



## Research Article

# Transmission of the professional identity through an embodied artistic ritual: An investigation of a dance/movement therapy welcoming ceremony

Tomoyo Kawano

Dance/Movement Therapy & Counseling Program, Department of Applied Psychology, Antioch University New England, 40 Avon Street, Keene, NH 03431, United States



## ARTICLE INFO

## Article history:

Received 14 July 2016

Received in revised form 25 May 2017

Accepted 5 September 2017

Available online 6 September 2017

## Keywords:

Embodiment

Ritual

Enactment

Arts based research

Arts based knowledge

## ABSTRACT

The role of embodied enactment as a non-textual means of communicating knowledge was examined. A Welcoming Ceremony organized annually by the American Dance Therapy Association, in which newly registered and board-certified dance/movement therapists are inducted into the community, was selected as the site for this phenomenological investigation. Verbal data were collected via questionnaires and interviews from 10 inductees, one facilitator, and one non-inductee participant-observer. In addition to an interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA), the textual data were embodied and transformed into a dance as a way to access what may otherwise be lost in verbal representations. By having done the ritual, participants could use the embodied experience as a resource for knowledge and strength in the real world. The findings point to the potential benefits of incorporating communal embodied interventions within appropriate cultural contexts.

© 2017 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

This paper presents findings from a phenomenological investigation with newly Registered Dance/Movement Therapists (R-DMT) and Board Certified Dance/Movement Therapists (BC-DMT) at a Welcoming Ceremony, an embodied, communal ritual organized annually by the American Dance Therapy Association (ADTA) in the United States. The ADTA is a professional organization dedicated to dance/movement therapy (DMT), a cultural community situated in the view that the non-verbal, symbolic, and embodied aspects of DMT can be accessed as tools for psychotherapeutic change and growth. The purpose of the study was to investigate the role of embodied enactment as a non-textual means of communicating knowledge. In addition to an interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA), an arts-based response using dance was integrated to review the questionnaire, interview, and observational data.

## Literature review

The arts are an integral part of a ritual (Dissanayake, 2009), which is built on “a sensitive orchestration of many strands of symbolic action in all available symbolic codes” that include “speech, music, singing; [...] dance forms with complex grammars and

vocabularies of bodily movements, gestures, finger movements, and facial expressions” (Turner, 1985, p. 237). Like the creative arts therapies (CAT), a ritual’s use of symbolic action (Kaeppler, 2010; Monteiro & Wall, 2011; Novack, 1998); Wozniak and Allen (2012) involves embodied, affective-sensory-motor stimulation (Seligman and Brown, 2010; Turner, 1985, 2011). The psychosocial therapeutic significance of the arts has been primarily documented in Asian and African anthropological research (Ben-Ari, 1991; Hanna, 1987; Hirabayashi, 2009; Mills, 2012; Parmar 2013) with a dearth of psychological ritual research (Watson-Jones & Legare, 2016), reflecting the dichotomous mind-body separation, or a disembodied psychology (Cohen & Leung, 2009; Watson-Jones & Legare, 2016). Interdisciplinary embodied neuroscience research has shown the salience of the interactive role of the body for associative learning and creating emotional memories (Niedenthal, Winkielman, Modillon, & Vermeulen, 2009; Seligman & Brown, 2010), as well as affecting autonomic regulation (Seligman & Brown, 2010). Other embodied cognitive research suggests that blurring the self and becoming one with others is the neurocognitive mechanism for cooperation and building trust – through engaging in synchronous rhythm and movement in an intentional way (Fischer et al., 2014; Reddish, Fischer, & Bulbulia, 2013). Some perceive rituals such as the Ngoma ceremonies of Central and South Africa as a biomedical technology that can be incorporated into global health programs (Vinesett, Price, & Wilson, 2015). Despite the similitude,

E-mail address: tkawano@antioch.edu

not much has been published on how creative arts therapists and other mental health practitioners make use of the arts in ritual in their practice.

### *Definition of ritual*

The lack of consensus on the definition of ritual in Western academia (Grimes, 2013) may contribute to the gap in research on the intersection of the arts, ritual, and the body in psychotherapy. Ritual has become a “global construct” (Bell, 1992, p. 6) with an array of evolving connotations including: “concept, praxis, process, ideology, yearning, experience, [and] function” (Schechner, 2004, p. 228). A linguistic examination of ‘ritual’ in 18 different languages found that most have multiple terms to describe what scholars lump together as ritual (Stausberg, 2006). For DMT and other CAT practitioners, Grimes’ (2013) definition of ritual as “embodied, condensed, and prescribed enactment” (p. 196) may be germane. Koch and Fischman (2011) have conceptualized DMT as an embodied and enactive form of psychotherapy that “looks at individuals as living systems characterized by plasticity and permeability (moment-to-moment adaptations with the self and toward the environment), autonomy, sense-making, emergence, experience and striving for balance” (p. 57). DMT is ‘prescribed’ in that the behaviors and attitudes are culturally conditioned (i.e. we just *know*), and ‘condensed’ because it separates itself from ordinary action and may require deconstructing for outsiders to make sense of (Grimes, 2013, p. 195). The definition is also flexible enough not to “overlook its overlap with other kinds of human activity” (Grimes, 2013, p. 195).

### *Ritual in DMT*

With roots in modern dance, DMT’s association with ritual can be traced in the choreographies of American modern dance pioneers of European and African descent, who drew their inspiration from anthropological studies on ritual dance during the late 1800s to 1950s (Bartenieff & Lewis, 1980; Foulkes, 2002; Hawkins, 1992; Levy, 1988). For instance, the use of a circle can serve to manifest the archetypal form of celebration rituals (Adler, 1992). Among contemporary movement practices, *authentic movement*, which has its roots in Jungian psychoanalysis can be described as a ritual, or as a “therapy process” when applied in DMT (Lowell, 2007, p. 317). Walking counterclockwise in a circle can be a way to demarcate the space and time for one’s purposeful use of dance to heal, as a way to transition into what dance therapist Anna Halprin referred to as ‘ritual consciousness’ (Schorn, Land, & Wittmann, 2014). The creation of symbols through embodied enactment with the presence of one or more witnesses can be transformational when the ritual or therapeutic structure offers liminality. The context of ‘therapy’ therefore becomes essential.

### *Creative arts therapies as a cross-cultural ritual framework*

Within the CAT, ritualistic means have been primarily utilized with survivors of politically motivated violence and displacement (Gray, 2001; Harris, 2009; Jones, Baker, & Day, 2004; Koch & Weidinger-von der Recke, 2009; Rousseau et al., 2007). Conducted far from the clients’ homelands – in the US, Australia, Germany, and Canada; or in the region where the actual violence had taken place, the cross-cultural research illustrates the use of ritual to assist people to adapt, manage societal tensions, and allow for the regeneration of identities through the expression of the individual while integrating the self with society. For example, Rousseau et al. (2007) used ritual as a framework to provide safe containment for the emotions and images in working with 136 immigrant and refugee adolescents, the majority from Asia, Eastern Europe, and South America (Rousseau et al., 2007). A significant effect was

found in the perceptions of those who were in the drama therapy experimental group. Distress, impairment of home life, friendships, and other associated impacts of displacement in their posttest results were mitigated relative to the control group. Harris (2009) explicitly combined ritualistic components of the Chacian model of DMT with the worldview and traditions of local forms of expressions in his work with former boy combatants in Sierra Leone. The symbolic and embodied capacities inherent in Chace’s three-stage framework, kinesthetic empathy, as coined by Miriam Berger (Cruz, 2012), and the circle formation afforded liminality. The familiarity of the ritual form was instrumental in the boys engaging in the process of taking ownership of the impact of the violence they had committed, eventually reintegrating into their communities (Harris, 2009). What can be inferred is that the embodied, artistic use of symbols in both a ritual and CAT may offer multiple pathways for communication and healing.

### *The arts in ritual as knowledge*

Ritual and the embodied arts are both recognized as structures of and sources for communicating socio-cultural knowledge (Banks, 2009; Dissanayake, 2009; Kaeppler, 2010; Monteiro & Wall, 2011; Parmar, 2013). For instance, Monteiro and Wall (2011) believed that “descendants of the African Diaspora have carried with them deeply-rooted cultural inclinations and unconscious memory of their ancestral traditions” (p. 249) that can be manifested in dance. The authors suggested ritual-dance as a healing modality for “individuals, groups, and communities to commune with each other, as well as communicate and connect with the spirit world, which is believed to be fundamental to the process of healing” (p.238). In kind, DMT practitioners have established that “body memory can be accessed through movement” (Panhofer, Payne, Meekums, & Parke, 2011, p. 15; Koch & Fischman, 2011); and the verbal understanding of embodied experiences happen through the metaphors of the moving process (Panhofer & Payne, 2011). Dance is a vehicle to make meaning and connections.

Vital to tracking the movement experience is the presence of a non-inductee participant, or a ‘witness’. Halprin, who viewed dance and ritual as both performance and research methodology proposed that the spectator-as-witness role was “an individual who is present at the performance to support it with her attention rather than look to it for diversion or entertainment” (Ross, 2004, p. 49). Drama therapist Sajjani (2012) remarked on a similar notion as the “aesthetic intelligence to track significance” (p. 79). Given the findings that spectators of a fire-walking ritual had more fatigue compared to its participants, who were the happiest (Fischer et al., 2014), the non-inductee participants’ commitment to a ritual seems paramount to achieve community solidarity. Taken together, such aesthetic knowledge and intentional presence may illuminate the communicative significance of condensed, embodied enactment in a ritual.

### **Method**

An arts-based, qualitative methodology was implemented, informed by an interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA) framework, which acknowledges the active role of the researcher as the analyst in creating meaning of participants’ accounts of their experiences (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009). According to Pietkiewicz and Smith (2014), “IPA can be compared to ethnographic studies in which small communities are closely investigated to produce detailed descriptions and commentaries about their culture” (p. 10). Furthermore, IPA’s allowance for creativity was conducive to this study, where “unusual groups, situations or means of data collection are being contemplated” (Pringle,

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/4935626>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/4935626>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)