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Carter, Celina

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## Dance and Choreography as a Method of Inquiry

*Celina Carter*

**Key words:**  
dance;  
choreography;  
arts-based  
research;  
methods; analysis

**Abstract:** In this article, I critically investigate the question, "Are dance and choreography generative methods of inquiry?" To do this, I draw on my experience analyzing and translating field notes about a role transition experience using dance-based methods. I examine how I employed the GRAHAM technique as a lens through which to investigate and illuminate the factors influencing a lived experience of transitioning from registered nurse to advance practice nurse. Throughout the article, I grapple with how to articulate and write about an arts-based research process that is embodied and intuitive. Ultimately, reflecting on and critiquing my experience of using dance and choreography as a method of inquiry, I come to argue that the GRAHAM technique offered a lens through which to ask critical questions in both a cognitive and embodied sense. This process of "dancing the data" to analyze and disseminate findings is generative in that it offered new insights into what a role transition might entail and provided a method of capturing the living of an experience.

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## 1. Introduction

Eight years ago, I undertook an arts-based research project that experimented with dance and choreography to analyze and disseminate data. At that time, in the fall of 2012, I was completing a research practicum as part of my Master of Nursing (MN) degree. I had recently been introduced to the idea that art can be used in research production and dissemination. For a nurse who studied modern dance for 14 years, this idea thrilled me. What sort of creative projects were open to me through engaging in arts-based research? How could I combine my understanding of dance, nursing and research to generate something new? In this article, looking back on the project, I comment methodologically on how I used dance and choreography as a method of inquiry. Ultimately, I investigate my arts-based approach, "dancing the data," to address the questions, "Are dance and choreography generative analytic tools? And if so, in what ways?" [1]

I begin with a description of the circumstances that led me to pursue an arts-based project (Section 2). I then discuss my research methods including my iterative research approach and the way my framing of this research method has changed (Section 3). Following this, I comment analytically on the way I used a modern dance theory as a framework for interpretation and analysis and discuss how it is different from other analytic techniques (Section 4). I then comment on the challenges of writing about embodied processes (Section 5). This is followed by a discussion of the literature on embodied perspectives and the limitations of this article (Section 6). I end by discussing why I believe "dancing the data" is a generative method of analysis, the contributions this article makes to the field, and share the results of the project (Section 7). [2]

## 2. Prologue

### 2.1 The practicum

My MN degree required participation in a practicum that aimed to socialize me into the role of advanced practice nurse (APN). Advance practice nursing is defined as "an umbrella term describing an advanced level of clinical nursing practice that maximizes the use of graduate educational preparation, in-depth nursing knowledge, and expertise in meeting the health needs of individuals, families, groups, communities and populations" (CAN, 2008, p.1). The expectations of the two-month practicum were that I would apply knowledge from practice, theory and research into my role with the aim of contributing to knowledge development and the advancement of the profession in my practicum setting. For my practicum, I chose to join a four-person academic research team of APNs conducting several large mixed methods studies in an urban environment in Ontario, Canada. [3]

## 2.2 The surprise

Several weeks into the practicum, I found myself in a meeting with my practicum leader, an established tenured nursing professor, and another research associate, discussing my ideas for interviewing stakeholders. I found myself tensing up, unable to express myself, and feeling uncertain about how my work was being perceived. At the end of the meeting, I felt tears welling up and I tried hard to suppress them; I wanted to be seen as a calm competent APN. My practicum leader asked me to stay after the meeting so that she could speak to me and I found myself crying. My reaction was unexpected and embarrassing. The event left me wondering what was happening. Does this experience involve something more than I understood? Like other researchers, this event, which had given me "pause" (FREEMAN, 2014) called for understanding (JARDINE, 1992). Questioning a peculiar experience is a common analytic tool that helps researchers begin to make meaning about an event or experience that we might otherwise overlook as ordinary and/or expected (FREEMAN, 2014). Experiences that strike us, make us stop in our tracks, tug on our sleeve, or give us pause, call out to be questioned so that new connections and meanings can be made; it is where interpretive inquiry begins (FELS, 2012; FREEMAN, 2014; JARDINE, 1992). I could have conceived of my experience of crying as an isolated incident; but instead, it aroused in me questions about how my experience speaks to the broader experience of role transitions (JARDINE, 1992). [4]

## 3. Design

At that time in my research training, I had been learning about reflexivity. I understood this to be a process of gazing inward to consider a subject (HOLMS, 2010). I knew that researchers often engaged in reflexivity due to experiencing uncertainty (ibid.) to foster rich insights about their relationships to another person, object, event, or phenomenon (FINLAY, 2002). Because of my experience of crying, I decided to journal reflexively about my experience of transitioning roles from registered nurse to an APN researcher during the practicum. Just like other researchers who use self-reflexive field notes to document their "impact on the scene and note others' reactions to them ... [as well as their] subjective experiences, hopes, fears, and vulnerabilities" (TRACY, 2010, p.842), I wanted to write reflexively to gain a deeper understanding about the event under examination—me crying during a practicum. To do this, I took an interpretive generic approach to this inquiry that focused on subjective embodied experience (KAHLKE, 2014). Data was produced through self-reflexive field notes written after and between practicum days in September and October 2012. I documented my emotions, encounters, things that "struck" me; feelings of success and challenges; the way I interacted with the environment and the relationships that developed over 20 days of practicum. This resulted in 50 pages of single-spaced notes that comprise the data used for the project. [5]

### 3.1 Artistic team, roles, and location

There was a requirement at the end of the practicum to present what I had learned to the faculty of nursing. I trained in modern dance two to five times a week for 14 years; three of which were dedicated to learning the GRAHAM dance technique. I was also a member of two modern dance companies including the one at my high school for the arts. Because of this training and my interest in arts-based methods, I decided to engage in an arts-based project to 1. use dance to make meaning about my experience and 2. produce a short modern dance video to share my experience of my role transition. I had a small budget of 500 dollars. I first reached out to a choreographer who I had previously danced and choreographed with to see if she would be interested in collaborating on an arts-based research project—she enthusiastically agreed. I sent her my aims of the project and my self-reflexive field notes to review. Over our first two meetings in mid-October 2012, we discussed the type of dance, logistics, and roles of the project. I told her I wanted to produce an abstract rather than literal depiction of my experience using the GRAHAM dance technique to highlight the embodied, rather than dramatized experience. We also decided to hire one dancer rather than dance ourselves so that we could both stay true to our roles: hers as choreographer to focus on movement and use of space and mine as researcher to focus on integrity to data. Working with just one dancer was also important logistically because we only had four weeks for this project due to my school deadline. Because of the deadline, budget, and consideration of creating a dance to be filmed, we also made the decision to represent the social context using scrims, which are pieces of fabric that can reflect an image or appear translucent depending on how it is lit (see Figure 1).

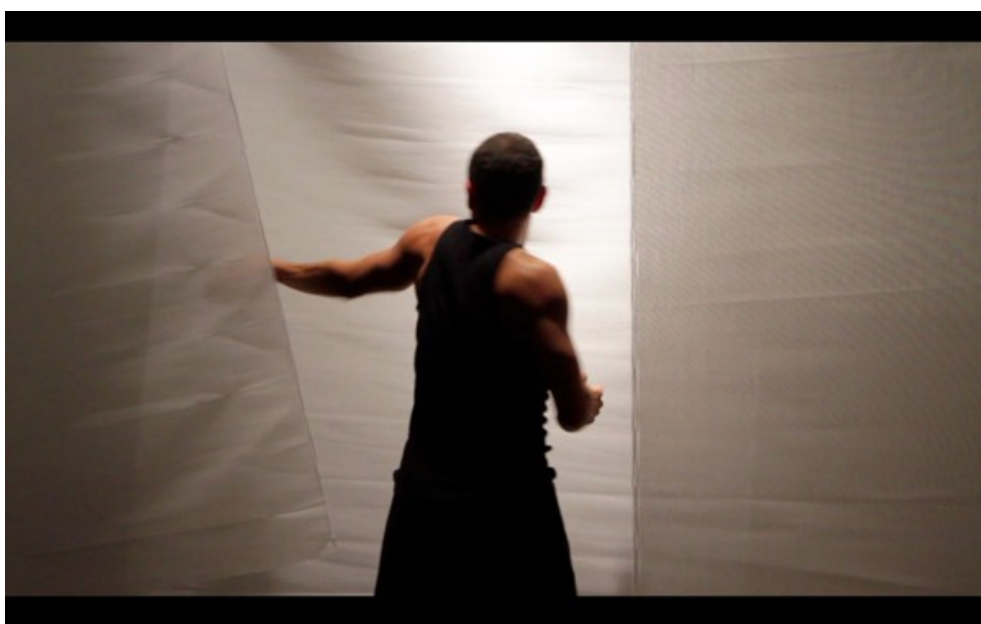


Figure 1: Photographs of scrims used in dance video [6]

I reached out via e-mail and social media to dancers in my social networks requesting one dancer to participate in my project. A male dancer whom I had also previously danced with was available and so he joined the team. The three of us worked together at a small dance studio in an urban environment in Ontario, Canada for a total of 13 hours, spread over 6 days, over 3 weeks. During this time, I also recruited a videographer and composer in my social networks who both agreed to join the project. The videographer attended one rehearsal and then filmed the dance over 5 hours in mid-November 2012. Once I had edited the dance video, I sent it to the composer with the contextual and emotional map (see Table 2 and further details about this in Section 5) and instructions to use free-form composition to highlight the emotional journey of the role transition. We worked together on three iterations before I felt the music fit with my experience. [7]

My role was one of researcher and artistic director, in the sense that I was involved in all aspects of the project from dancing alongside the dancer during the workshopping of the piece, to co-choreographing, to providing input on the video production. This was important to me so that I could be aware of the interpretive work that was creating an impact on the analysis and dissemination. It was especially important for this project, because I was working in a team and I assumed that artists, like transcribers, make interpretations that can have an impact on the work (TILLEY, 2003). I, therefore, wanted to know to the best of my ability how my co-artists were interpreting the data and transforming this knowledge into movement, video and music. Knowing this helped increase the transparency and trustworthiness of the work (TRACY, 2010). [8]

### **3.2 An iterative process**

From a review of arts-based literature, I knew that the process of blending the methods of art and research were generally iterative, emergent and collaborative (BOYDELL, 2011; LAPUM, RUTTONSHA, CHURCH, YAU & DAVID, 2011). The similarities between academia and art involve concern with form, content, and meaning as well as the role of translation, interpretation, and representation (WAINWRIGHT & RAPPORT, 2007). Various forms of art such as poetry and dance can be used to communicate complex experiential accounts of human emotions, beliefs and interactions (BOYDELL, GLADSTONE, VOLPE, ALLEMANG & STASIULIS, 2012). Several researchers have published on the methods and process of using dance within research (BOYDELL, 2011; FRIEDMAN & MOANA TE RANGITAKINA RUHA GWYNNE, 2008; VAN KATWYK & SEKO, 2017; WOODGATE, ZURBA & TENNENT, 2017). Some use dance as a method of data dissemination (BOYDELL, 2011; VAN KATWYK & SEKO, 2017; WOODGATE, ZURBA & TENNENT, 2017) and others use it as a method of analysis (FRIEDMAN & MOANA TE RANGITAKINA RUHA GWYNNE, 2008). BOYDELL (2011) collaborated with a choreographer and dancers to translate the findings from a multiple case study into a dance performance as a way of disseminating her research. BOYDELL's research team collaborated with the artists by sharing raw data and key features of the findings. The artists engaged in artistic interpretations to translate the emotions in the data into movement and the research team ensured the theoretical concepts were

maintained. FRIEDMAN and MOANA TE RANGITAKINA RUHA GWYNNE (2008) are professor and student who cowrote an article about this student's process of completing an assignment in a dance studies program, which required translating interviews into oral/movement, then text, and then back into an oral/kinesthetic performance. The article includes a description of this Maori student's experience and process of creation using embodied Indigenous ways of knowing within the context of academia. While these works were helpful in providing examples of how dance could be used in research, I found it challenging to know how to replicate what these researchers had done because the content and objectives of their work were all unique, which resulted in unique processes. [9]

From the examples of research that used dance, certain principles did appear important to the overall arts-based dance process such as ensuring the production honors a skillful representation of the chosen art form (BAGLEY & CANCIENNE, 2001; BOYDELL, 2011); that movements be literal or abstract (ibid.); that the process is iterative and non-prescriptive (ibid., see also; FRIEDMAN & MOANA TE RANGITAKINA RUHA GWYNNE, 2008; WOODGATE et al., 2017); and to represent the data or findings sincerely (BAGLEY & CANCIENNE, 2001; BOYDELL, 2011; WOODGATE et al., 2017), which is the researcher's role if collaborating with artists (BOYDELL, 2011; WOODGATE et al., 2017). I decided I would take an exploratory approach that did not draw explicitly on previously established methods but adhered to these principles. However, unlike the other researchers, I chose to structure my work with a theory of dance and choreography to guide the way I interpreted and represented my data through dance. As a critical social scholar, having a theoretical lens through which to ask questions and make meaning is a large part of how I produce credible work. [10]

### **3.3 Dancing reflexivity?**

I pause here to share a little bit about the way my framing of this project has changed. I had originally conceptualized the practice of dance in research as a reflexive device. I previously termed my method "dancing reflexivity" and explained that dance was a tool that helped me produce meaning from my experience and bring my reflexive awareness to life. However, to many qualitative researchers, reflexivity in the research process is a device to establish trustworthiness through articulating the means through which findings are generated such as interrogating researcher's analytic decisions, their impact on the research process and the evolution of the researcher's thinking (EVANS, 2000; FROST et al., 2010; YATES, 2010). [11]

Was "dancing reflexivity" really what I was doing? I was not dancing or interrogating how I was influencing the research process but was using dance to understand my experience. I felt there must be a better way to articulate my method. Several researchers discussed how interpretation and analysis involve a reflexive dialogue between theory and data (ALASUUTARI, 1996; AUGUSTINE, 2014; MAZZEI, 2014; YATES, 2010). ALASUUTARI (1996) explained that using

theory in research is a reflexive exercise, meaning that researchers rethink previously unquestioned perspectives. Researchers can reflexively use theory to view an event from different perspectives and rethink assumptions to make sense of it (ibid.). A reflexive exercise, such as dialoguing between dance and data, is about thinking critically and integrating theoretical and personal knowledge to develop insights about the social and contextual aspects of an event (COLLINS & COOPER, 2014; HOLMS, 2010). Some researchers described this approach to analysis as "thinking with theory" (AUGUSTINE, 2014; JACKSON & MAZZEI, 2018). JACKSON and MAZZEI (2018) explained their analytic approach as involving reading the data while thinking the theory(ies) to build new connectives and produce new questions and knowledge from interweaving data and theory in a dialogical way. It is because of being exposed to this additional literature that I choose to re-frame my understanding of my arts-based inquiry method as "dancing the data." I now believe my method involved using dance as a theory and embodied strategy to make sense of the human experience of this transition and the relational factors that influenced it, as captured in my self-reflexive field notes. I understand this type of analysis to be a reflexive exercise but not reflexivity as most qualitative researchers define it. [12]

#### **4. Analysis**

Other scholars have also drawn on the term "dancing the data" or "dancing with data" to describe various research processes. Like JACKSON and MAZZEI (2018), MARKULA (2011) used the term to describe their process of analyzing data with both the dancing body and Deleuzian theory to produce findings that were embodied and theory-driven. BAGLEY and CINCIENNE (2001) said "dancing the data" entailed using movement and choreography to facilitate deep attention to emotions, experiences, meanings, understandings, emphasis, and pace in the data, which includes new insights and interpretations as well as a (re)presentation of research findings. Other researchers such as HOARE, MILLS and FRANCIS (2012) presented "dancing the data" as a metaphor for their analytic process that moved back and forth between data selection and analysis like a dance, but did not employ dance in their work. [13]

My analysis involved "dancing the data," meaning I used a theory of dance and choreography, which emphasized embodied knowing, to interpret and analyze my self-reflexive field notes (the process is further described below). Just like theory, dance and choreography is made up of different concepts, rules, and understandings that can be used to see and experience data in different ways. Choreography is the art of dance (CINCIENNE & SNOWBER, 2003). In modern dance, it is about crafting a sequence of bodily movements, often with forms, rules and structure, to literally and/or abstractly depict lived experience (SHARP & DeCESARO, 2013; SNOWBER, 2012). It can be used to investigate the internal struggle of embodied experience and the struggle between individuals and the social world (HOROSKO, 2002). Choreography and dance also use the body as a way of seeing, being, questioning, and challenging to honor multiple ways of knowing (CINCIENNE & SNOWBER, 2003). Furthermore, choreography and



dance fosters questioning, shifting perspectives, "forming and unforming, making and remaking," and ultimately, facilitating discovery (SNOWBER, 2012, p.57). [14]

#### 4.1 The GRAHAM technique

For my theory of dance and choreography, I drew on the work of American modern dancer and choreographer, Martha GRAHAM, who framed emotions as embodied sociocultural phenomena that connect the body (our felt lived sense) with the social (relationships, power, context; HOROSKO, 2002). GRAHAM articulated the shapes our bodies take to express different emotions as reactions to the social world: contraction and release; opposition; shift of weight and spirals (HOROSKO, 2002). This provided a repertoire of movement and a theory for understanding the relationship between space, and time, along with shape and motion. To GRAHAM, space reflects the dancer's conscious movement through the social world in relation to people, environments, and all the issues that may be encountered, including power and oppression. Time reflects the duration of a feeling or experience. The sequence of movements may be fast or slow, and the overall progression or journey of the experience may be comprised of a moment or a lifetime. Shape and motion reflect the energy and emotion we hold in our bodies and how this can be expressed in both stillness and movement (BLUMENFELD-JONES, 2004; HOROSKO, 2002). Using dance and choreography as an analytic lens provided me with new language to explicate the process of bringing to life my embodied experience of role transition. [15]

#### 4.2 Explicating the analytic process

In an attempt to demonstrate my analytic process, I share one of my field notes from my practicum (see italicized text below). I then try to demonstrate how I approached analyzing this data with dance and discuss what ideas were generated from this process.

*Last Thursday I cried in practicum! I couldn't believe it. I fought back the tears, but then X (name of practicum leader) asked me how I was and I just started crying. She thought it was because I didn't like the feedback that I was getting. And maybe it was a little but it was also that I didn't feel like I was doing valuable work. I was so excited to have my own project and contribute to this project but now I feel like I won't be making much of a scholarly contribution ... and at first that really bothered me, but now I'm just trying to roll with it.*

*I find the role of student really hard. Especially after working for so many years and then not feeling like you are being valued or that your voice is not considered important or that your input is second rate....or that you are used to being good at what you do and then you find yourself in a place where you are not that knowledgeable and now you're trying to figure out how to learn and contribute and still feel like you're accomplishing something important.*

*I was also upset about the space issue and not being able to work with the group and feel connected ... I felt isolated. [16]*

How does dance and choreography help me understand my living of this experience? To begin, the choreographer and I interrogated my field notes asking: How were emotions experienced and held in the body (shape and motion)? What is the body reacting to in the social world (space)? What story or journey is unfolding (time)? How do these relate and intersect to tell us something about the experience? Concepts that stood out to us from our first meeting included 1. the journey of the transition from confident, to uncertain, to adaptation, (time); 2. the mixed emotional reactions to the external situation including feelings of ease, stress, fear, vulnerability, judgment, exposure, and distress (shape and motion); and 3. the external situation including a small communal office, new relationships, and a new role and expectations (space). We then worked with the dancer to create a dance that depicted these emotions, in a sequence that explicated my journey, within the spaces between, under, behind and in front of the scrim that represented the social environmental of the role transition. [17]

A way of depicting our early analytic process of making meaning of my experience is shared here (see Table 1). Like other embodied arts-based scholars, I struggle with how to represent an embodied analytic process in writing (BAGLEY & CANCIENNE, 2001; BLUMENFELD-JONES, 2016). While we did not construct a table for our analysis, we read through the field notes discussing and dancing the different elements that we noticed using the words seen here. Like other artists, our objective was to bring the unconscious knowledge into consciousness, which involved "dancing the data" until my body knew that I had recreated the experience in movement (WAINWRIGHT & RAPPORT, 2007).

Table 1: Example of using dance to analyze field notes. Please click [here](#) to download the PDF file. [18]

Within Table 1, the first column contains the same field notes seen above with elements in the notes italicized to indicate that they stood out as important emotions, progressions and/or context; our first level of interpretation. The other three columns in the table reflect another degree of our interpretations based on GRAHAM's theory of dance as they relate to three elements of dance and choreography, space, and time, as well as shape and motion within the text. What helped with this analytic process was that all of us, the dancer, the choreographer, and I had trained in the GRAHAM technique during our dance training, which made adherence to this lens possible. Looking back on this project from where I sit now—having written what I have written—I realize that to the reader, my analytic approach, while novel on the surface, may appear to be akin to data simplification through coding. [19]

### 4.3 Dancing as coding?

Data simplification through coding reduces large amounts of data into manageable segments. Each segment is comprised of data on the same topic (COFFEY & ATKINSON, 1996). Researchers can approach data simplification using a coding list composed of key concepts from the literature, theory, research questions, and hypotheses or by inductively drawing on the indigenous terms within the data (ibid.). Was I using this particular dance theory as a coding list? [20]

I believe that depicting my analysis in table form helps the readers understand my analytic process and is useful. However, by depicting my analysis this way, it may appear that I used the elements of space, and time, as well as shape and motion as labels to which I assigned data from my field notes by organizing and segmenting the data. While difficult to depict, it is important to clarify that in our process these "categories" were in dialogue through dance; they were not separate, despite the table depicting them as such. Additionally, these "categories" were not used to organize or segment (ibid.) but to see the field note data from a new perspective and to ask the data questions, which otherwise would not have been asked. To me, it is not that I coded data with dance but by trying to write about the process for this manuscript, I may have depicted my method as such. [21]

## 5. Writing embodied processes

Writing up my analytic process in table form does not feel accurate to the experience of "dancing the data." In my attempt to write a credible depiction of my analysis, I have turned to a linear, structured method that does not cohere with my understanding of my experience completing this project. Other researchers have also struggled in writing about qualitative methods asking themselves how best to communicate the process of analysis (BAGLEY & CANCIENNE, 2001; BLUMENFELD-JONES, 2016; RICHARDSON, 1994; SANDELOWSKI, 1998). [22]

The analytic process of naming embodied emotions, my interaction with the social world during my practicum as well as the journey of emotions and experiences was informed by our understanding of the GRAHAM technique, the requirements of the practicum, and my experience depicted in my field notes. The process was iterative and collaborative. As the dancer and choreographer asked me clarifying questions and workshopped dancing my experience, we began to articulate my experience of this role transition and the various elements that shaped it. This (re)production of my experience required thinking and feeling; knowing the theory; and being in dance. [23]

I wonder what other writing techniques I could have used to communicate my analytic process that drew on movement and dialoguing between data, dance and choreography. More description or a figure depicting the process (PRATT, 2009)? Poetry (WIEBE & SNOWBER, 2011)? In an attempt to demonstrate the iterative process of my analysis of "dancing the data," I share a field note from one of our choreography sessions:

*We (myself, the choreographer and dancer) spoke about starting the dance in a natural state and then moving into the new role which involved first joining the team and then engaging in research tasks. The choreographer started discussing how the scrims (see picture in Appendix A) intersected the body between what we saw in flesh and in another dimension behind the screen. She asked the dancer to work on the ground where we could fully see him and asked him to dance a relaxed and comfortable way of being. The dancer improvised and we both agreed that his slow spiraling released rolls and slides felt right. He then started to explore one scrim—the scrims represented the social world of the new role, depicting multiple contexts, expectations and barriers that the dancer moved through and interacted with—and as he engaged with it, we saw his shadow appear—the shadow behind the scrim was so powerful—we decided it was an excellent way to depict a transformation that felt uncertain and unknown. [24]*

As evident in this excerpt, data analysis and dissemination were emergent. During the thinking and being with dance and choreography, we experimented, danced and played with the space, the shape and the progression of my experience. Being in my body and the rehearsal space, together the choreographer, dancer and I, danced this experience of role transition. With each movement and choreographic suggestion, I felt in my body what was right and what resonated through my embodied knowing of the experience. I watched the dancer's body, in space, on a journey depicting the living of a role transition as a way of coming to know the core of the experience. I would not say this was data simplification. It was something else, something akin to dancing the experience of this role transition to life. [25]

"Dancing the data" eventually led me to create a contextual and emotional *map* of my role transition (see Table 2), which was similar to the script created by the choreographer who collaborated with BOYDELL (2011). My map was created through an iterative process of dialoguing between my field notes, the team's understanding of the time, space, and shape and motion of my experience; dancing in space; and our attempt to depict the most important aspects of my experience. This map was incredibly useful to the team in our working together to create and complete our arts-based dissemination of this project; a short modern dance video.

Time	Shape/Motion	Space
Pre-transition	Spiraling, soft, released	Known
Exploring the new role	Slow, shifting weight	Unknown, professional, ridged, high expectations
Joining the new culture	Weighted, contracted, shifting weight, opposition, spiraling	New multiple roles and layers of reality
Adapting	Releasing, shifting weight	Relational, becoming known

Table 2: The contextual and emotional map [26]

## 6. Discussion

In writing this article, I have attempted to make my method of analysis intelligible and in the process, I wonder if I have lost something of the magic of working through my experience of role transition with a team of artists, through dance and choreography. Because of writing it, I have begun to enter into the world of literature by arts-based researchers who work from an embodied perspective (BLUMENFELD-JONES, 2016; CANCIENNE & SNOWBER, 2003; SNOWBER, 2012; WIEBE & SNOWBER, 2011). These authors offered a language of analyzing with the body that, perhaps, is better at capturing this magic. They emphasize that we do not have bodies, we are bodies (WIEBE & SNOWBER, 2011). Knowing and learning occurs not only cerebrally, but through the senses, the felt sense of our bodies, the turn of the stomach, the tightening around the heart, the closing of the throat, the melting of the shoulders with a sigh (CANCIENNE & SNOWBER, 2003; FRIEDMAN & MOANA TE RANGITAKINA RUHA GWYNNE, 2008; WIEBE & SNOWBER, 2011). Investigating the visceral living of an experience requires affirming our embodied knowing while avoiding over explanation so as not to depict knowing as certain (WIEBE & SNOWBER, 2011). [27]

Much of embodiment literature is situated within the broader theory and methodology of phenomenology (BOYDELL, 2011; TODRES, 2007). TODRES (2007), in a phenomenological work on embodied inquiry, argued that knowledge is linked to lived experiences, which always occur in the lived body. Within this framework, truth is found in being and sharing one's feeling and knowing that is situated in the body, which experienced the phenomenon in question. Accessing this embodied knowing requires being attentive to the dynamic interweaving of the body and social world, experience and expression (TODRES, 2007). Similarly, arts-based researcher BLUMENFELD-JONES (2016) explained that his research process involves cultivating phenomenological "ways of awareness" (p.323) through dance and choreography. His artistic process involved a looping, iterative exploration of five "ways of awareness": determining, immersing, objectively observing, bodily remembering, and assessing rightness through feeling. Again, the process requires being in the body and drawing attention to

one's inner state when in movement and stillness. Perhaps, it is this "feeling right" (p.325) after an iterative, improvised, exploratory process of dancing an experience that is the magic I refer to. In my experience, it was exhilarating and satisfying to analyze with our bodies within a repertoire of movement to create something that, when I saw it, invoked in me my experience of role transition. [28]

GRAHAM's technique for dance and choreography is not discussed as a phenomenology but it is aligned with phenomenology and embodied inquiry making it well suited to embodied research. It requires being in the body, attuning to one's inner state, in a dynamic dialogue with the social world, over time (HOROSKO, 2002). Some embodied arts-based scholars may find the structured repertoire of movement as a lens through which to conduct analysis restrictive. Perhaps, because the dancer, choreographer and I were trained in this technique, the movements seemed to flow naturally from our bodies rather than feel forced from a cognitive expectation. Using GRAHAM's technique as a framework also provided me with a way of communicating our approach and situating it within an established dance tradition. As a critical qualitative researcher, it was important to me to use a theory within an established tradition to "dance-the-data-while-thinking/feeling-the-theory" to ensure a level of rigor and coherence which would improve the quality of the work. This is not to say that all scholars using dance as analysis must use one dance technique, but I do argue that grounding their work in a methodology (e.g., phenomenology or embodiment theory such as somatic learning; SNOWBER, 2012) is important to producing credible research-based dance. [29]

Dancing, choreography, poetry and other embodied art forms bring us close to the textures of our experience (WIEBE & SNOWBER, 2011). Yet, many researchers struggle with articulating the alchemy that occurs when analyzing and disseminating data through poetry or dance (ibid.). The process of embodied arts-based research acknowledges that we do research through our physical embodied selves, which can expand our ways of understanding. I argue these processes are not akin to coding but to being with data in an embodied way. With dance, we use embodied movement to ask critical questions, to understand concepts and discover new insights through sense-making (CANCIEENNE & SNOWBER, 2003). In a similar way, the process of poetic inquiry honors knowledge that is co-constructed, relational, embodied, and dynamic (CARTER, 2017). Poetic inquiry often draws on the researcher's emotional responses to texts to make meanings (GLESNE, 1997) to highlight the emotional and experiential nature of reality in multivocal ways (CARTER, 2017). [30]

What visceral language can communicate arts-based analysis (SNOWBER, 2012)? How do we communicate "something that is not words yet is knowing" (BLUMENFELD-JONES, 2016, p.324)? Some argue that the art form itself should be used as the primary way of depicting the method of inquiry (ibid.). Yet as academics in the health sciences we must be able to articulate our method, whether embodied or not. Some choose to describe their process as sculpting metaphor (CANCIEENNE & SNOWBER, 2003); others describe how they made felt decisions through the analytic process (BLUMENFELD-JONES, 2016). I

continue to develop my own language and understanding of my arts-based methods of inquiry to capture the embodied process of discovery, as opposed to using a vocabulary that depicts my method as structured and linear, which it is not. [31]

Due to my desire to use this article to reflect methodologically on the use of dance and choreography as an analytic device, I did not attend to several elements of the research process. I did not spend time interrogating what happened during the "co-construction" of data and analysis between myself, the dancer, the choreographer and the videographer. Little is written about this type of collaboration (SHARP & DeCESARO, 2013) and I believe it deserves more consideration in the future. I also have not taken much space to discuss the strengths and limitations of using dance and choreography as a dissemination tool, which is an important part of this project and may help with the issues of representation that I discussed in Sections 5 and 6. Furthermore, I did not explore the compatibility of dance and choreography as analytic strategies with different methodologies. It would be interesting to further explore this beyond what is known about its compatibility with phenomenology. [32]

## 7. Conclusion

This work is a careful examination of embodied exploration that used dance as an analytic strategy. In returning to my question, "Are dance and choreography generative analytic tools? And if so, in what ways?" I argue that they are. They are generative in that they involved a process of analyzing field notes through a specific lens to explore, understand, and capture the "living of an experience"—the living of a role transition. The GRAHAM technique included a lens through which to ask critical questions in a cognitive and embodied sense. And the process contained new insights into what a role transition might entail. [33]

Through this article, I aim to contribute to the field of embodied arts-based methods in several ways. This article is the first to show the analytic process of using the GRAHAM dance technique to interpret and disseminate data, which others may be interested in exploring further. It includes a robust dialogue about what it means to use dance as a method of analysis and differentiates this process from reflexivity and coding. This is an important contribution as many researchers who use dance do so as a secondary analysis and/or dissemination tool once findings are established (BAGLEY & CANCIENNE, 2001; BOYDELL, 2011; VAN KATWYK & SEKO, 2017; WOODGATE et al., 2017). Therefore, this article offers insight into this process and provides a rationale for the use of dance as an analytic strategy. [34]

I assume that you, the reader, will need to see the results of my project to judge if the process that I have explained was, in fact, generative. Like other arts-based embodied research the best way to do this is to experience the work for yourself.<sup>1</sup> May I suggest that you suspend your cognitive sense-making and first listen with

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1 See e.g., <http://vimeo.com/54572701> [Accessed: May 20, 2020].

your body; pay attention to what understanding you cultivate about role transition with your embodied self. [35]

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## Author

*Celina CARTER* is a PhD candidate at the Dalla Lana School of Public Health at the University of Toronto and a registered nurse. Her research interests include critical qualitative research, arts-based research, interprofessional clinical education and practice, primary care, and end-of-life care and communication.

Contact:

Celina Carter

Dalla Lana School of Public Health  
University of Toronto  
155 College St Room 500, Toronto, ON M5T  
3M7, Canada

E-mail: [celina.carter@mail.utoronto.ca](mailto:celina.carter@mail.utoronto.ca)

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