

Robin Hood in dialogue with the King: evidencing Dance Movement Psychotherapy in the 21st Century

Dr. Bonnie Meekums

Evaluation in the art therapies: best practice

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What is DMP?



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Previously called Dance Movement Therapy:

‘the psychotherapeutic use of movement and dance through which a person can engage creatively in a process to further their emotional, cognitive, physical and social integration’ (ADMT UK 1997).



- DMP, like dance, has been denigrated due to sexist and heterosexist discourses and a collective denial of embodied wisdom / expression.
- Dance and DMP may be seen as frivolous / non serious, and devalued compared to verbal therapies that emphasize the dominant discourse of rational thought.
- Most DMP practitioners do not come from science backgrounds and so may feel intimidated by scientific inquiry.
- Scientific forms of evidence crucial in establishing statistically significant causal relationships.

Dance Movement Psychotherapists: men (and women) in tights



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- Recent rapprochement between mainstream psychotherapy disciplines and body orientated psychotherapies (e.g. Corrigan, Payne and Wilkinson 2006) suggests that the body is being taken more seriously.
- Scientific study offers powerful evidence for DMP:
 - Importance of mirroring in empathy (Schefflen 1964)
 - Non-verbal aspects of infant-caregiver relating important in infant self-regulation through brain hard wiring (Schore 2001).
 - Movement has complex and positive psychobiological effects (exercise research).
 - More recently: discovery of mirror neurones opens up research potential of movement mirroring e.g. in autism research (see Iacoboni 2008)

Splitting and projection



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- ❑ DMP researchers are in danger of projecting their discomfort onto what they see as an external authority (which privileges RCT evidence as King)
- ❑ The King of RCTs becomes more like the Sheriff of Nottingham
- ❑ We reconstruct scientific inquiry as powerful, alienating, bad
- ❑ We act like Outlaws:
 - Congratulating ourselves on being resistant
 - Writing reports that will not be read by anyone other than our own kind
 - Using coded language that means very little to the uninitiated
- ❑ Or we try to ape the King, using alienated third person language alongside quasi-experimental designs, in an attempt at serf-like appeasement but without considering what questions are relevant

The DM P relationship with the king?



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The challenge



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- ❑ How do we maintain our identity as dance movement psychotherapists and continue to do high quality research whilst also engaging with the real world of evidence that is meaningful to a wider audience?
- ❑ Can we continue to do research that acknowledges our strengths in embodied knowing and subjectivities, whilst also demonstrating causality through statistical evidence?
- ❑ Can we also do this without losing our ability to work ethically and sensitively, listening to the stories of both our clients and practitioners about their lived body experiences?
- ❑ Can we address our splitting and projection, give up our Outlaw status, and request an audience with the King?

Implications of the challenge



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- We need a united research community.
- We need to learn and use the language of others.
- We need to work to our strengths within collaborative and multi-disciplinary research groups that can address important research questions (including ones about causality and efficacy).
- We need to use methodologies that address those questions.
- We need to use existing evidence (e.g. from neuroscience), to build robust studies.

What we have done so far



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Dr. Karkou and BM:

- ✓ Have set up a Practice Research Network to encourage practitioners to get involved in research
- ✓ Are working on at least one systematic review of the evidence for DMP (using also existing research registers set up by VK)
- ✓ Will use this evidence to apply for funds to conduct an RCT
- ✓ Will continue to write for high impact peer reviewed journals, speak at conferences and so on

COLLABORATION IS THE WAY FORWARD

- DMP already holds a lot of evidence for its potential, through scientific research in other disciplines.
- We do not wish to ignore the powerful practice based evidence that can be gathered through the narratives of service users and others, whether or not this constitutes 'evidence' within the EBP paradigm.
- But we do want to design viable studies for EBP and engage critical friends.
- We are both in the position of having experience in attracting funds for research.

We are ready to put our heads together and seek an audience with the King

References



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