organise this data in accordance with seven perspectives, identified by Hanna (1979). They include physical, cultural, social, psychological, economic, political, and communicative perspectives.

Because the theory underlying the BOM recognises the totality of human experiences, the method strives not to limit itself to a singular perspective. Even though the BOM is designed to address psychological questions, it is suggested that viewing the research question from one point of view does not fully capture phenomena under investigation. For that reason, the method comprises seven perspectives. Not all seven perspectives have an equal weight in every context because depending on the nature of the research question, some of them become more relevant than others. For example, for the research question which concerns cognition and language, the communicative perspective is more important than the political one, if, on the other hand, the research question derives from critical psychology, the importance of perspectives gets reversed.

Therefore, in a given study, one or two perspectives are given a primary focus, whereas all (or most) the remaining perspectives are used as a meaningful context. The rationale for considering diverse perspectives simultaneously lies in an attempt to preserve the totality of experiences and stress the inextricable interplay among those perspectives.

### *Data Interpretation Stage*

The interpretation in Prownian analysis consists of two stages: deduction and speculation. Deduction is further subdivided into three steps, including sensory, intellectual, and emotional engagement. Speculation involves two steps: theories and hypothesis formulation and program of research. The BOM incorporates both stages with their corresponding steps.

*Deduction.* While in the description stage the major focus of investigation is the object itself (i.e., video-recorded bodily expression), in the deduction the researcher centers on the relationship between the internal evidence of the object and his/her own perception of it. Specifically, the deduction stage comprises the researcher's sensory, intellectual, and emotional responses. The researcher combines his/her knowledge and subjective experiences with the material of the object. Using empathy, the researcher tries to imagine what it would be like to experience the mover's bodily expression him/herself, and based on these observations, the researcher deduces the meaning of this bodily expression. Prown suggests that the criteria for deductions should be reasonableness and common sense; that is, other researchers should arrive to similar conclusions based on the internal evidence of the investigated object.

Even though the researcher brings his/her own subjectivity into the deduction stage, the process remains synchronic. This implies that as the investigated object gains different meanings depending on a particular context, so does the researcher's assessment of that object. For example, if the researcher investigates the same object in ten years, his/her deductions might be

different because of the new accumulated experiences. In that case, the deductions can be seen as an interplay between the investigated object within its context and the researcher within his/her own context. Thus, the generated deductions in the BOM do not provide an exhaustive account of the mover's bodily expression, nevertheless, they communicate useful information.

Sensory engagement. In the first step of deduction the researcher elaborates on his/her sensory experience with the object. This experience is empathetic and imaginative; namely, the researcher imagines him/herself in the position of the mover and tries to describe what he/she would see, hear, smell, taste, and feel while moving. In her assessment of phenomenological dance appreciation, Fraleigh (1987) claims that the ability to understand the meaning of the dance (and bodily expression, in general) and the intention of the dancer stems from the expressive nature of the observer's body. In that sense, the experiencing of movement is primarily an experiencing of one's own body through the empathetic process.

Intellectual engagement. In the second step of deduction, the researcher tries to provide an intellectual assessment of the bodily expression. Especially if this expression has a representational quality, there are many questions which can be asked. For example, what does a given gesture communicate? Is it a metonym or a metaphor? Why is there a particular rhythmic quality predominant? What did cause the mover to change suddenly the rhythm of movement? Why certain parts of the body are more used than others? What are spatial dimensions used in movement, and what does this tell about the research question?

Emotional engagement. In the third step of deduction, the researcher identifies and describes his/her emotional responses to the investigated object. The mover's bodily expression might evoke a wide range of emotions, among which are enjoyment, fear, indifference, curiosity, and so forth. These reactions may differ in quality and intensity, but as Prown notes it: "it is not



uncommon to discover that what one considered a subjective response is in fact widely shared” (Prown, 1982, p. 9). The task of the researcher in this step is to precisely articulate the subtle emotional responses to the mover’s bodily expression, so they can be communicated to and compared with others.

*Speculation.* In the speculation stage, the researcher moves away from the mover’s bodily expression and focuses attention on his/her own subjectivity. Now, when the internal evidence of the investigated object is described and the interaction between this object and the researcher is deduced, the speculation stage encourages creative imagining and the free association of ideas on the part of the researcher to make an overarching account of the investigated object. These findings are then judged, based on the criteria of common sense and reasonableness. This stage includes theories and hypotheses formulation and the development of future program of research.

Theories and hypotheses. Based on the accumulated information from the descriptive and deductive stages, the researcher now formulates hypotheses regarding the meaning of the mover’s bodily expression. These hypotheses should provide plausible interpretations of the findings, observed and felt. It is important to recognise, however, that the researcher’s speculations are inevitably influenced by his/her own cultural, social, and political contexts; therefore, the knowledge generated is regarded as situated, rather than as such that offers objective facts about the research question at hand. In other words, the suggested theories and hypotheses are aimed to capture the dynamism and situatedness of psychological knowledge; thus, the interpretation given is not presented in the form of finished knowledge.

Importantly, in the BOM hypotheses making does not precede the actual research; these stages are reversed. Specifically, the BOM is an open-ended exploration which generates deductions and speculations. In that way, the failure to capture something about psychological

meanings is valuable in and of itself. The lack or absence of data reveals knowledge about the investigated question. If, for example, a given research topic does not lead to an overt bodily expression, this “nothingness” of expression might lead to various deductions and speculations. What is it about a particular topic that leads to the lack of bodily expression, what does this inhibition of expression say about social and cultural norms, is the body censored in this area of life – these are some example questions which might lay foundation for hypotheses. To conclude, the BOM does not offer definitive explanations, but rather, it aims to generate multiple interpretations in order to “thicken” description of psychological data.

Throughout the process of theories and hypotheses formulation, the researcher adopts the principle of reflexivity. This concept, which is commonly discussed in the field of critical psychology, implies that the researcher and the knowledge produced by this researcher are inextricably connected (Morawski, 2014). Therefore, the important task of the researcher is to engage in the reflection process, during which he/she constantly thinks about and makes explicit the extent to which his/her own assumptions and biases pervade the hypotheses and theories, formulated in the research process.

Program of research. The purpose of the second step of the speculation stage is to develop a future program of research to elaborate on the accumulated knowledge. The BOM offers an open-ended process about a given research question, so that other researchers are encouraged to engage in the interpretative work. Therefore, other qualitative and quantitative methods and techniques are employed to either corroborate or falsify findings about the research question, obtained through the BOM. Not only can the raw material in the forms of the participant’s bodily expression and verbal accounts be further investigated, but the researcher’s analysis itself can be also placed under scrutiny. Why did the researcher choose a particular

framework to interpret the mover's bodily expression, why were some aspects of movement more discussed than others, to what extent did the researcher's theoretical commitments influence his/her sensory, intellectual, and emotional responses – these are just a few examples of questions that can be addressed in the following line of research.

### *Data Representation Stage*

The purpose of this stage is to provide a coherent organisation of the accumulated data in the manner which can be communicated to other researchers. As mentioned earlier, the material consists of the video-recorded bodily expression, verbal accounts on the part of the participant and the researcher, material description, as well as material interpretation.

Contemporary qualitative research in social and human sciences makes a systematic effort to broaden modalities beyond verbal means for collection, interpretation, and communication of psychological findings, among which are video, film, photography, and so forth (see Banks, 2007; Bauer & Gaskell, 2000; Knowles & Cole, 2008; Onwuegbuzie & Byers, 2014). Therefore, the usage of bodily expression through posture, gesture, and movement should not be immediately rejected as an infeasible eccentric suggestion. In fact, various attempts have been made to incorporate dance practice into communication of research findings in publications and presentations (Janesick, 1994).

This has been done not only in social and human sciences, but in natural ones as well. For instance, using the Dance Your PhD contest as an exemplary case, Myers (2012) discusses the use of movement in scientific work of structural biologists. She describes the process through which these scientists employ their bodies as a medium in order to test their hypotheses about biological phenomena and communicate their intricate findings to students and colleagues. Myers (2012) concludes that “the Dance Your PhD contests, as well as other performative

modalities, can expand and extend what it is possible for scientific researchers to see, say, imagine and feel.” (p. 151).

Another interesting example of using movement for communication of conceptual knowledge is the work of Blumenfeld-Jones (2008). In the following part, one of his articles outlined in particular to show how the research findings can be represented in the BOM. The article by Blumenfeld-Jones (1995) has a rather unconventional format. It consists of two fused parts: a script of a presentation which has been given by him at the educational research conference and his theoretical elaboration on the style of this presentation.

Blumenfeld-Jones’ presentation, which aimed to elucidate the artistic modes of research representation in educational field, was verbal with an accompanying improvisational movements, performed by the presenter himself. By combining verbal and non-verbal means of communication, the author argues that he not only endeavoured to discuss alternative forms of research representation but used the very presentation as an example of how it can be practically achieved. In other words, his presentation itself was an artistic mode of representation.

According to Blumenfeld-Jones, dance as an art medium has a capacity to generate meanings through its own categories of motion, time, space, and shape. Drawing upon the tradition of hermeneutics, Blumenfeld-Jones criticizes the notion that language is a transparent symbolic system which provides one-to-one correspondence between the meaning (signified) and the sign (signifier). Movement, according to him, is an autonomous perception which generates unique meanings. In his presentation it meant that his dance did not imitate concepts that he was simultaneously discussing; in contrary, his movements initiated ideas which he was sharing with the audience. Blumenfeld-Jones concludes that movement is a text in hermeneutic sense which has a meaning that can be understood through the process of interpretation. The

BOM adopts this approach for the stage of data representation. Along with the generated verbal knowledge, the video-recorded bodily expression is shared with an academic community as a useful data for interpretation.

### *Application of the BOM*

Since the BOM operates with the bodily expression through gesture and movement for gathering psychological evidence, one might assume that the method only aims to address psychological questions that have a direct link to bodily experiences, such as the research on nonverbal communication and body-image. Even though the BOM can be potentially applied to the former fields, its scope is not limited to questions pertaining to the body. The BOM is designed to study a wide range of psychological topics, including the ones in which the body is not explicitly addressed, yet inevitably present. Even though the purpose of this thesis does not aim to generate specific research questions, it offers a few theoretical case examples which can be studied, using the BOM.

Psychology as a discipline comprises diverse academic and applied areas of research. To classify them in this particular work, the seven graduate programs in psychology at York University are used. They include the following: (1) brain, behaviour, and cognitive sciences, (2) clinical psychology, (3) clinical developmental psychology, (4) developmental science, (5) historical, theoretical, and critical psychology, (6) quantitative methods, and (7) social and personality psychology. The BOM can be potentially adopted to each of those fields.

Participants' bodily expression may be investigated in the context of behavioural and cognitive processes. For example, it might allow to systematically study the *thinking-in-movement* phenomenon, discussed in Chapter 3. Several biological topics in psychology can be

also studied using the BOM. For example, the rhythmic characteristic of movement can be researched for understanding circadian rhythms of the body.

The BOM might be also applied to study mental health. Specifically, it provides bodily form of data for understanding illness and well-being. The findings in the BOM might even redefine the former notions. Deciding on a classification of mental illnesses would potentially be a different process when embodied expressions of psychological disturbances are systematically analysed. This could contribute to the public policies on depathologising mental illness. The BOM might also allow to develop treatment programs for individuals with developmental problems. For example, the bodily interaction can be placed at the core of treatment for individuals on an autism spectrum disorder who have difficulties with communication skills.

One of the possible research questions in developmental psychology which can be studied using the BOM is the interaction between pre-linguistic infants and their caregivers. It occurs at the bodily level of touch, facial expression, eye-contact, tone of voice, and so forth (Stern, 1985). By researching expression of the body directly, the BOM allows to study nuanced characteristics of such interactions. This might lead to various hypotheses and theories on the infants' subjectivity and its development throughout the lifespan.

The BOM can also generate programs of research to study historical, theoretical, and critical questions in psychology. It has a potential to make explicit some underlying intuitions by which historical questions are addressed. For example, the systematic study of bodily expression in space and time might offer alternatives to the way the historic time is conceptualised. Generally, historical time is conceived as a linear, continuous unfolding. Relatively recent historians expressed discontentment with such a view (Danziger, 2006); however, it seems that

no alternative conceptualizations been offered. Experiential findings in the BOM might inspire historians to develop new intuitions pertaining to historical work.

The BOM has also a potential to contribute to ontological, epistemological, ethical, and aesthetic considerations in psychology. For example, bodily expression might provide experiential ground for theorisations on dynamic ontologies. It might clarify questions of the nature of psychological phenomena; that is, whether psychological meanings are inherent, finished entities or rather emergent processes in a constant flux. A number of critical questions can also be studied, using the BOM. For example, the bodily expression in interaction between two or more participants might provide commentary on the embodied power dynamics among groups, characterised by such social markers as gender, race, class, and so forth.

The relevance of the BOM for quantitative methods lies in the very nature of the former; namely, being a kind of a method. Specifically, the work generated in the BOM might reflect on the limitation of quantification of psychological phenomena, its own limitation as a qualitative method, and the possibility for the two to collaborate in order to contribute to the complexity of mental life. Finally, one of the research topics in social psychology is the nature of prejudice. This phenomenon is simultaneously defined as a group process, as well as an individual negative attitude, emotion, and action towards members of a particular group (Brown, 2010). The BOM can be used as a platform to investigate this phenomenon both at its individual and group levels. In this context, at least two participants take part in a study. The research focus in this case is the quality of participants' non-verbal interaction in movement which adds to a phenomenological account of prejudice.

## Conclusion

Mental phenomena are inextricably connected to body experiences. Thus, in order to gain psychological understanding, the body should be incorporated into psychological theories and practices. Despite current efforts in qualitative research to broaden modalities of data-gathering, mainstream methods in psychology offer a limited account of psychological phenomena because they are predicated largely on verbal evidence. The main purpose of this thesis is to offer a research method that could enrich psychological understanding by including the experiences of the body as a viable source of knowledge. First, this work provides theoretical foundation of the research method which systematically uses body expression through gesture and movement as empirical evidence for studying psychological questions. Second, it outlines a hypothetical structure of this method, including the stages of data collection, data interpretation, and representation of results.

It is not argued, however, that such a qualitative mode of data collection, interpretation, and representation needs to fully replace the traditional, verbal mode. Instead, body expression is suggested as a complementary means to access the complex ambiguity of human lived experiences which expand and extend their existence far beyond what words can say. In proposing to employ body expression, the BOM offers new possibilities for understanding psychological questions; that is, body expression is viewed as another symbolic system of the lived psychological experiences. It has to be, however, differentiated from the symbolic system of language because it has its own logic, distinct from rational logic.

The first chapter of this thesis examined historical and theoretical underpinnings of existing psychological and philosophical approaches to the body, including body image scholarship, nonverbal communication work, phenomenology, and feminist theory. It employed



their principles to provide an elaborate theoretical groundwork for the BOM in psychology. The body was theorised as a fluid entity through which subjective experiences are lived and communicated to others, as well as the means to provide commentary on social, cultural, historical, and political contexts in which the body exists.

The second chapter discussed the historical and theoretical foundation of the applied field of body psychotherapy which actively works with the body for psychological treatment. Inasmuch as this field offers conceptual and empirical instruments to work with the body as a carrier of subjective experiences, its principles informed the design of the BOM. Specifically, the structure of the six-step model of the focusing technique (Gendlin, 1978) was adapted for the BOM at the stage of data collection. Additionally, micro-phenomenology (Petitmengin, 2007) was utilised to systematise pre-verbal bodily experiences for research purposes. This thesis also outlined an empirical research study on the formation of self-concept in athletes (Stelter, 2000) in order to demonstrate the application of focusing technique outside of the psychotherapeutic field and inform the format of the BOM.

The third chapter evaluated dance theories which place the body at the core of their practice. It summarized theoretical understandings of dance, including its definition, seven perspectives of considerations, four components and functions (Hanna, 1979). Afterwards, it explored the relationship between philosophy and dance, putting emphasis on the phenomenological descriptive approach. Finally, it examined two dance practices in particular: authentic movement (Whitehouse, Adler, Chodorow, & Pallaro, 1999) and contact improvisation (Bull, 1997; Novack, 1990; Paxton, 1975; Sheets-Johnstone, 1981). It discussed the format of authentic movement in order to incorporate it in the BOM at the stage of data collection. Since contact improvisation puts emphasis on the non-linguistic forms of psychological meaning

(Merritt, 2015; Pini, McIlwain, & Sutton, 2016), it was suggested that its principles are suitable for the theoretical basis of the BOM.

The fourth chapter provided a possible structure of the BOM. It discussed the data collection stage by addressing three questions: (1) what constitutes psychological evidence; (2) from whom the data can be obtained; and (3) in what fashion can this data be obtained in the BOM. The chapter also examined the data description stage. It utilised a Prownian analysis (Prown, 1982) as a model for describing psychological data. Furthermore, the chapter outlined the data interpretation stage which consists of deduction and speculation. Afterwards, it discussed the representation of results stage that aims to provide a coherent organisation of the accumulated data in a manner which can be communicated to other researchers. Finally, it provided a few theoretical case examples which can be studied using the BOM.

The diverse theoretical and applied fields discussed in this work were selected based on pragmatic consideration. The purpose of such an examination was to adapt their principles to the format of the BOM. To assess the effectiveness of this method, it has to be tested empirically. The current project sets the ground for incorporation of body experiences to study psychological questions and offer a possible instrument for doing that. This work serves as a starting point for a body of empirical research which will give access to domains of psychological phenomena which have been previously neglected in mainstream psychology.

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