



DANCE/MOVEMENT THERAPY FACES MULTIPLE TRANSITIONS

PAMELA FAIRWEATHER, MA, ADTR*

The purpose of this article is to examine Dr. Irma Dosamantes Beaudry's ideas concerning the field of dance/movement therapy as they are presented in her article entitled "Reconfiguring Identity" (Dosamantes Beaudry, 1997). Additionally, the focus of this commentary is to highlight a vision for the future of dance/movement therapy (DMT) and its collaborative efforts with other creative arts therapies (CAT) and professional disciplines. Before proceeding, I would like to thank Dr. Dosamantes Beaudry for her invitation to write this article, for acting as a mentor and for all her support over the years.

Summary of Reconfiguring Identity

In her paper, Dosamantes Beaudry traces the development of DMT in this century. This development includes the influences of the ancient role of dance in healing, the modern dance-based pioneers of the field, humanistic psychology, psychodynamic developmental and psychoanalytic theory, the American Dance Therapy Association and the introduction of embodied experience into the medical model treatment equation. She then discusses the current impact of fiscal and managed health care crises on the DMT field and its practitioners that focus on funding cuts for mental health treatment, closure of educational programs and managed care's move toward a cost-effective/optimal outcome treatment base. Finally, she suggests some possible professional theoretical and educational directions open to DMT in the future and describes potential alliances, CAT licensure, international development, alternative, preventive, social-activist treatment models and educational modifications.

DMT's Current Developmental Position

Trends in DMT, Health Care and Strategies for Continued Viability

At present, DMT faces several unique developmental challenges pertaining to reassessment of its professional identity and "greater relatedness to an existing complex outside world" (Dosamantes Beaudry, 1997). In the beginning phases of professional development the original creative-movement base aligned with psychological theory served the profession well by sponsoring employment in traditional mental health settings. However, because of economic political and health care shifts DMT must now entertain alternative strategies for continued professional growth and viability.

The reasons for this position come into focus when considering that trends in mental health treatment often seem antithetical to DMT's creative dance, humanistic psychology and psychoanalytic underpinnings. As the medical settings where most DMTs practice usually require them to adopt a medical model perspective that emphasizes diagnostic criteria and demands brief-term treatment, the elusive quality of embodied experience makes the effects produced by this medium difficult to document in terms of rigorous outcome studies demanded by the managed care system. An overriding historical concern in the DMT field has been the need for continued and rigorous outcome studies to "prove" the effectiveness of DMT practices. As one potential coping strategy, some DMTs who are trying to keep their practices

*Pamela Fairweather is a lecturer for the University of California Los Angeles Department of World Arts and Cultures, Graduate Dance/Movement Therapy Program, and for the California State University Long Beach, Departments of Dance and Educational Psychology.

alive amid these health care shifts have suggested holding outcome seminars to assist dance therapists in quantifying the quality of their treatment in a language that will be accepted by health care management. They also are calling for a DMT definition that operationally defines its competencies and markets the skills unique to DMT (Cort, Kirschenmann & Lawson, 1996; Fraenkel, Armeniox, Kleinman & Kondziolka, 1996).

Dosamantes Beaudry points out that the influence of managed care with its focus on short-term treatment with optimal outcome has caused "many practitioners to question their professional future under such a system." From an optimistic perspective it can be speculated that managed care's move toward cost effectiveness and, therefore, the hiring of masters-level providers could augur "well for dance therapists who are licensed as health care providers in their state." A key point for discussion related to the trend of hiring masters-level providers then focuses on the issue of *licensing* and certification of DMTs on state and national levels. For many, this concern is directly related to the nature of DMT's economic survival as DMTs lose their jobs or are prohibited from practicing privately unless licensed. The complexity of this situation is daunting because all states do not require licensure and because of the considerable variation from state to state regarding training, degrees and requirements for licensing.

ADTA and NCATA Investigate Counseling Affiliation and Licensure

An American Dance Therapy Association (ADTA) task force and the National Coalition of the Arts Therapies Association (NCATA) have taken on this problem by investigating possible affiliation with counseling through the American Counseling Association (ACA) and the National Board for Certified Counselors (NBCC) liaisons that would lead to national-level credentialing and recognition as counselors (Armeniox & Benshoff, 1995). Potential benefits of these affiliations are that they would allow DMTs in some states to have greater access to licensure possibilities while allowing DMTs in other states to achieve board-level certification through the development of a nationally recognized standardized examination of competency, both of which are first steps in state-level licensure legislation (Armeniox & Benshoff, 1995; Pallaro, 1996a). This work has caused extreme divergence of opinion among DMTs because it raises fundamental questions regarding the very na-

ture of our professional identity. In considering the outcome of such a collaboration and its long-term consequences, we must be reminded that when we look for security within the auspices of a larger outside organization we run the risk of occluding our unique focus as CATs. Varied opinions have been voiced by DMTs ranging from Siegel (1996, pp. 13-14) who states, "There are many reasons why I would regret such a move. . . we would be selling ourselves short. . . [with a] frittering away of our substance on an alliance with another profession," to Pallaro (1996b, p. 14) who comments, "Collaboration with the NBCC would ensure us more power and status without losing our identity. . . support counseling certification for more opportunities for dance/movement therapists in the health care field."

Other alternatives besides that of alliance with counseling include the choice of some dance therapists pursuing additional graduate training in mainstream professions that are licensed in their states and ADTA's move to affiliate with other creative arts therapists to "wield greater political influence and to jointly pursue a state-level Creative Art Therapy license" (Dosamantes Beaudry, 1997). Although it is apparent that our combined unique orientation based on a creative artistic approach to therapy would offer the "ideal" license, states such as California, which have stringent and restrictive laws regarding the practice of psychotherapy, are currently legislatively close-minded about creating any new state regulated licenses for masters-level practitioners (Pallaro, 1996a). How long these doors will remain closed is unknown and places CATs in the position of having to work on alternative solutions during the interim. It is important to recognize that other states that are transitioning into greater specification of services and requirements for therapeutic practice are more open to creating a unique CAT license or to include CATs in their by-laws for psychotherapy practice (Armeniox & Benshoff, 1995; Pallaro, 1996a). Because of the eventuality of having a CAT license in some states while not in others, we may see DMTs move to locations that offer such opportunities. Also, it is important to bear in mind that those states that do approve a CAT license will set a precedent for including such a licensing option in other states.

Alternative Treatment Models and Potential Applications

Clearly the field of DMT is in flux and finding it necessary to open its borders through collaborative

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