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Aesthetically Significant: An Embodied Artistic Inquiry Exploring the Experience of Aesthetics as an Emerging Dance/Movement Therapist

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AESTHETICALLY SIGNIFICANT: AN EMBODIED ARTISTIC INQUIRY EXPLORING
THE EXPERIENCE OF AESTHETICS AS AN EMERGING DANCE/MOVEMENT
THERAPIST

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to explore my aesthetic experience as an emerging dance/movement therapist, to understand the influence my aesthetic has in my clinical work and how my aesthetic preferences are shaping me as a novice clinician. An embodied artistic inquiry was used for this self-exploration and data were collected through semi-structured journals that included both words and art. Creative synthesis was utilized for data analysis. The data collection and analysis were co-occurring for eleven weeks. At the end of each week I explored what arose in the data through movement with a board-certified dance/movement therapist (BC-DMT) consultant to begin the creative synthesis process.

Findings indicate that aesthetic values were experienced through sight, sound, and bodily sensations. Many of the 14 dance/movement therapy aesthetic values previously identified by Hervey (2000) were experienced during the research process while aesthetic values of other theorists such as Laban, Moore, Imus, Langer, and Csikszentmihalyi were also present. The salient were authenticity, depth, connection, patterns, wholeness, flow, and the general in the particular. Awareness of this experience allowed for the deciphering of my own aesthetic preferences and shed light on how my aesthetic is influencing my clinical work and shaping me as a novice clinician. The research process and findings were synthesized into a choreographed dance that was presented in the Columbia College Chicago Department of Creative Arts Therapies Student/Faculty show on July 23rd, 2015.¹

¹ From Hervey, L. (2000). *Artistic inquiry in dance/movement therapy: Creative alternatives for research*. Springfield, IL: Charles C. Thomas.

Thank you so much to my family, friends, cohort and co-workers; you all truly helped guide and support me throughout this process. Thank you Heather for helping me immensely through every step, from the proposal to final product. Nancy- thank you for embarking on this journey with me, your witnessing and beautiful words truly illuminated so much within this study. Thank you Susan for sharing all of your aesthetic knowledge and guiding me to create a final product I can be proud of. And Lenore, thank you for your inspiring work, this thesis would not have come to be without it.

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Chapter One: Introduction

“Beauty is no quality in things themselves: It exists merely in the mind which contemplates them; and each mind perceives a different beauty.”

-David Hume

Throughout the course of history, philosophers and artists such as Hume, Plato, and Aristotle have contemplated and debated about the nature of beauty (Hume, 2006 & Sartwell, 2014). George Santayana (1955) discussed many components of aesthetic theory within his book, *The Sense of Beauty*. Although there are no conclusive answers to what classifies something as beautiful, or even what it truly means for something to be beautiful, it is known that every person experiences beauty in some way. Danto (1999) argues that the experience of beauty is often synchronized with an experience of pleasure in some form. Dissanayake (1992) stated, “Humans everywhere receive pleasure from beautiful things— although of course, what is considered to be beautiful may vary from person to person or group to group...” (p. 131). These both relate to dance therapist, Lenore Hervey’s (2000) theory, that her 14 aesthetic values of dance/movement therapy ultimately help to illuminate what is seen as beautiful and appreciated in dance/movement therapy sessions. Santayana, Danto, and Dissanayake also allude to this idea that aesthetics and beauty speak to some experience of pleasure within an individual’s experience.

Beauty and aesthetics are concepts that have intrigued me for quite some time. I recall specifically discussing the concept of beauty as a child with my mother and being surprised to find incongruences in what we each found to be beautiful. It was at that moment that I began to realize, without explicitly discussing it, that each person has their own unique aesthetic and in turn, their own concept of beauty. Our environment influences this unique development; the

people and places we encounter shape the way we perceive the world, which in turn influences the aesthetic we individually develop. When I began data collection, I came to the realization that my aesthetic has shifted over the past twenty-four years of my life, making me realize it will continue to evolve and deepen as I continue my journey through life as a dance/movement therapist.

Beginning to decipher the initial influences of my aesthetic values and my own concept of beauty took me back to my elementary and junior high years when I was living with my mother in Lawrence, Kansas. At the time, Lawrence had a very unique and diverse culture. In elementary school I had friends of different ethnicities and races, and the community itself was very accepting. There was no question about it; I found this environment and the unique people in it beautiful though it was rarely discussed at that age.

At eight years old while taking ballet classes, the beauty of movement truly began to stick with me. I found something about ballet so enticing. The art form had more beauty than I had ever known. There are vast amounts of aesthetic values that go into ballet; the symmetry, long lines, and beautiful feet are just a few concepts that I started to fall in love with. At that young age, I absolutely loved watching the older girls through the window during their pointe classes, seeing the advancement within their technique where the aesthetic of ballet truly glowed. There was something about the beauty of movement that I was so drawn to.

Shortly after I turned 15, my mother and I moved to Columbia, South Carolina, which turned out to be quite a culture shock once I arrived. Peers were not as accepting, there were still some clear racial divides within the school, and I was ultimately shocked how different the overall atmosphere was. I also noticed feeling more judged in my new environment. Reflecting back, my overall being (aesthetic included) was being judged. Coming from such an open,

accepting place before, I had grown to embrace my own style and way of being. I really embraced what I liked and who I was, but despite initially not caring what others thought of me, my unique style stuck out like a sore thumb in my new southern environment.

The only thing that remained constant when I got to South Carolina was ballet and my love for dance. It still had the same beauty and I was now practicing the art form in a more intense and demanding way as a junior member of a ballet company that traveled to nearby states. There was more emphasis on the body's size and shape, which began to add to and slightly shift my aesthetic, changing what I found beautiful in both others and myself.

Eventually, I transitioned out of high school and went on to pursue my Bachelor of Arts at the University of South Carolina. I went in as a dance and choreography major with a focus in ballet.

Needless to say a big shift happened during the program because I graduated as a dance and choreography major with a focus in contemporary dance. I was challenged during my four years by two amazing contemporary teachers who choreographed what I felt was “awkward” and sometimes “ugly” movement in their pieces. Some of their choreography techniques felt uncomfortable to me and at times I felt like they gave me the weird phrases on purpose to challenge me. However, regardless of how awkward I felt the movement was, they were slowly reshaping my aesthetic again without me realizing it. I recall my last contemporary undergraduate showcase; I was so excited for my mom to see the piece. After the show I will never forget her telling me the piece was “interesting” but that my dancing was “beautiful.” This clearly laid out the aesthetic values of my mother, her finding pleasure in watching me dance but getting a sense that the overall piece was unaligned with her personal aesthetic.

Upon entering the Dance/Movement Therapy and Counseling program at Columbia College Chicago and beginning to talk about aesthetics in class, I realized that I am drawn to what I often classify as “pretty” things and what that means to me is different than what it means for each of my peers. While it seems obvious that everyone has their own likes and dislikes, I had never tracked it back and related it to each human having their own set of aesthetic preferences and values. I felt tracking back through my own history helped to show me what my aesthetic was at different points in my life, while simultaneously showing major points in my life where my aesthetic shifted in some way. It also helped me to notice my own body knowledge and body prejudice that arose while thinking back through my aesthetic experience and ways in which my aesthetic has shifted over time. While it was a bit of an odd realization that an individual’s aesthetic is plastic and changeable overtime, it also made total sense. Siegel (1999) stated, “The human brain remains open to changing in response to experience throughout the lifespan”, which directly relates to the changes that occurred throughout my youth that caused shifts within my aesthetic over time (p. 254).

The purpose of the study I conducted was to explore my aesthetic experience as an emerging dance/movement therapist. In reviewing the literature, there was very little research on aesthetics and dance/movement therapy. Lenore Hervey (2000) stated 14 aesthetic values that are often seen as beautiful and appreciated in dance/movement therapy sessions. She identified and defined these values by being aware of what was looked for, perceived well, and encouraged by dance/movement therapists in their sessions. Through semi-structured written journals, I explored my aesthetic experience within my clinical work, specifically within the dance/movement therapy groups I was leading at my internship site. I used Hervey’s (2000) identified aesthetic values of dance/movement therapy as a foundation while remaining open to

the possibility of other aesthetic values arising as well, allowing to see how the work of other theorists could relate to and enhance the power of the study. Ultimately, I hoped this exploration would help me to better understand how my aesthetic influences aspects of my clinical work as an emerging dance/movement therapist.

The main motivation behind this study stemmed from my belief that noticing and tracking my aesthetic experience in my clinical work as a dance/movement therapy intern would be key to my professional development. Recognizing how choices are made in a clinical setting is important as a clinician and I felt that my aesthetic preferences and values were a major underlying component for me. I felt my aesthetic choices were coming from an unconscious or implicit place due to my developmental stage as a clinician and I was curious if this exploration could give me more conscious awareness of my process within dance/movement therapy sessions. My motivation grew during the literature review on dance/movement therapy and aesthetics, where I found that there is a great need for further research.

After completing the initial literature review and proposal for this work, I created the research questions I would focus on within the study. The research questions are:

- How do I experience aesthetics as an emerging dance/movement therapist?
- How do aesthetics influence my clinical work?
- How are my aesthetics shaping me as a clinician?
- How does my culturally informed body knowledge/body prejudice influence my aesthetic choices?

I believe that my aesthetic informs my clinical choices and want to find evidence to help answer how they do this. Exploring aesthetic experience through an embodied artistic inquiry allowed for the study to be organic in nature in hopes of allowing for the implicit to be brought

to the explicit, ultimately giving me the tools to utilize my aesthetic more consciously within my work moving forward. Due to the fact that each person has a unique aesthetic, I believe it was critical for me to consciously go through my proposed process to further my self-awareness as I continue to develop as a clinician, while also laying the groundwork for future research to be done on aesthetics within the field of dance/movement therapy.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

As I began this literature review I realized I needed to hone in on pieces of literature that would give me the knowledge I needed for my study, while also showing the need for this particular research in the field of dance/movement therapy. There were many moments while studying the literature and writing this chapter that I realized my subject matter was too broad and I needed to reestablish my points of emphasis. While there is a sufficient amount of literature written about aesthetics, I found I really had to focus on pieces that would help me in the process of data collection and analysis, coupled with theories that would lay the groundwork for validating future results. In the midst of feeling overwhelmed during the process, I read a great excerpt in Susan Langer's (1993) *Feeling and Form* introduction that spoke to me. The quote felt necessary for inclusion in relation to the foundation and information to follow in this chapter:

A book, like a human being, cannot do everything; it cannot answer in a few hundred pages all the questions which the Elephant's Child in his 'satiated curiosity might choose to ask... The business of philosophy is to unravel and organize concepts, to give definite and satisfactory meaning to the terms we use in talking about any subject (in this case art); it is, as Charles Peirce said, "to make our ideas clear." (Langer, 1993, p. vii)

In the same spirit, this literature review surely will not answer all curiosities of the experience of dance/movement therapy and aesthetics. Instead, it will attempt to lay out enough theories and important concepts in order to make sense of both the importance of this study to the field of dance/movement therapy as well as later explain how the results and discussion align with pieces of the different theories. Ultimately this literature review hopes to pave the way for future research into dance/movement therapy and aesthetics.

This literature review begins by exploring the general concepts of art theory and aesthetics, followed by an exploration of aesthetics and movement in conjunction. Aesthetics and movement is the primary focus of this chapter as it is the most crucial literature explored throughout the research process. Through navigating all of this literature, gaining knowledge from the various theorists, and seeing what pieces resonated with my aesthetic experiences in this research, I became more aware of how many pieces from the different theorists intertwine together in what I experienced during my own study. The literature review concludes with brief sections on beauty, universality, flow, and body knowledge/body prejudice, all of which are key components within this study.

Art Theory

In beginning this literature review, I initially debated including a portion on art theory. After weighing the inclusion, I realized it felt like a necessary piece to lay the foundation for the work that was to be explored. Throughout this thesis, the term *art* will be used to refer to any consciously formed expression of an idea, feeling, or experience (Preble & Preble, 2004). While this expression can take many shapes and mediums, in this instance, art will be referencing the form of dance/movement throughout both this chapter and the remaining text.

When most people think about the idea of art or aesthetics, the first thing that often comes to mind is the idea of things being beautiful verses ugly and pleasing verses unpleasing. In 2008, The Philosophers' Magazine Online conducted an informational survey where they asked participants to identify what makes a piece of art "good." The authors quickly pointed out that an informational survey does not equal truth, however, it can still be interesting to see what large groups of people think. The survey found that the leading components of artistic greatness were romanticism/expression of feelings and enjoyability/pleasure (Baggini, 2008). Ultimately,

the survey results found that a majority of participants appreciate the feeling/emotion as well as the pleasure in the art they experience (Baggini, 2008). While I want to reiterate that this survey does in no way equal truth, it is interesting to note that one of the found components of what makes art good was this idea of enjoyability and pleasure. There are many theorists who believe that one gets pleasure from beautiful things, which in turn helps to validate this survey's findings (Csikszentmihalyi, 2008; Danto, 1981; Dissanayake, 1992; Santayana, 1955). In Langer's (1953) *Feeling and Form: A theory of art developed from Philosophy in a New Key*, she stated, "The effect of the genetic premise on art theory is that aesthetic values must be treated either as direct satisfactions, i.e. pleasures, or as instrumental values, that is to say, means to fulfillment of biological needs" (p. 35-36).

When people see dance, movement, or other forms of art, they are all affected in various ways. They might contemplate how they feel after viewing it and then decide whether they like it or not. Both beauty and pleasure are clear aspects of aesthetics and art philosophy, however, there is more to one's aesthetic experience than what can be visually observed. Many art theorists throughout history have pondered what makes something beautiful or pleasing and have found that it is a hard question to answer. This can be inferred from Danto's (1981) writings on the history of philosophical debate on these questions and was also mentioned in the introduction chapter in reference to Hume, Plato, and Aristotle (Sartwell, 2014). The idea of pleasure in relation to aesthetic experience will be looked at in more depth in a later section of this literature review.

Aesthetic Theory

For hundreds of years philosophers have considered the significance and motivation of the arts. Art has even been honored as a separate sector of philosophy under the name of

“aesthetics.” Dance/movement therapist Joan Chodorow (1991) stated, “The aesthetic attitude seeks the world of beauty” continuing to explain that the world of beauty is not necessarily “pretty” (p. 86). There are many definitions and thoughts about aesthetics. Langer (1993) suggests a number of definitions in her text: “the science of the beautiful,” “the theory or philosophy of taste,” “the science of fine arts,” and “the science of expression” (p. 12). She continues to ponder that if “the beautiful” is the field of aesthetics, then this field is much wider than that of fine arts. This shows her realization of the importance of aesthetics and how much they encompass.

According to Preble & Preble (2004), aesthetics is defined as “the study and philosophy of the quality and nature of sensory responses related to, but not limited by, the concept of beauty” (p. 499). The concept of aesthetics relates to both the overall philosophy of art and the individual preferences that one has around art (Bothamley, 2002). In R. K. Elliott’s (1967) chapter entitled *Aesthetic Theory and the Experience of Art*, he explores aesthetic experience in depth. Elliott explains,

Aesthetic experience was not a matter of recognizing that the object possessed emotional (and other) qualities, but required the reader to transfer himself into the poet’s mind, re-enact his creative expression and thereby allow his clarified emotion to be manifested in him. (Elliott, 1967, p. 45)

He goes on to explain that “in aesthetic experience every duality between ourselves and the poet is transcended” (Elliott, 1967, p. 46). I believe this concept is also transferrable to other forms of art, such as dance. As explained in the introduction chapter, humans receive pleasure from beautiful things, even though there is variability from person to person in what is considered to be beautiful (Dissanayake, 1992, p. 131). George Santayana (1955) even went as far to explain

that when terrible situations occur, there is still a momentary pause of the mind to contemplate it aesthetically. Santayana is speaking to the idea that, while we find pleasure in beauty and aesthetics, even things that can be experienced in a more grotesque way are still aesthetic in nature.

When it comes to aesthetic experience, Dissanayake (1992) insists that it cannot be properly understood separately from the psychobiology of sense, feeling, and cognition – the ways we spontaneously think and behave. After discussing the various elements of aesthetic experience, Dissanayake (1992) argued that vision and hearing are not the only elements that appeal to the senses, stating, “...there are others that are pleasing to the cognitive faculties: repetition, pattern, continuity, clarity, dexterity, elaboration or variation of a theme, contrast, balance, proportion” (p. 54-55). In this statement alone, there are clear overlaps in her aesthetic ideas with Laban’s harmony work, detailed in Moore’s (2009) text, and Hervey’s (2000) ideas of aesthetic values in relation to dance/movement therapy (these are touched on below in *Aesthetics and Movement*), while Dissanayake (1992) also introduces concepts that have not come up within the aesthetic research thus far.

In Langer’s (1953) text, she discusses how direct aesthetic experience actually reveals the depth of human mentality to where the experiences take individuals. She goes on to explain how major aesthetic experiences make a “revelation of our inner life”, continuing to state that these experiences “shape our imagination of external reality according to rhythmic forms of life and sentience, and so impregnates the world with aesthetic value” (p. 399). Another important concept to note within Langer’s (1993) work is her concept of *Significant Form*. She believes that certain forms and relations of forms actually stir our aesthetic emotions. “These relations and combinations of lines and colours, these aesthetically moving forms, I call ‘Significant

Form’; and ‘Significant Form’ is the one quality common to all works of visual art” (Langer, 1993, p. 33). She later talks about content in a way that asserts art as being “formed content,” showing her belief that form and content are actually intertwined, presenting her theory that they are one entity (p. 5). Within personal notes Susan Imus (personal communication, 2003) states that “(A) good work of art has content and form and they merge to a natural synergy” showing a thought similar to that of Langer’s. Imus later writes, “You can work both from the form or content, none is without the other.” Content and form are also part of Hervey’s (2000) work, which is mentioned in the next section, however, in her work they are described as separate aesthetic values of dance/movement therapy.

Aesthetic emotion is discussed in more depth later in Langer’s (1993) text. She explains that this type of emotion is a result of an individual’s perception, which reveals the artistic value of the object while also offering another point of support to her assumption that significant form is the ultimate essence of art. While Langer’s idea of aesthetic emotion is touched on above, this quote truly captures the essence of what aesthetic emotion does: “...the aesthetic emotion is really a pervasive feeling of *exhilaration*, directly inspired by the perception of good art. It is the ‘pleasure’ that art is supposed to give” (Langer, 1993, p. 395). This idea of pleasure continues to pop up in many of the different theorist’s work throughout the text and will be discussed more in depth later on within this chapter.

Aesthetics and Movement

Lenore Hervey (2000) identified 14 aesthetic values of dance/movement therapy: the image of health, freedom of form, meaning in form, patterns, story, authenticity, depth, vitality, the body, wholeness, context, music, skill and discipline, and the general in the particular (p. 79-86). She explained that aesthetics are anyone’s definition and determination of beauty,

elaborating that aesthetics are unique to each person (Hervey, 2000, p. 72). She continued to explain how the therapist's aesthetic values could be assessed by being aware of what the therapist looked for, what was perceived well, and what was encouraged in their clients (Hervey, 2000, p. 79). In her master's thesis, Jennifer Bacani (2009) explored a few of Hervey's (2000) aesthetic values of dance/movement therapy. Bacani (2009) delved into the concepts of authenticity, vitality, and the image of health. She, along with other dance/movement therapists and dance/movement therapists in training (n=7) explored different aspects of these aesthetic values to see how they influenced the participants life in general, as well as their work in dance/movement therapy clinical settings (Bacani, 2009). The results were vast and varied because of the different relationship each co-researcher had with the three aesthetics but were synthesized into a choreographed dance (Bacani, 2009, p. 47).

In *The Harmonic Structure of Movement, Music, and Dance According to Rudolf Laban* (2009), Carol-Lynne Moore examined Laban's unpublished writings and drawings. Moore (2009) coined Laban's Movement Harmony work "A Beautiful Theory", alluding right away to the aesthetic nature of harmony. While Laban never explicitly defined harmonic movement in a succinct statement, Moore (2009) found that he alluded to harmony and harmonious movement throughout his published and unpublished writings. From these comments, Moore (2009) identified six elements of movement harmony: ratio and proportion, balance, symmetry, unity in form, interrelationship of elements, and individuality. In the book she stated, "...Laban is not employing the term "harmony" in the common sense of something that is euphonious, attractive, or pleasing" (Moore, 2009, p. 188-189). Instead, she explains, "*Harmony* is the broad conceptual framework that Laban developed to address how the inner and outer domains are integrated in the seamless unfolding of voluntary human movement" (Moore, 2009, p. 188). After taking the

time to read and process the concepts, I see the importance of the statement above, however, I must disagree with the statement that Laban's harmony work is not euphonious, attractive, or pleasing. I feel the six elements seem extremely aesthetic and important to the research at hand, which is why I am looking at them aesthetically, and certainly differently than Moore (2009) intended.

Laban speaks to ratio and proportion in dance when looking at the body in certain movements. Some of the movements to be noticed according to Laban's notes are an extension of the lumbar spine, flexion of the knees, and rotation of the pelvis. Moore (2009) quoted Laban's unpublished work where Laban said, "Between the angles of the component moves there is a precise relationship which is determined by law – the law of harmony in movement. If we disobey this law, we shall then succeed in reaching the desired point only by means of incredible distortions and with the greatest difficulty." In the explanation of Laban's concept, I see clear ties to Hervey's (2000) concept of skill and discipline (defined in Appendix A).

Balance is a significant aspect of somatic experience; health both mental and physical is dependent on balance. Laban defines balance as an oscillation between opposites. If movement is to maintain its dynamic fluidity and continuity, there must be variation in how and where it unfolds. If the continuity of transition is to be harmonic, there must be a balance over time in the moods and shapes of change. (Moore, 2009, p. 197)

The concept of symmetry is closely connected to balance. "When one side of my body tends to go to one direction, the other side will almost automatically tend towards the contrary direction...the wish to establish equilibrium through symmetric movements is the simplest manifestation of harmony" (Moore, 2009, p. 197). Reflection is a subcategory of symmetry.

This concept speaks to reflection of one's body in the three dimensions (vertical, horizontal, and sagittal) or to the reflections that may occur between humans.

Moore (2009) believes Laban's concept of unity in form within dance appears to have been influenced by the aesthetic theory of empathy. According to this theory, forms arouse feelings through the viewers' projections of self into the object (Moore, 2009, p. 203). In reading Moore's (2009) writings on unity in form, I made the connection to Hervey's (2000) dance/movement therapy aesthetic values of the general in the particular and meaning in form. Laban's unity in form discusses structural balance and cohesion, aesthetic forms that convey mood and meaning. I see Laban's unity in form combining Hervey's (2000) two concepts of the general in the particular and meaning in form into the single concept.

Interrelationship of elements focuses on how elements relate to one another and then to the whole (Moore, 2009, p. 204). A distinction is made between the outer world and the inner world of an individual, the choreutic and the eukinetic according to Laban. This concept of the interrelationship of elements looks at these concepts individually and then between them, seeing how they interact with one another. Within the interrelationship of elements, Laban notes the importance of one's mood. He discusses the law of proximity from mood to mood, explaining the relationship between effort mood and effort qualities, alluding to the influence these have in modulations. He also links mood and place to laying the groundwork for the inner impulse to move. Once again, I see ties to Hervey's (2000) work here. This concept, I believe, speaks to the overall interrelationship of all of her elements and the interrelatedness of most theorists' aesthetic concepts as well.

“There are considerations such as individual expressiveness or taste which can influence the personal conception of harmony in movement. Graceful movements will suit one person

more than vital or bizarre movement, or the contrary may be the case” (Moore, 2009, p. 207).

This concept of individuality I believe screams aesthetic all over it. While Moore (2009) stated that this theory was not meant to be aesthetic, this statement of harmony appears to be extremely aesthetic, speaking to the aesthetic preferences of an individual, Hervey’s idea of noticing what type of movement an individual prefers to observe. “The process of individuation, that is to say, becoming a unique individual human being, is energized by the innate archetypal affects of Joy and *Interest* with their activated dynamisms of play and curiosity” (Chodorow, 1991, p. 96, italics added). Chodorow’s thoughts on individualization tie into Laban’s harmonic concept of individuality. Joy and interest are important factors because they influence and shape individuality. Once again, it should be noted how Laban’s elements of harmony are extremely interwoven; it is as if ratio and proportion are laid out in order for the rest to follow and stack on one after the other.

In 2002, Susan Imus and Lenore Hervey facilitated a workshop entitled *Truth, Beauty and Goodness: Research, Aesthetics and Ethics in Dance/Movement Therapy* at the 37th annual American Dance Therapy Association’s Conference. The workshop was three hours in length. Hervey’s (2000) book was referenced during the presentation; however, the point was not to explore her identified aesthetic values. Instead, the main goals relating to aesthetic exploration in this workshop were to develop sensitivity to personal aesthetic and to propose a professional aesthetic (Imus & Hervey, 2002). Similarly, the first two learning objectives were to guide the participants to develop personally meaningful understandings of aesthetics and ethics and to help participants identify the aesthetic source of some of their own dance/movement therapy practices (Imus & Hervey, 2002).

Many dance/movement therapy practices are rooted in the aesthetic of dance. With dance/movement therapists' having various dance backgrounds and the knowledge that each individual has their own unique aesthetic, Imus and Hervey began their workshop having participants create small expressions that expressed their understanding of truth or beauty (Imus & Hervey, 2002). When participants began sharing their movements, the facilitators encouraged the participants to notice what they were attracted to in the other participants' movements. The facilitators then encouraged the participants to suggest interventions that create pathways to the creation of new forms that complete or express the intention of the movement. In processing after, attention was brought to the aesthetic influences of the decision-making and how the decisions were reflective of the previous movements (Imus & Hervey, 2002).

After this aesthetic experience, there was a lecture and discussion about a number of topics including truth, beauty, authenticity, and aesthetics. An emphasis was placed on authenticity, which is also one of Hervey's (2000) identified aesthetic values. Authenticity was discussed in relation to both the therapist and researcher identities. Imus and Hervey (2002) established that "alertness to authenticity is a core professional skill and an essential component of our professional aesthetic." Throughout the *Truth, Beauty and Goodness: Research, Aesthetics and Ethics in Dance/Movement Therapy* workshop, Imus and Hervey (2002) were aiding others in the dance/movement therapy field to explore both their individual and professional aesthetic.

Imus and Hervey (2002) were not alone in their curiosity and desire to explore aesthetics as dance/movement therapists. A few years after Imus and Hervey's (2002) workshop Donna Newman-Bluestein (2005) turned to an experiential learning workshop to define her own aesthetic as a dance/movement therapist. She attended a weeklong workshop where she was able

to discern her personal aesthetic in dance. In sharing movement with her peers during the workshop, Newman-Bluestein (2005) learned that her most satisfying movements, the ones she connected to the most, were also the most captivating movements for her peers to observe. Newman-Bluestein (2005) then made the connection with one of Hervey's (2000) aesthetic values of dance/movement therapy, the general in the particular. Hervey (2000) explains that the general in the particular entails honoring the uniqueness in each individual, while also communicating the universal essence of being a person and how this can strengthen the bond between people. This is what Newman-Bluestein (2005) found in the response from peers that witnessed her movement at the workshop. After Newman-Bluestein (2005) explored and defined her own dance aesthetic, she was able to apply her new aesthetic knowledge in her dance/movement therapy groups with elderly clients. This was the only published research found where a dance/movement therapist explored their own aesthetic and then applied it to the populations they were working with.

Within her work, Dissanayake (1992) speaks to movements being expressive without being dance. She gives an example of throwing a plate against a wall to show anger or caressing a cheek to show affection, both what she refers to as expressive gestures. Little did Dissanayake know, but she was clearly speaking to postures, gestures, and posture-gesture mergers (PGMs) as defined by Warren Lamb (1965). According to Lamb (1965), posture-gesture mergers are integrated movements that involve the whole body, such as Dissanayake's (1992) movement example of throwing a plate. While certain postures and gestures may have some social and cultural meanings, PGMs transcend these confines and actually reveal a person's core motivations in decision-making (Lamb, 1965). PGMs ultimately display authenticity of an

individual, an important aesthetic concept used by Hervey (2000), Imus & Hervey (2002), and Bacani (2009).

While different from any of the previous studies in the literature review thus far, I think it is important to include a study exploring aesthetic experiences of patients. Padrão and Coimbra's (2011) research explored the aesthetic experience of participants with eating disorders (n=7) during dance/movement therapy interventions. The aesthetic experience is first described as the body experience of what it is like to have body image disturbances, acknowledging that the experience could be different for each person seeing as aesthetic experience varies from person to person. This was the only research found where the aesthetic experience of participants was explored within a dance/movement therapy intervention. It would be interesting for a similar study to be conducted in the future incorporating Hervey's (2000) aesthetic of authenticity and image of health to see how those ideas may affect the aesthetic experience of those with eating disorders in a structure similar to what Padrão and Coimbra (2011) created in their study.

Universality

The concept of universality is one of eleven therapeutic factors defined by Yalom (2005). Yalom (2005) explains that many individuals enter therapy thinking that they are alone in their experience. He continues to explain that in group therapy people begin to realize that they are not alone. An easy way that he explains this is through the cliché "we're all in the same boat", for there is no human deed or thought that lies fully outside the experience of other people (Yalom, 2005, p. 6). The idea that one is not alone in their experience can be an eye-opening realization during the therapeutic process. The collective or universal essence of being human is then brought to light.

Hervey's (2000) last aesthetic of dance/movement therapy is referred to as the general in the particular. She stated that the arts portray unique individual instances yet they also communicate the universal essence of being a person, going on to later state, "Dance/movement therapists learn about the larger human condition through their individual clients and see patterns of movement, behavior, thought, affect, life circumstance, or images that speak of the general in the particular" (Hervey, 2000, p. 86). There she is speaking to the universality within the experience of dance/movement therapy.

The concept of universality and the general in the particular were both uncovered in Newman-Bluestein's (2005) exploration as well. There was a clear point in her research where she explained sharing movement with her peers during the workshop and learning that her most satisfying movements, the ones she connected to the most, were also the most captivating movements for her peers to observe. Newman-Bluestein (2005) then made the connection with one of Hervey's (2000) aesthetic values of dance/movement therapy, the general in the particular, which ultimately speaks to her own experience of universality within the workshop that she was a part of.

Flow

In the aesthetics and movement section of this literature review, flow was mentioned vaguely in relation to Moore's (2009) work on Laban's theory of harmony and Hervey's (2000) aesthetic values of dance/movement therapy. While neither theorist explicitly discussed flow as an aesthetic value, I saw concepts of flow within their work. After looking into Laban's theory of harmony, it is clear that there are threads of each element throughout all of the elements of harmony; in a sense, he creates flow within these concepts. This is similar to how flow was

experienced between Hervey's (2000) defined aesthetic values of dance/movement therapy, which will be explained in more depth in the results and discussion chapter.

The flow I am beginning to speak to above could also be defined as a transition. In personal notes, Imus (2003) writes about flow being transitional. While other theorists clearly allude to this, I have not found it explicitly stated by anyone else. During my first Dance/Movement Therapy Theory Course in the fall of 2013, Susan Imus lectured on flow. When she lectured I wrote in my notes, "Seamless transitions throughout the integration of verbal and nonverbal interventions create flow." Imus believed that seamless transitions were an important part of the evaluation process and presented a chart on flow that she used when defining what is aesthetic in a dance/movement therapy session. Imus' lectures were related to D.W. Winnicott's "transitional phenomena" and "transitional space." While I was introduced to this information in class in the fall of 2013, it was re-illuminated by Imus during a thesis meeting when I was speaking about how important flow had become within my study.

In Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi's (2008) book, *Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience*, Csikszentmihalyi explores the idea of flow within one's life. Csikszentmihalyi (2008), however, dedicated an entire 300 some pages to his exploration of flow and explained his ideas in great complexity. While the entire book did not relate to this study, many parts connected. One in particular was a section entitled "The Body in Flow" (p. 94-116). While he never discusses the concept of dance/movement therapy, he many times alludes to ideas embraced by dance/movement therapy; it felt as if it was all over this section's pages. Csikszentmihalyi (2008) at one point explains that "the human body is capable of hundreds of separate experiences...and to each of these there correspond flow experiences" (p. 95). He also goes in depth explaining similarities to yoga and flow, showing how they are linked in many

ways. After reading this, I had a realization as to why I love the concept of flow so greatly. As both a mover and a yoga instructor, my inner yogi and core self craves the flow that yoga and certain types of dance provide. I can further connect this to the desire I have for a sense of flow within my day-to-day life and to the desire I have for flow to be apart of the dance/movement therapy groups I facilitate.

In continuing to read Csikszentmihalyi's (2008) text, I was astonished to come across this quote, "When an important goal is pursued with resolution, and all one's varied activities fit together into a unified flow experience, the result is that *harmony* is brought to consciousness" (p. 217). He later went on to explain, "Purpose, resolution, and harmony unify life and give it meaning by transforming it into a seamless flow experience" (p. 217-218). The way in which these ideas relate back to Moore's (2009) exploration of Laban's theory of harmony was beautiful, bringing to light the idea that the ultimate creation of flow results in harmony within an individual.

Beauty

"The dynamic expression of interest is curiosity" (Chodorow, 1991, p. 92). Interest is a concept Chodorow dives into within her work. This is important within the concept of beauty because often beauty lies within what an individual is interested in. According to George Santayana (1955), beauty is "pleasure regarded as the quality of a thing" (p. 31). He explained the idea that beauty is a value or collection of values as opposed to a perception (Santayana, 1955). Santayana (1955) further asserts that when an individual comes in contact with a piece of art in which they feel beauty exists, they are generally responding to a feeling of pleasure. Jacques Maritain (1954) stated, "The beautiful is that which comes to delight the mind through the sense and their intuition" (p. 19). People experience the world through all of their senses and

then decipher the sensations and feelings through their intellect (Maritain, 1954). Due to this, it is important to be aware of both of these aspects when assessing beauty.

Within their work, Imus and Hervey (2002) stated, “We consider beautiful those things that most fully reflect our aesthetic point of view.” This was one of their conclusions about beauty within their workshop at the American Dance Therapy Association’s Conference in 2002. They continue to explain that if we value authenticity, or the congruence between content and form, then we consider the authentic beautiful (Imus & Hervey, 2002). When it comes to beauty and aesthetics, it is important to notice our own perception of them as well as how bringing awareness to them effects us as therapists. As a novice therapist and student, I was drawn to research including beauty and aesthetics due to my personal noticing of how much beauty I saw within the therapeutic process of dance/movement therapy sessions. Langer (1993) stated, “Beauty is expressive form” (p. 396) which directly relates to my belief that the expressive form of dance/movement therapy is beautiful.

In his essays on beauty and morality Danto (1993) ponders about the transformative powers of beauty. He brings curiosity to why people bring flowers to funerals and sing beautiful hymns during times of mourning. “It is as though beauty were a kind of catalyst transforming raw grief into tranquil sadness” (p. 364). Does beauty truly have the power to ease sorrow? While he ponders, Danto (1996) does not state a concrete conclusion because the idea is extremely complicated. He questions if it is morally acceptable to create or experience something beautiful when around certain tragedies. He continues to ask if it is “right” to create something beautiful in relation to certain events that occur (Danto, 1996). As a dance/movement therapist, I often ask clients to show movements in relation to how they feel. If a client is dealing with pain in that present moment, is it right to bring or create beauty within the sadness?

While I do not invite the clients to focus on the beauty of their movements, I am still curious about the idea of creating something beautiful or pleasing while one deals with pain. In looking at Danto's (1993) curiosities, I found more curiosities arise within myself: what is the connection of beauty and sadness? Do people use the addition of beauty in certain situations to ease sadness? And finally, what in fact is the relationship between beauty and therapeutic change? While they are not the research questions for this study, they are all questions I hope to shed some light on in the future.

Body Knowledge and Body Prejudice in Relation to Pleasure and Pain

While the focus of this literature review is on aesthetics, it would appear imperative to include some information on body knowledge and body prejudice. In speaking with Imus during the research process, she posed to me the questions, "What are you drawn to? What are your interests?" The discussion continued to illuminate the idea that what I am drawn to and interested in is part of my aesthetic, which shows what is a part of my body knowledge; the things that are missing, those that I am not drawn to or interested in are apart of my body prejudice.

Our own physical experiences in the world allow us to discern similarities among different motions (Moore & Yamamoto, 2012, p. 50). This lays the foundation for what is known as body knowledge. Making sense of movement depends upon categorizing and abstracting movement properties in order to establish general associations that are either intellectually or emotionally meaningful (Moore & Yamamoto, 2012, p. 51). Culture plays a role in this because the same movement can mean different things in various cultures (Moore & Yamamoto, 2012, p. 52). This begins to feed into body prejudice, because like body knowledge, our individual prejudices come from our ability to categorize and generalize our personal

experience. This is where we start to make assumptions about movements we do not like or place particular meaning on movements from our body knowledge (Moore & Yamamoto, 2012, p. 52).

From our body knowledge and body prejudice, it can be inferred that we categorize movements into ones that we like and ones that we do not. By doing this, it shows an individual's preferences or affinities. We can then also assume that one gets pleasure out of seeing things or movements that they like, while observing movements or things that one does not like may in fact cause discomfort or pain.

While pleasure was brought up within the context of art theory near the beginning of this chapter, I want to illuminate this idea, as well as its opposite, pain, in this section.

Csikszentmihalyi (2008) stated, "Pleasure is a feeling of contentment that one achieves whenever information in consciousness says that expectations set by biological programs or by social conditioning have been met" (p. 45). Similarly, Dissanayake (1992) found "it is important to recognize that the elements used for making something aesthetically special are normally themselves inherently pleasing and gratifying to humans" (p. 54). She continues to explain that pleasing characteristics include those that have been selected throughout human evolution as elements that are wholesome and good (Dissanayake, 1992). When something is rewarding, Csikszentmihalyi (2008) also stated that it is associated with pleasure.

Body knowledge and body prejudice also must take into account what is familiar and what is unfamiliar. What is familiar to an individual is a part of their body knowledge. It shows their preferences, what is comfortable, and also may show some of their patterned behavior and movement. The unfamiliar, on the other hand can parallel body prejudice. It can be uncomfortable, however, as a dance/movement therapist, this is what we want our clients to

experience. We want them to step out of the familiar or comfortable and take risks within the unfamiliar to create change.

Conclusion

In conclusion, there is simply more work to be done, specifically conducting research exploring dance/movement therapy and aesthetics. While all literature explored was insightful, the work of Hervey (2000), Moore (2009), and Bacani (2009) were most helpful to my process during this exploration. Newman-Bluestein's (2005) work was also helpful due to the personal exploration involved; however, follow up could be helpful as to what she found after applying her new found aesthetic to her interventions with older adult clients. The lack of clarity and desire for more information were driving factors behind my desire to pursue a study involving dance/movement therapy and aesthetics. This literature review paved the way for my work to be done and I hope others will find it useful in the future.

Chapter Three: Methods

The methodology utilized in this study was embodied artistic inquiry (Hervey, 2012). In her chapter entitled Embodied Artistic Inquiry, Hervey (2012) explains that embodied artistic inquiries use artistic methods of gathering, analyzing, and presenting data. This type of research allows for the researcher to engage in a creative process, is motivated by the aesthetic of the researcher, and it may draw upon embodied experiences of researcher as a source of information and understanding. Research was conducted under the constructivism paradigm due to the qualitative nature of the study. This allowed the research to be subjective and inductive, which aligns with how I learn and view the world. Lenore Hervey (2000) believes understanding human experience needs an epistemology described as aesthetic, emotional, and intuitive. This framework suited the study due to the importance of art making, aesthetic values of the researcher, and engaging in a creative process.

Participants

This study explored my personal aesthetic experience in my clinical placement. I was working as a dance/movement therapy intern in the Expressive Arts Therapy Department within a Behavioral Health Hospital located in the suburbs of a large Midwest urban community. Due to the research being about my subjective experience, I was the sole participant in the study and no recruitment was necessary.

Procedure

Lenore Hervey (2000) stated 14 aesthetic values that are often seen as beautiful and appreciated in dance/movement therapy sessions. The 14 aesthetic values are: the image of health, freedom of form, meaning in form, patterns, story, authenticity, depth, vitality, the body, wholeness, context, music, skill and discipline, and the general in the particular (p. 79-86). She

identified and defined these values by being aware of what was looked for, perceived well, and encouraged by dance/movement therapists in their sessions. Through semi-structured written journals, I explored my aesthetic experience within my clinical work. I specifically collected data on the dance/movement therapy sessions I was running at my clinical placement site. During the 11 weeks of my study, I collected data for all of the dance/movement therapy groups I was leading, any one-on-one dance/movement therapy sessions I facilitated, and the dance/movement therapy and art therapy collaboration groups. Any sole art therapy or music therapy group I was a part of as a participant observer was left out of the research in order to make it more specific to the field of dance/movement therapy. Hervey's (2000) identified aesthetic values of dance/movement therapy were used as the starting point of the study, while the work of other theorists such as Laban, Moore, Imus, Dissanayake, Chodorow, and Csikszentmihalyi were utilized as well. I also remained open to the possibility of unidentified aesthetic values unique to myself arising throughout the research process.

Data collection and analysis.

During this study, data was collected through semi-structured written journals for 11 consecutive weeks. Semi-structured written journals were completed at the end of each internship day, Monday, Wednesday, and Friday for the 11 consecutive weeks of data collection. The journal included answers to the guiding questions (See Appendix C), thoughts that arose regarding the study, and artwork on the days I felt the impulse to journal more creatively. Data collection and co-occurring analysis began the second week of January 2015 and lasted until mid March.

Throughout the process, I met once a week with a board-certified dance/movement therapist (BC-DMT) consultant. The consultant was chosen because of both her knowledge of

the field of dance/movement therapy and her personal experience and familiarity utilizing methods of artistic inquiry. This consultant served as a guiding influence in my process, aiding me through the concurrent data collection and analysis to help ensure that all of the meaningful data was being illuminated, while also assisting me through challenging moments I encountered during the process. The meetings occurred on Saturday evenings for an hour and a half. This allowed for data to be absorbed throughout the week, to take a short break and then allowed us to begin the process of analysis on Saturday at the end of each week before the new week of data collection began.

Each meeting began with authentic movement of my data followed by the BC-DMT consultant speaking to what she witnessed. We tried not to speak about what I had experienced the previous week until after the movement. For the authentic movement to begin, I took a few minutes to connect to my breath. Once it was connected and flowing, I waited for an inner impulse to authentically move what had been experienced the week before. The movement was video-recorded and varied in length from week to week. After the authentic movement, the BC-DMT consultant and I dialogued about what was moved, what I felt, what she saw, and started to make sense of what the movement meant and displayed about my aesthetic experience that week. Throughout the process it was amazing to hear that what she saw was what I had experienced that week. She even stated, “You’re moving the aesthetics. The data is within you” during one of our sessions after witnessing my authentic movement. After each session I took time to journal or create art about the key points that had been discussed, salient movements that stuck out from the session and dialogue that needed to be remembered.

Creative synthesis was the method used to analyze the data in order to get a fully embodied sense of the research findings. Moustakas (1990) believed in creating artwork to

explore, discover, synthesize, or express the meaning of data. Creative synthesis involves presenting the themes and essential meanings of the phenomenon, including the “peaks and valleys, highlights and horizons of the process” (Moustakas, 1990, p. 52). The researcher’s knowledge, passion, and presence infuse the work with a personal, professional, and literary value (Moustakas, 1990). The process of meeting with the BC-DMT consultant once a week on Saturday evenings for an hour and a half began the process of data analysis. This was the beginning of the creative synthesis process where I started to get a fully embodied sense of what I was finding within the data each week. The movement and dialogue was recorded, serving as the start of my creative synthesis while also laying the groundwork for my choreography. After data collection was complete, I was able to dive deeper into the creative synthesis process through revisiting all of the data. I realized that I needed to re-move certain pieces of my data for a second time; through this re-embodiment I was able to come to an even deeper understanding of what I had found. By the time the dance performance came in July of 2015 the data felt saturated and all findings had been illuminated through the creative synthesis process.

Dance making.

After the creative synthesis process felt complete, I began choreographing a dance to display my research process and the results of the study. While I initially thought I would be completely done with the analysis process when the dance creation began, I realized that the creative process of choreographing the dance was a necessary part within the creative synthesis. I initially invested a significant amount of time reading back through my journals, synthesizing my findings to solidify my results. Through this I realized I needed to re-move certain themes within the data to help myself find a deeper understanding of them. After moving again, I reviewed my movement videos to see the various movements and qualities of movement that

correlated with what I had experienced each week during the data collection and analysis. This was important to the choreography because I wanted to make sure the dance was authentic and valid at the same time.

From there, I found a piece of music by Philip Glass that I felt aligned with my results and what I wanted to show the audience. I found that the research process was an intense period of time where I experienced a great amount of growth as an individual and clinician. Glass' music was able to illuminate the intensity within the process while specific sections of the music fit perfectly with the aesthetic values I wanted to present. In choreographing, I wanted to show both the results and the process of data collection because both pieces felt extremely important to convey. In the end, I believe the dance represented the process and results in a more authentic way than words could. I encourage each reader to view the video and read the result and discussion chapters to get a full sense of what was found.

Validation strategies.

Validity was addressed two ways within this study. The first was through the use of a BC-DMT consultant. In meeting with her each week, she served as a type of external audit. She saw and heard what was found and was able to question me in ways that continued to guide me through data collection and analysis. When the data collection and analyses were complete, I used a resonance panel as my second form of validation. The panel, which consisted of three peers and one board-certified dance/movement therapist, met with me for two hours. To start, I explained my process of data collection, analysis, and dance making with them. After the process was laid out, they provided feedback and posed questions to help me clarify what happened during the study and what I had found. The panel was very curious about my experience. The main questions they had were about the layout of the results and discussion

section. As a whole, the panel felt the two sections needed to be separated. They felt the way in which I was defending my results was unnecessary and suggested I get rid of those qualifications by letting the results stand in a chapter on their own. Both the resonance panel and regular meetings with the BC-DMT consultant served as validation measures within this study.

Chapter Four: Results

This research produced semi-structured journal entries as data that were intertwined with a co-occurring authentic movement analysis process in order to answer four research questions:

- How do I experience aesthetics as an emerging dance/movement therapist?
- How do aesthetics influence my clinical work?
- How are my aesthetics shaping me as a clinician?
- How does my culturally informed body knowledge/body prejudice influence my aesthetic choices?

During the creative synthesis all data were analyzed in reference to the main research goal: to explore my aesthetic experience as an emerging dance/movement therapist. In this thesis, experience is defined as the unique way in which individuals understand and perceive an object, thought, emotion, or sensation through the mind-body in the present moment. After data collection and analysis, I took the creative synthesis a step further and synthesized what was found into the form of a choreographed dance. Each finding has great meaning both on paper and through embodiment in my thesis performance dance that was shown at the Student/Faculty Dance Concert on July 23, 2015. The title of the dance was *Beautiful Moments*. When I started to feel overwhelmed at the beginning of the research process, my BC-DMT consultant told me to break down what I was seeing, to seek out the beautiful moments.

Numerous aesthetic choices were made in the creation of the dance. While I want to leave the reader space to view and witness, I also want to lay a little more background about the creation of the dance. Musical choice was previously explained in the Methods chapter. After music was picked, I started to piece together salient movements that evolved from the aesthetic values to specific musical cues. Music is an important aesthetic to my dancer self so I felt that I

wanted the movement to match the music as much as possible. Throughout the dance I tried to vary fast upbeat movement to show the aesthetic experience and values with slower, recuperative movement to show the points when I needed to slow down in the research process. Bartenieff Fundamentals, which are specific movement exercises created to improve body movement, organization, and awareness were inserted as a form of recuperation for myself throughout the dance (Hackney, 1998). They were used as a way to center myself and show the integration of my dance/movement therapy leadership experiences within the aesthetic research.

The journal excerpts below are pieces of raw data. They are included to help the reader better understand the results. Since engaging in a creative process through movement was key to this embodied artistic inquiry, I encourage readers to read this chapter and watch the attached video to gain the best understanding of the findings. I also encourage readers to notice how their own aesthetic arises while reading and viewing, as it is important to remember that aesthetic experience and concepts of beauty do vary from person to person.

Early on in the research process, I realized that my aesthetic experience was primarily auditory, visual, and somatic. There were particular moments when a patient's dialogue would illuminate an aesthetic. Other times, an aesthetic was seen through how a patient was sitting, gesturing, or moving throughout the space. Finally, aesthetic values were also noticed through my tool as a dance/movement therapist – my body. There were particular moments when I would feel a certain sensation in my body that helped to inform me about what I was seeing and hearing aesthetically. Over time, I also noticed certain bodily sensations in response to the experience of hearing or seeing certain aesthetic values.

To give the reader a clear picture of specific moments when aesthetic values were heard, seen, and felt, I am including unedited excerpts from my journals and movement session

dialogue with my BC-DMT consultant. These examples feel quite personal; however, they paint a clearer picture of how the results of this embodied artistic inquiry were uncovered and therefore need to be shared. While vulnerable, I invite the reader into my process, and I believe these excerpts will ultimately help readers to see, hear, and feel what occurred within this study.

Journal Entries

1/5/15.

I experienced aesthetics in all three groups today. Context and patterns were aesthetics I noticed in all groups. It was first noticed because of the overarching fact that we were located in a behavioral health hospital and secondly because all three groups were held in the gym today. The gym can be triggering for the eating disorder patients – one of them even spoke to that today. I can see patterns in every group from the use of the circle. Today, all groups started in one and two out of the three groups also ended in a circle.

I noticed the image of health in both eating disorder and adult today but in two very different ways. In adult I was drawn to the qualities of health and youth while with the eating disorder patients I was noticing what felt like a lack of image of health. They were lacking in brilliance of color, luster, quickness, strength, grace, flexibility, etc. which are qualities that I wanted them to find, qualities it felt like they should have. In seeing this, I felt a sinking in my chest. The body aesthetic surfaced within the image of health as well. Aesthetically there is an ideal to how a body should look and this is apparent within this population. Seeing them, many so frail is hard to bear at times. It's crazy how much I noticed it during group but how hard it is for me to verbalize the experience right now.

Freedom of form and meaning in form were both noticed in eating disorder and adult as well. I feel as if these two aesthetics intertwine. Freedom in form was noticed in both groups

through members taking turns leading the warm up. I felt a sense of joy and playfulness during this but also could feel the anxiety that some of the patients were emitting. Meaning in form was experienced the strongest when an adult patient put her own meaning to the re-patterning exercise we did. She explained feeling as if each variation was representative of a different point in her life. It was beautiful. It's moments like those that make me want to do this work.

The general in the particular was really felt in adolescent. The way in which they talked about their individual experiences, yet paved the way to link their experiences to their peers put out a great sense of universality. It was amazing to witness. Lastly, I noticed an experience of a few aesthetics creating a sense of flow from one to another. The way in which eating disorder was engaging allowed for freedom in form to come out, them allowing themselves to creatively explore with movement. This made me want to know more about their story and patterns that brought them to the hospital, which influenced our processing and helped them find brief moments of depth.

1/9/15.

I'm beginning to notice anxiety within my body when I am with the self-injury program. I think it has a lot to do with how many of them are in a biting rhythm within their feet, legs, or hands. So much vibratory shaking in the room. The pattern of the circle was there and I had a clear moment where I felt a need for wholeness in the group – I felt like they had a longing desire to feel a sense of wholeness as well.

While patterns were present in adult, the most important aesthetic to note was the image of health. I experienced the presence in one particular patient who was discharging today. She appeared so bright and positive. It was a total switch from when I first met her and it was beautiful to see.

1/12/15.

Patterns were prominent in all three groups today. I realized I have started to pick up a pattern of how one of the other dance therapists leads adolescent groups in the gym because I find it really effective. Another thing that was very present was connection and relationship between the patients – always interesting because while it’s human to make connections, I see it sometimes manifest in such a negative way with the adolescents. However, today was different they were cohesive and they were connected so positively.

In eating disorder connection was also what I experienced as the most important aesthetic within the group. I not only noticed the connection the patients had to each other but I also noticed the connection they had to me. It is clear that they are getting more comfortable with me and that the therapeutic relationship is building. Where does connection fall in all of this? Hmm. Depth was displayed in the patients’ sharing about what brings comic relief to their lives. Some of them truly found depth in really explaining how a sense of comic relief can aid in their recovery.

Adults were an absolute blast today! They really wanted to dance so we did! I noticed connection between the patients and myself once again. There was a ton of freedom in form throughout the group while the members explored creatively through movement. Lots of creative expression today. Authenticity was so present in the dances the patients ended up creating. It was so amazing to see the authentic movements the patients linked together into short dances they performed for each other. –Woah, I just realized that freedom in form was what encouraged the creativity that led them into authenticity and then resulted in wholeness. They were able to find the mind, body, and spirit connection and speak to the shift that they felt

occurred in their moods from moving their bodies around for almost an hour. Yay DMT! Just made me smile. It's all so intertwined.

1/16/15.

The most profound experience happened today in my one-on-one with an eating disorder patient. My guess is it was because I was truly homing in on one person. My other thought is it might be because she was already connected to her body in some way because she is a dancer. I really noticed the lack of image of health – the need for her body to be nourished and healthy. Her movements were so authentically beautiful. She explored bound and free flow within her body. There was a moment in her exploring bound flow where my heart ached. I noticed so much sadness in my body, there was so much authenticity and I felt a clear reaction to it. Depth came up in processing as well as wholeness. She stated she felt as if our session was a “mental cleanse” and that she felt more connected to her entire being. She found more depth in linking the bound movement to feeling bound around snack and meal times and free when she is at dance or with her friends. Connection was underlying in our session, connection and trust.

1/21/15.

I am wondering if flow is apart of my aesthetic. Today in the chemical dependency group I experienced a string of linked aesthetics. Patterns were what I first noticed when the group started. Through the movement experience I saw freedom in form through the creative movements the patients came up with. Freedom in form then led to meaning in form as they started to make meaning of what happened. The meaning in form then illuminated both the connection of the group and their individual stories, resulting in the patients finding depth in the experience. Wow. There is so much there! So many aesthetics to create this flow like experience.

1/26/15

Eating disorder was really intense today. They really brought up the body for me. Seeing so many frail bodies in the room really struck my core today. The girls brought in so much sadness and many other emotions into the room. I felt a bit flooded with it all when they walked in. The concept of wholeness and the idea of feeling whole came up during group. One of them spoke to feeling broken, which truly illuminated the lack of wholeness in the room. However, something beautiful happened with them. There was something about their sadness and fairly internal focus today that allowed them to go deeper and internal which resulted in them creating more meaning for themselves in what we did.

Transitioning to adults, I heard, felt, and saw many aesthetics today. I heard and felt a lot of the movements that they shared to show what they were holding onto – it was authentic to each, really showing their truth in where they were at in the moment. One of the male patients embodied holding onto his anger. I could feel in my own body how uncomfortable whatever he was holding onto was before he spoke to it being his anger. During processing there was so much depth. It almost felt as if they were bearing their souls in a way. It showed such powerful, beautiful vulnerability that was so humbling to be witnessing. Lastly I noticed connection was felt on a body level today, it was even illuminated by my supervisor. I'm not sure what it is but I think there's something really important about connection within my aesthetic.

1/30/15.

In adult, wholeness was very present, connection to the mind, body, and spirit as one. Vitality- I hadn't seen it until today but it was oh so there. The adults were just so connected to life and being present here and now. I felt vibrations in my chest out through my arms and fingertips when it arose. I never know where the adults are going to be on Mondays, but today

they were alive, so ready to do the work that needs to be done on their journey that is recovery and I am so blessed to get to be apart of it. In reflecting on what has been experienced with in groups so far, I am noticing a desire for depth. I feel in processing, I attempt to probe them to dive deeper into their experience and start to make meaning of it.

1/31/15.

After meeting with my BC-DMT tonight, I felt the need to jot a few things down that she illuminated. After the movement, we started to discuss a few groups from the previous week and she pointed out that it seemed as if I saw beauty in them and wanted to give that back to them by allowing them to see the beauty within each other in my adolescent and self-injury groups. She said that having them write on each other's back was in a sense taking them through an aesthetic experience. While I did not use the word beauty in the directive, it was ultimately their aesthetics that were surfacing, encouraging them to connect in this way to each other.

2/4/15.

Today was something else. The chemical dependency group walked into the room with anger, frustration, and hostility. I ran and grabbed the octaband to see how we could possibly use it to work with these different feelings. While the patients first started pulling against it and each other, eventually they took turns fully supporting each other. There was a beautiful moment when the man who was so angry at the start of group spoke to how nice it felt to be in the octaband held up by his peers. It made me curious about support and where it fits in. The group itself displayed the aesthetic values of connection, story, general in the particular, and depth. I had a bodily response to the experience of connection and story that arose as a tingling from my throat down into my stomach. What a crazy yet lovely group.

2/9/15.

The irrational belief meditation was so good for the adolescents! When one of the patients said, “Woah, that was really deep” it struck a cord deep in my core because it really was, and it can be so hard for them to go deep because it can be scary at times for them. General in the particular was also there because they were really relating to each other – maybe connection falls under there because there was so much connection and universality in the room.

The adult group today was stunning. I think it was because they were so connected. It was art and dance together looking at defense mechanisms. They were so connected to one another as they witnessed the embodiment of their defense mechanisms. When they were encouraged to find a shift of the defense mechanism on a body level, one woman was brought to tears in thinking about how she can make the shift outside of the group. The movements were extremely authentic; they felt very rooted, grounded in their truth. Overall, it felt so deep and meaningful. There was also a sense of wholeness that was spoken to at the end. The woman explained that she felt the combination of art and movement together allowed her to essentially process her process and feel more integrated. It was amazing to hear.

2/13/15.

Patterns on Fridays are shifting with the art therapist and I collaborating on groups. The first adolescent group we had felt so silly, so authentic but so silly in their authenticity. I was pleasantly surprised that they were able to find depth during processing. Vitality was sprinkled throughout the day. There was something about vitality and wholeness that seemed intertwined today. Wholeness was a thread. Really connecting to the mind/body/spirit and integrating everything we did in group brought the wholeness full circle.

2/20/15.

The children were so interesting this morning. We tried freeze dance which invited so much freedom in form. They were so creative and authentic with in their movements. I also noticed the image of health combined with vitality because they were showing all sorts of moves that make me think of a healthy child. There was a great connection to life that they were displaying and that I felt through a sensation in my fingertips. It was wonderful to see the kids let go and be kids.

2/25/15.

Today I had a one-on-one with an eating disorder patient. What stuck out a lot was her openness even though it was clearly a foreign process to her. I really noticed her integrating, finding a sense of wholeness. She made her own beautiful meaning of her experience. There was connection and depth. It. Was. Beautiful. Period. When I walked her back to group, we were both smiling. I have never seen her that bright before.

In chemical dependency there was a strong connection to life. I truly got such a sense of vitality and felt so alive throughout group. There was something about the joy they found throughout group, which I also found important. In processing, they found depth; they were able to discuss what it is like to have sober fun, what it looks like, how it feels, etc. One male patient even surprised himself sharing how stupid he thought group was going to be but then how much he felt he got out of it. Oh DMT, you're magical.

3/2/15.

My one-on-one eating disorder patient was displaying image of health and vitality today. She is so connected to life and just trying to find a sense of balance and where she fits in this crazy world. We had a lot of connection, a strong therapeutic relationship, which I feel allowed

her to find depth right away and share it with me because she felt safe. Her movement and words were authentic and beautiful to see and hear. I noticed a sensation in my core throughout the group because I really feel that is where she was speaking and moving from.

Conclusion

In conclusion, my aesthetic experience was auditory, visual, and somatic. These experiences were synthesized in the dance that displayed the research process and results. While the depiction of the results within this chapter begins to paint a picture of what was found within the aesthetic experience, the discussion chapter explores what all of this means and starts to provide answers to the supporting research questions.

Chapter 5: Discussion

When I began data collection, I was curious what would arise – what my aesthetic experience would entail and what aesthetic values would surface. In trying to answer my research questions, I found more information than I could have imagined. The process also brought up many curiosities that I am excited to discuss with other researchers, and possibly explore deeper in the future. In this chapter, I discuss what was found, make meaning of this research process, and see how the findings can aid in my growth as an emerging dance/movement therapist.

Salient Aesthetic Values

While I found that my aesthetic experience occurs through sight, sound, and bodily sensations, I also learned a great amount of information about my aesthetic preferences. From this awareness, I began to find answers to the questions regarding how aesthetics influence my clinical work, and how aesthetics are shaping me as a novice clinician. During data collection and co-occurring analysis, there were a number of aesthetic values that began to surface quite frequently. Authenticity, depth, patterns, context, connection, wholeness, flow, and the general in the particular were the aesthetic values that I began to notice in almost all of my groups. In noticing their frequency during analysis, I realized that some of these aesthetic values were arising because of the environment of the hospital, while others were surfacing because they are my personal aesthetic preferences.

There were two aesthetic values that arose primarily due to the nature of the hospital: context and patterns. One reason I believe that they were coming up consistently is because I was conducting my groups in a behavioral health hospital. Due to this, there were times in some groups when the overarching context of the hospital was screaming out to me. Other times, the

context would speak to me because of the particular room that I was leading the group in. Furthermore, context was very apparent when I had to facilitate dance/movement therapy groups in unconventional spaces. I conducted groups in group specific rooms, and in schoolrooms located in the hospital. The group rooms created a contextual challenge because there was limited space.

In looking at the aesthetic of patterns, I noticed them everywhere very early on in the research process. After moving and reflecting on this particular aesthetic with my board-certified dance/movement therapist (BC-DMT) consultant, she posed the question, “Are these patterns you’ve created or ones that have been put on you?” When she posed this, I realized that most of my patterns were already in place at the hospital. There were a number of patterns that had been put on me, and others I adopted after seeing them modeled. For example, a pattern that I adopted was the pattern of starting in a circle with some sort of check in to learn names and allow the patients to get settled in the space. Patterns were illuminated during the movement sessions through repeated circular movement. To show this during the actual dance performance, I placed five chairs in a circle at the start of the dance, and came back to them throughout the piece. Ultimately through data analysis, I realized the saliency of context and patterns was a result of the setting where I was conducting research. Authenticity, depth, connection, wholeness, flow, and the general in the particular were actually my aesthetic preferences.

The first salient aesthetic to take note of is wholeness. Jung noted that “the unrelated human lacks wholeness” (Jung, 1946, p. 224-225). When many patients enter the hospital they are in some way broken or fractured, unrelated or unintegrated. Through the therapeutic process, pieces start to reconnect, thereby helping the individual to find a more integrated self, a whole self. It is my belief that dance/movement therapy, possibly more so than other forms of therapy,

truly paves the way for the patient to experience wholeness. The idea of integrating the mind, body, and spirit falls within many definitions of dance/movement therapy, including dance/movement therapist Fran Levy's (2005). I found it beautiful when patients spoke to a full body connection they found during group or when a statement was shared about feeling whole or more connected to their entire being at the end of a group.

The general in the particular aesthetic was present in many groups as well; I frequently saw it intertwined with wholeness. When patients spoke of wholeness, it was often at the end of group during processing in a circle. During this time there was the opportunity for feedback from others in the group, and the aesthetic of the general in the particular and universality was often illuminated. Although I do not believe the word universality is used in Hervey's (2000) definition of the general in the particular, she does speak to the general in the particular encompassing the essence of being human. I very much see that Hervey's (2000) definition aligned with Yalom's (2005) idea of universality.

There is something about authenticity that I find extremely beautiful as an emerging dance/movement therapist. Hervey (2000) stated, "I don't believe there is a practicing dance/movement therapist who does not know from experience that even the simplest or most awkward authentic movement can be profoundly beautiful" (p. 82). When someone is authentic, speaking or moving his or her truth, it sits with me in a very powerful way. Depth was often illuminated in groups where authenticity was glowing. I noticed that when patients let go of feeling like what we were doing in a group was weird or foreign because it involved body movement, they were able to access their authentic selves and often reach their depth. When I initially read Hervey's (2000) definition of depth, I found myself very connected to it. Depth would be at the top of my list of salient aesthetic values. While it can be quite vulnerable, I

desire to get to a place with my patients where they can dive into the depths of their experience instead of staying surface level.

These salient aesthetic values brought a great amount of awareness to me as an emerging therapist. Realizing that patterns and context have more to do with the hospital setting rather than actual personal preferences was a true “aha” moment. Wholeness, the general in the particular, authenticity, and depth, however, are some of my aesthetic preferences that both influence my clinical work and are shaping me as a clinician. I have an earnest desire for my patients to find wholeness through the connection to their body, mind, and spirit and to experience universality to realize that they are not alone in their struggles, whatever those struggles may be. During this study, I noticed how depth and authenticity are aesthetic values that shape the way I pose questions in group processing. I also noticed how depth and authenticity shape the way that I word certain movement directives to invite the patient’s authentic, true, raw selves to come out. The aesthetic of connection and flow are also salient, however, they are sections of their own because their importance needs to be illuminated.

The aesthetic of connection.

An important aesthetic that arose within the research process was connection. There were moments during the process when I questioned if it was an aesthetic or not. In bringing this question to my BC-DMT consultant, we dialogued for a few weeks to see where it fit into what I was finding. We came to the conclusion that for me, I do experience connection as an aesthetic. What is interesting is that I found that there were many components to this aesthetic. In looking deeper at connection, I found that there was connection patient to patient, patient to therapist, and connection between the mind, body, and spirit. Within connection, I also saw ties to the aesthetic of wholeness, when it comes to the mind, body, and spirit connection. I also saw links

to the aesthetic of universality and the general in the particular while looking at the connection between the patients. Due to the importance of connection, I included it in the choreography of the dance. In using the chairs in a circle on stage, I was trying to convey the essence of a session to show all three types of connection mentioned above. The last important thing that I noticed within the aesthetic of connection was the possibility of transference and countertransference. When the aesthetic of connection was strong I became more aware of these concepts. In becoming aware of how connection could draw out transference and countertransference, I became aware that the noticing of connection was shaping me as a clinician. It was helping me to figure out what to do and how to use transference and countertransference when it arises through a connection with a patient.

Flow in aesthetics.

A very astounding finding during my research was that many aesthetic values were connected and flowed from one to another throughout the dance/movement therapy sessions that I facilitated. When I initially started the research process the possibility of finding this was not on my radar whatsoever, however, when I realized that flow between aesthetic values was occurring in my groups, it felt like a big “aha!” moment for me. The essence of flow, one thing seamlessly moving to another, is something I desire in both my day-to-day life and my dance/movement therapy groups. In speaking with my thesis advisor and reading her personal notes, Susan Imus (2003) shared that flow was a part of her aesthetic. Imus (2003) and I discussed “seamless transitions” relating to flow which illuminated my own desire for this type of flow in my groups as well. Imus also reminded me about her introducing my cohort and I to flow in our Dance Movement Therapy Theory course during the fall of 2013. While I had forgotten, I referred back to my notes and found where I had written about exactly what was

mentioned above. Imus had planted a seed that truly blossomed within my study.

Csikszentmihalyi (2008) also discussed flow in great depth within his work. He referred to “seamless flow experiences”, which I truly feel are what my aim is within my dance/movement therapy groups (p. 217-218). While it is impossible to have flow at every moment, noticing flow between the aesthetic values in a seamless way was crucial in helping me answer how aesthetics are influencing my clinical work and shaping me as a clinician.

The flow of aesthetic values is greatly influencing my clinical work. After seeing how the different aesthetic values create this beautiful flow within my groups, I desire to recreate this flow and use it in the future. There seems to be something about the flow of aesthetic values that in turn helps to bring an overall essence of flow to the group. Flow was introduced throughout the results chapter but I want to illuminate how important I believe it is to the patients as well. On January 21st, I noted in my journal that a string of aesthetic values flowed: patterns, freedom in form, meaning in form, connection, stories, and depth. During processing of that particular group one of my patients spoke to feeling as if the group flowed which “helped me get even more out of it.” This was not the only time that a patient spoke to flow or fluidity they experienced during group. In hearing the patients yearning for this sense of flow, it took me back to Csikszentmihalyi’s (2008) work and his ideas on humans desiring flow experiences.

Interplay between the aesthetic values is astonishingly important to me as an emerging clinician because I can see the beautiful ways in which certain aesthetic values can unfold and beautifully lead to the next. Flow creates an experience where various aesthetic values can arise, possibly intertwine and then be threaded throughout the group, paving the way for the possibility of a more cohesive, powerful experience for the patients. The aesthetic of flow is truly

influential in my clinical work; it is shaping the style and way in which I facilitate groups. Flow, more than any other aesthetic, is what I desire the experience of my group to be for my patients.

Lack of Aesthetic Values

One of the most intriguing observations to make note of was my experience of a lack of certain aesthetic values. There were a number of groups where the most important points to note were about certain aesthetic values that were missing. This was shown in journals from January 5th, 16th, and 26th. Beginning this research process, I truly had no idea what I would find, however, I never contemplated the idea that I would begin to experience a lack of aesthetic values at times. While it was unexpected, I think it has given me wonderful awareness. Missing aesthetic values are great to be aware of because they play a role in clinical decisions on a day-to-day basis. When I notice aesthetic values lacking, it gives me wonderful information as to how I can help guide the group to access the various aesthetic values that I want to help them experience.

Body Reactions in Relation to Certain Aesthetics

Another surprising finding was that the experience of certain aesthetic values evoked various bodily sensations:

...the attentive student can discover evidence of a subversive undercurrent attesting to the idea that at least some of the intense pleasures of aesthetic experience are insistently bodily, and that therefore physicality cannot be totally discounted as irrelevant...Sheer sense experience, whether unconscious or conscious, without mental mediation, is aesthetically meaningless. It is *what the mind makes* of the physical sensations that is interesting and relevant. Hence, to anyone who stops to consider the subject of aesthetic

response, the mind (or soul or spirit) seems to be the relevant vehicle for the experience of art. (Dissanayake, 1992, p. 28-29)

While ultimately this does not surprise me, since I do feel connected to my mind, body, and spirit and am an emerging body based therapist, it was still an interesting thing to find during the research process. At first sensations were minimal, however, as the process went on, I noticed certain sensations consistently for certain aesthetic values that became more powerful on a body level. I came to realize how informative these bodily sensations were. During the research process I noticed these sensations shaped clinical interventions within groups based on both what I was experiencing and what I was witnessing the patients experience.

As shown in the results chapter, I began to experience and take note of body sensations within my groups. As I started noticing these sensations I began creating images to track where they occurred in relation to the experience of these aesthetic values on a body level (see Appendix D). This is when I realized how important the aesthetic of the body is and how crucial noticing the experience in my entire being was to this research. When I finished the drawing, out to the side I wrote, “oh hi, the body.” I realized how it represented not only the bodily responses to aesthetic values, but also the aesthetic of the body itself.

One of the most intense bodily reactions to an aesthetic occurred during the first time vitality came up in a group. It was in the journal entry from January 30th. I noted vibrations in my chest out through my arms and fingertips in that moment. Sensations were felt in a similar way for connection. Connection was felt in my heart center initially, and then the sensation flowed all the way out through my arms. In instances when connection felt strong, the sensation went all the way through my arms and resulted in a tingling sensation in my fingertips. This sensation was illuminated during one of the movement sessions with my BC-DMT consultant

through vibratory movement in my fingertips. This movement was integrated throughout the dance performance because of how powerfully I experienced it during the movement session and how well I felt it displayed how these particular aesthetic values were experienced on a body level. This particular movement experience also played a role in my music selection because I felt certain musical sections truly matched the essence of the vibratory movement.

Other consistent bodily sensations included curiosity and meaning in form, which were noticed in the head, particularly in the forehead. When authenticity arose, I noticed that I had more increasing pressure in the soles of my feet to the ground; I really noticed that it created a sense of feeling the authentic self rooted down through the feet into the earth, as if they were planted in their truth. The last noteworthy bodily felt aesthetic is depth. I noticed that when patients were able to leave the surface and dive into their depth, I felt a drop down into my stomach, noticing a sensation down in my core during moments when they were able to speak from their core selves, finding their depth, which was illuminated in the results with a one-on-one patient. Depth and meaning in form were also illuminated through movement in the dance. There was a particular swirling motion with my hands around my core that I felt displayed the swirling sensation I would experience in relation to depth arising within a group. From there I used my hands in an upward motion from my core until they got to my face where I sent them forward, showing the experience of going from finding depth to communicating and creating meaning from it.

A final body based finding to note was the eventual feeling of flow within the body. This related both to my body based responses to the aesthetic values, as well as my noticing of patients' bodily experience of the different aesthetic values. I noticed that my bodily experience of curiosity starts in the head or mind; this was noted by the looks on patients' faces, as well as

my own noticing of curiosity. The flow then goes down into my stomach to the core self to find the depth, which was noticed in clients sinking into their curiosity while going more internal, and my own swirling sensation in the core. Flow then goes back up to my head to make meaning, allowing the patients to communicate the meaning in form and depth they have found. The importance of finding flow was mentioned in the section above; however, I find it necessary to point out how enticing it was to realize that flow also occurs within both the patients and my own body within a group. This serves me as a clinician because it helped to illuminate the ways in which my body can inform the aesthetic experience and how important it is to continue to use my body as an informative tool within my groups.

Differences Found in One-on-One Movement Sessions

I think it is important as an emerging clinician to note the difference in aesthetic experiences I had with my one-on-one patients verses my groups. There were a few journal entries in the results section that shared about the one-on-one sessions that I facilitated. The main finding was that aesthetic values felt more pure in the one-on-one interactions. When noticing aesthetic values arise in a group, sometimes I would notice a few at once or multiple coming up from different combinations of patients and content in the group. However, with the one-on-one patients I worked with, I felt that the aesthetic values being experienced were much stronger and more pure due to the more intimate setting of one-on-one dance/movement therapy sessions.

In looking back at my journal from January 16th, I remember being so excited in writing about my aesthetic experience during my first session with a patient from the eating disorder program. I wrote how surprised I was to notice the strength of the aesthetic values I was experiencing with her. I found this important because it made me become more aware of the size of my groups in relation to the strength of aesthetic values I was experiencing. I feel this is

important moving forward as a clinician because sometimes groups can get quite large, which makes it hard to really home in aesthetically on everything in the room.

Culturally Informed Body Knowledge and Body Prejudice

The fourth research question of the study addressed body knowledge and body prejudice. I was curious about how my culturally informed body knowledge and body prejudice was influencing my aesthetic choices. Starting the masters in Dance/Movement Therapy and Counseling at Columbia College Chicago, we discussed these concepts quite a bit. I became aware of how important it would be for me to really notice my own body knowledge in order to be aware of my body prejudice and the biases that may arise as I started to work with patients.

What I found most interesting in first exploring these concepts was actually how much body prejudice I saw coming up. My ballet trained self has very distinct preferences when it comes to dance, and I saw this initially arising when moving with my peers and seeing dance around the city of Chicago. What was even more interesting was how much I saw my body prejudice disappear when I starting interning the second year in the program. It was so absent that I almost forgot about it. When I came back to the topic in my study I realized that my body knowledge and body prejudice had made a huge shift. In processing with my BC-DMT consultant during the data collection and analysis, she helped me to decipher what exactly I was noticing. However, I could not figure out what it was until I went to another dance performance early in 2015. At this show I realized that my dancer body knowledge and body prejudice and my therapist body knowledge and body prejudice were two very separate entities. When it comes to dance I still have the same prejudices come up that were noticed in the start of the program with some small shifts, while my therapist body knowledge and body prejudice has brief moments where bias pop up, but it is much more minimal than I expected.

The one major thing I noticed about body knowledge and body prejudice in the hospital was that I noticed it come up most during my groups with the eating disorder population. When it came up with this population, I noticed it right away and was able to simply become aware of it and let it go. The way many of these patients spoke and acted resonated with me due to experiences I had growing up in the dance world. Dance brings up a lot of body image issues. In my patients with eating disorders I noticed this come up frequently.

Being a young, Caucasian female, I do find myself being very aware of who is in my groups. I am very curious about my patient's cultural backgrounds since not all movement translates across all cultures. In becoming more aware of my own culturally informed body knowledge and body prejudice for this study, I was able to realize where most of my biases came from. I also came to the conclusion that I think I asked the wrong question. The question was, how does my culturally informed body knowledge and body prejudice influence my aesthetic choices? Through the research process I found that my culturally informed body knowledge and body prejudice does not influence my aesthetic choices. Instead, I believe that being aware of my own body knowledge and body prejudice as a therapist is a necessary precursor. This awareness is key and is an underlying necessity in order for the aesthetic values to unfold. Without this awareness, I believe biases could become extremely distracting, making it hard to focus in on the aesthetic experience.

Body knowledge and body prejudice during the choreography process.

When I began choreographing the dance to show my research process and results, I found it quite hard to start. I had a number of movements that I wanted to include to show how aesthetic values were heard, seen, and felt, however, I encountered a great deal of self-judgment. After a few frustrating rehearsals, I realized my dance body prejudice was coming up in the

creation of this dance. I began to realize that I was being judgmental over the fact that the dance felt very pedestrian and did not feel technical enough. In processing this further, I decided I needed to let go of the biases that were coming up and to try to bring my therapist body knowledge into the picture rather than let my dance body prejudice arise. Once I finally started to allow this shift, I was able to create a dance that authentically showed the experience of how aesthetic values were seen, heard, and felt. With the help of the music, a bit of the franticness I felt throughout the research process was illuminated. While there were very prominent movements for salient aesthetic values and bodily sensations, I also found that some of the dance needed to be un-choreographed. Due to the desire for the study to be organic in nature, I realized that parts of the dance needed to be spontaneous as well. While my dancer self did not initially feel comfortable with this, I again had to let go of the anxiety that arose around the fact that the whole dance was not choreographed, just as I was trying to let go of my dance body prejudice. In attempting to let go of my dance body prejudice during this choreography process, I believe some of the perfectionism that comes along with the art of dance was shed as well; this is something I have been working on and know is a growing edge as I continue to grow as a dance/movement therapist.

Curiosities for the Future

Throughout the course of data collection and analysis, I found myself jotting down many curiosities. After laying out the results to answer the four research questions, there were still many things from my journal that did not technically fit in a section but felt important to include. These seemed important to include for both my own recollection and for those who may be interested in diving further into them in the future. During creative synthesis, I went back to these curiosities in order to figure out what to do with each one that felt too important to be left

out. There came a time during a meeting with my BC-DMT consultant when I realized a few things that were repeatedly surfacing were possibly new aesthetic values to be looked at, or ones that were unique to me. In exploring them further, I came to a realization that some fit into other theorists already existing aesthetic categories, while I began to think others may just be components that are necessary within a session for aesthetics to unfold during the group.

Three concepts kept arising during data collection that flustered me because I was unsure what to do with them. Since they kept coming up repeatedly, I knew that they had importance and needed to be included. The words were safety, trust, and consistency. Over time I noticed that safety and trust were underlying principles that were necessary for the group to have in order for aesthetic values to flow in a seamless way. In groups that did not have a sense of safety and trust certain aesthetic values such as authenticity and depth were unable to arise.

My experience of consistency, however, was a little bit different. I debated for a period of time if consistency could stand on its own as an aesthetic. After much thought and discussion with my BC-DMT consultant I decided that I do not think it stands alone. However, I think it is an extremely important foundational component that is integral for aesthetic values to arise. The decision to include them as foundational pieces and to define them in this way was also influenced by this quote from my journal, "...through being with this group consistently, trust and safety have been built." I now think of these as pre-aesthetic in a sense, the things I need as the basis for aesthetic values to ultimately unfold. When these precursors are absent they influence my clinical work because I know that I cannot do certain things that may bring them to a place that feels unsafe.

Consistency is an interesting concept to think about in a hospital where I sometimes only see a patient once in a dance/movement therapy group. With the adolescents, this happened

often because there were so many patients in the partial hospitalization program that they had eight expressive therapy groups offered each day. However, with other populations, such as eating disorder and adults, I saw them much more consistently. Seeing certain populations consistently allowed for more depth to be found in group, and for more of an aesthetic experience to occur due to the strong therapeutic relationship, the trust and safety that had been formed.

The rest of this section touches on building blocks I have identified for various aesthetic values. The first involves the idea of curiosity. While curiosity is not an aesthetic itself, I believe it is a crucial component that could be added as a feature of Hervey's (2000) concept of aesthetic consciousness. Hervey (2000) defines aesthetic consciousness as a particular kind of awareness and understanding that is made up of four features: awareness of sensation, emotion, and intuition, appreciation of qualities and form, dynamic polarities, and awareness of one's own aesthetic values (p. 74). I believe that the addition of curiosity to her features would allow for a deeper understanding and awareness of one's aesthetic consciousness. Another concept that came up was honesty. To be honest myself, honesty stumped me for a while. I contemplated where it fit in and what it meant. There was a time where I wrote in my journal, "Is honesty the same as authenticity?" While I am still a bit unsure, I think that honesty is a word that could be added in the definition of authenticity. To be honest with oneself is to be open and authentic.

When it comes to the aesthetic of image of health, I believe that joy or a sense of joy could also fall under the overarching definition. There was something so beautiful and aesthetic when joy arose in groups. In debating what to do with it, I found that looping it into the image of health felt most authentic to me because I often saw it in a healthy, youthful way, which made sense to the definition. I also found that I experienced strength and perseverance throughout the

study. To me, these seemed to be qualities that fit right into the aesthetic of vitality. Exuding strength and perseverance displayed a strong connection to life, a beautiful sense of vitality.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this embodied artistic inquiry brought more to light about my aesthetic and the role my aesthetic experience plays in my clinical work than I could have expected. I experienced aesthetic values as defined by numerous theorists and realized that my aesthetic experience occurs through sight, sound, and bodily sensations. By noticing the influence my aesthetic has in my clinical work, I ultimately realized that there are certain aesthetic values that I want to bring to my patients, one being flow. Thinking about how my aesthetic is shaping me as a clinician was probably the most interesting. While certain aesthetic values shape my clinical decisions, I realized that my personal aesthetic is ultimately helping me to find my style as an emerging therapist, while also making me more aware of the decisions I make during my groups. The awareness that my therapist body knowledge and body prejudice is foundational in groups and separate from my dance body knowledge and body prejudice was monumental to realize as a novice clinician.

However, there is still more research to be done in the field of dance/movement therapy when it comes to aesthetics. My hope is that this study and others can help pave the way for us as field to continue being curious about how we notice and use our aesthetic within our dance/movement therapy practice. I am thankful for this experience because I believe I have learned more than I could have imagined about my aesthetic experience, how my aesthetic influences my clinical work, is shaping me as a clinician, and how my culturally informed body knowledge and body prejudice plays a foundational role in it all.

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Appendix A

Aesthetics Cheat Sheet for Research

Aesthetics

- Anyone's definition and determination of beauty
- Each culture, each group, each individual has their own aesthetic
- "what we consider beautiful"
- The discriminating appreciation of qualities reflected in form
 - Qualities- more than surface characteristics, perceivable manifestations of something's essential nature
 - Form- unique configuration, how it is arranged
 - Appreciation- comes from repetition –ability to perceive and respond aesthetically
- SPECIFIC aesthetic appreciations or values that develop through DMT training
- Engages aesthetic values of creators and observers
- BASICALLY- I am ascertaining my aesthetic principles
 - Asking myself what I value about the collection of experiences that are dance/movement therapy and determine what of these experiences can be described as aesthetic (what is considered beautiful, what qualities and forms are appreciated)
 - ****A CLINICIANS AESTHETIC VALUES COULD BE FURTHER ASSESSED BY BEING AWARE OF WHAT IS LOOKED FOR, WHAT IS PERCIEVED WELL, WHAT IS ENCOURAGED IN CLIENTS**
 - will see them is assessment, treatment planning, and most commonly interventions

1) THE IMAGE OF HEALTH

- Qualities of health and youth: brilliance of color, luster, quickness, strength, grace, flexibility, smoothness etc—these are attractive to humans
- Also coordination, flexibility, and a wide range of bodily rhythms and efforts

2) FREEDOM OF FORM

- "pioneers who rejected classical ballet form and committed to individual freedom of expression" (BK/BP)
- DMT encourages creative participation of the client—uniqueness of each individual

3) MEANING IN FORM

- Personal and universal meaning---meaningful movement
- Also time to suspend judgment and interpretation as to allow the dance to itself evolve

4) PATTERNS

- Repetitions and rhythms help organize chaotic movement and make communication through movement much easier
- Circle—equal visibility etc it is an aesthetic strength and conveys many of the aesthetic values of DMT

5) STORY

- “essence of meaning in the embodied stories told by patients”
- embodying the meaning of the mover’s story
- the narrative behind it
- 6) AUTHENTICITY
 - Looking for meaning—not necessarily movement that is “pretty or graceful”
 - Expressive language
 - The simplest or most awkward authentic movement can be profoundly beautiful
- 7) DEPTH
 - Look for depths of a person’s experience
 - Encourage deeper insight as opposed to staying surface
 - Explore the profound in the phenomenon in question
- 8) VITALITY
 - Affirmation of and connection to life
 - “vital movement sensibility”
- 9) THE BODY
 - The appearance of the human body is something that DMT’s appreciate
 - Can be unrealistic ideal of a woman’s body—ideal dancer’s body may have impact on communal aesthetic
 - Trust body as a source of data in session
- 10) WHOLNESS
 - Holistic approach to the person
 - Aspiration toward a balanced use of movement qualities, integration of the body as a whole, and all parts working together in harmony
 - *Interconnection and integration of body, mind, and spirit
 - Gathering data from multiple, inseparable realms of the person’s experience and not splitting it
- 11) CONTEXT
 - Attention to context
 - Focus on subject of interest without isolating it from contextual influences
 - Every movement is uniquely precious in relation to the context
- 12) MUSIC
 - There’s a profound relationship between movement and music
 - Most frequent uses: as a powerful emotional catalyst and an organizer of expressive movement
 - Medium to enhance the communication of research findings
- 13) SKILL AND DISCIPLINE
 - Skills that are encouraged in DMT are embedded values regarding health and creativity
 - Intentional, articulate expression of feelings through movement and words
 - Assisting the client in developing an expressive movement vocabulary
 - *Aesthetic skills in therapist are ability to accurately reflect the movement qualities of the client
 - Use of kinesthetic empathy
 - Mindful witnessing

- RECREATION OF MOVEMENT- worth serious consideration as it is one of the professions' greatest skills

14) THE GENERAL IN THE PARTICULAR

- Particular clients awaken understanding of more general truths about the therapeutic process through the art form
- Unique individual instances yet also convey the universal essence of being a person

Appendix B

Definitions of key terms

Aesthetics. “Aesthetics refer to *anyone’s* definition and determination of beauty... aesthetics can be understood as the discriminating appreciation of qualities reflected in form” (Hervey, 2000, p. 72).

Aesthetics of Dance/Movement Therapy. Image of health, freedom of form, meaning in form, patterns, story, authenticity, depth, vitality, the body, wholeness, context, music, skill and discipline, and the general in the particular (Hervey, 2000, p. 78-86).

Authentic Movement. An expressive improvisational practice that allows a type of free association of the body. Mover waits for an inner impulse to move while a witness observes and holds the space. Movements may be responses to experiences of the past (Pallaro, 1999).

Beauty. Beauty is pleasure regarded as the quality of a thing (Santayana, 1955, p. 31).

Dance/Movement Therapy and Counseling. The psychotherapeutic use of movement in a process that taps into the inherent talent and creativity residing in individuals. Stemming from the belief that who we are is reflected and manifested in our bodies and dance/movement facilitates an integration of the mind, body, and spirit (Levy, 2005).

Experience. The unique way in which individuals understand and perceive an object, thought, emotion, or sensation through the mind-body in the present moment.

Flow. Seamless transitions from one thing to another also can be referred to as a seamless flow experience (Imus, 2003 & Csikszentmihalyi, 2008).

Appendix C

Semi-Structured Journal Questions

Journal questions are meant to be used as a guide. To maintain the organic quality of this study, it is not a requirement to answer every question, instead just notice which ones are most essential to understand aesthetics for that particular day/group.

- 1) How did I experience aesthetics today?
- 2) What particular aesthetics were observed today?
- 3) Which groups/populations were particular aesthetics observed in?
- 4) How were the aesthetics experienced in my body?
- 5) How did the aesthetics influence my choices/interventions/way of being/etc. today?
- 6) How did my culturally informed body knowledge/body prejudice influence my aesthetic choices today?

Appendix D

