Mobilizing Identity Formation as a Psychotherapist: An Artistic Heuristic Inquiry with Dance/Movement

A Thesis
Submitted to the Faculty of Drexel University by Melanie R. Haber in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts June 2009
Dedications

I dedicate my thesis work to my loving family for their endless support in all my endeavors and their constant faith in my abilities to succeed. I also dedicate this work to all my professors, friends, colleagues, and patients, who have contributed to my personal and professional growth. This work is in loving memory of my recent late grandmothers, Millie Sandler and Bernice Haber and my high school teacher Tina Lane, who will eternally continue to play an instrumental role in my development.
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Abstract

Mobilizing Identity Formation as a Psychotherapist: An Artistic Heuristic Inquiry with Dance/Movement
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The objective of this artistic heuristic inquiry is to explore how a creative arts therapy student’s practice of his or her own art form to explore personal identity can enhance the self-awareness necessary for professional development. Artistic inquiry refers to a method in which data are gathered, analyzed and findings reported using artistic media. Heuristic inquiry is a form of qualitative research in which the researcher has experienced the phenomenon under study, and is a subject of the study him or herself. For the purpose of this study, the researcher, a woman in the early adulthood stage of development, served as the sole participant to explore her self-awareness and identity transition from a student to a dance/movement therapist. The data collection included videotaped movement improvisation, journaling, and art making. Qualitative data analytic methods were employed in the discovery of emerging themes. Implications for the education of psychotherapists are discussed.

The major findings suggested that the existence of early adulthood developmental issues and milestones were significant in both the artistic and the prosaic portions of the data collected. In fact, the data collected indicated a strong relationship to personal identity and provide a way to understand how personal identity contributes to professional identity. The dominant emergent themes were developed through immersion in the data collection and analysis. These included loss, intimacy, self
perception, memory, and roles. A priori themes included issues pertaining directly to the
developmental stage and professional issues (e.g. mastery). The results also showed that
the artistic forms of the videotaped movement sessions and the visual art revealed
important data about the individual that the journal texts did not convey.
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

The objective of this artistic heuristic inquiry is to explore how a creative arts therapy student’s practice of his or her own art form to explore personal identity can enhance the self-awareness necessary in professional development. There are many developmental milestones and tasks that individuals face in the process of identity growth and change throughout the life span. According to Erikson (1986), identity corresponds with the core of the individual in regards to a mental and moral self-concept. He theorized that that there are several dimensions to identity and that its development and formation relate to a psychological process of reflection and observation.

In terms of the identity of a therapist, Aponte (1995) explained that therapy professions have long recognized the need for the training of therapists to manage personal issues in the context of therapy. He stated that in order to “pay careful attention to the human element in the essential relationship between the therapist and family, we must first explore ourselves as people, as men and women, and then as therapists” (p.155). Symington (1997) further emphasized the importance of the development of a therapist through self-examination.

Mahdi, Foster, and Little (1987) discussed the idea of transition or “liminality,” a concept coined by Victor Turner (p. 4). Those in a period of liminality are “at once no longer classified and not yet classified” (Mahdi, Foster, & Little, 1987, p. 6). During a liminal phase, undoing, dissolution, and decomposition are accompanied by processes of growth, transformation, and the reformulation of old elements in new patterns. Periods of
liminality in modern life include present day versions of rites of passage (e.g. Bar/Bat Mitzvahs and weddings), as well as phases where individuals are in rapid and developmental change (e.g. adolescence and studenthood). The process of becoming a psychotherapist fits Turner’s conceptualization of a liminal phase. An in-depth self-exploration with the use of dance and movement during periods of “liminality,” transitioning from student to therapist, could contribute to the enhancement of personal identity as a therapist in training.

The development of personal identity can also be translated to the process of forming the self as a dance/movement therapist. Dance/movement therapist and psychologist Patrizia Pallaro (1996) addressed the idea of identity regarding self-image and wrote:

In the psychotherapeutic process of dance/movement therapy, in order to strengthen and/or modify the experience of integrating the representations and the experiences of one’s own inner self, it is absolutely necessary to start from the body and its experiences (p. 115).

Her theories of self-discovery focused on the use of Authentic Movement in order to enhance self-image. Likewise dance/movement therapist Joan Chodorow (1998) emphasized the importance of movement as a means of communication emerging as an individual experiences a deep self awareness. Such movement can trigger powerful images, feelings, and kinesthetic sensations arising from the depths of stored childhood memories or connecting inner selves to the transcendent. While theories of identity, self-image, and authentic movement are well researched in the dance/movement therapy field to date, no known artistic inquiry has been utilized to discover the use of dance and
movement in exploring the self-concept of a therapist in training. Thus, the purpose of the study is to explore in depth how the use of movement exploration during the period of transition from a student to becoming a creative arts therapist could contribute to the enhancement of personal identity as a therapist.

According to Winnicott (1971), the therapist’s ability to be creative and to play is essential. “It is in playing and only in playing that the individual child or adult is able to be creative and to use the whole personality, and it is only in being creative that the individual (the therapist) discovers the self” (p. 54). Psychotherapy is executed in the overlap of the two play areas, that of the patient and that of the therapist. According to Winnicott, if the therapist cannot play, then he or she is not suitable for the work. If the patient cannot play, then something must be done to enable him or her to play, so thereafter psychotherapy can begin. Winnicott held that playing is vital because it is in playing that one is being creative and without the creative ability of play, one cannot understand the self.

Siegel (1995) used the idea of play to illustrate that “it is absolutely essential that dance therapists know their own movement repertoire thoroughly and that they have worked through their past motorically, as well as verbally” (p. 126). She stated that dance/movement therapists must be able to convert their counter-transference into movement empathy in order to better understand themselves and their patients. A danger exists especially for people who work as dance/movement therapists who may not be in conscious command of their movement repertoire. Thus, it is essential for a creative arts therapist to be in tune with his or her own artistic repertoire, and this is especially time for one who is transitioning from that of student to therapist.
A patient in psychotherapy is also in a liminal or transitional phase of growth and change. One who chooses and is compelled to go through the process of change and development whilst in therapy, is in a liminal phase. Therefore, the exploration of the liminal phase as a therapist in training may be analogous to the process of the transitional phase of patients. Under both circumstances, the individual is going through a process of transformation. The patient may discover new characteristics of self when dealing with and attempting to heal from difficulties, just as the therapist in training uncovers aspects of the self ignited by the process of change.

The study may benefit dance/movement therapist educators by describing how the development of a therapist’s identity occurs in the media used in the creative arts therapies. As a result, educators will have more information regarding movement authenticity and the development of the therapist in the dance/movement therapy field.

These findings could encourage dance/movement therapists experiencing periods of liminality or transition to explore their personal identity and movement in order to continue work as a strong, self-aware therapist. Finally, by adding another example to the small yet growing number of artistic inquiry projects in the dance/movement therapy lexicon, the present study may inspire dance/movement therapists to use the artistic inquiry method in further research endeavors.

The study utilized the methods of artistic inquiry and heuristic research to explore the phenomenon. For the purpose of this study, the researcher served as the subject. The blended artistic inquiry and heuristic methodology enabled the researcher, a student in the transitional phase of becoming a therapist, to explore the self-awareness and identity of a therapist in training. According to Brown (2008), “creative arts therapists must continue
to embody the creative spark that first birthed our respective disciplines and first drew individuals to this creative field (p. 201).” McNiff (1998) wrote that “if we are to further the practice and the imagination of the profession, we must begin to use the languages, the ways of thinking, and the modes of creative transformation that constitute our collective being” (p.31). The present study illustrates how creative processes, which utilize the tools and skills that creative arts therapists use regularly in practice, may be an important approach to research using the emerging methodology of artistic inquiry.
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview of the Literature

This literature review will explore 1) characteristics of personal identity growth, 2) professional identity formation in mental health therapists, 3) creative media use in the formation of the therapist, and 4) the practice of heuristic and artistic inquiry research methods. Normal adulthood identity growth, specifically the period of early adulthood, is the focus for the discussion of personal identity formation in this particular study. Thus, the selected literature will discuss the developmental issues and characteristics significant to the early adulthood stage of development. Consequently, identity formation will also be addressed for this population and be linked to the development of the therapist. Furthermore, it is important to this research to address the practice and significant aspects of creative media use, especially dance/movement, in the development of the therapist. Artistic and heuristic inquiry will also be discussed in order to illuminate the method of research being used for this study.

Personal Identity Growth

According to Newman and Newman (2006), growth occurs at every phase of life, from conception through very old age. At each stage, new abilities transpire, new roles are assumed, and new challenges must be confronted. As a result, a new orientation toward self and society emerges. Rogers (1961) wrote “a person is a fluid process, not a
fixed and static entity; a flowing river of change, not a block of solid material; a continually changing constellation of potentialities, not a fixed quantity of traits” (p. 122). Theorists such as Piaget and Erikson believed that the study of human development requires an examination of different periods of life embedded within the life span (Schaie & Willis, 1986).

Kroger (2000) explored ideas of early adulthood identity in terms of what makes up one’s identity, aspects of identity that change over time, and aspects of identity that remain the same over time. According to Kroger, a search for personal meaning has been the quest of many individuals, often highlighted in literary works ranging from Erikson’s (1958) *Young Man Luther* to Salinger’s (1951) *Catcher in the Rye* to McCarthy’s (1994) *The Crossing*. The common thread among these works has been the desire to define an individual’s identity and to illustrate how one discovers significant connections and pursuits within a larger cultural environment. Kroger wrote:

> Themes of stability and change, of psychological autonomy and connection, and of intrapsychic and contextual components have all been aspects of identity addressed and given differential emphasis by various identity theorists over the past 50 years. (p. 5)

Early adulthood is a phase of the life cycle that is comprised of various developmental tasks (Newman & Newman). Early adulthood is defined as the transitional stage of life from childhood and adolescence into adulthood, generally ages from 24 to 34 years (Kaplan & Sadock, 1998). Theorists and authors (Levinson, 1973; Beckett, 2003) have suggested that early adulthood appears to be a crucial period of normal development with distinct characteristics and importance for the understanding of
human development. In this transitional phase, a young person begins to leave home and live independently (Newman & Newman, 2006). This period is marked by biological development, the assumption of new social roles, and the socialization into these roles. The process involves learning skills and attitudes necessary to execute the roles well, and the eventual assumption of an adult self and life structure (Kaplan & Sadock).

During early adulthood, people negotiate the “psychosocial crisis of intimacy versus isolation,” originally described by Erikson, which includes the developmental task of relationships, which can be related to identity (Newman & Newman, 2006, p. 386). Furthermore, Newman and Newman wrote that during this phase:

Humans struggle to define themselves—they achieve a sense of identity---through a sense of connectedness with certain other people and groups and through feelings of distinctiveness from others. We establish categories that define whom we are connected to, whom we care about, and which of our own qualities we admire. The psychosocial perspective brings to light the dynamic interplay of the roles of the self and the other, the I and the We, as they contribute to the emergence of identity over the life course (p. 10).

Erikson (1995) also saw the challenges of early adulthood as being the establishment of intimate relationships with other adults. He suggested that only when one is secure and confident in his own identity can he take the risks involved in genuine social and sexual intimacy of a lasting kind. He went on to say that the avoidance of such experiences may lead to a deep sense of isolation and consequent self-absorption.

Erikson wrote:
The strength acquired at any stage is tested by the necessity to transcend it in such a way that the individual can take chances in the next stage with what was most vulnerably precious in the previous one. Thus, the young adult emerging from the search for and the insistence on identity is eager and willing to fuse his identity with that of others…even if this may call for significant sacrifices and compromise. (p. 237)

Beckett (2002) further stated that only when one is secure and confident in his or her identity, can he or she take the risks involved in genuine social and sexual intimacy of lasting kind.

In addition to the development of relationships, the construction of intelligence also occurs. Sternberg (2005) explained early adulthood intelligence as consisting of three major components: the mental component, the experiential component, and the contextual component. The mental component involves analyzing data. One utilizes the mental components to select what the individual has learned to solve problems. The experiential component is comprised of the relationship between intelligence, prior experience, and the ability to cope with new situations. With the experiential component, one uses personal experiences to insightfully apply old information to new situations. The contextual component involves the degree of success people achieve in meeting the demands of and coping with everyday life. It is also known as practical intelligence, a form of intelligence necessary for successes in one’s career. Sternberg deemed practical intelligence a term for career-oriented intelligence by which broad principles about business-appropriate behaviors are deduced and then applied in business situations. This form of intelligence is learned through observation and modeling. Practical intelligence
is highly correlated to business success.

Sternberg’s notion of practical intelligence can be likened to Labouvie-Vief’s (1994) concept of post-formal thought. Labouvie-Vief explained the notion of early adulthood intelligence as post formal thinking. Post-formal thought is a process that does not rely on logic or reason. Instead, it takes into account the relativistic nature of problems and solutions. In other words, early adulthood thoughts see gray areas. Adult thinking must be flexible and adaptive in order to cope in a complex, specialized society. This is flexible thinking that acknowledges the world as complex and contradictory. Thus, it allows for interpretive processes and reflects an understanding of relativity in interpretation of life events. It allows young adults to search for the best resolution by drawing on and integrating past experiences, which confers on them early adulthood tools for developing a professional identity. In post-formal thought, there is no right or wrong answer.

Based on the theories of the self constructed by anthropologist Maryland Mead (1934), the early adulthood identity is developed as a social structure. One’s self expands through social experience and activity. It is the unity of one’s complete self as merely the reflection of the individual’s social experience. Therefore, the individual is a product of society with identity arising out of the social experience. Subsequently, Shotter and Gergen (1989) and Gergen (1991) have advanced arguments that identity is shaped, enclosed, and controlled within ongoing relationships and the cultural context. Identity, from their perspective, is influenced by the demands of culture.

Pals (1999) examined the interactive relationships among personality, context and identity consolidation in a longitudinal study of women during early adulthood. She
determined that early adulthood involves identity consolidation, a process in which individuals invest themselves in new contexts and roles and evaluate their ongoing experience within them to construct and consolidate an adult identity.

Pals (1999) proposed that during early adulthood the tasks of constructing an identity require that individuals explore and choose new identity-defining contexts and roles. For example, through attempting to create an identity, individuals may reinforce their personalities through the connections of a new intimate relationship or the communication involved with selecting a place of employment. Thus, personality may begin to play a more central role than it did in childhood in determining what contexts define people’s lives, and contexts, in turn, may serve to crystallize personalities and promote its continuity over time.

Regarding personality, Pals (1999) focused on ego-resiliency, a broad personality resource reflecting the capacity to cope effectively and flexibly maintain positive identity commitments in the face of challenging life circumstances. She proposed that early adulthood is not only a period of identity development, but also that “the emphasis of identity work may change to reflect the unique demands of early adulthood, namely, confronting the social realities of adult life” (p. 297). Life events and transitions during early adulthood challenge identity and stimulate its growth.

According to Erikson (1986), identity correlates with the heart of the individual in regards to a mental and moral self-concept. He theorized that that there are several dimensions to identity and that its development and structure relate to a psychological process of reflection and observation. Kroger (2000) further described identity as “involving a subjective feeling of sameness and continuity over time” (p. 7). In different
places and in different social situations, one still has a sense of being the same person. Kroger (2000) wrote “thus, identity for the holder as well as the beholder ensures a reasonably predictable sense of continuity and social order across multiple contexts” (p. 7).

According to theorist Stern (1985), the self and its boundaries are at the center of philosophical speculation on human nature, and the sense of self and its complement, the sense of the other, are universal phenomena that strongly influence social experiences. He wrote:

While no one can agree on exactly what the self is, as adults we embody a very real sense of self that permeates daily social experience. It arises in many forms. There is the sense of a self that is a single, distinct, integrated body; there is the agent of actions, the experiencer of feelings, the maker of intentions, the architect of plans, the transposer of experience into language, the communicator and sharer of personal knowledge (p. 5).

Furthermore, development has also included theories that identity formation is largely created by a combination of interactions and transactions between internal and external forces. Colarusso and Nemiroff (1981), delineated development as the “emergence of forms, of function and of behavior which are the outcome of exchanges between the organism on the one hand, the inner and outer environment on the other hand” (p. 62-63).

While identity may cross over various contexts, one will go through phases and changes. Anthropologist Turner (1977) defined the idea of transition as a period of liminality. Turner developed the term from the idea of rites of passage, the rituals that
accompany one’s changes of place, state, social, position and age. Liminality names the state of being for “threshold people,” those who are in transition between two worlds (p. 7). In rites of passage, these are often the people being initiated. These are the individuals who a society has determined ready to move from the world of childhood into adulthood and who accordingly must endure testing and receive training in rituals associated with their new roles in society.

Turner describes those being initiated during this transition time as being “neither here nor there” and “betwixt and between” (Mahdi, Foster, & Little, 1987, 0.4). The individuals lack official status. They are in a state where great potential exists as they are preparing to become a part of something new. During a liminal phase, undoing, dissolution, and decomposition are accompanied by processes of growth, transformation, and the reformulation of old elements in new patterns. In other words, the liminal phase is a time of refashioning, where a person being initiated is reduced or ground down in preparation for being shaped into a person capable of new abilities.

Mahdi, Foster, and Little (1987) wrote:

Anthropologists and social scientists generally agree that modern human life is composed of seven major passages: birth, childhood to adulthood, marriage (sometimes), divorce (sometimes), midlife (reaching middle age), aging, and death. In traditional cultures, these life passages (with the possible exception of divorce), were marked by ceremony and ritual. These ceremonies of passage did not exist because of superstition or ignorance. They existed as a means of culturally guaranteeing that each person who passed from one stage to the next was ready to do so and that
everyone around understood and consented to the step being taken. (p.84)

Wotherspoon (2005) uses Turner’s concept to identify graduate school as a liminal state. He proposes graduate school as a stage bridging typical schooling with entering the real world. It is a place and time in which one learns in-depth his or her chosen discipline, “instruction often involving a great deal of deconstruction and the unlearning of much that had been taught in earlier stages of instruction” (Wotherspoon, 2005, p. 9). He states that in graduate school one learns to access and comprehend the foundations of a chosen discipline, without which one could never participate in creative work to advance knowledge in the particular field. Thus, the process of developing a profession, such as becoming a psychotherapist, fits Turner’s conceptualization of a liminal phase.

Psychologist and anthropologist Rogers (1961) wrote about hindrances to one fully discovering his or her identity. He postulated: “In our daily lives there are a thousand and one reasons for not letting ourselves experience our attitudes fully, reasons from our past and from the present, reasons that reside within the social situation” (p. 111). In fact, he believed:

(One) discovers how much of his life is guided by what he thinks he should be, not by what he is. Often he discovers that he exists only in response to the demands of others, that he seems to have no self of his own, that he is only trying to think, and feel, and behave in the way that others believe he ought to think, and feel and behave. (p. 110)

Throughout life, one experiences new stages, acquires new skills, faces and overcomes new obstacles, and takes on new roles. As a result of these endeavors, a fresh
sense of identity and self takes form. Individuals in the phase of early adulthood, in particular, undergo specific developmental tasks and challenges integral to shaping one’s identity. Independence, relationship building, intimacy, honing of intelligence, sophistication of thought processes, assuming new roles specifically related to career choice, and social experience make up one’s early adulthood identity formation. Often, these constructs are formed during a period of liminality or transition, where one is working towards finding one’s place in society.

Professional Identity in Mental Health Therapists

According to Feen-Calligan (2005), “professional identity is a term used to describe both the collective identity of a profession and an individual’s own sense of the professional role” (p. 122). Ultimately, a professional self transpires that encompasses assuming an official role, which is assigned, and a professional identity, which is negotiated. Professional identity is a product of biography, personal choices, and social circumstances through which professionals begin to test and accept the traditions and obligations of a profession.

Stark, Lowther, & Hagerty (1986) further stated that professional identity is associated with mastery of knowledge and skills in a particular profession, and involves a profound and life-long commitment to that profession, developed as a result of being a member of a group with a philosophy of its own.

In terms of the identity of a therapist, Aponte (1995) explained that therapy has long recognized the need for the training of therapists to manage personal issues in the
context of therapy. He stated that in order to “pay careful attention to the human element in the essential relationship between the therapist and family, we must first explore ourselves as people, as men and women, and then as therapists” (p. 155).

Symington (1997) further emphasized the importance of the development of a therapist through self-examination. Symington discussed the qualities necessary to the making of a good psychotherapist. It is essential that the therapist exhibit, for example, imagination, curiosity of mind, moral courage, and self-esteem to effectively help a patient. In addition to these elements, one must explore him or herself as a person, rather than solely as a therapist, in order to fully understand the self and be able to provide the support and strength necessary for the client. Thus, Symington’s work identified the steps a therapist-in-training must take in order to succeed as a professional.

Symington (1997) suggested:

The would-be psychotherapist undertakes personal therapy for himself to assist him in reaching acknowledgement of his true self and also to assist him emotionally to do so. The development of a person’s emotional capacities is clearly central to any psychotherapy training, and without it all intellectual striving to master concepts becomes a hollow endeavor. (p. 11)

Feen-Calligan (2005) elaborated that to all human service fields, professional identity is considered very important when the work of the profession involves closer interaction with, and responsibility for, other human beings. He wrote:

What is involved in learning to become a creative arts therapist, a doctor, or a nurse is not simply the acquisition of skills, but an entire
way of understanding the world, an epistemology, a set of values (p. 123).

For creative arts therapists, in particular, many authors have suggested that there is an intimate relationship between personal inner development and professional growth as a creative arts therapist. Levick (1995) identified compassion, empathy, and patience as foundations for professional identity. McNiff (1986) highlighted the understanding of how personality and behavior influence clients and therapy. Moreover, the need to understand one’s values in order to be respectful of and to work effectively with others whose values differ from one’s own are extremely important (McNiff, 1986).

The formal development of professional identity begins in graduate education as Levick (1995) suggests. She highlighted the idea of education that includes “training and core curriculum, role definition, basic knowledge, competency…relationship of self to other mental health educational teams, supervision and consultation, standards and research and a code of ethics” (p. 291). McNiff (1986) also believed that in graduate education, “students find that their primary professional identity formation takes place through practical training” (p. 135).

Anton Hart (1985) believed that becoming a psychotherapist involves a change in the way the psychotherapist trainee sees him or herself. He stated that many psychotherapy modalities acknowledge that a practitioner’s fundamental clinical tool is his self.

Hart (1985) explicated:

The therapist’s self is involved in the spontaneous process of psychotherapeutic interaction and in the psychoanalytic concept of
empathy. Trainees in psychotherapy must bring together their personal identity and the role of psychotherapist and must resolve the struggle between personal self and therapist self by splitting or by integration. When conceptualizing the development of the psychotherapist’s identity, six aspects of that identity may be considered: (1) the unique interaction between the psychotherapist's personal identity and the professional role; (2) the feeling of being a psychotherapist as opposed to the feeling of playing the role of psychotherapist; (3) being or feeling like a therapist in one's day-to-day life; (4) identification with a particular psychotherapeutic figure, theoretical model, or institution; (5) the level of integration of personal identity and the professional role; and (6) the expectations that the psychotherapist has of his work. (p. 21-22)

Thus, a “better understanding of the identity transformation of psychotherapist trainees will facilitate both the teaching and the learning of psychotherapy” (Hart, 1985, p. 24).

Bouchard (1998) recommended each creative arts therapist pursue personal development in accordance with a sense of professional direction, which many include personal therapy, spending time in a creative space to practice one’s media, building relationships of trust with other members of the profession, reading, and reflecting on one’s own practice.

In training as a dance/movement therapist, in particular, dance/movement therapists Fischer and Chaiklin (1992) described how one must be able to take on the role of participant observer and must have a clear understanding of and responsibility to his or
her own dance in relation to the other individual. “Just as the tension of any existing anxiety present in the mother induces anxiety within the infant, such tension in the therapist will affect the interaction” (p. 138). The therapist and the client meet each other in movement and create a dialogue together.

Dance/movement therapy pioneer Chace held that the therapist provides “her own sensitivity, creativity, and ability to communicate spontaneously through body action to add the dimension that must come from her and that is uniquely hers” (Chaiklin, 1975, p. 148). Fischer and Chaiklin (1992) added that there would be some who are more skilled than others in providing that dimension of self; however, it is the job of students and professionals alike to practice, explore and further develop their potential.

Theorists such as Aponte (1995), Chaiklin and Fischer (1992), and Symington (1997) agree that it is within the framework of the therapeutic relationship that transformation transpires.

Chaiklin and Fischer (1992) wrote:

As therapists, we offer ourselves to others: our thoughts, feelings, and bodies. Sometimes our mere presence is enough for others to be self-observant. Beyond the mirroring, reflecting and supportive work that we do, there is the depth of work that challenges to the client to be aware of and work through issues that are conflictual. We can only do that as therapists to the extent that we are self-aware. It is through our perceptions that we respond and structure the treatment. Each therapist’s dance contains his/her own movement characteristics, coping mechanisms and possible countertransference responses. As therapists, we are unlikely
to be totally resolved of our conflictual issues, but it is imperative to keep questioning our perceptions and initiated dances, and to recognize and claim the impact we have on others (p. 139).

Chaiklin and Fischer (1992) further discussed that regardless of therapists’ expertise, they should explore a range of movement structures for the purpose of expanding their own repertoire of responses, testing the ability to loosen and maintain boundaries of self, working with containment of self and others, honing countertransference awareness, and opening themselves to experiencing the tensions, fears, and pain of others within their own viscera and musculature. Chaiklin and Fischer stated (1982):

Questions arise which can only be answered in exploration through movement, such as the dance therapist’s possible issues of overidentification, projection of self onto patients, and use of space, strength, passivity, and energy in relation to others (p. 140).

Schmais (2004) believed a person’s style and their contemporaneous behavior is based on an combination of temperament, culture, values, beliefs, professional and social roles, and the evaluation of themselves in action. Kernberg (1980) saw the function of the therapist represented by, “that aspect of personality which centers upon his own self concept and the related internalized conceptions of significant others…” (p. 259).

Schmais (2004) further stated that a dance therapist whose status as an authority figure carries weight and influence must be sensitive to how her behavior may affect patients. “The therapeutic relationship is enhanced when one is emotionally accessible, can sense their own visceral and kinesthetic responses, resonate with images from the
past, and attune to their fellow students’ symbolic constructions” (Schmais, 2004, p. 51).

Emotional accessibility implies being open to sharing and responding to the breadth of human emotions ranging from deep despair to raging hostility, without feeling threatened or engulfed.

The development of one’s professional identity, especially in the mental health field, is a process that involves the examination of the self. As aforementioned, forming a professional identity requires a mastery of skills, acquisition of knowledge, and preparation for a lifelong commitment in a particular field. For a therapist in training, one must undergo self-examination in order to better understand the role he or she will play within a therapeutic relationship. Dance/movement therapists, in particular, must understand their range of movement structures, the way their body reacts to others and conveys emotions, thoughts, strengths, and limitations. A complex and thorough comprehension of the self allows for a better understanding of the patient. It is in developing a strong professional identity that a therapist can be an effective source of support.

Creative Media Use

Development of Creativity

According to theorists such as Yalom (2002), Arieti (1994), and Nass (1989), individuals are continually developing and the process of therapy, along with art marking, can help support and facilitate growth and transformation in healthy individuals. Early on, Erikson (1968) suggested that identity can be examined through the lens of creativity.
He wrote:

We can study the identity crisis also in the lives of creative individuals who could resolve it for themselves only by offering to their contemporaries a new model of resolution such as that expressed in works of art or in original deeds, and who further more are eager to tell us all about it in diaries, letters, and self representations. And even as the neuroses of a given period reflect the ever-present inner chaos of man’s existence in a new way, the creative crises point to the period’s unique solutions (p. 134).

Arieti (1994) discussed how Freud believed that creativity “originates in man’s conflicts that stem from fundamental biological drives” (p. 4). The urge to create is seen as an attempt to find a solution to these conflicts. Arieti developed a three part theory to explain the process of creativity. The first part involves the idea that there are intra-psychic activities involved in creativity; including primary process thinking and secondary process thinking. The second part is that there are conditions that nurture creativity and bring out primary process thinking. The third part is that there are conditions in culture that nurture creativity. Arieti was concerned with a blending of primary process thinking and secondary process thinking, which he called the tertiary process. Through the tertiary process creativity occurred with a blending of the rational and irrational which resulted in something new and desirable.

According to Arieti (1994), there are six characteristics that support creativity in the individual. They include the ability to be alone so that one can have space from society and be able to daydream, the ability to be inactive so that one can daydream, the
ability to freely think which allows for the ability to find similarities, the ability to be
gullible so that one is open and naïve, the ability to remember past traumatic conflicts
which enables us to connect to humans and the pains of life and to stay in touch with
those experiences, and the ability to be alert and disciplined which brings one into the
secondary process thinking.

Nass (1989) further states that creative people are able to face developmental
challenges with different tools and resources than the average person. It is a means for the
artist to make sense of his or her life and sense of his or her identity. The artist is able to
get through life and cope with experiences due to his or her creativity.

Nass (1989) wrote that the creative person also has greater access to body
processes and rhythms and to his experience to use developmentally earlier modes to
reorganize experience. He further stated, “The talented individual in addition has the
autonomous ego gifts that enable him to use this pool of experience to reorganize a view
of the world and present it to others, and his talent can function independent of conflict”
(p. 161).

Winnicott (1971) also discussed the individual’s capacity to live creatively. He
started by looking at the “intermediate area of experiencing” or the space between
internal and external reality, as a place where children initiate their relationship with the
world first through transitional objects and later through play and shared playing, which
eventually leads them to true creativity. Based on the importance of children’s ability to
play and be creative, Winnicott discussed the significance of the therapist’s ability to be
creative and to play as essential. It is through play that the therapist can reshape a sense
of self to adapt to new roles, just as the child discovers the self. Without play, Winnicott
believed that one could not understand the self. Thus, a therapist who does not understand the self cannot effectively execute his or her work.

Furthermore, Arieti believed that the modality of choice can be the driving force propelling one through difficult times in life. Creative expressions such as dance, journaling, art, and photography allow one to dive into the primary process and healthfully express it through performing in the secondary process (Arieti, 1994).

“All creative acts, whether choreography, science or research, occur within a recognizable creative process” (Meekums, 1993, p. 15). This process is commonly considered to be cyclical with four stages: preparation, incubation, illumination and evaluation (Meekums, 2004). Preparation involves assessment, establishing safety, and left brain activity, Incubation includes letting go of conscious control and the not-knowingness, Illumination encompasses the emergence of insights, and Evaluation entails the grounding of insights in the world (Meekums, 2004). Meekums elaborated on the cycle, “As we travel along the spiral, we pass the same images several times, but each time from a slightly elevated perspective. The result is increased clarity and ability to see new gestalts” (p. 15).

Creative Processes

Dance/movement therapist Pallaro (1996) addressed the idea of examining one’s identity through the use of Authentic Movement and wrote:

In the psychotherapeutic process of dance/movement therapy, in order to strengthen and/or modify the experience of integrating the representations and the experiences of one’s own inner self, it is absolutely necessary to
start from the body and its experiences. (p. 115)

Pallaro used object relations theory to emphasize the experience of being a person and the process involving the differentiation from and merging with internal and external images and stimuli. In doing so, one must experience an awareness of bodily sensations through explorations of the skin’s boundaries and different body parts, finding various ways of moving those parts, exaggerating and intensifying movements, releasing inner tensions and exploring one’s own body rhythms. Thus, Pallaro’s theories of self-discovery focused on the use of authentic movement in order to enhance self-image.

Dance/movement therapist Chodorow (1991) emphasized the importance of authentic movement as a means of communication emerging as an individual experiences a deep self-awareness. Authentic movement generates a profound awareness of the sensory world, clarifying one’s perceptions, and affirming feelings that address the creative, psychological, and spiritual dimensions of an individual. Working with authentic movement enables the person to connect with vital inner resources that enhance the sense of meaning in daily experiences. Through this process, an individual is able to listen to the information and wisdom that is contained within the body. Authentic movement is a way for one to become more aware of themselves and their experiences in the world. Chodorow (1991) quotes dance/movement therapist and pioneer of authentic movement Whitehouse in that “following the inner sensation, allowing the impulse to take the form of physical action is active imagination in movement. It is here that the most dramatic psychophysical connections are made available to consciousness” (p. 27).

Chodorow (1991) further explains that authentic movement involves the process of creating spontaneous movement that is the result of deeper inner listening of oneself.
She quotes Whitehouse as describing “the core of the movement experience as being the sensation of moving and being moved” (p. 28). When engaged in authentic movement, one experiences a moment of total awareness, where the coming together of what one is doing and what is happening occurs. Through this deep connection, authentic movement accesses the unconscious and brings into awareness unconscious content. Such movement can trigger powerful images, feelings, and kinesthetic sensations arising from the depths of stored childhood memories or connecting inner selves to the transcendent.

In addition to studying dance and movement as a means for exploring the self, Hervey (2000) asked and answered the question: “can art-making reveal truth/meaning/understanding?” Several eminent thinkers, among them, Martin Heidegger in The Origin of the Work of Art (1971/1976), emphatically believed so” (p. 49).

Collingwood (1939) proposed that the artist experiences an emotional response to the stimulus/data and that ensuing artwork reveals such an emotion. In the process the art maker comes to understand what the emotion is and what the meaning of the experience is.

Dewey explained that art has the ability of “clarifying and concentrating meanings contained in scattered and weakened ways in the material of other experiences” (1934/1976, p. 579). He deemed art as “a dynamic, self-forming, self-fulfilling, interaction between man and reality. Through…which an inner meaningfulness is progressively developed, the individual reaches a consummatory conclusion, which is the building up of the total meaning of the experience in terms of imminent, i.e., qualitative, meaning (p. 579).” Thus, the art making reveals the meaning of one’s experience.

Payne (1993) discussed artwork as a record offering important data about the artist
himself. In the case of therapy, she described art works as “a method of recording the patient’s experience of the session” (p. 92). Payne believed the works played in an important role in one’s self-concept. She elaborated “the retrospective review of the series of pictures demonstrates progress and changes which have taken place over days, weeks, months and even years” (p. 92).

Photographing the self is another form of using creativity to explore personal growth. One of the most lauded photographers of the twentieth century, Cartier-Bresson (1999), addressed photography as a means of communicating aspects of one’s identity. He wrote:

To take photographs means to recognize – simultaneously and within a fraction of a second—both the fact itself and the rigorous organization of visually perceived forms that give it meaning. It is putting one’s head, one’s eye, and one’s heart on the same axis. As far as I am concerned, taking photographs is a means of understanding, which cannot be separated from other means of visual expression. It is a way of shouting, of freeing oneself, not of proving or asserting one’s originality. It is a way of life. (p. 16)

In fact, Ziller (1990) used photographing of the self to conduct psycho/sociological research on “self theory.” He used photographs taken by subjects in response to questions such as “Who are you? What does the good life mean to you? What does woman mean? What does war mean? What does the United States mean to you?” (p. 10). Ziller added, “through photography we instantly become artists” (p. 37). In this statement he acknowledges an artistic method used by his subjects to gather data
about themselves.

According to Hervey (2000), Ziller’s work “suggests possibilities for artistic methods of gathering data in dance/movement therapy research.” Thus, photographing oneself engaged in dance could be a useful method for examining the self.

Choreography is another medium in which one can express the self. Hervey (2000) states that as a work of art dance can say more than could be said with works arranged in “a linear, predetermined, traditional form about the quality of feelings one experiences in the particular life passage it explored” (p. 123). Choreographer and dancer Bill T. Jones (Hervey, 2000) composed the work Still/Here to communicate the “complex, many layered, phenomenological qualities of the experience” (p. 123). In order to create Still/Here Jones conducted workshops around the country with people facing life-threatening illnesses. Jones asked participants to remember the highs and lows of their lives and to imagine their own deaths. The participants were then asked to transform these explored memories and feelings into expressive movement. Jones incorporated these movements into the choreographic work of Still/Here. Jones’s artistic work demonstrates the movements of his life story: his first encounter with white people, confusion over his sexuality, his partner Arnie Zane’s death from AIDS, and Jones’s own HIV status. Through choreography, Jones was able to tell his story and the story of others suffering from illness. He utilized the art of dance to reveal individual truths as well as reflections of the universal experience.

Anthropologist Dissanayake (1992) also discusses the use of choreography as a way to express the self. “Choreography, the art of dance, and everyday movement provide a rhythmic pattern, a system of meaningful motions of the body that can
communicate an interpretation of the world in which we live” (p. 200). Each person’s movement schema expresses social and cultural meanings. Dissanayake further discussed that bodies not only serve to represent social constructions of gender, race, and sexuality but can also embody a somatic identity (the experience of one’s physicality). The pairing of one’s cultural identity and somatic identity enables the dancer both to emulate and challenge his or her identity.

Dissanayeke (1992) wrote:

Arts-based researchers explore how they have been socially constructed through our bodies as well as how the physicality of our technique and lived experience moves us beyond our social constructions. (p. 200)

Dissanayake describes a performance of dance as a means to display the self as in instrument which is implicit in the performances is the qualitative aspect of self as instrument. Instead of considering the body as only an instrument or tool, as it often is, Dissanayke encouraged a broader view of the body as a locus of discovery. The human body and its ordinary movements that make up dance seem to lead to a focused and felt awareness of human presence in the world. Dance enables that interpretation of self and activity to be felt as something much stronger.

Dissanayke further states that dance can be seen as extension of music, its visual form. It makes music objective, externalizing the inner dancers to move to some measure that suggests a kind of inner music, and even if there is no music to dance to, dancers move to some measure that suggests a kind of inner music (p. 123).

Music theorist Hanser (2000) also discussed the importance of music for generating self expression and promoting body movement. “A considerable body of experimental
and clinical research examines the effects of music in its many forms, including performing instrumental and vocal music, listening, composing, improvising, moving to, conducting, analyzing, or talking about music” (Hanser, 2000, p. 2). According to Hanser, when one is unable to speak, move, or think, music helps one to overcome such stillness to communicate.

Music also serves to help one make sense of their feelings. Hanser (2000) wrote:

Another therapeutic aspect of music is the meaningful content and affect conveyed to the listener through musical compositions. Individuals may begin to understand their own feelings when they listen to a song which expresses similar ideas. (p. 11)

Arts Based Research and Heuristic Inquiry

“Art-based research grows from a trust in the intelligence of the creative process and a desire for relationships with the images that emerge from it. These two focal points are the basis for a new tradition of inquiry” (McNiff, 1998, p. 37).

The process for art-based research methods, namely artistic and heuristic inquiry methods, is one that cannot be clearly explicated within the limits of qualitative or quantitative data as are many other research methods. It is a research process that utilizes the significance of the artistic process as an avenue for collecting data. Clinicians and theorists such as Hervey (2000) and McNiff (1998) have explored and written in depth about the artistic and heuristic inquiry methods as invaluable procedures for compiling data in a field whose vitality comes from its utilization of the creative arts in therapy.
“Artistic Inquiry is defined as research that: (1) uses artistic methods of gathering, analyzing, and/or presenting data; (2) engages in and acknowledges a creative process, and (3) is motivated and determined by the aesthetic values of the researcher(s)” (Hervey, 2000, p.xiii). In artistic inquiry methods, the research questions may actually be created through the making of art, and the art and data may also be created in response to the questions at anytime during the process by either the researcher or the subjects/co-researchers (Hervey, 2000).

Hervey (2000) elaborated on why such a method is beneficial to the dance/movement therapy field in particular:

I believe most dance/movement therapists value: relationship, embodiment, creativity, dance, sensation, action, play, intuition, wholeness, empathy, authenticity, emotion, metaphor, imagination, healing, beauty, the unconscious, and the spirit. Though it would be difficult to put a numerical or monetary value on any of them, these are what make dance/movement therapy uniquely what it is. Artistic inquiry is a form of research that engages and reveals these phenomena more directly than scientific methods ever could, and so authentically reflects some of the more qualitative values of the profession (p. 17).

McNiff (1998) wrote that if creative arts therapists are to further the practice and the imagination of the profession, they must begin to use the languages, the ways of thinking, and the modes of creative transformation that constitute the profession’s collective being. McNiff (1998) outlined the importance of artistic inquiry in contributing to the richness and core of the creative arts therapy professions as well as to
contribute to the nascent body of this research type in the field.

Hervey (2000) wrote:

Understanding much of the human experience, including art and creativity, requires ways of knowing that can best be described as aesthetic, emotional, and intuitive. Many have asserted that study in the human sciences needs an epistemological approach that is independent of the scientific method (p. 182).

Hervey (2000) further explicated:

One of the challenges of dance as a form of data collection is that it is transient, as any dancer or choreographer knows. In order to use dance as data, it must be captured in some way, so that it can be looked back upon (or re-searched) in order to be analyzed (p. 185).

Brown discussed how with art-based research methods the line between text and context is vague and individual voices are valued (Brown, 2008). “As art making involves the continual co-creation of the self, where the self and subject are intertwined this research also fits into the poststructuralist paradigm, which embraces ambiguity and uncertainty” (p. 204).

McNiff (1998) elaborated:

The greatest challenge presented by art-based research is the boundless possibilities…the truly distinguishing feature of creative discovery is the embrace of the unknown. If I present one way as the definitive method of inquiry I will be omitting the endless possibilities (pg. 15-16).

According to research done by dance/movement therapist and researcher Brown,
“few published CAT research articles (Fenner, 1996, Juilliard et al., 2000, and Politsky, 1995a) have documented a model of research that embraces the creative process that creative arts therapists use daily in their clinical work.” Brown reported that from 2000 to 2007 there were only two arts-based studies presented at the Annual American Dance Therapy Association Conference Research Poster Sessions, Tonsey’s research with Muslim women in 2003 and her own research on the importance of making art for the creative arts therapist in 2007. She cited that it is also plausible that the “lack of published artistic inquiries comes from the difficulty in capturing this methodology in writing” (p. 202).

Brown described work done by Mullen (2003), which explored an eruption of arts-based inquiry in the social sciences, more specifically within the arts-based educational research community. In “A Self-Fashioned Gallery of Aesthetic Practice” she explained how she created a performance text, a “postmodern gallery space” in the journal, *Qualitative Inquiry* (Mullen, 2003, p. 165). In her work, she explained how arts-based inquiry has created a fusion of research forms including narrative prose, poetry, drama, painting, journaling, collage, and life history.

Moustakas (1990) explained the processes and phases involved in the heuristic method. He described first the importance of identifying the focus of inquiry, then the essential beginning process of self-dialogue in entering in a dialogue with the phenomena.

Moustakas (1990) explicated the process and method of heuristic research. He wrote:

> Heuristics is a way of engaging in scientific search through methods and
processes aimed at discovery; a way of self-inquiry and dialogue with others aimed at finding the underlying meanings of important human experiences. The deepest currents of meaning and knowledge take place within the individual through one’s senses, perceptions, beliefs, and judgments. This requires a passionate, disciplined commitment to remain with a question intensely and continuously until it is illuminated or answered. (1990, p. 15.)

In his discussion and explanation of the heuristic process as a form of self-inquiry aimed at discovering the meanings of human experiences, Moustakas identified the steps involved. In this process, the researcher is the subject who submerges him or herself into the exploration of the phenomenon. Moustakas wrote, “In this way, one is able to encounter and examine it, to engage in a rhythmic flow with it – back and forth, again and again – until one has discovered its multiple meanings” (1990, p. 16).

Furthermore Moustakas delineated initial engagement, immersion, incubation, illumination, explication, and creative synthesis as the important steps created the heuristic experience. These components have been defined by Moustakas (1990) as follows: 1) The internal frame of reference pertains to the internal base or frame of reference on which further knowledge of the self is built and evolved; 2) Indwelling refers to the process of turning inwards to comprehend the nature of the experience; 3) Focusing consists of clearing an internal space to enable more freedom to concentrate on thoughts and feeling. Focusing aims to highlight the vital themes and elements of the question being explored.

Researcher Van Manen (1990) discusses the nature of the process of the “lived
experience” (p.72). The lived experience describes the exploration of the inner workings of one’s being. Van Manen discusses diaries, journals, and logs as sources of lived experiences, especially for purposes that are of educational, research, personal growth, religious, and therapeutic value. He proposes that keeping a regular diary may help a person to reflect on significant aspects of his or her past and present life. Journal writing may also inspire one to set life-goals. Journal writing is also used for the purpose of “self-discovery” and can contribute to one’s learning process. Students, in particular, are encouraged to use journals to reflect on their learning experiences and to discover new relationships that they might otherwise not see. Researchers, too, have found that keeping journals can be beneficial for maintaining a record of insights gained, for discovering patterns of work in progress, for reflecting on previous entries, and for making the activities of research themselves topics for study. Using aforementioned purposes of journal, diary, or log writing “it is likely that such sources may contain reflective accounts of human experiences that are of phenomenological value” (p. 73).

Van Manen (1990) also discussed art as a means of the lived experience that is also commonly used for human science research. Each artistic medium (painting, sculpture, music, cinematography, etc) has its own language of expression. He wrote:

Objects of art are visual, tactile, auditory, kinetic texts- texts consisting of not a verbal language but a language nevertheless, and a language with its own grammar. Because artists are involved in giving shape to their lived experience, the products of art are in essence lived experiences transformed into transcended configurations (p. 74).
Summary

The nature and development of identity has been studied and theorized for many years. Identity has been explained as a compilation of self-perception, sense of self, characteristics or personality traits, life experiences, interactions, and transactions. Yet, the vast intricacies of the makeup, expression, and growth of identity are persistently questioned, explored, and evolved in order to keep up with modern day implications for the development of self.

These studied concepts of identity development translate to the professional world. One must explore him or herself as a person in order to create a role for the self as a professional. Therapists, in particular, must visit such a construct in order to be strong specialists who can understand the roles they play in a therapeutic relationship with clients. They must understand their own fundamental values consisting of compassion, empathy, and patience. These values cross over to the creative arts in therapy field, where dance/movement therapists must cultivate a sophisticated awareness of their own body rhythms and repertoires and the ways they respond to clients to achieve a better sense of their own professional identity.

Theories of creativity suggest that creative media use is a significant tool to explore aspects of the self and to form a concept of one’s identity. Authentic movement, dance improvisation, journaling, art making, photography, and choreography are examples of modalities useful in reflecting on one’s experiences. Thus, the process of artistic inquiry, a procedure of gathering data using the art making process, and heuristic inquiry, the study of the self, could be useful methods for understanding the ways in
which one’s identity shifts during the growth and development of a graduate student in
the early adulthood stage of life transitioning into the professional role of a
dance/movement therapist.
CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

Design

The study addresses the use of artistic heuristic inquiry to explore how a creative arts therapy student’s practice of his or her own art form to explore personal identity can enhance the self-awareness necessary in professional development. Does a creative arts therapist’s practice of his or her own art form during periods of liminality to explore personal identity enhance the self-awareness necessary in professional development?

The artistic inquiry component, as delineated by McNiff (1998) and Wadsworth Hervey (2000), includes the artistic endeavor of improvisational movement combined with journaling, as the primary forms of data collection. The heuristic methodology, as explained by Moustakas (1990) will involve the six stages of heuristic methodology: the initial engagement, immersion, incubation, illumination, explication, and creative synthesis.

Operational definition of terms

Artistic Inquiry: Artistic inquiry, or arts-based research, is a process of engaging in a creative process, using artistic methods, for the purpose of collecting, analyzing, and presenting data. (Hervey, 2000, p. 7)

Dance/Movement Therapy: The American Dance Therapy Association defines dance/movement therapy as “the psychotherapeutic use of movement as a process which
furthers the emotional, cognitive and physical integration of the individual” (Hervey, 2000, p. 8).

**Early Adulthood:** For the purpose of this study, early adulthood will be defined as the period of life between the ages of 20 and 30 years old.

**Heuristics:** Heuristic inquiry is a process of engagement in which the researcher searches to understand or illuminate a phenomenon or question through discovering the meaning of experience. Heuristic research provides an organized sequence of phases for investigating the human experience. In heuristic research, the researcher is studying his or her own experience. Thus, the self is the subject. (Moustakas, 1990, p.9).

**Identity:** The personal idiosyncrasies that separate one person from the next, known as the personal identity; and the collection of social roles that a person might play, known as either the social identity or the cultural identity. Growth in identity development can be identified through experience in a series of stages in which identity is further honed in response to increasingly sophisticated challenges. (Erikson, 1968).

**Professional Identity:** Professional Identity is a term used to describe both the collective identity of a profession and an individual’s own sense of the professional role. Professional identity is a product of biography, personal choices, and social circumstances through which professionals begin to test and accept the traditions and obligations of a profession. (Feen-Calligan, 2005)
Subjects

There is one human subject in this study. I am the human subject, the researcher who will serve as both the investigator and the subject. Using me as the subject and revealing the experiences throughout the artistic heuristic process through artistic mediums and processes is the paradigm for exploring the enhancement of personal identity essential to the professional development of a creative arts therapist. Due to the heuristic nature of the study, IRB approval was not needed.

I am a second year dance/movement therapy student transitioning to become a dance/movement therapist. I am a 26 year old, Caucasian, Jewish female. I was raised by my mother and father as an only child in Northern Jersey in an affluent community. My father is a physician and my mother is a Real Estate Agent. I am extremely close with my family, but, unfortunately, my aunts, uncles, and cousins live far away. All my grandparents have passed away.

Growing up, I always excelled in school, receiving straight A’s in all Honors and AP classes. I mostly enjoyed my English, Journalism, and Art classes. Since the age of two-years-old, I was involved in dance and participated in competitions and performances outside of school. I remember from a young age either wanting to be TV celebrity Oprah Winfrey or a professional dancer. My active participation in community service projects, the school newspaper, and dance tied in with these aspirations. In addition to dancing with companies, I also was a reporter and later on Editor in Chief of the high school award winning newspaper.

I have the most amazing memories from my childhood school years and remember
receiving many awards and praise for my efforts, which propelled me to work even harder. In fact, from a young age, I remember always wanting to attend an Ivy League University, particularly the University of Pennsylvania, and I attribute my activity participation, leadership roles, and good academic standing to pursuing this dream.

I attended the University of Pennsylvania from which I graduated in 2005. I majored in Communications and minored in English. As a freshman, I auditioned to be a member of a dance troupe. I became a dancer in the University's Penn Dance Company where I was challenged to explore new forms of dance and choreograph companywide pieces showcased to audiences on campus and throughout the Philadelphia area. At the close of my senior year, I earned the title of Chairwoman of Penn Dance where I was a leader, choreographer, and a strong performer. One of the most bittersweet moments of my life came at my final dance show when I had the privilege of performing front and center, choreographing several pieces, facilitating the pre-production and production of the show, and engaging in a show where I felt more confident than I ever had in my entire life. I believed it would be my last time dancing and was extremely sad for it to end.

After accomplishing my final performance and graduating from the University of Pennsylvania, I decided to pursue a career that embodied my passion for the arts. I believed the music industry was reflective of such a field. Graduating from UPenn with students who become moguls in some of the most prestigious companies in the world influenced me to want to work for a major record label. In addition, my comfortable lifestyle and my parents’ hard work and success inspired me to want to work for a prestigious company, as well. In fact, I had prepared myself well in advance for a career
in entertainment with four years of internship experiences during college at music related companies including HBO, MTV, Spirit Music Groups, WXPN, and Susan Blond Inc. PR for entertainment.

I believed my transition from the dance world would be an easy one as my hard work in college and at internships had finally paid off. I landed my dream job as the assistant to the Senior Vice President and Vice President at Columbia Records/SonyBMG, one of the oldest and well respected major record labels in the world. Unfortunately, after over a year and a half in the industry, it was very clear to me that corporate America and the entertainment industry were not going to fulfill my dreams. The creativity and passion for the arts I had thought were at the core of the music industry seemed to be nonexistent. The business was driven by financial success and business savvy executives, who I felt were not the creative and passionate minds inspiring me to achieve. I did not want to continue in a profession where I felt uninspired. After spending days sitting behind a computer at a desk, running around New York City performing seemingly meaningless tasks, I felt like I had accomplished very little, and realized how much I missed dancing.

This struggle at work made me realize that I could not continue to live my life without dance and, at the same time, needed to pursue a field that contributed to society in a meaningful way. I craved not only the joy that dance brought me that I had missed for so many months, but missed the sense of accomplishment I experienced after teaching a group of West Philly students an exciting dance routine or simply engaging in a community service project with remarkable rewards.

Since Corporate America did not work for me, I quit my job at Sony, giving up a
nice salary and life in New York City, in order to volunteer. I moved to a village in
Israel, where I knew no one, to work with underprivileged youth teaching English and
Dance. I believed that living a humble environment and giving back to a community
would allow me to center myself and figure out where I wanted my life to go. From
there, I decided that pursuing a Master’s in dance/movement therapy, where I could use
my love for dance to heal, would be a fulfilling career. Today, I am excited and
committed to pursuing a helping role.

In addition to transitioning into a new career, I also choreograph for Fusion2
Dance Company and Penn Dance Company, as well dance for Underground Dance
Works. Ever since I was a little girl, my dancing style has been predominantly jazz and
hip hop. However, after dancing with a modern company at UPenn and pursuing my
Masters Degree in Dance/Movement Therapy my love for dance has expanded to the
Modern dance world.

Investigational Methods and Procedures

Data Collection and Analysis

The data collection included 1) authentic movement and dance improvisation with
videotaping of the creative process, 2) reflection through journaling, 3) art making
including photography, drawing, and choreography to illustrate the personal process of
the subject’s development of identity. The artistic inquiry portion required that the
researcher engage in dance exploration for the purpose of gathering data on the use of a
creative arts therapist’s own medium to enhance self-awareness. Thus, I engaged in
dance and journaling after particular selected experiences. These experiences included a
day at clinical practicum, creative arts therapy classes, dance classes, spending time with
family, cultural experiences (e.g. cousin’s Bar Mitzvah, presidential election, funeral),
and social engagements with friends in order to gain insight into the influence of this
method on identity development over a 20 week period. I also used other visual creative
activities such as art-making, photography, and choreography to understand the
experiences.

Moustakas’s heuristic research stages were followed closely in order to carry out the
investigation. First, **initial engagement** involved the selection of the inquiry and the
strong desire to uncover how the practice one’s own art form might enhance personal and
professional identity growth and self-awareness as a creative arts therapist.

The second stage known as the **immersion** period was comprised of the artistic
inquiry component: movement improvisation as a response to the lived experiences of
that particular day. The immersion took place over a 20 week period. The movement
improvisation involved me selecting a piece of music inspired by the activity that
particular day and then engaging in authentic movement to that selection. The processes
were videotaped. Following the movement improvisation, I wrote a journal entry about
the experience detailing the sources of inspiration that guided the particular movement
chosen and how the movement experience allowed me to process the events. The
journaling also described emotions involved in the process. During the immersion
process I was able to “be on intimate terms with the question – to live it and grow in
knowledge of it” (Moustakas, 1990, p. 28). Therefore, the process of immersion allowed
me to become completely enveloped by the question. Following the initial data collection and immersion, the researcher engaged in the third stage of incubation, where there is a retraction from direct focus on the question in order to allow for the growth of reflection and the development of insight.

Next, the heuristic research involved a period of illumination, the fourth stage, where the new awareness comes into consciousness. Illumination allowed for the emergence of the comprehension of the data, in the form of improvisational videos, journaling, and visual artistic mediums, to be collected. Illumination allowed for me to notice important themes emerging within the authentic movement sessions and creation of the visual art.

During the fifth stage of explication, methods of indwelling or self-searching occurred. Through indwelling, one is able to focus and center the self in order to allow for themes to arise into a “comprehensive depiction of the essences of the experience” (Moustakas, 1990, p. 31). Through the self-reflection process, the significant elements of the data collected began to come to fruition in the mind.

I studied and determined significant themes and attempt to make sense of the data collected in relation to the research question. The process involved moving between periods of recuperation from and immersion in the data collected to allow for a greater sense of attentiveness, understanding, and insight with regards to the material. Examining the collected data in such a manner allows for the uncovering of themes that delineate the most salient components of the reflective artistic experience (Moustakas, 1990, p. 53). Due to the recursive nature of this sort of study, I then continued to return to the data collected and the themes I uncovered in order to develop an even deeper
understanding of the emerged material.

The sixth and final step of the heuristic process involved a **creative synthesis** in which there is liberty in thought and feeling to sustain the researcher’s knowledge, fervor, and presence. “Once the researcher has mastered knowledge of the material that illuminates and explicated the question, the researcher is challenged to put the components and core themes into a creative synthesis” (Moustakas, 1990, p. 31). During creative synthesis, the comprehension that has been culminating throughout the heuristic research process comes to fruition. I utilized photos of the improvisation sessions and other modes of art that accompanied the experiences to clearly identify the inspiration for the movement on that particular day (e.g. clinical, class, cultural experience, relationships) and the themes that emerged from the movement. I also utilized photography, drawing, and choreography describing the experience of self-discovery throughout the 20 week research period. Through the compilation of narrative work, videotapes of dance/movement, and modes of visual art, I arrived at a comprehensive written description of the importance of how a creative arts therapy student’s practice of his or her own art form to explore personal identity can enhance the self-awareness necessary in professional development. I also uncovered that visual art forms reveal information that journaling alone does not.

*The Heuristic and Artistic Inquiry Process*

In the process of heuristic research there are numerous stages of research and analysis pertinent to the methodology. First, the data collection included the creation of
dance, journal writing, and visual art making. The journal entries were completed after each dance session. Some of the dance sessions were accompanied by other creative mediums such as photography, art making, and choreography. While there was no limit set on the length of a journal entry, each entry after the dance sessions averaged around 4 to 5 pages of 8.5 by 11 inch paper written. I engaged in a total of 15 dance sessions. The dance sessions were proceeded by events in my life during the allotted 20 week process that I believed warranted processing. The events included:

1. First Authentic Movement Session
2. Barack Obama Election
3. 26th Birthday Dinner
4. Successful Group Session at Clinical
5. Advanced Skills Class Session
6. Death of Grandmother
7. Death of Mentor
8. Evening with Old Friends
9. Family Dinner
10. Bar Mitzvah
11. Night Before Exam
12. Saying Goodbye to a Client
13. Resistant Client
14. Session of Client with Paralysis
15. Final Movement Session

Descriptions of the most salient aspects of the movement sequences are included in
the creative synthesis. Photos and other forms of visual art accompany some of these movement descriptions (to be inserted throughout movement descriptions once they are printed). The movement improvisation sessions took place at my home. I pushed furniture aside in the living room of my apartment that is 11.7 X 20.5 in order to have a cleared space to engage in movement. The photography was done in a local dance studio space in response to the experiences. I enlisted a friend with whom I feel no inhibitions to take the photography in order to not taint my authentic experience.

Then in the immersion, I engaged in the data collection and the question by repeated review of the data and continuous contemplations and consideration, until a point of comprehension. Since the immersion includes spontaneous self-dialogue, searching, following hunches, and drawing from energy and knowledge within the tacit dimension, I sat with the question and contemplated the data collected (Moustakas, 1990, p. 20). During incubation, the images and journals were set aside to allow an unconscious process of “spontaneous mental reorganization” (Moustakas, 1990, p. 28). The process of immersion and then incubation seemed to evoke a new awareness of the data by first completely engaging in the question and then allowing a conscious break in order to reorganize, rejuvenate, and gain greater insight. Being completely immersed in the data does not allow for distance and a varied perspective, consequently reaching comprehension, it was fundamental to live with the question and then have periods of rest to gain awareness.

During this stage, there was a concentration on discovering and gaining a more comprehensive view of the data collected. Then, the journals and the images were scanned, and dominant themes were identified from (1) the authentic movement and
dance improvisation sessions (2) journal entries after dancing to process the experiences, (3) and the other creative modes of expression including photography, artwork, and choreography. I also engaged in two separate dialogues with my primary thesis advisor in order to dig deeper within myself to search for information uncovered from the research.

Presentation of Data

First Authentic Movement Session

Authentic Movement/Improvisation Description

I begin standing in a mannequin-like pose. My body is asymmetrically positioned. My shoulders are narrowed, the right shoulder is positioned higher than the left shoulder, and my arms dangle limp in front of my stomach. My wrists are touching. My left knee is bent and my right knee is inverted inwards toward my left knee. My head is positioned as though I am gazing upward. Suddenly, I snap my head to look forward. I then sharply pulse my chest out three times and let my upper body fall limp to dangle over my lower half. My wrists separate to allow my arms to dangle. I then jerk my torso several times to bring myself upright, while holding my lower half. Then, I only move my legs by twisting them to the left, to the right, to the left, to the right. I begin to engage my upper body in the movement by bringing my right arm followed by my left arm above my head to connect at the wrist again. I let both hands drop from over my head to cover
my face. I open my hands to reveal my face and begin snapping.

*Excerpt from Journal*

“For the first authentic movement and dance improvisational session, I chose to focus on the beginning of my journey for the research. I feel stuck. I am in a pose where I am trying to fit into a mold, but is this mold really me? I want to break out of this mold. It’s as if I’m trying to be in a perfect pose and play the perfect role. Can I still somehow maintain pieces of the pose and free myself?”

*Visual Art*
Bar Mitzvah

I chose to process the Bar Mitzvah of my cousin through artistic mediums due to the fact that, according to Judaism, this religious celebration marks the transition of an individual moving into adulthood. Being a part of this traditional ceremony reminded me of my time as a Bat Mitzvah and my entrance into womanhood. It also is an occasion where my family is brought together in order to engage in a practice that has been asserted in my family for centuries before me. The Bar Mitzvah is a process that signifies part of my identity as I relate to my family, my religion, and my own experiences with transitions.

Authentic Movement/Improvisation Description

Holding my hands out beside me and reaching as if people are going to grab my hands. Simulating the idea that individuals are holding my hands throughout the dance. I bend my knees and lower myself to the floor almost as if I’m going to kneel, but as soon as my knees brush the ground I slowly walk and elevate myself so I am again standing.

Excerpt from Journal

“I am holding people’s hands. I am connecting with family and friends. I feel full.”
I chose to process my experience with a resistant client, who after weeks of working with me finally began to move. I could sense that this patient had a lot of movement to offer my dance/movement therapy group and wanted to participate to some extent. It seemed to me as though he was feeling self conscious about moving. As the leader of the group, I worked hard in every session to facilitate his engagement, but felt stumped as to how to allow him to feel safe and comfortable enough in the environment to participate. Eventually, his resistance broke and the client began to dance. I felt this had marked an important moment of growth for not only the patient, but for our relationship. I tried to put myself in the client’s shoes in order to gain an understanding of how he may have felt restraining himself from moving and finally releasing.
**Description of Authentic Movement/Improvisation**

I recline on a chair, cross my arms, and extend and widen my legs out in front of me. I gaze towards the floor and purse my lips together. Every few seconds, I suddenly pick my chin, flick my head, and raise my eyebrows as if to give someone a quick, subtle “yeah, I hear you” nod. From this position, I begin tapping my feet. Then, with the rhythm of my feet tapping, I start nodding my head to the beat. After several seconds, I engage my shoulder and torso in rolling motion. I let that rolling motion reach my hips and thighs, which enable me to more fully mobilize and stand up. I appear to be grooving. Keeping the rolling rhythm of my body, I play with that using different body parts.

**Except from Journal**

“I am resistant to move. I am quiet. I am still. Yet, I can hear the beat of my heart. I have a desire to move, but I’m holding myself back. There’s an internal rhythm that’s begging me to begin to move. I want to rebel against it, but I can’t help it. I start to dance.”
Visual Art

Barack Obama Election

I chose to process the Barack Obama Election because I felt as though this was a significant event both politically and socially for our country. I had the privilege of tracking the election and watching the inauguration with my predominantly African American clients at my clinical internship site. I was so moved by this experience that I felt a strong desire to contribute this historical event to the research.

In addition, my idea of beauty has always been tainted by what the media tells me is beautiful. However, I saw a new sense of beauty emerge from this occasion and through the faces of my patients. The sense of pride they conveyed to me. Here, the beauty was the nation finally coming together and people feeling proud of who they were. Did this election change people’s perception of beauty? Today beauty seemed to
be defined as perseverance, strength, and unity.

_Description of Authentic Movement/Improvisation Session_

As I slowly reach up to the sky with my right arm, my left leg also bends at the knee and rises up. Slowly, I begin to support my weight with the ball of my right foot. I then swing my arms like a see-saw, while shifting the weight in my feet, first to the right and then to the left. I let my body go with the direction of my arms. My head swings the motion. My body completely twists to face the left and my hands clasp together making a clapping noise. I then enclose my body, tucking my heads and hands towards my chest. Slowly, I grow out of this posture so that my arms and legs are eventually outstretched as far as they can go. My head is facing towards the sky.

_Excerpt from Journal_

“My African American co-worker at clinical turned to me and said- ‘for the first time in my life I feel like a true American.’ He pumped his fists in the air and he was smiling so big. I welled up with tears. What an amazing piece of history in the making to be a part of...His voice resounds in my head....I feel a sense of victory, too.”
I chose to process this session because it was my first successful group run at my clinical internship site. I work on a sub-acute locked unit with adults diagnosed with chronic and persistent mental illness. This particular session, consisted of 11 individuals who were actively responding to internal stimuli via their Schizophrenia diagnosis. The group presented as very chaotic and the thought of creating a cohesive, therapeutic session seemed daunting. I had been putting so much pressure on myself to break through this chaos and get through to my patients with “the perfect plan.” However, when I finally stopped overanalyzing and problem solving as to how to make the session work, I achieved success with the patients. When I let go of myself, they, too, were able
to let go of themselves and move together. I felt as though I started to lose the feeling that I was not good enough. I lost the inhibition and rigidity. Losing rigidity and structure for me is risking falling apart. Ironically, chaotic patients brought me to a place of being less organized and less functional (i.e. I was able to let go of myself). There was a paradox going on here. I realized that in not pushing myself to fit a perfect role of dance/movement therapist, I am achieving dance/movement therapy success. It is a kind of non-judgmental support. I figure out how to tell them they are okay. It frees up their mobilizing and my mobilizing. We are both giving up rigidity.

*Authentic Movement/Improvisation Description*

I am skipping around the room. I am rolling my shoulders and twisting my hips. It appears as though I am not paying attention to direction. I then begin to slow my skipping down. I begin to engage in what appears to be a slow motion run with a wide movement range. My left arm reaches high above up me, as my right leg slowly kicks out behind me. My entire body is engaged in the run. The movement seems to ripple from my extremities to my core as I switch the legs and the arms to give me momentum. I then plant my feet and thrash my body letting my head, arms, and torso quickly sway from side to side and front to back. I then jump in the air and face towards the sky and throw my legs back behind me.
Excerpt from Journal

“I am celebrating. I feel excitement surging through my entire body. I am fully invested in moving. I am going so fast that I don’t know when or how to stop. It’s as if I don’t want the moment to end.”

Visual Art

Advanced Skills Class Session

This particular advanced skills in dance/movement therapy class occurred on a day in which my classmates and I were under a lot of stress regarding internship and homework duties. I had reached a point where I felt like I was working on auto-pilot. This class session allowed me to check in with myself, slow down, and regain my ability
to be present in the moment. I had been working so hard and moving so fast in order to “get things done” that it felt as though I had left myself behind.

*Authentic Movement/Improvisation Description*

It appears as though I am checking my body parts. I start patting my head with both hands. I then lower my hands simultaneously down to my ears. My hands then reach my chin and I bring them over to cover my face. I continue to tap down my body. I tap my shoulders and then pat down my arms all the way down to my hands. I pat my chest and my back and move my way down towards my hips and my legs. Eventually, I work my way down to my feet. I then dangle my body over my feet and forward roll myself over onto the floor. I collapse and rest.

*Excerpt from Journal*

“Am I still here?...Yes, this appears to be me.”

*Visual Art*
Evening with Old Friends

On this evening, I went to dinner with my three best friends from high school, all of whom I have known since elementary school. Whenever I am with these individuals, I feel as though they still see me and know me as the girl I was when I was little. Even though we all have moved to different cities, pursued varied career paths, made new friends, and become very independent from one other, it seems as though no time has passed when we see each other and we are reminded that little pieces of us have not changed after so many years. In fact, I still see my friends as the girls with braces, crushing on the “cool” boys, wearing questionably fashionable prom gowns, and laughing about the notes we passed each other in class that the teachers often caught. I feel like they always see me striving for perfection and being a “goody two shoes,” too. Getting together with old friends makes me nostalgic for my youth.

Authentic Movement/Improvisation Description

I wrap my hands around myself as if I’m hugging myself. I sway and slowly take a few small steps from side to side. I let my hands slide out of a hugging position and hold them over my heart. I slowly roll my shoulders and shift my torso to allow my hips to sway with the rest of my body. I turn, hands still covering my heart. My eyes are closed. I continue to hold my heart and turn and sway as I dance around myself.
Excerpt from Journal

“I am just relishing in the dinner. My closest, oldest friends don’t live in Philadelphia. I feel like they know me best, probably better than I know myself. They always bring back warm memories of childhood and times filled with laughter...I feel like I am missing a piece when they are not around...I cried when the dinner was over.”

Visual Art

Funeral of Grandmother

I chose to include the funeral of my grandmother in the research as I find death to be a sad, yet very real part of growing up. I come from a small, close family. My “Gramma,” as I called her, was the last living grandparent in my entire family and her loss greatly affected the dynamics of my family and my own sense of my role in my family. My father is now the patriarch. He is the oldest in the family. I feel like none of
us are young anymore. I am now relating to parents in a new way. Family boundaries are being disrupted and there is a clear coming closer together during periods of grief. There is an opening up of the psyche at this time. Being open to each other spiritually and emotionally. A sense of maturity has overcome me. I am trying to soothe my father, my uncles, and my mother. I am identifying with the adults in my family.

*Authentic Movement/Improvisation Description*

It appears as though I am holding an invisible shovel in my hand. I am simulating digging dirt. My hands pulse with the invisible shovel as though it is trying to break the ground. I bend my knees and lower myself while my arms lower with strength as well. I slowly rise up and stare at my hands. I then flick my arms as if to throw something off the invisible shovel. I open my hands as if to let something fall. I freeze.

*Excerpt from Journal*

“I cannot put the image of digging up the earth to help cover my grandmother’s grave. I think I will hold onto it forever. I cannot believe she’s gone. It still seems surreal.”
My “Gramma” literally collected plants. Even when plants would die, she would keep them on her windowsill. We could never quite figure out why she didn’t let them go. “Gramma” was also the head of the gardening club in her nursing home. I even took her pen with a flower on the top when she passed away to keep on my desk. Flowers will always remind me of “Gramma.”

Birthday Dinner

My 26th birthday marks my experience of aging. I chose to process this event due to the fact that I usually have a meltdown at every birthday since I was little. I do not understand how the days and years pass by so quickly. It scares me that I age so quickly.
I set so many goals for myself and I always review whether I am where I think I should be on my birthday. Usually, I am disappointed.

*Authentic Movement/Improvisation Description*

It looks like I am gathering something with my hands. I am pulling it close to me. I look into my hands and then jerk them up as if to let something fly out of them. It looks as though I’m watching the invisible contents as they dispel into air.

*Excerpt from Journal*

“I will never be 25 again...I remember birthdays used to be so much more fun and exciting when I was little.”

*Visual Art*
Death of Mentor

Ms. Tina Lane was my high school English teacher and my supervisor when I was the Editor-in-Chief of the school newspaper The Wessex Wire. Ms. Lane was not only my favorite teacher, but she was my friend. She encouraged me to push my own limits, take risks, and have confidence in myself. Because of Ms. Lane’s dedication to my success and belief in me, I achieved what had been my childhood goal of attending the University of Pennsylvania. Ms. Tina Lane was the woman who I looked up to during my formative years of adolescence and I believe that I would not be where I am today without her guidance. She contributed greatly to my identity development.

Authentic Movement/Improvisation Description

I am standing holding two fingers up in front of my face. It appears as though I am writing in the air. My feet are planted on the ground as my arms and torso sway following the movement of my fingers. The movement picks up momentum and I begin to shift my weight from side to side. I reach my arm outward as far as it can go and my body is forced to move with it. My feet leave the ground and gliding to the right. It looks as though my fingers are pulling me as they continue to write.

Excerpt from Journal

“She was guiding me with her pen. Coaxing me into taking risks and to go as far
as I could go. I followed her, but I felt like I couldn’t keep up.”

*Visual Art*

*Night before Exam*

I stress myself out. I am a perfectionist. This particular evening, I engaged in my cyclical negative thought process, where I convince myself that there is no possible way I will be able to memorize everything before the exam. If I do not get an A plus, I will be failing to some extent. If I do not succeed, it is because I did not try hard enough. Tonight, I tried to break the cycle. Instead of wasting time freaking out and watching the minutes on the clock’s second-hand tick away, I channel my anxiety via movement and art making.
**Authentic Movement/Improvisation Description**

I am standing with my hands holding my head. I let my hands drop off and my head follows my hands. One by one, I let my body parts collapse so it forces me to the floor. I simulate banging on the floor with my hands. Suddenly, I slap both of my hands on the floor and look up. I use my hands to slowly help my body peel back up to a standing position.

**Excerpt from Journal**

“My brain is so full with information that it can’t possibly remember anything else. It’s weighing me down...I want to throw a childlike temper tantrum...I just can’t possibly study anymore....but, alas, there is no choice in the matter. I must swallow my resistance, annoyance, and frustration and study.”

**Visual Art**
This was the first time I actually examined the scrap piece of paper I doodled on as I attempted to memorize material. I notice that I tend to always draw a bunch of circles stuck together and overlapping stars when I am stressed out, anxious, or nervous. In other words, I’ve seen this brand new scrap before.

Saying Goodbye to Client

Initially, I was afraid of this client. Before I even met him, staff members warned me of his aggressive ways. No psychiatrist, staff member, or fellow patient had gotten along with this client since his admission. For weeks, he was hostile towards me, would barely speak to me, and refused to remain in my groups. I was persistent in my attempts to develop a rapport with him. He was a challenge, but I felt it was my duty to get through to him. Finally, after weeks of me approaching him and he rejecting me, our relationship changed. He came to me for help and from that day forward, we developed a beautiful rapport with one another. I had never experienced such a 180 of emotions with a client before. He began attending my groups and eventually even engaged in the given tasks. I grew to really care for this patient and felt so much sadness when I found out he was being transferred to another facility. I cried that day, not only because I felt I had lost a patient with whom I had made so much progress with, but I felt like I hadn’t gone as far as I could with him and felt sad that my chance was over. I also was amazed with the fact that I almost cried the first time I met him out of fear and anxiety and was now crying that he was leaving. I hope someone is able to care for him and understand him like I did. I am scared he will be isolated all over again.
Authentic Movement/Improvisation Description

I run forward and reach towards something. Suddenly, I stop and freeze with my hand still reaching out. I let my hand fall and retreat my body back to the original position from where I ran. I run forward again and stop as I reach out. Yet, I’m pulled back again. I freeze and just look out into the distance. I am thinking.

Excerpt from Journal

“I don’t know what to say when facing a goodbye. I know I will never see this person again. I wish had I said more to him. I wish I had done more for him. I wish we would have more time to work together, but we don’t.”

Visual Art
Session with Client with Paralysis

This particular session sparked my own thoughts and feelings about how I would feel if I had lost the ability to move. Dancing and moving is part of my identity. Would I still feel like I was me without mobility? Working with this patient also made me realize how much I take for granted. I am always so hard on myself about the way I look. Complaining about extra grad school weight has been fore runner on my personal appearance complaints. How selfish of me to be so hard on my physical attributes when I have the ability to pick myself up and go to a dance class or go to the gym. What would I do if I did not have the choice to make a physical change? When did my concept of beauty become so jaded? Shouldn’t beauty be about relishing in the healthy parts of ourselves? I feel shallow and mad at myself for placing so much emphasis on the way I look. This patient can only sit one way, slumped in his chair. He cannot even access movement that would make him feel more vibrant and alive. I have options. I am free. I have taken this for granted. Paralysis gets me thinking about idea of beauty. I am moving from appearance to experience. It disrupts me enough to have new idea of beauty and my own beauty. Shouldn’t beauty be about feeling healthy? Here, I experience an intersection of adult development and development of a therapist.

What is the telling of a story when an encounter with a patient gets you rethinking about beauty? and how does it move you back into your feelings about your patients. If a therapist, conveys feelings of self-consciousness what gets communicated to the patient who cannot move? It is almost imperative to resolve these issues. I have always been my biggest critic regarding beauty...I also thought I wasn’t thin enough, pretty enough,
good enough, but I can walk. I can dance. I can move.

_**Authentic Movement/Improvisation Description**_

I am seated in a chair. The entire right side of my body appears limp. My head is cocked to the right almost as if it’s resting on my shoulder. I am reaching my left hand out beside me as far as I can. I appear to be straining with my left hand. I then stretch my left leg out as if to try to reach my left hand. It cannot reach. My left side collapses.

_**Excerpt from Journal**_

“These are my hands. They remind me of my mother's hands or what my mother's hands probably looked like 30 years ago. I used my own hands to trace my hands on these pieces of paper. I've drawn and written many things with these hands. I've filled up notebooks and journals with writings crafted by these hands. I type with these hands and connect to the World Wide Web using the touch of these hands. I can play piano with these hands. I play with my hair with my hands. I've started to cook with these hands. I hold people's hands. I wave to friends. I carry bags. I pick things up when I drop them. I scratch myself when I have an itch. I've been blowing my nose since I have a cold. Sometimes, I wear makeup. I dance with my hands. I push, I pull, I open, I close, I raise, I lower with my hands.

I was inspired to focus on my hands after working with a forty year old patient, who had suffered from a stroke resulting in paralysis of his left side. Prior to the medical
problem, he had been successful at his work requiring labor.

This is the stream of consciousness process of what occurred while I was tracing my hands. After clinical, I also tried to process our session with a movement exercise. For ten minutes, I forced myself to go about my business without using my hands. It is hard to imagine a life without the use of the hands or any body part for that matter. I believe that I would feel a sense of identity lost without the use of a body part.”

*Visual Art*
Final Movement Session

Authentic Movement/Improvisation Description

I walk quickly throughout the space for several minutes. I walk in straight lines and then change my direction. I then, walk in a zigzag formation. I walk in a circle. I let my arms float out beside me as though I’m trying to fly while I quickly walk. Finally, I come to a halt. I begin to shake all my body parts as if I’m shaking something off. I fall to the ground and roll around.

Excerpt from Journal

“Have I accomplished what I set out to do? Do I have a better sense of self? Am I still a child or an adult? Am I ready to be a professional? Am I a dancer or a dance/movement therapist? Am I a leader? Am I strong? Am I confident? Am I scared? Who am I?”

Visual Art: Reflection through Movement/Looking Back with Choreography

In response to the movement sessions and in an effort to culminate my research data collection experience, I choreographed a dance and set the piece on dancers from a local high school dance company. I was creating the piece over the 20 week period. I used my experiences and feelings to construct a piece of choreography entitled
“Disbanded Facade,” which was danced to the Faint’s *Posed to Death*. The concept of the piece was a story of identity formation as told through the images of mannequins coming alive. The dance began with the girls trying to fit a perfect mold in a very proper pose. As the music continued, the girls began to break out of their mold. The movements progressed from a very rigid, sharp, and structured movement style to a very loose and free movement at the end. The dancers underwent an internal transformation and growth that allowed them to brighten and take over the stage with large, sweeping movements. Essentially, the dancers let go of what they were molded to be and become themselves. The following photo captures a movement that was taken from the piece.
CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS

Overview of the Results

The primary focus of this study was to examine the question: How can a creative arts therapy student’s practice of his or her own art form to explore personal identity enhance the self-awareness necessary in professional development? The purpose of the study was to investigate the potential usefulness for dance, journaling, and visual artwork including photography, drawing, and choreography in enhancing one’s identity, particularly during the life stage of early adulthood, through an artistic heuristic inquiry methodology with the researcher as the subject.

The major findings suggested the existence of developmental issues and milestones to be significantly present in the artistic portion and the writing portion of the data collected. In fact, the data collected continued to show the presence of early adulthood themes, which directly correlate to and helped provide a way to view and understand personal identity and how it contributes to professional identity. The dominant emergent themes included loss, intimacy, perception of beauty, memory, and roles. A priori themes included issues pertaining directly to the developmental stage and professional issues (e.g. mastery) and were developed through immersion in the data collection. The results also showed that the artistic forms of the videotaped movement sessions and the visual art revealed important data about the individual that the journal texts did not convey.

In the processing of experiences through dance and movement, there was a
consideration of what was evoking the movement in me, the dancer, and the manner in which I chose to execute the movements. In viewing the tapes of the improvisation sessions, there was a recall of a moment and an evocation of a feeling that was present at the time of the improvisation session, yet the tapes provided greater insight and reflection on the dance which had been captured, and its relevancy to me. The journaling provided a means by which to explore in more depth and document feelings, thoughts, and processes initiated from the movement inspired by the experiences and later being able to view a video of the experience. Thus, the principal finding of the study is that processing experiences through dance, journaling, and visual art can provide a means to examine and explore issues relating to personal and professional developmental progression and essentially enhance the growth of identity and self-perception. The other major finding was that art forms reveal more information about the self than writing alone.

Themes and Overall Process

The themes that emerged from the post-movement journals included concepts of self-perception, body exploration, emotional experience, identification of self and roles. The themes that emerged from the analysis of the movement sessions are strength, confidence, assertion, communication, and a need for bonding. The visual art conveyed themes of self discovery. The dominant emergent themes included loss, intimacy, perception of beauty, memory, and roles. A priori themes included issues pertaining directly to the developmental stage and professional issues (e.g. mastery) and were developed through immersion in the data collection. To arrive at a synthesis of themes,
the process included first scanning the data collected for recurring or salient themes, highlighting, and then extracting themes. The movement session and subsequent journal excerpts included below illustrate the themes that emerged. Through further synthesis of the data, the themes of loss, intimacy, perception of beauty, memory, and roles seemed to triangulate between the data sources. Following the description of the sessions, the information emerged from the process is further discussed.

Table 1.

Themes and Their Components

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Components</th>
<th>Loss</th>
<th>Intimacy</th>
<th>Memory</th>
<th>Perception of Beauty</th>
<th>Roles</th>
<th>Intelligence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Death</td>
<td>Feeling into the experience of the other as it pertains to the one who has lost</td>
<td>Processed experiences during course of research</td>
<td>Aesthetic</td>
<td>Personal</td>
<td>Mastery</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inhibitions and Rigidity</td>
<td>Personal Intimacy</td>
<td>Past</td>
<td>Perfectionism</td>
<td>Professional</td>
<td>Connecting with the innate</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Innocence</td>
<td>Professional Intimacy</td>
<td>Strength</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Mobility</td>
<td>Saying Goodbye</td>
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</table>
Loss

Themes of loss emerged through the exploration of death, loss of inhibitions and rigidity, loss of innocence, loss of mobility, and saying goodbye. In terms of death, I processed both the experiences of my losing my grandmother and my high school mentor. Regarding inhibition and rigidity, when I finally stopped trying to strive to achieve the perfect therapist role and stopped being so hard on myself about leading a flawless group or giving the best advice, I was able to reach a level of success with my clients. When I let go of my inhibitions and my rigidity, I was able to better connect with my clients and convey a sense of ease that strengthened our therapeutic process.

Regarding loss of innocence, I felt that this emerged in terms of aging, experiencing death, connecting with family members in a new way through the grieving process, and merging into a helping role where clients and patients are coming to me with significant issues that warrant mature support. Loss of mobility is explored as it relates to working with clients with paralysis. As a dancer and a dance/movement therapist in training, a life without mobility is unfathomable. In attempting to understand the experience of my client without mobility and trying to feel into his experience, I found it quite devastating to imagine not being able to move. Movement is my way of expressing myself and I feel as though a piece of me would be lost without that ability. Finally, loss in terms of saying goodbye to a client, to a wonderful group session, and to old friends is also an idea that I faced and experienced throughout.
Intimacy

Intimacy involved through the processes of feeling into the experience of the other, especially the one who has lost, as well as personal and professional intimacy. The one who has lost pertains to my father who lost his mother and how I connected to him in a new way through the grieving process. My process of loss also transcended to the experience of my patients who had also lost loved ones. I was able to better understand the feelings they embodied while grieving, as well as the roles they played within the community as a sense of support for those who also suffered the loss. I also felt into the experience of my patient who lost mobility. I worked towards connecting to him in a new while trying to understand his perspective of loss. Personal intimacy relates to my relationship with my family, my relationship with my friends, and the ever-changing and growing relationship I have with myself. Professional intimacy was achieved when I opened up to clients, met them where they are functioning, and let go of myself in order to become more intimate with my clients.

Perception of Beauty

Several aspects of my concept of beauty was changed and challenged. Throughout the research process, I made a number of aesthetic choices. My idea of beauty was shifted and played a significant role in the study.

Self consciously, I must admit that my perception of beauty stemmed from perfectionism. I used to think fitting a perfect mold. My idea of the aesthetic was
comprised of images I conjured up in my head of the perfect dancer, with the perfect body, beautiful features, impeccable grades, kind to, friendly to, and liked by everyone, and achieving the highest level of success that one can achieve when striving towards a goal. As a dance/movement therapist, I envisioned myself as being knowledgeable in every aspect of the field, saving every patient I encountered, and utilizing every therapeutic technique and intervention possible in order to achieve success. In striving for this unattainable goal I set for myself, I realized I neglected to accept and give credit to the attributes that make me the person who I am today. I realized that I have taken things like the ability and opportunity to learn, exposure to artistic mediums for expression, health, mobility, and the ability to connect with others for granted. In taking these things for granted, I neglected to pull away pieces that contribute to my own beauty. While it is hard to shake my lifelong sense of aesthetic, I can confirm that my idea of the aesthetic has shifted to beauty as honesty.

In terms of dance, I used to value technical proficiency. Now, as a dance/movement therapist in training and as a researcher, I appreciate and find beauty in the authentic quality of dance and movement. The beauty of dance is one’s ability to connect with his or her inner impulse and move in anyway one feels to compelled to. There is beauty in the organic. Hence, I am looking now at things that are more valuable than straight forms, preciseness of steps, look of the body, height of leaps and jumps. Perhaps this sense of honesty has existed all along? I believe it may have been the reason why i chose this form of research- to get to know the real honest part of myself. The ability to become a therapist is getting to know the honest truth of an individual and accept and find beauty in what is pure.
Memory

Originally, I had envisioned the artistic mediums serving as memories of the events I processed throughout the 20 week research period. However, when examining the data, I was reminded of dance movements and poses that were reminiscent of dance moves and positions I had exhibited through my life span as a dancer. Even some of the facial expression captured through the photography, sparked memories of past experiences unrelated to the topics currently chosen to be processed. In addition, the visual art work also reminded of me of past moments, and production of art work that were symbolically similar to that of which produced throughout the research process.

Roles

My roles both personally and professionally were shifted throughout the research process. I feel as though I experienced a coming into of adulthood, where I experienced those milestones correlating to early adulthood development, striving towards a professional role, taking on responsibilities as an adult, losing innocence, and experiencing death, which shifts roles in family. I also felt a shifting of roles when meeting with old friends. In this sense, I have always played a particular role to my group of friends since I was in elementary school. I have grown into quite a different individual; however I always still seem to play that role in their eyes. Professionally, I experienced a shift from a dance/movement therapist in training to almost a dance/movement therapist. I shifted from the idea of being a student to being a therapist
and a teacher in session.

Intelligence

My idea of intelligence and mastery changed. Originally, I had thought achieving a level of mastery meant learning there is to know about a topic and becoming an aficionado in that field. Through my experiences as a dance/movement therapist in training, I have learned that mastery and intelligence are not only about acquiring knowledge. In this field, mastery and intelligence are about connecting with the innate. There’s something about becoming a therapist that relates to the creative process.-- Just as the artist starts with striving for perfection and feeling pressure, but reaches a point where he or she feels as though one is okay and can accomplish the task at hand. It is in losing inhibition, rigidity, and perfectionism, only by letting go can you work….Taking a risk, losing yourself in a good way, reaching a sense of intimacy- your ability to be a therapist comes out…. Adult development is striving to reach mastery and a sense of proficiency, but perhaps the mastery happens when one connects with what’s innate. …You can’t reach a level of mastery until you trust the innate.
Figure 1. Cyclical nature of themes.

The following map demonstrates the cyclical nature of the emergent themes:

The emerged themes appeared to be a part of a cyclical process. One can start at any experience, whether it is recalling a memory, experiencing loss, developing intimacy, shifting roles, or perceiving beauty as a point of entry. Each entry point generates and connects to the experiences that precede. Moving through this cycle facilitates adult development processes as they relate to professional developmental processes.
Synthesis of Themes

To arrive at a synthesis of themes, the process included:

- Scanning the data collected for recurring or salient themes
- Highlighting
- Extracting themes
- Synthesizing aforementioned data
- Analyzing the movement data
- Comparing movement data to journal entries and visual art

The idea of loss emerged through the data in several ways as it relates to death, losing one’s rigidity and inhibitions, loss of innocence, loss of mobility, and saying goodbye.

In terms of losing rigidity, it seemed as though a new level of intelligence, self-perception, and professionalism emerged. Achieving a level of mastery and proficiency in becoming a therapist emerged through a sense of trusting oneself and appreciating one’s innateness rather than talking about following a particular learned formula. Mastery approached when I connected with myself and let go of a sense of perfectionism and striving to fit a so-called therapist mold. My own concept of intelligence shifted from that of being concrete skills to the idea of interaction between what is in innate and what is brought in.

In terms of intimacy the idea of feeling into the experience of the other surfaced, namely feeling into the experience of the one who has lost. It seemed as though the more
I understand myself and connected to my core, the more I was able to open myself up to understanding and engaging in other’s experience. Through the processing it is clear that my intent was to understand. The idea of intimacy, again, emerged as both a personal and professional component of identity development. I was able to understand the experience of my clients and my loved ones as they interacted with me. This illuminated my own sense of loss developmentally about the other and about the therapist in me. I did not just meet people where they were at, but I was able to free my own body and take risks in order to connect with others in a more meaningful way.

In terms of loss of a loved one, the idea of responsibilities being passed down and people moving up into roles emerged. Having to be there for my family, I was able to relate to my parents in a new way. I felt like an adult. There was an opening of my psyche at that time, where I was able to be open spiritually and emotionally. I experienced a sense of maturity as a new role emerged.

While personally this occurred, I also saw this emerge professionally. When saying goodbye to a client, I had to let go of my role as the caretaker. I had to, again, step into a role of maturity where I could coach myself into coping with the loss of the client, knowing that I had done what I could, and that our time together had ended.

A new self-perception emerged as I was inspired to rethink my preconceived idea of beauty. I moved away from appearance to experience. Inundated from images and messages of the media, had jaded my concept of beautiful. For my entire life, I had been obsessed with fulfilling some sort of perfect beauty ideal that was always going to be unattainable due to my genetic makeup. Through processing personal and professional experiences, I saw a sense of beauty emerge that I had never seen or felt before.
Shouldn’t beauty be about attaining a lifelong goal or feeling healthy? Again, this concept of self-perception as it pertains to beauty intersects adult development with the development of a therapist.

What is the telling of a story when an encounter gets you rethinking about beauty? How does it move you back into your feelings about your patients? If a therapist, conveys feelings of self-consciousness what gets communicated to the patient who cannot move? It is imperative to resolve these issues. I have always been my biggest critic regarding beauty. I always thought I was not thin enough, pretty enough, good enough, but I am healthy. The data also revealed to me that there is a little piece inside of us that has always been there. A piece that existed before our bodies matured and our minds matured, a piece that has always been beautiful. I felt as though I was able to discover the pearl inside the onion, the beautiful part of me and others that you could not see or label, but knew was innate.

Integration of Movement Description with Themes

The following text analyzes salient movement data that conveyed pertinent information about the researcher’s identity. It was evident in many of the movement sessions, that I was very vertical and my torso was held. I seemed to frequently be presenting myself with my torso. All of the body parts eventually seemed to be engaged in the movement, but the movement often seemed to be initiated via the torso. Breath Support for body connectivity was apparent throughout all the movements. While the torso was held and breath was visible, my arms and head always seemed to be very
animated with my movement. I also displayed head/tail connectivity. In movements where I bended my upper half over my lower half and when I threw my body around the dance space, head/tail connectivity provided my body with the support necessary to carry out the movement. I also used a lot of gesturing and gesture posture merging to accomplish her movements. Articulation and rotation involving the hands were constant movement themes, as well. I appeared to dance in a way that engaged all the body parts.

I also displayed Effort qualities that were consistent in my movement repertoires. In many of the movement sessions, I demonstrated Indirect Efforts. I also used a lot of strength. Strength seemed to be an Effort quality consistent throughout the taped sessions. I also frequently exhibited a constant two-motion Effort state. I remained stable, utilizing Space and Weight. I also displayed Effort drives with three-motion factors. I was in a Spell drive paying attention to Space, Weight, and Flow. This appeared to be a repetition in many of the taped sessions, which may indicate movement preferences for me.

In terms of Space, I, again, showed similarities in preferences. I utilized both the far and near reach space. During many of the dance sequences, I appeared to reach my hands out as far as they could extend and then I would bring my arms back close to my body. I often outstretched my arms and pumped my fist in the air in the far reach space, but would also bring my arms in and rock. In addition, I frequently demonstrated the use of the horizontal plane, which refers to the ability to communicate, throughout the movement sequences, as well as the sagittal plane, which indicates abilities for decision making.

I utilized shaping, as well. I demonstrated both a small and large carving shape.
As exemplified through my far and near reach space preferences, I tended to expand and contract my body varying the movement during the movement sequences. With that being said, Spreading/Enclosing and Advancing/Retreating enabled me to carve in such a way.

The movements indicate that I am an interactive person. I try to engage with other people and have them interact with me. My utilization of shaping and spacing in terms of reaching out is indicative of the way I interact with the environment and others. I also demonstrated a particular phrasing type in my movement. In each dance sequence, my micro-structure included Accenting.

Inferences can be made from the aforementioned movement patterns using the work of dance/movement theorists and practitioners North (1972) and Kestenberg (1999). According to North’s appendix (1972), my use of Weight and Flow reveal information about my inner attitude. My use of Strength and Free flow demonstrate traits of vigor, exuberance, boldness, and a positive attitude. I appeared to follow my inner impulse to support her to move. My use of Strength and Suddenness while dancing exhibit energetic qualities. The manner in which I would reach out as far as possible and then bring movements back into myself was extremely effervescent. I also used Free and Sudden movements, which illustrate excitement when engaging in repetitive motions.

I tended to engage in the spurting and ramming rhythms as described by Kestenberg et. al (1999). The spurting and ramming was seen in my pumping fists in the air and striking a pose. One using the spurting and ramming rhythm tends to be focused and penetrating, acts aggressively, learns in bursts, and may be assertive and explosive. The spurting and ramming rhythm helps one hammer away at tasks until they are done as
well as gives individuals the ability to strongly assert and protect themselves. With force and spontaneity, especially in the first authentic movement session, I was able to fully complete my movement phrases. In many of the movement videotapes, I had a stable torso that held my upright and supported my movements. This highlights the assertion she was able to demonstrate in spurring and ramming like motions.

North (1972) and Kestenberg’s (1999) theories convey strength, confidence, and energy propelling her movement. With this vigor, one can infer that the mover possesses the ability to meet her needs and the demands and opportunities of the environment.

In addition, North (1972) and Kestenberg’s (1999) theories also conveyed a need for personal connection and attachment. The horizontal plane is oral, which also pertains to my preferences. Some of the movement sessions also displayed sucking rhythms. It appeared in some of the videotapes that I was self soothing. The oral sucking rhythm also suggests the need for bonding and attachment, which is another a personal characteristic of mine. Strong relationships are important to me. There was use of Lightness and Free flow that exhibited a sensitive ease and ability to be aware.

The movement sequences predominantly presented a strong sense of self, but also demonstrated qualities of sensitivity and a need for bonding. The improvisation and authentic movement sessions conveyed confidence and powerful movement that shows the researcher to be one who asserts herself, yet also needs the company of others.

The movement data revealed an individual different from the journal texts. Themes of loss were predominant but the movement data and the visual art revealed more confidence than portrayed in the texts. The journal entries revealed insecurities, but the creative modes revealed assertiveness and strength.
While loss was clearly a theme salient throughout, a clear sense of sadness and fear of being alone were conveyed. The movement demonstrated ways of coping that the text did not. The movement conveyed assuredness and strength, while the text showed difficulty saying goodbye and feelings of aloneness. This theme of loss led to integration of self perception.

Clearly, through the text I perceived myself as often feeling like I was having trouble letting go of something, whether it be a client being discharged, having to say goodbye to friends, losing a loved one, losing a limb, or loss of childhood innocence. The text seemed to portray sadness and worry. Yet, the movement, as well as the visual art, juxtaposed the text. It demonstrated an ability to cope with strength and a strong awareness of self.

Memory was also a salient theme throughout the movement sequences, journal entries, and visual art. The movement sequences were based on memories. The movement not only elicited emotions and feelings about the events processed through the artistic medium, but also triggered memories of other experiences. Meanwhile, the visual art was another tangible form of capturing the memory of the significant events and the artistic processing of the moments.
Creative Synthesis

In the spirit of Artistic Inquiry research, I composed a metaphor that culminates the experience of self discovery:

Becoming a therapist and discovering yourself is like uncovering a bulb at the center of an onion. You start off with a beautiful, delicious, ripe onion perfectly sitting on the counter. But once you begin peeling away the layers, your experience with the onion deepens. Your eyes may water along the way, you might have to take a step back and wait for the pain to pass in order to proceed. As you peel back layer by layer, the odor of the onion stays on your hands and stings your nose. All of your senses are engaged in your quest for reaching the epicenter. You peel layers, pull away chunks, and might even need the assistance of a good sharp knife to get you to where you’re going. Through the hard work, the sweat, and the tears, you reach the very small pearl of the onion that breathed life and beauty into this multi-dimensional vegetable.
CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION

Overview

In this chapter the results of this study will be discussed in response to the research question. Also, the major themes that emerged through the heuristic and artistic inquiry methodology will be delineated and reviewed. Based on the synthesis of the results, possible clinical applications, limitations of the study and implications for further research will be proposed.

The results of the study emanate from the dominant themes that emerged through the data collection and were illuminated through a heuristic data analysis method. The research sought to gain insight into the question of how a creative arts therapy student’s practice of his or her own art form to explore personal identity can enhance the self-awareness necessary for professional development. The discussion will explore the relevancy and implications of discovered themes. The following progression will aim to return to relevant references from the literature review as it pertains to the previously listed results. The discussion will proceed to discuss each dominant theme at greater length, and then address clinical applications and implications for future research.

Integration of Existing Literature with Results

The major findings suggested that the existence of early adulthood developmental issues and milestones were significant in the artistic and in the writing portions of the data collected. In fact, the data collected indicated a strong relationship to personal
identity and provides a way to understand how personal identity contributes to professional identity.

The dominant emergent themes were developed through immersion in the data collection and analysis. These included loss, intimacy, self perception, memory, and roles. A priori themes included issues pertaining directly to the developmental stage and professional issues (e.g. mastery and understanding the experience of the other). The results also showed that the artistic forms of the videotaped movement sessions and the visual art revealed important data about the individual that the journal texts did not convey.

Earlier research has reported the existence of several significant developmental milestones that individuals face in the process of growth in the life stage of early adulthood. Individuals in the phase of early adulthood, in particular, undergo specific developmental tasks and challenges integral to shaping one’s identity. Independence, relationship building, intimacy, honing of intelligence, sophistication of thought processes, assuming new roles specifically related to career choice and social experience make up one’s early adulthood identity formation. Often, these constructs are formed during a period of liminality or transition, where one is working towards finding their place in society. The concept and themes of relationship building, intimacy, honing of intelligence, sophistication of thought processes, and new roles appeared to be predominant topics of investigation and experience of this research. This includes the exploration of the themes in relation to family, friends, and clients as they relate to personal and professional identity growth. The course of research resulted in a greater awareness and illumination on personal ideas and reactions related to the development of
the personal and professional self.

Additionally, loss seemed to be a pertinent issue contributing the concept of life transitions, while it was not the original intent of this study to specifically address this concept with the developmental tasks within this research, the connection and focus on loss as it relates to death, losing one’s rigidity and inhibitions, loss of innocence, and saying goodbye appeared relevant to the researcher. The issues of work, lifestyle, intimacy, and social roles were also relevant themes and considerations of the researcher.

In terms of identity growth, existing literature has shown how identity continues to evolve throughout one’s life process (Erikson, 1968). Literature has also indicated that while identity does not have a clear definition, it can be composed of issues of self-perception and personality. Identity and intimacy have been notably linked constructs that continue to develop during early adulthood (Pals, 1999; Winefield & Harvey, 1996). These concepts of identity emerged as salient to the nature and results of the study.

Based on the heuristic inquiry method of research, the personal experience as a source of meaning and discovery was a fundamental aspect of this study, which highlighted the experience of the self throughout the entire study. Accordingly, the investigation or exploration of self and self-perception, in addition to the self as related to intimacy and relationships, were essential aspects of the experience. In reflecting on the a priori themes it appears that these evolving personal concepts of self-perception are integral parts of personal and professional identity formation.

This research study spanned and considered relevant issues in existing literature, as noted above, when framing the research work. While the results did not conclude a specific definition of one’s personal and professional identity growth process, they
showed an increased awareness of the emotional content combined with reflections on experiences contribute to the enhancement of a personal and professional identity. Moreover, the themes that emerged through the artistic inquiry process illustrate the relevance of the use creative arts mediums as a means to explore pertinent developmental issues directly corresponding to the growth of personal and professional identity. As such, it is important to the nature of this study to explore the heuristic process of data collection in order to gain greater insight into the depth of the resulting themes.

Authentic movement and dance improvisation with videotaping of the creative process, reflection through journaling, and visual art making including photography, drawing, and choreography in order to process one’s experiences can facilitate the emergence of themes and insights through experiences that become instrumental in the development of personal and professional growth. Working with the emergent themes emanating from the process can illuminate awareness that may have been previously unconscious. Often it is difficult for one to gain a comprehensive perspective on personal and professional identity, as well as related issues. Thus, the tasks of authentic movement and dance improvisation, journaling, and visual art making combined with the phases of heuristic research create a sense of awareness, insight, and illumination that previously seemed unavailable to the subject. However, allowing the themes and meaning of the experience to emerge and evolve, provide a new perspective. Growing in comprehension of themes caused considerations of the relevant issues. Considering intimacy, professional roles, self-perception, mastery in intelligence all directly relate to the developmental issues of early adulthood. Thus, identity was clearly related to developmental issues in the process and results of this study, which correlates to self-
perception.

The artistic inquiry methodology was based on the notion for practice in the field of creative arts in therapies that one must gain personal experience and insight into the utilized artistic media in order to cultivate sensitivity and strengthen the profession (McNiff, 1998). The heuristic research methodology is based on the significance of the human experience, thus the themes related to the experience of the data collection or creative process will be explored.

The collection of themes that emerged and provided insight through the process include the sub topics of issues of loss, intimacy, intelligence, roles, self perception, and professional identity.

The challenges of early adulthood involve the development of intimate relationships with other adults (Erikson, 1995). Only when one is secure and confident in his own identity can he take the risks involved in genuine social and intimacy of a lasting kind. This was noted through the relationship building with my parents during the experiences of death, close relationships with friends who are now adults. When I began to let go of striving for perfectionism and became more secure and confident in myself during sessions with clients and during the funeral, I was able to establish more intimate, meaningful relationships with those involved in the situation.

Labouvie-Vief (1994) discussed the notion of early adulthood intelligence as post formal thinking, where one engages in flexible thinking that acknowledges the world as complex and contradictory. The flexible thinking emerged when the researcher was able to let go of inhibitions and trust herself to connect with the innate. Furthermore, this concept was illustrated when the researcher’s perspective of beauty shift and she was able
to better understand the experience of the other.

Based on the theories of the self, constructed by anthropologist Mead (1934), the early adulthood identity is developed as a social structure. One’s self expands through social experience and activity. It is the unity of one’s complete self as merely the reflection of the individual’s social experience. The presidential election and the researcher’s experience with the client with paralysis changed perceived ideas of beauty.

Regarding personality, Pals (1999) focused on ego-resiliency, a broad personality resource reflecting the capacity to cope effectively and flexibly maintain positive identity commitments in the face of challenging life circumstances. She proposed that early adulthood is not only a period of identity development, but also that the emphasis of identity work may change to reflect the unique demands of early adulthood such as confronting the social realities of adult life. Issues such as death, growing up, saying goodbye to individuals and forming a new sense of self resonated this idea of changing to adapt. As seen through the movement improvisation tapes, the researcher was resilient throughout each of the profound processes.

Research also suggested that there is an intimate relationship between personal inner development and professional growth as a creative arts therapist. Levick (1995) identified compassion, empathy, and patience as foundations for professional identity, while McNiff (1986) highlighted the understanding of how personality and behavior influence clients and therapy. The sense of understanding one’s values in order to be respectful of and to work effectively with others whose values differ from one’s own are extremely important was achieved by the researcher who reflected on experiences in order to understand the experience of the other. The researcher concluded that her
reactions, thoughts, and feelings towards herself were being communicated to the other and that a personal sense of understanding and strength was needed in order to provide a safe and welcoming environment with the client.

While identity crosses over various contexts, one goes through phases and changes as discussed by Turner. Within each experience processed, it appears as though the researcher underwent several transitions and endured changes. This connects with Schmais’s (2004) literature stating that the dance therapist whose status as an authority figures carries weight and influence must be sensitive to how his or her behavior may affect patients. One’s own feelings and thoughts about the self is can, in fact, be communicated to and influence another.

The theme of memory also appeared throughout the authentic movement and improvisation sessions, the reflection through journaling, and the visual art making. In this study, the artistic mediums served as a way to explore certain places, people, or feelings through the capturing and creation of art. These mediums produced a way of revisiting the significant experiences, retriggering feelings associated with these experiences, and acted as a way of remembering the exploration of these events from a removed view.

Memory relates to identity as the personal identity is comprised of a variety of aspects, including self-concept and internal structures through which one understands and gives meaning to personal experiences (Kroger, 2000). Thus, the role of memory in identity development contributes to ones perception of life experiences. The artistic mediums served as tangible and images of past moments that provide the researcher with
another perspective of the self.

Clinical Applications

Based on the aforementioned information, it seems as though the research process itself, could be a useful tool. Perhaps engaging in artistic heuristic inquiry research could be used as a method of getting to know oneself or to work through life transitions and changes? While I had specifically spoke about the research as it pertains to the idea of early adulthood development processes, note that I also experienced changes in career and loss, for example, that are life transitions that can be relatable to individuals at any age. Thus, a 45 year old man or woman deciding to change a profession and embarking on a new life journey may find it worthwhile to engage in the artistic heuristic inquiry process to better understand the self and how he or she processes life’s experiences.

Based on the experiences of the data collection and the resulting themes and results, several recommendations for clinical applications of this method have been conceptualized. Authentic movement and dance improvisation sessions, journaling, and visual art making served as mediums to initiate memories. The literature, accompanied by the results of this study, demonstrate that the use of tools for processing experiences can be extremely beneficial in a therapeutic milieu to trigger experiences, memories, feelings, and sensations. In fact, the researcher found that through the creative mediums, there was an investigation of the self in terms of loss, self-perception, relationships, and intelligence. Thus the results illustrate the valuable vehicle of artistic mediums to enhance one’s concept of personal and professional identity growth. In addition, there are several considerations in terms of clinical applications that directly relate to one’s
experience regarding issues of ego strength and functioning and practical considerations.

The process proposed in this study may be helpful to a higher-functioning individual in therapy to explore identity during a period of transition, a time of change, and developmental milestones. Since the experience specifically addresses issue of early adulthood, it would be particularly beneficial to patients of that age group. The research further showed that combining artistic processes can allow for one to gain an even deeper understanding of the self and initiate further growth.

Another recommendation from the experience of the researcher is that the artistic processing of life events may also be useful to those experiencing life transitions. Individuals undergoing divorce, giving up an addiction, struggling with life threatening illnesses such as Cancer, and parents who birth a handicapped child may struggle with issues of identity issues. As previously noted, examining the self during different life situations allows an individual to uncover strengths and weaknesses from outside lens. This study uncovered themes of loss, concept of beauty, roles, and intimacy, for example that could correlate to individuals experiencing the aforementioned situations. One who divorces will deal with issues of losing a partner, being single, exploring intimacy with new people, and how he or she perceive the self as a result of a failed marriage. One who gives up an addiction may face the loss of the addiction that served as a coping mechanism and source of comfort, loss of friends and family as a result of the addiction, and change in roles both personally, intimately, and professionally. Someone struggling with Cancer may have to cope with illness as a new part of their identity and perhaps deal with loss of hair and physical mobility as a result of treatment. Individuals coping with illness may also have to take on a new role in their homes and at their work places as a
result. The illness may create barriers or openings to intimacy. In addition, illness may play a role in one’s perception of beauty. A parent who gives birth to a handicapped child will also undergo a transition as it relates to identity. The parent will have to significantly readjust his or her lifestyle in order to meet the needs of the handicapped child. This life readjustment may also include loss in terms of life experiences restricted due to the handicap, intimacy with the child due to limitations, change in perception of how beauty defines the self and the child, as well as undertaking a new parental role. It may be helpful to explore identity through artistic medias with the described clients, who struggle with their sense of identity, to focus on exploring personal identity growth.

The study may benefit dance/movement therapists in-training as well, by encouraging them to explore their own identity as it relates to media used in the creative arts therapies. As aforementioned, students are undergoing a period of transition themselves. Understanding the self during these transitions and their responses to life events can allow them to better serve their clients. As the literature stated, the better the therapist understands the self, the better he or she is able to be a strong, helpful therapist.

It is also important for educators to consider that a strong relationship exists between personal and professional identity growth. Training and evolution contribute to the development of the therapist. Self-awareness during this journey may enhance the student’s belief in the client’s ability to change. If we, as therapists, understand our processes of change and our abilities to evolve, than we can with sincerity and faith encourage our patients to do so, as well. Perhaps our firsthand experience will be able to better serve our clients.
Schmais (2004) believed a person’s style and their contemporaneous behavior is based on a combination of temperament, culture, values, beliefs, professional and social roles, and the evaluation of themselves in action. The interwoven experiences of memory, loss, intimacy, roles, and perception of beauty are explored and the personal conception of each is shifted as one develops professionally. In training to become a therapist, one is hooked into exploring the cyclical themes discovered. These ideas seem to repeatedly emerge through the exploration of different life experiences and facilitate growth. Thus, it is likely that a patient may also face these concepts.

Schmais (2004) further stated that a dance therapist whose status as an authority figure carries weight and influence must be sensitive to how her behavior may affect patients. Being emotionally accessible to experiences of loss, intimacy, memory, roles, and perception of beauty implies being open to sharing and responding to the breadth of human emotions ranging from deep despair to raging hostility, without feeling threatened.
or engulfed. Understanding the feelings of the self and how one deals with life
experiences may allow professionals to convey more genuineness to their clients and may
allow professionals to better understand the issues that may simultaneously emerge
through a client’s experience.

Limitations of the Study

Limitations of the study do exist. I engaged in an artistic heuristic inquiry using
myself as the subject. While the findings can be valuable and contribute to the field, my
experience will be different from that of others who may decide to embark on a similar
journey of exploration. Also, while I, the researcher, made recommendations for
applications of the study, there are still certain limitations that must be addressed. Since
the study focused on a normal early adulthood population, with only one subject, it is
limited as it cannot be generalized to a larger population at this time.

In addition, this particular study is open for interpretation. Scientific epistemology
condemns aesthetic processes for being subjective, unreliable, and not valid. However,
McNiff (1998), Hervey (2000), Payne (1993), and Brown (2007) offer research that
argues against such and assures the significance of arts based research. This study
embraces postmodern and poststructuralist epistemologies with the researcher sharing her
process of understanding herself through the process of inquiry (Richardson & St. Pierre,
2005). Here, “ambiguity and uncertainty” is accepted (Brown, 2007). Thus, the reader is
invited to formulate his or her meanings in the works produced.

There was the aspect of personal disclosure, which may have consciously or
unconsciously affected the extent of personal information incorporated into this study. The research required personal examination to occur, and due to the public admission of the information attained, there was some conscious and unconscious resistance to full personal engagement and disclosure. Therefore, it may be beneficial for the study to recruit anonymous volunteers who can more fully engage in the process to allow greater insight and disclosure to emerge.

Furthermore, time constraints played a significant role in the course of the research process. It may have been more insightful and helpful to have had more time for the process of the research to unfold. Moustakas (1991) noted that in order for heuristic research to most effectively and genuinely progress, it cannot be hurried or timed (p. 14). Consequently, the study was limited by time restraints and perhaps the process was not allowed to unfold in endless time commitment as recommended.

Not being able to use the choreography fully as a piece of data in the study also was as a result of limitations in the study. Due to the timing of the dance, which was to performed by a teenage dance company at their show at a specific date, and me being given six dancers to work with who were not of professional status, the choreography was not a fully available opportunity for me to reach an authentic creative synthesis with the work. Had I been able to compose the piece on my own time, with dancers I selected, I may have been better able to use the piece as a data source to be analyzed. It is possible that different implications regarding aesthetics, for example, may have been revealed. Not utilizing the piece as a more significant piece of data was a decision of scope. However, I feel as though it was missed opportunity that could have been beneficial to the study.
Implications for Future Research

The results suggest that authentic movement/dance improvisation sessions, combined with journaling and art making, are valuable methods for exploring and enhancing personal and professional identity growth in a young adult facing developmental tasks and challenges. However, it may be helpful to have a larger number of participants to allow a greater generalization of the results. Also, having the research participants use anonymity to discuss experiences and results might allow for more personal insight, growth, and engagement on the part of the participants. Anonymity may be difficult to achieve due to the authentic movement/dance improvisation tapes and photography included in the data college, therefore established guidelines and the rights and privacy of patients would need to be formulated before the study began. Participants may also choose to include another creative arts medium, perhaps one that was not so revealing of them, to explore their identity, while protecting privacy.

Further implications for future research may include a longer timeline for the study in order to allow a greater depth of results to emerge. More time would provide space for the process to unfold and themes to emerge with fewer constrictions. Personal and professional identity growth seems to be ongoing processes of development. Thus, a limit of time may inhibit the emergence of rich data.
CHAPTER SIX: SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

This thesis is titled Mobilizing Identity Formation as a Psychotherapist: An Artistic Heuristic Inquiry Using Dance/Movement. The rationale for the research was to explore how a creative arts therapy student’s practice of his or her own art form to explore personal identity can enhance the self-awareness necessary for professional development. For the purpose of this study, I, the researcher, a woman in the early adulthood stage of development, served as the subject to explore my self-awareness and identity transitioning from a student to a dance/movement therapist. As various theorists have suggested, there are developmental milestones and tasks that individuals face in the process of identity growth and change throughout the life span. However, available literature and research exploring the use of dance/movement and other artistic mediums to enhance identity in a young adult transitioning from student to therapist within a therapeutic milieu has been minimal. Furthermore, there is a nascent body of research in the dance/movement therapy field using the artistic heuristic inquiry processes.

The artistic and heuristic inquiry methodologies were employed to gain insight into the usefulness of videotaped movement improvisation, journaling, and art making processes to gain a better self awareness. Consequently, for the purpose of this research, I, the researcher, also served as the subject. The artistic inquiry method was selected due to the emphasis on the creation of artistic media as significant in understanding 1) the creative arts therapist in training’s experience with a particular medium and the 2)the implications of practicing these mediums to gain a better self awareness necessary for personal and professional growth. The heuristic methodology was then integrated in
order to bring forth the human experience as an emergent, yet structured research process.

I began with an initial engagement process of selecting the topic that was meaningful to me, and one that had the potential to produce valuable implications for the creative arts in therapy field. After reviewing relevant existing literature, and due to the rationale and desire to conduct this particular study, I proceeded to engage in the immersion and collecting of the data. To collect the data, I engaged in the creation of dance, journal writing, and visual art making over a 20 week period in order to process personal and professional events I deemed significant to my growth.

After a period of incubation, illumination, and explication, I was able to organize and synthesize the themes that emerged from the data collection process. The major findings suggested that the existence of early adulthood developmental issues and milestones were significant in the artistic and in the writing portions of the data collected. In fact, the data collected indicated a strong relationship to personal identity and provides a way to understand how personal identity contributes to professional identity. The dominant emergent themes were developed through immersion in the data collection and analysis. These included loss, intimacy, self perception, memory, and roles. A priori themes included issues pertaining directly to the developmental stage and professional issues (e.g. mastery). It was discovered that these themes function in a cyclical manner, where each experience relates to and helps facilitate the next. Regardless of point of entry experience, the themes are interwoven. The results also showed that the artistic forms of the videotaped movement sessions and the visual art revealed important data about the individual that the journal texts did not convey.
List of References


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