Integrating the Feldenkrais Method within Dance Technique Class

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Introduction

This article emerged from a collaborative research endeavor between two dance teachers and Feldenkrais practitioners from different cultures: Sylvie Fortin teaches at the dance department of the Université du Québec à Montréal, Canada, and Warwick Long teaches in the dance studies program of the University of Otago, New Zealand. Our desire to conduct this study stemmed from our experience and practice of dance and the Feldenkrais Method, as well as reading the dance literature which presented many claims about relationships between dance and somatic education practices such as the Feldenkrais method, but few data-based or empirical studies to support the claims. Our hunch was that a descriptive study interpreting daily actions in the dance class would contribute to the understanding of this relationship. One place we felt useful to start was to describe the ways we were integrating Awareness Through Movement (ATM) lessons within dance technique classes and how the notion of self was embedded throughout the class.

In the literature on dance, various authors note specific concerns about the value of somatic education in dance technique classes. The first concern is the apparent lack of connection between somatic classes often characterized by students lying on the floor and sensing minute movements, compared to the technical class which relies on the imitation of strictly prescribed teacher-demonstrated movement which progresses from simple to more intricate dance combinations travelling across space (Simpson, 1996). A second concern is whether this learning environment leads to a type of dance that is too internalized and self-absorbed and ultimately detrimental to performance (Schultz, 2000). These points of view suggest that somatics may be helpful for limited styles of dancing but would exclude dance styles that require speed and virtuosity. In contrast to these critics, a number of writers propose a revision of the traditional way dance classes have been taught, advocating the value of somatic approaches that direct students’ attention to the primacy of process. For example, Sheets-Johnson (1979) observes that traditional methods of dance training are future-oriented and the “movement is commonly directed to where I am not yet” (p. 25). Working through the primacy of experience, rather than focussing on the end product of movement, brings the students to “discriminate and notice change”— and that is learning (Sheets-Johnstone, p. 26). Blank (1987) and Lessinger (1996) also advocate that in order to facilitate efficient alignment, dance training should fine-tune the kinesthetic sense rather than rely on objective visual assessment and mechanical imposition of corrections. Green (1999) also discusses notions such as bodily disconnection and compensation to fit ideal models vis à vis somatic ways of connecting self awareness and the authority of one’s own body to action in the world. She further suggests:

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).
The above viewpoints provided us with a background to conduct our study, which belongs to a research method known as teacher research. Cochran-Smith and Little (1993) describe this research approach as a “systematic, intentional inquiry carried out by the teachers themselves” (p. 7). Criticism of teacher research suggests that it is not real research because teachers are too close to their data and simply present their own perspective. In contrast to this point of view, Heshusius (1994) strongly advocates for teacher research through her concept of “participatory consciousness,” which she suggests is a somatic way of knowing. Through participatory consciousness, she rejects the idea that the knower is separate from the known, and argues that one cannot actually distance oneself and regulate that distance in order to arrive at a better way of knowing.

Setting

The setting for our research was a professional dance studio in Montreal, Canada. Data collection spanned two weeks during December 2000. Each class was two hours long, however due to unforeseen circumstances concerning both the heating of the studios (it was winter in Canada) and technical problems with the recording equipment we were able to collect just 12 hours of data. The classes were taught in English and French. The 12 hours of teaching were videotaped and then analyzed by sifting through all verbatim expanded field notes and anecdotal moments that could be linked to the research questions. Each class was structured around four sections:

**Awareness Through Movement (ATM):** This section lasted around 30 minutes and addressed basic themes such as curving of the spine or hip-leg relationship. These themes would be explored while lying, crawling, or sitting, and provided experiences to be later integrated within the dance technique and combinations. The structure was similar to a typical ATM lesson but was simplified and condensed to accommodate the demands of the dance technique and the time frame of the class.

**Transition to Standing:** Continuing from the ATM section, transition to standing focused on the felt experience of verticality. It provided opportunities to adapt the previous sensory-motor experiences to standing without engaging in dance technique or vocabulary. It lasted five to eight minutes.

**Dance Technique:** This section of class provided a dance technique and vocabulary context, similar to a traditional technique class. It included six to seven alignment and warm up sequences to be learned by the students, using a variety of rhythmic and spatial structures. Sometimes partner work was used to guide or facilitate tactile sensation of movement.

**Dance Combinations:** Much like traditional technique classes, this section involved longer, more complex combinations of moving dynamically in space. The emphasis here was for students to understand and explore their personal ways of executing the given combinations.

Usually, Sylvie would teach the first two sections of class, while Warwick would teach the last two sections. Despite having a designated teacher for specific parts of the class, the team teaching approach remained flexible with different types of facilitation emerging in different situations. This context provided us with the conditions to inquire about our individual experiences while bringing together our distinct voices. We decided early in the research process that the final report would acknowledge the authorship of each teacher-researcher. We avoided blending our voices to avoid conveying a false impression that we had reached a single, absolute understanding of the phenomena under study, i.e., one “reality.” We both present our data and locate our perspectives within a post-positivism paradigm which relies on the argument that the world can be interpreted through multiple realities and there can be no one single way of knowing (Eisner, 1998). The remainder of the article is therefore structured around Sylvie’s investigation about how the notion of self was embedded in the technical dance class.
informed by the Feldenkrais Method, and then Warwick addresses the integration of ATM in the technical aspects of the class.

The Notion of Self

Sylvie Fortin

Dance is often assumed to be an ideal corporeal activity for the cultivation of our full potential. Dance can also be regarded as a means by which dancers can relate to their bodies as objects to be controlled and used (by themselves and/or others). As a dance teacher I cannot escape either perpetuating or resisting mainstream dance culture. Through this study, I wanted to investigate how I conveyed notions of soma/body/self/other in my teaching, since my Feldenkrais training led me progressively to a reappraisal of these notions. At a broad level, I wanted to know if I counteract the enculturation of my dance milieu, and more specifically I wanted to understand how complex relationships between soma/body/self/other were displayed in our dance classes. I juxtapose these words, soma/body/self/other, because our Cartesian dualistic language restricts my ability to convey the wholeness of experience. In the following paragraphs I will address them by going back and forth between our empirical data and the dance literature, specifically discussing Susan Foster’s construct of “dancing body.”

In the dance literature, the term dancing body is widely used. According to Foster (1997), “each dance technique constructs a specialized and specific body, one that represents a given choreographer’s or tradition’s esthetic vision of dance” (p. 241). I feel Foster neglects the dancer as a subject of their own construction. When she focuses on roles of the training, the choreographer, or the teacher as being responsible for constructing the student’s dancing body, she overlooks the possibility of creative self-fashioning (Shusterman 1999) by the dancers themselves. To me, Foster's view sustains dancers’ disempowerment. Just as esthetic authority seems to be encoded in our bodies through our training, can esthetic authority also be challenged by it? Can a dance class informed by the Feldenkrais Method be used as a way to empower and emancipate?

Body/Soma

Generally, the goal-oriented environment of professional dance training encourages students to emphasize the representational body (how it looks from a third-person viewpoint) while the process-oriented environment of somatics favors the experiential soma (how it feels from a first-person viewpoint). Borrowing from both traditions, our teaching during this study offered us an interesting challenge as the classes unfolded. The data showed different emphases in the different parts of the class.

At the beginning of the classes, during the ATM, the participants were invited to attend to themselves sensitively, slowly, gently, paying attention to the details of different ways of executing the movements, most of the time lying on the floor. However, there was a delicate moment between the transition from ATM to the dance combination and technique parts of the class, as this transition focused on the interface between sensorium and motorium. This transition also coincided with a passage from verbal to visual guidance. Whereas visual demonstration is valued in dance classes, the ATM section tends to favor verbal guidance in order to encourage students to rely on their own sensations and explorations. I remember feeling uncomfortable about how to resolve this transition phase of the class. In the course of the research, I realized that what was needed was demonstration that
conveyed the idea of feeling while moving. Such demonstrations could merge the notions of body and soma by bringing together a concern for external shapes of the body and a qualitative felt appreciation of its lived experience. Therefore, the quandary is to create a context for connecting somatic ways of learning, such as experienced in ATM lesson, to the functional demands of dancing.

Throughout the dance technique and dance combination section of class, Warwick was teaching with a visual and sensory emphasis. He clearly stated this in class: “I am interested in the material so that you extract what is meaningful to you, rather than just following the way I am doing.” This baseline promotes an idealism of function rather than an idealism of image. Functionally, one theory of somatics is that our deep postural muscles should be engaged to support our skeleton in the field of gravity, thereby allowing our superficial muscles to be available for our expression in space. Postural imbalance sometimes occurs when dancers strive too wilfully to meet external esthetic demands. Because deep involuntary muscles are not accessible through volition, more efforts to adapt to someone else’s image might not necessarily result in more efficient moving unless accompanied by new perceptual input. Promoting a functional, self-referential and contextual esthetic is tied to the goal of understanding personal organization in movement, which in turn can facilitate acquiring someone else’s style. To return to Foster, it is not only the training itself that constructs the dancing bodies as she described it, but how the individual approaches his or her training. Foster’s argument is to me disputable in that it assumes dualism and presents a problematic notion of self to which I turn now.

**Body/Self**

To address the issue of self, I need to distinguish between the theoretical viewpoints of essential self, or deep true self (Foster, 1997), versus transient selves. In the data, there are anecdotes that infer to the notion of transient selves, which differ from Foster’s notion of essential self. When dancers engage in conditioning and a diversity of dance styles, they create what she calls a “body to hire,” a body that has lost its identity, uncommitted to any specific vision:

> The hired, body builds a great distance from the self, it reduces it to a pragmatic merchant of movement proffering whatever look appeals at the moment. It not only denies the existence of a true, deep self, but also proscribes a relational self whose desire to empathize predominates over its need for display (p. 256).

Foster deplores the current trend of dancers who use a mixed bag of training tools in order to meet the requirements of today’s dance market. Her vision is neither entirely fair nor accurate in respect to the many ways dancers strive to explore the myriad of possibilities evolving in today’s dance community (the Feldenkrais Method being one among other tools used by dancers to inform their dancing). The idea of one’s identity as a given, as a priori, transcultural, and a-historical, can be linked to a paradigm, a world view, that claims universal truth, which Warwick and I both question as teachers and researchers.

Rejecting the idea of an essential self, Shusterman (2000) alludes to the transient self and maintains that the body/self is a social construction rather than a given in nature. Our body/self is formed and transformed through heredity and societal, historical, cultural, familial, and ideological contexts. To Shusterman, our identity is not unified around a permanent self. Our identity is constantly subject to remodelling, thus providing fluctuant selves that can either give unity and coherence to our different encounters with the world or, as alluded by Foster (1997) can get lost experiencing our different selves in a consumer-like manner. The notion of continuous construction of the self relates to a paradigm where the world can be experienced through multiple realities. In our dance classes informed by the
Feldenkrais Method, this idea of a transient self is represented in the following quotation from our field notes:

While you are lying on your belly, find the exact place where your legs are the most comfortable. That means where they support your weight the best. There are different answers to this question since there are different people in the studio. There might also be different answers for the same person at different moments of the day or the week. We are constantly changing.

This passage highlights the notion of a transient or transformational body/self rather than a definite one. For Beringer (2001), “the self should not be a noun, but a process, selfing …Selfing implies a dynamic process which is ongoing” (p. 36). She believes that ATM can create opportunities to experience “the plasticity of the self” (p. 37). Bringing the Feldenkrais Method into the dance class hopefully enables that process and increases the capacity to make enlightened choices. The diversity of today’s dance training, seen negatively by Foster, can therefore be channelled into an emancipatory experience. The notion of becoming something other than what we presently are is after all the sine qua non for change at all levels: physical, esthetic, social, spiritual, and even physiological. As stated by the neurologist Damasio (1999): “The seemingly rock-solid stabilities behind a single mind and a single self are themselves ephemeral and continuously reconstructed at the level of cells and molecules” (p. 144).

Some questions arising for me in light of our present study are: Did we help the dancers make sense of the ongoing selfing process? Did we help create bridges between their diverse experiences? Did we talk about the permeability of experiences and changes? Did we allude in the dance class to the possibility of connecting the experience of the body/self with one’s environment? In other words, did we insinuate a sense of self/other?

**Self/Other**

Dantas (2000) develops the concept of “proximity of the body,” arguing for a continuity of experience between the daily body and the dancing body. She makes the point that it is the same body that is suffering or looking for ecstasy on stage as in our daily life. In class, unity between the dancing body and the daily body is reflected in the following example from the field notes:

When you come to a difficult moment, slow down rather than passing through quickly. Allow yourself to clarify it. What could you do? Use the difficulty as an opportunity to learn new possibilities. When a movement is painful, sometimes we kind of clench our teeth and say “I will pass through” rather than exploring ways to learn from it. Often we have the same attitude in our daily life as we have in our way of moving. If you are encountering a resistance with your partner or your child, do you pretend that it is not there and just go, or do you investigate it by paying attention to the details of the situation?

These instructions hint to the dancers that our corporeal experience finds reciprocity in the domain of our extended life. Integrating the Feldenkrais Method into a dance class should not encourage a selfish escape into private narcissism. On the contrary, it could create a path toward social consciousness. An emerging characteristic of the field of somatics is the acknowledgment of the outward, an inclusion of micro and macro, of self and other (Eddy, 2000; Green, 2000). The world we awaken to through sensing is not limited to our inner landscape. It has the potential to change the way we see the world around us, starting with the most private: ourselves. A new perception of our body/soma can result in a new position from which to view the world. A comparison process allows us to notice how we feel different, how the studio might appear different, or how our daily life suddenly takes on a new light, a
new shade. Our heightened awareness has the potential to change the way we see the world around us and to render us more capable to act intentionally and effectively in it. Consciousness-raising is aimed ultimately at personal transformation and public action, yet consciousness-raising does not necessarily lead to change. In the dance classes we taught, seeds were nevertheless planted to encourage the pairings of sensing/moving, body/soma, body/self, and self/other to lose some of their fixity. Hopefully that subtext of our teaching contributed to help students construct their dancing body/soma/self.

**Conclusion About the Self in Dance**

Throughout their career, dancers spend a lot of time in class. It is thus a major site of enculturation. In the previous paragraphs, I have shown how by integrating the Feldenkrais Method into the dance classes, we encouraged dancers to attend to themselves from a first-person perspective. This has enormous repercussions. Not only is the representational body validated but also the experiential body that is the inner experience of the dancer. I have argued that the integration of the Feldenkrais Method into dance classes might encourage creative self-fashioning, as well as reaching out of one’s narrow boundaries. A dance class informed by the Feldenkrais Method is not only about constructing “dancing bodies”; it is also about developing a more accurate sense of ourselves and the world we live in.

**Awareness Through Movement in the Dance Class**

**Warwick Long**

Throughout my career as a dance performer, choreographer, and teacher, I had difficulty learning movement. As a child I always had problems learning complex movement skills. In ball games or activities such as gymnastics I was uncoordinated and was afraid of movement. Paradoxically, in other areas movement felt natural, as I regularly competed at a national and provincial level in athletics and swimming.

When I began dance classes at the age of eighteen, learning was 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. I was not paying attention to sensation and was preoccupied with achieving technical perfection no matter what the cost. The cost was chronic back pain. I realize 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 and eventual training in the Feldenkrais Method. Through this way of learning, I began to sense how to make fine discriminations in movement from a kinesthetic perspective. One way that Awareness Through Movement lessons can link with dance technique is through learning to direct our attention to movement on an increasingly fine level.

I see this study as a meeting of my past experience as a student and my present experience as a Feldenkrais and dance educator. When I teach, I often observe students experiencing many issues similar to those I used to encounter when learning movement. Consequently I am curious about how I respond to these observations now that I have experienced both the technical demands of a dance class and the more exploratory environment of an ATM class. This study provided an opportunity to investigate my teaching process and to understand how I facilitated movement awareness in these dance classes informed by ATM lessons. The following six themes emerged from my data analysis: (1) initiating different ways to perform movement, (2) comparing sensations of different initiations, (3) directing attention to specific sensations of movement, (4) describing the movement skeletally while
looking for precise sensations, (5) repeating movement to obtain a clearer sensation, (6) selfquestioning. In the following sections, I interpret these six themes individually, even though they all interrelate, and then discuss the facilitation of movement awareness.

**Initiating Movement in Different Ways**

One way to bring awareness to our movement is to make distinctions about how we initiate movement. My overarching interest was to help participants become aware of how they were moving. To facilitate this I would ask students to distinguish between different ways of initiating movement. My aim was to encourage students to investigate their own way of initiating movement rather than replicate what they saw. The following example from the field notes is from the dance technique section of class, a foot articulation and weight transfer exercise, sequencing movement between the upper body, pelvis and legs:

When you come to this (I am demonstrating and describing the exercise) there are a lot of things to think about or attract your attention if you like… You don’t have to think about all of them…for me, sometimes I think about the figure of eight happening in the shoulder…or it might be this side of my ribs, they fold in, they fold out…If I exaggerate I can decide that it’s going to help turn my whole leg in and out…. Play with some of those ideas, either the point of the shoulder drawing a figure of eight or the ribs folding, or feeling the heels drop and give weight.

My intention was to facilitate shoulder and rib movement in relation to the whole body. I presented a number of choices about where students could direct their attention to illustrate different ways to initiate the movements.

**Comparing Sensations of Different Initiations**

In directing attention to different initiations of movement during specific exercises, I was aware that my kinesthetic sensation and students’ visual perception could be very different. The following example is from a warm-up exercise on the floor where the intention was to warm up the pelvis, spine, and hip joints in preparation for weight-bearing exercises in standing. I demonstrated a rotation movement with the pelvis that could also be seen as a swinging movement initiated by using momentum of the arms to drive the spine and pelvis. I wanted to convey the idea that I was initiating movement with my pelvis:

In this movement here feel like the lower abdominals are a part of this…it is very easy to use momentum to swing (demonstration using arms then pelvis to initiate)…see if you can drive it from the pelvis.

I identified two distinct ways of performing a movement by directing attention to the difference between using momentum and sensing initiation in the abdomen. Often learning movement is not simply a matter of copying, but understanding the intention behind the movement and how this influences choice of action.

**Directing Attention to the Sensation of Movement**

In the previous example, I drew attention to initiation of movement. In the following example, I was interested in the students’ ability to distinguish between different sensations. I noticed a tendency for some people to slightly pronate in their feet in a plié exercise. The plié exercise involves flexion of the
hips, knees, and ankles (bending and unbending the knees while standing in different postural configurations e.g., turned in, turned out, etc.). It is a foundation movement for most forms of dance and also acts as a preparation and recovery movement for travelling and jumping. Misalignment of the feet and knees during the plié can lead to an imbalance in the force being transmitted through the knee joints. After hours and years of working with such misalignment, overuse injuries can develop. Rather than give a correction, which is a common approach (and to which the response is often “that is what a lot of teachers tell me”), I wanted students to feel internally the support of their weight through their feet, and to really notice the sensations in relation to the whole foot:

Press through your heels and your big toe. What is your sensation? Where does your weight go on your feet? As you bend the knees and then straighten, feel that the weight is even, not forward, not back. Feel the whole of the foot absorbs your weight. You are trying to not favor the heel nor favor the ball of the foot, the weight is right in the center of the foot.

In the bottom part of the plié movement where the knee is flexed, alignment is also determined by directing proprioceptive attention to the origins of the movement. For example, beginning the movement by tucking (or rolling their pelvis anteriorly) can change the kinetic forces acting upon the feet, knees, pelvis, and lower back. The same applies for the opposite action of pushing the pelvis backward. The plié is a deceptively simple movement that often becomes more difficult according to the demands of alignment, the constraints of technique, and the role it plays in conjunction with many other dance steps.

**Describing Skeletal Movement While Looking for Precise Sensations**

Often I would describe movement skeletally by asking students to search for sensations in the movement of their skeleton. The following passage from our field notes is from the beginning of the dance technique section of class in preparation for a spinal roll commencing with the head and upper back. I was using the constraint of the arms behind the head in exploring flexion and extension of the upper spine:

Just bring your hands behind your head and ask yourself: What happens when I bend forward, look at the floor, and bring my elbows forward? As you bend, what happens in your collarbones? As you roll forward, can you feel that the front of your ribs soften and that your collarbones move a little bit towards each other? As you look up, can you feel that the shoulder blades slide down the back and the collarbones open?

Here I wanted to introduce the idea that the thorax was mobile and that the scapula can slide over the back surface of the ribs in both flexion and extension movements. It is often the case in dance that the thorax and scapula become very fixed. While necessary at times, this fixation is not always useful.

**Repeating Movement to Obtain a Clearer Sensation**

Another way I encouraged awareness was to ask students to make distinctions about their movement based on their own understanding and sensations. I used repetition to clarify sensation and proprioception, rather than to learn the mechanics of the movement. In this passage, which is a continuation of the exercise quoted above, the action of looking up and down was repeated to emphasize the sensation of the movement:

With your elbows wide, looking at the ceiling, feel what movement is available for you in your upper back. What happens between your shoulder blades? Feel what happens in your
Through repetition I wanted students to make increasingly fine distinctions about a simple movement and, by using the constraint of the arms behind the head, invite attention to movement in their shoulder girdle.

**Self-Questioning**

In my endeavor to bring learners’ awareness to their individual processes of movement I would ask questions throughout the class. Each day the class would evolve from a specific theme introduced during the Awareness Through Movement section and threaded through the other three sections: transition to standing, dance technique exercise, and dance technique combination. In the following questions my aim was to connect the themes from the ATM section to the transition to standing section. The theme was the relationship of the abdomen, spine, and pelvis to walking:

Make an observation about your walking. Do you feel heavy? Do you feel light? Think of a quality that describes your walking this morning...What is the relationship of your abdomen to your legs?

By asking questions to bring students' awareness from general observations to a specific relationship between their abdomen, legs, and pelvis in a simple activity such as walking, I endeavored to cue the idea that we were trying to bring the sensations from the ATM into specific actions. Later in the week I focused on how we use this support in a more complex activity such as a dance phrase, requiring fast off-balance movement. In this instance I wanted to identify the relationship between the ATM section and a challenging phrase of movement we had already learned.

It is not about lifting your leg. It is about finding how your abdomen can support the flexion of your hip... So I am interested in how we use our abdomen to find not only stability, but also a moving stability. So stability does not need to be locked but it can become dynamic. If the abdomen is a part of the movement of the leg then we can do things like this (quick demonstration of a jumping phrase from the previous class). We are using the muscles to support the skeleton.

While this quotation is from the beginning part of the class I wanted to draw attention to how we had approached this dynamic jumping phrase at the end of the previous class, and the relationship between searching for small initiations of movement in the ATM and the continuing development of these initiations within the more dynamic aspects of the class.

**Discussion about Awareness Through Movement**

Together, the dancers, Sylvie, and I entered into these classes to realize individual intentions and goals. Our abilities to realize our intentions, however, were influenced by our previous teaching and learning experiences. Goldfarb (1990) defines the relationship between learning, intention, and action as that moment when the learners' “ability to carry out an intention [to act] changes” (p. 106). But what factors contribute to our ability to realize our intentions in dance? I believe our ability to carry out intention depends on our awareness and knowledge of different ways we can achieve our goals. The data
demonstrated that one of my strategies to facilitate awareness was to direct students' attention to their sensation of movement. Our ability to direct attention is, however, limited. As Maturana suggests, “…our perception is fundamentally constrained by the limits of our nervous system” (in Goldfarb, 1990, p. 35). Thus, our awareness is limited to what we are able to hear, see, and sense, within ourselves and in the world around us. Feldenkrais (1972) saw awareness as the moment between intention and action. According to Feldenkrais this moment provides us with the opportunity to decide on an appropriate choice of action from a number of possible solutions to a task.

In these dance classes, my intent was to facilitate movement awareness. When teaching I am looking for ways to provide verbal, visual, and sensory cues to assist learners to construct meaning from their past and present kinesthetic experience to achieve new goals during the lessons. By kinesthetic experience I mean the sense and feeling of our body in motion (Berleant, 1970). In teaching and learning dance our visual sense has traditionally been the predominant avenue for learning. One learning problem for both teacher and student is how a student can translate what he/she sees into kinesthetic sensation. Goldfarb (1990) argues “the most direct way to describe a movement goal is to describe it in terms of kinesthetic experience, in terms of what the mover must feel in order to perform the task” (p. 138). Sensory feedback from our joints, muscles, tendons, and vestibular apparatus gives us qualitative and quantitative information such as effort, tension, direction, vibration, joint angles, velocity, and balance. All these factors inform our kinesthetic sense (Goldfarb, 1990).

Conclusion on Teaching Practice

Through analyzing the data I was able to reveal the different ways I encouraged exploration of kinesthetic distinctions to direct attention to “the feeling of what happens,” to borrow Damasio’s phrase (1999). I realized through this research that what was missing from my own education as a dance student was my feeling of how I was moving. My sense is that by introducing new ways of teaching and learning within the established tradition of dance technique class I provided an opportunity for a change in perspective to occur. The first part of this change for me is a new understanding of my own teaching process.

A Last Note

This study focused on the experience of the teachers. However, we fully recognize the need to address the students’ experience since how one teaches is inseparable from how one learns. Teachers and students together create the conditions in which knowledge is constructed and acquired. This is the direction for a follow-up study that we are currently developing. How do students experience the integration of somatics into the dance class? How do students encourage or prevent the transformation of the dance culture? Those are important questions to ask to get a better understanding of somatic/dance integration and a wider resonance of the Feldenkrais Method as an element in dance education.
References


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Bio
Warwick Long, M. Ph. Ed., is a Certified Feldenkrais Practitioner and holds a masters degree in physical education. In his professional life as a dance performer educator, dancer, and choreographer, he works with Fortier Danse-Creation in Montreal and teachers on the dance programs at the Université du Québec à Montréal and Concordia University, Montreal where his practice is focused on the integration of somatic education and contemporary dance technique. Warwick has taught extensively in University and professional settings in Australia, Brazil, Canada, New Zealand, London, and New York. and is currently in preparation for a new performance work in 2004.

Sylvie Fortin (Ph.D.) is professor in the Dance Department of the Université du Québec à Montréal. Her research interests focus on somatic education, research methodology, and dance medicine. She has published numerous articles in scientific journals and has presented her work at conferences in Canada, England, United States, Australia, Germany, Portugal, Brasil, New Zealand, and France. She is currently responsible for the development of a health center for artists at the Université du Québec à Montréal and she just received a three-year grant to direct a multidisciplinary research project on somatic education in dance and health.