

**Art as a Means to Locate and Disrupt Embodied Prejudice with Emotional
Sensations on the Body: The artful and transformative telling of stories of
stigma and HIV**

by

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Abstract

This arts-based inquiry investigates how the arts can challenge the embodiment of prejudice and bias by its ability to inspire, through sensations on the body, a transformative empathetic experience in an individual. I located implicit bias through sensation awareness on my body by accessing associated embodied memories and disrupted such bias with the deliberate intervention of art imagery. I then, collaborated with a former dancer living with HIV and followed my felt sensation responses to artfully tell of her experiences with stigma using dance to create two videos that inspire transformative, empathetic sensation responses that disrupt my learned embodied resistances around HIV and help me better understand her experience.

Through this research I learned what it means to be an artist researcher in an artistic endeavour of inquiry in the receiving and telling of difficult stories. Engaging through sensation awareness as inquiry, meaning-making and storytelling is an emergent reciprocal process of listening, receiving and offering. Remaining open to receive sensations on my body required that I be attentive to the storyteller throughout the creative process.

Keywords: embodied prejudice, implicit bias, stigma, transformative learning, HIV, somatic, sensation, emotion construction

Dedication

I would like to dedicate this thesis to my wife, Ana Bela. Not only has she made this degree possible with her support, encouragement and sacrifice, but it was her brilliant idea for me to create a film about HIV that can create a positive impact on the world. My heartfelt thanks and love to her.

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Table of Contents

Approval	ii
Ethics Statement.....	iii
Abstract.....	iv
Dedication.....	v
Acknowledgements.....	vi
Table of Contents.....	vii
Introduction.....	1
<i>Chapter 1</i> Generating Emotions out of Movement and Posture, or Merely the Sensations of Emotion: a performative inquiry	10
Defining Emotion.....	12
Performative Inquiry.....	14
Transformative Psychosomatic Moment	14
The Franklin Method™ as a Tool to Sense the Soma	17
Psyche to Soma.....	18
Soma to Psyche.....	19
Assignment 1 – Solo	20
Assignment 2 – The Duet	24
Assignment 3 - The Second Solo.....	31
Embracing an Integrated Mind and Body.....	34
<i>Chapter 2</i> Disrupting Embodied Prejudice Through Art and the Moving Image....	37
Embodied Writing to Discover Sensations Associated with Prejudice and Vulnerability	39
Images that Produce Solid Reactions.....	42
Images that Produce Fluid Reactions.....	43
Juxtapositions of Images that Produce Fluid and Solid Reactions	44
Images That Produce Both Fluid and Solid Reactions	44
Implicit Bias, Hidden Prejudice.....	45
My Sensation Reactions Are Influenced by Learned, Embodied Experiences	49
Body Sensations Reveal What Is There, Not What Is True or Just	51
Locating Embodied Prejudice by the Moving Image: The Charles Weekes Video	53
Experiments in Disrupting Embodied Prejudice.....	54
My Position as Artist Researcher.....	57
Interpreting Mr. Weekes Through My Body.....	57
<i>Chapter 3</i> Stories of Stigma and HIV: Using arts-based practices to inspire new ways of thinking and new behaviours	59
Storytelling and Dialectic	61

Storytelling as a means to empathetic understanding	61
Meaning making and a new dialectic	63
The Interviews	66
Refining the Stories	70
I invite Shelly into the editing process	74
Shelly’s compassion for her ex-partner is what gives the story’s message its power	76
The emergent qualities of the editing process	77
The Scripts	79
Shelly video 1	79
Shelly video 2	86
Production Week	92
Generating movement in the studio	92
The video interview	97
The Music	99
The Video Shoot	102
A moment of magic	103
The Video Editing Process	105
Editing the video interview	105
Attaching the dance images	106
Inviting Emergent Elements by Design	109
A second edit	109
Chapter 4 The Shelly Videos: Artifacts of Artful Embodiment	113
Video 1. The Betrayal Was to the Bone	113
Video 2. The Heart Is a Reversible Organ	113
Chapter 5 Open Heart Dialogue	114
Storytelling Is a Reciprocal Activity for the Teller and the Listener	114
Sensation Awareness as a Means of Communication	115
Creating the Videos Was a Reciprocal Activity Between Us	118
My Responsibility as an Artist	121
Designing the possibility of emergent elements	122
Epilogue	125
Resources	128
References	130

Introduction

I am a dancer. I have been one for three decades. In the beginning, I dedicated myself to sculpting and training my body to do what others asked of it in their choreographies; then much later, I toiled to make my body receptive and able to convey what was meaningful to me in my choreographies. To live my life like this forced me to come face to face with my body, its facility and its limitations. With my attention focused so intensely on my physical body, I began to attribute the moods and temperaments and the great range of joys and sorrows I experienced on stage and in the dance studio as originating from my body. I developed a perspective that derived from a career focused on the body, and I carried it into the rest of my life, moving through the world as a body in space. My dancer's body became the interface between me and life.

My performing career came to an end and seemed to threaten how I would continue to relate to the world. Dancing for the sake of dancing was no longer enough; my body could not sustain the rigour, and I wanted more from dance. For the first time, I wanted dance to provide for my family more than it had, and I wanted to build something that I could do well into my old age. As a dancer who no longer danced, I needed to re-imagine myself in order to move forward without abandoning all I had learned and become. I wanted to reach beyond the restrictions of the form of performance-based dance to reach a wider audience than dance had previously provided me.

I also needed to experience how art could benefit someone other than myself. After a lifetime of nurturing myself as an artist, I was compelled to put the gifts I had earned to the service of others. I had choreographed for film in the past and knew I wanted to return

to this work, so when my wife mentioned I make a film telling the stories of those living with human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), I immediately began to dream again. Our family has been touched by HIV and the thought of creating films that might push back against the stigma faced by our loved ones seemed like an opportunity to, in some small way, make their journey easier. I was ready to test my conviction that art could make a difference to someone other than myself. I knew I wanted to exercise my creative abilities in film and I had a subject I cared about. I started with the following questions:

Can the arts challenge embodied, prejudiced and biased positions that cause discriminatory behaviour? If prejudice and bias are learned and stored in the body, can the arts challenge these by creating new sensations experienced on the body? And can an artistic process guided by the sensations of the body portray a story of discrimination in a manner that invites an empathetic sensory response in the viewer which subverts biased and prejudiced embodied reactions?

I feel prejudice and bias on my body as a tightening of my chest. It feels like a solidifying of my exterior, like a breast plate that resists being touched by anything or anyone that would make me feel, hurt or wonder. When I encounter another person while in this state of bias, rather than letting myself experience them on my body, I hold them safely at bay.

This research is an arts-based inquiry that investigates how the arts can challenge the embodiment of prejudice and bias by its ability to inspire a transformative empathetic

experience in an individual. Throughout my inquiry, I listened to and followed the sensations on my body as a guide to create an open, sensorially responsive process in order to make two short art videos that invite an empathetic response to someone living with HIV who experiences discrimination and lives with stigma. The videos are meant to be experienced emotionally and sensorially on the body; my sensations informed my creative actions throughout, from the initial contact with the storyteller to the final art artifact.

The use of my body as a location of research in this project is supported by a rich field of somatic studies, where numerous scholars, researchers, dancers, dance therapists and movement-based somatic practitioners have explored how the body, soma and psyche work together. When I looked to my body's sensation reactions as a guide to identify my emotions and biases, I demonstrated Thomas Hanna's (1991) description of the body as more than "a passive, observable object but an experiencing, self-aware soma, a subject capable of acting upon itself" (Hanna, 1991). How my body sensations informed my process was constantly dependent upon, and demonstrative of, the interrelatedness of my soma and mind (Williamson, 2016; LaMothe, 2014; Halprin, 2002), and I looked to how my embodied experiences in the past and present affected my behaviours and responses. This process is supported by Anna Williamson's description of embodiment as "intentionally enacted, impassioned by care, deeply observant of body experience, and attentive to the expressive sensibilities of the moving body" (Williamson, 2016, p. 277) and how focused awareness attuned to the body can provide a place to engage, reflect and contemplate on the stores of learned experience that is remembered in the body.

I continually concerned myself with the emotional responses uncovered by my somatic inquiry and their effect on me. Ultimately, the two videos' influence on my understanding of and empathy towards the storyteller was seated in the emotional responses they evoked in me. Anna Halprin (2002) describes how emotions interrelate with physical movement, how emotions can affect the way movement is performed or generated, and how changing her movements can change the way she feels (Halprin, 2002; LaMothe, 2014). Throughout this inquiry, I became aware of my emotional responses to my storyteller's movements and story through the awareness of my physical sensations. I used the sensations I felt to direct the creation and performance of the dance movement and my choices in the editing suite to produce for myself the most provocative emotional responses I could. My emotion responses became the action site for how I chose to interact with my collaborators and how I fostered the empathy necessary to expand my ability to receive what my interview subject, Shelly, shared with me and better understand her story.

The dancer's arms twitch as she contorts her face. I hear against the grinding guitar of the video's music score her words tell of quarantine and the fearful isolation suffered by the early victims of the acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS) epidemic. My body itches and writhes, my chest twists in knots, and I feel sick and restless as though fingers turn and tangle through my internal organs.

In my research and in teaching dance, I analyze how my somatic responses to the movements of others are activated on my body, informed through the works of Vittorio Gallese (2001), Antonio Damasio and Kaspar Meyer (2008) and others from the field of

neuroscience I also draw upon the field of emotion theory as described by Carrol Izard (2009) and emotion construction theory as described by Lisa Feldman Barrett (2017) to analyze how I interpreted and made meaning of the emotional impact of my sensations.

In Chapter One, a revised version of an article recently published in the *Journal of Theatre, Dance and Performance Training* (Kilpatrick, 2017), I discuss how emotional states are learned and recorded in the body as embodied emotional events during a lifetime of emotional and socio-cultural experiences. The sensation(s) experienced can be accessed later by recreating or witnessing similar movements. In a movement class I taught to post-secondary theatre students, I investigated how emotional states could be accessed by movements and postures with an increased awareness of body sensation. We honed the awareness of our body sensations through lectures and exercises that improved the biomechanics of our movement. Then, in a series of movement studies we discovered how movements and postures could recall in performance emotional states from previously embodied events that contained similar movements and postures. In a movement self-study, I describe the experience of recalling a previously embodied event of anger: I felt my muscles contract through my torso to my forehead, my breathing became shallow and my focus narrowed in the familiar sensations of an anger response as I rocked my tightly held pelvis from side to side. I identified the difference between a recalled emotionally embodied event and an original emotional event by my lucid ability to calmly and critically observe each sensation, which was so different from the flush of anger that normally overtakes me when I lose my temper.

Once I established that learned, embodied, emotional experiences could be accessed and recreated in the present, I looked at how physical sensations could be used to

locate my embodied prejudices and how art might be used to disrupt the learned sensations with new sensations. In Chapter Two, I investigate how embodied sensory responses could be accessed by looking at images. I isolated images that evoked sensations that resembled biased and vulnerable states.

The physical sensation of vulnerability in my body feels like movement. Like a churning, seething tide of liquid energy travelling in and out of the centre of my chest. At its most violent, it is accompanied by waves of anxiety. When it is benign, it is fluid and porous. My chest feels receptive and is accompanied by feelings of compassion.

My inquiry revealed how implicit bias can be experienced unawares and affect my interpretation of an image negatively. I found a video interview of a street person who described his struggles with addiction and poverty and discovered I experienced a resistant embodiment to him, despite my desire to be sympathetic. I then, directly investigated how art could disrupt my learned biased sensations by inserting images that created sensations associated with vulnerability. After strategically inserting footage of dance throughout the interview, my resistant sensation responses were replaced by fluid ones that caused me to experience his interview in an empathetic and emotionally open state.

In the third chapter, I tell the story of Shelly, a dancer who faces stigma. Telling her Story in an artful way disrupts the embodied prejudices that instigate discriminatory behaviours against her with empathetic sensation responses. I created two ten-minute dance videos that tell her stories of stigma and discrimination while living with HIV.

I'm nervous, I just met Shelly and after some small talk we begin the interview. I want her to feel comfortable enough to share her story with me, but the churning in my stomach, the clenching of my feet against the floor, and the electric anxiety I felt throughout my torso tell me how uncomfortable I am. I am worried I won't get a story I can put on video. I fret about not knowing what to say next, and where to direct the conversation and I have become more concerned about my needs than what Shelly was saying.

I was guided by my sensation responses, the neuro-receptive sensations that cause or are caused by my emotional responses as felt on my body, throughout the project. From the initial interview when Shelly first shared her stories the active awareness of my physical sensations influenced how I designed and conducted the research. The way my body leaned in towards her, the warmth I felt below my skin, the porosity of my chest or the butterflies in my stomach and the dull, detached non-feeling of distraction were all sensations I felt while listening and being attentive, or failing to be so. They guided me to create a respectful space for the storyteller to intimately share her story. Plus, listening attentively with sense awareness helped me to realize how my ambitions and expectations for the videos influenced the way I conducted the interview and valued the answers to the research question. Once I let go of those expectations and valued what was shared, it became possible for my vision of the video project to expand and respond to the story before me.

In order to envision how to portray her story on video, I needed to relate it to my embodied history and translate it in a way that was meaningful to me. But I needed the storyteller's involvement to refine the message and help expand my capacity to understand

and relate to it. Our collaboration was necessary for me to learn how to include more of what was meaningful to Shelly in the videos.

I read an excerpt out loud from the text we had made of Shelly's story. It spoke of sailing and of her and her partner falling in love, and she begins to interpret her memory of the event through improvised dance movement. Her hand slowly caresses her face and lands upon her chest, it continues its circling motion until her chest begins to sway and sink under her hand. As I watch, my body too begins to sway, and I feel a soothing calm of nostalgia within me as though I remember the moment, too.

My sensory responses guided me to direct the storyteller to generate meaningful phrases of dance movement that provided sensory experiences in me. At the same time, her story included larger issues like the criminalization of HIV, or people's biases based on archaic impressions from the early AIDS epidemic that were important context for her story but interrupted the sensory experiences I felt from the personal events in her story and blocked my empathetic connection to her.

When we shot the dance studies, the camera amplified her movements to evoke stronger sensation responses in me. The more meaningful the movement was to her, the more her performance provoked my sensory responses. Once I assembled the footage in the editing suite, I could follow my sensation responses and decipher how it needed to be constructed to meaningfully tell the story. When I placed the sensation-provoking dance footage over the more political and less personal dialogue of the "larger issues", I discovered I was able to have sensation responses that allowed me to empathize with how

these issues affect her life over dialogue I previously could not feel sensations from. Her message became more meaningful to me because I could experience it in my body in an emotional, sensory way. The videos allowed me to relate to her by feeling, in a limited way, her experience in my body.

The two videos are presented in Chapter Four. The reader is invited to watch them in this order, after the description of the creative inquiry and process that produced them or they may be seen beforehand at the reader's pleasure.

The videos are designed to give the viewer a sensory experience of the storyteller's story. But the story had to translate through me, the artist, so I could translate my understanding of her experience on video. My capacity to embody her story needed to expand so that I could include more of what was meaningful to her. In the beginning, I could only relate her story through my limited embodied experience, so I designed a creative process for emergent elements to arise that I could not have conceived of on my own. The emergent elements were anything that was suggested or revealed from our activities that contributed to the process and were not pre-considered. I needed to create space for these elements to arrive through our collaboration and alone while I was editing, and I needed to be sensitive enough to recognize them when they appeared. The videos fulfilled my original vision for them in the most general sense of how they look and how they provoke sensations I can feel on my body, but they exceeded my expectations in what is included in the story and how the dance movements express that story. The emergent elements provided the nuance that allows the story to be told and received in a meaningful way.

Chapter 1

Generating Emotions out of Movement and Posture, or Merely the Sensations of Emotion: a performative inquiry¹

Many years ago, as a principal dancer for a ballet company, I was thick in the creation of a new ballet where my dance partner and I were the leads. Over, and over again, we pushed ourselves to master the moves, to make our connections seamless and true, and through toil and determination, to try to find an emotional narrative to cling to in the tangle of steps, lifts and gestures.

By this time, we had originated lead roles together in a number of ballets, and over the years, we had discovered the initial joys of dancing together, survived a period of time when we bickered and fought over every decision, and finally learned to trust one another enough to master gruellingly complex duets with impeccable precision. On this day, we took a moment to share what this new phrase of choreography meant to the emotional journey of our burgeoning characters.

My partner had imagined a running narrative to play through her head as she negotiated a virtuosic sequence of dance moves and described to me in precise detail what each step meant to her character's journey. I stared back at her blankly. I was stunned that she could do that. That she could think that many things while dancing such a difficult phrase of movement. To me, my partner was exhibiting super human strengths of mind and body, and I had nothing. Why hadn't I attached a complex character narrative to each

¹ The following is a version of a peer-reviewed article that was previously published in the *Journal of Theatre, Dance and Performance Training* (Kilpatrick, 2017).

step? Because the very thought of dancing that way made me ill, that's why. I had earlier decided that I would let the emotional journey come to me from the movements rather than decide what they would be and then try to chase them. But at this early stage of creation, I hadn't been in the movement long enough for much to arrive. For weeks I wrung my sweat and persistent determination out of each scene while waiting to feel emotions surface, all the while my partner tore through her creative process in her own bulldog way. I often wondered if I was playing a naive game and exposing myself to the risk of having shirked my work to be left on stage without having created a fully realized character. Then slowly and almost imperceptibly they arrived, emotions that seeped out of the musculature of my movements that I could sit in, or ride as I traversed the stage. Emotions that helped me experience the story I was trying to tell through my body, so I wouldn't have to act. I looked for them long enough that finally they found me.

“The more clearly you understand yourself
and your emotions, the more you become
a lover of what is.”

—*Baruch Spinoza*

In the winter of 2016, I embarked on a performative inquiry with seven post-secondary theatre students with the question, “How can I teach my students to create felt emotions from the sensations of physical movement and posture?” I hoped to share an important aspect of my creative process as a professional dancer. I had learned to notice how the movements I danced made me feel, and I could colour my emotional responses with my understanding of the story and my character’s intentions in order to be in an appropriate emotional state. While I experienced emotions driven by the physical sensations of my movement in performance, I had no idea if my creative process would translate to other bodies.

Defining Emotion

Carroll Izard (2009) defines emotion in his writing on emotion theory. Izard states that when we speak of emotions in everyday terms we are speaking of emotional schemas defined as “emotion interacting dynamically with perceptual and cognitive processes to influence mind and behaviour” (Izard, 2009, p. 8). He explains how the basic emotions of joy, sadness, disgust, anger, interest and fear are fully formed in us and always felt in the same way, but emotional schemas can be interpreted individually.

For all basic emotions, motivational and action processes occur in similar fashion across situations. Among emotion schemas, however, there are wide differences in motivational, cognitive, and action processes across individuals. The determinants of which particular emotion feeling and what cognitive content occurs in a specific emotion schema include individual differences, learning, culture, and the conceptual processes influenced by them (Izard, 2009, pp. 6–7).

Emotional feeling is a sensation – “emotion feeling is a phase of neurobiological activity that is sensed by the organism” (Izard, 2009, p. 5), – and it is through feeling that we consciously recognize emotion. Because emotional schemas occur when the felt basic emotions are perceived and interpreted through individually learned socio-cultural influences and experiences, Izard states, they can be activated and felt in myriad ways. For example, sadness still feels like sadness in an emotional schema involving sadness, but the context around how an emotional schema is triggered or experienced depends on the individual’s learned experience; thus, sadness can be interpreted as “sweet” when a child leaves home to go to college when college is understood as a positive step towards a full and independent life. My intent was to heighten my students’ awareness of their physical sensations to help them notice the emotional schemas that coincide with their sensations.

Performative Inquiry

Fels and Belliveau (2008) describe performative inquiry as an action site of research and learning that uses theatre practices to “bring to light new learning and understanding” (p. 12). They argue drama and other creative processes can unlock new ways for students and researchers to engage in a question that leads to new understandings; in this way, performative inquiry becomes an integral element in devising and implementing curriculum. I approached the classes as a performative inquiry in which the curriculum developed as we explored the question, “Can felt emotions be created by the sensations of physical movement and posture?” The concepts I introduced and how I presented them evolved in a series of physical explorations and movement compositions that focused our attention on physical sensations and the emotions that emerged.

Transformative Psychosomatic Moment

The focus of our investigation together was to create what I called transformative psychosomatic moments. I use the term “psychosomatic” to refer to experiences involving both the soma and the psyche, where the one affects the quality and function of the other, as opposed to, the medical definition that relates to physical dysfunctions born out of psychological causes. For my purposes, a transformative psychosomatic moment results in a visible transformation of movement quality and expressiveness.

One student lay face down and attempted to allow her arms to float off the floor. The effort of raising her arms above her prone body translated through the rest of her physique as tension that defied the illusion of floating. I

suggested she think of the bones inside her arms as lighter than air and that she allow the muscles around them to release so the bones could take flight. By placing her attention on a more specific point within her arms, together with the imagery of floating bones, her entire physique transformed. The tension throughout her body dissipated, her arms took on new quality of lightness and were able to achieve a greater range of movement. But beyond the biomechanical changes in her body, she moved with increased sensitivity and newfound subtlety, and her face relaxed into a subtler expression of her experience.

Each time a student experienced a transformative psychosomatic moment, his or her whole body appeared to be more integrated and coordinated in the movement. Body parts whose actions seemed isolated and predictable in their movements took on new, richer movement qualities that were integrally connected to the whole body. The movements connected naturally with the ones that came before and after, and through movement, they became more evocative of emotion or story. The students composed mostly abstract movements without literal suggestion of meaning, but as their awareness of sensation increased, the intensified experience of their physical bodies made them engaging to witness, thus encouraging those of us who watched to impose our own narrative on the movement.

The psychosomatic phenomenon I describe requires movements that are perceived in the body by the senses. The movements must be clear and specific enough to feel the targeted body part and allow the sensations to be actively interpreted by the psyche

(Fraleigh, 2015). The self-awareness, and the heightened attention required to perceive sensations in the soma, creates a whole-body experience that includes the psyche. In this way, working with imagery and body movement such as dance or creative movement allows the unconscious to become conscious (Fraleigh, 2015; Cancienne and Snowber, 2003; Frantzich and Fels, 2017). Similarly, dance therapy pioneer Mary Starks Whitehouse (Hendricks, 2009) would encourage students to let go of control and to “wonder about what wanted to happen.” Izard interprets Fraleigh’s description of the unconscious as a low-level awareness of phenomenal consciousness, “What may be unconscious is not the feeling but the perception of the feeling, and this lack of perception could account for the failure of the feeling to register in access consciousness” (Izard, 2009, p. 12). He continues describing how awareness of phenomenal consciousness prolongs emotion feeling and can influence thought and action. “A principal reason why they can endure more or less indefinitely is because their continually interacting cognitive component provides a means to regulate and utilize them” (Izard, 2009, p. 9).

Alexander Technique founder, F. Mathias Alexander stated, “It is impossible to separate mental and physical processes in any form of activity” (Hanlon-Johnson, 2000, 41). For the past 150 years, North American scholars and practitioners of movement therapy techniques to heal the body, spirit and mind have worked to undo the Cartesian split of body and mind to work with it as whole and integrated (p. 41). The field of dance, especially through the art of dance improvisation, exemplifies how the mind can affect what movements occur, while the body concurrently suggests states of mind and the initiations of new movements seamlessly (LaMothe, 2014).

Dance improviser Ruth Zaporah discovered that listening to the sensations of her body freed her mind from the need to create. The integration of her physical experience with her imagination and inspiration created a symbiotic relationship of soma and psyche, which allowed the content of her improvisations to arise, moment by moment, from her actions (Zaporah, 2003; Morrow, 2011). By heightening our awareness of physical sensations more precisely, my intention was for us to also heighten our awareness of low-level emotions, so the emotions would influence movement choices and emotional experiences. The method relied on the integration of psyche and soma in order to make this connection; however, it was still to be determined whether sharpening our awareness of physical movement would actually influence our emotional responses.

The Franklin Method™ as a Tool to Sense the Soma

The Franklin Method is a systematic approach to making changes to the body by embodying optimal biomechanical function through the use of imagery and functional anatomical understanding as an intervention that adjusts habits of thinking and promotes new connections between the brain and body (Franklin, 2012). I have applied the Franklin Method to my dancing and discovered my movements became fluid and integrated in ways that allow me to execute difficult, virtuosic movements with greater ease. The method provides an imagery toolbox designed to help the practitioner feel specific body parts such as bones in a particular movement to be able to envision better biomechanical function in the targeted movement, and to effectively create a positive change in the execution of that movement. The imagery tools include positive self-talk, envisioning correct anatomical movement, using metaphor to enhance the ability to image and affect movement,

proprioceptive tapping to stimulate the neural connections between body parts and the brain and Mental Simulation Movement (Franklin, 2012). I used the imagery techniques [AM1]to help the students feel their “bone rhythms,” described by the Franklin Method as movements of bones in relation to other bones while in motion. The bone rhythms helped explain the optimal biomechanics for a movement, and the image techniques encouraged the students to feel their bones in movement, which helped them work towards improving their movement mechanics. Over the course of the semester, I taught the ideal function and movement of the pelvic bones, spinal column including the vertebral joints, disks and select ligaments along the spinal column, as well as the function of the shoulder girdle, as explained by the Franklin Method (Franklin, 2012). Together we increased our range of motion by modelling proper biomechanical function using imagery, which in turn heightened the awareness of physical sensations in our bodies in movement. The precision required to focus on individual bones as they relate to other bones in movement strengthened our ability to concentrate on our bodies.

When I implement the Franklin techniques on myself, I experience a feedback loop, which I made use of to help us sense the bones of our joints in motion: the better the joints function, the greater range they can move in; the more they move, the easier it is to sense them; and the more they can be sensed, the better the joints function.

Psyche to Soma

I began by teaching the Franklin Method imagery tools of positive self-talk, anatomical information and metaphorical imagery (Franklin, 2012). We used these tools to understand how the mind can positively or negatively affect the function of the body’s biomechanics.

For example, I explained the anatomical function of elevating the scapula along the ribcage and then explored how that information combined with metaphors like soaping up the scapula so it could slide smoothly or having them imagine smells or memories that were pleasing to them increased the scapula's function (Franklin, 2012). Our experiences of sliding the shoulder blade became more enjoyable and easier to accomplish with an increased range of motion. The more emotional the image became, in most cases, the greater range of movement they could achieve and the better the movement felt. Franklin proposes a sensory feedback loop where the images in your mind affect the sensations in your body, "which in turn feed your thoughts and mental pictures." The more powerful the imagery, the greater affect it has on the function of the body (Franklin, 2012).

Soma to Psyche

In my classes I want my students to learn by somatic experience. I introduce ideas and concepts in ways that they can feel on their bodies through movement, and I repeatedly give them opportunities to express what they notice and judge for themselves how the concepts relate to their own bodies. I aspire for movement to feel good and be healthy for their bodies in whatever state or condition they are in but point out how misalignment and tension can reveal biomechanical imbalances that affect their emotional states.

I introduced how movements and postures can affect our psyches by paying attention to how different movements and postures made us feel. We explored how tapping the surfaces of the body heightens the proprioceptive connections between the brain and body surfaces and how heightened proprioception increased efficient movement and muscle function. I also pointed out how the proprioceptive awareness of our bodies affected

our mental states. It was an opportunity to experience how neural signals between the brain and the sense organs could travel in either direction (Damasio and Meyer, 2008). We experienced this by tapping one side of our head and face and noticed how we became mentally discombobulated, contrasted by the clarity of mind and grounded presence we experienced after tapping both sides. We then explored how moving with healthy biomechanical function gave us the same sense of mental clarity and alertness compared to the mental sluggishness and depressed emotional states experienced in poor biomechanical postures or functioning movements.

I repeatedly pointed out how the psyche and soma were constantly integrated to affect our experience within our bodies as we played with mental imagery like imagining space between the ribcage. Or from without the body like a wave washing up from behind and sloshing the shoulder blades down, around and forward as our arms swung upward, or how our movement and posture became protectively restricted while imagining moving in a dangerous space. I constantly asked the students to voice their physical experiences so I could monitor what they were experiencing and understanding. They were immediately able to determine changes in ease of movement and range of motion in their bodies, but when I directed their attention towards changes in their mental state, their contributions became more vague or tangential.

Assignment 1 – Solo

I asked the students to create a solo movement composition out of a series of whole body movements derived from the biomechanical information and imagery they had learned in class. I specifically asked them to be aware of the functionality and the sensations of their

physical movements. Then I encouraged them to be aware of how their movement choices made them feel and to follow these impulses to let a character or series of emotional states unfold, whatever narrative resulted, however abstract or non-linear, that was born out of their psychosomatic responses to movement. When I assigned the task, I had visions of my dance students deeply exploring the way their bones and joints moved. I had hoped that this kind of focus would intensify the awareness of their body in movement, and in turn, the physical sensations, emotions, ideas or possible narratives they felt would inform what they should do next. My hope was for them to develop an emotional narrative and sequence of movements revealed from within their bodies, rather than imposed from preconceived ideas. Such ideas are essentially those that are thought of first and then physically acted out. For example, a student decides first to get up off the floor and walk towards the ballet barre on the wall and then performs the act. Instead, I hoped to see the way the student came off the floor be based on what she experienced in her shoulders the moment before how these movements instigated other body parts to move her across the floor, and finally how her body placed its weight against the ballet barre as a result of her momentum. In both scenarios the same event occurred, but one event contained a succession of noticeable felt experiences, and the other, with its preconceived idea, missed the string of connections by concentrating solely on the end result.

Once they got started, I saw many preconceived ideas. At the end of each class, the students informally presented their work in progress for discussion. I asked them questions designed to uncover how they were making their movement choices and repeatedly asked if the movements were generating emotions within them. They all had interesting and unique strategies for creating movement and some of them even involved utilizing the

biomechanic information they had learned, but they could not describe their soma-to-psyche experience. They would talk about the movement in general terms, about images they applied to movements or stories in their head they were using to *inform* the movement, but I never heard about images, sensations or motivations that resulted *from* the movement. While I had not yet learned to ask the right questions in the right ways, I was beginning to wonder if I was asking for something too esoteric or expected too specific a response.

By the assignment's final presentation, I had coached each of them to experience at least one psychosomatic transformative moment like the one I described earlier. One student became noticeably more engaged by this process. He managed to grasp the transformative moment we identified and applied the process to each of his movement sequences. When he applied the suggestion to let the weight of his femoral head drop into gravity during a sequence of leg swings, his range of motion improved, as did his balance, but interestingly, his face relaxed into an expression of the experience of his physical movement. He described the moment as fun, and it focused our attention beyond the physical execution of the movement and towards an emotional state. Another student's ability to remain engaged in her solo was more sporadic as she found only brief moments of fully engaged embodied movement. Her embodied moments came from large forceful movements that required intensified attention to execute them but were lost once her focused attention waned in less forceful movements. Her movements did not speak with the same complexity and emotional suggestion as the other student because her focus in her body was too general. The embodied moments were engaged ones, but brief and interrupted and not the same as the transcendent moments of other students who appeared to be transformed by sensing what was happening inside their bodies. The embodied

engagement of the performer affected how intently we observed them. Most of us began to recognize universal emotions like joy, curiosity, frustration or anger suggested by the solos, but often we experienced different narratives or emotional journeys, and we all recognized a lack of engagement when the performers stopped sensing their bodies in movement.

I became discouraged by our post-presentation discussions and what I read in their reflective writings. I did not hear how movement inspired within them certain feelings, emotions or experiences, and at the time, I could not believe their failure to speak to emotions was because they did not feel anything. Their inability to speak to an emotional experience is supported by Izard when he says:

Feeling an emotion does not guarantee that it will be labeled, articulated, or sensed in reflective consciousness or at a high level of awareness. The level of awareness of an emotion feeling depends in part on its intensity and expression, and after language acquisition, on labeling, articulating, and acknowledging the emotion experience. These capacities, critical to personality and social development, depend on the neural activity and resultant processes involved in symbolization and language (Izard, 2009, p. 6).

At the time, I began to question whether the psychosomatic experiences from my own dance career were too idiosyncratic to my experience and that perhaps the students' experience might be unique to mine. What was missing? Still, I implored them to be more attentive to their physical sensations and how those sensations made them feel.

Assignment 2 – The Duet

As the students worked on their solo assignment, I wondered how to help them have deeper experiences with sensation and what to do next to further our investigation. I realized that the next step would be for them to recognize the same articulations, dynamics and movement qualities they were learning to feel in their body on another body. I partnered them up and asked them to create a movement duet where, again, they would generate the movement by sensing their own bodies and respond to the movements and sensations they saw in their partner. I encouraged them to allow the movement they felt and observed to suggest emotions and the movements to come next. I had a clear aim of what I wanted them to achieve in the duet assignment, but I had no idea how to prepare them, so they could find it. Intuitively, I felt my way through a series of stages that sensitized the students to feel the affect of another body's influence on their own physical sensations.

I began by teaching them about tensegrity models as applied to structural systems of the body. A tensegrity model in the body is where the bones are supported by a network of ligaments and tendons that equally share tensile forces and are able to absorb and dissipate external forces equally throughout the system most efficiently (Franklin, 2012). To help them feel the tensile forces in their own bodies, I explained how ligaments and tendons support the bones of the hand. We gently pressed our hands against the floor to feel the tensegrity system absorb the force of pressure. When we released our hands from the floor, we noticed the elastic rebound as the bones bounced back in place. I then had them notice the different sensations of a rigid hand pressed into the floor, how its force transferred up into the arm or neck into a point of acute discomfort and how when released

it lacked any elastic rebound. The next step was to invite them to experience bio-tensegrity sensations caused by another body.

I asked two students to shake hands with elastic, pliable hands and again with rigid hands while the rest of us observed how the different actions translated through their bodies. I then had one shake a flexible hand with another's rigid hand, so we could observe, and they feel, how one person's physical quality could affect the body of another. Those observing began to see stories suggested by the physical actions, and those doing the actions described how their partner's rigidity would be taken on in their own body, or how their partner's pliability made it difficult to maintain rigidity. I then had the students repeat the process with an embrace to re-emphasize the concept. It was important that each student be able to experience the sensations in their bodies as well as witness the phenomena on other bodies, so, they could then recognize and interpret sensations inspired by the movements of their classmates.

There was one more leap necessary before we could begin working on the duets. I needed them to affect each other physically without physical contact. They needed to observe each other's bodies keenly while they worked, and they could not do so in such close proximity as holding hands or hugging.

I asked one of the students to enter the room with an easy, fluid and elastic chest, while the others noticed how his physicality made them feel at ease in

their bodies. I then asked him to enter the space with a rigid chest and we all felt our chests tense up and our breathing tighten as an automatic reaction. This enabled them to feel the effect of another body's physical state in their own body from a distance. From there I had a student enter the space, either rigid or fluid, while their partner was already in the space in their own fluid or rigid state and then asked them to improvise movement.

As we observed each pairing improvise we could see when their bodies were in dialogue and when their focus broke causing them to lose kinetic connection. They gradually progressed to a free-play, galumphing exploration of their physical sensations in response to what they read in each other's bodies (Nachmanovitch, 1990). When it worked, the improvisers were watching each other's bodies, reacting to what they saw and affecting theirs and the other's movement in solely kinetic ways. The conscious mind that judges and makes choices seemed to get out of the way and the dialogue between students was intimate, their movements and physiques were embodied naturally and evocative of numerous possible stories (Sheets-Johnstone, 2011, pp. 48–50).

They began work on the duets where one would move from the spine or pelvis and the other would use that as motivation for movement. We discovered they were significantly challenged to connect to their partner's spine when they couldn't see it. I will analyze this assignment through the lens of neuroscience to shed some light on the physiological interactions happening between the partners. Particularly, in the way a student's motor-sensor neurons fired upon seeing her partner in movement.

When one observes an action in another person the same neurons recruited to perform that action also fire in the observer's neural system, even when the observer does not perform any action in response (Gallese, 2001; Rizzolati and Craighero, 2004); therefore, when a student observed a movement in their partner's spine the mirror neurons in their spine would fire similarly. The mirror neuron system (MNS) generally functions to help interpret the motivation and intention behind other people's actions by experiencing that action in one's own body in order to relate it to and interpret it by similar previously experienced physical sensations (Gallese, 2001; Rizzolati and Craighero, 2004). In the duet assignment, the MNS facilitated an empathetic physical connection between students (Gallese, 2001).

In order to activate the mirror neurons in the observer, her partner's actions must be goal oriented, and the two students must share the same motor schemata (Gallese, 2001). The shared motor schemata consisted of the phenomenon of tensegrity and the movements of the spine and joints the students had become sensitive to, which then progressed into a free play of physical movements that they would recognize from their long personal histories of play and movement. They recognized the movement in their partner because their bodies were neurologically capable of similar movements, and their heightened awareness for recognizing movement in themselves and their partner allowed for subtler interactions between bodies.

However, seeing an action and embodying it through the mirror neuron system is not sufficient to create an action response. Damasio and Meyer explain, "If 'action understanding' is to occur by internal simulation, the process must enlist both motor and sensory systems in the brain" (Damasio and Meyer, 2008, p. 167). They go on to say,

“Rather, they must be acted on by other structures; and, just as importantly, but a fact generally neglected, mirror neurons must act on other structures” (Damasio and Meyer, 2008, p. 167). The physical experience of an event, the tensing of the chest, for example, involves multiple sensory experiences that signal between different areas of the brain:

The locations of sensory experience are called “convergence–divergence zones” (CDZs). These neural ensembles collect signals from separate sites, and signal back to those sites. When several signals converge on a CDZ, the ensemble creates an abstract record of the coincident activations — a memory trace, in other words (Damasio and Meyer, 2008, p. 168).

Therefore, the memory response to witnessing a tensed chest could include a spike in adrenaline, shortness of breath, clenched muscles around the thoracic, neck and jaw and an emotional association to the stimulus that prompted the event. When we observed a student walk towards us with a tense chest, the same mirror neurons fired in our bodies, but in order for an action response to occur, we needed to interpret that sensation by relating it to a similar physically recorded experience in our past (Damasio and Meyer, 2008). If past experience with a clenched chest involved a stress or fear stimulus, then some students may have felt anxiety as their chests automatically contracted in response. Others may have experienced irritation or defensiveness if they interpreted it as arrogance. Each variation would call up and instigate the corresponding physical responses associated to the embodied memory:

Mirror neurons correspond to non-local CDZs. Their connections to other CDZs, and their ability to collect and distribute signals based on learned experience, allow the brain to reconstruct an action from only part of the story. A whole neural network underlies the understanding of action, rather than a single anatomical site or even a single cell (Damasio and Meyer, 2008, p. 168).

Each person's unique history of recording experiences explains how such personal and varied responses can be reconstructed from the observation of a simple gesture like entering a space with a tensed chest.

The students were not merely mimicking their partners, nor did I see distinct emotional responses triggered by each movement their partner made. Each student had an individual lens based on the perception they used to interpret their partner's actions. Maurice Merleau-Ponty (2005) wrote, "We perceive the world through our senses, our bodies and interpret it thus." He explained how people's frame of perception is formed by their lived experiences and the sum of a person's lived experiences frames what they know. He explained that new information and stimuli is understood when it is compared to a person's history of lived experiences, which then becomes the basis of their perception (Merleau-Ponty, 2005, pp. 185–186). Therefore, the physical responses to an action will vary from student to student as the action is interpreted through distinctly different aggregates of experiential knowledge. Because experiences are recorded in the body, this type of knowing is often referred to as embodied knowledge or the collection of remembered physical responses to events that have occurred through one's life (Snowber, 2012).

The students' physical responses reflected the movements they saw in their partners and inspired new ideas and movement choices. The heightened awareness of theirs and their physicality in movement achieved from the Franklin Method work sensitized a kinetic dialogue fed by the empathetic sharing of the experiences in their mirror neuron systems. They then related their neural experiences to their personal embodied histories. These connections among perceiving, interpreting and moving happened too quickly for the student to be cognizant of the effect on them from every interaction, but they automatically influenced subsequent movement choices and had a cumulative effect on the students' emotional states of mind. The various duets were abstract dialogues of physical movement, and yet for the reasons stated above, they often evoked emotional responses in the performers and the audience.

I prompted them to reflect on how the movements felt in their bodies and how their response to their partner's body suggested narrative or guided their movement choices. They wrote about their experiences but in the most general of terms, and they were still not offering precise descriptions of what they were feeling. I implored them to notice and put their sensations into words, to little avail. Because of the conspicuous absence of physically generated emotions in their descriptions, I began to entertain the idea that movement may create sensations of intensity and mental states that can inspire differing interpretations, but the act of sensing movement and postures in the body alone may not be enough to conjure specific emotions.

Assignment 3 - The Second Solo

The instruction for the second solo assignment was to build upon the first solo by working with an opposing physical dynamic. I wanted the class to use their burgeoning sensitivity to sensation to create seamless and natural transitions between different movement qualities or dynamics. I hoped the task would require them to follow sensations in their bodies and use the movement possibilities that emerged to transition them between physical extremes. As a class, each student presented sophisticated solos that were physically and psychologically embodied and thus became evocative of narrative. They all, to varying degrees, were able to settle into their physicality by being aware of their sensations. Their bodies became more present, coordinated and connected, with faces that were focused and reflective of what their bodies were doing.

Because they still would not describe emotional experiences in our discussions, I did their last solo assignment with them. I wanted to explore on my own body, using the same instructions and enabling constraints I placed on them, and challenge my question, “Can movements and postures create emotions?”

I composed a short movement phrase that began by exploring the sensation of space in my skeletal structure. It was when I alternated between the qualities of elastic rebound in my shoulder girdle and rigidity in my pelvis that I felt sensations of anger. Each time my pelvis went rigid, I noticed my torso, skull and breathing tighten as my mind narrowed into a singular focus, I objectively experienced sensations of anger without feeling angry.

In previous experiences with anger there was no sense of objective awareness. Where I would often lose control to anger, this time I remained in control. It is notable that during the exploration I did not feel the electric tingle of adrenaline or the rush of blood I had from external anger stimuli. While manipulating my anatomy I felt physical sensations that induced mental states of being that strongly suggested emotions, but they were not emotions exactly.

Izard's claim that "emotion feelings can be activated and influenced by perceptual, appraisal, conceptual, and non-cognitive processes, but cannot be created by them" (Izard, 2009, p. 5) suggests that my physical experiences in the solo were triggering emotional memories rather than creating them. While basic emotions are fully formed, the unique forms of their expression, called discrete emotions, are learned in the context of each emotional experience (Izard, 2009). "Although [researchers] do not agree in all details, they agree that emotions have an infrastructure that includes neural systems dedicated, at least in part, to emotion processes and that emotions motivate cognition and action and recruit response systems" (Izard, 2009, p. 7). If the learned cognitive responses to emotional stimuli are connected to the body through these systems, then the physical responses should also be learned and remembered. When I felt tightness in my pelvis translate into tightness in my chest, breathing and facial features, these reactions resembled a learned pattern of neural firing based on previous experiences of anger. When the mirror neuron system connects to the peripheral neural networks, or convergence-divergence zones, they recall memories that have experienced coincidental brain activities (Damasio and Meyer, 2008). The mind-body neural connections experienced in previous encounters with anger become recorded physical memories that can be called upon in the future and

triggered through events like images, sights, sounds or thoughts (Damasio and Meyer, 2008). I propose that in this case the emotional memories were instigated by a recollection of physical sensations associated with an emotional experience. The tightness in my pelvis was an independent part of the anger reflex that triggered the reconstruction of a familiar physical response pattern to anger, to which my cognitive appraisal of these sensations reminded me of anger. As I responded to these physical sensations, I allowed them to motivate the movements I was making and recognized the associated emotion of anger, while the basic emotion of anger was never created.

Deborah Lupton (1998) argues that emotions are socio-culturally learned constructions that are learned from society, family and previous experiences. She presents emotions as interpretations of physical responses. As a dancer, I looked into my body to find the emotional responses I needed to not fake them on stage; and in doing so I felt the body sensations of different emotions. I used these sensations, with the choreographer's direction to discover the emotional journey of my performance. Using this lens of socio-culturally learned emotion, my psyche suggested previously learned emotional associations onto physical sensations, or simply stated, imposed emotional experiences on my movements. At other times, especially in roles with no directed emotional narrative, I allowed the movement sensations to influence my state of mind. Through this lens of mind-body neural connectivity, certain movements resembled the physical association to emotions stored in my embodied physical memory, and in these cases, the movements evoked emotions to emerge.

Embracing an Integrated Mind and Body

This research emphasizes the interconnectivity of the soma and psyche. I introduced postures and movements in the context of biomechanical efficiency by introducing the Franklin Method bone rhythms in simple non-emotional movements like bending, walking and twisting. We used the targeted movement sensations to suggest subsequent movements and as our awareness of subtle sensation increased, so did our awareness of subtle emotions, elicited by the movements, and postures. By the final solo assignment, one of the students was able to articulate the physical and emotional connectivity of her psychosomatic experience in her reflective writing:

As I moved into more rigid movements, I found my breath was shorter and shallow. My muscles were tense and there was a sensation of fear that swept over me. Despite being in full control over my body, it felt as though I was attached to strings and being manipulated by a third party. As I held my legs and arms above me, it felt as though they were slowly turning to stone. Lifting my neck and head off the ground, I thought of my ALL [Anterior Longitudinal Ligament] folding; this gave a sense of submission to what was happening to me as I drew my piece to an end. My collapse was a breaking point, a death, a defeat. ... Throughout the piece, it felt like a sickness overwhelmed my body, and as I fought it, I lost more of myself to it until there was no more fight left within me. (Student, spring term, personal communication Mar. 28, 2016)

The students' initial inability to describe emotions generated from movements and postures caused an important revision in what turned out to be a faulty hypothesis: my movements and postures were not creating emotions, but instead created the sensations of emotions by accessing the embodied memories of previous emotional events. Even the writing sample above only speaks to sensations of emotions. Our heightened awareness of sensation accessed automated processes of perceiving and interpreting movement and resulted in more spontaneous and present movement unencumbered by tension or awkward coordination, with the potential for surprising movement and emotional responses.

In my creative process as a dancer, clarifying the distinction between creating emotions and accessing the embodied sensations of previous emotions allows me to work more directly with my emotional history in a way that melds physicality with emotional experience. The work becomes an act of uncovering, or bringing to the surface, emotional resonances that can surprise and inform the process, rather than an act of creating emotional events. It is a subtle distinction that values the lived history of the creative artist.

The audience also experiences the performance through their own systems of perceptual, emotional and neural processes. Movement can suggest emotional responses in the viewer by triggering remembered universal emotions that we all share (Ekman, 2016), or socio-culturally learned discrete emotions that can be uniquely interpreted by an individual through the physical responses of the mirror neuron system and associated motor-sensor neural systems (Lupton, 1998; Gallese, 2001; Rizzolatti and Craighero, 2004). When they witness in the performer such

realized mind-body integrated movements, audiences interpret these movements through their own reservoirs of emotional history. The performance then has the potential to become a dialogue of shared emotional experiences between audience and performer with room for personalized interpretations in each individual audience member. Movement art becomes a phenomenon of the communal history of our collective emotional and physical histories, while at the same time respecting and relying upon the uniqueness of individual experience within that community.

Chapter 2

Disrupting Embodied Prejudice Through Art and the Moving Image

I devoted my career to a virtuosic art form. Nearly every time I stepped on stage I flirted with the thrill of the moment, or disaster and disgrace. I often flippantly answered whenever people asked how a new work would turn out, “Well, it can always suck!” Performances rarely did “suck” but the danger of failing was always there, and there was pressure to succeed. I danced in companies that had invested a lot of money and reputation on my performance, using it to leverage public funding for the next creation and ultimately the continuation of the company. But more critically, at least to me, my ego would not sustain public failure and I was always determined to succeed. Dancing can be difficult because choreographers challenge the art form by challenging dancers’ bodies with increasing ranges of motion and dexterity. That’s what you want as a dancer. The invitation to challenge yourself and do something you didn’t yet know you could. When you push your abilities to the edge on stage, a lot can go wrong. The fear of falling flat, being found unprepared or lacking is a real one. In the performance-based dance world, the product of “the show” becomes paramount to the point where personal abuses are suffered and enabled for that elusive, and totally illusionary, moment of sublime execution in front of an audience.

One of the things I have been working through in graduate school has been the eventual realization that my sense of art is not the same as that of many other people. Nor is it the same as what attracted me to dance at a young age. I had learned through the many crucibles of performance creation that art was a discipline – with emphasis on the

discipline. It had to be gruelling in order to be fully realized, and on the shoulders of such effort and privilege, it had to rise above the everyday to the exalted. I told myself, “How could anyone who hasn’t faced that kind of work really understand?” It’s a bleak and inhuman perception of art. While I may be indulging in some hyperbole here, I didn’t realize how pervasive this opinion I held was and its effect on how I related to the others in my class. I wasn’t born this way. I learned it in an exceptionally elite, competitive and exclusive environment, and as I bumped up against the other artists in my master’s cohort with their own experiences and values, I began to realize how biased my convictions were. I had learned my lessons from the ballet well, succeeded by them and took them for granted. In return, they coloured how I interpreted our discussions, how I understood my readings and what I considered valuable. If I was going to put my gifts to the service of others, I needed to shed these biases and replace them with something kinder and more generous. It took a long time and some effort to admit to them, but first I had to become aware.

Continuing my inquiry into felt sensations in relationship to body response, I investigated locating bias and prejudice in my body by sensing resistant physical sensation responses to images and dialogue, and then attempted to disrupt these resistant sensations with art images to better empathize with the subject. I utilized a regimen of embodied writing to locate on my body embodied sensations I associate with prejudiced bias, or vulnerability. I examined images that produced these sensations in my chest, and then engaged in an art practice of video editing to disrupt my initial resistant and biased sensations by inserting art images that created fluid physical sensation responses.

Phenomenological records of my sensation responses were used to document my embodied reactions to the investigations.

Embodied Writing to Discover Sensations Associated with Prejudice and Vulnerability

Embodied writing is an element of embodied inquiry (Snowber, 2012), which practises deepened attentiveness to the senses of the body as a repository of one's lived experience, perception of one's physical, spiritual, and emotional self, and perception of how one receives and responds to the world (pp. 51–56). Writing after stretching released “embodied flows of words and ideas” (p. 48), and the words that flowed from my body sensations became opportunities to be sensitive to the subtlety and the “inner knowing” earned from my experience in the world. They offered a way to see beyond what I thought I understood (pp. 55–56). Stretching is a physical activity that tunes my attention to my body and has kinetic resonance to my long dance career. Therefore, writing from the practice of stretching accessed a rich history of experience that included my self-identity as an artist, a person, and how I placed myself in the world as a dancer (p. 48). Because vulnerability often reveals itself through our bodies (p. 50), the writing gave voice to sensations, thoughts and feelings I had not yet articulated for myself (p. 51). Sensing my body and writing in this way helped me realize that sensations of fluidity in my chest were associated with vulnerability.

During my inquiry, I maintained a practice of stretching that was immediately followed by sessions of embodied writing. The stretching intensified my embodied emotional sensations and I immediately noticed sensations of fluid movement in my chest

connected to emotional associations like anxiety, sorrow and fear. I was open to allow these sensations and thoughts pass through me.

The italicized excerpts are embodied writings after a session of stretching:

Stretching my taut and grizzled hamstring muscles pulls directly on the hardness within my chest. It invites a battalion of yawns... Each yawn carries a small release and an infinite succession of yawns persistently peel away layers of white-knuckled muscle fibre until the core of me is laid bare... I feel the physicality of the emotion, but I don't remember its source. I have been mercifully spared from reliving the traumas that have burrowed into my tissues. It's a blessing as the chest shudders and the eyes water, that I only have to watch and bare it.

Vulnerability felt like movement, like flow, and I was open to my sensations and potential change. The flows of vulnerability are like internal currents, pools and eddies that wrench my gut, caress my jowls and spark my adrenaline.

My emotionally sensitive chest became a convenient test site to then search for embodied prejudice. In a theatrical exercise designed to encourage the emergence of a character from physical actions, I explored walking while leading from my chest, followed by a session of writing. My chest felt rigid and solid and the thoughts and movement patterns I took on resembled those associated with prejudice. As I barged around the classroom, I perceived my surroundings as clearly defined and lost the understanding that anything, or anyone, could be different than I assumed.

The character that arrived as I led from my chest was an egocentric brute of a man. Armed with a chest shield of arrogance and cockiness that belies any question or doubt, I was knighted with a sureness of myself and the surrounding world. I forgot I could be vulnerable, or that there could be any grey area to my black-and-white assumptions of others. My sureness of things eclipsed all inclinations of what else could be possible.

To experience the world in a finite chest-driven way felt simple and clear. It tempted me with a dangerous fantasy of security that obscured from me the mysteries and unknowns of the outside world; the variables of life that make one so vulnerable in the first place.

I began to look for images that produced these same sensations of fluidity and solidity in my chest. These were not images of prejudice or vulnerability, but images that produced the physical sensations I have associated with prejudice and vulnerability.

Images that Produce Solid Reactions

The following are a series of still images that elicited a solid sensation in my chest. They are not images of prejudice, but ones that provoked a solid physical response similar to the sensations I associated with embodied prejudice in the theatrical exercise.



Figure 1. Elicits a solid sensation



Figure 2. Elicits a solid sensation



Figure 3. Elicits a solid sensation

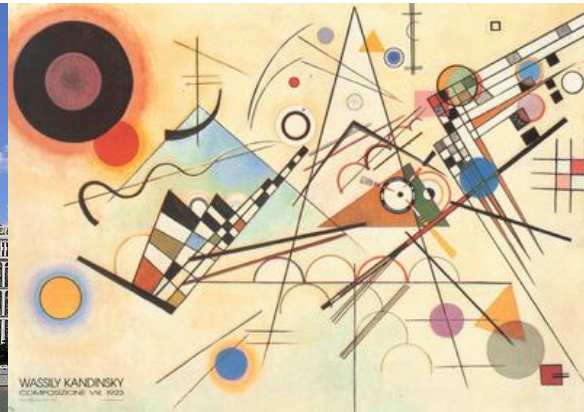


Figure 4. Elicits a solid sensation

Images that Produce Fluid Reactions

I then compiled a series of images that elicited moving sensations within my chest similar to those I associated with openness, and vulnerability in the stretching sessions.



Figure 5. Elicits a fluid sensation



Figure 6. Elicits a fluid sensation



Figure 7. Elicits a fluid sensation



Figure 8. Elicits a fluid sensation

I realized that viewing certain images could reproduce the same sensations of solidity and fluidity in my chest as the vulnerable sensations I felt while stretching or the prejudiced sensations I felt leading from my chest in the theatre exercise.

Juxtapositions of Images that Produce Fluid and Solid Reactions

I searched out images of people, architecture and contemporary art, and categorized them as to whether they produced a solid or fluid sensation in my chest and juxtaposed them against each other. As I moved from image to image, I felt an immediate switch between solid and fluid sensations upon viewing the new image. My responses were consistent regardless of how often I viewed them.



Figure 9. Elicits a fluid sensation



Figure 10. Elicits a solid sensation

Images That Produce Both Fluid and Solid Reactions

Some images produced solid and fluid reactions simultaneously. I had originally categorized the image in figure 11 as fluid and the contemporary art image in figure 12 as solid. However, as I viewed these two images repeatedly and became more sensitive to my sensations I noticed that I felt both sensations simultaneously. I suspected the downturned

posture of the background lady and the rounded lines of their faces created fluid responses, while the intense gaze of the foreground lady, when viewed in isolation, created a solid reaction. Similarly, the art image initially elicited a solid reaction by its rectangular shapes, but as I became more sensitive to my physical sensations, the movement their placement implied simultaneously elicited a fluid response.



Figure 11. Elicits both a fluid and a solid response



Figure 12. Elicits both a fluid and a solid response

The realization that an image could provide multiple responses invited a subtler investigation of what I was reacting to as I inspected the individual images that I had chosen.

Implicit Bias, Hidden Prejudice

I questioned why the image of a gentleman in a turban with a partly covered face elicited a solid response. Keith Payne (2017) described in a lecture at North Carolina University

how implicit bias is learned from the cultural surroundings one is raised in. These learned biases are often unconscious and influence behaviour, even when that behaviour is not in a person's best interest. Implicit bias has been investigated in experiments on racism to reveal how systemic racism can unknowingly affect people's behaviour.

I questioned whether the solid sensation in my chest I attributed to the man in the turban was a case of implicit bias. He wore a turban with part of his face hidden and held an intense gaze, but there were no definitive objects of terrorism in the image.



Figure 13. Elicits a solid response

I juxtaposed the turbaned man against a praying man, also in a turban, who created a fluid sensation in my chest.



Figure 14. Elicits a fluid response



Figure 15. After juxtaposition, elicits a less solid and more fluid response

I returned to the original image after viewing the image of the praying man and my interpretation of his countenance softened and his eyes seemed gentler. They still pierced, but no longer with apparent malice.

I then juxtaposed the image of the turbaned man against a photo of a British man whose image consistently triggers a strong solid sensation in my chest.



Figure 16. Consistently elicits a solid response



Figure 17. After juxtaposition, elicits a solid response

The British man consistently hardened my reaction to the turbaned man's image. I now interpreted the turbaned man's eyes in the image as more dangerous and threatening.

The implicit bias I unknowingly carried that men in turbans must be terrorists remained, a recognition that I find troubling and problematic, but pairing the original with the image of the praying man disrupted that bias. These viewings differed from earlier juxtapositions, since my experience of the original image would change depending on which image it was paired with, which demonstrated I could change my sensation experience of the image.

I realized that the affect one image had on my interpretation of the next was an example of the Kuleshov Effect, discovered by the twentieth-century Soviet filmmaker and film theorist Lev Kuleshov. The Kuleshov Effect occurs when two filmed shots, or images, are placed next to each other without their establishing shot. The viewer's response to an image is affected by the image that precedes it. With the Kuleshov Effect, the editing becomes more important to convey meaning than does the content of the individual shot (Thompson and Bordwell, 2010, 108–109).

The Kuleshov Effect was demonstrated in my experiments with the turbaned man by my changing responses to his image; however, some images, like the British man, would not be influenced by other images and consistently provoked the same solid response in my chest.

My Sensation Reactions Are Influenced by Learned, Embodied Experiences

Here I share an excerpt of embodied writing that I wrote during the process of my inquiry:

There are emotions stored in my tissues. I carry them like wet clothes. I can ignore them and imagine they aren't there, but when do they come out? What do they do to me when I don't notice them? When I am unawares and with my guard down, what are the triggers that set them off? When the stores of grief, pain, sorrow and anger seep unconsciously into my conscious life, how do they affect my mood, or how I behave?

If they are imbedded sensations that live in my chest, what are their triggers? Does each experience that produces a similar sensation uncork a vial of remembered emotions and associations that infuse my present actions? Am I constantly walking around in an ooze of the past?

I often find myself living out my mother's opinions: old, crotchety and outdated opinions about the world that make me cringe. They pop up in certain situations as an automatic reaction and make me respond as someone older than myself – I suspect as someone even older than my mother; my mother's mother's mother. In these moments, I'm trapped in a cycle of learned and conditioned reactions that steer me like an ancient skiff.

Chapter One documented how the physical sensations of emotion experiences are recorded in numerous neural sensory structures in the body and brain as a total cognitive and physical experience. Damasio and Meyers (2008) explained how the various physical sensations experienced in an emotion event become an embodied record of the experience, and how these embodied emotional memories can be recalled when experiencing even a part of the original sensation experience (p. 168). The anxious fluidity I experienced in my chest as I stretched my hamstrings resembled sensations I had experienced in previous moments of vulnerability.

My interpretation of the anxiety and vulnerability I felt while stretching and in past instances were culturally learned (Izard, 2009; Lupton, 1998; Damasio and Meyer, 2008; Feldman Barrett, 2017). In her description of the theory of constructed emotion, Lisa Feldman Barrett (2017) describes how we learn concepts of things and events based upon our previous experience with them (p. 28), which then influences the autonomic nervous system to create a physical reaction response. Our understanding of an emotional experience as a concept “is actually a collection of neural patterns in [the] brain representing... past experiences” (p. 29). The brain then organizes these concepts to guide our actions and give our sensations meaning (p. 31). She continues to say that the brain's neurons become wired as a result of our experiences called plasticity, “as a consequence,

the past helps determine your future experiences and perceptions” (p. 34). I was not immediately aware why the turbaned man’s image provoked a solidified reaction in me and I initially categorized it without question, nor was I aware that I first interpreted him as hostile.

After the attack on the World Trade Center as part of 9/11, I was inundated with tragic images of people falling from buildings, or stories of people’s panicked descent down endless flights of stairs, that forced me to brace myself in order to witness them. For over a decade I have seen Muslims portrayed as terrorists in popular culture and heard Western narratives of East vs. West in the Al Qaeda and ISIS conflicts. My cultural inundation against the image of the turbaned man includes a sensation of solid resistance in my chest and influenced me to respond to him with resistance. Similarly, my experience of leading with my chest in the theatrical exercise recalled a learned association between a rigid chest and a biased, unyielding perspective. Feldman Barrett states that physical events like changes in heart rate and respiration, or muscle tension in my case, only become an emotion when we associate them with culturally learned emotion concepts based on experiences of past events or relationships (p. 39). In this way, my anxiously fluid chest recalled emotional responses associated with a state of vulnerability and openness, and my solid resistant chest recalled those from a state of prejudice and biased resistance.

Body Sensations Reveal What Is There, Not What Is True or Just

I wrote the following after a session of stretching while pondering the dilemma of embodied unspoken prejudice:

“I know deep down in my heart, in my soul, that it must be true.”

This statement is often said with such conviction that it invariably is accompanied by an embodied reaction. While scouring YouTube for examples of prejudice, I landed upon multiple examples of people emotionally moved by their racist convictions. I witnessed a woman so deeply moved as she explained her racist position that it shook her and brought her to tears. People will even attribute their prejudiced beliefs to God, and His will for the proper order of things. I imagine their argument, asking how they could possibly be wrong when they feel it so deeply? Isn't that much emotional, embodied sensation proof that their belief comes from a higher power, or a place of truth? All the while, their prejudice continues to damage, diminish and oppress its victims just as effectively as it would when delivered with cold, hard, psychopathic malice.

I look inside my body to register how I feel or react to people, things and events.

But I must know that my body is not telling me what is right or just.

It is telling me what is:

Reactions that reveal learned and accepted beliefs I am not aware of.

Prejudices that lie within me.

My body demonstrates how the events I witness interact with what is already within me.

My sensations instruct me. They show me the good, the bad, the ugly,

and the possible.

Locating Embodied Prejudice by the Moving Image: The Charles Weekes Video

In the midst of my inquiry, I came upon a video posted on YouTube by Haider Nayani (2017) that interviewed a resident of Vancouver's Downtown Eastside about living with poverty, substance addiction and shoplifting.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dksifww4Ir0>

I monitored the sensations within my chest as I viewed the video and turned again to writing:

I noticed, through my internal dialogue, myself wanting to be empathetic to Mr. Weekes... Underneath the initial impulse to be sympathetic to him, I scanned a hard sensation in my chest... I distinctly noticed the solid sensations in my chest increase once Mr. Weekes described how he shoplifts for clients... But because I was making myself aware of my sensations, I... noticed a physical resistance within me that contradicted my conscious efforts to be sympathetic to him – a resistance I did not anticipate I would have.

The video was intended to inform about treatment centres and to foster empathy for people suffering in the Downtown Eastside, however, the unconscious resistance I felt towards Mr. Weekes became a hidden obstacle towards empathy that the video did not resolve. In order for me to have an empathetic experience of him and his story, the disconnection between my cognitive reaction and my embodied reaction needed to be made

whole. I decided to disrupt the solidified resistance in my chest by inserting images into the video clip that produce fluid and vulnerable sensations in an attempt to disrupt embodied prejudice.

Experiments in Disrupting Embodied Prejudice

I spliced excerpts of a dance solo by dancer and choreographer Noam Gagnon (2012) that elicit fluid reactions in my chest throughout the original Weekes interview. I chose dance clips, out of sequence from Mr. Gagnon's original choreography, and a section of the dance score as a backing track for the entire video, which included Mr. Weekes's original scenes and dialogue. I intuitively made aesthetic choices to create a rhythm between the original video and the dance video inserts; for example, after Mr. Weekes declared that he now lives alone, I inserted a dance clip referencing isolation; I purposefully limited the duration of the inserted clips so that the viewer would anticipate what Mr. Weekes would say next; I chose an extended sequence of choreography that portrayed vulnerability to follow the title announcing Mr. Weekes's methadone treatment; and I deliberately lowered the volume of the backing score for the final scene in order to bring forward his final dialogue. These choices were made to encourage fluid sensations in my chest to occur throughout the video.

<https://youtu.be/HjSTFOJdB7Q>

The following are excerpts from my phenomenological record written after viewing the edited video interview:

I first saw Mr. Weekes against the disquieting opening strains of the dance music. I keenly felt my anxious chest. Immediately, a deep knot formed in the centre of my chest, just below my sternum, dark with fluid, electric currents flowing in and out. I still felt a level of discomfort towards Mr. Weekes, only this time, rather than my internal dialogue reminding me how I should feel about him, I simply felt movement in my chest and heard the words he said. The static solidity I felt in my chest while he described shoplifting in the original video was replaced by sensations of anxious movement... In the final scene, I was more engaged in what Mr. Weekes had to say about his recovery. I found myself listening more intently and feeling more disturbed by his story and his predicament.

On my first comparative viewing I realized that I felt more empathetic to Mr. Weekes. I had expected that once I empathized with him I would feel more accepting of him. It turned out that I still did not always condone his actions, but I did feel more compassion for him: my body leaned in and my chest tensed, as though it ached, when he spoke about losing his family; and while I still could not condone shoplifting, I was more struck by the condition of poverty that led him to steal by the texture of my chest that allowed me to meet and receive his words, like a soft clay his story could imprint upon. The fluidly anxious and uncomfortably electric sensations I maintained in my chest by the final scene culminated in my increased interest in his recovering health.

In the unedited version, I felt an underlying resistance that contradicted my cognitive will to sympathize with him; meanwhile, in the edited version, I felt far more discomfort, was more engaged with his story, and was less in my head as I watched. The solidity I had felt in my chest was my physical resistance to embody his story as I heard it,

and the fluidity and uneasy electricity I felt during the edited version was the physical experience of embodying his story.

I repeated the experiment by replacing the dance inserts with contemporary art still images and chose to insert stills of Jackson Pollock paintings as I knew they would elicit fluid responses in my chest, and because visual art was less familiar than my field of dance, I was not sure what to expect. The following is an excerpt of the phenomenological record after viewing the newly edited video:

The edited video began with only Mr. Weekes's original video and no sound, and I experienced the familiar sensation of solidity in my chest. The first inserted Pollock image was a shock to both my body and my sense of continuity. Once Mr. Weekes's original scenes resumed, I still experienced solidity; however, each successive Pollock image increased the sensation of movement in my chest. I noticed that I was less resistant to Mr. Weekes as he spoke of shoplifting. The extended sequence of Pollock images moved my chest intensely with movements that travelled towards the tightening knot of sensation at the bottom of my sternum. My experience grew increasingly uncomfortable and dark, with a building sense of anxiety. However, there was a point of release where the movement seemed to escape outward of the knot. The release was the most intense embodied sensation I had felt during this inquiry, and in the final scene after his treatment, I was more interested in what he was saying, with less sensation of resistance to him in my chest. My hard and resistant chest had physically softened to receive him over the course of the video. Again, I did not condone all his actions, but I felt more sensation while I experienced him.

My Position as Artist Researcher

The qualities of the images and music I chose to insert into the original videos guided my sensations to a particular emotional state. The music elicited a brooding state of mind with its electronically produced sounds, and the choreography emphasized and intensified anxious, emotional sensations in my chest. My edits were a deliberate intention to interrupt my embodied resistance to Mr. Weekes's dialogue and create a new emotional arc for the video.

I held the dual role as researcher/participant and artist/creator in the way I assembled the materials of the new video edit. I searched my body for fluid physical reactions to the images and chose imagery and sound that emphasized them, which in turn informed my next editing choices. I both observed the sensations that arose and manipulated them to change my experience of the original video. The more artfully sophisticated I could be at manipulating images and sound, the more able I was at creating a new experience.

Interpreting Mr. Weekes Through My Body

The sensations I experienced in this inquiry, along with their emotional associations, were personal, culturally informed sensation responses based on my unique experience, and therefore I do not expect them to be universally experienced by others in the same way.

However, the result of my artful disruptions to the original Weekes video was that I felt sensations of anxiety and discomfort, rather than resistance, which made me listen more intently and feel my reaction to his story. The edited video altered my experience of

him, and for that brief time, my perception was also changed. Heightened sensations of anxiety in my chest made my previously unnoticed reaction of bias noticeable, and the visual art inserts became interventions that circumvented my habitual response to Mr. Weekes. I was offered a new response, one that exposed my entrenched bias and made possible a change in perspective. The new sensations challenged my initial reaction and became an invitation to feel differently about him. I experienced Maxine Greene's (1995) concept of being shocked into a state of wide-awake-ness out of my unconsciously patterned embodied responses to poverty, addiction and shoplifting, which allowed me to perceive his story in a new way. The intervention was more than a manipulation of my thinking or behaviour; the disruption allowed me to create meaning from his story in the moment, rather than have my experience predetermined by previously learned and embodied experiences, or through the manipulation of the filmmaker.

Because the interventions posed a new way for me to respond, they placed the agency of change directly in my hands. I could choose to respond differently from my habitual patterns, or not, but in the moment of viewing and responding I had a choice that was not predetermined by the past. For my efforts, I had a holistic response to Mr. Weekes's story that included my body, mind and emotional experience, and as I leaned in, listening, I was able to react to Mr. Weekes with empathy.

Chapter 3

Stories of Stigma and HIV: Using arts-based practices to inspire new ways of thinking and new behaviours

When I started the video project for this thesis, I imagined I would interview some people, record their stories, find a few especially compelling ones and portray them on video. I didn't consider whether the storyteller would remain involved in the project past the initial interview period. I thought that once I had the story, I could create an art video in the same manner I had created dances for the stage. I would wield my artistic acumen as I always had and assemble a team of artist collaborators, hire performers and storyboard the narrative. I saw myself as the artist scholar and I would do my research in the lab of my dance studio.

Later in the project, I met with Tiko Kerr (T. Kerr, personal communication, Oct. 6, 2017), a Vancouver-based visual artist and HIV advocate, as a potential collaborator on the project. He told me about his early days with the virus before he had the medication to reverse his viral load. He felt sick and weak and very angry. Yet he was determined to spend at least 20 minutes a day in the artist's studio, even if it was only to put a few brushstrokes on the canvas before he took a nap. He spoke of the power of the brushstroke and how, when we see it, we feel it (Gallese and Freedberg, 2007). He put his rage and anger on the canvas through his brushstroke. There was something so healing for him to do that, then stand back and see it from a distance. I wondered if the state of the artist could be felt in the body of the viewer through a brushstroke, and if the experience of making the stroke was healing for the artist, then it could possibly be healing or at least

affirming to someone witnessing it who lives with HIV. For my videos to create a meaningful experience for another, they needed the presence of the person living with the HIV.

I began to realize that I couldn't tell these stories on my own. I don't have HIV. I haven't experienced discrimination to that extent and it's a tall task to help someone feel something I'd never felt myself. My powers as an artist are irrelevant unless they give voice to the storyteller, and for that, I needed to involve the person living with HIV in the telling of her story. She would be the brushstroke on the canvas of my video frame.

In the preceding chapters, I experienced how I could access previously embodied memories in the present and discovered by noticing my body sensations how I could identify implicit biases I was not consciously aware of. Furthermore, I experienced how I could engage with art images to disrupt biased sensation reactions with new sensations that altered my response to a subject. It was time to apply my research and investigate how to use sensation awareness to disrupt prejudiced responses that systematically and unnecessarily fuel discrimination.

I interviewed women living with HIV who shared their experiences with stigma and discrimination due to their diagnosis. I chose to make two videos that told the stories of one of the women and used dance as a means to artfully encourage sensation responses in the viewer. It did not make sense to me that people living with HIV were still experiencing stigma when it has been possible to control the virus with medication at undetectable levels for some time (CATIE, 2017). The fear that fuels some people's discriminatory behaviour is no longer relevant, but somehow, the public service

announcements and education designed to update the public's understanding of the condition has not eradicated the stigma. I wondered if the public service announcements that appeal to our cognitive understanding were sometimes insufficient to update their audience's emotional reactions and behaviour. These videos investigate whether delivering a message that appeals to our emotions and sensual bodies can challenge entrenched prejudice and bias that fuels the stigma.

The videos are a way to experience the story of someone living with HIV, and an argument against the preconceptions that underlie stigma towards those living with the virus. I used the awareness of sensation on my body to guide a creative process that would, I hoped, evoke sensation responses in the viewer. My aim was to invite an empathetic experience in the viewer that would in turn encourage a transformative response to the subject through artful storytelling.

Storytelling and Dialectic

Storytelling as a means to empathetic understanding

Gregory Cajete (1994) describes how all knowledge and learning in indigenous education is passed on through stories and how, by combining story creatively with encounters, imagination and play, ritual knowledge can be embodied by the learner. He states that through story "we explain and come to understand ourselves" (Cajete, 1994, p. 68). In this way it is not just the passing on of information that constitutes learning; instead it is an embodied experience of that information by the learner that allows it to enter him and transform his beliefs and actions. The video project I undertook would not call on a type

of coercion or indoctrination of the viewer; instead it would be “empowering ourselves to make creative leaps of thinking and acting” (Cajete, 1994 p. 68). Maxine Greene (1995) describes this interaction between story and empathetic imagination as a dialectic that forms in the mind of the learner when the information combines with their past experience and ways of relating to the world. She believes that the learner is just as active a participant in forming the new perspective as is the delivery of the information.

What facilitates an embodied reception of learning through the use of narrative is an act of imagination. Maxine Greene calls on our capacities of imagination as a power to “break through the inertia of habit” (Greene, 1995, p. 20) and necessary to be able to see that things can be other than they are or are thought to be. She calls on imagination as the first step towards acting on a belief that something can change and that we understand ourselves and make sense of the world through stories. More so, Greene states that it is in the details of each other’s stories that we connect to those we do not yet understand and where we can be open to accept new perspectives (Greene, 1995).

The arts provide an evocative space for arousing and affecting the imagination of the learner. Elliot Eisner (2002) understood how form influences meaning and how a narrative, rather than facts and figures, can often best convey to an individual the nuances of affective meaning making. Eisner states, “We appeal to poetry to say what cannot be expressed in literal language” (Eisner, 2002, p. 204). He refers to the metaphor of poetry as a vehicle to express nuanced layers of meaning able to create entire pictures for the learner that appeals to all his capacities of intellect, emotional empathy and lived memories. It is the use of artistic metaphor that appeals to the emotions as well as to the intellect of the learner and that inspires his imagination. The combination of the message and the

learner's personal history creates an imaginary unique to each learner as a new dialectic understanding in the mind: a new idea, or the possibility of a new reality (Greene, 1995).

Meaning making and a new dialectic

Maurice Merleau-Ponty (2005) in *Phenomenology of Perception* provides an alternative explanation for the dialectic imagination born of embodied emotions. He describes how we know the world by experiencing it through our senses and how we interpret the world thus, while at the same time, the sensations we receive in our bodies affect how we think. His writing supports Damasio and Meyer's (2008) theories around how we experience the world and other people's actions in our bodies—

It will be said that I experience a certain cultural environment along with behaviour corresponding to it (Merleau-Ponty, 2005. p. 406).

—and interpret our experiences of the world by correlating them to our history of experience:

I see a certain use by other men the implements which surround me, that I interpret their behaviour by analogy with my own, and through my inner experience, which teaches me the significance and intention of perceived gestures... the actions of others are, according to this theory, always understood through my own (Merleau-Ponty, 2005. p. 406).

He describes how, when we are in dialogue with another person, we internalize what we hear and see in order to analyze what is perceived or received against a common sphere of experience, and if not commonly internalized, we are then provoked to renegotiate in the presence of each other if we are to meaningfully engage:

We have here a dual being, where the other is for me no longer a mere bit of behaviour in my transcendental field, nor I in his: we are collaborators for each other in consummate reciprocity. Our perspectives merge into each other, and we co-exist through a common world (Merleau-Ponty, 2005. p. 413)

The following is a possible key to create a new understanding, or perspective between people around a previously embodied emotion: “If anything of the past is to exist for us, it can be only in an ambiguous presence, anterior to any express evocation” (p. 424) – which, I interpret as whatever memories arise from the past are influenced by the present context, therefore, when an embodied memory is triggered, it is also coloured by the present situation and not recovered completely pure in its original experience. Thus when I saw the image of the turbaned man in the last chapter and realized that my response of solid and resistant sensations in my chest were from a culturally learned bias that originated in the attack on the World Trade Centre, my response had very little to do with the sensations I felt on 9/11. On that terrible day, my thoughts were for the people suffering in the buildings, in the airplanes, and on the ground. I was not thinking about Al Qaeda or the

Muslim people. That connection with its sensory baggage was learned later and over many years in the cultural aftermath of the event.

Jordan-Haladyn (2014) looks at Mikhael Bakhtin's writings that describe the meeting point between works of art and the observer as a dialogic place of meaning making. Jordan-Haladyn also investigates artists who have tried to "destabilize the authority of the text in cultural discourse by countering a text with their own artistic response" (Jordan-Haladyn, 2014, p. 2).

As Bakhtin states: "What aesthetic analysis must be directed toward immediately is not the work in its sensuous given-ness, which is ordered solely by cognition, but – that which the work is for the artist's and the contemplator's aesthetic activity toward it." In other words, in aesthetic analysis Bakhtin privileges the dialogic exchange between an artist and an observer as mediated through the artwork" (Jordan-Haladyn, 2014).

"I am specifically arguing for a conception of active observership that is predicated on embodiment, which is key to Bakhtin's understanding of aesthetics" (Jordan-Haladyn, 2014).

Cancienne and Snowber (2003) describe how movement inquiry can combine with embodied writing to investigate the body as a place of knowledge (p. 237). The two research methods rely on the interconnectivity of mind and body to critically uncover and reflect upon embodied and encultured knowledge that is made evident through

choreographic and improvisational movement. The body contains a record of the lived experience, as it is imprinted upon by our socio-cultural experience in the world (Desmond, 1997). Embodied writing and movement inquiry explore and question the social and cultural identities that are housed in our bodies (pp. 238–239).

The video project I embarked on is based on the prepositions as introduced above – that we understand the world through the experience of our senses and we interpret the current experience against our embodied experiences from the past. My hope is that, when individuals actively engage with a work of art, the result is a new embodied sensual experience that can expand their perspective, fire their imagination and allow them to entertain new ideas.

The Interviews

I interviewed six people living with HIV and asked them the question: “Do you have a story you would like to share where you experienced some kind of discrimination because of your HIV-positive status?” I had prepared in advance follow up questions: “How do you wish that experience could have gone differently?” and “What would you want others to know about living with HIV?” in case I needed to flush out the conversation, but the crux of the interview was to revolve around their personal stories of stigma and discrimination.

I partnered with two organizations which provided me with the storytellers. The first was the Positive Women’s Network (PWN), an organization that provides support services to women living with HIV and which has become defunct over the period of this research. The program manager introduced me to three mature women whose ages ranged from their early fifties to mid-sixties. The other partner organization was YouthCo, which

provides support and counselling to children and youth living with HIV. Through this organization, I was introduced to a young man in his late teens and to two young women who were in their early twenties who had transitioned from being clients to peer counsellors. I limited the number of people I interviewed to six so that I would be able to invest more time in fewer stories in order to envision how to tell them on video. I was open to receive any participant my partners offered, and I made it clear that my limited resources meant that not everyone would have their story put to video.

Over a period of six months, I met with each storyteller once at either the offices of PWN or YouthCo and held interviews that lasted from forty-five to ninety minutes. Each participant was given an honorarium for their time, plus bus fare. They were offered the choice to be fully anonymous, partially anonymous, or to have their identities revealed if their story was told on video. Some storytellers were open to having their names and likenesses appear in the videos, others only their voices, or to be identified by first name only, and some preferred to be entirely anonymous. I recorded the interview on my laptop, with the understanding that, once the interviews were transcribed, the recordings would be deleted.

“By being present, we seek to effect restoration and transformation, personally and socially” (Walsh, Bickel and Leggo, 2015). The storytellers arrived with the understanding they would be sharing their stories, but if our exchange was going to go beyond the sharing of information and move people enough to emotionally empathize with the storytellers, then I felt the space for restoration and transformation needed to be encouraged from the beginning. I intended to make myself as attentive to my guests as I could and create a hospitable starting point for a relationship to unfold.

I was anxious before each interview whether I could offer a space that made them comfortable enough to share of themselves (O'Reilly, M., from Snowber, 2007), and it was difficult to monitor my physical sensations as to whether I had achieved this. My nerves about conducting the interview, or knowing what to say next, or how to flush out the stories I wanted to hear, created sensations that originated from my worries, rather than in response to what they said. At times, I became concerned whether my questioning would trigger a storyteller's emotions too greatly. I felt the weight of my responsibility to interview each individual safely. I sometimes experienced that weight as shortened breath, tightness in my chest and a slight clamping in my head. I braced myself when my understanding of HIV was challenged directly by one of them, and for another, I was simply challenged to keep up with the speed of her storytelling. Each interview provoked different sensations that often rubbed up against my fears and doubts over my capacity as an interviewer. But in each interview, the one thing I could consistently offer was my attentiveness to make sure each one felt heard and had a chance to express herself.

For me, attentiveness means to listen. I quickly realized I needed to be open to hear what was important to them, which turned out to be more than their answers to the question, "Do you have a story you would like to share where you experienced some kind of discrimination because of your HIV-POSITIVE status?" The actual time spent telling stories of discrimination was brief and when they finished I would often pause and give them the opportunity to direct the conversation. The pauses sometimes felt endless and provoked the familiar, anxious butterfly sensations. Sometimes I would pick up on something they said and ask questions to expand on it.

They offered so much more than the stories I expected. They spent most of the interview speaking about the context around living with HIV, whether that was poverty, or being in high school, its criminalization or the vulnerability of disclosing to lovers. In fact, a very small percentage of our time together was spent actually telling the type of story I expected to video[AM2], which lead me to consider that the rest of what they said was what was most important to them.

I was initially alarmed when I did not hear stories I could immediately envision on video. I became worried I would not have any material to work with, so I searched for clues, or possible questions to flush out more details in the stories. I began to realize that my intention to tell their story on video guided how I was listening. It made me think that some of what they were saying was more useful than the rest, and I was not able to appreciate the weight of what they spent so much time telling me. For example, I could not conceive what I would do visually with the detailed information I received around the issue of criminalization of HIV. As a result, I was missing just how much that impacted how the women formed or avoided forming romantic relationships. I had to force myself to let go of the expectations of what I thought I needed from the research question and listen instead with openness to what they said. It forced me to trust that the stories would be there, and I would find them when I worked with the interview material later.

When I did receive the type of story I expected could be told on video, it was brief and did not express the depth of their experience on its own. This type of story would be an account of events that had happened, but the story offered would be missing all the context and backstory that made it meaningful. I needed to expand my vision for how I would tell the stories in order to include the context and nuances they shared. The art of

the storytelling would be in the ability to convey what is meaningful to them by sharing the totality of their experience.

I never asked how they contracted the virus. I felt that would be indelicate and inappropriate. Sometimes they offered it up in the course of the interview and sometimes they did not, but I intuitively did not feel right about asking the question. Whether it would have been received as disrespectful or not, I do not know. I only know that the thought of asking the question gave me physical sensations I associate with intrusiveness, rather than the sensations of being attentively responsive and receiving of their stories and their presence.

Refining the Stories

Once the interview transcripts were complete, I noticed common themes such as discrimination from medical professionals, or issues around disclosure to colleagues and romantic partners. And there were individual themes like workplace bullying and attempted suicide. The themes would be scattered throughout the transcripts, so, to gather all that was said on a theme, I assigned each section of the digital file a colour and cut and pasted the passages into a separate document. I very soon saw how themes when paired together could resonate off each other, acting as foils that emphasized the different perspectives the women held. For example, I noticed the older women had seen their diagnosis as a death sentence and were surprised and ill prepared to still be alive in their older age; meanwhile, the young women I interviewed were speaking of their future in terms of what careers they might choose and their dreams of having families and buying a home. I imagined how weaving the stories of an older woman and a younger woman in a single video would create a space for the viewer to reflect on these two realities or how

pairing two themes from a single interview could provide a deeper understanding of that person's experience.

As I worked with the different interviews, I envisioned different ways of telling them on video. Some I imagined using movement and dance, while others I imagined a theatrical presentation or a telling through visual art. I discovered upon meeting Shelly at her interview that she had been a career contemporary dancer, much like myself, and it always made a lot of sense to have Shelly dance her own story. Because dance is my field of expertise, I felt more comfortable producing my first video using the familiar discipline of dance than attempting another art medium. Shelly had relocated to Calgary when I approached her to put her stories on video, but we agreed to work together online over the next three months with the intention of her coming to Vancouver for ten days of rehearsal and production for two videos.

For Shelly's first video, I paired the themes of her infection story together with the issue of criminalization of HIV, which I have titled *The Betrayal Was to the Bone* and will refer to here as Video 1. She describes how she was in a long-term monogamous relationship with a man who knew he was HIV-positive but failed to tell her until after she had contracted the virus from him. In her interview, Shelly made a compelling case for how criminalization of HIV propagates stigma against people living with the virus and deters them from getting tested. I will let Shelly explain the complexities of criminalization herself in the story script included at the end of this section. My first reaction to the betrayal Shelly expressed in her infection story was the thought that she should have charged him and made him accountable for his actions. However, she delivers a message of how unnecessary and damaging the criminalization of women's and men's bodies with HIV can

be and how her charging him would have perpetuated the stigmas that led to such legislation. Pairing her infection story with her views on criminalization gives her message power because of how easily she could have charged her ex-partner and won, but chose not to. It is a story of betrayal, compassion and selflessness.

Video 2 entitled, *The Heart Is a Reversible Organ*, pairs the themes of how Shelly pushed away the things that she loved after her diagnosis, with her experiences around disclosing her positive status to others. I was personally moved by her choice to remove herself from the dance community she identified with for most of her adult life. In my experience, dance is an integral part of who a career dancer is. Being a dancer is how I found agency in the world, and her story reminded me of my transition away from my dance career. I could relate to how much she lost.

Shelly described the pain of having some family members turn away and how others stood by her when she disclosed her positive status, and it became clear she could not know who would or would not reject her for it. As a result, Shelly admitted she no longer pursues romantic or intimate relationships to avoid potential rejection. So it was surprising to hear Shelly talk about being out with her status in her daily life, and how she encourages others as a peer support counsellor to be out with their status. She makes the point that living transparently about her status prevents possible instances of discrimination.

There is irony in her courage to be out with her status, together with the way she cut herself off from the parts of her that gave her joy and identity that make the story so relatable. I imagine many people can relate to isolating themselves in times of trauma, and Shelly's message of facing possible rejection to ward off stigma by being open about her

status is given credibility because she was open with her family and suffered because of it. But perhaps, because she could not openly return to her dance community and so abandoned dance altogether, a part of her identity that meant so much, losing what she most loved humanizes her message. Placing these themes together speaks to the complexity and difficulty of dealing with issues involving HIV and relationships with oneself and others, and her message about her struggles with trauma and loss is universal.

My technique of highlighting with different colours of highlighter, and cutting and pasting excerpts of our interview together allowed me to read Shelly's thoughts on a theme in one place. But the excerpts were scattered throughout our extended interview. Ideas came to her as her train of thought brought them to mind, and the information I omitted was the context that inspired her thoughts in the flow of conversation. I was faced with a conundrum. I could not include everything in the interview in a succinct ten-minute video, and yet what I edited away provided the breadth of her experience.

I noticed that when reading the pasted excerpts together in one document, they did not entirely convey all that she meant to say based on my understanding of the rest of the interview. I needed to create a succinct narrative focused on chosen themes and somehow imbue that narrative with the greater context that made it meaningful to Shelly.

I therefore edited the themes into a legible narrative by rearranging the sequence of excerpts and adding connecting phrases and words. By placing my contributions in parentheses or italics, I attempted to avoid adding meaning to her words so as to keep our voices visibly separate. But the very act of taking a passage out of its context and rewording it slightly changes its meaning. I edited Shelly's words to make sense to me, so I could respond to them emotionally, make meaning of them and imagine them on video. In this

way, I filtered her interview through my body, mind and emotions. I searched for what made my body lean in to what I read, for my skull to feel open and clear, and for my chattering mind to get lost in her words.

I invite Shelly into the editing process

I invited Shelly to edit the scripts with me so that my voice would not eclipse hers. I sent her the rough scripts and we began to flesh them out together. The sections I chose were dense with information and I edited ruthlessly to cut to the quick of what she was talking about. Shelly wrote new text to flesh out the scripts and allow someone unfamiliar with the full transcript to better understand her meaning. She also freely deleted sections I had scripted from the original interview. I responded to her changes with questions that would challenge her to better articulate her ideas or keep her on track with the themes of the videos.

When Shelly became stuck, she wrote verse directly into the document. In these instances, I transposed her ideas back into prose and sent them to her for feedback. I knew the dance imagery we would later create would be poetic, metaphoric and not narratively representative of her story, so I decided the spoken text needed to be a grounding source for the viewer to follow. I needed the text to be effortlessly clear and understandable so as not to frustrate or confuse me and thus allow the poetic images to work on my senses as I watch the final video. I am aware this particular choice mirrors my difficulty in deciphering meaning from verse but the result, once the video had been edited, was that the dance images were able to imbue Shelly's words with the emotional context of her experience.

Shelly's style of writing was more concerned with expressing her thoughts than my needs as a reader. Her writing mirrored her speech and her sentences jumped around as she took liberties with punctuation. I kept bringing the text back to a form that could be easily read, as if published in a magazine. Again, this was an aesthetic choice I imposed to better help me understand Shelly's story and translate it for others. Perhaps, by editing her words to meet my needs, I missed an opportunity for the omitted punctuations and disjunctures to further expand my understanding of her experience.

I knew from the outset that the scripts we worked on so scrupulously could never be filmed in their present form. They were becoming too long to fit an eight to ten-minute video format, and I knew that, if they were simply read on camera, they would lose the dynamism and spontaneity of conversation that made Shelly's original interview so engaging. We continued to edit and refine the scripts despite knowing they would never be on video. I believed the process would crystalize the message we were forming and become a blueprint for the videos. I intended to devise questions from the scripts that would elicit the same message in a filmed interview that Shelly could say in a dynamic conversational manner. The scripts would also become the text used to generate the dance movement.

We went back and forth in this manner for three months working out what to say and how to say it. The process allowed us to question her message from different perspectives and we realized that her choices would not universally work for everyone. We saw how her choice not to press criminal charges or her encouragement for others to be open with their positive status would not be appropriate for people suffering from assault, abuse or made vulnerable by marginalization and thus were able to include this understanding in the message.

Shelly's compassion for her ex-partner is what gives the story's message its power

At one point in the editing process of Video 1, Shelly questioned whether we should include the section about her ex-partner. She was concerned that he would be portrayed as a criminal and instead wanted to acknowledge her responsibility in becoming infected. I feared this omission would hinder the audience's ability to relate to her. One of the stigmas Shelly and the others face is the perception that in order to contract the virus they must be prostitutes, drug users or promiscuous. The fact that Shelly was in a long-term relationship and practised safe sex for a year demonstrated her sense of responsibility. Because her actions are not unusual for people in long-term relationships, her story is not so removed from many people's experience. I also felt this information set the emotional stakes for her decision to not charge him. It evidenced the depth of the betrayal she suffered and the compassion of her understanding in not pressing charges.

Shelly's compassionate approach to her story included her treatment of her ex-partner. She told me how important it was that we paint him as a good human and not as a criminal. We did this by presenting the facts of the events, how she accepted her responsibility in becoming infected, and by describing how shaken she had become after learning what happened. She does not absolve him, but she shows how his actions weigh on him by the simple line, "He is aware of his mistakes."

Shelly's compassionate response towards her ex-partner is what gives her message against criminalization of HIV such power. Because she chose not to charge him, Shelly is an example of someone who saw beyond revenge and vindication to understand the damage pressing charges would cause her and her ex-partner. When she later describes how

criminalizing those who do not disclose their HIV status propagates stigma and leads to people not getting tested, we already have a sense of the pain she moved through to make that decision. It humanizes people living with HIV and challenges the perception of them as criminals or dangerous.

The three months we spent editing were an emotionally turbulent time for Shelly. She had moved to a new city and was trying to establish herself in a new career and I would sometimes not hear from her for a week, after which, she admitted to struggling emotionally. I became concerned that the reflective process of our editing exacerbated her emotional struggles and urged her to move at her own pace. She always returned to the project invigorated to work and she admitted to finding the process cathartic and energizing. I often heard from her how the writing helped her process for herself the events we were investigating.

The emergent qualities of the editing process

I had naively imagined that if I asked people to tell me their stories of stigma and discrimination I could portray that story in an artful way, as if it were a matter of simply recording what they said and putting images to it. But these stories are complex and embroiled in cultural and systemic issues. If I had simply isolated an event that happened to Shelly and portrayed it on video, it could not have possibly conveyed the weight and significance of what it meant to her. The meaning in her stories lay in how they are nestled in the context of her life.

I could not have integrated the issues of criminalization into the script without including Shelly in the editing process, because I needed to expand my ability to understand

her. I could only understand her message by relating it to my frames of reference (Feldman Barrett, 2017). My frames of reference included being able to read our words in a grammatical form that made sense to me. Only then could I envision imagery to accompany them. When we began editing together, my frames of reference were so limited to my experience that Shelly's task was to constantly bring me along. She needed to answer my questions and find ways to articulate her thoughts, so I could build concepts in my mind and understand them (Feldman Barrett, 2017). My task was to listen and constantly be surprised by what she said and how she said it. I needed to allow my understanding to broaden and my frame of reference to expand and encompass more of what she shared, thus "enlarging the space of the possible" (Sumara and Davis, 1997).

As a result, the scripts were richer with her experience than I anticipated they would be. I remember wondering what I would do with paragraph after paragraph of discourse around the criminalization of HIV. I would have rejected them as extraneous had Shelly not helped me re-imagine how the telling of her story could look. I realized the videos could convey more than the re-enactment of an event and could include the nuanced background context that informed it. The nuanced context exposed the compassionate lens from which Shelly tells her story, and they expose a systemic prejudice that influences the negative reactions she experiences from others. Our three-month editing process allowed the nuanced context to emerge that ultimately gave her words and dance meaning.

The Scripts

The following are the scripts we arrived at during the editing process prior to production.

They are not entirely the same as the dialogue scripts heard in the two videos.

Shelly video 1

The Betrayal Was to the Bone

By Shelly Tognazzini with Edmond Kilpatrick

Unfortunately, or not, I was knowingly infected. Initially, the betrayal was [worse] than the diagnosis itself because I had been living with someone who knew he was [HIV] positive. He had been positive for 14 years, and never told me. We lived together for two years and I didn't get sick, [until] I did. I went to Emergency three times and they kept sending me home with the flu. The flu! The third time they sent me over for an endoscopy to check my esophagus and discovered six esophageal ulcers. When they finally tested me for HIV, it was the ears, eyes and throat specialist who did the endoscopy who had to tell me the news. He had never given an HIV diagnosis in his life. So, it was really weird. [While he was talking, I watched him go back and forth] with his hands. I'm watching his body language and thought, "Okay, this isn't good but what is it?" And he said, "Well, the good news is that you're not Hep C positive, however, you have tested positive for HIV." And that's what he was doing [he was balancing Hep C and HIV in his hands.]

[He was telling me] it's only this one, it's okay... And I thought, "Oh my God, that's the good news?" It was an awkward conversation. He said, "I want you to call these people, and the public health nurse is going to call you, and here's the referral. Thanks very

much, I have a meeting.” Literally, it was not even five minutes. And he walked out. When I came out the nurse said, “Would you like some water?” I said, “No, I’m fine.” And she said, “Thanks very much. Have a good day.” I went, “Oh okay, bye,” and I never saw them again, because that was the Emergency referral right, and I was immediately in the hands of the other care providers.

They knew from my viral load because of where I was at zero conversion that it was an acute transmission contracted within a certain time frame. [But], because I had only had sex with one person, it was obvious to me who it was.

When I first met him, he was initially real standoffish and didn’t want to know anything about me. He just came out of the bush, this Outward Bound kind of guy. He was a rugged sailor and asked me to go sailing with him by saying, “You’ll never make it, but if you want to come, you can come along.” So, I finally took him up on it. That was the basis of our relationship. There was no past. It was all about being present in the moment and learning to sail. It was one of the first relationships [where] I thought, “Wow. This is so cool. We don’t have to talk about ex’s and our history,” without knowing that the reason we weren’t talking about it was because he had so much to hide. He didn’t want to talk. And I didn’t ask questions. I didn’t protect myself. I was a consensual partner, and I should have been responsible for my own risk.

[His betrayal came from an attitude of shame and fear.] I mean, he had hidden quite a bit more from me [than] just his status. It was a personality [trait of his.] He had issues that he was unable to deal with and wasn’t dealing with. He definitely had a really hard life and had risen above it in spades like many survivors do, and you go, “Wow! How the hell did you survive?” [He] had a love of things that I love like movement and sailing. You

know, we had so much else to have fun with that even the sex we did have, which wasn't the basis of our relationship, really, gave us so much joy.

He is fully aware of what he has done. I was betrayed and it [drove home] how awful and hurtful it is to be, not just lied to, but not given the full story. I think that is partly why I am so out with my status [now].

I believe 100% in ending the criminalization of HIV. To me, criminalization of HIV hits home after having experienced the reality of non-disclosure. It makes no sense at all and it contributes to the stigma of HIV. My ex wasn't taking his meds while we were together and knew he was positive. I could have charged him and would have won hands down. But I couldn't, it just felt wrong. Even when it crossed my mind, or people told me to, I couldn't wrap my head around it. How could I blame someone else when I was not responsible for myself.

The charge in Canada for non-disclosure of HIV is aggravated sexual assault, and the law applies to exposure as well as transmission, regardless of whether the accuser tests positive. [This can lead to serious penalties and jail time and] it undermines the very practice of disclosure between consensual partners.] It fuels the stigma around getting tested, and—contributes to the myths of HIV transmission. Why didn't I worry about protection longer into our relationship? Why didn't he worry more about using a condom? He didn't think about it, or even worse care about the risk. Especially, since he wasn't

taking meds. He's a smart man. He knew. But why didn't he care? When asked he honestly said, "I couldn't tell you about it [because the longer we were together the more ashamed I was to tell you]."

The [shame that silenced him came from the stigma around disclosure.] The media has been brutally offensive [in this regard]. The media is so in favour of criminalization that they don't show the other side to it. Of course, you don't hear the outcomes of these reports because they sensationalize the charge and the act as predatory. The media plasters the accused's pictures on the front page making them guilty before proven innocent. They thrust the HIV positive person into the public domain and label them as sexual predators, and the public buys into the propaganda while forgetting or ignoring the scientific facts. These cases have destroyed lives across the country by trying to "protect the public" [even if] the persons accused have not even transmitted the virus.

Why is it that HIV is the only blood borne pathogen criminalized? It makes no sense. If that's the case, Hep C was incurable at the time I was diagnosed [and why wasn't it criminalized too?] Why would that have been any different? Why, if they're criminalizing one blood borne pathogen disease [do they not another?] And how can they discern what's sexual assault when consent is present. Is non-disclosure of an STI [grounds for an assault charge]? Really?

Now, the science shows that being undetectable means the virus is non-transmittable. The whole notion of U=U (undetectable equals un-transmittable) is wonderful news but it's not on firm ground because the law does not support it. When someone consistently takes their retroviral medication and tests undetectable for six months there is virtually no risk of transmission. The charge for non-disclosure of HIV then makes

no sense. The Canadian government recognized this on World AIDS Day, 2017, now, how long will it take for the law to actually change and the courts to reflect this? [For the law to] actually do what's right it must be upheld by the science and not be driven by outdated fear and uninformed public perception. It is a significant breakthrough that some provinces will no longer persecute people with HIV for not disclosing to partners, but the rest of the country is yet to decriminalize HIV and comply with the current science. To change people's perceptions, the media has got to get on board to reduce the stigma.

[My ex] disappeared for a week when he found out I was diagnosed with HIV. He wouldn't pick up his phone because he was afraid I would charge him. There was no response. [He knew how shaken I had become after my diagnosis.] I spiralled into a dark place, a deep depression. I shaved my head, quit my job, and I couldn't cope for a few months. It's a blur actually. I just remember trying to wrap my head around any kind of future. I felt so ashamed and stunned that the diagnosis was actually real, that I was HIV positive. It shattered any sense I had of the future. So, when he did come back, it mattered so much to me. We didn't stay together, and we never had sex again, but [I can say now that we care about what happens to one another.]

We shared care for a while and consoled each other in a lonely time. [He became] supportive of whatever I needed to do, and that included full disclosure on his part in front of a professional. That was really important [for me]. I wanted to hear why he had betrayed me to that degree. And because he had been living with it for so long, why did he think it was okay not to use protection? We did practise safe sex for a long time and then we just stopped. We were living together and [I thought,] "I'm not getting pregnant. I'm over 40. We're fine." And you know it wasn't like he [withheld his status from me] maliciously. He

didn't. That's the bottom line, he didn't. He just did it. And that's what made me say, "What the fuck!"

There is absolutely no evidence that criminalization supports public health, or deters people from engaging in risky behaviour, or that it encourages disclosure of your status, or most importantly that it protects the public. The media sensationalizes the HIV positive person as a sexual predator and the "unwitting" accuser as a victim, and the whole story plays out as a he said she said [scenario]. These are mostly heterosexual men getting charged, their lives destroyed, and to what end? What does it accomplish? [Was I not responsible for my own protection?] [We both were]. It's not rape, it's non-disclosure of an STI. And if [the criminalization of HIV is] there for public safety, then why do the charges need to be so extreme? I was a consensual partner. The crime does not match the punishment. Instead, it fuels the fear and stigma surrounding HIV.

I was truly devastated and forever changed by *one* betrayal. Over time, the betrayal was far worse than the diagnosis. It haunted me for years and kept me from building new relationships or being able to trust anyone, especially about their sex life, status or history. I haven't had sex in years because of it. But I was there too. I am responsible for my own body. I feel strongly about that, and I take responsibility for not asking or using protection. I am not speaking to women that were violently assaulted or raped, obviously that's different, but those are not the cases before the courts. I'm talking to women and men who choose to charge consensual partners because the law says they can.

Ask yourself, if aggravated sexual assault is the charge is he or she really a predator? Were you a consensual party protecting yourself and mitigating the risk? Were you responsible for your own body? Are you prepared for his or her word against yours?

Or, for sharing needles with a stranger to be a confrontational charge? It becomes a blame game, and criminalization is not the answer.

Testing, treatment and protection from all harm, the ability to disclose your HIV status without shame, stigma and discrimination, personal responsibility and compassion, universal access to meds and removing the criminalization of HIV, these are the answers for me.

Until there's universal access to medication globally, until criminalization is taken off the table, we don't have the answers. There is no cure for the virus, so an end to HIV involves two things: global access to medication for everyone from Sub-Saharan Africa to Greenland, where nobody points fingers and blames; and criminalization must be taken off the table.

When HIV is not a criminalized disease, and individuals take responsibility for their own self, the stigma will shift to empowerment. Empowered to practise safe sex and talk of one's HIV status and get tested and fight for those who have no voice. It's not over yet. We need to move past the shame. U=U, undetectable equals "un-transmittable." That's the science now. The stigma and shame still have so far to go.

Shelly video 2

The Heart Is a Reversible Organ

By Shelly Tognazzini with Edmond Kilpatrick

*The heart is a reversible organ, in that it beats and can be
beaten...and as it is beaten it beats...beneath the skin, through
the muscle, in the blood...to the bone...²*

I tested positive for HIV. And I lost my passion. I lost my desire to live my life the way I had for more than 40 years. I really was lucky that in my life I woke up for most of it and loved my life. I did what I did everyday out of passion. For half my life, I made my career as a contemporary dancer and I ran a dance collective that presented and produced shows. I was privileged to be able to live my life like that. I was beyond lucky.

I somehow had to let go of my life before HIV. I was a dancer, and when I was diagnosed life changed.

Dance had been my power and strength, my confidence, and I couldn't find my way past the shame to come out in the arts community. I was embarrassed and didn't want to end or reinvent my career as the sick dancer with HIV.

My shame meant that I gave it up, stopped dancing, stopped participating, and stopped taking class or thinking about choreography. My life became unrecognizable. And

² The italicized sections at the beginning and end of the Video 2 script are verses of poetry written by Shelly Tognazzini.

so my whole world, as it were at that point, just slowly started falling apart. And the things that gave me the most pleasure, I pushed away.

Since my diagnosis I haven't had sex. As pathetic as that sounds, I just said, no. So, all things I loved, dance, sex, companionship even, have been hard. Because it's all about trust.

Letting go of the past, everybody has to do that right? Just let go, but hold on to what will keep you going, or even alive. Sometimes that is a really hard thing to do. And acceptance is a process. It involves understanding the present. I am not sure why I chose the virus to defend, or why I let go of the things in my life that gave me reason and purpose. I wish I knew now what I knew then.

In the beginning, my mom was my touchstone and my entire HIV support system, though my sister also immediately supported me and listened.

My sister never hesitated when I told her. She was hurt and angry at how I was infected, but she simply accepted the diagnosis and moved forward. She's a warrior too.

My father and my brothers, on the other hand, basically stopped talking to me. They assumed they knew the story, or had a version of one from the 80s in their mind. They didn't get it, and or, chose not to. They just didn't want to hear about it. It wasn't a gradual thing, it was literally a cut-off and I didn't hear from them for many years. Some years, I got an obligatory phone call at Christmas or a birthday. It was awful not hearing from them, and for a long time, I just gave up.

When I first called to tell them, they were shocked and ashamed, and really had no idea what to say or how to be supportive. They couldn't even ask how I was doing. They were so disappointed and angry at me. Like it was my fault and I deserved it. So, suck it up. I was devastated, and we have never really talked about HIV again.

Recently, maybe because my mom died, I have been building back these relationships as best I can. But it's hard. How can we reconnect if we can't talk about HIV? How can we navigate a relationship when one of the biggest pieces in my life is not open for discussion? I hope, and even pray some days, that we will find our way to a better place of communication. A day when we can talk about it without shame or fear. I hope so. I am trying again, and I won't give up.

It was really hard on my mom. I think the hardest on my mom. She didn't have the information like my daughters and she worried I was going to die.

My daughters are eleven months apart, and so amazingly different, wonderful, and wise. When I tested positive, my daughters were in their twenties and they came to see me right away. My youngest knew more than me really, and she said, "Mom, you're going to be fine."

My oldest had less information, and I thought that was odd because they are so close in age. But they had different circles of friends and vastly different views on so many things. I guess it shouldn't have been so surprising to me. It was just weird, their experience of persons living with HIV was current and far more informed, but they grew up in the 90s when the fear mongering and shame-based messaging was rampant, and folks were still

dealing with the madness of the 80s with stigma fuelled by ignorance and bigotry. That seems like forever ago.

Treatment has changed, and the meds are less toxic now. A lot of people only have to take one pill a day and have no problem adhering. They have no fear of the medication, the side-effects, or long-term effects. To them it's just that simple, and they move forward positively positive.

I never really thought about not being out with my HIV-positive status. It didn't strike me as something that was beneficial to me or my family. And those who were going to fall by the wayside were going to fall away anyway. So, waiting for them to leave me was like pulling a Band-Aid off one little hair at a time. Only this was like pulling duct tape.

Part of me wants to say, "Just be out with your status and let the people fall where they will, because it will give you such a sense of relief that you are who you are. And you are able to be who you are without that." Because the shame and the stigma around non-disclosure will continue to come up every time until you decide you are comfortable in your own skin. And it does mean you will lose people. Like, there is no way around it. For so many of us, not everybody is going to get it. Especially family. And the assumptions that people make are ignorant and so old. It is hard to imagine that people haven't changed the recording in their minds. They don't know how far the science has come, and how far behind the stigma is. I know people who have to take their own cutlery when they go home to visit. Like, what the fuck! This is your family? And they make you bring your own cutlery?

The stigmas are real. And it's different for low-barrier people who can't get off the street than it is for others who are functioning with HIV. There are many on the Downtown Eastside who can't adhere to their meds and are only able to just survive through the harm-reduction model. Some of these folks not only question the meds and challenge the side-effects but have multiple barriers to care and adherence, like homelessness, addiction or domestic violence and all the issues that go along with that. For them, taking meds is just not possible. It is an overwhelming dark cloud hanging over their health and there is nothing positive about living with HIV like that.

And all I know is that I have a privileged life and I should be fully aware of that, and the people who work in frontline care also need to be aware of the advantages they have that others don't. There are definitely differences in how people from diverse demographics are able to cope with this disease. Yet being positive about being positive is so important to everyone. And doing something, giving something back. Whether that's volunteering for the AIDS Walk, or going to vigils on December 1st for International AIDS Day, speaking up and sharing your story, or doing overdose-awareness days. Participating in those kinds of things helps. It helps get a message of hope out there, even if it's just to one person that day. We are not that different from each other, so I felt very early on I had a responsibility to do that.

Yeah, so, HIV became my world.

Medication was the answer and dance reminded me that I was sick and couldn't continue, so I went to work for the virus. I became employed by HIV.

And I think, over time dance just slowly went away.

The greatest loss for me was when I pushed away the things that gave me the very most pleasure. And now, to get them back gets complicated. I'm getting older.

And so, this is how it works... I was born May 30, 2008 when I tested positive for HIV... heartbreak is heartbreak...and all that is written in stone, can be changed with breath... and the destiny of stone is dust... and breath makes dust dance.

Production Week

I scheduled a ten-day production week in which Shelly and I spent eight days in the studio creating movement studies, conducted a video recorded^[AM3] interview, and two days of filming consisting of a morning and evening shoot. I paid Shelly an hourly wage in line with industry standards according to the Canadian Assembly of Dance Artists for her time in the studio and a flat performer's fee for the three video shoots. We also agreed that I would pay Shelly's return air fare to Calgary, as she had already made plans to visit Vancouver over the holiday. The honorarium for the initial interview and our agreement to share the byline in any future publications of the scripts were appropriate compensations for the early research, but this production phase required fair compensation for her work as a dance artist. Paying her at industry standards became a meaningful indication for Shelly of my commitment and respect for her contributions as an artist, as well as made the time commitment and travel more feasible for her.

During these ten days, the composer, Cat Toren, visited the studio to see the work and meet with me, and videographer Sophia Wolfe spent three days in the studio with the camera to familiarize herself with the movement studies before the video shoot on set.

Generating movement in the studio

We were both nervous on our first day in the studio together. It was the first time Shelly and I had seen each other in person in over a year even though we had been working intensely online for the past three months. I had been preparing for this moment for two years and had not created in the studio for months, while Shelly was stepping back into the

dance studio after being away for years. Walking into the studio together was a charged moment, especially for Shelly, and I knew it was a potent moment for her by the way she was honouring it. I gave her space, and we quietly warmed up our bodies.

Like the other aspects of the project, I tried not to predetermine how the movement or dance phrases would look and let them emerge as we worked together. I found this a difficult task, because I have an aesthetic in my work where I appreciate simple, expressive movements that draw the viewer into the dancer's performance. As a film set, I chose a bright clean space with white walls and great, unadorned, arching windows. The set was a cathedral of simple lines in which to frame her movements, where almost anything kinetic could happen, but I had to admit, I had hopes the movement would also be simple and meaningful to match my artistic taste. I had a secret dread that the movement Shelly would bring to the improvisations would not fit my taste. In her first improvisation, she interpreted a heartbeat by placing her hand to her chest and having her chest subtly contract beneath it. It was a subtle, simple gesture that spoke to the delicateness of her heart and the suffering it could endure and I knew we were speaking the same kinetic language.

I pulled lines from the scripts that I felt would inspire Shelly to create improvised movement studies for each video. I chose only excerpts that told her story of infection and betrayal and excluded any abstract concepts like criminalization. The following are examples of some excerpts from the Video 1 list:

Unfortunately, or not, I was knowingly infected. Initially, the betrayal was [worse] than the diagnosis itself, because I had been living with someone who knew he was [HIV] positive.

Why didn't I worry about protection longer into our relationship? Why didn't he worry more about using a condom?

[My ex] disappeared for a week when he found out I was diagnosed with HIV. He wouldn't pick up his phone because he was afraid I would charge him.

I spiralled into a dark place, a deep depression. I shaved my head, quit my job, and I couldn't cope for a few months. It shattered any sense I had of the future.

I would read the text to Shelly and she would begin to improvise movement from it. She would take a moment and remember the event from her past, often while closing her eyes, and then followed the impetus of whatever movement came to her. Her process seemed the reverse of the one I had introduced to my students as described in the first chapter; here her memories induced an emotional state that she slipped into and the inspired movements that arose were responses to her emotions. I suspect the new emotional states were a blend of remembered embodied ones and her perspective of them so many years later. Once she had completed an improvisation, I would give feedback as to what worked, or could be further developed. She would improvise again, and we would continue the process of refining in response to what came up for her, and what I saw. Over the eight

days we spent in the studio, we continually refined the studies in this way until we had a selection of polished and set movement studies.

I followed the sensory responses in my body to determine what movements were working; for example, Shelly further developed the earlier mentioned heartbeat gesture by aggressively recoiling from it. This new gesture was like the pain from an open wound that I felt in my chest as well. My mirror neurons fired just as hers did and I experienced sensations that related to my experience with pain and suffering. I determined that a gesture was provocatively working when I had a sensation response in my body. When I coached her to try it again with only a fraction of the effort, I noticed that the more subtle her movements became, the more powerfully resonant the sensory effect I felt in my body. I could immediately imagine a very close camera shot of her chest convulsing from the lightest of finger taps.

Often, we would get lost as we developed the improvisation studies. They would lose their meaning, or improvisations that seemed to have potential would lose their momentum and stop making sense. In each of these cases I could not maintain a sensory connection to the movement, nor would they be kinetically or emotionally meaningful to Shelly. Each time we got stuck we returned to the text to get the improv back on track or start again.

As our work in the studio progressed, we accumulated eight movement studies each per video. The studies were autonomous explorations of a section of text and never intended to link together in a long phrase of continuous movement. I wanted to be able to assemble the studies in the editing suite like a collage of poetic movement scenes. Each study had its own beginning and end, but when Shelly performed them in sequence, an

emotional telling of her story emerged. It was not told in words, but knowing her story already, I could see her story told as she would have felt it.

These studies were built from key events in Shelly's story that she experienced directly, but I wondered what dance footage I would place over the conceptually abstract text concerning criminalization or disclosure. While these portions of the text provide important context to fully understand Shelly's experience, they do not represent actual personal experiences and were difficult for Shelly to improvise from. Any improvisations we attempted based on anything other than her personal experience resulted in movements that were too abstracted. Where improvisations based on personal experiences were located on her body, the conceptual improvisations would be located in geometric patterns on the floor, or in space. My response to them shifted from the sensory reactions I had previously experienced to more cognitive ones. They did not fit with the other studies nor did they contribute to the sensorial experience of Shelly's story I that was trying to craft for the viewer.

As the movement improviser, Shelly's role was to create movements that expressed the emotional telling of her story. My role as choreographer was to give her a framework in which to find those movements and then guide where the improvisations should go next or connect sections of movement together that tell the story. I helped her edit movement that was not working and kept track of how they might fit within the larger context of the video. I influenced her improvisations by accompanying different tracks of movement, changing the tempo or quality of her dance gestures, and directed where the movements would unfold in space. My responsibility was to choreograph her generated movement into

highly refined movement studies, always in collaboration with Shelly, and always in response to my physical sensations.

The video interview

The shoot for the video interview was scheduled on Day Three of our rehearsal and production week. Before Shelly arrived in Vancouver, I had gone through our scripts and devised a series of questions that I thought would prompt her to deliver the message in a conversational manner. I even sent her the questions shortly before she arrived so she could become familiar with them. I was surprised that the new interview was so different from the script we had written. Shelly responded to my questions authentically in the moment without a care for adhering to the script we had made. It made for an engaging and spontaneous interview, but it meant that some of the scripted text was missing and new information arrived that challenged my understanding of her story. Some of my favourite passages from the script would not appear in the video because they were not said in the new interview.

We returned to the studio to continue creating studies. At this time, we only had a few sketches, but it was clear that some of the studies generated from the original text would no longer match the dialogue in the new interview. I decided to continue with our process of generating movement from the original text. While it was not a blueprint to the new video recorded interview, it was the only blueprint I had, and I did not have time to transcribe the new footage and isolate new excerpts before the next rehearsal. I reminded myself that the new interview still told Shelly's story and chose to trust the process I put in

place. I would need to have faith that the emerging elements could be integrated into a cohesive narrative by the end.

My faith was supported by my experience as an artist. I had learned in the ballet company, while waiting for my character's emotional journey to arrive out of my movements and in countless other creative art processes, that I often do not know how my artistic efforts will come together, or if they will even work out in the end. Many times, I have moved forward with an idea without fully understanding it or knowing how to accomplish it, but through determined investigation and a willingness to let ideas grow and change in response to the choices I made, I have realized that something satisfying always arrives. And when it does not, I continue the investigation. I have learned to embrace this part of my creative process. It is never easy and always uncomfortable, because the uneasy, anxious sensations of not knowing if things will work out always accompany being at the stage of not knowing what the result will be.

One day, Shelly came to the studio in a vulnerable state. Something had happened in her personal life that had made her very emotional. It was immediately apparent that when she attempted to physicalize emotional content she could not maintain control of her emotions or physical movements. I was concerned she was emotionally at risk. She insisted I not pull the plug on the rehearsal, but I was able to guide her quickly through the material without allowing her to spend much time in any of the improvisations. After forty-five minutes, she left to recover and returned the next day back to herself, able to physicalize emotions and be controlled and critical. Even though this was an externally motivated event that remained isolated to that day, it brought home how intense an emotional exercise it is to embody extreme personal experiences in the movement of one's own body.

I felt I needed to protect her. The studies were hotly emotional one-minute dances that were tied to specific events in her story. I slightly abstracted the studies by amalgamating them into four two- to three-minute studies, instead of eight one-minute studies. Shelly was still able to find strong emotional connections to them, but they now sat in the location of two events simultaneously and her access to the events became slightly generalized. Her performances in rehearsal seemed to lose some of the ragged emotional edge they had before, while the fewer modified studies portrayed more narrative and were more interesting for Shelly to perform and me to view. They also cut my shot list by half and each take of a study provided more material for Sophia to video and for me to work with in editing.

Shelly's vulnerable day made me consider whether these videos sensationalized her experiences or capitalized on her emotions. I did not want this video, or its creation process to be abusive to Shelly in any way. I created a final image for Video 1 where Shelly stood looking into the camera while she felt the presence of her body. I intended the image to portray Shelly as someone who had suffered but is facing her trials and is able to move forward. The image remains in the final cut, but may not have been necessary as intended, as it is ultimately the dignity and grace of Shelly's performance, and the care we took to frame it, that empowers her as a heroine, rather than a victim.

The Music

New York-based jazz and contemporary classical composer and musician Cat Toren agreed to offer her music to the project. I was introduced to her and her music when she presented at a symposium for socially engaged art. Cat and I share similar thoughts about how art

can have an impact for social justice and her music is open and experimental enough to allow the listener to be open to new ideas. She finds a balance between melody and conventional rhythms that the listener can recognize and grasp, and the free-flowing improvisations that she and her band perform defy expected musical structures. Her jazz and contemporary classical music requires the listener to engage with it, invest of himself and be surprised by it (Nachmanovitch, 1990; Jordan-Haladyn, 2014).

These qualities are why I think contemporary visual art and dance are the right vehicles for this project. They do not denote meaning to the witness by simply stating what is, but they suggest frames of reference the listener or viewer is familiar with, and then upend them by challenging expectation. The sounds and movements are abstracted representations of meaning. They do not lead the audience to understand them in a prescribed way but they require the observer to relate to them from their personal experience and frames of reference to make meaning. I wanted the autonomy of meaning making to be the viewers' act of agency while watching these videos: the videos do not tell the viewer something to believe, they present Shelly's experience accompanied by a sensory experience for viewers to respond to an embodied past. They will then be challenged to make meaning for themselves as they process the meaning of Shelly's story with the meaning they make of their sensorial experience while watching the videos. My hope is that the viewers challenge how they have learned to habitually interpret their sensations, with new meaning making experiences from their sensations in the present.

I purposely chose not to decide on which music tracks I would use until Shelly and I built the movement, and I was prepared for the possibility that the music I would eventually choose for the videos may not become apparent until I started editing. I had a

list of eight tracks from four of Cat's albums and tried them with different studies until we slowly began to settle on tracks that best inspired Shelly's performance. Once we arrived at the shoot, each study had a specific music track to accompany it. Because they were isolated sections of tracks from multiple albums, it was obvious most music and movement pairings could not play together in the final videos. Working this way was a risk because not every study worked with each music track. I deferred the decision to the editing phase but worried that my emergent strategy in the end would back me into a corner where I would be forced to match movement to uncomplimentary music. Again, the uneasy sensations of not knowing the outcome needed to be overcome so I could trust my process.

In previous dance creations for the stage, I would make the music the timeline to which I put movement. I could slow, speed or pause the music, but it would always be the constant keeper of time, and the dance movements would be placed upon it. In these videos the recorded^[AM4] interview would be the timeline to which I would attach the music and images. This choice allowed me to realize that I could set the imagery to the rhythms and pauses in Shelly's voice. This approach emphasized her words and brought the dialogue forward with the intention to cognitively engage the viewer, while congruently the metaphoric elements of the music and dance could engage the viewer's senses.

In the rehearsal studio I discovered that two tracks from different albums complemented each other well. I had an inkling these tracks would work well in Video 2 and they remain in the final cut. But the track I imagined would accompany Video 1 competed with the dialogue at times by making it sound as if Shelly was yelling over the music. Cat supplied me with a new contemporary classical track for solo piano with a quiet, discordant and moody feel that was completely different from the driving jazz trio I had

planned to use. The new music sits under the dialogue and colours my experience with its searching notes that hang in the air and only stands out when a movement or piece of text accentuates it.

The Video Shoot

I chose to shoot Video 1 in the morning so as to utilize the sunlit white space and arched windows of the room. It was a simple set up with Sophia in charge of the cameras, with me directing, and with one artificial light source provided by my lighting technician.

Video 2 was a nighttime shoot that took place the following evening. I needed the second video to have a different look, so if they were shown together, Video 2 would not seem like an extension of Video 1. I designed a landscape of standing lamps with exposed bulbs that I hoped would create an industrial starlit look. Thus, the night shoot required more extensive set preparation, as well as technical considerations around framing the shots. I was fortunate to have a skilled and generous crew to assist me.

I filmed each study from multiple angles and the technical considerations of the video shoot made it difficult to consistently scan my sensation responses to Shelly's performance. My focus was often split between issues of framing, camera focus, set design and keeping the background clear of distractions. Still there were moments when I had physical responses from what I saw on the monitor. The camera's ability to amplify the subtle movements of Shelly's "wounded" chest taps, for example, intensified my sensation responses enough to notice despite the other distractions.

The camera amplified Shelly's movements in other ways. One sequence involved her tracing the palm of her hand over her shoulder and down her arm. I asked Sophia, the videographer, to follow the movement of Shelly's arms with the camera. The camera's movements complemented Shelly's sensual images of touch and instigated sensations of fluid sensuality in my body that heightened my attention.

A moment of magic

When Shelly got excited about something that happened in the studio, I usually received an onslaught of texts from her. They were often random, like lists of popular songs that represented her mood, or catch phrases that I could not always decipher. After the Day One shoot, I received a string of texts about dancing a free improv to Roberta Flack's version of *The First Time Ever I Saw Your Face*. I had previously scheduled into the next day's shot list a free improvisation for Shelly to perform to one of Cat's tracks. The improvisation was not meant to add to or support the narrative and Sophia was instructed to repeatedly bring Shelly in and out of frame in order to catch only flashes of her movement. This take was to provide filler for me to cut and insert throughout the video to give it an overall kinetic sense of movement.

My first reaction to Shelly's music request was an internal eye roll, as the pop song was so removed in mood and structure from Cat's music and my taste. But Shelly had been so generous of herself throughout the project that I was quick to want to do this for her, whether I felt it would end up in the video or not. I downloaded the track she requested and scheduled a take of the free improv to Cat's music, as originally planned, and another to the Roberta Flack music. The take with Cat's music was entirely adequate to my purposes

as visual filler. But when Shelly danced to the Flack track something magical happened. Her movements were fluid and hopeful, but because the music meant something to her, the movements contained so much meaning. I let the improvisation run to the end of the music track, something I had not done for any other take. As she danced, it seemed like I could see all the emotions that we had explored in the studio flow forth, burn bright for a moment, and make way for the next. It felt like an effortless telling of her story through movement, the same story we had painstakingly rehearsed all week.

Sophia and Shelly performed a stunning duet of tracing movement in and out of frame. The free dance nature of the take allowed Shelly to indulge in the sensations of her movement, which seduced sensation responses in me as though I were dancing with her. Her movements aroused a mood of melancholy and I was inspired to have the action of the camera match the dancer. I gently directed Sophia to slow her camera movements and settle longer on Shelly, until she came to a final pose nestled against the edge of the frame. It was a moment when the three of us fell into synchronicity as we improvised together (Nachmanovitch, 1990).

Shelly's improvisation was a gift to the project and I am glad I had an open enough heart to allow it on video. I learned from this moment how important it is to listen to the person telling their story. I prepared plans and aesthetic choices that I felt were right for the project and had almost dismissed Shelly's idea to use a pop song as being able to add anything relevant to the project. Instead, her performance to the pop song touched me because it was meaningful enough to her that she could dance from a place of truth and authenticity (Nachmanovitch, 1990; Ling, 2017).

I eventually wove the improvisation throughout Video 2 by placing clips of it between the movement studies, and the final pose became a satisfying ending to the video. I later realized the improvisation gave Video 2 a unique kinetic feel that differentiated it from Video 1 in a way the nighttime visuals could not do on their own. The power of Shelly's improvisation expanded my vision for the video and became a stronger, more influential presence than the improvisation to Cat's music would have been.

The Video Editing Process

Editing the video interview

Each filmed interview was thirty to seventy minutes long. My initial task was to edit the interviews down to eight to ten minutes each. As discussed earlier, it is common for the music to act as the timeline for choreography, but I decided the interview would be the timeline and attach the music and dance images to it. This choice made Shelly's words the focal point of the video, since I wanted the spoken text to be the grounding force that carried the viewer clearly and comprehensibly through the video.

I focused strictly on phrases that spoke to the themes of the videos in order to pare the new videos down to ten minutes. For Video 1, I focused on dialogue that told her infection story and argued against criminalization. There was a lengthy exposition on the influence of the media on the public's acceptance of the criminalization of HIV that was pertinent; however, in my need to edit away most of the interview, I cut this portion out and chose to focus only on the criminalization arguments that related directly to her personally. I aimed to create an empathetic connection between the viewer and Shelly

through her personal story, and the media examples proved to be one step too removed from her person. When Shelly spoke of larger concepts like these, the tone of the interview changed to that of a lecture and my cognitive mind took precedence over my body sensation responses. My physical sensations were clearly attached to Shelly's personal story.

For Video 2, I focused on sequences where Shelly spoke of turning away from dance and disclosing her status to family and others. I did include an expository sequence explaining how people's impressions are often still based on fear around stories from the onset of AIDS in the late 1980s. I included this section because Shelly related it directly to why people still react negatively when they learn she is HIV-positive.

Attaching the dance images

Once the interview was edited down to around ten minutes, I assembled the dance footage that would be edited over it. The new interview could be organized in segments where Shelly spoke on a particular topic. For example, she began Video 1 with a segment about how she was diagnosed with HIV; she then spoke about her ex-partner's disappearance once he realized he had infected her; this was followed by a section about their relationship, and how his silence was a betrayal, and so on.

My initial plan was to weave dance imagery with footage from a sit-down interview. I suspected the viewer would relate to Shelly as a person and a storyteller by seeing her speak early on with the same physical cues one is accustomed to in an intimate conversation. I gradually gave more time to the dance imagery as the video progressed. I could then judiciously show the interview footage to highlight key ideas and concepts. The interview footage also helped me control the pace of the video: it gave me freedom to cut

between dance images that did not sit well together on their own and also allowed me to slow the pace of the video after a thickly edited section of dance by creating visual space and an emotional breather for the viewer. I realized early on in my editing that, when I set the movement to the rhythm of Shelly's cadence of speech, the dance cuts transitioned smoothly and were less jarring. I often edited with the music muted, so that I could hear how the movement interacted with her words. This choice brought the text to the forefront of the music and largely prevented the two audio files from competing with each other.

Choosing the new images for the text was done intuitively. I had hunches that certain images would work with particular text segments and saw how they reacted together when I laid a sequence of dance over a segment of dialogue. My intuition was based on gauging the emotional intensity of a text segment and choosing movement sequences that I felt were emotionally complementary; for example, I knew the wounded chest sequence in Video 1 should accompany the segment where she spoke of betrayal. I experience a kind of electric stabbing sensation in my chest while watching her chest convulsions that match the intensity of her description of discovering that the man she loved and trusted had knowingly infected her. These two elements made for an obvious pairing for me. In this way, I placed wide shots of movement studies across segments of dialogue to roughly sketch out how the video would look from beginning to end.

There were movement studies and interview segments that did not obviously go with anything. The section where Shelly began tapping one hand into another, followed by a sequence of arm caresses and highlighted by pressing her hands into her groin no longer had its originating text included in the interview footage. I also had a segment of text

explaining the concept of $U=U^3$ that was never used to generate movement. The sensation responses I received from the repetitive tapping reminded me of impatience or mild anxiety, and when she dipped her hands below the frame and pulled them back in, I was reminded of someone trying to hold their emotions in check. The images did not directly connect with the words, but when I paired the segments of footage, the sensations I felt from the dance were congruous to the meaning behind the text. The footage sections combined to infer more meaning than they held on their own.

As I began to work with the pairing, I noticed that certain evocative movements and phrases became emphasized due to the proximity of their location on the timeline. For example, there was a moment when Shelly abruptly opened her elbows with her hands behind her head and turned her face from the camera. Nearby, on my roughly sketched outline in the editing program, I noticed that the word “criminalized” was emphasized with emotional weight. When I placed the elbow move over the word, her movement became overlaid with an emotional connotation. In fact, the emotional hit was so potent I was jarred by it, as if being pushed back, so I softened the effect by choosing a shot of the same image where the camera moved away from her, thus allowing my body to continue to lean into her story.

As I further edited the sequence I began to notice that the emotional hits I received from the movement were informed as much by the text as the text was informed by the movement. The sequence contained two narratives: an audio narrative describing why it makes no sense to criminalize someone for non-disclosure of an STI if they cannot transmit the virus; and a visual one of Shelly experiencing a deeply personal and painful moment.

³ $U=U$ means “undetectable = untransmittable” and refers to when a person’s viral load is managed to levels so low as to be non-transmittable to another (CATIE, 2017).

When I watch these elements edited together, I hear her speak about the new science of HIV, but I am also seeing how Shelly is affected by the issues. The images personalized the issue, and I witnessed through Shelly's emotional movements how legislation affects people's lives. The overlay of dance images made personal to her the concepts of U=U that used to only engage me cognitively in a way that I could now feel in my body through my senses. This is the discovery I had hoped to make, where public service announcements for HIV/AIDS appealed to the intellect with limited transformational effect, this video segment demonstrated how the same message can be conveyed to appeal to the emotional self and provide an embodied experience.

I completed a first draft of the videos by pairing movement studies with the interview dialogue they originated from, when I could, and paired previously unrelated dance and interview footage, when I had to. The imagery and the dialogue became so integrally interconnected that I could accept her emotional experience told through dance as an extension of what she said, and what she said became informed by the emotional context the dance imagery conveyed. My emotional experiences connect to her words and allow me to experience her story, and her arguments, in a sensationally embodied way. I am drawn emotionally into her story and hear her words more intently.

Inviting Emergent Elements by Design

A second edit

After a month of painstaking editing I had a first draft of each video. The images worked well, but the dialogue was relentless. I had forced so much spoken information into ten

minutes that there was no space for me to reflect on what I heard. I re-edited the interview footage in Video 1 with a colleague who was experienced with video editing. Together, we were able to cut out text that was redundant or superfluous to the heart of her story. Our efforts shortened the length of the video and allowed me to place space inside the dialogue so that phrases could land with emphasis and give the viewer time to process an idea before moving on to the next one. The re-edit gave the message clarity and offered more opportunity to absorb and experience the story. I not only removed sections of footage but also rearranged dialogue on the timeline, which forced me to re-edit the dance footage.

Once again, sections of dialogue that had been connected to specific images no longer matched. For example, in the first edit the background story of how Shelly met her ex-partner and how their relationship evolved was connected to footage of slow caresses of her face and arms. The pleasant nostalgia her movements evoked mirrored the recollection of a budding romance. Much of that dialogue was now missing, so I chose to attach the arm caresses to the betrayal dialogue and soon followed with the wounded chest images. In the new edit, the emotional weight of the text transformed the gentleness of the arm caresses into a new experience that creates ominous sensations of anxiety and anticipation in me.

I had to re-imagine how the dance imagery would interact with the new interview timeline. I kept connected pieces together when I could, and otherwise rearranged the dance images to new sections of dialogue. The images and words informed each other in their new arrangements and subtly altered my sensation responses; however, the larger meaning and emotional narrative of the video was not changed. The re-edit changed how Shelly's story unfolded and how I received it, but it did not change the story itself.

The re-edit became an exercise in forced emergence because I did not anticipate the need to rearrange the footage once more. The new associations subtly brought new emotional experiences to the footage that I could not have foreseen and the space between dialogue allows me to feel and be affected by my senses.

I would not have had the flexibility to re-edit the video had I not built the invitation of emergent elements into the design of all aspects of the creative process. I built my footage and considered the music in ways that invited emergent possibilities by building movement sections that did not need to be joined to other movement sections or a particular section of dialogue to be understood. I used Cat's music exclusively, save for the one Flack improv, but never set movement to particular sections of music. I shot each movement study from multiple angles and distances that gave me the freedom to choose only portions of movement footage in editing. My emergent design strategy provided materials that once entered into the editing suite were flexible and somewhat interchangeable. They were more like building blocks to work with, rather than a set piece of choreography put on video.

The materials needed to be assembled in a particular way for them to make sense, but my process of discovering how they made sense had to be emergent. I had to have the freedom to arrange them differently than I originally imagined, and I had to listen to my sensation responses to discover what worked. In this way, I made space for the collaboration between Shelly's story and the dance imagery to make meaning together. When a music track I intended to use competed with Shelly's dialogue, the process allowed me to introduce a track of Cat's music I had not previously considered. I had expected a lush driving jazz score to move Video 1 along, and ended up with an understatedly sparse

and emotional contemporary piano solo that gave it a completely different emotional setting better suited to the dialogue.

Shelly's story was the most focal element of the entire project and all the emergent materials we built served that story. Every sensation response I had to imagery had to be tied in some way to the story Shelly told, and they had to be arranged in a way that best conveyed her experience. The re-editing process was necessary to better explain Shelly's story and the flexibility of the materials were necessary to respond to the needs of the storytelling.

The final edit of the video achieved my early vision for the project, in the sense that it tells Shelly's story and is emotionally portrayed by her in dance. It even looks the way I imagined it would with the bright-white walls and arched windows of Video 1, or the intimately illuminated nighttime landscape of Video 2 and the simple, emotionally charged dance. But I never could have anticipated the content of what Shelly said or the movements that she performed on video, or how they combined to make me feel and empathize with her. Shelly's story is more complex than I anticipated, and the content of the video is far more emotionally sophisticated and complex than I had the capacity to imagine on my own. At the outset of the project, my ability to envision the videos was limited to what I already knew from things I had seen or created before. It was the emergent qualities that surfaced during the processes of editing the scripts, generating movement and editing the video that opened possibilities for the videos beyond what I could conceive from my limited frame of reference. And what emerged in our process helped Shelly tell her story more articulately and emotionally on video than she could in our early conversations.

Chapter 4

The Shelly Videos: Artifacts of Artful Embodiment

Inserted on this page will be the two videos once the thesis is uploaded to the SFU thesis archive.

Video 1. The Betrayal Was to the Bone

Insert video upload here.

Video 2. The Heart Is a Reversible Organ

Insert video upload here.

Chapter 5

Open Heart Dialogue

Storytelling Is a Reciprocal Activity for the Teller and the Listener

My role in the creation of these two videos was to be both the listener and the teller. They are Shelly's stories to tell and my job was to frame them in the artful context of a dance video. I chose to understand Shelly and guide the artful telling of her story by listening with my body. In order to generate an empathetic response to her, I attempted to feel her story through my experienced physical sensations. I needed to interpret those sensations in the context of what she shared against my lived experience, and I needed my understanding of her to expand so I could know her beyond my limited frames of reference, which then expanded the scope of the project. I hoped that if I created videos that could provoke physical experiences of empathy towards her on my body and mind then they could do the same for others and perhaps expand their understanding and perception of Shelly as she negotiates living with HIV. I hoped an empathetic understanding of Shelly's experience living with HIV would challenge the habitual and learned reactions to HIV/AIDS that result in discriminatory behaviours.

In our collaboration, Shelly's actions created certain sensations on my body that I interpreted as meaningful, and I offered suggestions for her to incorporate into the process that I thought would enhance or clarify those sensations for me in the context of her story. Shelly would then re-interpret them with new actions, and slowly I began to comprehend

more of what she shared with me. This was how the conversation between us – the expression of body, mind and emotion – proceeded and I hoped would extend to others viewing the videos in the future.

Throughout the creating and editing of the videos, I sought to work in the service of the story and in service of the art through which we told her story. I served the story by listening to my felt sensations and emotion responses moment to moment and by being attentive to Shelly, to her story in movement, and to what mattered to her in the telling.

Sensation Awareness as a Means of Communication

In Chapter One, I felt how certain movements in my body could recall an embodied emotional state by their similarity to recorded physical and emotional sensations experienced in a previous emotional event (Damasio and Meyer, 2008). Furthermore, I experienced how witnessing movement sensations in another body fired my neural responses and recalled an embodied emotional state, just as it had earlier when I performed the movement myself. Shelly's performance in the videos, enhanced by the choreography, music, videography and video editing amplified the visual cues that activated my emotional sensation responses. I received a sensation experience within my body of Shelly's story through witnessing her movements in the context of the aesthetic elements of the videos.

My sensation responses were not direct transcriptions of Shelly's emotional experience on my body. I did not experience what she did. I could only know what my experiences meant by what I already knew based on my experiences and my own ability of empathic imagination. My responses were interpretations of her experience based on my capacity to relate to her, to her story, and to her movements in the telling. The sensations I

felt in my body while creating and witnessing the video needed to be interpreted against my embodied experience in order to be made meaningful. I could not possibly relate to Shelly's emotional experience exactly because her experience is unique to her, but my archive of embodied knowledge could be expanded by my experience of her.

The place where I, the engaged viewer, and the video met was the interstitial space where a new understanding of Shelly and the issues she faces could form. The habitual embodied responses I held pertaining to those living with HIV/AIDS was challenged by the new emotion sensations generated in response to the aesthetic qualities of the video. My sensations responded to Shelly's words in company with my emotional reactions to the music, the architecture and quality of the choreography, the kinetic motion of the video editing, and every other element I engaged with in the videos. My previously embodied understanding of the world had to be reconciled with the new sensation data I felt while watching the video. Each point of engagement became an invitation for new understanding to occur.

For example, earlier in my inquiry when I experienced Mr. Weekes's description of shoplifting for hire, I had an immediate and automatic sensation response of resistance in my chest. My response was biased in the sense that it was inscribed by my upbringing and my indoctrination to believe that theft is wrong. As a result, had I not been actively aware of my sensations, I would not have noticed that the innate bias I held against him was blocking my ability to empathize with him. When I inserted the dance clips, I disrupted the biased sensation with a fluid one and was able to be physically receptive to his story. Before the disruption, the only meaning I could make was that theft is wrong, therefore he was wrong. The new understanding I came to, once my fluid sensation response allowed

me to embody his story, was that theft is wrong and his suffering with poverty and addiction was causing him to make these choices; I arrived at a more empathetic response. The new meaning is the one I wished I had come to at first viewing but could not embody until after the disruption of my initial bias.

In the video project, Shelly's stories and the issues she conveyed were located on her body and gave me a direct sensation experience of her, through her dancing and her story, that directly challenged how I received her. When my sensational experience, in tandem with the message of the videos, differed from my biased and embodied assumptions, I was able to reconcile the new sensation experience by expanding my understanding of her and of her experience.

For example, it took me a long time to see Shelly's point behind why pressing criminal charges against someone who knowingly infected her with HIV perpetuates stigma around HIV. I understood how the threat of being caught would stop someone from getting tested in the first place, as if their ignorance of their condition would absolve them from the responsibility of infecting another. However, I always struggled with the notion of Shelly, or someone like her, not holding the partner accountable and receiving justice for the injury they suffered. Hearing her explanation in the video accompanied by the emotional portrayal of her dancing offers me a glimpse of how she experiences the issue. My habitual response to her words was that she was abused, and she needed to be vindicated. Now I have a new appreciation for the emotional struggle and pain individuals in her position live with. When she speaks about how some people charge their partners out of revenge as her fingers trace their way up her torso from her groin, I get a sense of how their pain is inscribed on their bodies. It helps me realize that putting another person

in jail will not eradicate that pain, and how the stigma criminalization perpetuates will still be felt on their bodies. So when Shelly declares, “It would have ruined his life, and probably my life too,” I am able to accept that statement. I do not have the experiential capacity to understand her completely, but this section of the video allows me to embody enough of what she is saying to challenge my predetermined reaction. After reconciling the sensations I felt by her words, the new experience has expanded my capacity to interpret them differently and brings me closer to understanding her than I had originally.

My embodiment of Shelly’s story transformed my understanding of her and others in similar situations. The habitual conclusions I was indoctrinated to arrive at were disrupted by new sensory responses that could not co-exist with them without an adjustment. My only options were to reject the new experience outright or reconcile with it. The dance allowed me to feel her story on my body, which immediately added these new emergent sensations and understanding to my embodied history. Her words and the dance spoke to my mind and my emotional experience as a holistic encounter and gave me permission to broaden my experiential understanding and capacity to receive and perceive. The experience mediated by the video enabled me to experientially know something new.

Creating the Videos Was a Reciprocal Activity Between Us

I used my physical sensations to guide a process that permitted Shelly an artful voice to tell her story of discrimination on video. My sensation awareness became a means to communicate between Shelly and me and ultimately to communicate Shelly’s story in a transformative way to others. In order for our creative process to be capable of providing an empathetic response to Shelly’s story for future viewers of the videos, the process

needed to inspire an empathic response for me. My constant task as an artist and collaborator was to remain open to my sensations and to allow them to guide my choices throughout the process. As artist and as researcher, I had to listen deeply to what mattered, to what emerged, and to abandon expectations.

During the initial interview, my sensations were a guide to be a respectful listener, so Shelly could trust that she could share her story with me. When my sensations shifted to respond to my worries rather than attend to Shelly, I noticed my attention had focused on my goals and not on what was said, and I was able to adjust my expectations for the interview and become more open and receptive to what I heard. The disconnect arose when I felt sensations other than those that felt warm and receptive towards my interviewee, attending to the disconnect enabled me to consider expanding my vision of what the video could become in order for it to include what was important to her.

An attitude of being receptive, warm and open towards Shelly was necessary in order for me to feel sensation responses and to be guided by them while we generated the movement studies together. I offered Shelly the materials to work with and then paid attention to what she created by sensing my physical responses. I could only be this receptive to her by offering her my attention as an invitation to express herself and to remain open to receive whatever she offered in return. I offered choreographic suggestions or initiated discussions based on my sensation responses, and together we gradually crafted her gestures into a sequence of, what was for us both, emotional storytelling.

My attitude of openness and reciprocal engagement also significantly influenced how I imagined the videos into being. In order to put the video project in motion I had an initial vision of what the videos would be from the very beginning. That vision was

restricted to what I could conceive of based on what I knew from my own experiences in life and as an artist. My vision for the project could only expand by including Shelly more and more in a creative process that unfolded as we worked together. Whenever I remained open to hear what was important to her, I was able to make room in the creative process for her to express herself. Shelly took up this space by contributing more text as we refined the script, or by improvising movement that was meaningful to her and suggesting music that would inspire the expressive depth of her performance. The more I included Shelly, the more I could sensorially respond to what she shared and the better I understood her story, which enlarged my capacity to amend the creative process in order to serve it.

As important as it was to feel sensations, it was equally important to notice when I did not, particularly when my sensations were no longer responding to the dialogue between Shelly and me. Often, I experienced these moments as mind-centred ones, where my reasoning and critiquing had usurped my ability to sense my body and I became “more in my head.” When this happened, I stopped responding holistically and became disengaged from Shelly in some way. Moments like these revealed a tendency in me to ignore my embodied participation and often exposed moments when my goals and ambitions for the project had superseded my desire to listen and respond, thus fracturing my body/mind awareness and integrity. Working holistically required me to respond to the moment, which often shifted my plans and required me to trust that the choices I made in response to what I felt would be right for the project. The choices that came to me and arose from listening to my body were acts of intuition. The trust in my body response guided my intuition in all aspects of the project, whether I was involved in creating dance, editing text or editing video.

My Responsibility as an Artist

My responsibility as an artist was to craft Shelly's story into an artifact that would be meaningful to someone else. In order for it to be meaningful to others, they would need to respond to it emotionally. However, I could only know what I responded to, so my artistic choices were made to enhance my understanding and felt experience of Shelly's story. Choices like ensuring a comprehensible narrative; locating movements on the body and not abstracted in other spaces; keeping the music, videography and set simple, yet inspiring; and how I arranged the spoken interview and dance imagery on video to inform one another.

I made artistic choices that I knew from my experience of watching and creating art would move me emotionally with sensation responses. My aesthetic values come from profound embodied encounters with art in my past that inform my artistic choices in the present. These values continue to characterize my work and are part of the embodied context that I use to interpret what works artistically while I create.

My aesthetic values informed how I organized and communicated the story to provoke my emotional responses. Because I knew I would respond to a certain way of moving, a stylistic look on camera, or a type of narrative arc, these became tools in my toolbox to portray Shelly's story. But my aesthetic values and habitual method of working also restricted my vision for the video. When I began the interviews, I noticed myself not only pay more attention to narrative that already fit my aesthetic idea of what the videos would become, but actively direct the conversation towards that type of dialogue that would suit my pre-conceptions. Once I became aware of this tendency by monitoring my

sensation response, I began to value the rest of what was said. As a result, my aesthetic vision for the videos grew from a simple portrayal of discriminatory events to one that included discourse around larger issues like criminalization and disclosure. As my capacity to embody more of Shelly's story evolved, so did my capacity to imagine how the story could be told on video.

Designing the possibility of emergent elements

Designing the possibility of emergent elements into the process opened the door for me and the project to expand, encompassing more of Shelly's experience. I needed to invite opportunities for the emergence of new ideas and understanding to surface throughout the project. I had to release expectations by how I designed our creative process to unfold and constantly allowed the creative process to evolve. I chose to work in a way that was flexible and responsive by not making choices that were predetermined. We built a script that I knew would never appear on video but used it as a guide to refine our message. We built movement phrases that could exist over different sections of text, and my choice to not set movement to one music track gave me the freedom to later re-edit the interview and dance images in different arrangements and to different tracks of music.

I balanced the interplay of remaining open to respond to Shelly's offerings and not predetermining the result with the need to have a clear vision of what the video could be, so I could plan what I would do to get there. Being open and receptive to Shelly's engagement made space for her to influence me – and the project – and it allowed for new ideas to emerge that were necessary to serve the evolving story, which allowed my vision for the project to evolve. In order to lead the process, I needed a concrete-enough vision of

the final product to move towards, and then to be willing and flexible enough to re-envision it each time a new idea emerged. I was constantly imagining the final result, responding to what Shelly offered and then re-imagining the final result to serve the evolving needs of the story. There was the possibility such a fluid approach could derail the project with tangents and indulgences, but I was able to keep the process on track by searching for what choices resulted in sensation responses that served the needs of the story.

An example of how I simultaneously followed and evolved my plans was after the introduction of the new video interview. I knew the new narrative no longer included the text that originated a number of the movement studies. When we returned to the studio, I continued following my plan of generating movement from the original text because I needed a structure in place to continue our work in the studio. However, because I knew the movement studies would now have to play over different texts, I began to re-imagine how they might be assembled into the videos and how that might affect their interpretation. My confidence to move forward in this way required some faith emboldened by my past experience with art making.

It was through the invitation of emergent qualities that I realized how Shelly's emotional dance performance, when placed over the contextual information of criminalization and HIV, could provide me with an emotional experience of that information. The holistic experience of that information is what I missed when reading the HIV public service announcements that struggled to provide a lasting impression on me. The pairing of Shelly's performance and the contextual information also expressed the complexity and the nuance of her story in ways I could never have known how to conceive of or portray on my own. These realizations were what this inquiry was hoping to uncover,

and I would never have come upon them on my own without them emerging as they did in collaboration with Shelly.

Epilogue

I have always been somewhat shy, especially with new relationships. When I conceived of this project and imagined myself interviewing people with HIV with the intention of telling their stories, the realization that I would need to connect with them was daunting. Even in my imagination at that early stage, I did what I always do with new people I meet. I set up boundaries in my mind that would keep those who I interviewed at an emotional arms-length. Close enough for me to be professional and courteous, yet, far enough that I could keep a comfortable emotional distance, or so I thought.

Choosing to work with my sensations, thankfully, made such distancing impossible. The very nature of this work is to allow myself to notice how I respond to Shelly through my body. As Shelly explored what mattered to her over the past two years of our creative process and I remained open to experience what she shared, I noticed the protective bubble I had set up slowly become more porous (Ling, 2017). Our relationship became professional and collegial, but it is also one of care and consideration. Now that the facade of the distant researcher and research subject has been long abandoned, I realize that my protective measures born of a lifelong shyness were unnecessary; I could experience another person through my sensation responses and not be overwhelmed. I could work closely with Shelly, investigate an emotionally complex and difficult story, and be concerned for her safety and wellbeing throughout the process, without bearing the emotional burden of carrying her story myself.

I could witness her story through the emotional responses I felt in my body sensations without becoming subsumed by them. I could connect and empathize with her

and remain the artist collaborator. Not an impartial artist, but a caring, sensitive artist with the ability to look closely at the emotional material at hand, and still removed enough to see it from a distance.

The connection I have formed with Shelly has enriched me, rather than taxed me. My experience of her has expanded my perception, and I am better for it. I received the unexpected gift of gradually gaining a better understanding of Shelly, and myself, in the course of making a meaningful piece of art.

I learned through this research what it means to be an artist researcher in an artistic endeavour of inquiry in the receiving and telling of difficult stories. I learned that to engage through sensation awareness as inquiry, meaning making and storytelling is an emergent reciprocal process of listening, receiving and offering. In order to be open to receive sensations on my body, I needed to focus my attention on Shelly with warmth and empathy and I realized early on during our research together that such a generosity of attention would invite things to emerge I was not capable of anticipating. My responsibility to maintain my empathetic attitude required me to adjust constantly and willingly to what surprised, startled or dismayed me. The sensations that guided me, born from my attitude of empathy, manifested an artwork of words, music and images that combine in such a way that the sensations I experience when I view the videos result in an empathetic response. My hope is that the videos will provide an embodied empathetic response in others who view the videos, as well.

An empathetic response to Shelly's story, to anyone's story that we encounter, lies in our willingness to grant an attitude of openness and to allow this new embodied

experience, facilitated by an artistic encounter, to challenge learned habitual and embodied beliefs. The art makes us feel, and now it is up to us, if we are willing, to allow the experience to touch our emotions and hopefully transform our understanding of Shelly to know her and ourselves better.

Resources

Table of Figures for Chapter 2

Figure 1. Retrieved from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Patrick_Chan

Figure 2. Retrieved from <http://coffeenclothes.com/editorial/fashion-photography-runs-on-cold-brew-just-like-you/>

Figure 3. Retrieved from

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Skyscraper_Kotelnicheskaya_naberezhnaya.jpg

Figure 4. Kandinsky, W. 1923. Watercolour. Retrieved from <http://www.abstract-art-framed.com/famous-abstract-art.html>

Figure 5. Retrieved from

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Life_is_alone_fight.jpg

Figure 6. Phillips, W. Photograph.

Figure 7. Retrieved from <https://www.flickr.com/photos/matthieu-aubry/2320807709>

Figure 8. Lindsey, J. n.d. Black-and-white photograph. Retrieved from <https://modernartetc.com/products/abstract-art-photography->

Figure 9. Retrieved from <https://www.archdaily.com/70482/surrey-city-centre-library-by-bing-thom-architects>

Figure 10. Retrieved from <http://www.lib.sfu.ca/about/initiatives/wac-bennett-library-renewal/history>

Figure 11. Phillips, W. Photograph.

Figure 12. Pagani, C. Retrieved from <http://pictures-and-images.net/content/result-abstract-art-white.html>

Figures 13, and 14. Phillips, W. Photograph.

Figure 15. Retrieved from <http://www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/cocktail-bar-boss-held-teenager-10037988>

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