

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

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From the assumption: “Rhythm is the order in the movement” (Plato), my work is grounded on the organizational, expressive and interactive aspects of rhythm. Inspired by and recognizing rhythmical functions of orbiting planets, cycles of seasons, weather, and also the rhythmic adaptation of animal and vegetation to seasonal changes, I find that rhythm is organizational in nature.

Elaborating on the preverbal developmental level of some Dance/Movement Therapy patients, and the attempts of the Dance/Movement Therapist to make contact and achieve understanding with a patient on a movement level, I find that concepts of attunement (Stern et al.) also provide a framework within which Therapist and Patient can become highly emotionally sensitive to each other, and whereby significant changes can occur in the individual’s rhythm that can affect total functioning.

First, there are basic attributes of rhythm (pulse, pattern, and perseveration) that can be useful in helping to induce emotional attunement. During a movement interaction between Therapist and Patient on a one to one basis, investigations made by Stern et al. provide a reasoned view that matching the intensity, timing, and shape as found in general features of a behavior can facilitate an ‘optimal range’ of attention and arousal in the patient which, at the same time, can provide the basis for expressive interaction to occur. I have found that rhythm can also help to regulate the movement interaction, and, in fact, determine the inner feeling tone of the dyadic mutual feedback system; the shared dance. Second, Stern also finds attunement a pre-cursor for all further relationship development. He conceptualizes it in terms of a hierarchical structure in which smaller units of behavior combine to form larger organizational units enabling the expansion of the social interaction process initiated by the therapeutic encounter.

At a group level rhythm can also act as a “unifier”. Because regulation of social interaction can be likened to an orchestra with the different instruments interacting in a harmonious rhythmic combination of sounds that the listener perceives organized as music, I found that concepts from Condon (1966) and Scheflen (1982) provided a way of understanding interactional rhythms in any shared activity with implications on the establishment and effectiveness of communication in a therapeutic context. On the one hand, the prior mentioned investigators have described in detail how human interaction appears to be fundamentally rhythmic in nature. In fact, descriptions of human interaction in the vocal/sound/music domain stress the significance of physiological aspects involved in the embodiment or manifestation of rhythm. Whether it is through drum beats, changing facial expressions, vocalizations, or movements, range of notes, volume, pitch, quality, duration, range of props or instruments, rhythm can be useful in helping to induce a phenomenon known as synchrony or “entrainment”: The alignment of a body’s rhythmic pulse to an externally imposed rhythm, Condon (1966). On the other hand, understanding the phenomenon of shared rhythmicity as a “co-active” process

provided a way of understanding movement interaction as the underlying organizational structure necessary in order to attain a coordinate interaction.

The therapist as a co-participant within the therapeutic process on an individual or group basis, can enable behavioral changes to occur. From the perspective of therapeutic movement interventions, it is in this system of shared ongoing events that the co-organization will enable the re-choreographic process to take place. Furthermore, the active co-regulation and organization of rhythmic body movement occurs not only at the physical level, but also at the emotional and cognitive levels as well. Third, it is through synchronized or entrained experiences within the safety that the therapeutic relationship provides, that the rhythmic organization can affect the alignment of a body's rhythmic pulse bringing about system pacing, paced reflexive physical movement responses, modification of body tempi, and many aspects of physiologic operations that impact upon functional adaptation.

In principle, the body experience utilized by Dance/Movement Therapy promotes the expression, communication and transformation of emotion. In this regard, Chodorow (1991) emphasizes the body/mind relationship and attributes to the affects (i.e. emotions) the bridge between body and mind. She also identifies the emotions as the source of dance/movement, and the effect that dance/movement has on the emotions at all ages and developmental levels. Chodorow's view is supported by the psychology of C.G. Jung whose view of the emotions, not only as the foundation of the psyche, but as the source of psyche energy as well, provide me a more differentiated understanding of the movement impulse, the fundamental rhythmic pulse as the unit from which relations can be set up, built, and expand. From this perspective, I have also found in Jung's concept of emotion an asset in understanding play and the imagination as fundamental to the process of modulation and transformation of the primal, innate affects. Accordingly, Jung's concept of imagination in action provided a way of understanding the meaning of the symbolic actions, images, and the whole transformation process.

In addressing clinical issues, Kestenberg (1975) outlines the sequential processes of psychomotor development as it correlates with psychosexual development (Freud, 1965) together with systems of Movement Analysis (Laban & Lawrence, 1947). Concepts from the Kestenberg Movement Profile (KMP) provide me a way of perceiving, understanding, talking about rhythm and personality, and also a way of formulating working hypotheses with clinical populations of all ages: Assessing the progression of motor development, synthesizing nonverbal behavior with psychological theory and interpretation, and progressing developmentally, that is, starting at the patient's physical and emotional level and provide experiences that foster growth and extension of self.

Working with the idea of rhythm, the body becomes the focus, and the structure of my D/M T framework. It is through the process of developing the therapeutic relationship that D/M T becomes a rhythmic choreographic process of "entrained"/"synchronized" activities, in order to attain the harmonization of bodily and adaptation rhythms. It is from the developing movement dialogue, action and rest combined in a single experience, that the rhythmic process bears the synthesis

of inclusion, integration, balance and expansion toward the spectrum of consciousness and development. As expressive patterns increase in organization, it becomes possible to increase the motivation to share the experience with others.