

Article

Sensing Difference: Student and Teacher Perceptions on the Integration of the Feldenkrais Method of Somatic Education and Contemporary Dance Technique

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Abstract

A somatic approach to contemporary dance technique advocates individual uniqueness and the distinctive sensory experience of each student as a starting point to improve understanding and self-knowledge of movement. Despite the recent increase of somatic education within dance education and academia, there has been little research investigating somatic education and contemporary dance from the perspective of the student.

This thesis presents a phenomenological study examining student perceptions of the Feldenkrais Method® of somatic education and contemporary dance technique with a group of pre-professional and professional dancers in New Zealand. A socio-constructivist position informs the researcher's teaching process and the interpretation of students' experiences. Students' voices are examined through thematic analysis while the researcher's teaching practice is investigated through teacher research (Cochran-Smith, 1993; Mitchell, 2000; Russel & Bullock, 1999) and reflective practice (Schon, 1983).

Students' perceptions of experiences over five days of classes are gathered through participant observation, group discussions, journal entries and individual interviews. Results are discussed in relation to socio-constructivist epistemology, students' perceptions of self authority and sensory awareness in dance.

The study has shown that a combination of both teacher and student centred pedagogy was a useful approach for integrating somatic education and contemporary dance technique.

The outcomes of this study may contribute to knowledge in a range of areas that include research methodology in dance, research in the Feldenkrais Method® of somatic education and research in teachers' professional knowledge in dance education.

Keywords

Feldenkrais, perceptions, Somatic Education, Contemporary dance, dance teaching

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**Sensing Difference: Student and Teacher Perceptions on the
Integration of the Feldenkrais Method of Somatic Education and
Contemporary Dance Technique**

Warwick Long

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Master of Physical Education
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CHAPTER ONE:

INTRODUCTION

Throughout my career as a dance performer, choreographer and teacher I felt that learning movement was problematic. The origins of this feeling stemmed from my experience as a child when I always had difficulties learning complex movement skills. In ball games or activities such as gymnastics I was un-coordinated and seemed to have a fear of movement. The paradox was that in other areas movement felt natural, as I regularly competed at a national and provincial level in athletics and swimming.

In commencing dance classes at the age of eighteen, I found this learning process a struggle made more complex by my notions of right and wrong technique. These notions were based on my perceptions of an ideal dance technique and how I should look doing it. Attention to sensation had escaped me. I was preoccupied with achieving technical perfection no matter what the cost. The cost in the end was chronic back pain. I realise now my difficulties in learning dance were more to do with my thinking than anything else. I began to transform my thinking about movement through my growing interest in the Feldenkrais Method®¹ of somatic education. Through this way of learning, I began to sense how to make fine discriminations in movement from a kinaesthetic perspective. One way somatic education links with dance education is through learning to direct attention to movement on an incrementally fine level. In the field of somatic education this process of learning

¹ While Feldenkrais Method®, Awareness Through Movement®, and Functional Integration® are registered service marks of the North American and Australian Feldenkrais Guilds, the author has chosen to acknowledge these service mark in this first instance, but omit them from the remainder of this thesis for the purpose of reader clarity.

movement is termed sensory motor awareness. In this research my past experience as a student and my present experience as a somatic and dance educator meet as I observe students experiencing many similar issues that I encountered in learning movement skills.

Context

The purpose of this study was to examine learner perceptions of how somatic education was integrated within contemporary dance technique classes in a pre-professional academic setting. Somatics has been widely infused within the field of contemporary dance, with numerous methods of somatic education becoming increasingly popular in academic and professional milieu (Cardinal, 2000; Fitt, 1998; Fortin, 1995). There are many claims that somatics influences dance teaching, choreography, performance, and dance medicine. However from reviewing the literature it appears there is little systematic research examining these claims.

This thesis utilises the following definition of somatics by Hanna (1986) to illustrate the place of somatics within this study.

Somatics is the field which studies the soma: namely the body as perceived from within by first person perception. When a human being is observed from the outside i.e., from a third-person viewpoint- the phenomenon of a human body is perceived. The soma, being internally perceived, is categorically distinct from a body, not because the subject is different but because the mode of viewpoint is different: It is immediate proprioception, a sensory mode that provides unique data (Hanna, 1986, p. 4).

Joly (2001) further elaborates on this definition by Hanna to specifically define the field of somatic education as “the learning process of the living body as it acquires awareness through movement within the environment” (p. 17). My particular area of professional knowledge is the Feldenkrais Method of somatic education and dance education.

The current study evolved from my involvement as researcher in a previous study in a professional setting. In this previous study, I articulated theories that shaped my teaching in somatics and contemporary dance technique (Long, 2001). The conclusion of this study led to a number of recommendations for future research. The primary recommendation was to initiate further research investigating somatic understanding of movement from the perspective of the learner. A somatic understanding of movement refers to awareness of our kinaesthetic sense, the feeling of our body in motion (Berleant 1970), rather than external feedback or modelling.

My desire to conduct this present study also comes from my experience as a teacher. As a teacher, I am curious about how learners make sense of their learning experiences in the dance class. Talking to students after class, I often notice that feedback emerges in three categories: (a) feedback about the content of the class, (b) feedback about my teaching method, and (c) feedback revealing student experiences ranging from puzzlement, confusion, and frustration, to excitement and enlightenment over seemingly simple things. From these informal conversations, I began to wonder about the ways students perceive their experiences in dance class. My interest is in working with dancers as people, for it is as people that they experience their world through movement, it is as people they dance, and as people they are asked to transform their existing movement experience into a specific vocabulary known as contemporary dance technique. It is because of my interest in these relationships that I have taken a socio-constructivist perspective within a qualitative methodology.

The socio-constructivist would argue that our learning is constructed out of our personal experiences, values and ways of being emerging from our social interactions in the world. Two shared commonalities between somatic education and a socio-constructivist approach are: (a) the notion that people are intrinsically connected to their social environment and that behaviour emerges from interactions within that environment, and (b) the entry point for

learning is personal construction of experience. The distinction with somatic education however, is that most somatic educators' value movement as the primary representation of a person's way of being in the world, and therefore changes in behaviour are promoted through bringing a person's awareness to how they move in their world.

As a teacher, to arrive at a somatic way of knowing movement I have to embody the movement I teach. In contemporary dance much of the movement is self-devised by the teachers. (Here I make a distinction between contemporary dance and modern dance styles such as Cunningham or Graham technique that rely on a fixed movement vocabulary faithful to the technical prescriptions of the founder, i.e. Merce Cunningham or Martha Graham). Contemporary dance does not rely on prescribed vocabulary or sequences of movement common to every dance class, even though events and structures of classes may be similar in nature. In teaching contemporary dance technique informed by somatics, the content of my teaching is not separate from myself. My teaching is the sum of my experiences, abilities, disabilities, frustrations, fears, values and kinaesthetic embodiment of movement. If I fully embody the content of my teaching and the way I teach, the two are in some ways inseparable, each informs the other.

My interest is the interrelationships between human movement, somatic ways of knowing and understanding the self in the world. Although this interest has been an ongoing process, the essence of it has never been formally researched. Consequently I hold certain hunches regarding the value of somatic education to dance practice. Somatic theory suggests that if we really know how we move, we have the possibility to improve and transform unnecessary habits or dysfunctional patterns. My hunch is that somatic education may contribute to dance education and training through promoting self-observation of sensory motor awareness. This entails discrimination between sensing movement and replicating movement, the somatic approach and the technocratic approach. This belief is based on my

experiences in learning movement as a student, and working with others as a teacher, performer, choreographer or researcher. I believe that the integration of somatics in contemporary dance technique may assist students in constructing knowledge on many different levels including a somatic way of knowing (Heshusius, 1994).

Research Question

The aim of this study was to: (a) investigate student perspectives of their learning experience in the integration of somatic education and contemporary dance technique, and (b) engage in teacher research in the area of somatic education and contemporary dance technique.

The first aim was to understand how a group of pre-professional and professional dancers perceived the integration of somatic education, more specifically the Feldenkrais Method of somatic education, within contemporary dance technique class. From this broad aim five sub questions emerged:

1. How do dancers describe their experience of learning in a dance class informed by the Feldenkrais Method of somatic education?
2. How do dancers perceive the value of somatic education in pre-professional tertiary dance training?
3. How do dancers perceive the value of somatic education in relation to their own movement?
4. Can dancers construct somatic ways of knowing themselves through movement?
5. How can dancers “give voice” to somatic ways of knowing themselves through movement? (i.e. ...metaphor, graphic, movement demonstration, etc.)

The second aim was to use teacher research to investigate the following two aspects of my teaching:

1. How do my values in teaching somatics and contemporary dance translate into my practice?
2. What assumptions do I bring to the process of integrating somatic education and contemporary dance technique?

Paradigm

A paradigm is a meta-narrative presenting “...a world view, a general perspective, a way of breaking down the complexity of the real world” (Sparkes, 1992, p. 12). Historically, the dominant paradigm of scientific western knowledge has been positivist. Questions about the nature of knowledge in a positivist paradigm assume that reality exists in the form of measurable natural laws and mechanisms. The evolution of a number of alternative points of view to positivism has seen another paradigm established that is concerned with understanding human meaning and experience. This paradigm is generally known as interpretivist and in simple terms attends to the interpretation of human lived experience. Qualitative research methodology is widely used within this paradigm (Guba, 1990b). While further distinctions about paradigms are the source of ongoing debate, Guba (1990b) saw views such as postpositivism, critical theory and constructivism as being individual paradigms emerging as alternatives to positivism. For purposes of clarity in this thesis I am adopting Guba’s position of seeing postpositivism, critical theory, and constructivism as individual paradigms with the distinction that they are phenomenological in nature, in that they attend to human lived experiences of phenomena. These paradigms along with literature in constructivism will be discussed in the next chapter.

In this study I position my self within a constructivist and more specifically a socio-constructivist framework. In line with postpositivism, I value multiple ways of knowing and

acknowledge multiple versions of reality. To further define this theoretical position it is important for me to acknowledge the relationship between myself, and that which I seek to understand. The qualitative process by which I construct knowledge about the integration of somatic education and contemporary dance technique is phenomenological. It is phenomenological in that it seeks to describe and interpret the lived experience of 10 dance students and myself as we interact to construct a series of classes over a one-week period. If I am to value a phenomenological approach then first person experience is undeniable. Students' social and individual constructions of knowledge become their lived experience.

Method

While the research methods will be discussed in detail in chapter three, this section serves as an introduction to the process of the study.

Much of the available research on the Feldenkrais Method tends to be of an empirical nature directed towards addressing the efficacy of the Feldenkrais Method from a health perspective (Cardinal, 2000; Huntley & Ernst, 2000; Ives, 1998; Ives & Sosnoff, 2000). There is less research examining aspects of learning from a qualitative and specifically constructivist perspective.

In this study, qualitative methodology was used to gain an understanding of a group of pre-professional and professional dancers' learning experiences in the studio environment. As the principle researcher and teacher within this enquiry, I drew on teacher research (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1993; Mitchell, 2000; Russell & Bullock, 1999) and reflective practice (Schon, 1983) as a research method to gain understanding and insight into classroom experiences.

There were eleven participants in this study. Five participants were pre-professional dance students enrolled in their second year of a bachelor degree qualification, and another five were professional dancers from the Auckland dance community. Finally there was myself as a teacher researcher.

Data was collected over five daily morning classes of one and a half hour's duration each, for a period of one week. The collection method was through video recording of whole class participation, journal entries, group interview and in-depth interviews with six participants. The selection process for participants in the study will be described in chapter three.

The data was analysed using a constant comparative method (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994). The constant comparative method is an inductive process that allows meanings to emerge from the data through directing attention to the focus of inquiry. This initially entails extracting units of meaning and identifying categories that emerge relevant to my particular inquiry.

Value

The value of this inquiry lies in the emerging outcomes of the data analysis and insights gained through understanding student experiences and reflective practice. I believe that new knowledge in the fields of somatics and dance may prove fruitful to not only my teaching practice but also other somatic practitioners, teachers of dance, and tertiary educators interested in similar integrative processes. In the fields of education and dance education, this inquiry may contribute to a diverse and growing body of knowledge in the area of teacher research and reflective practice. Finally my intention is that this phenomenological account

of teaching and learning may contribute to teachers' professional knowledge in dance education.

CHAPTER TWO:

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This review of literature is structured in two parts. The first articulates my ontological and epistemological position in respect to constructivism and the second addresses the themes of this study: Somatics; the Feldenkrais Method; contemporary dance; somatic education and dance; motor learning and control; and somatics and motor learning.

Epistemological Position

The following issues concerning ontology and epistemology, serve to depict broader perspectives of knowledge in context to the literature pertinent to this study. As previously defined, a paradigm is “a set of overarching and interconnected assumptions about the nature of reality. The paradigm provides the basis on which we build our verifiable knowledge” (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994, p. 4). Guba (1990b) suggested that a paradigm is made up of a three element structure: ontology, epistemology, and methodology. He advocated that all paradigms are belief systems of “human construction” (Guba, 1990b, p. 18), and as such they are contestable, fallible and changeable as are all human philosophic constructions. Guba further suggested that our answers to the questions of ontology, epistemology and methodology can act as a guide to direct us to a set of basic belief systems that we might adopt in our research inquiry (Guba, 1990b). According to Guba these belief systems are;

The starting points or givens that determine what inquiry is and how it is to be practiced. They cannot be proven or disproven in any foundation sense; if that were true there would be no doubt about how to practice inquiry (p. 18).

The major paradigms that influence western scientific knowledge are positivism, postpositivism, critical theory and constructivism (Guba, 1990b). Guba (1990b) provides a

useful guide to the ontology of these four paradigms. Guba describes the ontology of positivism as being *realist* in nature. In contrast to this, the ontology of postpositivism and critical theory is described as *critical realism*. In postpositivism and critical theory, questions about the nature of knowledge assume that reality exists, but it is debatable and even multiple. “It can never be fully apprehended. It is driven by natural laws that can only be incompletely understood” (p. 23). The ontology of constructivism on the other hand is seen as being *relativist*. Questions about the nature of knowledge from a constructivist orientation assume that if realities exist they do so only in the “form of multiple mental constructions, socially and experientially based, local and specific, dependent for their form and content on the persons who hold them” (p. 27). In any case, postpositivism, critical theory and constructivism are all concerned with the value, meaning and interpretation of human lived experience in the world and are further differentiated by their individual characteristics as described below.

Postpositivism

A postpositivist paradigm values a qualitative methodology as a means of inquiry into human experience. This paradigm is founded on the argument that the world can be interpreted through multiple realities and there can be no one single way of knowing (Eisner, 1998). This argument presumes that research observation is always theory laden and therefore cannot be objectively independent or a true reflection of one singular reality (Ockwell, 2001). A feature of postpositivist research is that it is concerned with understanding and interpreting the world as it is (Kenway, 1995). The postpositivist paradigm encompasses a range of research processes and is subjective and interactive.

Critical Theory

Critical theory can be seen as “ideologically oriented inquiry” (Guba, 1990b, p. 23). In line with postpositivism, critical theorists also acknowledge that the nature of inquiry and the nature of knowledge are value laden. Guba proposes that if this is the case the question arises as to what values and whose values shall govern the inquiry. Consequently the assertion of one set of values naturally discounts or dis-empowers another set of values. The nature by which the inquiry can be conducted then “becomes a political act” (Guba, 1990b, p. 25). The epistemology of critical theory is also subjective “because inquiry acts are intimately related to the values of the inquirer” (p. 25). Critical theory therefore accounts for structural forces that influence human experience of the world. Ockwell (2001) suggests that to critical theorists, it is the “underlying power relations that set perceptible and imperceptible limits on our participation in, and understanding of the world” (p. 28). The role of critical theory as an ideologically oriented inquiry is to acknowledge, uncover and mediate these relationships to facilitate transformation and social improvement.

Constructivist

The constructivist view of the world sees knowledge as being socially constructed rather than universal. This view also forms the basis for one of the central feminist critiques of dominant western knowledge (Barbour, 2001). Schwandt (2000) suggests that, “human beings do not find or discover knowledge so much as construct or make it. We invent concepts, models and schemes to make sense of experience and we continually test and modify these constructions in light of the new experience” (p. 197). Ockwell (2001) suggests that: “Constructivism is based on a relativist ontology meaning that one true reality can not exist but can only be ‘reconstructed’ at a given time in the minds of its constructors” (p. 26). Therefore knowledge or experience is constructed out of social interactions relative to particular moments in time.

Constructivism and more specifically socio-constructivism, forms the basis of my epistemological position for this thesis. I will briefly describe these notions and then address constructivist pedagogy. Within the constructivist paradigm, I will review literature in the specific ethnographic method I use in this study, known as reflective practice (Schon, 1983, 1987) or teacher research (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1993). This will also be discussed in the methodology in chapter three. In narrowing down the broad paradigm of constructivism to the field of education, Howe and Berv (2000) propose that constructivism predominantly characterises such phenomena as “learning theory, teaching techniques and a general pedagogical approach” (p. 30).

The philosophical roots of constructivism in education can be traced back to the work of Jean Piaget and Lev Vygotsky (Howe & Berv, 2000; McCarty & Schwandt, 2000). There are wide and varied descriptions of constructivism that encompass ways of thinking and researching human sciences, including education practice and qualitative research methodology. Schwandt (1994) notes that notions of constructivism have wide usage yet are particularly “shaped by the intent of their users” (p. 119). Constructivism highlights a dichotomy of sorts in grappling with subjectivity and objectivity. Schwandt also suggests the problem faced by constructivist researchers is that “they struggle with drawing a line between the object of investigation and the investigated... the paradox of how to develop an objective interpretive science of subjective humanistic inquiry thus arises” (Schwandt, 1994, p. 119). The fundamental assumption of constructivism is that the human experience of the world is a construction and that this experience can be changed. There is not an absolute reality out there. Our notions of truth are linked to the subjectivity of our experience. Constructivism values subjectivity since multiple meanings of the world are created rather than found. In this dissertation, the following three aspects of constructivism have influenced my inquiry: (a) knowledge is created and not found, (b) a preference to value the verb knowing to describe

the procedure of knowledge rather than the noun of knowledge as something that is arrived at or found, and (c) the active concept of people interacting within their environment rather than the receptive concept of people reacting to their environment.

Socio-constructivism

Socio-constructivists claim that social interaction and shared discourse will allow individuals to make sense of the world (Gergen, 1994). In socio-constructivism, the focus is on the individual construction of the world and the shared discourse with society (McCarty & Schwandt, 2000). Socio-constructivism emphasizes the collective generation and transmission of meanings between people and their relationship with the world. Chen and Rovegno (2000) note that “knowledge is constructed through the interplay between an individual’s knowledge, attitudes, and values and social interactions in a socio-cultural context” (p. 357). They further explain that some of the teaching approaches that reflect constructivist beliefs about learning include:

(a) Engaging students in exploratory, self regulated and co-operative learning activities; (b) inviting students to decide their own learning tasks and objectives, generate questions and answers, express their ideas and thoughts, and seek out their own solutions to the problems; (c) asking thoughtful and open-ended questions to facilitate students use of high order thinking skills to critically reflect, identify and evaluate their learning; (d) guiding students to elaborate on their initial thoughts and actions by scaffolding various ways of expanding responses, probing questions, and providing clues; (e) structuring learning experiences around a ‘big picture’ in the context of authentic situations to help students make connections among pieces of information and understand the essence of concepts; (f) organising learning experiences relevant to students prior knowledge and daily lives to help students make learning meaningful to them; and (g) guiding students to work together productively and cooperatively by establishing the ground rules and norms to listen to others respectfully and to share ideas with one another (Chen & Rovegno, 2000, p. 358).

Issues in Constructivist Pedagogy

The foundational assumptions of constructivism also lead to theories that inform constructivist pedagogy that Howe & Berv (2000) describe as follows:

Constructivist learning theory has two basic premises: (1) learning takes as its starting point the knowledge, attitudes and interests students bring to the learning situation, and (2) learning results from the interaction between these characteristics and experience in such a way that learners construct their own understanding from the inside (p. 30-31).

Henceforth the facilitator of an educational experience is required to bring an understanding of needs, attitudes and starting points of students as well as a means whereby the interactions of knowledge and experience can lead to meaningful ways of knowing.

Adopting a constructivist pedagogy in its purity also has its detractions. If one of the aims of learning is a transformation of behaviour, then simply creating interactions around existing experience might not always be sufficient to transform behaviour or create new ways of knowing. Thus within the constructivist pedagogy there is an exigency to include a mixture of both constructivist learning theory and non-constructivist teaching techniques (Howe & Berv, 2000; McCarty & Schwandt, 2000). The stumbling block is that the meanings and experiences that students bring to learning situations might not always be accurate, thus the challenge within constructivist approaches is to balance what is valued with what is pertinent and necessary for rigorous growth.

Central Themes

As introduced at the beginning of the chapter, the central themes of this study are discussed in relation to the following literature: somatics, the Feldenkrais Method, contemporary dance, somatic education and dance, motor learning and control, somatics and motor learning.

Somatics

Somatics is defined as “The art and science of the inner relational process between awareness, biological function, and environment, all three factors being understood as a synergetic whole” (Hanna, 1983, p. 1). Another definition by Linden (1994) defines somatic

education as “the educational field, which examines structure and function of the body as a process of lived experience, perception and consciousness” (Linden, 1994, p. 15). Current applications of somatic education range from allied practices within physiotherapy, occupational therapy, and psychotherapy to performing arts practice including tertiary dance education.

For over fifteen years dance educators have been using a variety of somatic education methods in the teaching of choreography and technique (Cardinal, 2000; Fortin, 1998). Within the professional dance community it is well known that increasing numbers of dancers are using somatic education as a method of investigating an embodied knowledge of movement as well as injury prevention and management in conjunction with conventional treatment modalities.

Similar trends have been observed among the general population where there is a growing interest in somatic education methods to assist with a variety of health conditions such as multiple sclerosis (Bost, Burges, Russell, Ruttinger & Schlafke, 1994; Huntley & Ernst, 2000; Stephens, 1999), chronic pain (Bearman & Shafarman, 1999; Phipps, Lopez, Powell, Lundy-Ekman & Maebori. 1997), and fibromyalgia (Dean Yuen & Barrows, 1997).

The use of somatics has also been noted as an adjunct treatment in postural re-education, injury prevention and management, and sports medicine (Fitt, 1998; Ives, 1998; Ives & Sosnoff, 2000). Further evidence of this growing interest exists with an up to 50% increase in people seeking and being referred for treatment in Complementary and Alternative Medicine (Bearman & Shafarman, 1999; Johnson, Frederick, Kaufman, & Mountjoy, 1999; Stephens, 1999).

In many somatic practices the means for improving function is through increasing awareness. Hanna (1986) sees awareness as

... a lens that can be pointed and focussed. Awareness is a somatic activity that is exclusionary: It uses motor inhibition to exclude any sensory recognition other than that upon which it is focussed which could be something external in the environment (third person awareness) or internal within the soma (first person awareness) (p. 7).

Hanna further suggests that; “awareness is the function of isolating new sensory phenomena in order to learn to recognise and control them” (p. 7). Inhibition is seen as an essential component of awareness in many somatic disciplines (Alexander, 1918; Feldenkrais, 1972; Hanna, 1986). Inhibition between thought and action creates the possibility for choice of action, which is the physical basis for awareness. “This pause makes it possible to examine what is happening within us at the moment when the intention to act is formed as well as when it is carried out” (Feldenkrais, 1972, p. 45-46). This moment between thought and action is a primary mechanism to promote learning in Feldenkrais Awareness Through Movement classes. Attention to performing specific movement patterns in a multiplicity of ways can potentially lead to improvement of motor function. In dance we are often looking to exploit multiple ways to perform movement, especially in the choreographic and learning process.

One of the wider issues surrounding the Feldenkrais Method of somatic education is that there are many anecdotal claims supporting its efficacy as a learning method with many of the afore-mentioned conditions, yet there is little consistent research to substantiate these claims. Much of the existing research on somatics and health has received criticism regarding its rigour and methodology (Harris, 1996; Ives, 1998; Stephens, 1999). In light of these criticisms it might be said that there is a need for more research to investigate: (a) what does the Feldenkrais Method contribute to human learning in both specific and diverse areas of movement? (b) How might anecdotal claims regarding such phenomena as improvement of well-being and motor function be evidenced?

My particular interest is the Feldenkrais Method of somatic education and its application to dance education. From an educational perspective it is also relevant to ask: what are the underpinning mechanisms of the Feldenkrais Method as a teaching and learning tool? As a facilitator these questions are in the back of my mind as I seek to understand the ‘how’ of my teaching practice.

The Feldenkrais Method

The Feldenkrais Method is one of several methods of somatic education currently being utilised by dancers and pre-professional training institutions as an adjunct to traditional training methods. Using the medium of movement, it addresses the potential for people to increase self-awareness through self-observation of sensory-motor behaviour, which can then act as catalyst for the improvement of function (Feldenkrais, 1949; Ginsburg, 1999; Hanna, 1990; Wildman, 1990a, 1990b)

Goldfarb (1993) states, “the Feldenkrais Method consists of a systemic understanding of the human body’s design for motion and a perception orientated pedagogy for changing how people move” (Goldfarb, 1993, p. 1). A full discussion on the field of perception is beyond the scope of this review, however for present purposes I will define the notion of perception based on models by Higgins (1991) and Kelso (1982), as the recognition, extraction and use of information from various internal and external sources. Hence, perception based learning is being able to make sense of and act upon perceptual data in order to elicit a transformation in behaviour.

Phipps et al, (1997) define the Feldenkrais Method as “a learning model that presumes that the patient will improve overall cognitive abilities and awareness leading to the learning

of new movement patterns, thus allowing the person to develop more efficient comfortable movement” (p. 2). One learning premise is that action is evaluated by criteria such as: “Is this step leading to learning of new and improved ways of moving?” (p. 13). Other definitions highlight the interdependence of learning with personal experience where the emphasis is on the learner’s subjective conscious experience of themselves in movement (Bearman & Shafarman, 1999; Ginsburg, 1999; Lundblad, 1999; Phipps & Lopez, 1997; Stephens, 1999). Lundblad, Elert and Gerdle (1999) define the Feldenkrais Method as a perception based method and emphasise that “learning is based on the experience of the individual subject” (p. 184). Thus the Feldenkrais Method is an experiential learning process.

As a somatic practice the Feldenkrais Method manifests itself in two forms: Awareness Through Movement lessons and Functional Integration lessons. Awareness Through Movement (ATM) lessons are group classes where precise language provides cues to finding strategies for learning movement. Each person controls their own level of participation and inquiry in these lessons. The lessons are configured often around functional movement patterns from simple to complex. The aim is for people to find a clear relationship between their awareness in movement and the relationship to function. Functional Integration lessons are individual sessions where a Feldenkrais practitioner guides a client /student through precise gentle tactile (hands on) movement explorations. Each exploration has specific goals designed to enhance function. The practitioner works directly according to the needs, pace and capability of the student. My interest is in describing and interpreting student experiences of learning within the integration of ATM and contemporary dance technique class.

One of the paradoxes of this inquiry is that for most somatic practices there is a constant interplay between subjective and objective realities. In a socio-constructivist paradigm, phenomena are viewed and understood through multiple realities (Guba, 1990a, 1990b). Baniel (in Spire 1989) states that “we do not have an internal way to measure the quality of

our movement and its efficiency in objective terms as defined by the laws of physics” (p. 159). The concept of subjectivity and objectivity is also presented by Guba (1990a) who contends, “if there is a reality then (even if it is not ultimately accessible), the purpose of science must be to ferret out its dynamics... The aim is to find out how things really are” (p. 87). The importance of subjective and objective relationships can not be underestimated in light of research in the Feldenkrais Method. Hanna (1986) makes two clear distinctions regarding this ontology. “First person observation of the soma is immediately factual. Third person observation, in contrast, can become factual only by mediation through a set of principles” (p. 4). By allowing these two distinctions to be mutually inclusive Hanna sites them within a postpositivist framework stating “this difference in data is neither a difference in truthful accuracy nor of intrinsic value. ... Neither mode is less factual or inferior to the other: they are co-equal” (Hanna, 1986, p. 4). It is the essence of lived experience that provides the hard data for fruitful investigation and a demand for awareness in order to understand the world and our interaction within it. Somatic practices such as the Feldenkrais Method can act as a systemic approach to access awareness and begin to make functional sense of this data (Kleinman, 1992).

In taking a philosophical perspective of somatics, Shusterman (1999) presents a concept he has coined as “somaesthetics”, which connects the lived experience of soma to aesthetic sensation and interaction with the world. The value of personal interaction with the world and improved quality of life is evidenced in several studies investigating the effects of Feldenkrais Awareness Through Movement lessons (Bearman & Shafarman, 1999; Johnson et al., 1999; Phipps, 1997; Stephens, 1999). As Shusterman (1999) proposes; “Once such somatic functioning is brought to clear attention, there is a chance to modify it and avoid its unhealthy consequences, which include not only pain but a dulling of the senses, a diminution of aesthetic sensitivity and pleasure” (p. 303).

Contemporary Dance

Contemporary dance is a form of dance that sits within what I would call a western performance orientated, postmodern aesthetic. I distinguish contemporary dance from modern dance, which evolved out of codified technical dance vocabularies authored by significant pioneers in their field. People such as Merce Cunningham, Martha Graham, Doris Humphrey, Eric Hawkins and Paul Taylor are all considered founding practitioners and choreographers of dance techniques that bear their name as an identifier, i.e. Graham Technique, or Hawkins Technique.

One signifying feature of postmodernism is its value of a plurality of forms. The move away from modern dance, which valued ideal technical representation, virtuosity and body type, was signified by a contrasting move to postmodernism, which valued a multiplicity of non-hierarchical influences on movement. The notions that anybody could in fact dance, any movement could be seen as dance, and dance could be performed at any place, at any time, reinforced pluralistic values of postmodernism in dance. In America this new postmodern dance was mainly focused in New York in the late 1960's and early 1970's. These ideas came to be represented through the work of dance makers and performers such as Trisha Brown, Lucinda Childs, Simone Forti, Steve Paxton, Yvonne Rainer, Twyla Tharp and others. Following the explorations of these early pioneers, who began to question the value of movements that were or were not considered dance, contemporary dance evolved. According to Febvre (1994) contemporary dance seeks to group together artists who are open to creative talent and more inclined towards experimentation than towards producing stereotyped dancers. Contemporary dance is therefore representative of dance in this moment in time and is not stylistically linked to the lineage of any one pioneer.

Somatic Education and Dance

My research in the area of somatics and dance is not unique. There have been other investigations in the use of somatics and dance, including criticisms of how somatics methods have been integrated within dance techniques and the dance milieu in general (Fortin, 1998; Galeota-Wozny, 2000; 1999; Green, 1999, 1991). There are two specific detractors worth noting regarding the value of somatic education in tertiary dance education. The first concerns the apparent lack of context between lying on the floor and sensing minute movements *vis à vis* the technical demands of a strictly prescribed technique such as classical ballet (Simpson, 1996). The second concerns an increase in the value of somatic practices and the influence of these upon dance performance and choreography. Schultz (2000) questions whether this trend is leading to a type of dance that is too internalised and self absorbed, and ultimately detrimental to both technique and performance. The dilemma is perhaps not so much the somatic process, as the way in which context is created (or not created) to connect somatic ways of learning to the functional demands of dancing.

In light of the notion that somatics is an educative process (Hanna, 1990; Goldfarb, 1993; Myers, 1986), a number of writers support the educational value of somatic practices such as the Feldenkrais Method within the training of dancers (Blank, 1987; Cardinal, 2000; Fortin, 1995; Galeota-Wozny, 2000; Green, 1991, 1999; Kleinman, 1992; Lessinger, 1996; Sheets-Johnstone, 1979). These authors also propose a revision of the traditional way dance classes have been taught in pre-professional training institutions, advocating the value of somatic approaches that direct students' attention to the primacy of process in the experience of learning movement rather than future orientated goal directed process. Sheets-Johnson (1979) articulates this in her argument for changing the learning environment in observing that traditional methods of dance training are future orientated and the "movement is commonly directed to where I am not yet" (p. 25). Rather than focussing on the end product of movement, working through the primacy of experience brings focus to the learning

experience and it is only through having that experience that the learner is able to “discriminate and notice change” (p. 26). As Sheets-Johnson states, “the point of noticing and discriminating change is of course learning” (p. 26). Blank (1987) and Lessinger (1996) also advocate a need for dance training to fine tune the kinaesthetic sense to facilitate efficient alignment rather than rely on objective visual assessment and mechanical imposition of corrections.

Green (1999) describes the traditional dance studio setting where “the teacher presents specific movements that require rote learning, while students anticipate teacher praise and attention through correction and physical manipulation, the teacher is often viewed as an all knowing expert authority” (p. 81). In her research, Green investigates how bodies are a product of social inscription and construction especially in relation to gender. One particular issue she addresses in relation to gender and somatic authority is the societal construct that female dancers must be skinny. Notions such as bodily disconnection and compensation to fit ideal models are discussed vis-à-vis somatic ways of connecting self awareness and self authority of one’s body to action in the world. Green explains somatic authority through citing the work of Johnson (1992) and Foucault (1972, 1980), who present the notion of how docile bodies are prescribed through socio-political power relationships that play upon our adherence to a dominant culture. In a later article Green (2001) discusses this in relation to the female body within the field of dance and addresses wider social preoccupations with moulding ones’ body to fit external perceptions. Although Green addresses somatic authority in relation to dance pedagogy and different bodily practices she does not see this as the exclusive domain of dance practice alone. In line with Green (2001) I believe that; “a focus on and affirmation of what goes on inside the body rather than a sole focus on what the body looks like or how it should behave” (p. 157) should not necessarily discount conditioning or fitness training processes that can change the physique of the body, providing there is awareness and consideration of the intention behind our choice of action.

Specifically within dance education Green (1999) alludes to somatic authority as being an integral part of somatic pedagogy that values “proprioceptive awareness, and the abilities of students to listen to the inner messages of the soma and reclaim ownership of their bodies” (p. 81). In reading further this notion of somatic authority can also be inferred as the ability to utilise awareness and proprioceptive information to improve intentional action based on personal self-understanding, rather than external models. Green (1999) suggests that:

By teaching movement concepts from the inside out to arrive at a technical aspect shows a student that they have something to give from the inside rather than someone who has movement put upon them. The inner approach gives the student a sense of ownership of themselves and their contribution to dance. The outward approach makes the student feel like they are something to be moulded or that they need to fit into a mould and if they don't they cannot contribute. It is important to change the way we teach dance in order to change what is valued in dance (p. 98).

It seems in both dance academia and professional practice there is a growing curiosity towards understanding first person experience of the self in movement. Within the dance milieu there also seems to be a need for research that draws upon bodies of knowledge from other scientific fields such as kinesiology, to supplement and inform future somatic practice and research in dance.

Motor Learning and Control

In any dialogue around learning movement I feel it is important to include the field of motor learning and control as it provides another context for understanding diverse movement activities such as dance and somatics. Motor control is the scientific field investigating and describing how living organisms produce movement (Bate, 1994). Motor learning is the ability to solve movement problems repeatedly through acquiring the capability to produce skilled or novel actions (Rose, 1997; Schmidt, 1982). The following three aspects define motor learning as presented by Rose.

First, motor learning is a set of internal processes that leads to a relatively permanent change in an individual's capability for more skilled performance. Second, the learning process itself is not readily observable, and third, learning occurs as a function of practice and experience not maturation, motivation, and or training (Rose, 1997, p. 143).

Within the contemporary field of motor learning and control there are two major and contrasting theoretical positions, the *motor systems* or *information processing* model (Kelso, 1982) and the *ecological* or *dynamical systems* model (Gibson, 1979), also known as *actions systems* (Reed, 1982) or *ecological theories of perception and action* (Rose, 1997). The arising paradox from these contrasting field theories of motor control is that they both have their origins in the work of the Soviet neuro-physiologist Nicholai Bernstein (Anson & Mawston, 2000).

In the motor systems model, sensory input is perceived or decoded, processed, stored and acted upon, while feedback from the response re-cycles for further sensory perception and processing. In short, sensory information flows into the system and commands concerning generation of movement flow outwards. Within this model there are several distinct theories (Rose, 1997) such as Closed Loop Theory (Adams, 1971), and Schema Theory (Schmidt, 1982), which rely on memory based representations to control movement, and Cybernetic Theory, which lies within the “complex system of human information processing operations” (Kelso, 1982, p. 10). The basis of the cybernetic system (Wiener, 1948) is the presence of a feedback loop that lets us monitor our system for discrepancy between a desired goal and a present state. In this closed loop system, movement is seen as being intentional and perception is seen as being an active rather than a passive process. An issue around cybernetic systems concerns the question of what happens when in more complex and practiced movements, feedback or error detection concerning the end goal becomes less important? An example of this would be dancing a very fast complex phrase that has been very well rehearsed. Perhaps the attention to error discrepancy and feedback is directed to

refining the interpretive or kinaesthetic quality of the movement. Although worth noting, these issues are beyond the immediate scope of this study.

Dynamic systems or action systems differ slightly in their nuances, however in motor control they are accepted as being synonymous with the over arching theory of ecological systems (Hight, 2000). Movement seen from this ecological perspective is a relational process between living organisms and their environment (Bernstein, 1967; Higgins, 1985; Reed, 1982). The integrative nature of this field theory “extends to the assumption that in this process, perception and movement are so intertwined that it is not valid to consider either in isolation” (Bate, 1994, p. 39). Thus our movement emerges from the interaction between intention, the structural limits of our system and our relationship with the changing environment (Higgins, 1985; Newell, 1986; Reed, 1982).

Somatics and Motor Learning

In an article on learning in physical therapy, Wildman (1990b) addresses the need for learning to occur at the level of the patient and for conditions to be present to facilitate that learning. He notes that there can be a move to look beyond symptoms of the patient’s individual problems. Wildman cites examples of several physical therapists working within the Feldenkrais domain who “no longer look at the patient in terms of primary symptoms but instead understand how to explore the patient’s learning style” (Wildman, 1990b, p. 7).

Jackson (1991) identifies relationships between rehabilitation and the Feldenkrais Method as a learning model where notions of self-authority and self-direction are important to people undergoing rehabilitation. In redefining the patient-therapist relationship to a teacher-student relationship, she sees learning as an interaction between facilitator/teacher and

client/student. “The outcome of such an interaction is that the teacher and the student come to sense the interaction is creating change” (p. 132).

In describing learning principles of the Feldenkrais Method, several authors emphasise the need to differentiate between learning and performance of movement (Feldenkrais, 1972; Goldfarb, 1993; Spire, 1989). Baniel (in Spire, 1989) and Goldfarb (1993) articulate that learning is exploring and not practising or performing. However if performance or awareness of performance improves, then learning must be inferred even if it cannot be directly measured. The purpose or intention behind the exploration is also a key factor in the outcome of the learning (Williams, February, 2001, personal communication). Goldfarb (1993) draws associations with theories of motor learning and control and Feldenkrais (1972), where perception is seen as being active in relation to changing environmental influences. “Perceptual experience is constructed as a result of the subject’s activity” (Goldfarb, 1993, p. 6). In drawing a relationship with the Feldenkrais Method and motor learning, Goldfarb states that “exploratory movements and informative feedback are important for systems that face changing and unpredictable situations” (Goldfarb, 1993, p. 7). In her somatic work with musicians, Baniel (in Spire, 1989) articulates how this ability to sense and differentiate in sensory motor training is not only an important ingredient in high quality performance, but is central to the quality and accuracy of the movement. In light of this it can also be seen how an understanding of these learning processes are of parallel importance for dancers. Baniel (in Spire, 1989), Bate (1994), Feldenkrais (1972), Goldfarb (1993), and Wildman (1990a, 1990b), all emphasise the importance of the exploratory nature of learning movement, in order to increase perception based on a multiplicity of sensations.

A relevant problem for dancers is identified by Goldfarb (1993) who poses the question: “How do people learn a movement when they cannot copy what they see” (p. 1)? Being able to learn movement not only visually but also through refining perceptual processes such as

kinaesthetic sensation and proprioception, highlights the potential value of somatic education processes such as the Feldenkrais Method in a traditional dance environment. The problem of perception, learning and awareness can be addressed through examples of balance, where qualitative dynamics influence movements ranging from standing and simple postural sway to complex movement phrases. In dance where the sense of balance and stability is both important and deliberately inconstant, information such as this is useful in creating strategies to enhance perceptual leaning. If the guidance of movement is dependent on sensing dynamic qualities, then accessing ways to improve sensory motor perception can enhance the movement choices available. In describing perceptual motor learning Cratty (1967) states “...skill acquisition rests upon the development with practice, of the individual’s ability to perceive and act upon increasingly subtle cues” (p. 254).

Bate (1994) presents relevant examples and applications of motor control theories to Feldenkrais principles. In describing different theories of motor control, she presents a hypothetical model of how the Feldenkrais Method might relate to each theory and its real life application. It becomes apparent that the type of learning that is applied in the Feldenkrais Method may be relevant to several of these theories. In particular, Bate (1994) describes how the dynamic systems theory and equilibrium point hypothesis ties in with exploration and non-linear learning models such as the Feldenkrais Method (Bate, 1994; Goldfarb; 1993; Jackson, 1991; Phipps et al, 1997; Shenkman, 1989; Spire, 1989; Wildman, 1990a)

Reese (2000) presents a dynamic systems view of the Feldenkrais Method through an article that evolved from the author’s work and discussions with Esther Thelen, a developmental psychologist and author of “*A Dynamic Systems Approach to the Development of Cognition*” (Thelen & Smith, 1994). Reese traces current thinking in the field of dynamic systems back to some of Moshe Feldenkrais’ early thinking and exploration in movement education, cognition and action. In 1949 Feldenkrais proposed that functional learning

emerges through pursuing exploratory variations that are constrained and facilitated by functional demands and affordances of the environment (Gibson, 1979; Reese, 2000). These views are echoed in Bernstein's treatise "*The Co-ordination and Regulation of Movement*" (1967) and later on in the more recently translated and published essay, "*On Dexterity and its Development*" (Bernstein, 1996).

Feldenkrais (1949) also emphasised how action and perception are inextricably intertwined, and that variation is a key to the potential required for learning and adapting to novel conditions. Reese summarises one of Feldenkrais' early insights as follows: "A well learned skill embodies sufficient variability to meet the demands of changing environments and tasks" (Reese, 2000, p. 23). These early insights are interesting when seen in light of current scientific thinking around the control and learning of movement. To sum up, there are commonalities between many of the themes reviewed in this literature, which will create a platform for themes arising in the data analysis and more detailed context for the data discussion.

CHAPTER THREE:

METHODOLOGY

Qualitative Inquiry

Qualitative inquiry values personal experience as the means whereby the researcher can describe, interpret, examine, construct and understand peoples' perceptions of the world. Maykut and Morehouse (1994) state that qualitative research is "phenomenological in its position" and "examines peoples' words and actions in narrative or descriptive ways more closely representing the situation as experienced by the participants" (pp. 2-3).

Peshkin (2001) believes that we are never free from viewing the world through a multiplicity of lenses and delightfully recounts a hiking excursion that narrates a kinaesthetic, aesthetic, olfactory, and visual perception of experience that not only meets us in these pass-times of recreation and leisure but should be available for us to access daily in our research endeavours.

One day on the trail I decided to attend more seriously to what I was passing by to see if I could enrich the experience of my mountain jaunts. I purposefully identified categories that would focus my attention. The longer I walked the more focal points or categories I uncovered, all of them quite common, all of them always available, all of them generally ignored (Peshkin, 2001, p. 239).

As Peshkin describes his experience he develops his metaphor further, touching on various phenomena existing just outside of our awareness yet potentially available through selected attention and spending time looking at detail.

The idea, I soon learned, was to select one category at a time as the basis for perceiving and to shut off those others that always are there competing for my attention ... Our wealth of perceptions expands as our awareness of categories expands (p. 239).

I found Peshkin's analogy helpful in searching for an entry point to access my research question. Bearing in mind his comments around categories, I realised I could view this study through a variety of lenses, ranging from education to somatics, kinesiology and the performing arts.

Teacher Research

As a teacher and researcher, my inquiry is the integration of somatics and contemporary dance. In developing new perceptions of somatics and contemporary dance, I am using teacher research (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1993; Hamilton, 1998; Russell & Bullock, 1999) because my feeling is that interactions arising through the act of teaching occur in an intuitive, almost unconscious manner. I will also touch upon what Schon (1983) called reflective practice to gain understanding and insights into students and my own learning experiences.

Cochran-Smith & Lytle (1993) define teacher research as a “systematic, intentional inquiry carried out by the teachers themselves” (p. 7), taking the view that “teaching as research is connected to a view of learning as constructive, meaning centred and social” (p. 101). The underpinning advocacy of teacher research may be traced back to Dewey (1904) who emphasized the importance of teachers' reflection of their own practice. Dewey's original thinking in this area later influenced Schon's (1983) concept of teachers as reflective practitioners. Teacher research presents an affinity with Schon's notion of the reflective practitioner by bringing to consciousness the 'how' of teaching procedure and allowing this to inform the teaching practice. It can also be said that teacher research shares certain characteristics with the field of action research, supporting the idea that raising consciousness leads to social action. I will address the possibility later that emerging outcomes from this

study might lead to change, however my main focus of inquiry is to gain a better understanding of practice.

Heshusius (1994) points out that those who argue against teacher research have criticized it as not being “real” research due to teachers being “too close” to the data and that presenting their own perspective is too subjectively biased. In opposing this view she suggests that educational researchers have finally let go of their obsession with objectivity but have moved to a similar obsession in controlling or taming subjectivity equally rigorously and systematically. She rejects the idea that the knower is separate from the known and that one can actually distance and regulate oneself in order to arrive at a better way of knowing. Adler (in Green, 1999) claims a similar position in observing that

Expanded images of and expectations for research have done away with the necessity of a separation between the practitioner involved in the experience, and the researcher, once thought to stand outside the experience... Thus, coming to know can involve the researcher in the exploration of his or her experience as a teacher and as a person... Teaching and conducting research should be seen, not as conflicting, or even different but in fact, as part of the same whole. (in Green, 1999, p. 85)

Brookfield (1995) suggests four different lenses by which teachers can reflect on their practice.

First, there is the lens provided by autobiographical reflection. Our autobiographical experiences as learners and teachers provide a rich though often unacknowledged and even derided source of material for us to probe. Second, there is the lens represented by our students’ eyes. We find out from our students how they perceive our actions and what it is about those actions that they find affirming or inhibiting. Third, there is the lens provided by our colleagues’ perceptions and experiences. We can ask colleagues to be mirrors, mentors or critical friends with whom we engage in critical conversations about our practice. In these conversations, our colleagues reflect back to us different versions of the events we experience. Fourth, we can view our practice through the lens of literature. We can read inside and out our area of practice to locate what we do within alternative theoretical frameworks (Brookfield, 1995, p. xiii).

Loughran (1996a) considers reflective practice to be “the purposeful, deliberate act of self inquiry into one’s thoughts and actions through which a perceived problem is examined

in order that a thoughtful, reasoned response might be tested out” (p. 21). The process of reflection after the experience, influences future directions and creates a process of gaining a deeper understanding of that experience. Schon (1987) takes this further and advocates the possibility of reflection in action through knowing in action. He proposes that there has traditionally been too much emphasis on the value of theoretical constructs as signifiers of higher knowledge. Schon further supports his proposal in claiming that the higher the theory, the more divorced from the reality of action it is. Reflection in action is the process of learning by doing and learning teaching by doing. Teacher research and reflective practice provide a vehicle for teachers to uncover some of the tacit mechanisms of their teaching, representations of learners’ experiences and relationships to wider theoretical constructs.

Through teacher research I am valuing a phenomenological-interpretative perspective that reflects recent developments in postmodern ethnography (Delamont, Coffy, & Atkinson, 2000). Consequently, in the analysis my actions, voice, intentions and observations will take the form of statement such as ‘I did/I wondered/I felt’... while students’ experiences will be represented through their own voices. Thus, this teacher research brings together my own voice and the voices of the participants.

Setting and Participants

This study was conducted in March 2002. The setting was a tertiary education institution in Auckland. The participants were five pre-professional dancers, five professional dancers and myself as teacher researcher. The pre-professional dance students were enrolled in a bachelor degree course at the tertiary institution. The professional dancers were part of the independent dance community in Auckland taking class through a community partnership with the institution. As the researcher I initially contacted and consulted with the dance

program leader at the institution who agreed to the institution's involvement in this study (See appendix A).

Following institutional approval, I was informed by the program leader that I would be able to work with ten second year students as participants for the study. On arrival in Auckland I found there were only five students available as the other five were away on a performance tour. The rest of the class was made up of a changing population of seven to fourteen dancers each day. This changing population consisted of recent graduates and members of the Auckland professional dance community. An inclusive community aspect of this dance institution is that classes are often open to graduates and members of the professional community. I was a guest and as such felt a responsibility to work within their existing protocol. This however afforded me the opportunity to work with a broader sample that reflected the diverse background of pre-professional and professional dancers in these classes. As such I asked for volunteers from the other dancers taking class. The five professional dancers selected, represented a cross section of their community in terms of gender and experience. While not within the plan of my original design, this new group reflected the reality and the relationship between the tertiary and independent dance community in New Zealand. I now had a group of eleven participants balanced into five pre-professional dancers, five professional practitioners and myself as a teacher researcher. Out of these ten pre-professional and professional dancers, six were asked to participate in in-depth interviews. The selection process for these participants represented a cross-section of class in terms of professional and pre-professional background, gender and class size.

Participants were asked to:

1. Participate in five contemporary dance technique classes over the course of a week.

These classes were videotaped and recorded.

- 2.Participate in group discussion during or at the conclusion of the class.
- 3.Participate in in-depth interviews of approximately one hour.
- 4.Maintain a daily journal.

Ethics

Prior to commencement of this study and in compliance with the University of Otago research policy, ethical approval was sought and gained from the University of Otago Ethics Committee. All participants were fully informed of the nature and purpose of the research and their prerogative to terminate their involvement. The ethical issues of concern for the participants were about maintaining anonymity and safety during their participation in this research. To this end, students were fully informed verbally and in writing of the aims, purpose and nature of this research. All students were provided with a participant information sheet and informed consent form. Only students who provided written consent participated in this research. Each student chose their own pseudonym at the commencement of the data collection to preserve their anonymity. (The participant information and consent forms are attached as per appendix B and C.)

All classes were carried out within the parameters of “Safe Dance Practice” (Geeves, 1997), as noted in the “Australian Dance Council Guidelines For Dance Teachers” (1997). All activities and discussions were within the normal range of experience of the participants. The activity at the centre of this research was of a similar structure to the type of dance technique class which participants would usually take as part of their daily training. All participants were participating in the same types of movements that they usually perform as part of their daily activities. All participants were encouraged to self-monitor their level of participation in all physical activities and to reduce or terminate their involvement according to their own needs and comfort.

For all participants, their experience of somatics and the Feldenkrais Method in particular was varied. The five tertiary students had limited exposure to somatics and no experience of the Feldenkrais Method of somatic education, whereas the five professional dancers had experienced various forms of somatic education in their training, ranging from Alexander Technique and the Feldenkrais Method to Skinner Releasing Technique. The difference in the range of their experience was apparent in both journals and interviews. Tertiary students with little experience of somatics initially encountered some confusion and at times frustration, while the more experienced participants were able to access the lessons more easily.

Methods of Data Collection

The data collection consisted of video recording of all classes and class discussions, audio recording of interviews, participants' journals, and the researchers field notes for each day. Each of these three data sources revealed different strengths and possibilities for informing my analysis.

Before beginning the data collection, I planned the structures and themes of the lessons as well as the open-ended questions that would inform my interview (These were based on the five research sub questions outlined in the introduction). The difference between what I had planned and what eventuated was striking. Transformation is probably the word I would use to describe the experiential process of data collection. Even though there are warnings in the literature concerning the unpredictability of the data collection (McNuff, Lomax & Whitehead, 1996), I was not really prepared for the difference between what I proposed to do and what emerged in the action of researching. Where now are those neatly abstracted constructs of academic proposal?

Emic Perspective

Before turning to the description of the methods of data collection, it is worth noting the emphasis on an emic perspective in my data collection. Somatic education values the creation of direct knowledge, that is the knowledge acquired through direct embodied personal experience (Lake, 1987-1988). This line of inquiry is from an emic or insider perspective (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1993; Eisner, 1998; Maykut & Morehouse, 1994). In valuing an emic perspective Peshkin (2001) advocates a “quality of attention to lives that otherwise may be demeaned as those of mere actors on the stage of our research settings, simply so sources of data, unclad figures of speech awaiting our – the researchers - interpretation” (p. 244). Through taking an emic line of inquiry, I am specifically not engaging in an objective analysis of teaching procedure. My interest is in collecting data from an emic perspective and interpreting and notions of how and why experiences are lived the way they are.

Journals

The use of journal permits participants to contribute their thoughts and reflections on their experience in their own time and in their own way. According to Maykut and Morehouse (1994), the goal of a journal is “to let participants speak for themselves as much as possible, to tell their stories with out interpretation” (p. 122). To this end I asked participants to keep a journal of daily thoughts, reflections, and experiences that they felt related the classes. I encouraged participants to present this journal in a manner meaningful to them but in a way that can be communicable. This is not to preclude graphic or poetic representations of studio classroom experience. It was important to me that they felt comfortable elaborating upon their experiences and to also acknowledge that feelings and sensations of movement cannot always be rarefied into language. The journal process also accounts for participants’ experience of tacit knowledge, which is knowledge that cannot be

spoken yet is known, felt and perhaps represented in ways other than written communication. After all it is possible that much of the participants' experiences may be best represented through drawing, sketching or movement itself.

At the conclusion of the week of dance classes my data consisted of eleven participants' journals (including my own). Journals reflected participants' daily experience in class and their related activities and observations emerging through the week. The journals also revealed a number of emergent new themes that I had not expected. What was missing from the journals however was the sense of person, the broader aspects of their experiences in dance and somatics. I found however that these broader aspects did emerge in the interview process.

Interview

Two types of interview were used in this research, group interviews and in-depth individual interviews. Scheurich (1995) describes interviewing as "a research method that can be artificially separated into two parts. The first part is the interview; the second is interpreting the interview" (p. 239). Descriptions and definitions of interview are varied, ranging from what I would see as an extraction approach to a collaborative constructivist approach. Bogdan and Biklen (1998) for example see interview as a "purposeful conversation, usually between two people... that is directed by one in order to get information" (p. 93). Cohen and Manion (1997) also see interview as the gathering of data through direct verbal interaction between individuals...[where the] common denominator is the transaction that takes place between seeking information on the part of one and supplying information on the part of the other" (pp. 271, 272). Mishler (1986) describes interview at its heart as being a form of shared discourse.

Qualitative research interviews are about relating to people in their environment and understanding their perception. Qualitative interviews require “a deep and genuine curiosity on the part of the interviewer about understanding another’s experience” (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994, p. 81). The understanding of experience also highlights the phenomenological nature of interviewing, and the question at the heart of this study, which is about understanding students’ voices. Understanding specific phenomena presumes I am able to interpret and explain it. That being said, I acknowledge that my view of students’ experiences is through the lens of my role as a participant teacher researcher. It follows that my interpretation and explanation of their experience will arise in this context. Consequently I see the emergent result as being a shared phenomenology of our combined experiences. My interpretation of the interview and events in class is influenced by my way of seeing according to what I want to know.

Scheurich (1995), in an endeavour to “undermine positivist and postpositivist conceptions of interviewing” (p. 249) argues that

The interview is fundamentally indeterminate. The complex play of conscious and unconscious thoughts, feelings, fears, powers, desires, and needs on the part of both the interviewer and interviewee cannot be captured and categorised. In an interview there is no stable reality or meaning that can be represented. The indeterminate totality of the interview always exceeds and transgresses our attempts to capture and categorise (p. 249).

Rather than trying to capture or represent a reality, I am more concerned with interpreting and understanding a constructed experience that exists as a moment in time, specific to the group ecology of this particular dance class. Representation of that experience is relative rather than absolute.

Group Interview

In this study open-ended questions were used to generate group interviews/discussion at the conclusion of each class. Group interview is seen as a useful way to accumulate

individual knowledge of group members (Patton, 1990) and give the opportunity for reflection not only upon the groups' question but other participants' individual responses. This can lead to participants both "challenging and extending each others ideas' (Cohen & Manion, 1997, p. 287). One specific advantage cited by Watts and Ebbutt (in Cohen & Manion, 1997) is that group interviews are particularly useful "where a group of people have been working together for some time or common purpose" (p. 287). On the other hand it is noted that disadvantages of this process deny the opportunity for expression of individual personal issues, thus the data accrued is specific only to the group dynamic. Given these points of view, my aim was to address one major movement theme in the course of each class and to bring this to question in a fifteen-minute group interview/discussion at the conclusion of the class. For example, the question at the end of class might be 'How does the integration of this flexion theme relate to your learning of dance technique?'

In-depth Individual Interview

In-depth, open-ended interviews helped to gain perspectives of students' experiences within this study. Mishler (1986) sees interviewing as a form of discourse which is a "joint product" (p. vii) emerging from discussions between the interviewers and interviewees. In noting how we arrive at this joint product and defining the purpose for interviewing, it is worth quoting from Patton (1990) who proposes that

The purpose of interviewing is to find out what is in and on someone else's mind. The purpose of open-ended interviewing is not to put things in someone's mind (for example, the interviewers preconceived categories for organising the world) but to access the perspective of the person being interviewed. We need to interview people to find out from them those things we cannot directly observe (p. 278).

Maykut and Morehouse (1994) note that in-depth interview has been employed consistently in education in order to gain understanding of students' experiences. One defining characteristic of in-depth interviews is their time frame, generally between one-and-

a-half hours to two hours duration. This is in order to procure discussion over a “prolonged engagement” (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994, p. 80). Two important components arising out of such an engagement are the rapport and trust between interviewer and interviewee. Rapport involves a mutual respect of both parties’ points of view and a necessity for the interviewer to value the commitment and contribution of the interviewee. Patton (1990) distinguishes between rapport and neutrality. “Rapport is a stance vis-à-vis the person being interviewed. Neutrality is a stance vis-à-vis the content of what that person says” (p. 317). It is from here that trust can subsequently be built, as Patton observes, “the fundamental principle of the qualitative interviewing is to provide a framework within which respondents can express their own understandings in their own terms” (p. 290).

The second characteristic of the interview/discussion was the use of open-ended question techniques to gain perspectives of learning constructed by the participants. Patton (1990) presents a six part typology of open ended questions.

1. Experience/behaviour questions concern what people do and provides an entry point into the interview, they concern such things as descriptions of events and actions that participants engage in.
2. Opinion/value questions concern cognitive points of view and give insights into peoples’ thoughts and values about a particular issue or situation.
3. Feeling questions are directed towards “understanding the emotional responses of people to their experiences or thoughts” (p. 291).
4. Knowledge questions are concerned with declarative knowledge about things or events that are considered to be known.
5. Sensory questions seek to expand upon the interviewee’s sensory experience so as to “allow the interviewer to enter into the sensory apparatus of the respondent” (p. 292).
6. Background demographic questions provide a big picture overview of age, years of experience, marital status etc. These questions are concerned with identifying the

background characteristics of the person interviewed, and are often more appropriate near the end of the interview once a familiarity and rapport has been established.

At the conclusion of the week of dance classes my data consisted of six in-depth interviews of approximately one hour duration each, from three tertiary dancers and three professional dancers. In the interview I questioned participants in relation to the five pre-existing sub questions I brought to this study. The interview also allowed each person to express their histories, experiences and thoughts in a manner that was unavailable through video and journals. Through its interpersonal nature I learned about the participants as people and the questions they brought to this study. Assessing the interviews retrospectively, I realised that they provided many personal insights into this research that I had not anticipated. Both group and individual interviews acted as vehicles to reveal immediate personal knowledge unavailable through the other sources of data.

Video

All classes were videotaped with a lapel microphone to capture both the verbal and non-verbal activities of the teacher and students. The lapel microphone was also used to capture verbal responses of students in class and in the group interview after class. A new tape was used for each class. The videotapes were labelled and catalogued after every class. The video provided a triangulation point between the journal and interview data. It also provided me with an overarching documentation of the research event, the class structure, the teaching and learning activities and fragments of small details such as student questions or observations. It has been a valuable medium for my voice as a teacher researcher in this study.

Limitations

There were two limitations in the data collection of this study. The first was on the Tuesday where I experienced a technical problem with the video equipment, which resulted in the video footage and group discussion of one class being unusable. Consequently there were only six hours of video recording over four days, instead of the proposed seven and a half over five days. The second limitation appeared as I commenced the analysis. I excluded two participants due to issues of completeness and consistency of journal information over the five days. This reduced my final number for analysis from eleven to nine participants (including myself).

Methods of Data Analysis

The aim of the data analysis was to address the overarching research question of students' perceptions of the integration of somatic education and contemporary dance technique. The initial data analysis was based on a combination of "open coding" (Strauss & Corbin, 1990) and constant comparative method (Maykut & Morehouse 1994). Open coding is an inductive process whereby meanings emerge from directing attention to the focus of inquiry, while the constant comparative method consisted of breaking down the data into discrete parts in order to answer the over arching research question of the study. Using both the aforementioned processes, similarities and differences between the emerging data were compared. From this comparison, meanings and commonalities in the data began to emerge. The video data was transcribed by identifying the underlying structural sections of the class and then transcribing meaningful passages of verbal dialogue and moments of visual relevance from these different sections.

Trustworthiness

If, as it is consistently argued, postpositivist research values a multiple ways of viewing the world, wherein lies the notion of validity? As Walcott (1990) writes "there is no exact set of circumstances here, no single and correct interpretation, nothing scientific to measure that tells us anything important" (p. 144). The truth is my interpretation of a teaching experience, as one of many who participated in this project, and for each of us that experience is different. So the notion becomes one of trustworthiness; is it worthy of trust? Rather than discovering and collating and measuring, I am seeking to understand social interactions that through teaching and learning are in a continuous process of construction (Walcott, 1990). I cannot detach my self from my teaching process, or learners' participation in the experience we co-construct together.

In order to establish the trustworthiness, I engaged in a process of what Eisner (1998) calls consensual validation: “an agreement among competent others that the description, interpretation, evaluation, and thematics of an education situation are right” (p. 112). Through correspondence with competent others (my supervisors and colleagues in the fields of dance and pedagogy), I began to see my viewpoints in context to different interpretations of the project. In any circumstances we could access my audit trail which consists of catalogued videotapes of all classes, my original field notes, categorised data sheets, transcripts of interviews, copies of participants’ journal entries and a record of all communications between participants and myself.

Member Check and Triangulation

All interview participants received a copy of their interview transcript for approval, comments, or amendments. With the exception of one participant, all responded. Two minor corrections were made concerning wording, which affected the context of what one participant was intending to say. For the participant who did not respond, I attempted contact through a third party who informed me they had received the transcript. As I had made attempts to contact this participant and check their transcript I can only assume there were no outstanding discrepancies to address.

Triangulation of the data between the participants’ journals, interviews and video recording showed no discrepancies between the different data sources. Furthermore, the triangulation process often affirmed participants’ viewpoints across these three sources simultaneously.

CHAPTER FOUR:

CONTEXT OF THE FINDINGS

In order to facilitate comprehension of the findings in this study, I present this chapter in the general context in which the findings emerge. I will first introduce the reader to the nine participants in this study with a series of vignettes around each participant. Following this I will provide a platform for the analysis by describing the general structure of the class (which was the same as the one adopted in a previous study by Fortin, Long & Lord (2002), and a description of the daily classes taken from my own journal and the video data.

Vignettes

The following vignettes serve as an introduction to each participant. My intention is to portray my perceptions of each participant, based on my experience with these people in interviews, journals and time shared in class. I constructed the vignettes by cutting and pasting their words and quotations to create brief portraits ranging from the poetic to the pragmatic. The term poetic describes some of the ways participants used words to experiment with the possibilities of language to represent their experiences (Longley, 2002). As such each vignette is representative of my construction much like a photographic or figurative portrait represents an interpretation by the photographer or painter creating it. I arranged these vignettes alphabetically in pre-professional and professional groupings. It is to these eight people I now turn my attention, finishing with my own vignette.

Amelia (Pre-professional)

Amelia is a second year student with some experience of somatic education over her year and a half of tertiary education. Amelia is two credits short (she needs to complete two papers) of a BA in English and Film studies. Our interview encompassed a range of experiences that affect dancers, including conformity to and imposition of sociological constraints around the body, peer pressure, and how these constraints relate to choices we make.

When I went to Spain I had to choose (between dance and violin), it was too much to do both in Madrid, trying to get around the place. And I decided I didn't want to do violin. I'd learnt Suzuki method, which meant I didn't know any music. I only knew colours and memory. I had to pretty much choose between my violin and my ballet. I got into this prestigious school, the Royal Academy of Spain, you know thousands audition in a year and about 50 get in. So I got that. I was the only foreigner at the school and it was all funded by the government. So ballet from then on, it was my life, ballet everyday after school. School till 5.30, ballet from then on. I had two years there.

And then I failed ballet. My mother said that was partly political but what they told me was that my hips were too wide and they said I wasn't the right shape, my hips were wrong for ballet. The music teacher said it's a pity that we have to keep the people that look right and not the people that can dance right. I was really confused about all that when I was little, it was so much my life back then. I must have been about nine or 10.

I didn't dance for ages after that I really didn't even dance socially. Puberty and my growing up had caused my failure in dance. I was a kind of person that if I put my mind to anything I can do it. I was quite angry with the fact that it was my body and that I couldn't change it. Then I found other outlets. -- I played volleyball and ended up really enjoying that. It was almost like a dance it was the same feeling. Half way through my BA in English and Film I started dancing again and I've been dancing since then. I'm 23.

From both a somatic and constructivist perspective I would argue that her current choices and present experience do not exist in isolation but have a relationship to her past experiences of learning ballet in Madrid. As she said, she moved on and placed her focus elsewhere before coming back to dance. Some of our conversation did centre on notions of self-perception and the differences between what we can feel and what we have been told about our selves.

Lou (Pre-professional)

Lou is in her second year of study at this institution having commenced her tertiary dance education a year after finishing high school. I read through Lou's interview looking for comments, reflections or observations that reflected her experience of the week. As I scanned through, my attention was drawn to things that seemed important to her experience of dance and the world in general. Consequently the way I constructed Lou's portrait is not chronological in terms of her life or even in terms of our interview.

I get a lot of trouble 'cause I'm little and I feel quite light. I was at Epsom Girls Grammar. Stayed till Seventh Form (final year of secondary school) and that was 99. I competed with gymnastics from when I was four until I was about 11. I did ballet – starting when I was four - and that was quite intense training. And then I left the ballet school I was at and started doing Cecchetti ballet.

I'm not that clear yet on the meaning of Somatics. I can understand it if someone else says it. But I haven't put it in my own words, which I need to, to understand it fully. I haven't done work where I articulate my sensations very well. But I am feeling a lot of sensations, I'm aware of a lot of changes. I used to be really good at putting sensations down on paper, when I was younger, but then I don't know what happened. I kind of started feeling that words weren't that important to me anymore. As soon as you asked me to say what I thought about it, I realised that I do actually do have an understanding. I just never looked at it from that way before. I feel quite grounded now.

I really like working with my hips. I find it quite funny how often people will gravitate towards certain areas, and I gravitated towards the hips. I think it's just a feeling, I always feel happy and I feel strong. But another time we had to do this body diagram and we had to colour in different areas, where we know we've got pain. I put a dark blue in my head for emotion and I accidentally put it in my hip as well. And when asked about it I said: oh it was an accident. But I thought about it and I --- like last year I spent crying from the pain in my hips.

Lucia (Pre-professional)

Lucia is a second year student who is very articulate within her movement. In the classes Lucia seemed to be searching for new ways to understand herself in movement. Lucia described her initial experience of the ATM lesson as a little overwhelming. She later attributed this to other stresses she was experiencing as well as finding a lot of new movement in her ribs that she had not previously realised was possible. I found she quite often used

imagery as a way of describing her movement experience, and approached the somatic work with a questioning curiosity. Lucia did not participate in an interview and therefore this vignette is composed of reflections from her journal.

I had rather a traumatic learning experience in regards to somatics today. I had rather a stressful week last week and was run down. For some unknown reason I was particularly sensitive and emotional and I simply am not that kind of person.

My femur bones like running water, flowed from my knees to the hip joint and the sides of my body. I imagined an accordion, which splayed out wide along my sacrum squeezed together around into my transverses abdominus. My legs felt so light. It was still quite hard to achieve standing up to do a *developpe* for instance but I experienced the sensation, which was great.

All in all I have had a mixed experience with somatics finding it a major change to integrate somatics into technique. It is something I wish to continue as it challenges me in new and fascinating ways.

Polly (Pre-professional)

Polly is a second year student with a strong background in classical dance including many years of studio teaching. Like many others she had already completed another undergraduate degree before commencing tertiary study in contemporary dance. In our interview our conversation ranged from Polly's very active life and career before she commenced her tertiary dance study, to the changes in perception and attitude she was experiencing now. I found the way she spoke about her perceptions of change to be detailed and noticed similar relationships to my own experience of learning dance at a tertiary level.

I've always had a keen interest in dance. When I was in high school I really wanted to go off and do full time dance training. But I was kind of a bit scared about whether there would be a future in New Zealand as a dancer. I thought I'd get something else behind me first so I did a nursing degree when I first finished high school. Then I worked in health promotion for three years at the Public Health Unit. I've been dancing and teaching dance that whole time as well. I did my RAD (Royal Academy of Dance) Teaching Diploma as well while I was working. A year before I came here I trained and did a Miss Fitness competition because I wanted to challenge myself a bit more. I did quite well. I came first in the first competition that I was in and then qualified for the NABBA World Championships for the New Zealand team, and qualified for the 'Natural World Cup' as well, so in the course of the year I did four competitions and two of them were like World.

The same year I was doing that, I finally had the guts to quit work and audition for dance school.

What I'd really like to have is this really strong core, but more movement. Like some days I feel like I have got quite a strong core, but then I haven't got the movement. And then if I get the movement then I lose that stability in the core, so I want to try and get both. If you let your mind be open to it and pay attention to what's actually happening and what you can feel in your body then you start to experience – there's a whole new world.

Bevan (Professional)

Bevan is quite typical of a lot of men (including myself) who started dance in their late teens or early twenties. Before he started dancing Bevan completed a BA in American Studies. Following this he commenced further tertiary study in contemporary dance, graduating in 2001 with a Bachelor of Performing and Screen Arts. He is currently working within the Auckland dance community as well as continuing to spend time doing a variety of other physical activities such as swimming, martial arts and gymnastics. Through his tertiary dance training Bevan has experienced different forms of somatic education but not the Feldenkrais Method. In our conversation Bevan and I touched upon many seemingly abstract concepts that appeared somehow disembodied on paper, yet what evolved from our interview was poetic in many ways. To create this vignette I took the things that jumped out at me most from our interview and the way Bevan articulated his experiences of being in movement.

You could take your emotion into the smallest movements in a motion that captures your heart because it comes from somewhere and you can't quite describe it.

If I had a choice I would go swimming, play Capioera and gymnastics as well. A run on the beach, exploring around the rocks. Dancing, finding patterns, solving problems with the body. I'm only allowed to use one limb, so I twist around to that rock and this rock. Then contact work with the elements, improvisation, a bit more running --- some press ups and things. And then I end up with a swim, and I kind of like doing that I do these things for two and a half hours.

There are quite a few people who have done other degrees before they've come into dance. I've been dancing about four years. Coming from university (to dance training) it was very different because of all the introspective stuff you did. But for me it wasn't as if I'd done much dance, it was quite different, it was something way out there because it was all very

new. I graduated last year. It's a lot nicer I have to say now, I feel legitimised, having been here, and still feel legitimised being a dancer. Now you're privileged to be doing class.

John (Professional)

Prior to starting his dance training John completed a Bachelor of Physical Education (Hons) degree. Following this he completed a Bachelor of Performing and Screen Arts in 2000. He is now making his own work and performing and rehearsing independently. John and I often talked in quite a conceptual way about dance, and our discussion ranged around notions of choreography, performance and technique. Having completed two degrees in different areas of human movement and being a dance practitioner in the Auckland community, he had a reflective perspective on somatics and dance technique.

The body is the site of dance and dancing borders on the sublime. It's at the very edge of what we know or what we can perceive or how we frame the world. My particular ambition or interest it's almost like: how aware can I be? How many aspects of my physical reality can I attend to and then articulate and can that be visible? Now I feel like I'm getting more and more interested in kind of a poetic way and a less Cartesian way of thinking about space, so that's becoming more interesting. If there was a declarable unified philosophy of 'this is what my choreography is about, it seems that part of that is to do with exploration of what it is to have a body, and an avenue to explore what it is to have a body is the somatic frame or the somatic base. Often if I'm working by myself I tend to get interested in a certain line of enquiry and then I come to class and there's another set of concerns or another way of working. And I sometimes kind of go: ah, how can I put these things into the class? Maybe it's in my hopes and dreams I'd like to have more articulations between the various parts of the phases that are presented.

I often think about how I'm walking or how I'm appearing when I walk along the street and how do I look? Do I look like I'm a dancer? But maybe that's part of just like being an art student or thinking about analysing or validating your sensory experience. And sometimes people comment, people who are not dancers say: oh, dancers always look good when they walk, or they look integrated. I read an interview talking about the 'holier than thou' body look., you know, the dancer is the superior kind of --- has this 'I am so knowledgeable'. And I think, is that snobbery or something? I guess for me with Feldenkrais work it's an avenue for exploration that can lead to movement composition, or a way of creating interesting movement. I have this new information but I'm not sure how to work with that in standing because I then have to have another lot of learning to do with how to deal with that extra mobility. Sometimes I get quite excited thinking about Feldenkrais and like – oh it's this great thing which is like it's going to change the world.

I think part of the interest in dance for me is that there is a sense of wanting to show off and do fancy things. Generally I identify with a line of thought that's American, that idea of postmodern American dance it's about the body. The body is the site of dance.

Lucy (Professional)

Lucy is an independent artist working in the Auckland and Melbourne dance communities. Lucy completed her tertiary dance studies in 1998 and has had prior experience with different forms of somatic education and dance. We have known each other since 1996 when she was a student in one of the classes I was teaching at this institution. A lot of what Lucy and I talked about touched on the deeper aspects of somatic experience as well as the wider issues of contemporary dance. Something that seemed very present for Lucy during this week was a painful injury she was rehabilitating. Some of our interview reflected upon her injury and wider issues of inclusivity in contemporary dance. Her journal ranged from being poetic to very precise in the type of questions she was asking of herself through the week. The poem is from the first day of Lucy's journal.

It seems white at the moment
 And I'm colouring in
 My eyes are half closed and I'm a baby still
 Remember
 And how it doesn't change sometimes
 How at 35 you can still feel like a baby
 It is not comparative I know in this big rest called earth
 We are all loved
 Although we may not always feel it.

I don't fit. I'm older. And I think different things that have sometimes quite impacting reactions on people – other people. I did try to sit down for eight hours, as an office clerk, and I was just: oh my god, this is so unnatural. This is unnatural. Can't sit down for eight hours, it's just not good. Not good for your body. Not good for anybody's body.

And then having to do jobs like that because I physically couldn't do much else.

I like my body, because it has a tune of its own and that is something that happened after my dance training. And it happened because I injured myself and the result of that injury was that I had to re-evaluate what relationship I was having with my body. I quite like the so-called ideal of contemporary

dance – any movement is valid, and anyone in any condition has the potential to be able to be a dancer. But in reality, it's not really valued. I also think that dance is a lot more important than the society is ready to give it credit for and I think it has something to do with fulfilling our potential as humans and for recognising that that movement is . . . important and invaluable.

Mazy (Professional)

Mazy is an independent artist who works in Auckland and Wellington, making self devised work and participating in group projects. Mazy had experienced ATM lessons as a student in some community classes I had previously taught in Auckland and Wellington. In our discussions I found Mazy's questions, observations and curiosity provoked me to question my own teaching of somatics and dance. I sensed through the class discussions and from reading her journal that Mazy's observations focused on relationships between dance phrases and sensations within her body. I felt she had a similar way of looking at things to John who addressed somatics as a way of investigating movement to finding different possibilities for dancing. Mazy's reflections are taken from her journal.

I found it hard that rolling ... and other people had gone to the floor and it was like how the hell are they doing that, and it makes you feel frustrated in yourself.

We talked about the pace of movement as a way to have more control... I spoke of the freedom I felt with an increase of pace.

I felt quite clear about what was going on and wanted to move through the phrase quicker. I felt frustrated by the pace the other dancers were moving through the phrase.

We had a discussion about whether added mobility created confusion. I said that you could choose to go with the repercussion or not and that where it becomes interesting.... You being in control enough to be able to access and control the added mobility.

I was thinking about resting on our front and I thought this is weird how does my body feel resting front. We are so familiar with how we are resting on our back and then today when you were talking about the front of the spine. It was quite a nice connection and I thought 'I am going to do more lying on my front to feel how that is' because it was really new. I felt it became more interesting to focus on repercussions through the torso. I felt like my body was very responsive to movements, every movement had a repercussion that I found interesting to explore and go with. I felt heavy, weighted onto the

ground and quite calm and liquid through the body. I feel quite calm and just get carried by the movement

Mazy's experience is evident here as she was able to assimilate the phrases a lot faster than many of the other participants. Yet at the same time she became frustrated when she noticed a seemingly achievable movement from an ATM class was difficult for her. This highlighted the pedagogy of ATM, where everybody is in the same learning situation regardless of dance experience or ability. As Mazy found out, the reliance on others as a source to copy from, did not always work in these classes because movement problems need to be solved internally.

Myself

Although I have painted a picture of my history in the introduction to this thesis, I feel a short vignette outlining my data collection experience is important. One of my biggest realisations was how environmental and social conditions such as new situations, students and studios, influenced my teaching and research process. As a beginning researcher my mind was in many places simultaneously. My first priority was dealing with the protocols and technicalities surrounding the research process, participants and data collection. The novelty of this situation however, distracted me from my usual somatic immersion in my teaching process and the class I was working with. Other realisations occurred in looking through the journals afterwards, where I could see participants' observations of changes, frustrations and moments of excitement. Still further reflections occurred once I returned to Dunedin to teach a small group of students with whom I had a reciprocal relationship of collegiality. Here I was able to reflect upon the luxury of familiarity and unspoken understandings that we had built up as a group over a long period of time.

Structure of the Classes

Each class was of 1.5 hours duration. The underlying structural mechanisms of the class consisted of four distinct sections: (a) the Awareness Through Movement; (b) the transition to standing and walking; (c) the dance technique exercises; and (d) the dance technique combinations. Music was sometimes used as an accompaniment. A warm down and discussion period followed the conclusion of the dance technique section. A detailed description of the four sections of the class is as follows.

Awareness Through Movement (ATM)

This section lasted approximately 30 minutes and was taught primarily through verbal instruction although at times observation of movement was used. The focus of the ATM section was to bring students' attention to sensory motor learning, through introducing a series of movement lessons. These lessons explored patterns of movement initiation and function that were used to interweave through the other three sections of the class. These patterns consisted of movements such as flexing, extending, reaching or spiralling. This part of the class was done lying down. The underlying theory of many somatic practices is that by reducing the activity in postural muscles through lessening the effects of gravity, it is possible to bring learners' awareness to hidden and unnecessary or parasitic muscular activity (Green, 1999).

Transition to Standing Section

This section lasted approximately 10 minutes and was guided verbally. The aim was to transfer the learning from the Awareness Through Movement lesson to simple functions such as standing, walking and gradually threading this into the more complex function of dancing.

Dance Technique Section

This section lasted between 20 to 30 minutes. The dance technique section was similar to traditional dance class, consisting of a series of exercises designed to both sequentially warm up the body for more technically demanding dance phrases and draw attention to technical demands of alignment and accuracy of movement. The themes and patterns of the Awareness Through Movement lesson were interwoven through both this part of class and the dance technique combination.

Dance Combination Section

This section lasted between 20 to 30 minutes. The dance technique combination consisted of longer phrases of movement that encompassed large amounts of space. Again this section of class incorporated dynamic movement combinations travelling into the space. Both of these last two sections were taught through verbal instruction, visual demonstration and modelling from both students and myself as teacher researcher.

The Classes

The following passage is my reflective account of the week of classes, and serves to introduce some of the issues that arose in the data collection and that will henceforth be presented in the findings.

Monday

Today I was nervous and attending to many things at once. We started class with a simple reference movement of flexing the spine and then explored an ATM lesson that addressed different ways we use this flexion movement. Following the ATM we repeated the reference movement and explored it a little further before the students engaged in short paired discussions to share learning. From here, the reference movement formed the beginning of

the first technical warm-up exercise. We progressed through the class, sometimes pausing to work in pairs (using visual feedback and tactile guiding of movement) or referring to the initial flexion movement in relation to different aspects of the technique phrases. The discussion at the end of class provided insight to how students perceived this way of learning and some of the complexities arising as we started to get used to each other. These complexities involved participants becoming used to my teaching and movement style, while I was becoming aware of the students' previous experiences and current expectations.

Tuesday

Today we repeated the same lesson structure but began with a different ATM involving more flexion movement and exploring this in relation to the lower spine, pelvis and legs. As students became more familiar with the movement and my idiosyncratic style we began to move through the material quicker and consequently I was able to introduce new material. Class discussion seemed to centre on how to make use of the new sensations they had felt in the ATM lesson. Unfortunately due to a technical problem the video did not record today's lesson.

Wednesday

Today was interesting for a number of reasons. First of all everyone seemed tired and a little overwhelmed by the somatic work (some had also been doing another somatic workshop in the afternoon). Secondly in the dance technique section while exploring a *tendu* exercise I overly complicated the task. This created confusion and frustration as no one seemed to be able to make sense of the exercise. In the analysis a number of participants make reference to feeling a level of frustration on this day.

Thursday

Thursday was signified by a new approach to the warm-up. I introduced a light cardio based circuit warm-up with the intention of applying somatic principles of awareness. Following this we played a proprioceptive game using balance and closed eyes. As part of my teaching strategy I introduced an activity that asked students to not only observe other peoples' movement but also try and embody some of their movement characteristics. Discussion after class indicated that the cardio warm-up was popular.

Friday

Today was interesting in terms of perceptions. I perceived that people were struggling with the ATM and that I did not teach it that well, as I had condensed the lesson and taught it at a faster pace than I would normally. Afterwards a lot of students referenced that this was the clearest integration they had felt all week and that they took the sensations with them all the way through class. Mazy, however, did not share this view and felt like half the lesson was missing. This was interesting for me and in part explained the contradiction between what I perceived and what the students perceived.

CHAPTER FIVE:

RESULTS

It is not the movement that brings about the improvement, but rather your being attuned to its inner dynamics within you. It isn't the configurations seen in space that generates the refinement but rather the discovery it initiates inside you, between you and yourself. (Alon, 1996, p. 26)

As mentioned in the methods chapter, the initial analysis used a process of open coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1990) and constant comparative method (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994) whereby meanings emerged from directing my focus of inquiry to my original research question, which investigated: (a) student perceptions of their learning experience in the integration of somatic education and contemporary dance technique, and (b) teacher research in the integration of somatic education and contemporary dance technique. After the data collection, the initial categorisation involved identifying similarities and differences between the data. On completion of this initial categorisation, I began to interweave the participants' voices and my voice as a teacher researcher with the sub questions from my overarching research question and emergent themes from the journal, video and interview data. From here I organised all the data into seven themes, each with their own sub themes: The seven themes are:

1. Participants' experiences of integration
2. Participants' experiences of learning
3. Individual perceptions of somatics
4. Somatic ways of knowing
5. Somatic authority
6. Relationships to yoga and ballet
7. Value of somatics in tertiary dance training

Rather than providing definitive answers, these themes provided insights to participants' experiences of somatic education and contemporary dance technique. The following analysis is my description and interpretation of the seven themes and their associated sub themes

Students' Experiences of Integration

This theme is made up of the following sub themes: sensation and differentiation, the importance of a clear teaching structure, student centred pedagogy, trusting the body's intelligence, and accumulation of learning. To build my understanding of students' experiences of integration within somatic education and contemporary dance I searched through the video footage, interview transcripts and participants' journals. The notion of integration within these classes is a relative rather than an absolute concept. From a phenomenological perspective, I am gaining understanding of participants' and my experiences of integration in these classes. Integration for me implies combining the separate elements of somatics and contemporary dance technique together for dancers to form a self-referential embodied understanding of movement.

Sensation and Differentiation

Lucia, Mazy and Polly all described their experiences through detailed sensations of movement. In her description, Lucia related her learning to wider experiences outside the classroom. From reading her journal I sensed that Lucia was surprisingly overwhelmed by her initial encounter with the ATM lesson. It seemed to awaken movement in parts of herself which she was previously unaware of. During the dance technique and dance combination sections of class Lucia noticed a release of tension that she had felt at the beginning of the ATM lesson:

Strangely it felt fantastic during class. I felt the chinks in my neck had gone and I replaced them with thick syrup, each of my vertebrae gliding smoothly through the class. In turn I felt an opening in my chest (as an asthmatic I hold tension here) Shoulder blades and arms... simply releasing my neck had repercussions through out my body. I experienced such a strong feeling of gravity in my lower body I became aware my ribs existed and could add freedom of movement. This was an amazing discovery, I have always avoided my ribs or tried to make them invisible - which I am sure has affected the tension in my neck and chest.

On the second day Lucia began her reflection by describing a sensorial relationship she noticed between this morning's movement experience and the previous day's movement experience:

The thing that struck me most today was that I had maintained a muscle memory in my neck for gliding easy movement. I felt incredibly focussed today. I was fascinated at how the left side of my body could rapidly learn new ways of moving simply from the experience on the right side.

Lucia wrote about her experiences on this day in details of felt sensations. Her perception of these new sensations seems to have absorbed her whole focus in these two days:

Slowly at first one feels the trickles of sensations and differentiation of the right and left sides and then all of a sudden it almost seems like two bodies, and yet as separate entities they are highly aware of each other.

On the fourth day Lucia experienced frustration in following her sensations from the first part of class to the dance technique and combination. Lucia indicates the difficulty she experiences through perhaps too much new information and maybe not enough time to absorb this into the technique class which is also new:

In class we changed the structure around and started with cardio rather than ATM. This was good as I'm not sure I could have coped with more information but I felt I lacked the focus of the earlier days. In general I felt wooden and gammy in class, I couldn't seem to remember steps and this of course stunted the flow of my movement.

In Mazy's Journal, which was in note form, I identified relationships between her observations of sensations in the different sections of the class. On day one Mazy identified similarities in her sensation after the ATM lesson and her sensation in the phrase in the later

part of class, where the focus was on softening the ribs and flexing the spine. Initially Mazy noticed:

Really enjoyed the mobility through the upper back, when standing up after the lesson could feel weight back quite strongly on heels. Had a great sense of how front ribs were placed. Talked about how breasts can be confusing to place the ribs - Pelvis became flat and wide. Had a real sense of the hamstrings heavy on the ground. The skin became flat to the ground. Felt the ball part of top of femur really clearly in image of leg.

Later in class Mazy observed that she “enjoyed final phrase, felt quite heavy and weighted onto the ground and quite calm and liquid through the body”. On the second day Mazy identified difficulty and confusion with the ATM but noticed a change in postural sensation in standing and a new relationship with her ribs and shoulders in other parts of the class:

Class exercises became clearer today - purely in remembering them so it became more interesting to focus on repercussions through the torso particularly rib and upper back region. Really felt the shoulder girdle looser and responding fluidly. Found an interesting sequencing in the *plie* exercise. Felt fantastic, very connected and easy. Oh yeah - felt easy through feet and ankles in this exercise today and yesterday.

I find her comment about exploring the weight transfer on straight legs reassuring, as this was one of my main aims through this lesson.

In the discussion Polly and I had about the integration of somatics into the technique class she responded that:

I quite like the way it's added into the technique class like it's quite nice to feel those things on the floor and then get up and try and put it into practise... When we were doing the exercise with the *plies* in it and you said something about- imagine the openness you had in your ribs, imagine that transferring right through your body and through your legs. Because up until that point I'd been doing the *plies* and getting really annoyed with myself because it was gripping in my inner thighs which I tend to do a lot. And then when you said that I went: okay. And did the *plie* again. And it was just like this amazing openness in my inner thighs. And I'd never really felt like that in a *plie* before and so since then – today in ballet class I was kind of applying the same thing and I had more *plie* and more release in my legs which is really nice. So it was quite nice to start a class with some quite basic opening things and stand up and apply it and see how it all fits together.

In her journal Polly noticed an initial sense of integration after the ATM on day one:

In the phrase I observed a different quality to my movement. When told to focus on the action that we had been practising on the ground the movement felt more integrated than when I was just trying to mimic what I saw demonstrated. With harder phrases I found it a little harder to implement this tactic.

On day two Polly was able to continue to explore this sense of integration from the ATM lesson to the dance phrase:

The freedom in the ribs also helped me with the phrase work. I felt I had more movement and flow than yesterday and that I could actually indulge in each movement more. Tension in my torso and shoulder girdle is a big problem for me and it restricts my flow. It was nice to be able to move with more freedom.

Polly's observations reflect a sense of ease in her movement and also suggest that she is able to apply her new knowledge to remain aligned and improve her perception of this movement.

The Importance of a Clear Teaching Structure

On Wednesday, Amelia, Lucia and Polly also experienced difficulties with the class. Amelia felt disjointed and tired while Lucia felt completely overloaded and felt less sensitive to the subtle movement required for the ATM lesson. Polly described her experience in her interview:

I was getting a bit frustrated with myself because after the floor stuff today I wasn't putting it into practice as well as I had on the Monday and Tuesday. And I don't know what was going on in me or whether it was just harder. . . thing for me to access, or yeah. Like yesterday when we'd done all those phrases and that I felt really good and really like on top of my legs. And had freedom and was starting to explore the movement a bit more and then today when we went to do it, especially that *tendu*, I was just a mess, especially when we did it fast... I'd lost my (equilibrium).

Polly refers to the *tendu* exercise that I had some difficulty teaching and we generally agreed this was a frustrating experience. Her response indicates how unclear teaching can affect participants' perceptions of achievement. In her journal Polly described her frustration and sense of being overwhelmed on this day:

Today's lesson was a little frustrating for me. I had done a yoga session at home in the morning and felt quite centred, however after the floor exercises today when we came to stand and move I felt all over the place rather than firmly on my feet. On the ground I was able to push through the whole of the foot, however when I came to apply this when standing I had a sense of rigidity in my upper body which made subtle weight shifts in my feet have huge repercussions further up. I felt unstable, rigid and I struggled with the alignment of my pelvis. It was frustrating because the sense of flow I had the day before had gone. Things started to get better when we did the final phrase because I abandoned what we had been focussing on and just tried to get back how it felt yesterday.

In taking this action she takes clear responsibility for her own learning to the point of abandoning the group focus for this class and working in a way that is clearly more useful to achieve what is important for her in the context of this lesson.

Student-Centred Pedagogy

Bevan helped clarify my thinking about constructing these classes as he offered a critical perspective on the integration of somatics and contemporary dance. Bevan suggested that it would be easier to get to a deeper understanding if the classes were longer. Amelia and Lucy noted this too and it brought to mind the luxury I previously experienced teaching two-hour classes, which allowed somatic material to be accessed in more depth. Bevan also mentioned that integration might be made clearer by moving back to the floor at different stages of the class to revisit the somatic principles introduced at the beginning:

I don't know how you've done it in your two-hour classes before, but it would be good after say the *tendus* and the *plies* to do some of the earlier centring stuff. You could do a little bit of the closed eye standing stuff. Then maybe back down to the ground, but to reinvestigate... after doing some of this technique – have you learnt anything about the flexion and extension of the torso or something.

I had revisited the principles of the ATM lessons in different stages and orientations through the class, but I did not take the time to go back to the floor to re-investigate these concepts during the technique sections of the classes. Part of this was due to the time constraint of one and a half hours and part was being overly concerned with the need to get

through the phrase material and to keep people moving. The question of exclusivity of somatic ideas in technique class also arose in our conversation:

Well for me it's still pretty clearly a contemporary class . . . I mean it starts on the ground, if you want to look at it that way. . . it's a bit less observer related, outwardly observer related, and a bit more internally observer related, but even then some other contemporary classes would start like that.

I ask if other contemporary classes he has experienced could be seen as having a somatic approach also?

Yeah. As long as there is a continual awareness by the tutor, that is a desire of the class. If their desire is to get people revved up and do big jump phrases, then that's a different thing as well, which can still get there, but it's just the process takes a bit longer. And eventually it's more valuable with somatics involved . . . but you still have to know how to move within the music and do the particular steps.

Bevan has made a nice distinction in that the somatic approach can exist in a technique with an awareness and intention by the tutor. In responding to Bevan in our interview I make the point that:

I don't think I'm doing anything new. All I'm doing that is specific to me is trying to integrate the Feldenkrais work within the technique class work. But I'm sure other people are constantly working with, this somatic approach and then bringing it into standing, bringing it into technique, it's quite a common thing.

Within dance academia in North America, Australia, and Europe a variety of somatic approaches have been influencing dance technique for more than twenty years. Sometimes teachers use a particular source or method and at other times they evolve their own approach from their own personal eclectic experiences. The distinction Bevan and I discuss is the somatic influence on teaching from a range of experiences or a specific focus on one somatic approach like the Feldenkrais Method in these classes. Bevan talks about examples of this in relation to his experience in other contemporary classes:

Sometimes we'd do contemporary classes that started with manipulations on a partner... sometimes that was because the tutor would see that we are all quite tired and that maybe he'd start the class up there and everyone's body starts afresh and new again... or the tutor is using those techniques of relaxing and releasing, and letting go of your mind which is obviously giving resistance – everyone is tired and you can just tell, it lets that resistance go because it's a give and take between the tutor and the class.

Bevan's quotes here point more towards a student-centred approach than a teacher-centred approach, and suggest that although a particular somatic method may not be involved directly, the principles of a student-centred pedagogy can definitely inform the class environment.

Trusting the Body's Intelligence

Amelia and Lucy talked about their experiences of trusting and crediting their bodies with an innate intelligence to find ways through the movement. As we discussed this issue in our interview Amelia responded that:

Today I consciously lost everything that we'd been doing, but I'm sure that unconsciously it was there. I'd say that it is integrated . . . because I've created that connection between my mind and my body, which I think is really hard to get. Sometimes your mind is all over the place and your body doesn't feel centred. Yeah. I think it's a centred thing.

Lucy values the integration of somatics and contemporary dance as presented below:

I think it's really valuable to have both in a class because you kind of practise or like your body has time to . . . kind of subconsciously use the information that it's gained. And then we begin to actually move . . . then sometimes you don't need to think about it, it just becomes. And what I've noticed over the last week anyway is that I'm beginning to feel a lot more stable and a lot more connected to the whole. I'm pleased with the way my body is responding to the movement in a moment. Sometimes the exercises have a direct link, and other times it's not so direct. I think that your body is really, really intelligent. I think it's exceptionally intelligent and I think a little bit of information, goes a really long way.

Accumulation of Learning

For Amelia, Bevan and John, Friday gave them the clearest experience of integration.

Amelia provided a clear description in her journal on Friday:

Today I felt that I really mentally relaxed into this way of working. I felt that my body had a large range of new experiences that I could dance with. I did not consciously try to analyse the floor work but felt extremely stable through the feet when dancing - my hamstrings were propelling me forward and side to side and I didn't feel like my pelvis was behind like it usually was.

Out of previous frustrations and difficulties in the week, new learning seemed to emerge for Amelia to give her experiences she could dance with.

In his journal Bevan also noted a clarity on Friday and acknowledged his own contribution to the process of integration:

A fantastic integration of somatics and technique. I thought a lot after our interview and during the class about what effect my desire to get the phrase right had on my attempt to keep the somatically explored knowledge. During the later parts of the class I felt a great sense of widening and softening in my *plies* after the hamstring-centred beginning.

For John, the discussion at the conclusion of class meant that for him:

The relationship between the technique class and the beginning part felt really good, like better than any other time [from the nods and noises of agreement it appeared that some other class members agreed with him]. From the floor when we first stood, I felt like that connection was much clearer through the floor and there was also some kind of sense of more separation between the leg and the pelvis, but there was still a greater sense of security on the floor through the foot.

Friday's lesson was about finding a relationship between lengthening the back of the leg and the articulation in the pelvis and spine. For some people this was quite demanding and even painful on their hamstrings and hip flexors. I commented at the beginning of the ATM for people to take it easy and look for strategies to do less and focus more on the sensation of the movement rather than the end range of motion. I noticed John was having difficulty lengthening the back of his leg and I suggested that he could modify the exercise if he needed by using some support under his pelvis. In continuing to talk with John later in our interview he said that:

Today was the clearest for I felt like I made a little breakthrough, or a little connection was present in my awareness from the part on the floor through to the bigger phrases. That felt really good. I felt like there was a sense of carrying through information and being able to apply it in standing and moving and transferring weight. So it felt like it was easier to apply the standing stuff... Earlier in the week it felt like I have this new information but I'm not sure how to work with that in standing because I then have to have another set of, another lot of learning to do with how to deal with that extra mobility.

John makes a nice connection regarding his earlier comment about controlling the new degrees of freedom he was experiencing in his movement. On this day he has found a way to integrate this new information.

This fifth day was an interesting epilogue to a week of learning that was also non-linear for both students and myself. For students, improvements one day would sometimes appear as frustrations the next and for myself there was a need to vary my planning and way of interacting according to the needs of the class.

Summary of Experiences of Integration

As participants point to their perceptions of integration in these classes, there are clear indications of satisfaction and frustration. Based on what I learned from the students my understanding from this theme is to utilise more identification between ATM lessons and dance technique combinations. There is also comfort in the knowledge that some students expressed a trust in their own bodily learning processes. This suggests that given the information and sensation, they trusted their body would find its own way through the movement. As Lucy said “a little bit of information goes a long way”. Finally, I feel that Lucia’s following quote provides an insightful appraisal of this week:

All in all I have had a mixed experience with somatics finding it a major change to integrate somatics into technique. It is something I wish to continue as it challenges me in new and fascinating ways.

Students’ Experiences of Learning

This theme is comprised of the following sub themes: visual learning, kinaesthetic learning, and a conceptual way of learning

When I teach I can see people interpreting my language differently as they find their way through ATM lessons. As mentioned previously the language of Feldenkrais provides precise instructions for moving while simultaneously encouraging students to find their own individual ways to interpret the instruction. I find I am able to use these variations in the way people move as the basis for how I develop the lesson. I am curious about the comments people make concerning their discoveries while exploring these seemingly innocuous ATM lessons. It is this sense of intrigue and curiosity that lead me to inquire about students' experiences of learning.

In the course of the six interviews I asked participants how they would describe their experience of learning movement. Their replies as expected varied greatly, but there was a tendency for experiences to be described as spatial, kinaesthetic or visual ways of learning, with none of these being mutually exclusive. Some of our discussion focussed on the expectations we place upon ourselves in the learning environment and others centred very much on our personal process of learning. In the following section I will present different parts of our discussions starting with our personal ways of learning.

Visual Learning: "I've actually got to see"

Two participants who identified with a visual way of learning movement were Amelia and Lucy, who used very different visual representations to assist their learning. Amelia, as mentioned in the vignettes, is a second year student who describes her experience as follows:

I'm quite visual in the sense that if I'm studying I need to write things down so that... in an exam I can actually picture my notes. That's how I learn them. I also found last year that I'm hopeless at transferring things from right to left... because I'm visual I actually learn how it looks. I can picture you doing your phrase and try and do it exactly like you do it, but if I try and transfer it onto the left, (repeating the whole dance phrase on the other side of the body) all I've got is this image of you doing it to the right. So I've actually got to see. So if somebody says to me: okay transfer it to the right. I have to look around because I know who can transfer things to the left or right, well. And I look at them, and as soon as I've seen them do it once, I can do it.

Lucy a professional dancer, also preferred to learn visually but in a different manner to Amelia. Lucy comments:

I learn quite visually, so that if people explain something it takes me a little bit longer to transfer the information into an action. So if someone explains it visually, then that's . . . where I excel the most. Sometimes that means . . . having to take a few steps back, especially when it gets a bit crowded, so I have a bit more distance . . . so I can view it from that perspective.

I ask Lucy how the visual image is represented for her, she replies that it is just a straight reflection but is not sure exactly what I mean. I try to explain my thinking a little more and mention Amelia's process as an example. Lucy responds that her visual representation of movement was different:

How does it translate to me? Sometimes it's actually like energy waves. So, like when I watch dance, actually what gets me the most is the dynamism and the energy and . . . what patterns –it makes in space and the air. It took me a while to realise that actually . . . which is why space and patterning is actually something that I am intrinsically drawn to.

I ask Amelia how she finds her way through the ATM classes given that there is very little visual modelling. Amelia said she adopted a specific strategy to find her way through the lesson:

I take sneaky peaks actually, because I find that . . . quite weird. Am I doing this right? So when I saw you get onto the floor and show us something I was like: what's he doing? Because it's so much easier for me. So my mind doesn't have to think so much. I know that I don't need to grasp onto things, I know that they are happening in my body just by thinking about them... I want to just find a position that this is how you should be and that's good and this is bad. It's really hard to be working on yourself and not be able to stand back and look and say: ooh, look how much I've improved.

We discuss how the point of reference becomes your perception, not an external picture of what the movement should look like and so it becomes your movement and not an approximation of someone else's. As Amelia noted that is often hard because we want to "have a right answer". This is reflected in her journal entry on Monday

While moving on the floor I had no idea why we were doing this stuff. . . This movement stopped quite abruptly at a particular vertebra in my back, which dug into the floor and felt like it was sticking out a lot. I tensed my stomach muscles just to see if I could go higher - I couldn't and began to judge this also

- was I doing it right? I'm used to copying teachers but there was no usual guide.

Later on Amelia recalls another situation where confusion around movement led her to explore physically the meeting point between her self image and the kinaesthetic actuality of what was happening:

When you're saying 'be aware of what your ribs are doing', I'm like: my ribs aren't doing anything, are they? You know. And it's like I have to touch [my ribs] to see what's happening. Because sometimes I must have this image in my head about what I do. But it must be totally cut from what I am doing.

Lucy also comments on the challenge and frustration she experiences through learning this way when there is little visual guidance:

I quite often get frustrated, I must say and coming back to these classes and doing these classes, I know they're really good for me but, it's taken me a while to release my mind. I don't have any judgement on that, I just know that that's what's happened, so that's okay. There is a visual-ness to it, but it's not externalised, it's more internalised and that's fine.

Amelia and Lucy draw nice allegories to visual means of learning movement as their kinaesthetic access is often through a visual medium.

Kinaesthetic Learning: "I think it's just a feeling"

Bevan, Lou and Polly identify with a kinaesthetic way of learning. When I ask Bevan to describe his experience of learning, he talks about searching for what to feel for, and noticing changes in movement patterns, qualities and directions in space. Time seems an important factor necessary for Bevan to build a deeper sense of understanding movement phrases:

Its good for me to have a rough think around it, but having to come back to it for three or four days, and slowly over time getting the extra points. So [time] for me is a learning tool that I use to have a rough outline. I like to know where it starts and ends the whole thing, rather than learning a certain block well. I like to have knowledge of where the whole thing is going to go. So kind of see the image of the pattern or something.

I ask him if he feels there is a relationship between the way he learns somatically and the way he learns in dance technique?

Yes. I think the Somatics works quite well in just . . . a way of opening up your body to being . . . to exploring sensations that come in and how they can go through the nervous system to come in and then how they come out as movement. But then when it came to a tricky phase, trying to get my mind back into my body was always an issue for me . . . But the way that you've been doing your classes is good in that regard because they are in the same class. I feel it stays with me even though it's not . . . that intense or something. The awareness at the start – that amount of awareness doesn't stay. But it is there.

Lou also identifies with a kinaesthetic way of learning movement and found discussing movement a challenge in so far as finding the language to accurately describe her sensations. She mentions this when I ask her how she would describe her experience of learning in these classes:

It's been really not so physical for me. It's been very inside. I haven't been able to really articulate my sensations very well. I haven't really said anything in class. I find it really hard to write and actually talk about it. But I am feeling a lot of sensations, I'm aware of a lot of changes. Like before my spine felt a lot more like my lumbar was off the floor when I just lay there and now it's a lot more weighted. And it's good because I get a lot of trouble [picked on] cause I'm little and I feel quite light a lot of the time, and I feel quite grounded now.

When I ask if she relies on a strong visual representation or a feeling about the movement she replies that she definitely relies on the feeling of the movement by initially watching the general full body movement, and then doing the movement to try and build that same feeling. Lou also pays close attention to details to the point of worrying that she might miss other things in concentrating on too much detail.

I think it's just a feeling. I feel like I'm not thinking so much. That's my enemy, I think it's lots of dancers enemy. It's more a feeling, sensation. It's a different type of thinking, it's not like a conscious thinking. As soon as I get into that kind of mode, I distract myself quite a bit. When I become more internal it's just a different kind of thinking. I don't really consciously have thoughts. But I must be thinking to move my body.

To me this again reflects Lou's preference to make sense of her movement through engaging in kinaesthetic sensation rather than visualising or cognitively analysing the steps and learning process around movement.

I asked Polly how she would describe her way of learning:

When I learn a phrase... if it's not too complex, I can pick it up just from watching. But if it's complex or a different style or anything like that, I have to really do it. If people say oh you know, I'm moving my weight from here to here... I need a bit more than just seeing it and trying it on myself. And once they ...give me some more in depth knowledge about how they're performing that movement then I can ... apply that inside of me. When you first did that action I was just going: oh my god what are we doing? And then you said, it's like kicking a soccer ball. And I was like: oh yeah, kicking a soccer ball, I can do that. And then when you did the step around it and you said it's like a *soutenue* and you take your weight and you only put your weight on your foot at the last minute and it was like: oh yeah, that makes sense to me, roll your pelvis around. I found it a lot easier to get the movement. Rather than just trying to see what you did and mimic it in my own body. If I have little hints like that I find that it's a lot easier. Once I've got the basics like that, then I try to get my body to find its own kind of flow with it all. It makes sense of all the information.

Although Polly suggests her way of learning is more kinaesthetic there is a strong visual sense represented in an entirely different manner to Amelia and Lucy. In this example Polly's sense of learning seems to be more internal in respect to her own body rather than an external model of someone else's body demonstrating the movement.

A Conceptual Way of Learning: "I look for rules"

John presented yet a different way again of learning movement. He tended to work with more abstract concepts or look for patterns that might repeat or change in terms of spatial orientation of movement. In our interview John talked of combining concepts from class with his own particular concerns or interests in movement. I ask him how he would describe his experience of learning in dance class?

I always feel I'm quite slow to learn sequences of movement and I'm often looking around to . . . kind of jog my memory, so I look at someone and remember what the movement is, so I am trying to apply information that might have been presented at the beginning, or concerns that I have about various ways of perceptually engaging. I'm always trying to . . . grab the material I guess.

I ask John if he makes a distinction between different ways of interpreting the movement whether it is through imagery, a spatial sense or a felt kinaesthetic sense?

Not too sure. I guess I try or maybe it is that I look for rules or you know – you always go to the left when you do that. . . Or it starts the same arm or leg, those kind of little ways of finding the way it's constructed. So. . . it's not a way that I prefer to engage with the world. I guess habitually I have a different engagement with things whereby I may be looking at or thinking of things that are more kind of inward, so in dance I have to kind of try to engage in different way.

I relate John's idea to my experience of the different ways people construct or reconstruct the teacher's movement in dance classes. I recall my own struggle in trying to put together the complexity of body parts and spatial directions and how I used to get very frustrated. In his description John mentioned his internal process, which resonated for me, as my early experience of learning dance was about trying to identify what I was sensing internally (which I couldn't always do), with what I was seeing externally. I could recognise the value of what I was seeing, but had difficulty assimilating it into my body. My problem was that I was also basing this on an external picture of how I should look doing the movement rather than how I might feel doing the movement. I shared this idea with John who responded:

Often if I'm working by myself I tend to get interested in a certain line of enquiry... then I come to class and there's another set of concerns or another way of working. And I sometimes kind of go: ah, how can I put these things into the class? Which, I question you know, I think it might be good to do that sometimes, but also sometimes it feels like I can shut down my options by doing that because I'm not fully engaging... or getting most out of the class.

John clearly mentions that he brings his own set of concerns or lines of inquiry to class and endeavours to connect these to the existing class themes. He is concerned that in doing that he may not be “fully engaging” in the class.

Summary of Students Experiences of Learning

Prior to this analysis I held the view that ATM lessons could provide unique and often intriguing, teaching and learning experiences, where people could interpret language into their

own particular way of moving. In teaching I idealised the notion that the limitations between right and wrong ways of moving were replaced by facilitating learners' attention and self-awareness. I felt autonomy was encouraged through removing the reliance on visual modelling and replacing it with a reliance of self authority as people learn to rely on their own perceptions through translating verbal instruction into movement. The ideal process in ATM lessons is for the reference point of learning to be each person's bodily sensations of movement. What is present in this view is learning through awareness. What is missing is a plurality of ways to achieve that.

The most important consideration emerging from this theme of students' experiences of learning is the different ways people make sense of movement material, whether it is taught verbally through an ATM lesson or visually and verbally as in the dance technique section of class. The data revealed the importance of presenting lesson content through a multiplicity of pedagogical approaches and encouraging students to learn through multiple approaches. One of the main outcomes from analysing this theme concerns the issues between kinaesthetic learning and visual learning. Learning through the visual becomes problematic in the ATM section of class where language is privileged. It appears that students who are visually orientated may become frustrated and lose some sense of accomplishment they achieve from visually mastering the movement. Even though verbal instruction may be challenging for people who favour a visual learning style, it is nonetheless valuable as indicated by both Amelia and Lucy who through their resourcefulness are both able to find visual strategies to learn this way. For example, Amelia's strategy was to sneak a peek while Lucy would find a more "internalised visual-ness" and a directional relationship to her skeletal movement.

Individual Perceptions of Somatics

This theme is comprised of the following participants' perceptions: Amelia, Bevan, Lou, Lucy, and Polly. In this section I have grouped the headings under each participant's name, as their perceptions of movement were both personal and unique. Understanding how students perceived somatics to their own movement allows me to gain insight into their personal movement experiences and the ensuing relationship to contemporary dance technique. This section is structured to present individual perceptions of movement rather than commonalities emerging through all participants.

Amelia: “You dance for a feeling of pleasure”

Amelia’s initial experience with somatics and her own movement indicated a certain amount of frustration, but also a tendency to learn quickly:

At the beginning of the year everything was frantic and you’re pushing to your limit and stuff. I am finding with these classes, I’m a lot calmer and once I get to doing the phrases, I can feel like I understand what my body is doing and I know where I am and that actually feels good. I mean to say there’s a lot of confusion, but also once I get into doing phrases I can feel where it is in my body that I’m feeling freer and it feels really good. There’s always that balance of technique and always judging yourself and trying to be better and then just kind of free dancing. And then what do you dance for ? A feeling of pleasure.

The thing that I’m beginning to work with now is working with the body more and transferring things from one part of the body to the other like today with the feet. I found that really interesting to feel more that it’s not position, position, position, but you can create something, create an alignment and create a movement in your body by using other parts of your body. I have to not think about my hips to be able to open up my hips. That’s something I realised really quickly. As soon as I thought about the area it tensed up. And then if I breathed I thought about maybe my feet. Or if I breathed I thought about something different it would work.

Amelia’s language indicates that she is actively exploring different strategies to improve her movement. For me this reads as a sense of curiosity. The following is from Amelia’s journal on day one:

When we stood up again, I found the movement of looking up and down much easier. I felt that I could move my spine then my ribs connected and flattened onto my chest and activated my stomach, which meant my pelvis could keep centred the whole time. This made me think about the possibility of relaxing my neck muscles in more complicated movement such as balance or a *pirouette*. I have already been experimenting with this and discovered that a relaxed neck helps me relax muscles around my sacrum and my ankles. This gave me a new experience of a good feeling of freedom in my neck by creating movement in my upper torso. Though I find it difficult to relax my ribs, as I have no concept of what muscles might control them. They feel stiff and sticky out, but today helped. I feel that if I don’t get too hung up on it I will achieve new movement because things like today begin you on journeys inside your body that you are not always conscious of.

I find this last sentence an insightful revelation, reflecting what seems like curiosity, confusion and sense of wonder from Amelia's experience of this first lesson. I feel that she is also experimenting and testing some of these new concepts quite readily.

Amelia, like other participants on Thursday, expressed a sense of enjoyment on the new start to this day particularly after the struggle on Wednesday:

This morning felt great it was like I had been given sound foundations for three days and then let go on the fourth. I found that I knew the movement as well as the feeling I wanted to have while performing it. I didn't have to think so much and yet my body seemed to be accessing the new movement and it felt really easy.

I feel this is a interesting expression; "I knew the movement as well as the feeling I wanted to have while performing it." Through this language Amelia gives me a different essence of experience that goes beyond the steps in class and describes her connection between knowledge of the movement and her feeling of being in movement. To me, Amelia's aesthetic feeling of movement is embodied somatically. In this instance Amelia as a dancer is not separate from the dance she is engaging in.

Bevan: "Somatics beyond the studio"

The way Bevan values somatics in relation to his own movement is through being able to increase his sense of awareness at the beginning of class and exploring his own movement outside of class:

Somatics at the beginning of class, that sort of approach, can get me slightly more in my body... a bit more fluid in my own movement... knowing that I will be more centred... before I try and do these tricky moves that my body doesn't do as easily as someone else's. Maybe that Somatics can actually help in that way, you get a bit more into yourself first.

Bevan also describes how he creates his own somatic explorations in day to day activities such as running on the beach or climbing around rocks. I comment to Bevan that: "Sometimes I think this term of somatics is funny because it describes something that is not

new, that has just been there forever”, but it does provide a lens or way of experiencing things. There is sometimes a misconception that somatics always needs to be quiet and introspective. Although this is important for learning, somatics can be active and physically challenging as well. Bevan’s own explorations serve as an example of this other way of working somatically. The following excerpt is from Bevan’s journal on day four where I had introduced a more physically active, cardio based warm up before commencing technique class:

Class was great with the P. E. circuit warm up. The chance to work within the bounds of a long time limit (one minute per movement) was good. And this was a surprise. This beginning to class was enriching and enjoyable as the lying down stuff. More focus on the phrase was great. I felt centred after the balance stuff.

Bevan’s response to this change in the way we were using somatics was also indicative of other participants’ responses. For me this was surprising, as I had no idea how they would find this new approach.

Lou: “A different perception of strength”

Part of the reason Lou agreed to participate in the interview was to actually clarify her own understanding of somatics. As Lou asked me to clarify the meaning of somatics, I described it as a way to bring awareness to how we function in the world through the medium of movement and that different somatic methods or techniques provide us with tools to increase this awareness of how we move. Lou responded that:

I find it really useful even in this one week. It’s been fantastic. Just my whole alignment feels much more stable. And when I take it into other classes, like yoga... I don’t feel that strong, but I feel like I’ve got a really stable foundation to work from now.

I asked Lou how she might take the self -knowledge she has built up from the somatic and dance technique classes into other classes. She responds that:

I might listen [to others] less and listen to myself more. And go at my own pace, rather than feeling forced to do things.

When I ask Lou how she would describe her felt experience of movement she replies

It really frustrates me when I feel like I'm moving a certain way and someone will tell me that my quality was say really soft when actually I felt really strong. And I can't help that because everyone just looks at my size and thinks it's frail or whatever. I also think that when they say that I look soft or weak, really I feel strong. I think they're looking at a really surface level . . . Because I think you can really express a quality without your body. Just by a presence or the focus in the eyes or something. You know an intensity that is strength. I think what I feel in one-way is true.

Lou's reply here indicates a perceptual gap between an external view and an internal sensation. Often in learning and teaching dance it is the external viewpoint by which dancers learn movement. In somatics it is the self-perception that becomes the material to work with. Lou describes her sense of strength specific to her way of dancing. What is interesting from a somatic context is the possibility of portraying that strength in more than one way. Lou talks about how she was able to create another presence of strength through manipulating the way she moved. By extending her boundaries, changing her quality and making her movement bolder Lou was able to extend herself more in the movement. In doing this Lou noticed her feeling of movement changed; "for a while it made me really off balance and it felt messy and then gradually I adapted". She also mentioned this was a significant enough change for other people to notice as well. To summarise, Lou's perception of somatics to her own movement seems to offer her a sense of assertion through self discovery. This assertion also manifests itself as a way of listening to herself more and hopefully relying less on external expressions from other people.

Lucy: "I think it has a healing quality"

Lucy describes a relationship of somatics to her own movement that focuses more internally on her quality of movement in life. When I ask her about the relationship of somatics to her own movement she replies:

I think at times they seem quite separate, although I'm beginning to kind of slowly add an internalised approach to movement. Other than that often my preferred method of moving has often been quite external, like it has a look.

I'm interested in a look, or dynamism. So they're still a little bit separate, but I intuitively feel like... I'm kind of drawn to Feldenkrais or... Klein [another technique], I'm not sure at the moment, but I'm actually clearly drawn to actually want to know more about it and how I can work with it within my own body. I think it has a healing quality... I also have a sense that it will prolong my dancing career, not in the fact that I want to forever keep dancing. I'm beginning to really like my body and what it can do. And I want to approach it with a softness I might not have actually... previously thought about before.

I interpret Lucy's comment as a way of empowering herself to explore her body in movement through a somatic approach. I make a distinction here as I did earlier with John about people using somatic methods or techniques to improve their own sense of action in the world and *not* to empower the somatic method as the agent, which improves them. I mention to Lucy a conversation I had with a Feldenkrais teacher who felt that the most primary aim of the Feldenkrais Method was to enable people to reach the full potential of their human dignity within their world. Lucy responds:

I think you're right. I like my body. And that is something that happened after my dance training. And it happened because I injured myself and the result of that injury was that I had to re-evaluate what relationship I was having with my body I guess. And realising that I like my body and... that it has a tune of its own. I also think that dance is a lot more important than the society is ready to give it credit for. I think it has something to do with filling our potential as humans and for recognising that movement is... important, and is invaluable, and the way that we can access that movement... can happen with consciousness.

Lucy touches upon an interesting concept. If so much is possible outside of our conscious control, can our movement also improve unconsciously as part of our learning process?

Polly: "Changing habitual movement"

Polly relates somatics to her movement through descriptions of her self-awareness, her ability to create more movement possibilities, and her new attention to uncomfortable or restricting movement habits. Although Polly noticed a lot of changes over the first two days, she could not always integrate it to dance technique:

I've really enjoyed the awareness stuff on the floor, and then getting up and putting it into practise and then seeing a difference. It was really good the first day when we did that phrase, I just felt all over the place with it, and then the next day after we'd done the rib stuff on the floor, when I got up ... I felt more secure, but also as though I had more freedom and flow within my ribs and torso. Whereas normally when things get a bit harder it just all stiffens up for me and I get really quite mechanical in my upper body.

The phrase Polly refers to is a movement combination I introduced on the first day and continued to develop during the week. Some of her difficulty on the first day could be attributed to the novel nature of this movement phrase and the somatics combined. In her journal on day one, Polly reveals more detail of her experience:

I also noticed I was standing with my weight distributed differently over my feet. On the left foot my weight was all on the outside of the foot whereas on my right foot it was even... The uneven weight distribution was something I was aware of for the rest of the day and when walking I noticed that my right foot rolls outward and then in as I step.

Often students comment on their different perceptions of posture after ATM lessons. It is interesting that Polly's awareness of how her weight was distributed over her feet remained with her for the rest of the day.

Polly and I discuss the difference in perception between day one and day two. It seems that the rib lesson on day two made more sense to her in relation to difficulties she was having in the phrase:

I moved around and did that first phrase and felt more freedom... I can actually move my ribs without falling over and it gave me that sense that there is the freedom there without losing control. I guess because I've got a lot of ballet training I tend to like hold my torso with a lot of tension and control when I start to move it more I kind of think, oh hang on I'm going to fall over or you know, I'm losing control here.

I ask Polly if she has been able to maintain a connection between her felt sensations from the ATM part of class and the more complex combinations that start to evolve towards the end of class. She replies that:

When I think about it, it works really well. As soon as you switch back into your old habits then you kind of go into this tight little bundle again. I noticed that with the shoulder one we did on Monday as well, when we. . . stood up and started doing the phrase work with the shoulders. You were talking about

integrating the shoulder and then the rest of the body. It felt like there was more connectedness right through my body.

Polly talks further about how once her awareness of a habit or pattern is revealed, the challenge is to maintain awareness and realise situations when those habits may impede her dancing:

This week has really allowed me to key into how my body does perform movement, what bad habits I have, where my weaknesses lie and what other areas I can focus on to achieve the same movement. I have felt a greater sense of verticality and this has been achieved through less unnecessary muscle action. I have begun to find new ways to use my legs with greater freedom and stability and felt a sense of freedom and release in my torso. I have noticed a significant change particularly in ballet where my tendency is to grip muscles.

Summary of Individual Perceptions of Somatics

This section shows how ATM lessons are not useful as an end in themselves but are valuable in relation to their application to diverse and extremely personal ways of moving. One theory of somatics is the notion that integration can occur below the level of our conscious control, that given the right opportunities our system through its self regulatory nature will gravitate towards the optimum solution to a task. The clearer the opportunity the easier this will be. However in the case of a complex or strongly habitual movement this may take time. By consciously trying to control all our movement, as we are sometimes apt to do as dancers, perhaps we may actually inhibit the opportunity for integration or transfer to take place.

Often after a Feldenkrais lesson students are asked to notice any new changes or sensations but not to actively hold on to them. The rationale is that what is important from the lesson will make sense in the context of function and not as an isolated sensation. Students may notice that through engaging in familiar activities their movement can provide a catalyst for new sensations to be realised in a different way. Holding on to specific new

sensations as an end in themselves can be counterproductive in that awareness is focussed solely on the sensation and less on the integration into function.

Somatic Ways of Knowing

This theme is comprised of the following sub themes: describing sensation, knowing through our skeleton, questioning through our body, and valuing the self.

Somatic knowing is a knowing evolving from sensitivity towards oneself leading to an awareness that allows more meaningful relationships to the world (Heshusius, 1994, p. 18). The central tenet to this theme is to gain insight of how we come to know ourselves somatically. Questions such as how do we know we are breathing, moving, standing, balancing and dancing, invite us to explore somatic ways of knowing ourselves in movement. Many participants alluded to the difficulty of expressing their experience of somatics through language. This difficulty may reflect the deeply personal nature of each person's experience or on the other hand it may reflect our struggle to approximate our somatic experiences through the dualistic cartesian nature of our language (Heshusius, 1994).

Describing Sensation: "There's no way to describe that through language"

The question of how we come to know ourselves somatically arose in my conversation with several participants. When attempting to relate somatic knowing to her own movement, Lou mentions having an awareness of bodily movement that is distinct from her conscious thinking. Lou found this process difficult to articulate in language, yet in her movement she is very articulate and even confident in her ability. As I talk further with Lou about this I suggest that from my experience:

In somatics, a lot of people talk about the idea that you're experiencing sensations as you explore specific movements. After a lesson for example, you might stand up and your sensation of being vertical and on your feet might

be very different than it was before you started. The question is: how is it different? Some people will approximate that through language, but sometimes there's just not a way of describing that through language. I think it's useful to even approximate it, because if you can do that and know it's an approximation, you have the ability to maybe get a little bit closer (to describing it more accurately) the next time.

Lou responds:

I think that's what I need to do because I really want to be genuine, you know completely truthful... So maybe I should just settle for something more vague and then find the more specific things. When you came round the other day when we were doing this stuff and you asked Amelia and me where we felt it hard and where we hadn't, and I said something about where I felt tense. Afterwards I thought: did I really feel that way? Because I couldn't trust my own sensations. I said I was quite tight in my hip, but then I felt quite loose at the same time.

Lou's description illustrates the complex relationship between our actions, the depth of our perception and the language we need to communicate our experience.

Knowing Through our Skeleton: "Suddenly I can feel where my bones are"

Where language seems to be a difficult way for Lou to articulate a somatic way of knowing, for Amelia language provides a clear way to articulate her sensations of movement. Amelia represents her somatic way of knowing through focussing on and describing perceptual shifts in her body such as using time to allow things to digest and then noticing maybe a shift in her pelvic alignment or a change in the curve in her back:

I know it sounds really strange but I have an IUD put in because I got pregnant at the end of the year, and so every month when it comes to my period... my body reverses to having a sway back. I get a lot of painful periods and then it's almost like every month I have to rethink what I'm doing with my body. I'd be so confused because I thought: well if every month my body goes back to having a sway back is that because it's the way it's supposed to be because that's how I am naturally. And if so, is it true that I will never be able to dance. Great! Because my body is just like that.

From her journals and interview Amelia's strongest expressions of somatic knowing seem to be through her movement and the different experiences of being in her body:

When you asked about how I was trying to correct my sacrum [it] was actually through me being able to feel what was happening. Because I didn't know really where my sacrum was, and I still don't think I know, but I'm beginning

to. I'm beginning to get an image of that in my brain, and I have to take it from a variety of sources, like I have to see a picture of a skeleton, but maybe for me seeing a 2-D picture doesn't actually help me. I have to go and see a skeleton. I began to lose weight from my bum last year and suddenly I can feel where my bones are, I've never been aware of that part of my body. It's like I had to learn through a variety of sources where that is inside me before I could kind of begin to change. I had the same thing with my hip joints. I have to learn where they are and what they do inside me because I still have the idea that my hips are wrong, from being told they were wrong. So I have to reconstitute that idea in myself.

From this passage it is clear that Amelia is building up an internal somatic picture of herself in order to initiate changes in her movement. As Amelia indicates, with new learning there is often confusion even though her awareness and curiosity continue to lead her to new questions about herself.

Questioning Through our Body: "How aware can I be?"

Performance and choreography are the medium through which John builds his knowledge. Through choreographing and performing his own work John can explore "what it is to have a body" from a somatic base. For John the performance also becomes a vehicle to express different degrees of awareness:

It's almost like how aware can I be? How many aspects of my physical reality can I attend to and then articulate, and can that be visible?

In the context of performance, this raises the challenge of directing attention as a performer but also the attention of the audience. John elaborates further about arriving at this somatic way of knowing through his experience in the studio:

In the studio if I'm dancing by myself or maybe if I'm improvising, performing . . . there can be this kind of engagement with the sublime or the unknown or... ecstasy... I just don't know what it is, but it's like I'm chasing this... divine experience or something. So that's probably influenced by reading what William Forsyth talks about and I think he says something like... dancing borders on the sublime or it's like at the very edge of what we know or what we can perceive or how we frame the world.

John presents a very personal experience of his somatic way of knowing movement and dance, which as he alludes to is often difficult to capture in logical cartesian language.

Valuing the Self: "I encourage them to bring it back to the I"

A somatic way of knowing for Lucy ranged from self-perceptions constructed through her own corporeal experiences to reflecting on other peoples' unique ways of moving, to global issues that ultimately evolved from her deeper personal experiences. Lucy provides an example of how she learned to use her sensitivity to acknowledge another way of moving when she was rehearsing with John:

When I asked John to work with me last year it was because I saw in his body an ability that... if he could just side-step some of those third person issues it actually would be really invaluable, not just to me as a choreographer, but as. . . as an influence in the dance world. Ok I see him struggling often with technique and counting and stuff like that, but ... I just go: I see all these stories in your body and there's a fluidity and a swiftness that I don't see anyone else being able to manifest. And it's idiosyncratic to you and it is really very beautiful and it is exquisite and it is a language of its own and I'm fine about it allowing it to manifest in whatever form. I tried to choreograph on him which was my own kind of ego thing stepping in and , I wasn't at all successful.

In going through this process Lucy also recognised some of her own ways of understanding movement and the pressure to conform to the ideal of being a dancer.

That's informed me about how I can approach my own body and recognising that I too have struggled to conform to a look that isn't necessarily mine or has my body's sensibility involved in it. So now these days I say to myself, often, I'm a beautiful dancer. And that is interesting cause it's really bringing it back to the first person and now ... when I work with other people, I encourage them to say that to themselves a lot. I encourage them to say . . 'I'm good', and bring it back to the 'I' and encourage them at the same time to relax and have some fun and that it's okay.

I feel Lucy's description belies a deeper philosophical understanding of not only different ways people move but also her own broader perceptions of what it is to be a dancer, including reinforcing peoples' sense of self belief.

Summary of Somatic Ways of Knowing

For Lou, Amelia, John and Lucy, movement and dancing itself seem to be the most potent way they can express themselves somatically. As such, words become a secondary tool that can only approximate a part of their somatic knowledge and for some people like Lou even words seem to fragment their experience too much. These participants' descriptions reflected Heshusius'(1994) concept of somatic knowing in that they all interrelated their own corporeal experiences to larger social issues within and beyond the dance milieu.

Somatic Authority

This theme is comprised of the following sub themes: discovering awareness, self belief, and external modelling.

As mentioned in the review of literature, somatic authority is an integral part of somatic pedagogy that values "proprioceptive awareness, and the abilities of students to listen to the inner messages of the soma and reclaim ownership of their bodies" (Green, 1999, p. 81). As such, somatic authority concerns students' ability to take authorship for their own learning within the context of a dance class. A constant question for me as a facilitator is how can I provide opportunities for students to develop authorship of their movement. My aim as a teacher is to distinguish between my way of moving and the movement I present. I want students to use the movement I present (not my way of moving) as a reference to create understanding about their ways of moving. Often in dance class the teacher is seen as the expert authority, and arguably it is the teacher that becomes the author of students' experience. The philosophy of a somatics class contrasts this for if students are to embody their learning they will need to create authorship over their own movement.

Discovering Awareness: “Like a child in a sweet shop”

Developing somatic authority can often be confusing and frustrating for students used to traditional dance classes where the teacher is the model for the movement. The challenge for students in somatics is to find ways to become their own model as they engage in learning and to value their individual uniqueness in movement. I noticed that in our classes this week several students expressed confusion in initially coming to terms with this concept. Lucia summarised the confusion and frustration she experienced throughout the week at the end of her journal.

The frustrating thing about ATM and Feldenkrais in general is that there is no right or wrong, no goals just observations. This seems to have been quite negative. I’ve become so aware of my internal observations that I’m confused and overwhelmed, I feel all wrong and out of alignment, or I simply don’t understand. I guess I’m just so used to being told what is right, what feels right, what the goals are, what the aesthetic is. The student has total responsibility, like a child in a sweet shop - I don’t know where to begin.

Some of Lucia’s experiences tell me that as a teacher I can never emphasise enough, the idea of encouraging students to take it easy, to do less, to find their own sensations, to listen to those sensations as a corporeal authority of their own selves.

Self Belief: “I just had to keep believing that I did know”.

The following passage illustrates how Lucy defines her somatic authority as she describes an experience of injury she sustained earlier in the year. While this description does not relate directly to her experience in class she does mention that her injury does impact upon her experience in our week of classes. Lucy reveals how she reclaimed ownership of her body after a frustrating time rehabilitating herself back to dancing. What was frustrating for Lucy was the apparent disbelief of her experience of injury. For Lucy there was a gap between her lived experience and the third person assessment of that experience. Lucy’s ultimate faith in her own soma led her to the path she was currently engaged in.

I went to physio, I went and saw a doctor, and the diagnosis was unfulfilling, they just saw it as a sprain. I went to acupuncture, I went to another physio, I

went to a chiropractor, I went to lots of people. I went to someone who did hypnotherapy. So I met a lot of egos along the way and that was really interesting because all that time I really had to keep saying to myself that I have injured myself and they have not found it yet. They just haven't found it. But the egos I found in terms of people promising that I'd be jumping in three weeks, or 'its just a sprain, you'll be fine in two weeks'. ...And then I'd get to two weeks and people would go: 'oh, okay well it's a bit serious and a lot more serious than I thought, but you'll be back on your feet in three months'. Then I'd get to three months, and so for a long time I was living on this false sense of hope even though I knew quite deep down that this injury was a lot more serious than everyone anticipated. I'd never physically injured myself like that before. There were only one or two people that went 'I don't know'. 'I think you need to see someone else. I think you need to see a specialist'. And then even a specialist --- again I was meeting ego. It takes a strong person to say 'I don't know'. 'I believe you, but I don't know'. So once I realised that there were a lot of people out there that didn't know then I just had to keep believing that I did know. They said that I was just making it up. It got the point where they just said 'Oh you're making it up'.

External Modelling: "It's lovely to try and dance like someone else"

The issue of somatic authority and external modelling arose in discussion with Bevan and Polly. While language is the privileged means for learning movement in an ATM lesson, visual modelling is sometimes used to illustrate points of difference in the way people can move. In a traditional dance class, (which the second part of my classes closely resembles), visual modelling through the teacher's movement is the predominant way of learning. Often the goal is to replicate the teacher's movement as accurately as possible. In teaching the more traditional aspect of the technique class I was encouraging students to use my way of moving not as a model to be replicated, but as a reference point to explore their own entry points into the phrase. I wanted them to find their unique way of doing the movement. The challenge I feel for both myself as a teacher and the students is to integrate two separate and different pedagogical styles. This was achieved I feel in part by the transition to standing section of class, which integrated sensing, seeing and exploring movement in a more familiar dance-like fashion. In light of this Bevan raised an interesting observation that equally valued the challenges of somatic authority and visually replicating movement.

It is the desire to mimic the teacher's style. That's what I was writing in my journal the other day . . . that once you came to that point where I had to do it, I was thinking: how do I move like that anyway? Like I still wanted to be able to get what you were putting out there . . . I could see it when you showed the phrase. The main desire I think is to be able to try and do that phrase in a way, which fulfils the desire to do something similar. And not just to do my own version completely.

In discussing his perception of learning in the dance combination section of class Bevan's journal reflected that

Firstly the phrase is hard but lovely, so I take a while to figure things out. So for me, what made the biggest impression wasn't what we had done at the start of class (consciously at least) but the way in which you did the phrase, and my desire to move as clearly as you in your movement.

This is interesting in light of transfer of learning from the ATM to the technique and the relationship between external goals and internal understanding of movement. In our interview we continued our discussion around teacher modelling and self-exploration. I respond with my experience of being a teacher and a learner:

Sometimes I think it's a fine line. Because I know sometimes if I watch a particular person move and I try and move like that I often find it very difficult and . . . I lose my own way, but then if I go completely into my own way it's not like theirs at all, and it's a bit of a fine line where it's a bit of both. You sort of have to find your own way into their movement. I often find that a real tricky thing with teaching technique is being the model of the movement that you're teaching.

Bevan replies:

I think as a dancer it's a lovely experience to try and dance like someone else because you actually feel different.

Bevan concisely presented a way for me to re-evaluate the dual benefits of replicating movement and deliberately exploring the movement to define one's own personal movement style. I agree with Bevan and respond that I get a similar feeling of accomplishment if I see someone do a movement that looks good. If I can do the movement like them it and feels good "its like: oh wow, I've found a new way of doing something". I further note this paradox in my teaching where I like to encourage autonomy and self-thinking and critical thinking and yet at the same time I think there's a real need for a certain amount of 'let's do it

exactly like this'. Bevan agreed, observing that it is important for maintaining specificity in movement:

Cause I'm quite non-specific, you know, I'll just fly around with my arms if I can get away with it until I remember: no. So how does somatics fit in there? Maybe if somatics at the beginning of class, that sort of approach, can get me slightly more in my body . . . a bit more fluid in my own movement, then I could actually utilise that introspection and ...awareness of my balance...to help me when I'm trying to emulate [the teacher's movement]. Knowing that I will be more centred . . . before I try and do these tricky moves that my body doesn't do as easily as someone else's. Maybe somatics can actually help in that way, you get a bit more into yourself first.

From this point we agree that having a deeper understanding of your own movement allows you a better understanding of how to do someone else's through an awareness of difference. In relation to emulating another person's movement I mention the idea that; "if you know what you're doing, you have a choice not to do it and find something else. But if you don't know what you're doing, it's very difficult, you approximate any pattern".

In discussing external modelling and somatic authority with Polly, I mention my observation of another person's way of moving in class. I commented how I found this interesting because this person was doing the movement their own way. I remember pointing out to the class that "She's really doing the same movement, but she's really taken a liberty". I actually preferred her way rather than mine. "To me it looked like more fun". Polly brought up concerns regarding the pragmatics of group learning where the pace of the group tended to dictate how much time or freedom was really available to play with the movement.

Because we're dancing as a mass, it's really hard, because you go: I want to really like indulge in this, but everybody has kind of moved on.

Polly also identified a difference in her experience between mimicking the teacher in terms of a traditional technique class and being asked to find her own interpretation through the movement.

In the past like I tend to feel like I'm just mimicking the movements that I've seen before me. But when you said something about integrating it throughout your body, it was like: oh well this is what it feels like to actually initiate with this part but have a flow on through the rest of your body. Because I tend to

look at the teacher and go: okay, yeah, that's what I'm doing and just kind of mimic the movement.

At this point our conversation moved on to the wider perception of the value of somatic education in tertiary dance training, which will be addressed in a later section.

Summary of Somatic Authority

The most important realisation to come out of this theme is the need for balance between fostering self knowledge and self authority through: (a) encouraging students to engage in their own way of moving while my movement acts as a reference, and (b) encouraging students to replicate movement to challenge their usual way of moving. Interview and journal data revealed that some students experienced a sense of frustration with the different pedagogical approaches, yet it also revealed new ways to value these pedagogical approaches. Bevan clearly articulated his pleasure and sense of achievement from learning to accurately replicate someone else's movement. "I think as a dancer it is a lovely experience to try and dance like someone else because you actually feel different", which is perhaps an indication of learning. The lesson to be learned from this theme is to value plurality of pedagogical approaches. ATM lessons without some form of visual representation may disadvantage some students, and self authority in technique class can be encouraged through replicating an external model and individual exploration of a set phrase.

Relationships to Ballet and Yoga

In their journals, some students identified a relationship between their learning in somatics and their daily experiences in ballet and yoga classes. I therefore feel it is significant as an emerging theme in this study because it brings up the notion of transfer of learning from one instructional context to another. From reading the interview transcripts and

journals my sense is that ballet and yoga provide a familiar and stable context into which student can bring new awareness and learning.

Yoga: “I simply had an intense internal focus”

Amelia Lou, Lucia and Polly described their experience in yoga as “stronger, easier”, and revealing movement they had not felt before.

Amelia:

In yoga today I found it really easy to reach a state in which I was working hard and concentrating on how my body was moving. I discovered that my right hip grips a lot more than my left and maybe being conscious of that is the first key to correcting it.

Lou:

“My alignment seemed improved, therefore I was stronger and more resilient - usually I feel quite weak”.

Lucia:

After technique class I had an incredibly intense yoga session. It was very interesting, as the teacher wasn’t pushing me; I simply had an intense internal focus and drive. My poses and movement between poses felt very pure, defined and clarified in my mind and body, I’m sure this was due to the successful technique class. I think also it is a lot easier to integrate somatics into yoga in comparison to something like Ballet.

Polly:

When I did Yoga at home at night it felt different to the session I had done first thing in the morning. I was more aware of the position of my pelvis, the way my weight was distributed and the movement of my weight.

These comments show each individual’s approach to relating somatics to yoga this week, and the internal focus they were each able to bring to their yoga practice.

Ballet: "I was using more of the deep muscles to control my legs"

Amelia, Bevan and Polly mentioned a reciprocal relationship they noticed between their learning in our contemporary technique class and their ballet classes through the week. On Friday, Bevan indicates the ballet class actually helped prepare him for the contemporary class.

Ballet class first, really good class. I think it worked to stabilise me during your class quite a lot. During the later parts of the class I felt a great sense of widening and softening in my *plies* after the hamstring centred beginning, Also the *battements* were free - However as I said I had already done a ballet class also.

Here Bevan noted that the contemporary class provided the clearest integration of somatics he had felt, but also suggested but that it might have had something to do with the ballet class prior. As a teacher it is helpful for me to see students make reciprocal connections between somatics and other classes and that a particular focus in ballet may help them in somatics as well.

Amelia and Polly found relationships between their internal sensations of somatics and understanding technical principles of ballet. Amelia noted that:

I think that I'm beginning to work with transferring things from one part of the body to another...In ballet, when we were doing *grande battement* I was thinking about putting pressure, keeping that leg stable and be open ... it did open up my hips

Amelia referenced an integration of alignment in her journal on Wednesday.

I became calmer in ballet and regained that connection between mind and body. I began exploring a feeling of correct alignment rather than tucking my pelvis into the right position. I used my feet to create this stability and I instinctively knew what felt correct because it released superfluous muscles. But then I got confused about which muscles I should use for turn out and how hard I should grip them, so a new thing to be confused about.

The highly technical demands of ballet require fine kinaesthetic distinctions moving and organising oneself to achieve an 'ideal' technique. For many dancers this is exciting, frustrating and confusing. Nevertheless, as Amelia indicates, it is possible to rely on internal sensory feedback as well as external models to improve understanding of technique.

Polly describes a direct transfer of learning between contemporary and ballet

I went to ballet today after the class this morning and was able to put into practise some of the stuff we've been learning over the last couple of days. It was really nice to use it within another setting, and know that I can access those feelings.

On Wednesday Polly experienced a sense of frustration, tiredness and difficulty with somatics and contemporary class, however she was able to notice positive sensations in ballet afterwards.

My ballet class went quite well despite this first class. I was able to apply some of the things from the first two days and it gave me a greater sense of freedom in the hip sockets. My *pirouettes* were really good on both sides, which was great because on Monday I was having real trouble to the left with weight placement etc. I felt I was using more of the deep muscles to control my legs in *tendus*, *grande battements* etc with much less gripping in the quad.

On Friday Polly provides detailed somatic descriptions of her sensations in ballet and her learning through the week.

In ballet I again tried to have the sense of verticality with less muscle involvement. I found I could do this and my legs are a lot more free, and I was more secure. During an *adage* exercise at the *barre* I was able to perform the *grande rond de jambe* (which I usually find quite hard due to quads gripping) with ease and fluidity without disrupting my ribs or gripping in the quads. It was quite a different experience and it allowed me to remain more relaxed up top.

My *grande battements* also felt better. In the centre my *pirouettes* were very secure on the whole and I was able to perform a double and control the landing. I also did an *arabesque* turn on both sides, which I normally struggle with. I was simply concentrating on remaining vertical and using both sides of my body equally and remaining square.

Summary of Relationship to Ballet and Yoga

From the students' language it is clear that somatics provides a strong link to both ballet and yoga. It seems that the strongest relationship between ballet, yoga and somatics is the deeply felt sensations that students are able to apply between two different contexts. For me I have learned to perhaps ask students to notice or identify relationships between their learning

in a somatics class and other classes they may be entering into during the day. I feel this is important because as Bevan noticed this relationship can be reciprocal.

Perceptions of Somatics in Tertiary Dance Training

This theme is comprised of the following sub themes: External pressure; contrasting traditional dance training, and curriculum issues. Student perceptions of somatic education in relation to tertiary dance training ranges from issues of peer competitiveness, to resistance to new ways of learning and critique of tertiary training structures.

External pressure: “Not comparing yourself to anything”

As second year students Amelia and Lou mentioned that somatics helped give them a more internal understanding of themselves in movement and that this helped buffer superficial competitiveness between students and judgement from tutors. In these instances Amelia used somatics as a coping strategy.

I focussed on my body and what was happening in my body. I try not to let my mind get too clouded. Because also I think it's really hard to be in an institution in as far as you get a lot of judgement around you. You're looking at other people and start thinking they look great and comparing yourself, or even people putting you down. There's a lot of that kind of stuff . . . within classes. I think it is really just focussing in on yourself and not comparing yourself to anything else that's laying around.

Lou expressed a similar concern when asked how she would describe the value of somatic education in relation to her dance training.

Now I perceive it as an extremely useful thing. I don't think you could have a course in dance... and not have that as part of it, because I think that would be really shallow. It's superficial without it.

I ask if she has always felt that.

No. Not until recently. I mean I guess I did feel a little bit that way last year, but then I started doing this high level technique stuff and it's got really a little bit competitive and . . . what we've been aiming for I think it's a bit wrong. I don't think technique is the most important thing. But you get sucked into feeling that way anyway sometimes.

This finding surprised me, as I had not considered the competitive aspect of tertiary dance training in relation to somatic education.

Contrasting Traditional Dance Training: “What is this stuff?”

During the interviews we talked about the place of somatics within tertiary dance training and how it may seem at odds with traditional ways of approaching dance training. I mention that when I first came across somatic work I was quite sceptical and did not understand it.

It took me quite a lot of time to actually acknowledge and see the relevance, and that only came through basically giving myself chronic back pain which is why I became interested in it.

Amelia, Polly, Lucy and John all mention a similar resistance to, or confusion about their first encounter with somatics. Amelia notes that:

I'd say there's a definite division in my year class – there's a definite division between people that would love that, and there is a certain group...and they'd just go: what is this stuff? I think most of us had to make a switch last year and knowing that what you're doing is fine, you can dance, but if you look inside yourself you'd see there's other ways to do things. We didn't want to disrupt what we had. It's like we had to cling on and say: 'I can do this' and didn't want to look deeper for fear that we'd find something that wasn't right.

It is sometimes a concern amongst dancers that by taking up a 'softer' approach like somatics that they will lose all their hard earned technique. I feel part of the responsibility of somatic educators is to emphasise that by adopting a plurality of approaches to improving all movement, students can actually enhance their dance technique. Often dance students feel that privileging technique is the best way to improve dancing. Polly and I discussed this issue in our interview. In her second year Polly questioned what she was achieving by going at 100 miles per hour all the time.

Is my movement changing? Am I achieving those goals that I set out? Why don't we step back a bit and try these other approaches? I don't know what clicked in me that made it different. I don't know whether after a year of dance training and being exposed to it [somatics] a little bit and then having yoga and other bits and pieces given to you over the time, whether you suddenly develop that awareness of yourself. Because I don't know whether I was probably that open to it. Maybe that was what was wrong when I first started here because I thought that Dance School had to be dancing all the time. Maybe I wasn't open to the fact that you can actually learn from just lying on the ground and you know being aware of different things.

As a professional dance practitioner Lucy recalled her initial tertiary training and how she found the new sensations of somatics confusing in an amusing sort of way.

"The teacher taught quite a psychological approach to somatics I thought. I would often walk away and not be quite sure ... --- what the fuck we were doing, but that seemed okay. It seemed relevant.

John also recalled his early experiences and how he now continued to explore somatics in relation to his choreographic process. I asked him if he had a different perspective on somatics in tertiary dance training now he is working professionally.

Yeah. I think so. I think... probably since about half way through third year to now, I feel like I'm a bit clearer about the lines of investigation that I'm following. In maybe first and second year there were so many pieces of information and there wasn't such a conscious understanding, philosophically or historically or experientially ... The thing about Feldenkrais for me is that it's not quite so narrow as maybe. [some other ways] of working. Feldenkrais has the potential for disorienting and for taking out habitual ways of thinking and... that feels quite good... it feels like there's like more possibilities there.

Curriculum Issues: "There's a lot to learn about standing, sitting and walking"

There were different perceptions of how somatics fitted in with the overall course structure in this institution. Reflecting on his experience from the past three years Bevan noted that.

We didn't do any Feldenkrais in school. I should just say that. But, I think it's very valuable. There's a lot to learn about the standing, sitting and walking, before you do too much dancing otherwise things get tricky, so it's very important. Because of the way this course is structured and you have all these extra outside classes, some of which aren't as valuable, a bit more somatics would be good.

Bevan raises what seems to be a curriculum issue. The balance between theory and practice is an area of discussion and within that there is debate around the type of practical disciplines being offered. Often students are fearful of not being able to realise their full potential if their technique classes are reduced or compromised. This is often compounded if students have started their dance training in their late teens or early twenties and may feel they have a lot of catching up to do. Amelia described the value of Somatics to her dance training

During Somatics exercise last year I think we were doing body mapping or something like that, and I realised that one of my hips was higher than the other and that's something I've been kind of realising more this year. And just questioning maybe why is it like that? Just being able to feel more what's happening. I never think of the back of my body and I began to think about that and that actually helped the most with my pelvis because when I came back fresh from being able to relax my muscles so much over summer, I started to think about creating that through the back of my spine and feeling the back of my body rather than the front of my body and suddenly everything

came into alignment a lot more and I found that I could that I felt a lot stronger in a lot of places. And that definitely stemmed from a Somatics thing, that at the time didn't seem to make any sense to me at all.

In continuing to talk about the implications of daily practice, I mention that I notice a difference in my movement if I do not have time to work in the studio each week. Amelia responds:

Yeah. Even letting this kind of work – the Somatic work inform my study rituals that I need to do... half an hour after school, and then do... maybe the stretches or things that I was doing at that stage, that I'd get so much more out of the day. I just knew I'd get so much more out of the day in comparison of getting up late and just coming in to stay in the class. Because I wouldn't be at the right state. Just doing the exercises by themselves is not really going to help really.

Amelia recalls her early experience of somatics in her tertiary training and the relationship to improvisation and choreography courses. She describes this relationship as a way to experience new ways of sensing movement through her body:

We discovered... in our choreographic classes that if we did some improvisation before we started choreographing... that things that came out were just so much more interesting... compared to if we didn't do any improvisation, our minds weren't in our bodies. We weren't able to think as far as physical bodies in space. All we could think that it was a different part of consciousness almost. But when we improvised to begin with, it was like all this experimental stuff came out from a different place. So that's what I found in releasing last year, but I guess that's Somatics isn't it? And I found that great for experiencing these things in my body. I found that really, really good.

My discussion with Bevan also touched on a different relationship between somatic practice and choreography. Criticism of somatics in tertiary dance training has suggested that some recent student and graduate performances have been too introspective and that the influence of somatics on choreographic practice has resulted in a diluted performance quality that alienates audiences (Schultz 2000). Bevan disagrees with this view stating that:

As an audience member I don't know, sometimes you can see those really simple choreographic things which have come from... a place which seems to be really somatic-based. As an audience member I've seen that some of the choreography that other people have done, I think that's not to do with somatics. For me that's to do with... just taking on the aesthetic of certain postmodern dance choreographers or whatever . . . So I think it just comes as part of intensively learning one medium for expression. I went through it in first year, just questioning the dance, it's so garish, it's so... what we're trying

to do is we're showing off ... how we can do things on stage and why do we want to be up there in the first place? Are we saying anything? It's such an uncommunicative medium in, sort of little terms, and so that is where Somatics for me is really important in choreography and performance of dance, so you can be more communicative.

Bevan implies that through a deeper understanding of self it is possible to build and question a deeper understanding of the relationship between dancer and audience.

Summary of Perceptions of Somatics in Tertiary Dance Training

Over all student perceptions have revealed three important things emerging from this theme: (a) By diminishing peer competitiveness and institutional pressure, somatics can empower these dancers to rely on their own perceptions rather than other peoples', (b) Somatics can foster students' internal understanding of themselves in movement and prepare them for deeper engagement in learning and (c) Somatics can invite students to question relationships between different ways of learning. To sum up, the findings emerging from this theme suggest that these students find somatics to be a useful way of bringing attention back to personal ways of embodying movement, and increasing self knowledge within choreography and technique. As John says "it feels like there's more possibilities there".

CHAPTER SIX:

DISCUSSION

Objective thought is unaware of the subject of perception... All knowledge takes its place within the horizons opened up by perception

(Merleau Ponty, 1962, p. 207)

The aim of this study was two fold: Firstly, it aimed to investigate student perspectives of learning in the integration of somatic education and contemporary dance technique, and secondly it aimed to conduct teacher research in the area of somatic education and contemporary dance technique.

This chapter commences with a critical and reflective discussion on the constructivist methodology used in this inquiry and then addresses the major issues related to the research questions. The analysis of the seven themes that shaped the results are discussed in relation to the literature under the following headings: constructivist pedagogy and dance technique, socially constructed bodies, somatic authority, binary concepts in teaching and learning, the difference between pre-professional and professional dancers, and the integration and transfer of somatics and contemporary dance technique.

Reflective Discussion on Methodology

In reflecting on the relationship between the qualitative methodology of this study and my understanding of participants' experiences of somatics and contemporary dance, I see the epistemology of this study not as lens, but an entry point allowing me to access constructivism and participatory consciousness as ways of knowing. In light of this, I would

like to clarify my epistemological position in this inquiry. While I previously used the term lens to describe my theoretical point of view in this study, I now would like to revise this notion.

To view this study through a particular lens implies that I am behind the lens or outside the window, to use another metaphor. A lens implies an object between the phenomena that I seek to understand and myself. By avoiding the use of the word lens I now place myself within this study and not as an outsider looking in. This emic perspective enabled me to somatically immerse myself in participatory consciousness, a mode of being that Heshusius (1994) sees as a way of allowing the researcher to enter into a somatic quality of attention while building a sense of kinship with their inquiry and learning to let go of the notion of self as separate. In short, the best way I could come to understand participants' and my own participation in these classes was to enter into a process of shared experience through teaching and learning.

Constructivist pedagogy provided the method by which the participants and I experienced the integration of somatic education and contemporary dance technique. My understanding of their experience was constructed through interactions between them and myself. The reconstructions of experience presented in the analysis chapter "do not exist independently of the knowers' involved" (Ockwell, 2001, p. 78). My way of understanding participants' experiences in these somatic and contemporary dance classes has only emerged through our shared constructions of experience specific to these moments in time, place, and space. This theoretical position allows the inquiry to 'refine perception and deepen conversation' (Rorty in Ockwell, 2001), thus also promoting different ways of understanding peoples' experiences of somatic education and contemporary dance technique.

Constructivist Pedagogy and Dance Technique

This discussion of constructivist pedagogy and dance technique is comprised of the following sub headings: the language of experience, the pedagogy of ATM and dance technique, and the historical context of the teacher centred dance class.

A common tenet of somatic and constructivist epistemology is that value is given to the lived experience of the individual and that individuals' active relationships with the world are integral to the construction of awareness and knowledge. In this study, I found constructivist pedagogy to be an effective method of gaining insight into student experiences of awareness and learning in the integration of somatic education and contemporary dance technique. However, as will be revealed in the ensuing discussion, within this constructivist pedagogy, different learning styles and teaching responsibilities within the classes meant I would sometimes adopt a teacher-centred approach to teaching. Consequently within these classes I was required to manage different learning styles and utilise some "non constructivist" (Howe & Berv, 2000) approaches to teaching and learning.

Howe and Berv (2000) argue for a pluralistic approach to constructivism in education, advocating how "constructivist pedagogical techniques may be undergirded by a decidedly non constructivist epistemology and visa versa" (p. 20). Thus from this perspective, epistemological positions and pedagogical techniques are not always exclusive. Howe and Berv (2000) cite the essence of constructivist epistemology in relation to Kant's argument that "a conceptual scheme without sensory data is empty, and sensory data without a conceptual scheme are blind" (p. 21). In relation to students enhancing their learning through making sensory motor distinctions about themselves in movement, and the schema of the dance technique class, Kant's viewpoint is pertinent. I argue that in contemporary dance technique, technical dance steps devoid of sensory awareness become empty and exclude the self from the dance, on the other hand, over valuing sensory awareness at the expense of technical

schematic function may lead to a type of introspective nebulous movement. According to Howe and Berv (2000) there is reciprocity between our ability to utilise and make sense of both sensory data and conceptual schemes. Sensory data cannot be considered as raw anymore than schemas can be considered as pure as each only has meaning in the construction of experience (Howe & Berv, 2000). In relation to this research, students' experiences of new sensation in an ATM lesson and any subsequent interrelationship with dance technique are interdependent. Somatic principles devoid of a relationship with function are somewhat spurious.

The Language of Experience

This interrelationship between sensory data and conceptual schema is significant as students learned to make sense of their experience in the ATM and dance technique sections of class. The representation of students' experience in this case was through the language of class discussion, interview or daily journals. Howe and Berve (2000) further elaborate the relationship between language and experience by drawing upon the ideas of Wittgenstein who claimed that the meaning of sensory experience was interdependently associated with linguistic construction (Howe & Berv, 2000). Wittgenstein, according to Howe and Berv took the position that "there are no raw sensory experiences...that exist prior to linguistic constructions" (p. 23). This position is preceded by the notion that the linguistic communities into which we are born are saturated with cultural, historical, and social dimensions and these dimensions determine the linguistic resources and practices available about which we have no choice but to learn (Howe and Berv, 2000). Because we as humans rely so much on language, we might also say that language both creates and limits our experiences of our world. Although language is the vehicle by which we construct meanings about our learning, our interpretative ability to express our sensations in movement is limited and in this case the limits of language can only approximate the essence of our experience. Shusterman (2000)

suggests that often our experiences in movement are beyond the level of language and that this experience is pre-linguistic. “Some of the things we experience and understand are never captured by language, not because their particular feel defies linguistic expression but because we are not even aware of them as things to describe” (p. 136). In the context of dance classes Fortin et al (2002) comment on how the dualistic cartesian nature of language prohibits our ability to convey a sense of “wholeness of experience” (p. 26). Our sense of ontological self is socially constructed through our own experience not only in language, but also through the social interactions and environmental influences that shape our movement. Shusterman (2000) argues that

Individual styles of talking or walking do not simply diverge from, but are developed through shared social practice of speech and bodily action. Not only language, but even the precise style and patterns of our muscular movement are learned in a social context (p. 211).

In teaching and learning, the multiple relationships between sensation, movement and language are changeable (although in teaching, I am endeavouring to teach movement and not experience). As Richardson (2000) notes, “Styles of writing are neither fixed nor neutral but reflect the historically shifting domination of particular schools of paradigms. Social scientific writing like all other forms of writing is a socio-historical construction and therefore mutable” (p. 5). In these classes the ATM section was taught primarily through linguistic instruction while the dance technique was taught through both linguistic instruction and visual demonstration. The interview and journal data demonstrated that each participant experienced the ATM lessons differently according to their own learning styles and previous movement history.

The Pedagogy of ATM and Dance Technique

If we take the view that education is primarily about questioning our values and the way we live in the world, then what does somatic education contribute to understanding our values and ways of moving in contemporary dance technique? I believe part of the answer is in the

distinction between ontological and epistemological ways of knowing. By this I mean the distinction is between the process of our lived experience and constructions of knowledge that inform our lives. Thus I see ontological knowledge as the experience of the world that comes through the essence of oneself, a notion that Auserwald calls “the experience of ontological freedom, of pure Being (with a capital B)” (Auserwald, 1995, p. 455), while epistemological knowledge is understanding that comes through theory of knowledge (Von Glasersfeld, 1995, p. 5). In the context of arguing for a critical pedagogy Shapiro (1998) makes a case for this relationship in stating “The shift from epistemologically orientated knowing to ontological reasserts the connection between education and the reality one lives” (p. 17).

Throughout its historical evolution, the teaching of dance technique has primarily been epistemologically based through various theories of dance based knowledge. Dancers have subsumed much of themselves to the demands of choreographic vision or technical style (Stinson, 1998). The findings of this study revealed how dancers’ understanding of technique related to their exploration of relationships between their own awareness in movement and the demands or constraints of technique.

The pedagogy of the class alternated between more ontological based learning in the ATM and a more epistemological based learning in the dance technique section. The aim of learning in the ATM is more centred on investigating the self through movement. In this section of class, each person’s own body becomes their sensory reference point for learning and making distinctions through questioning their own perceptions of movement. A more social environment typifies the dance technique section, where the ontological process of the ATM is integrated with the external process of learning through reference to another body (either the teacher or other students). The dance technique part of this class addressed the relationship between the self and the content knowledge of the dance technique. This relationship between ontological and epistemological knowledge forms a reciprocity between

the dancer self and the dance technique. In this study I see this reciprocity as a dialectic tension to be managed by both teachers and students in the course of the dance class. The tension is between constructing a deeper knowledge of oneself in movement and how to integrate that knowledge within the functional demands of dance technique.

The ATM and dance technique sections of class meet with the transition section which acts as a bridge to link the private world of ATM experience with the social or shared world of the dance technique section of class. Here, the students are asked to form relationships between the sensorium of their ATM experience and the schematic demands of the dance technique class. Arguably ontological knowing also relates to a somatic way of knowing through the primacy of lived experience. In these classes ontological knowing was promoted through ATM before the epistemology of contemporary dance technique.

Shapiro (1998) poignantly reminds us that teaching is not value free, and the same can be said for this research, which is laden with my personal values, beliefs and experiences about movement and teaching. Part of my value system is a belief in advocating the primacy of perception and experience as a source for learning about ourselves in and through movement.

As a facilitator I am aware that my values influence the way I shape my teaching practice. In these classes I felt my role was to provide an environment where the relationship between students' own learning and the demands of my idiosyncratic dance style allowed them to find a middle ground or even question the events in class. In the video data I clearly articulated this as I invited students to interpret my movement.

So don't be afraid to grab this stuff and make it fit your way of doing things, because this movement is only idiosyncratic to me, it's not a universal technique. It is just my idiosyncrasies that you are having to put up with so the best you can do for yourself is to fit them into what makes sense for you. So don't feel you have to do it like I do it, because when I saw Lucia doing it I

thought it didn't look anything like what felt I was doing, but I thought, wow, I would like to do it like that, because there is another interpretation.

Mazy revealed that the opportunity to question my ideas occurred for her when she offered comment on her perception of the spinal roll and warm up exercise. Bevan and Lucy also commented on the relationship between the somatic section of the class and the dance technique section. These students' comments in class and later in the interview inspired me to question not only the mechanics and intentions of my movement but also gave me insights into different ways of structuring the classes. Howe and Berv (2000) suggest that in a constructivist pedagogy "the constructivist educator must actively promote a fallible view of knowledge by inviting critical perspectives to be brought to bear on these schemes" (p. 36), which must occur against a background of shared meanings between learners and educators.

From the perspective of shared meanings I advocate both student-centred and teacher-centred approaches to teaching dance technique and the promotion of fallible conceptual schemes that engage students within the learning environment. My experience in this research has revealed how aspects of my teaching philosophy failed to explicitly account for a duality of both teacher-centred and student centred-learning in dance technique. Bevan articulated the value of somatic ways of learning and the value of teacher-centred learning as being equally useful for him in assisting and changing his way of moving in dance class. Amelia, Lucia, Lucy and Polly also found a way of coming to terms with finding their own way through the movement and replicating an external or teacher-centred model. Polly's connection came through relating her own experiential process to the language I used to describe an action such as kicking a soccer ball. Polly's logical association with this was to bring it back to her own experience when she stated, "oh I can do that". For Polly this signified a meeting point between her previous concrete experience in a familiar activity and a puzzling abstract movement she saw me demonstrate. In demonstrating this movement, I was using a teacher-centred approach. I was clear that I wanted it performed a certain way and I

was attempting to provide lots of cues for students to latch on to, to refine their initial approximations in executing the movement.

Historical Context of the Teacher Centred Dance Class

The learning of dance technique has traditionally relied strongly upon teacher directed and prescriptive criteria that is often seen as being external to the dancer as a person. According to Green (2001) this leads to a “view that tends to objectify the dancers’ body and requires students to achieve a specific ‘look’ while being corrected so that the students perform proper dance technique” (p. 157). In this thesis, several students related their experiences of teacher-centred approaches in other dance classes and even their own aspirations for learning using the teacher’s approval as gauge to determine the level of their progress. Amelia and Lou both referred to their personal experience of struggling to come to terms with external ideals or a ‘certain look’ at some point in their dance training.

In the teacher-centred approach, which in its most extreme form can be abusively authoritarian, the “student has already consented to being in a situation in which he or she is usually attempting to replicate as perfectly as possible the example and the demands of the teacher” (Smith, 1998, p. 128). Contemporary dance technique is closely related to choreographic practice. Indeed it can be argued that technique and choreography are reflective of the paradigm shifts that historically have signified the changing values of the art form. Historically early modern dance techniques evolved simultaneously with individuals pioneering new choreographic styles, while seeking to establish new canons or reject old canons of dance practice. Early pioneers of modern dance such as Lois Fuller, Ted Shaun, Mary Wigman and others played an important role in the development of dance vocabularies to realise their choreographic processes. Later, particularly in North America a number of artists developed stronger links between their choreography and dance technique. Often these

artists evolved their work to “express particular concerns around modern social issues and eventually opened schools to teach their eponymous technique” (Fortin, 1998, p. 61). Modernist choreographers such as Merce Cunningham, Martha Graham and Jose Limon espoused specific technical and aesthetic ideals around movement and the dancing body to support their particular vision of modern dance.

The pedagogy of this early modern dance work was often teacher centred as dancers strove to realise the ideals of the particular technique they were learning, through copying or challenging their bodies to meet the movement ideals and technical ability of the teacher. In the dance classroom, Smith (1998) sees this as an ideal environment to foster authoritarian behaviour yet also appropriate for a form of choreography that “involves a process in which dancers become the material for the choreographers work” (p. 128).

Rejection of these modernistic ideals around dance occurred with the postmodernism of the Judson church movement where value was given to a plurality of dancing bodies and different ways of questioning, deconstructing, and politicising the body through movement. “The Judsonites rejected all orthodox approaches and considered all types of movement as possible material for dance” (Fortin, 1998, p. 62). This way of thinking also gave rise to the potential for a shift away from the choreographer/teacher being the source of movement knowledge and encouraged a deconstruction of codified techniques. Although many choreographers from this period developed idiosyncratic or signature styles of dancing they were distinguished by their particular philosophical approaches to exploring their genre rather than conforming to or creating rigidly stylised vocabulary of movement.

Currently within contemporary dance academia and the dance profession a wide range of stylistic approaches do exist that represent traceable roots to both modernistic and postmodernist ways of dancing and teaching. Somatics is also increasingly finding its place

as a catalyst to contribute to both the professional and academic milieu where it can in part answer “choreographers’ specific demands for highly skilled but not stylised dancers” (Fortin 1998, p. 63).

Despite this current situation emphasising the value of somatics in the contemporary dance milieu, there are also noteworthy cautions. Brown (2001) suggests that caution may be needed in investing too much in ‘recent waves of intelligent dancer practice’ (p. 23) where the “emphasis within the contemporary dance community upon the ‘knowing body’, a body fluent, effortless and released and informed by somatic disciplines, retains an almost modernist formalism and purity ...”(p. 23). I agree with Brown, and it has often been a criticism, as well as my own experience, that somatics can sometimes result in a stylised ideal way of moving in and of itself, devoid of any functional relationship with ways of being in and interacting with the world. Ironically this defeats the essence of most somatic practices, which are concerned with bringing movement back into function.

Socially Constructed Bodies

In her article “*Socially Constructed Bodies*”, Green (2001) addresses “body power and pedagogical issues in relation to a study in dance education”(p. 155). Using theories of Foucault (1972), Green discusses empowerment as a pedagogical approach in relation to notions of docile bodies and power relationships. In particular Green suggests that it is common for dance educators to idealise the notion of empowering students and this belief itself may actually constitute an act of imposition or even disempowerment upon students. She explains that:

Particularly in modern dance, educators and artists often believe in dance as a liberating experience and teachers often focus on offering students access to an ability to free themselves through movement. Yet dance teachers do not always attempt to be self reflexive regarding the ways the student dance body may be mechanised or habituated into an ideal form that represents the

teacher's learned belief system and presumed ideas about what the body should be and do (Green, 2001, p. 156).

Green's claim strongly suggests a need for a reflexive practice on the part of dance educators to move away from a teacher-centred model and begin to value more diverse and inclusive models of dance teaching. Both Smith (1998) and Green (2001) argue that the teacher-centred model creates docile bodies where "surveillance is a key disciplinary tactic in forming and controlling the docile body" (Smith, 1998, p. 131). In this argument the dancer's body is constructed through adherence to the discipline of dance technique, where change and improvement is always regulated and acknowledged from an external source other than the self.

This constructed body according to Foster (1997) is a body constructed from specialisation in one particular technique and representative of a "given choreographer's or tradition's aesthetic vision of dance" (p. 241). Fortin et al (2002) argue that Foster's definition of the constructed body "neglects the dancer as a subject of their own construction when she stresses the roles of the training, the choreographer or the teacher, as being responsible for constructing the student's dancing body" (p. 27). Indeed the social expression of dance and dancing is always lived by the individual dancer in their experience of the world. Dantas (2000) takes this further in suggesting that a person's lived experience remains unique to their identity no matter what activity they are engaged in. Fundamentally we remain the same person regardless of our experiences, whether dancing or walking down the street.

I would argue that the pedagogy of valuing the docile body is also (ironically) idealised by many dance students at some point in their training, where a sense of accomplishment is signified by an external model or aesthetic and the satisfaction of 'getting it right'. I know the notion of getting the technique 'right', was certainly something I aspired to achieve in my technical training and professional career. The data revealed that technique was also an issue

for students in this study as well. Nevertheless, Fortin et al (2002) challenge this view in asking; “Just as aesthetic authority seems to be encoded in our bodies through our training, can it also be challenged by it? Can somatics be used as a way to resist the situation portrayed by Foster?” (p. 27).

If the body is subjectively inscribed by social and cultural meanings and values, is it also the site for the playing out of socially and culturally constructed power relationships? The notion of ontological self becomes an important plexus through which these relationships of power and social and cultural inscription take place. Shusterman (2000) further affirms this stating that:

... recent philosophy reveals the body's crucial role for ontology. Just as Maurice Merleau Ponty explains the body's ontological centrality as the focal point from which we and our world are reciprocally produced, so analytic philosophy examines the body as a criterion for personal identity and as the ontological ground (through its central nervous system) for explaining mental states (p. 141)

Thus according to Shusterman, the ontology of body is central to our interactions within the world. Rather than resist the docile body, dancers can learn through somatics to take authority over how they construct and even transform their individual bodies within the context of many different (socially constructed) dance styles. Thus they can learn to balance the notion of a constructed body with internal and external values. Students' perceptions from the data reveal an exigency for perhaps both ways of learning and constructing their dancing bodies to co-exist somehow. One way that students may come to terms with both their own constructions of learning and the stylistic demands of dance technique is through the notion of somatic authority (Green 2001).

Somatic Authority

In contrast to an authoritative pedagogy that values the teacher as the oracle and the student as the recipient of knowledge, a pedagogy informed by somatic authority values

students' ability to make distinctions about their learning based on constant attention to somatic awareness. From this perspective I argue that the point of students' learning evolves around an ability to distinguish changes in proprioception based on an internal kinaesthetic sense as opposed to corrections of position based on an external aesthetic ideal. In this instance the external aesthetic ideal may be perpetuated not only by teacher or stylistic centred notions of correctness but also competitiveness amongst peers. Both Lou and Amelia noted that there was plenty of opportunity for distraction away from a personal sense of self in their year group, which they both perceived as being unhealthy.

The wider implication of this external aesthetic is also political². Arguably in a teacher-centred dance technique class the dancer's body becomes a docile body and in fact dancers are actually encouraged to strive towards an external ideal of technical perfection that in effect removes the somatic self from the learning process. Amelia describes an extreme case of this disempowerment when she was rejected by the elite school she was attending in Spain. Despite her ability as a dancer, Amelia's body did not meet the required norms for a young female ballet student because her "hips were too big" at the age of nine or ten years old. Notwithstanding this earlier setback, Amelia shifted focus in her tertiary training and eventually brought her attention back to perceptions of her hips through felt sensation and recreating her knowledge of her pelvis through touch, visual representation and attention to awareness of herself in movement. Amelia was now starting to differentiate and act upon the difference between what she had been told, which influenced a big part of her self image, and what she was now coming to know. I feel that Amelia was starting to reclaim some of her somatic authority.

² In an article in *Somatics* the magazine journal of the mind/body arts and sciences, Johnson talks about psychological and somatic approaches to body image and notes that Reich, in his studies of Fascism, discovered how the influences of body image reaches as far as political systems (Johnson, date unknown)

In a different way Lucy found an avenue to claim somatic authority over her own body as a result of misguidance from and her disillusionment with the medical professions' inability to address what was important to her when she had injured herself. For Lucy, it seemed that her injury had created a constraint through which she developed this new way of thinking that had also resulted in a different way of perceiving her own body and the value of movement in her life.

This discussion around Amelia and Lucy's experience of external expectations and the body self also highlights the tension between ontology and epistemology and the wider relationship of the self to the reality of one's life. Here I find that Shapiro's (1998) view, echoes something of both Amelia and Lucy's experiences:

The body in feminist and postmodern theorising comes to be seen as the personal material on which inscriptions or particular discourses of the culture become embedded. To read the body in dance is to see the values of the culture from whence it comes. In western traditions the body in dance is discussed in term of size, shape, technique, flexibility and life (that is of the body). It is a biological and physiological object (pp. 14-15).

Both Amelia and Lucy through adversity had rallied against objectification of their bodies through constraints of medical and pedagogical dominance. Amelia found her own way back to dance through reasserting her own values and Lucy overcame her ongoing frustration with a lack of diagnosis around her injury. They had each reclaimed an individual and uniquely personal sense of somatic authority through reconstructing their knowledge and beliefs in and through their bodies.

Binary Concepts in Teaching and Learning

One of the central issues between teacher authorship and an individual self authority of learning is the distribution and enactment of power relationships. Foucault (1972) sees power as relational rather than absolute. It is something to be exercised rather than something one

has. In this way power is a potential to be acted upon. As such it is the intention of the action that determines how the power relationship is played out. In a teacher-centred dance class, teacher authorship of student achievement is foreshadowed by the teacher's vision of what the steps should look like and how the dancer's body should be moulded to fit the steps. This is often realised through the teachers themselves being the model to be idealised or replicated. Dancers have to conform regardless of gender, cultural context, body type or ability. In a somatic dance class, student-centred authorship is encouraged, and the teacher ideally acts as a facilitator to support students to create distinctions about understanding themselves through movement. The idea here is one of transformation from one way of knowing to a new way of knowing, rather than adaptation of the body to an external ideal.

Despite the ideals of somatics, I believe that sometimes there is discrepancy in the self-authority encouraged in ATM lessons and the pedagogical method of teaching. On one hand students are encouraged to participate at their own level, rest when they need to and bring their attention to their own observations and sensations through movement. On the other hand these students are lying on the floor as they follow the teacher's language of instruction where the goal of the lesson is more often than not deliberately hidden (so as to encourage students to learn from building their own internal representation of a movement rather than adhere to a pre-existing schema). The teacher stands, sits or walks around the class, observing the students following her/his instructions. In this instance the teacher is exercising power over the students. In the ATM lesson this is enacted through a physical relationship where the students are at a lower level and in a physically more vulnerable state than the teacher. They are also relying on the teacher's language as the impetus for learning.

When teaching the ATM and the dance technique sections of these classes, I was very much aware of the power relationship between myself and the students, while at the same time struggling with ways to subvert that. Although this perhaps led to struggle or confusion,

I realise now after analysing the data that it is not so much a matter of subverting these power relationships but rather managing the intention behind the exercising of power. Smith (1998) recalls an instance when he was teaching movement with a group of non dancers:

At a certain point in one class I realised how vulnerable these people were... Although I was teaching from a somatic perspective, I used traditional techniques of demonstrating and then observing. When I saw students talking to each other or not fully participating, I got their attention in order to let them know I was always watching. ...In short I was disciplining docile bodies under surveillance, commanding and observing them in order to improve them. I was acutely aware of the potential for abuse in this situation (pp. 131-132).

Smith's (1998) comment rang true for me too in both the ATM section and the dance technique sections of class. Although trying to promote a constructivist learning practice that evolved out of shared experience between myself and the students, I was often using traditional teacher-centred techniques of modelling movement and providing feedback based on my observations. Although my tendency was to be overly sensitive to being teacher-centred, the data revealed some positive aspects of this approach that actually promoted a sense of self authority in movement.

In the interview process and analysis I learned about the value of the teacher as model. I noticed that in attempting to uphold some abstractedly puritanical belief of somatics I would often be reluctant to impose too much authority on the learning process. Yet at times teacher authority does create a schema for new experiences that can be supported by somatic authorship over one's sensory experience in movement. As Bevan observed, one of the pleasures of connecting his own self authority to learning another person's movement, is to be able to move like someone else and experience the pleasure of feeling different. I also recall how I became intrigued with another student's way of moving which looked nothing like either the rest of class or my perception of what the movement was, yet this student's movement maintained the integrity of the original phrase. This student had brought something else that I had not anticipated. I wanted to figure out their way of moving.

Thus there is need for balance in the interplay of valuing both self authority and teacher authority in these dance classes. As Howe and Berv (2000) conclude:

An epistemological stance that leaves knowledge ultimately stranded on private constructions encourages teachers to become overly cautious about what they can confidently claim to know. This in turn encourages them to be overly timid about challenging students' constructions of the world, for fear of imposing their own personal view (p. 38).

Therefore to return to this idea of the shared experience, I have found that the teaching of somatic education within dance technique requires managing the balance between promoting self authority, exploiting useful aspects of a teacher-centred approach and creating a sense of questioning in the construction of knowledge in the dance class. The management of these three areas also requires students to be active and critical learners in this process. In future I feel this may be more readily achieved through actively identifying the differences in learning styles and approaches between and within the somatic and dance technique sections of class and encouraging students to distinguish clearer relationships between their own sense of self in movement and that which they seek to know.

The Difference Between Pre-professional and Professional Dancers

The analysis of the interview and journal data revealed differences between the pre-professional and professional dancers. For the pre-professional dancers, perceptions of their corporeal self seemed to bear a strong relationship to their quest for technical improvement in both contemporary and ballet technique classes. The emphasis on technique may be indicative of the culture of tertiary dance institutions, where for many students technical ability may relate to their perceptions of employability. Another aspect accounting for a focus on technique may relate to the fact that these students are enrolled in a contemporary dance technique paper and as such they will be assessed at the end of the semester.

On the other hand an overly strong focus on technical gratification might present a barrier to some students' initial experiences of somatics. In this instance, somatics may be seen as irrelevant or wasting time that could be better spent on "dancing full out" as Polly initially thought she had to do. As Amelia and Lou also pointed out, the need for technical mastery created competition that some students found uncomfortable. Lou's following comment has already been quoted in the analysis but serves to illustrate this point.

I started doing this high level technique stuff and it's got really a kind of a little bit competitive and . . . I don't think technique is the most important thing. But you get sucked into feeling that way anyway sometimes.

In contrast to this focus on technique, the professional dancers were attending class for their own development. Consequently they presented a more reflective view on their corporeal self in relation to technique and to their choreographic practice. For Bevan, John, and Lucy, somatics provided a way to investigate movement in a more creative and explorative fashion. John's comments reference the creative aspect of how he uses somatic ideas.

I feel like it's... an avenue for exploration that can lead to movement composition, ... it introduces a ... way ... to analytically and/or intuitively go further into something that ... you might want to then deconstruct or develop.

In some ways these differences may seem obvious. It is often the case in tertiary training that the pressures of assessment can impact on what students' value in their learning process. From my own experience, professional dancers are concerned with their technical and personal development in relation to performance and choreographic practice. This becomes very pertinent given the current artistic climate where contemporary dance practice is signified by many diverse approaches to dance making (Brown, 2001; Fortin et al, 2002; Foster, 1997) that make a variety of technical and physical demands on dancers.

The other difference between these two groups is that the professional dancers had experienced a variety of somatic practices from their previous tertiary training and in their

current daily practice. As such they were perhaps able to integrate somatics and contemporary dance more easily. As previously mentioned, somatics asks a certain amount of autonomy from students since it values individual problem solving strategies. Professional dancers are more used to working in a self-directed manner in both technique and choreography and as such they may identify more with this aspect of somatic education. Somatics therefore provides a window of opportunity for them to engage in a way of working that is resonant of their own daily practice both within and outside of class.

Integration and Transfer

According to the Shorter Oxford Dictionary (1972), integration is seen as “the action of making up of a whole by adding together or combining the separate parts or elements” (p. 1088). In previous research investigating integration of somatics and contemporary dance technique from the perspective of the teacher, Fortin et al (2002) addressed both integration and transfer of learning. In this previous research the authors defined transfer as the “use of knowledge skills or competencies acquired in one context being applied to a new or different context” (Fortin et al, 2002, p. 8), while integration was defined as a “mobilisation of appropriate skills and knowledge to accomplish a complex task within a given instructional context” (p. 17). Although integration and transfer are similar, the latter applies to a task “outside of the instructional context” (p. 17).

In this current study, the classes were taught through integrating somatic principles from ATM lessons within contemporary dance technique. The intention was to create a structure for students to integrate their knowledge and learning of the Feldenkrais ATM lessons within the more complex tasks of the contemporary dance technique.

In light of this there were indications of integration from student's perceptions of the ATM and sections of the dance technique class. From analysing their journals, students' experiences of integration seemed strongest during the ATM and transition to standing sections of the class. The transition to standing section linked movement principles explored in the ATM to basic pedestrian movement and simple postural sensations such as weight distribution or skeletal alignment. I find it interesting that although most students recorded sensations of posture and general movement awareness throughout the class, they did not always relate this to particular exercises of the contemporary dance technique. As the dance technique exercises progressed, the complexity of the new movement material may have obscured their awareness for possibilities of integration. The exception was Mazy who detailed her sensations about each exercise in her journal throughout the week. As Mazy was a professional dancer she seemed to assimilate new movement material quickly (she noted frustration that the class was unable to pick up movement faster) and perhaps had more opportunity to reflect on relationships between the ATM lesson and contemporary dance technique.

Despite the focus on integration in this study, many instances of transfer appeared in the data. One of the issues with somatics in tertiary dance training is that "the early incorporation of somatics into dance programs has more or less relied on wishful thinking, leaving the responsibility of transferring acquired sensory motor knowledge of the daily dance training to the students" (Fortin et al 2002, p. 9). According to Fortin et al (2002), transfer of learning between different contexts, needs to be cued for it to occur. As presented in the analysis, the data from this study revealed that this was not always the case. Data from students' interviews and journal entries suggest there was transfer from the context of the somatic and dance technique classes into the different contexts of ballet and yoga. As discussed in the

analysis, Amelia, Bevan, Lucia, Lou, Lucy and Polly all presented their experience of transfer between these two contexts.³

One possible explanation for this transfer may be that these students had a very concrete somatic experience in the ATM lesson. While this may have been difficult to initially integrate within the new technique class, it was perhaps easier to transfer to the familiar and precisely codified vocabulary of classical ballet technique or yoga. Perhaps these new sensations became more prominent as students engaged in a form of movement that was almost habitually familiar. In the ballet classes the instances of somatic transfer seemed to help students apply their new sensory experience to a familiar context. Observations of transfer between the somatics and yoga may be accounted for in a similar way. In yoga practices, extended length of time spent in postures may allow the opportunity for new sensory experiences learned in another context to become more prominent. The depth of their experiences is perhaps indicative of these students' ability to draw upon multiple relationships between their learning in the ATM and different perceptions about their movement.

Discussion Summary

In summarising this discussion it appears that these students valued a variety of approaches to learning contemporary dance technique, however all of them valued the contribution of somatics as another way of knowing themselves in movement. This is not to say that somatics is an exclusive way. As revealed in the analysis, many found the somatic approach confusing and perhaps initially even threatening to their established ways of knowing and understanding contemporary dance technique. However, it seems that somatics integrated with contemporary dance technique in a way that allows for different learning

³ John and Mazy, the other two remaining participants did not take ballet or yoga class this week.

styles and different pedagogical approaches from student-centred to teacher-centred, can be useful in improving students' understanding and sensations of themselves in movement.

CHAPTER SEVEN:

CONCLUSION

This study has provided an insight into teacher and student perspectives of somatic education and contemporary dance. I commenced this research on the premise that despite the increase in somatic education within tertiary dance academia, there was little research investigating somatics from the perspective of the student. This investigation was both a teacher research into my own practice and a phenomenological inquiry into student perceptions of the integration of somatic education and contemporary dance technique. The research was informed by a constructivist epistemology and my own values as a somatic and contemporary dance practitioner.

In contemporary dance practice, current evolutions in choreographic styles are placing more demands on dancers, asking them to contribute to the choreographic process in a wide variety of ways. “Contemporary choreographers are constantly pushing the boundaries of aesthetic canons, and are increasingly looking for dancers who actively participate in the creative process” (Fortin, 1998, p. 67). Integrating somatics and dance technique may provide one avenue where dancers can, through increased sensory awareness of their movement, contribute to diverse demands of contemporary choreographic practice.

From a teacher research point of view this study has shown that the integration of somatic education within contemporary dance is about managing the following two relationships. Firstly, the relationship between a teacher-centred and student-centred pedagogy and secondly, the relationship between the institution, the students, the teacher, and what constitutes contemporary dance technique.

In balancing the relationship between a teacher-centred and student-centred pedagogy, I learned that students value a combination of somatic self authority and teacher-centred approaches to learning and within this there lies a notion that each can inform the other. Completing this research provided me with awareness and determination to improve opportunities for students to grasp new ways of learning. I argue that by utilising relationships between constructivist pedagogy, somatic education and contemporary dance technique, it is possible to construct a class that encourages learners to become more self referential rather than teacher referential as a way to improve their movement. These relationships have a dynamic interface with each other that arises in the spontaneity of action in the studio. This notion is reinforced by Fortin (1998) who states: “The role of the teacher in the view of feminist and somatic educators is to facilitate the students’ process of becoming an expert of their own bodies and lives by interrogating and analysing their own experiences” (Fortin, 1998, p. 65).

One perspective of seeing the management of teacher-centred and student-centred pedagogy is through what I would call a dialectic tension between students’ ontological knowledge of themselves in movement and the epistemological knowledge of dance technique. From another perspective, however, I also feel this description may suggest a dualism between different ways of knowing the one phenomenon. It implies there is a difference of knowing between the dancer and the dance. I would suggest that managing the integration of somatics and contemporary dance technique encourages an embodied way of knowing the self in dance, and as such, technique becomes intrinsic, internal and personalised rather than extrinsically representing an external ideal. These students’ reflections revealed that through their experiences they were curious about improving their understanding of how they organised themselves in movement from a sensorial and functional level. In other words they were curious about how new sensations they constructed through ATM lessons translated into the movement of the dance technique section of class.

The relationship between the institution, the students and my conceptions of dance raises questions around different values of somatics and technique in contemporary dance training. Dance students naturally want to dance and while all students willingly participated and valued the processes they engaged in through this study, many referenced times when they or their colleagues would not have seen value in a somatic way of working. As a teacher I often question the depth at which I would like to explore movement ideas and whether this is ignoring some students at the expense of others who may be interested in engaging in deeper explorations of specific movement concepts. To indulge in my own process too much may depart from institutional and students' expectations of contemporary dance technique. For example, one future approach I might take would be to evolve the somatic class directly into the dance phrases without going through the traditional structure of a contemporary dance technical warm up. While satisfying my own interest, this may be alienating to students used to more traditional approaches to technique. However, from my past experience, teaching this type of class seems to require more time than the one and a half hours afforded by many dance institutions. I chose to study the integration of somatics within a more traditional contemporary dance structure, because this resembled a type of class taught in many independent and institutional dance settings.

Many of the deeper aspects of students' experiences in these classes suggest further research beyond the scope of this present study. For instance several students indicated strong emotional reactions to different ATM lessons as they explored and puzzled their way through the movements. Some students also searched for language to describe their sensations of their deeper experiences in ATM lessons. In doing so they would often use metaphors or struggle with the limitation of language as a means to represent their experience. These observations around emotions and language also suggest two possibilities for further research. Firstly there is potential for investigating dancers perceptions of the relationship

between somatic learning and emotional experience and secondly, the investigation of how dancers use written or verbal language to convey approximations of their sensations and experiences in movement.

In relation to the design of this research, I learned that despite the quantity and depth of data accrued over one week, another week of data collection may have allowed an opportunity for deeper understandings to develop around the integration of somatics and contemporary dance technique. Part of the reason there was such an overwhelming positive experience on the last day may have been to do with the increasing familiarity and relationships being constructed between the students, the material, and myself. I also do not know what use students made of their experiences after the conclusion of this study. I do not know if they were able to continue to apply their understanding and sensory awareness throughout the following days and weeks.

As a teacher researcher, I learned about elements that formally construct my teaching in dance and somatics. I learned to identify and question what I take for granted in my teaching. I learned through the analysis and discussion that there is a distinction between what I think I do and what actually happens in the learning environment. Brookfield (1995) suggests: “one of the hardest things teachers have to learn is that the sincerity of their intentions does not guarantee the purity of their practice” (p. 1). Teacher research is one way I can reflect upon my teaching and notice when I trip myself up with unreal expectations of what should work. As Brookfield poignantly reminds us:

Critically reflective teachers... have a deep respect for the power of chance and they know that much of what occurs can't be predicted...they know that every class has its own dynamic, they cease to rely on methods and activities that have worked well in the past (Brookfield, 1995, pp. 264, 265).

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Cover letter to the institution

Appendix B: Information sheet for participants

Appendix C: Consent form for participants

Appendix D: Examples of interview transcripts; Amelia, Polly

Appendix E: Examples of participants' journals; Mazy, Polly

APPENDIX A:

COVER LETTER

Date

Dear

Thank you for your support in assisting me with my Masters research.

I am very much looking forward to be back up in Auckland and working with the students.

I would like to confirm our proposed teaching research dates and also provide you with a formal outline of my project as per our telephone conversation.

I will supply copies of the ethics information sheet and informed consent form once the University of Otago Ethics Committee has accepted my proposal.

Please find attached the title, description and aims of the project. I have outlined the logistics and considerations below.

Considerations

I am mindful that you have a program already in place and the potential disturbance that an outside teacher coming in for a short period of time may cause. To this end I am entirely flexible regarding the need for the dance program to have minimum disruption to its schedule.

If I outline what I am looking for then perhaps it will offer you an idea whether this is possible.

- Ideally I would like to teach a contemporary technique class every day for the week 18 – 22 March 2002.
- I am seeking a group second year (stream/level) contemporary dance students to participate as volunteers in this project. All students may participate at a level that is comfortable to their needs and may terminate their involvement again according to their needs. In accordance with the University of Otago Ethics policy confidentiality and anonymity of all participants will be preserved (see pending form).
- The aim would be for my self and the students to co construct the needs and aims of the class during the course of the week. Together we would identify what we wanted to achieve and how we would go about this utilising the integration of somatic education and contemporary dance technique.
- I would like to conclude each class with a short 10 - 15 minute debriefing or discussion. To this end is it possible for usual class time of 1.5 hours to be extended to 1.75 hours. If this is not possible then I completely understand.
- I would also like to conduct in-depth interviews with 3 volunteers to gain a deeper perspective on their experience. These would be determined according to the time and availability of each volunteer.

In order to fulfil the technical requirements of the ethics application, would you please be able to confirm the following to me in writing as soon as possible

The proposed dates for the project 18 – 22 March 2002

The proposed class times

The number of students in the class

Approximate age range of the students.

I will send forms concerning information for participants and informed consent as soon as I receive ethical approval for this project.

Once again thank you for your support and I trust that this is not too much of an inconvenience for you.

Kind regards

Warwick Long
Senior Teaching Fellow
Dance Studies
School of Physical Education
University of Otago

APPENDIX B: INFORMATION SHEET



INFORMATION SHEET FOR PARTICIPANTS (Students)

Thank you for showing an interest in this project. Please read this information sheet carefully before deciding whether or not to participate. If you decide to participate we thank you. If you decide not to take part there will be no disadvantage to you of any kind and we thank you for considering our request.

What is the Aim of the Project?

The aim of this project is to gain an understanding of how a group of pre-professional tertiary dance students perceive the integration of somatic education within a dance technique class. Students' perceptions of teaching style and lesson content will be sought in order to construct new knowledge, to help articulate the researchers teaching process.

What Type of Participants are being sought?

The participants sought for this project will be second year dance students' enrolled full time in a pre-professional degree program at a tertiary educational institution in New Zealand.

What will Participants be asked to do?

Should you agree to take part in this project, you will be asked to...

- Participate in a series of five dance technique class taught by the researcher. Each class will be of approximately two hours duration including discussion time
- Contribute to group discussions concerning the lesson content and delivery at the conclusion of the class.
- Maintain a journal of daily thoughts and insights relevant to your experience in these classes. This journal will be collected by the researcher
- Participate in an interview at a time suitable to you
- Participate in member checking, where all information to be used in the research that directly concerns your participation will be available for you. At this time you will have the opportunity to access and correct any direct quotes to be used in this research.

Participation in this project involves physical activity. You are encouraged to self-monitor your level of participation in all physical activities during the classes and to reduce or terminate your involvement according to your own needs and comfort.

Please be aware that you may decide not to take part in the project without any disadvantage to yourself of any kind.

Can Participants Change their Mind and Withdraw from the Project?

You may withdraw from participation in the project at any time and without any disadvantage to yourself of any kind.

What Data or Information will be Collected and What Use will be Made of it?

The data or information collected will be in the form of your own words, actions, dance and participation in dance classes. With your approval each class and some discussions will be videotaped. Some photographs may be taken during the course of the classes. This will only take place with your approval. Some interviews with individual participants will also be audio taped. All data will be strictly confidential and will only be viewed by you, Warwick Long and Ralph Buck the thesis supervisor.

At all times your anonymity will be preserved and all data will remain confidential. No data will be used without your personal consent. The data collected in this research will be examined analysed and written about by Warwick Long and will contribute to his Masters Thesis in Physical Education and any subsequent publications in this field.

All data will remain in a securely locked cabinet and will be destroyed after five years. All computer files are only accessible by Warwick Long.

This project involves an open-questioning technique where the precise nature of the questions which will be asked have not been determined in advance, but will depend on the way in which the interview discussion develops. Consequently, although the Ethics Committee is aware of the general areas to be explored in the interview, the Committee has not been able to review the precise questions to be used.

In the event that the line of questioning does develop in such a way that you feel hesitant or uncomfortable you are reminded of your right to decline to answer any particular question(s) and also that you may withdraw from the project at any stage without any disadvantage to yourself of any kind.

Results of this project may be published but any data included will in no way be linked to any specific participant.

You are most welcome to request a copy of the results of the project should you wish.

The data collected will be securely stored in such a way that only those mentioned above will be able to gain access to it. At the end of the project any personal information will be destroyed immediately except that, as required by the University's research policy, any raw data on which the results of the project depend will be retained in secure storage for five years, after which it will be destroyed.

Further involvement?

If you wish to participate in this study please complete the separate consent form.

What if Participants have any Questions?

If you have any questions about our project, either now or in the future, please feel free to contact either: -

Researcher

Warwick Long
Dance Studies Program
School of Physical Education
University of Otago
Ph 03 479 7684
Email: wlong@pooka.otago.ac.nz

Supervisor

Ralph Buck
Dance Studies Programme
School of Physical Education
University of Otago
PH 03 479 8965
Email: rbuck@pooka.otago.ac.nz

This project has been reviewed and approved by the Ethics Committee
of the University of Otago



APPENDIX C: INFORMED CONSENT



CONSENT FORM FOR STUDENT PARTICIPANTS

I have read the Information Sheet concerning this project and understand what it is about. All my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I understand that I am free to request further information at any stage.

I know that:-

1. My participation in the project is entirely voluntary;
2. I am free to withdraw from the project at any time without any disadvantage;
3. The data [*video-tapes / audio-tapes*] will be destroyed at the conclusion of the project but any raw data on which the results of the project depend will be retained in secure storage for five years, after which it will be destroyed;
4. "This project involves an open-questioning technique where the precise nature of the questions which will be asked have not been determined in advance, but will depend on the way in which the interview develops and that in the event that the line of questioning develops in such a way that I feel hesitant or uncomfortable I may decline to answer any particular question(s) and/or may withdraw from the project without any disadvantage of any kind."
5. Participation in this project involves physical activity. You are encouraged to self-monitor your level of participation in all physical activities during the classes and to reduce or terminate your involvement according to your own needs and comfort. Please be aware that you may decide not to take part in the project without any disadvantage to yourself of any kind.
6. There will be no payment or reward offered. Student participants will receive normal course outline and readings associated with usual classroom practice.
7. The results of the project may be published but my anonymity will be preserved.

I agree to take part in this project.

.....
(Signature of Participant)

.....
(Date)

This project has been reviewed and approved by the Ethics Committee
of the University of Otago

APPENDIX D: EXAMPLES OF INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTS

Interview – Polly – 20 March 2002 – 16:00-17:00

INTERVIEWER: Right. Interesting. And how have you experienced this approach of Somatic Education or the Feldenkrais work in the dance technique – what's your experience of that?

Polly: you mean in just this year or over the last couple of years?

INTERVIEWER: Well actually – we'll start off with this week actually.

Polly: This week.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

Polly: This week I've really enjoyed it. It's been really useful for me because I have a lot of issues with the placement of my pelvis and tension and stuff when I dance, flow of movement and that. And.. yeah. Like I've really enjoyed the, the awareness stuff on the floor, and then kind of getting up and putting it into practise and then seeing a difference. You know, like it was really good the first day when we did that phrase, I was like --- I just felt all over the place with it, and then the next day after we'd done the rib stuff on the floor when I got up and did it, I just, yeah, I felt more secure. But also as though I had more freedom and flow within my ribs and torso, whereas normally when things get a bit harder it just all stiffens up for me. And I get really quite mechanical in my upper body so . . .

INTERVIEWER: When --- that was quite nice what you said when you --- it was like a mixed metaphor you got up off the floor and you could see what was happening with your ribs but could you feel? I guess you could feel --- I'm assuming that was a feeling as well?

Polly: Yeah. I mean --- yeah that was what I was meaning. I could feel that I had more movement there. Yeah. That was what I was trying to say.

INTERVIEWER: That's interesting. So how is your experience --- you talked about it being muddled – what . . .?

Polly: Today?

INTERVIEWER: Or the first day? Was it the first day? When we first did the phrase that was . . .?

Polly: Oh no, I just felt, yeah, like I was all over the place. Like I didn't have any kind of control and I didn't kinda know where I was. On my feet or on my upper body and it was very stiff. And I couldn't get any kind of flow with it.

INTERVIEWER: Is it like the ribs became like a reference point that you could feel, and then from that other things made sense? Would that be a way of . . .?

Polly: yeah. Yeah. I guess so. Because I think --- I guess the first day that I was doing it, because it was new and. I guess being a bit hesitant and stuff. I tend to just wrap my whole upper body. And once we'd done kind of the rib graphics then I moved around and did that first phrase and felt more freedom there than I was --- I can actually move my ribs without falling over or you know . Yeah. And it gave me that sense that there is the freedom there without losing control. I guess because I've got a lot of ballet training I tend to like hold my torso with a lot of yeah, like tension and control when I start to move it more I kind of think, oh hang on I'm going to fall over or you know, I'm losing control here. It's probably just because I've had quite a lot of ballet training beforehand where you're kind of taught to be upright and you don't really relax or move your ribs to the side too much.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah. Do you think --- I sort of --- I won't say what I think first, but do you think the two can go together?

Polly: The aerobics stuff or the ballet?

INTERVIEWER: both. But in terms of being able to have that really strong core, but also the fluidity?

Polly: Oh definitely. Yeah. Yeah. And that's what I'd really like to have. Is --- yeah, this really strong core, but more movement. Yeah. Like some days I feel like I have got quite a strong core, but then I haven't got the movement. And then if I get the movement then I lose that stability in the core . . .so I want to try and get both.

INTERVIEWER: Get that balance?

Polly: Yeah.

Interview – Amelia – 20 March 2002 – 12:00

INTERVIEWER: I might talk about that. Do you think that uh --- that as you said, that we could do away with some of the other exercises that are in class and we could move to phrases sooner?

Amelia: I think it's really an individual thing because it must be really harder to teach and assess when to move forward because some days I feel like I'm really ready to do dancing and other days I feel I need to be on the floor and really explore further and get my mind around it. Yeah. It gets to the point where we get a new teacher where we're learning the exercises and it's almost like xxx xxx that say the three weeks we're with them, we're doing a lot more movement.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah. That --- that is a tricky thing that. It's almost like a --- the Somatic process takes time and then I feel the integration process from experiencing things on the floor to standing and doing simple movements it doesn't --- it shouldn't be hurried, but then at the same time somewhere I feel there's a need to be able to a faster mode of movement.

Amelia: Yeah. I'd almost say that classes at the moment need to be longer if anything. I think. Cause I'm still feeling at the end of the class that I want to keep on going. I'm just grasping it and I want to keep on going

INTERVIEWER: Yeah. That's sort of my feeling too and I'm not --- it's a bit of a puzzle I'm trying to figure out a way to . . .

Amelia: Condense it.

INTERVIEWER: . . . condense it somehow because we don't – unfortunately we don't have the luxury of a longer timeframe.

Amelia: Yeah..

APPENDIX E: EXAMPLES OF PARTICIPANTS' JOURNALS

Polly: 21/03/02

Mazy: 20/03/02