

# **LIFE AS SOMATIC PRACTICE**

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## Abstract

Somatics refers to a broad field of ontologies, epistemologies, and methodologies that bring attention to the first-person subjective, sensorial experience of life. United in the belief that “human movement and body-mind (bodily) wisdom are fundamental to life itself” (Lobel & Brodie, 2006, pg. 69), somatic practices bring one’s awareness to their internal sensations, movements and experiences through “the practice of directing non-judgmental, open attention to one’s body and listening to its messages” (Eddy, 2016, p. 12).

Although the vast, varied and growing field of somatics aims to dissolve notions of a separate body and mind, there are subtle separating tendencies that can limit its access and applicability. These include considering cognitive experience separate from sensorial experience, isolating internal experience from external movement, reliance on external expertise, prescribed environmental conditions, and tacit perpetuation of authoritarian educational systems. This research intends to expand the field of somatics even further by dissolving these divisive proclivities and offering bridges between somatics and our day-to-day lives.

The research asks ‘What if the awareness of the experience and movement in our bodies was regarded as not only important, but foundational in our lives, and something we had access to all the time?’ “Embodied research methods that stem from embodied epistemology are necessary, not only for the identity of the field, but for its survival” (Tantia, 2019, p.136) and this research offers a novel somatic practice-as-research approach by taking movement improvisation practice beyond the stage and studio and into all of life (Dowler, 2019, Mees, 2020). Specifically, the research explores how a ‘movement score’ can provide a somatically grounded methodology through all stages of research, from inception through implementation and representation.

In dance and movement improvisation, a score intentionally limits the frame to explore new possibilities within it (Nachmanovitch, 1990), choosing threads to play with while still remaining aware of the larger picture and entanglement of these threads (Barad, 2007). This dissertation demonstrates how improvisation, and the use of score as structure, is an emergent, mixed-method, arts-informed, reflective, and evocative (Pelias, 2004) method in its own right, overlapping ontologically and epistemologically with autoethnography (Spry, 2011), interpretive phenomenology/hermeneutics (van Manen, 2006, Sheets-Johnstone, 2015), heuristic inquiry (Moustakas, 1990), embodied narrative analysis (Sparkes & Smith, 2012) and a spiritual research orientation (Williamson & Sellers-Young, 2019).

Through this framing, the research translates tenets of somatic and dance practices, which are often non-verbal, to the realm of the day-to-day, where language is a regular part of our movements. Working within a life-as-movement ontology (LaMothe 2015), which recognises the inherent movement in all of life, this research explores how we can conceive of language as a score that frames our experience and movement (Ong, 1982, Lakoff & Johnson, 1980) and how this orientation opens up new possibilities of movement and the expansion of somatics.

In order to explore these concepts in practice, the research was both autoethnographic and participatory, consisting of personal practice and journaling as well as a ten-week exploration with 20 participants. The participant exploration consisted of a semi-structured interview, video and written invitations via email to explore somatic practice in daily life, written and oral participant feedback, and an unstructured final interview. Phenomenologically oriented and filtered through the researcher's somatic experience and awareness, this dissertation aims to evocatively present, inspire, and open possibilities instead of providing analysis and answers.

The research findings are presented through a variety of evocative and somatically-grounded writing scores. The plurality of writing scores offers the reader a 'crystallisation' (Richardson, 2000)

of the research, presenting multiple subjectivities and vantage points of the autoethnography, content of the ten-week exploration, and presentation of the participants before, during and after the somatic practice exploration.

The research effectively demonstrates how somatics can transcend some of its limitations by empowering inner knowing and bringing praxes into all aspects of life, including research and language. This research shows how score as research method contributes a transformational approach to somatic research methods, offering an alternative to critical methods. As opposed to focusing on issues, problems and constraints, the method of score starts from what is working to grow and increase somatic awareness through our lives, effectively expanding the reach and applicability of somatics.

## **Dedication**

To the 'Alexanders' in my life, the 'helpers of mankind' I've been blessed with in my lineage:

my Father and my Son.

## Acknowledgements

Although this is what you are reading first, it is what I'm writing last and it's an incredible opportunity to reflect on all that has made this work possible.

I have a tendency to feel on my own in the world and can have stories that I have to do it all by myself. Sometimes the many hours of solitary work on this project has helped me reinforce this erroneous notion when all I need to do is look around me to begin to apprehend the countless beings who have contributed to all I'm able to do. I'm privileged indeed to have had the opportunity and capacity for a years-long deep dive into a doctoral study; the home, the food, the sustenance, the community to care for myself and my child to do work that really matters to me; the freedom to question and contemplate and explore and the encouragement and support to do so. A doctoral program has been no small feat and I'm beyond blessed to have been able to be in one.

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As a voracious learner I have been so fortunate to have had so many supportive teachers in my life. Including my grade 8 English teacher, Mr. Daub, who saw something special in my writing and encouraged me to read Sartre, Rebecca Stevenson, who wanted me to flourish and step beyond my insecurities in my social work training, Louis Frankenthaler, whose unwavering dedication continually inspired me, the Swamis – particularly Jyotihananda and Samayanda – at Yasodhara Ashram, who continually challenged me, Erica Ross, my dance 'mother,' who has been a dear friend, mentor and collaborator, Taeji Najinski, my first teacher of the 5Rhythms, whose compassionate support helped me stay in even when it was challenging, Vivek Patel, a model in dance, parenting and life, and Michaela Otto, whose fierce and loving support inspired great transformation. I have

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## Introduction

In the busyness of our modern lives - continual interfacing with screens and technology and the sharp increase of reliance on virtual communication in a post-covid world - *how present and connected are we to our embodiment and sensorial experience of life?* How connected are we to our health, as well as societies' and the planet's? As we can rely increasingly on our apps and constant access to 'experts' through the exponentially-growing world-wide-web, *what impetus do we have to pay attention to our inner awareness* with so much going on and available outside of it?

Somatics has been a term coined for a fairly loosely connected field of work and attentional practices that support a greater awareness of and connection to the first person, sensorial experience in our bodies. When engaged in the busyness and responsibilities of our lives, the discomfort and limitations in our bodies can often feel like an impediment and humans have an incredible number of ways they tune out the sensorial experience. It often is only when there is a crisis, such as injury or illness, that many feel forced to slow down. Resigned, they begin looking for ways to find their way back to health and this is often when they turn to somatic practices (Eddy, 2019). Otherwise, the slowing down that is believed to be required for somatic work, not to mention the time and effort required to go to a practice space, pay for treatment/training/classes, is something that many tend to see little use or space for in their lives.

This dissertation exists within this tension by asking: 'What if?'

*What if the awareness of the experience and movement in our bodies was regarded as not only important, but foundational in our lives and by which everything else that we value is supported?*

*What if the awareness of the experience of being and moving in our bodies was something we had access to all the time, through all of our lives and did not require anything extra?*

*What if all our lives could be seen as somatic practice, opening up access, choice and connection in every moment?*

*What could be possible if the entire world was grounded in this belief?*

## **The research question**

The italicised questions above are the nuanced questions that directed the trajectory of this research, part of the overarching research question:

**How can all of life be understood and experienced as somatic practice?**

A lot of those ‘what ifs’ will stay as questions in this written document. However, it’s my hope that they contribute to opening up access for you, the reader. It certainly has opened up a lot for me and I am very excited (and nervous) to share it all with you.

This research aims to broaden the reach, applicability, accessibility and understanding of somatics, within and outside of academia. Although somatic experience is a first-person experience, this research aims to explore how greater somatic awareness can support all aspects of life, not just our personal physical health. This research is prompted by my belief that bringing awareness to, examining, questioning and transforming our beliefs around our somatic experience in life has the potential for broad reaching positive change. This repatterning potential of somatics can open possibilities for collective repatterning. This idea of bringing our attention to is key in this research. We are always attending somewhere, and our attentional foci are often habitual, unconscious and not focused in the present. Somatic practice involves intentional, voluntary attention directed towards our present-moment sensorial experience. The development of the skills of sensorially ‘tuning in’ can open many possibilities individually and collectively.

This research focuses on the questions, the willingness to consider our awareness, and our personal, subjective, sensorial experiences that inform somatic experience. I am not arguing for a single answer, new theory or categorisation. I don't believe there is a single answer but rather many pathways, just as the wide variety of somatic practices offers many ways to increase one's somatic awareness. I also am not wedded to any specific ontology, epistemology or methodology, largely because I don't actually believe any of them are truth with a capital T (i.e. any sort of 'objective reality'), putting me in line with postmodernist thought. This research and writing, however, does explore a number of specific paradigms and methods in order to see what is possible within them. Specifically, in service of investigating how life can be understood more broadly as somatic practice.

The methodological plurality of this research and the writing of it was continually prompted by a desire to explore what supports more awareness, choice and expansion in our experience and movements of life. As the possibilities of what could be considered and explored with such an aim are endless, this research presents only a small example of some of the paradigms, approaches, beliefs and frames that can support more somatic awareness in our lives. As my methodological choices were largely guided by my own somatic awareness, my in-the-moment connection to my sensorial experience of life, the process was emergent and even contradictory at times, pointing to the tension that can be very present between typical academic, scientific (often disembodied) processes and somatic, embodied ones. As such, a lot of the processes and writing in this work may not be what you expect to find in a dissertation. This is very intentional on my part. This research is not only exploring how I can experience life as somatic practice, or how the participants in this research invited more somatic awareness in their lives, but also how you, the reader, may be invited into greater somatic awareness through your reading of these words on this page right now.

In order to explore broadening the reach and increasing the relevance of somatics, I question some of the premises of somatic work in this research, namely the subtle separating or dualistic

tendencies often inherent in somatic praxes: body-mind separations, conceptualisations of language and expertise, a materialist orientation to life, internal versus external, and believed requirements for practice. I add to existing scholarship that considers and questions these discrepancies in service of inviting an expanded potentiality for this work: that all of life could be considered somatic practice. Conceiving of somatic practices outside of some of its usual bounds as open sourced and accessible to anyone in any situation significantly reduces barriers in terms of access, transferability and integration. This is not to argue against the codification and practice requirement of the many powerful somatic practices that exist but rather to add to their reach and potential.

Somatics as a field is continually growing and expanding and there is a continued call for more somatically oriented research to increase the relevance of embodiment in academic scholarship and daily life. By employing a somatically-guided methodology I add to this work by offering even more pathways for somatic practice.

As you've noticed, I'm writing in first person and I will continue to for most of this endeavour, except when the writing frame dictates otherwise. This is very much a first-person exploration and a deeply spiritual one for me. The choice to write primarily in first person is intentional as I believe that it is only through my senses and embodiment that I can know anything. I know that sounds like truth and conviction. However, I see it instead as the frame I choose to move in because it provides me with a sense of possibility and expansion. This is also in line with the scholarship I'll be presenting. Writing in the first person supports the acknowledgement that subjective knowledge is at the core of somatic scholarship and many specialists foreground their subjectivity in this manner (see Bacon, 2010, LaMothe, 2015, Green, 2015, Margolin, 2014, Martin, 2019, Mees, 2020, Meehan, 2015, Nachmanovitch, 2009, Snowber, 2002, and Spry, 2013).

I'm also moving within the field of somatics, which privileges the first-person sensorial experience. With that, I'll play within heuristic tendencies towards autoethnography and

phenomenology with the intention to invite you, the reader, to increase your awareness of your first-person experience of reading these words. The continual invitation through all of this dissertation is for you to notice, in your body, when sensations come up that move you towards or away from the words I've typed out for you to read. I am inviting you to be *curious about what happens for you sensorially as you read my linguistic movements*.

I am fairly critical of ontological orientations and theories that are hidden in complex rhetoric and inaccessible to those without high levels of education and access to such knowledge-sharing. And yes, I acknowledge that I'm ironically contributing to this academic corpus, that few will read this dissertation in its entirety, and that this work won't be particularly accessible. And yet, I have an impetus for this research to serve a more expansive, aware, connected and peaceful experience of being human. My meta-method herein is to bring aspects of somatic and dance/movement improvisation practices to all of our lives - including the research and writing of a dissertation.

The translation of my broad reaching telos into a focus for this research is to consider how to bring aspects of somatic and movement improvisation practice into our day-to-day lives. Although I've already stated that I don't believe in one framework or paradigm, we (myself included) operate within paradigms and beliefs, conscious and unconscious, that provide the bounds for our movements. Therefore, in order to become more aware of our somatic experience – the sensorial experience of life and the movements we make – I believe exploring (and playing with) these frames offers a powerful gateway to the practice of somatic awareness in all our lives.

Through my research and writing, I suggest that increasing our collective somatic awareness is not only important, but critical. Abram (1996) echoes my invitation:

A genuinely ecological approach does not work to attain a mentally envisioned future, but strive to enter, ever more deeply, into the sensorial present. It strives to become ever more

awake to the other lives, the other forms of sentience and sensibility that surround us in the open field of the present moment. (p.272)

Abram recognises that the survival and health of humans and the planet necessitate apprehending the interconnected nature of all of life. I am aligned with Abram in the belief that this requires more sensorial awareness. In service of such a deepening and expansion, I explore how the frames in our lives – specifically that of language – can open us to more awareness of the experience in our bodies.

We have many frames that impact our experience of life, with abstract or material structures, from ontology to identity to physical form. As a basis for this exploration, to offer a variety of viewpoints, and hopefully triangulate – or rather crystallise – some of the findings herein, I will be playing with a variety of writing and research frames, which I will be referring to as ‘scores.’ My usage of the term ‘score’ comes from its use in dance and movement improvisation and is an important way I attempt to bridge formal somatic practices and our day-to-day lives. A score in dance improvisation defines the field within which we explore the movement possibilities by suggesting prompts, images or pathways for potential movement choices. We are intentional with our scores to bring our awareness to movement and possibilities within a chosen field. It also invites play, curiosity and innovation, the potential to know more of who we are and the ways in which we can move. It is important to note that the score doesn’t define the field where all movement is possible, only the frame we’re currently exploring. We choose the score. We intentionally limit the frame. And we know that life is much greater than the score. Yet when we work within the limitations of a score, we expand our repertoire by bringing awareness to our habits, movement patterns and, from this focus and awareness, we have more choice – to stay in our movement patterns and to create new ones. Scores are frequently how we engage in dance improvisation and somatic practice and how I will engage with the research questions here. There are few scholars who

explicit employ score as research method (such as Dowler, 2019, Mees, 2020) and this research demonstrates its strength and applicability to somatic research and scholarship.

The simple use of scores allows us to reconceive of bounds and limitations as frames to explore and play within. I am interested in how our conscious or unconscious adoption of these framings can expand or contract our somatic awareness of life, our movement patterns, and open up greater choice and expansion in our movements and experiences. There are paradigms that I like a lot – because they offer me a sense of expansion and increase my possibilities and repertoire of movement – and so I will be presenting them within this work.

In this research, in my life, and in the presentation of this dissertation, I play with scores within scores within scores to continue to expand my movement repertoire. Just as I dance in the studio, in the park, in my kitchen, playing with different parameters and scores, I dance here on the page, exploring what movements of the written word are possible with each.

By using ‘score’ as method, I intend to explore and play and see what movements are possible and invite you to consider what choices, what framings, what scores serve you and what matters to you. *Will you join me in playing with different paradigms to see what can open us up to greater awareness and capacity?*

This written document is a hands-on exploration of somatic awareness within the score of the written word. Although some of scores I’ve played with in my research are non-linguistic, the score of using only the written word to share this research has been intentionally chosen. This is a standard way we share information with each other, in academia and in all of life. This frame is ubiquitous and those of us in the literate world are engaging with text constantly – in both print and virtual media. Through this paper, I will explore what we can learn about our somatic awareness, the movements and patterns we make, and the choice we have through the score of the written word, exploring possibilities within it. I will continue to ask myself and ask you, the reader: *How do we*

*experience ourselves somatically – what is the sensorial awareness we currently have access to – and what movements are possible in the score of the written word? And, specifically, within the score of a dissertation?*

Much of somatic practice is non-verbal. Indeed, somatic practices often involve ‘slowing down’ and ‘quieting the mind.’ Much wisdom that comes through somatic practices happens by cultivating spaciousness around the rigidity of language. Beyond language, we often have greater access to liminal spaces, where we more easily tap into our interconnection with all of life. Yet much of life happens linguistically and most of our lives are filled with day-to-day movements and responsibilities where the privilege and spaciousness of accessing such liminality is not an option. Yet I believe we can still maintain a sense of somatic awareness even through the mundane, the linguistic, and the virtual and that such awareness can serve us in what is important to us in our lives. It also assists us in clarifying for ourselves what is important to us in order to make *conscious* choices without necessarily *unconsciously* following social norms. This is one of the founding principles upon which I devised this doctoral research.

Through my written scores, I investigate some of the scores that have framed my research – both chosen and not – to explore how the awareness of these overlapping and multi-layered scores can open up more awareness and choice in our movement. This autoethnographic, improvisational, and somatic practice-as-research project, that I will present through the score of the dissertation, explores a variety of methods, or scores, to increase our somatic awareness in the day-to-day. I will present it qualitatively and phenomenologically as “an integral epistemology and methodological pluralism” (Küpers, 2015, p. 251) that considers phenomena contextually, processually and structurally from first-, second-, and third-person perspectives that lay emphasis on the movement and multiplicity of dynamic relationships within such phenomena.

Because dissertation writing and reading is not generally considered somatic practice, I am aware that what I’m proposing may be a new idea for you, one which may contradict or challenge



your beliefs of what a dissertation is or should be. And, because I am curious how we can consider ALL of life of somatic practice, I believe it's an ethical necessity to explore the writing and reading of a dissertation as somatic practice. We can feel many things when encountering something unexpected that challenges our paradigms, such as confusion, bewilderment, anxiety, guilt, and anger (Mezirow, 1991). I invite you to bring your curiosity and open-mindedness with you as you read on, to be willing to self-reflect and see what possibilities for learning and growth can exist for you through this reading. This research and writing has continually challenged me and helped me to deepen my awareness and expand my growth and I'm hopeful that the multiplicity of ways I have chosen to write about it will open up something new for you. This is the contribution I seek to make with my research.

The play with representation has been intentional and adds to the growing literature that presents multimodally and multivocally in order to highlight knowledge and epistemology that has been traditionally oppressed and suppressed. This research argues that embodied knowing and somatic epistemology are necessary and critical and the methodological and writing chosen have been to foreground such knowing and its access.

*Before we go further, take a moment to notice what you can feel in your body right now: can you sense the connection to what is beneath you, supporting you? Can you feel the sense of weightedness in the contact between your body and what's below you? Notice the position you're currently in and what sensations are most notably present in this position. Does anything shift with the noticing? Can you become aware of the stillness and movement as you read? Can you become aware of your eyes moving across the page? Of your breath as it enters and leaves your body? What other sensations can you become aware of as you continue to read? The temperature and air against your skin, the feel of your clothes, the sounds around you. What can you see and smell? When you turn your attention internally, where is your attention guided? Can you notice the quality and strength of the sensations you feel inside and out?*

## **Positionality**

Because my subjectivity and especially my own somatic self-reflexivity are central to this work, I'll share a little more about what brings me to this work, why I've spent so many years pursuing a doctorate, and why, even after years of the intensity of working on this research, I'm just as passionate about it as I ever was.

Somatic practices and movement improvisation have been a very large part of my life for over a decade. Before that, I danced but had not yet discovered somatics and the world of freestyle, 'ecstatic,' 'conscious' dance. I danced since I was a toddler, taking a variety of recreational technique classes from step dancing and ballet to salsa and belly dancing. I longed to dance and yet it filled me with so much dread and fear. The hours comparing myself to the other girls in tights and leotards in the mirrors overshadowed most of the joy I got from dancing and, I believe, was a contributing factor to the decades of eating disorders I grappled with. I grew up believing dance had to look a certain way and I had to be a certain way. I can also recall so many middle and high school dances, longing to dance but remaining a wallflower, frozen in fear and self-consciousness. The first couple decades of my life were also quite atheistic. When my mother was killed when I was 20, I wished I had some sort of spiritual belief to comfort me. But I did not.

I knew people mattered greatly to me and I pursued a Masters in Social Work and worked globally in the fields of human rights and women's empowerment, constantly volunteering and contributing to many non-profits. I wanted to support others' expression and empowerment even as I struggled with my own. This constant seeking led me to an Ashram (spiritual study centre) in British Columbia where I began to cultivate a spiritual orientation to something beyond myself. Although the deep work I did in my months of studies there were intense, the most difficult workshop was one that focused on self-image and where we were invited to dance. Here I was, with a lifetime of dance training and a small intimate group of people I had gotten to know quite well in a

rural spiritual community, and I just couldn't dance. The embodied fear I experienced was so great I can still tap into its resonant strength now, 13 years later. Yet I knew the dance was calling me and something drove me to re-enter the room, find a corner and to begin dancing. In that moment, dancing to Deva Premal's Gayatri Mantra<sup>1</sup>, I turned inward and let myself dance as I had never danced before. The taste of expansion and freedom through that dance still brings tears to my eyes. I immediately began researching how I could continue to dance in supported freestyle and improvisational ways when I returned to Toronto.

When I discovered somatic practices and conscious and improvisational dance spaces, I felt like I had found what I'd been seeking my whole life. Spaces that honoured and invited my unique expression, exactly as it was, that guided me to a fuller awareness of my sensorial connection to life and provided me with tools to deepen that awareness, expand my repertoire of movement, be fully grounded in expressing myself, and to move in life expanding ways. Saying this discovery was life shattering is not an exaggeration. I dove into somatic practices and improvisational movement head on, including 5 Rhythms, body-mind centering, contact improvisation, authentic movement, Butoh, and continuum, among a whole host of other movement modalities. My commitment to personal growth practices and transformational studies have also included shamanic studies, singing, clowning, Landmark and Thinking into Results, among others.

It did not take me long to realise that my calling was to combine my background in social work and facilitation to explore ways of increasing accessibility to somatics and movement improvisation. I wanted others to have access to the sense of expansive and healing self-expression I had found, to be at home in their bodies, and celebrate their physical embodiment as their unique expression in life. I brought together my skills and began to facilitate a variety of movement

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=60FH24ucmsg>

opportunities, including DJing. I continue to wonder how I can be part of increasing the reach and accessibility of somatic practices and this is what led me to bring this question to my PhD research.

My first few years of my doctoral studies had me researching the many barriers to dance and somatic practices, largely psychological. At some point a light bulb went off: my work wasn't just about bringing people to somatics and movement improvisation, it was about bringing somatics and movement improvisation to people, to where they are and what matters to them.

This is the goal at the core of my PhD research and has informed my research design. And yet I know it is still just the beginning. This research has been scary and exciting for me and I cannot wait for what's next, what else we can create when we ask how we can experience life as somatic practice, how we can bring honour and focus to our sensorial experience of being alive, how we can learn to listen to our embodied knowing and more fully express our unique contribution in this brief time of being alive.

### **The dissertation**

From this overview and my own somatic subjectivity, this dissertation positions itself as a practical demonstration of expanding somatics in research and in daily life. I believe this exploration supports an expansion of and greater access to somatic work by playing with pathways into our sensorial experience of life.

Drawing on autoethnographic, somatic practice-as-research, and evocative writing practices, this research explores the question of how all of life can be understood as somatic practice. The sections that follow include a review of relevant literature and methodological approaches and a detailed presentation of the methodology employed in this research. This introduction sets the stage for the presentation of the research data that is somatically-informed. In later sections I present the research through a variety of evocative writing scores and substantiate my choices by demonstrating

how multi-model, multi-vocal representations can engage the embodiment and somatic awareness of both the writer and the reader.

In the literature review that begins on page 18, I present the history and development of somatics. I also note where more growth is possible within the field by noting some of its subtle separating tendencies. I offer LaMothe's (2015) life-as-movement ontology as an orientation that speaks to these limitations in new ways by articulating the entangled and moving nature of life. The literature review then discusses orientations and practices in dance and movement improvisation, demonstrating how they intersect with somatics and increase its reach. This is followed by developments in the fields of cognition and language that have reinforced the embodied nature of thought and language as well as movements in the fields that undermine such embodied orientations. The review concludes with an articulation of how the dissertation weaves developments in these fields together to expand somatic practice.

Following the literature review, I present relevant methodological approaches in the section entitled 'A Somatic Methodology.' After describing the development of the research question for this exploration, I highlight developments in somatic research methodologies, demonstrating why more work in this area is needed. I then discuss autoethnographic methods and how they can be in service of somatic approaches to research. I offer examples of scholarship that employ evocative, embodied writing and describe how they offer somatic engagement for the writer and reader. By playing with linguistic forms, I argue that somatic writing has the potential to foreground multi-subjectivity and open up new possibilities of meaning-making. By describing other ways of presenting research, I explain why this research employs a variety of writing modalities in order to represent and expand somatics. It also describes how forms of writing were used as scores in this research, similar to their use in movement and dance improvisation.

The next section, entitled *Specific methods*, offers a step-by-step description of all phases of this research. This research engages autoethnographic exploration combined with participant research. In introducing these sections and the scores participants were invited to consider, I describe how they were enacted and prepare the reader for what to expect in further sections.

Having employed a standard academic voice for these preliminary chapters, I shift voice and presentation as I move to presenting the research itself. This begins with a section written as a roundtable panel discussion that discusses the approach, subjectivity and validity of the research methods using a multi-vocal script.

After this subjective ontological discussion, I move on to present the autoethnographic portion of the research. I share my experience and discoveries of employing an autoethnographic methodology through a 'letter to the reader' and then offer found poetry taken from my autoethnographic journaling to display the themes explored. As the autoethnographic exploration also informed the participant research, the poetry score also shows the reader my journey through the unfolding of the emergent research.

This is then followed by chapters that offer data from all steps of the participant exploration, each written as a different embodied and evocative writing score, which I've called 'dances.' Through a variety of presentation scores, I offer the participants' unedited voices through my subjective, somatic filters. The entire participant research exploration is presented as if it were a course I teach, which the main way I have been teaching and facilitating somatic practice. I start by presenting the steps of the participant research through a fictional course syllabus. I then introduce the reader to each of the 12 participants who completed the research individually through somatic poetry and a presentation of main themes that they shared in our initial interview. I follow this with a detailed description of the ten-week somatic practice exploration I offered the participants. I present the invitation for each of the ten weeks separately, describing what each weekly invitation

contained and aspects of my embodied enacting of the invitation. The next section presents the participants' feedback through the exploration, as created 'dialogues' between participants and with me. Although the responses were only ever between myself and the participant, I share excerpts from them in the form of dialogue to demonstrate the similar and divergent themes in their experience of the exploration. The final section of the participant research presents the follow-up interviews with each of the 12 participants, where I tie their sharing back to the research question that asks how somatic practice can be in service of what one values. This is presented through a summary of their engagement, their experience in the research and a collage of direct quotes from the interview.

In discussing the limitations of this research and how it adds to the field, I offer a revisioning of somatics. Instead of conceptualising somatics as an object, through its terminology of a noun, I invite the reader to consider the ever-moving, expansive possibilities within somatics by referring to it as a verb: to soma or somaing. I then engage with a final dialogue with somaing to discuss the findings and applicability of this research.

The concluding section of the dissertation, entitled 'Concluding and beginning,' is offered in a final writing score, called 'yes, and.' This score is used to allow for ambiguity, contradiction and multi-subjectivity, and to hold space for the success and limitation of the research as well as point to future directions. I present my conclusions in a way that is personally relevant to me while also keeping the space open for the reader's own subjective experience, meaning-making and conclusions.

## **The invitation**

As I've noted and will repeat throughout this written work of my exploration, I do not believe there is one way, one answer. I believe there are many pathways that can support greater

collective somatic awareness and this research explores some of them. I want to open up questions, curiosity, and openness to see what ways we can expand our movements and self-expression in ways that support our lives and what matters to us and support the lives of others. I do believe that when we are more connected to our present moment experience, we also experience greater connectedness to life and to others and feel inspired to move in ways that positively support life on the planet. That's my experience at least!

As I get ready to share this work with you, tears form in my eyes – do I really get to share all this with you now? The years of inquiry, passion, commitment, anxiety, carrying - this all matters so much. Will the marks I leave on the page convey it all? Will it make a small difference in your life, in your connection to your experience of life? As a doctoral student, I've been asked countless times what I am researching. My answer for the past while has generally been 'to explore how our day-to-day lives can help us have more awareness of the experience in our bodies' and, if I go a little further, 'to bridge what we can find in somatic and improvisational movement practices to apply to all of our lives, to take what we can discover in the studio to enrich all our movements, thereby expanding our repertoire and choice in the movements we make in all of life.' The response is generally quite positive, many replying that that sounds really important (especially now with the impact of Covid). I definitely believe this is critical work – for me and for others – and herein, we move from talking about it to fully being in it.

What the writing of this research highlights, as a critical piece of the question *what if all of life could be experienced as somatic practice*, is that your role as reader is not passive. *Your movements matter* and are just as critical as mine, as are the movements of the participants and my students and teachers and committee. The research only matters because you read it. It is through your engagement and your experience of it in your body that any of this is alive. These movements I am making are in concert with you, across time and space. Your movements matter and you are engaged in somatic



practice by reading this right now, this is the practice. *So you're invited into awareness of your part of this dialogue as we go. My voice and experience are on the page. Where is yours? Where and how does it weave in with mine? What lights up for you, what are you noticing and feeling? How are you moving and what are the sensations you feel through it?*

Life happens in the movements and I invite you into this co-moving with me, as we both tune into the movements and patterns of movement we make by writing and reading, as we explore the question: *What if all of life could be considered somatic practice?* I invite you to make the movement of 'turning the page' and metaphorically diving in with me...

## A Review of the Literature

The first writing score I'll be using in this dissertation is a 'standard academic score.' Being quite versed in academia, this may not at first appear to you as a score but rather the typical way we share within the academic realm. As I intend my subsequent chapters to show, it is not the only way to present within the academy - particularly within the field of somatics. By 'standard academic score,' I write in third person, aiming to present other academics' work as objectively as possible, describing how they relate to this research. In intentionally choosing this approach – instead of writing in this manner without question as we academics generally do - I recognise that it is not the only approach we could choose. This intentionality and choice is in line with the intention of the research itself, which is the exploration of the ways we can support the awareness of any and all the experience in our bodies. As I have previously stated, my research question asks how can we experience all of our lives as somatic practice, this includes asking it within this chapter: *how can standard academic writing be experienced as somatic practice for both the writer and the reader?* Or, in a personalised form: *How can I experience the writing within this score as somatic practice and how can you explore the reading of it as such?*

I'm curious about the somatic awareness that can be present through standard academic writing. It will require some open-mindedness from me. I admit I had not intended to write any of my dissertation in this way, as I had already decided that this way of writing in the third person tense and reading with critical objectivity generally pulls us away from our somatic experience and I had already partially written this chapter as a score using multiple voices. Yet making this decision without the exploration is counter to the intention of this research, which is to explore how we can experience all aspects of our lives as somatic practice, especially those frames that are externally set, such as the expectations of a doctoral dissertation. *My invitation through this chapter, and through this entire written work, is to invite myself to notice my sensorial experience while writing and for you to notice your sensorial*

*experience while reading. Notice what helps invite greater awareness of the sensations you feel in your body, including your proprioceptive sense, contact with what's supporting you, and what is moving and allowing you to engage with the world while reading.*

Before beginning the literature review in this score, I will acknowledge that it does feel like game playing to me: the practice of establishing my credibility by accurately citing others. I resist it quite a bit because of my desire to question our reliance on the external expert and tune more into our direct experience with life. So, I will take that into this practice – my resistance and the paradigms I subscribe to – and see what awareness and movement is possible from this place.

In the academic realm, the practice is often to reify and name: theories, ontologies, categories. I intend to play and be curious about what can heighten our awareness of our first-person experience of living right here in this moment. At the outset, my experience in my body is of constriction, of pushing away, of not wanting to play this game. Mees (2020), a creative practice researcher who has played with improvisational writing, echoes some of what I feel within this academic context:

Literature reviews are always so overwhelming to me. I have probably never in my life done a literature review that felt disciplined enough. Mostly I feel like a fraud when I try to write one, like I'm doing a bit of smoke and mirrors to make it look as though I know my shit. I think this is partly because you really can't know everything, and possibly everyone feels a little like a fraud when they write a literature review. But also, it is because I tend to follow desire in my research. And while I have, by now, managed to assemble a strong enough case for desire-driven research (which would go in the literature review itself, where I survey writings about artistic and practice-based research methodologies), I know that across the full gamut of scholarly methods, this sort of approach is still viewed with suspicion. (Mees, 2020)

By ‘this sort of approach,’ Mees is referring to the scholarly methods that I, too, employ in my work, such as autoethnography, practice as research, and somatic research methods.

So now that you, the reader, at least know some of what arises for me in the prospect of writing the kind of literature review that is expected in this genre, I can move to demonstrating that I am capable of meeting this expectation (and hopefully gain insight about new intersections of somatics and academia in the process). I’ll be covering what I hope to be an adequate number of works (although much less than I’ve actually read and reviewed) through the following subsections that introduce my aims to bridge fields, define a life-as-movement ontology, provide an overview of somatics, dance and movement improvisation, and cognition as embodied knowledge, while also reflecting on how language weaves these paradigms together.

### **Score #1: The Academic Score**

#### ***Entanglement and bridging life and practice***

With the intention of bringing somatics into the day-to-day, of bridging life and practice, this research aims to be as holistic as possible within the confines of a prescribed research project and the writing of it. This holism stems from a lived and theoretical understanding of the interconnection of all of life, of the ‘quantum entanglement’ or ‘fundamental inseparability’ and interdependence of everything, according to quantum physics (Barad, 2007). As much of academic work revolves around the reification and separation of aspects of life into silos of subjects, this literature review will present a small selection of ontologies, approaches and research that focus on the interconnections that bridge aspects of life that are often believed to be and experienced as separate. Such separation can interfere with the ways in life may be understood as somatic practice. I also review some of the ways that separation is continually reinforced in praxes and philosophies that aim to bridge and unify, and that are present within the field of somatics.

This tension is even apparent in the construction of this chapter. Because of the interdisciplinary, overlapping nature of the literature presented, separating them into categories in service of the typical form of a literature review upholds disciplinary and conceptual boundaries that this research attempts to question and soften. The invitation herein is to be curious about the connections as opposed to the separations between the ideas presented.

Many dominant ontologies, in academia, in life and in somatics and dance studies reinforce separation, both explicitly and implicitly. Long histories of positivist and post-positivist paradigms in academia and in life reinforce notions of objectivity and absolute truth by objectifying and separating aspects of life (Kelly *et al.*, 2018). By uncovering aspects of praxes and paradigms that pull apart alongside those that weave together, the opportunities to bridge somatics and life become more apparent. Again, this research is not arguing for the truth of any ontological orientation over any other. As is obvious from even a small amount of reading into any paradigmatic approach within academia, the paradigms that a researcher chooses, whether it is constructivism, interpretivism, feminism, critical theory or other, is never uniform in how it is understood or used. Paradigms can be understood as a worldview, an epistemological stance, a community of practice or a set of exemplars (Kelly *et al.*, 2018). With the vast and ever-growing literature expanding possible paradigms in an age of info-glut, even a semi-thorough overview of all relevant research in the overlapping fields covered in this project would be prohibitive and impossible (Luker, 2008). Therefore, this research presents only a small sampling of what could be used to frame the question, with the overarching curiosity as to whether the choice of that framing and viewpoint can support an increase of somatic awareness in all of life.

This literature review focuses largely on somatics and draws in relevant research in the areas of dance and improvisation, materiality and movement, cognition and language with the aim of exploring how somatic practices are already woven into quotidian life and can offer opportunities

for its expansion, such as that explored in this research. A novel ontological approach that allows for the interweaving is a life-as-movement paradigm, that is suggested by Kimerer LaMothe, a philosopher and dancer who explores this ontology in detail in her book *Why we Dance* (2015). This paradigmatic overhaul alone unravels many of the beliefs that undergird one's experience of life, both within and outside academia and this review will demonstrate how its adoption is in service of expanding the reach of somatics.

### ***Life-as-movement***

A dominant paradigm across all disciplines in our Western world that inherently reinforces separation is a materialist orientation to life. When life is believed to be and experienced as material, when matter is what is real, there are clear boundaries and separation of not only the physicality of life but also the emotional, conceptual, and sensorial experiences of it. LaMothe (2015) invites us to question this broadly, to challenge this unconsciously accepted materialist paradigm and to shift to one that recognises the inherent movement of life. She points to movements in philosophy and theology where alternatives to materialist accounts of life are developing and which acknowledge that “the *idea* that matter is real cannot explain itself” (LaMothe, 2015, p. 23). She references the search across disciplines for the smallest unit of life that are turning up empty-handed, because the underlying and ever-present “fields and fluctuations, structures and systems, processes and potentials, waves and/of energy [are not material]. There is, in other words, only *movement*” (LaMothe, 2015, p. 23).

By calling for “a reconsideration of our most basic assumptions about who we humans are” (p. 35), LaMothe presents a substantial paradigmatic shift from a belief that movement is something that happens to matter to an appreciation that there is actually nothing but movement, that matter is what we perceive through our movements, and that what we call ‘things’ consist of

“...constellations of kinetic images” (p. 123). In a life-as-movement ontology, we shift to recognising all of life as patterns of sensation and response and “perceive only that by which we are capable of being moved. The movements we make at all levels determine what can and does appear to us as real – as concrete or ideal, material or abstract” (p. 33). In this paradigm, consciousness of our movements and how they make us who we are is what opens up possibility in our choices of the movements we choose to make. The awareness of our sensations and responses is therefore critical to both knowing ourselves and life as well as enabling movements that express their fullest potential.

The telos of a life-as-movement ontology is circular in that “*bodily movement* [is] the medium, the motivation, and the goal... all material forms, humans in particular, exist for the purpose of giving rise to new movements and thus *overcoming* rather than reproducing themselves” (LaMothe, 2015, p. 48) Teleologically, “our task in creating culture is not to escape from nature, but to become a life-enabling movement of it; not to dominate the movements of nature, but to discipline ourselves to those movements; not to become culture-bound minds, but rather fully animated bodily selves” (p. 179).

In a life-as-movement paradigm, any claim that there is knowledge that is objective or material, that is abstract, stable and verifiable, that “appears in the forms of principles and laws, classifications and definitions... in graphs and charts and timelines... as statistics and percentage points, ratios and possibilities... [and] in the shape of symbols that are abstract – words and numbers,” (LaMothe, 2015, p.62) needs to be questioned. When life is understood as kinetic patterns, we know through our bodies, through our sensory awareness, through the movements we make and through the movement patterns we create with others. This knowing never stands apart but exists in concert with all other paradigms.

When life as patterns of movement is embraced as an underlying orientation, it provides a basis for a greater apprehension of the entangled, interconnected nature of all of life. It also provides

a greater impetus and imperative for considering somatic awareness in our daily lives. If we consider the notion that movement is the only way we experience and know anything in life, then the awareness of those movements is suddenly central to any epistemological, philosophical or psychological exploration, academically, professionally, quotidianly, or otherwise. This research does not argue for the truth of this or any paradigm but rather uses it as a frame for exploring ways in which somatic awareness can be increased individually and collectively.

### ***Somatics: the first-person sensorial experience***

#### **Overview of somatics**

The word ‘somatics’ refers to a relatively recently coined umbrella term of ontologies, epistemologies, and methodologies that bring attention to the first-person subjective, sensorial experience of life. This vast and growing field includes somatic education, somatic therapy and psychotherapy, somatic psychology, somatic awareness, somatic theory, somatic movement, somatic principles, somatic thinking, somatic performance, and somatic explorations and processes (Eddy, 2016). In the literature, somatics is often referred to as a field, although others question whether the varied and loosely held praxes and orientations can be considered a field. Sylvie Fortin cautions that “referring to the field of somatics as an entity is in itself hazardous” (2002, p. 128) and notes there are no adequate translations for it in other languages. As with any broad term, its usage is diverse and even contradictory and this research does not intend to enter a debate about whether somatics is a field or not as others have done (Fortin, 2002, Green 2002). Indeed, some may consider the work herein to destabilise a unified notion even further by questioning some of the premises often contained in somatic work. Why such a potentially contentious term has been chosen as the central focus of this research is because it aligns with the belief in the deep, unified field of body/mind and the potency of listening to the body (Eddy, 2009).



Broadly, somatics aims to dissolve notions of a separate body and mind. By bringing a practitioner's awareness to their internal sensations, movements and experiences, somatics are united in the belief that "human movement and body-mind (bodily) wisdom are fundamental to life itself" (Lobel & Brodie, 2006, p. 69). According to Martha Eddy, who has written extensively about somatics, by observing the interconnectedness with the entire body, somatic approaches involve "the practice of directing non-judgmental, open attention to one's body and listening to its messages" (2016, p. 12). Somatic methodologies include a wide variety of praxes, including hands-on techniques and verbal instructions, set sequences and spontaneous action, vigorous movement and stillness, and activity and passivity of the practitioner/student/client (Allison, 1999) with increasing variety and combination of the above. Any practice that encourages awareness of one's somatic (first-person subjective) experience, including somatic meditation and mindfulness practices, can be considered somatic in a broad sense, whether or not it is named as such.

Tuning in sensorially and somatically involves not only the generally considered five senses of taste, touch, smell, taste and sight but also internal perception, or interoception (Albright, 2009). This includes proprioception (internal sense of position and space), graviception (internal sense of gravity) and kinaesthesia (internal sense of body movement) and the combination of all of these to enhance a sense of three-dimensional space within and outside the body (Eddy, 2016).

Similar to the growing practices of mindfulness, somatics involve intentional attentional practices. Bacon (2019) points out that attention is an action and, although it has less outward movement, it consists of sensing and mental movements. Our habitual movement patterns involve countless unconscious and involuntary attention. Developing voluntary attention is a skill that requires practice and the act of practicing, subsequently, alters the very structure of the brain and its neuronal movement patterns (Watson, 2017). In line with LaMothe's contentions that "the movements we make makes us" (2016), Watson also asserts that "practices of attention then become

practices of self creation” (2017) and that it is important to consider the intentions behind our attention. The procedural practices in somatics are what focuses one’s attention on the sensorial experience. Mindfulness practices are similar in that they intend to cultivate a “nonlaborative, nonjudgmental, present-centered awareness” (Bishop *et al.*, 2004, p.232) via attentional practice. Mindfulness practices can be somatic practices but they are not necessarily so. Although mindfulness practices can often include attention to sensations, they are not exclusively focused on the sensorial experience, but also attend to thoughts and feelings with the intention to just observe (Bishop *et al.*, 2004). Somatic practices, however, guide practitioners to specifically ‘tune in’ to their first-person, whole-bodied, embodied sensations. The practice of sensorially tuning in is central not only to the practice of somatics but the teaching and guiding of these practices. By practicing tuning in somatically, somatic teachers and educators are able to cultivate what has been termed ‘somatic empathy’ or ‘connected knowing’ (Cheever, 2000), that allows them to tune into and attend not only their own sensorial experience but to be able to apprehend another’s.

There is often also considerable overlap between dance and somatic practices as both involve voluntary attention. Many dance practices involve and necessitate a cultivation of somatic and kinaesthetic awareness and there are some dance practices that are almost exclusively somatic such as 5Rhythms, Body-Mind-Centering, and JourneyDance. Most dance forms, however, also cultivate attention beyond the somatic, particularly towards the aesthetic, or third-person apprehension and/or staging of the body in space and time.

The motivations for engaging in somatic awareness and practice are quite varied and can include personal interests such as “self-discovery, pleasure, relieving pain, improved physical performance, new forms of social engagement or as a creative endeavor” (Eddy, 2016, p. 15). Somatics’ utility in fostering creativity is a reason why it is sometimes considered a subfield in dance (Green, 2002). Because somatic awareness involves attentiveness to present moment sensorial

experiences within as well as in response to the environment, there is also a growing impetus for its inclusion in social change. The cultivation of heightened sensitivity and empathy through somatic awareness and practice can support addressing inequities as “somatic education can be a baseline for healing” where a socially-oriented approach to somatics “includes both anti-violence and educational reform activism” (Eddy, 2016, p. 247). In dance, somatics in dance has supported environmental activism, and includes the practice of ‘eco-somatics,’ which considers how somatic awareness within our own bodies extends to the rest of the planet (Eddy, 2016). Spirituality can also be interwoven with somatics, with its focus on broadening and unifying awareness. Many somatic practices, including yoga and meditation, include spiritual components (Eddy, 2016). A range of scholars, including ecologist and philosopher David Abram (1996) and botanist Robin Wall Kimmerer (2013), speak to the imperative of greater individual and collective somatic awareness in order to redirect the calamitous trajectory of the human treatment of our planet.

... We must renew our acquaintance with the sensuous world in which our techniques and technologies are all rooted. Without the oxygenating breath of the forests, without the clutch of gravity and the tumbled magic of river rapids, we have no distance from our technologies, no way of assessing their limitations, no way to keep ourselves from turning into them. We need to know the textures, the rhythms and tastes of the bodily world, and to distinguish readily between such tastes and those of our own invention. Direct sensuous reality, in all its more-than-human mystery, remains the sole solid touchstone for an experiential world now inundated with electronically-generated vistas and engineered pleasures; only in regular contact with the tangible ground and sky can we learn how to orient and to navigate in the multiple dimensions that now claim us. (Abram, 1996, p.ix)

This overview of some of the practices, orientation and initiatives within somatics and attendant concepts reinforces the breadth and range of the notion itself. While broad, the term ‘somatics’ brings together and expands practices that increase humans’ capacity to fully apprehend their sensorial, embodied experiences. This research aims to contribute to this inclusive scope to demonstrate the potential application of somatics into everyday life.

### **A reflexive history of somatics**

The consideration of somatics as a field is viewed as a contemporary and Western one. First coined by Thomas Hanna, a philosophy professor and movement theorist, in his 1970’s book *Bodies in Revolt*, somatics is based on the Greek word ‘soma’. The notion of soma describes the first-person, subjective, lived experience of embodiment, juxtaposed against the notion of the body, which describes experience from the third person (Mullan, 2012). Philosopher Don Hanlan Johnson was also instrumental in the development of the notion of a field. Beginning in the 1970’s, these philosophers developed their theories by highlighting the somatic orientation within Husserl’s phenomenology as well the presence of first-person, sensorial, subjective lived experience within the work of scientists and philosophers such as Darwin, Freud, Lorenz, Reich, Kant, Kierkegaard, Marx, Cassirer, Camus, Merleau-Ponty and Nietzsche (Mullan, 2012).

By naming the common somatic orientation of many philosophical orientations, Hanna and Johnson also brought attention to practitioners of body-mind therapeutic practices in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, who are now considered the ‘pioneers’ of somatics. These pioneers are Rudolf Laban, F. Matthias Alexander, Mabel Elsworth Todd, Ida Rolf, Moshe Feldenkrais, Gerda Alexander, Milton Trager, Irmgard Bartenieff, and Charlotte Selver, who all developed therapeutic praxes, some with influence of each other and some separately (Eddy, 2009).

Referring to these practitioners as ‘pioneers’ gives rise to the idea that these are recent developments. The primacy of focusing on the subjective, embodied experience, however, has long been the orientation of many practices historically. This is particularly true non-Western practices, that existed long before the notion of a field was ever established, and unifying ontological orientations are often more common outside the West and its legacy of Cartesian dualism (Eddy, 2002). The conceptualisation of a field of somatics, however, has supported a substantial growth of somatics praxes within the past century, in part because of the capacity for individuals to build on each other’s work.

The aforementioned pioneers exerted a prominent influence in the development of somatics, including subsequent systems and practices. Following the pioneering work in the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the middle 20<sup>th</sup> century (1930s-1970s) was a time in which somatics lineages began to be established by the students who had originally studied with the pioneers (Fortin, 2002). During this time there was significant interactions between those establishing the lineages. Martha Eddy, who has played a prominent role in documenting the history and development of somatics, shows this in her two-dimensional map of the first and second generations of somatic practitioners in the 20<sup>th</sup> century (2016, p.2). It was also during this time that modern dance and somatics began to become interwoven on a global level as movement expression in the world was notably shifting. The interwar and post-WWII eras saw a shift towards expressionism in modern dance, both in Europe and eventually in North America in response to the changing political climate. The growing interest in psychoanalysis combined with a shedding of social conventions, and embracing of the avant-garde, created a fertile ground for somatics (Foulkes, 2002). In Germany, the development of ‘Ausdruckstanz’ (‘expressionist dance’) resisted the constriction of earlier concert dance, forming the basis of the ‘new artistic dance,’ which travelled across the Atlantic (Cohen, 2005). The need for a form of expression that was intrinsically, as opposed to extrinsically motivated or sourced, was

paramount. It was within this changing climate that Americans Martha Myers and Margaret H'Doubler promoted a somatic approach to dance, ultimately shaping the field and trajectory of both somatics and modern dance, expanding the reach of both (Eddy, 2016).

The naming of the field itself in the 1970s, along with the political changes of the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, further increased the overlap and influence of somatic practices, which became increasingly complex and broad. Thomas Hanna initiated the journal *Somatics* in 1977, which provided a written forum for somatic practitioners to share their work (Johnson, 1995). Esalen, a retreat centre in California founded in 1962, is also implicated as key in the furthering of the study, collaboration and development of much of the somatic work and considers itself 'the birthplace of the human potential movement.' (Esalen History, n.d.).

The successful growth and proliferation of somatics and the creation of these forums for learning and dialogue are supported in part by an increase in interest in Eastern philosophy and practice, the 'Human Potential Movement,' and the 'hippie revolution' of the 1960's (Mangione, 1993). As acceptance of somatic paradigms increase, so do the number of practices, including their hybridisation and often fuzzy distinctions (Dragon, 2015). This continued interweaving witnessed the integration of somatics into therapy, education, psychology, and art through the 1970s to 1990s (Fortin, 2002). Doran George (2020) suggests that not only have history and politics impacted the continued development of somatics, but so has geography. George proposes five geo-somatic locales that have shaped its trajectory: New York, New England, Britain, the Netherlands, and Australia, and states that "the ideal of individual creative freedom dovetailed with local artistic and social development" (2020, p.59) in these locales, creating an inter-national community of practice.

The end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> has seen continued proliferation of idiosyncratic practices and growth of research in somatics (Fortin, 2002). Somatic practices and the language surrounding them are becoming increasingly diverse and can focus exclusively on the

physical realm and the technicalities of movement, and can include imagery to verbalise emotional, mental and spiritual layers of experience (Allison, 1999), or be grounded more in principles or technique (Dragon, 2015). As of 2009, there were over 37 different somatic movement certification programs alone (Eddy, 2009) and *The Illustrated Encyclopedia of Body-Mind Disciplines* (Allison, 1999) describes 125 different body-mind approaches, including movement therapy – such as Alexander Technique and Body-Mind Centering, massage, Rolfing, somatic movement practices – such as Continuum and Contact Improvisation, expressive and creative arts therapies, and body-oriented psychotherapies. More than a decade later, as a new generation of practitioners establish their own schools and approaches, these numbers are likely higher.

Although the pioneers developed their healing systems and practices in response to their own personal health and life challenges, the motivation for somatic exploration and the development of somatic modalities has expanded greatly in the past century, such as social and environmental activism noted above. As with the social change and environmental activism noted above, somatics has unlimited potential to connect with adjacent practices and worldviews. Wherever there is a desire to increase awareness of and open dialogues with, for and between bodies, somatics offers invaluable insight.

### **Contradictions in a field that intends to unify**

Because of its intentions towards unifying conceptualisations of body and mind, the ways that somatics can nevertheless retain notions of separation are often subtle. Being steeped in a materialist orientation to life makes this fairly inevitable. A tension that often exists in the field of somatics is that, on the one hand, there is a resistance to Cartesian dualism through body-mind practices that privilege physical movements and sensations that aim to bridge mind and body (Eddy, 2016). There is, on the other hand, often (and despite intentions otherwise) an inherent separating of

the notions of mind and body within these practices - especially when it comes to language. There can be a flipping of the body-mind duality in such fields where, instead of venerating the mind and cognition, the fields of dance and somatics can privilege body over mind. In doing so, this “reposition[s] the body as an omnipresent source of wisdom and intellect, our quintessential intelligence: the body as ‘the matrix for our ideas, values, emotions, and spiritual commitments’” (Williamson, 2010 referencing Johnson, 1997). Meehan (2015) echoes this concern by noting that focus on embodied experience may be coupled by a distrust of thinking, unwittingly reinforcing a dualism it intends to dismantle.

Although Eddy (2016) shared that “Somatic Education values the language that allows people to speak about these [somatic] perceptions” (p. 13) and Don Hanlan Johnson notes that language is movement that comes from experience (2014), it is conversely common in dance and somatics literature to lament the inability of language to accurately reflect the experience, knowing, and wisdom of the body and of dance and language is often viewed separately from somatic experience. Dance, embodiment and movement have been considered prelingual (Midgellow, 2019), separate from our understandings of language (Sheets, 1966), and as having a ‘natural language’ of their own (Hanna, 1987), where multi-dimensionality can never be fully expressed in the one-dimensional nature of language. This simultaneous questioning and sustaining of divisions of life may be largely predicated on the ubiquitous materialist paradigm that informs human experience and belief structures.

Another separating tendency that can be present in the field is the reliance on an ‘external expert,’ or a practitioner/therapist trained and certified in a codified somatic practice/technique. Although the intention of somatic practices is to tune into one’s internal knowing and become one’s own authority via sensorial experience (Mullan, 2012), there is also a common belief that someone



outside oneself is needed to guide one there, that the ‘internal knowing’ is only accessible with the support of an ‘external expert.’ As Eddy (2016) explains,

While anyone can freely engage in bodily self-discovery as the original founders did, there are many people not inclined to pay attention to the body or have no clue how to do so. This may be because they do not have the strong activation or proprioception or kinesthesia, the mechanisms that allow for self-perception, or because the repressed sensations due to pain or strong discomfort. Or a person or culture may have been taught to ignore body signals.”  
(p. 17)

Nevertheless, what Eddy does not acknowledge are traditions within somatics that are grounded in the belief that one cannot access one’s own somatic awareness without being led there by an external expert and were developed as an authoritarian practice. In addition, the tension between the claim that “the mindstate of the [somatic] work is one of nonjudgement, openness to being present, exploratory instead of goal oriented,” (Eddy, 2016, p. 141) and the call in many somatic modalities to “repattern,” infer the belief that these is a more correct way of moving. For F. M. Alexander, founder of the Alexander technique, cultivating an experience of ‘true’ somatic knowing involves not trusting one’s instincts, which he believed were predicated on unhealthy habits (Alexander, 2001). Alexander Technique is meant to be experienced with a trained teacher who has developed ‘the use of hands,’ ostensibly a difficult skill to acquire (Nicholls & Carey, 1991). Similar to Alexander, Ida Rolf, who developed the practice of Rolfing, was noted to be authoritarian in her teaching and her practice. Although Rolfing is aimed at developing one’s access to holistic knowing, the knowing of the practitioner is required for such a development and is of greater significance than the knowing of the participant (Mangione, 1993). Bartenieff Fundamentals, developed by Irmgard Bartenieff, consists of sequences led verbally through imagery or by hands-on techniques, and is often about ‘correction’ (Allison, 1999) where the teacher’s observation of the ‘body’ features more

prominently than the mover's experience of the 'soma' (Bartenieff, Davis & Paulay, 1970). As Eddy (2016) acknowledges, "somatic education of the 20th century [did not] arise in a vacuum" (p.85) and although transformational, self-directed and emancipatory pedagogical approaches do exist and continue to grow, our educational systems have been long steeped in authoritarian and didactic models of learning (*Transformative Dimensions of Adult Learning*, Mezirow, 1991) that "maintain the society as we know it" (*Teaching from the Heart*, Apps, 1996, p.10).

Clearly somatics has and can contribute substantially to empowered, transformational, self-directed learning and growth with its guidance to listening within and an experiential, constructivist approach of 'learning by doing' (Eddy, 2016). Its capacity to do so can be further strengthened by acute awareness of vestiges of contractive and dualistic world views. As the practice of somatics involves exploration to bring unconscious and often automatic movement to one's awareness, the potentials for greater choice, repatterning, growth and expansion exist. In fact, these notions are the very premise of somatic practice itself. Yet, one cannot ignore the coexisting contradictions and implicit hierarchies that pervade many approaches and techniques within the field.

Despite their breadth, somatic practices are united in that they are almost universally practiced in a dedicated time and space, generally separate from other activities in our lives. This points to another separating tendency within somatics that is rarely questioned, that "a particular structure with uninterrupted time and space" (Bacon, 2010, p. 68) is necessary for somatic practice. Martha Eddy, who writes extensively on the history and practices of somatics, notes that "open space is needed for somatic learning – clean, open, unencumbered floors" (2016, p. 237) and "the need for quiet is yet another requirement" (2016, p. 238) and that these can be barriers to the accessibility of somatic practice. What does not appear to be discussed is the possibility of accessing the somatic awareness that is always there, even outside of these supposed environmental requirements.

The rationale for separate, quiet spaces for practice is the general focus on the ‘internal’ sensations of the body. Eddy states “in order to slow down and feel the body, it is important to be able to hear one’s breath, heart rate and physiological rhythms. Quiet supports sensitization to subtle body cues” (2016, p. 238). Kelly Mullan’s (2012) statement highlights the focus on the ‘internal’ as separate from ‘external’: “Internal sensation known as “*interoception*” was of key relevance to the study; thus stimuli from the external environment and exteroceptive channels were excluded in the analysis” (p. 72). Such separation of internal and external, isolating one aspect of movement from another, runs counter to the discovery of quantum entanglement in physics (Barad, 2007), which highlights the interconnected nature of movement. It also fails to apprehend the subjective, internal nature of all sensations in response to interconnected patterns of movement inside and outside a body. Sensations are produced because “every sense organ exists as a capacity to move in a certain pattern that is vulnerable to being moved by patterns of movement occurring within a certain range or medium” (LaMothe, 2015, p. 31). LaMothe also emphasises the interconnected nature of sensations, that perception arises from interactive patterns of sensing and responding. Sensation is always internal and personal and what it is in response to is continually moving and shifting. Absence of sensation in a limb or sense organ is frequently pathologized and viewed as a deficit. Just as air enters and leaves the body, the movements that give rise to internal sensing are an intertwining of internal and external patterns of movement that are viewed as essential components of being in the world. Yet these subtle – and not so subtle – separating tendencies – body separate from and over mind, somatic experience separate from language as well, the necessity of an ‘external expert’ and the creation and accessibility of particular environments – are the crux of what is considered, questioned and explored in this research.

Taken together, approaches to and practices of somatics, although they bring one’s awareness to corporeal sensation and movement, are still often grounded in a material orientation to

life. Reeve (2011) articulates this in *Nine Ways of Seeing a Body*, stating that “Somatic studies begin from the meaning inherent in materiality” (p. 17). In resisting materiality, a life-as-movement ontology offers powerful potential for lessening separation and further expanding the accessibility and applicability of somatics. When life is understood as patterns of movement that are co-created within a greater movement matrix, the possibility and necessity of increasing the reach of somatics beyond the studio and practitioners’ offices becomes more apparent. By recognising the interconnection of all movement on all levels, a life-as-movement ontology removes the separation of the experience of any individual from his/her environment. “No human exists whose movements do not express the vast matrix of relationships in relation to which it is presently moving... Every human bodily self is a microcosm of the whole, and a macrocosm of the smallest movements made” (LaMothe, 2015, p. 91). If all of life is patterns of movement, the possibility to become aware of life in all areas becomes apparent as it shifts what one is aware of. To do so is to invest in ways of being and knowing that exist with us throughout our daily activities but frequently go unnoticed.

Because this research explores the potential of somatic practices that do not require the presence of an expert, or a specific time and place, it could be seen as placing itself on the opposite end of the spectrum, unwittingly reinforcing the dualisms it seeks to question. These critiques are not presented to say that somatics should not be practiced with a trained facilitator, in a specific time or place, but rather to explore how somatics could function outside these bounds and how such practices could support and extend the myriad of powerful somatic praxes that exist.

As the overarching intention of this research is to consider how the accessibility of somatics can be increased, these tensions have been presented in light of Eddy’s question: “Why is it so expensive to access knowledge that is free?” (2016, p.236). This research, therefore, is an attempt to explore how to overcome, lessen, or soften these dualisms and barriers. Somatic practices, generally, have been developed by ‘experts,’ individuals with years of study, and offered in specific

environments set aside from daily life to focus attention inward without distraction. Much of my somatic practice has occurred within these specialised conditions. Considering how somatic practice could exist outside these bounds has the potential to change the nature of attentional work and to expand the reach and application of somatics. Though not without challenge, developing and honing self-directed attentional capacity in one's home environment has the potential to significantly reduce barriers in terms of access, transferability and integration.

### ***Dance and movement improvisation***

Although somatics is considered by many to be a subfield of dance studies, situating somatics within dance exposes some of dance's ambiguities. The defining of dance, a commonplace word (used as both a noun and a verb), is not as straightforward as its use in quotidian speech may imply. Entire books have been written exploring what is necessary to include in articulating its definition (for example see, Copeland & Cohen, 1983). Others have written that dance cannot be defined (McFee, 1992) or that it must be experienced to be known (Sheets, 1966). Yet the word is often employed as if personal interpretations match, including by academics in the field of dance studies. Such divergent conceptualisations of a commonplace term are not unusual. The notion of a "game" is similar in that its definition has long been debated. Wittgenstein noted that a game is "a complicated network of similarities, overlapping and crisscrossing, sometimes overall similarities, sometimes similarities of detail" (Wittgenstein, 1953). From this we can deduce that definitions of dance are numerous and contradictory.

Rather than expounding a similarly complicated network when it comes to the understanding of the term dance, the definition of dance utilised in this research is to use the term as defined by Kimerer LaMothe (2015). LaMothe proposes an alternate understanding of dance that requires it to not be isolated from life. She also claims that we can never know what dance

definitively is, as it is an emergent phenomenon, a process of “creating and becoming patterns of sensation and response.” Dance, therefore, is the conscious practice and development of movement potential and the increased awareness of how one’s movements create them. This definition aligns nicely with the practice and intention of somatics and explicates why both terms – somatics and dance – exist together in this dissertation. It also means a large proportion of the corpus of dance literature is not relevant herein, particularly works that focus on the aesthetics, technique choreography, and performativity of dance practices. Instead, it is the intentional exploration of somatic experience and patterns of movement not isolated from life that inform my research questions.

The practice of improvisation within dance and somatics is a methodology that supports the aim of exploring somatic practice in all of life. Indeed, improvisational approaches are ideally suited to developing consciousness of movements, their patterns, and one’s choice in the reinforcement or expansion of such patterns. Improvisation is used as a means of exploration within somatics. Eddy (2016) states that “improvisation is particularly important as a methodology that guides self exploration [as it] allows the education to be student-directed rather than teacher-directed” (p. 131). Eddy’s rule of thumb for determining whether a practice is somatic is whether it includes self-directed and improvisational movement with the focus on sensing, feeling and expressing.

Within dance practice, improvisation is utilised for both exploratory (including practical and self-instructive) and performative or aesthetic goals (Sheets-Johnstone, 2017). It is the former that is of relevance where somatic developments through dance improvisation are oriented towards awareness, personal development, witnessing and interconnection instead of aims of aesthetics and beauty (Fraleigh, 2019). This is not to reinforce dualistic, divisionary thinking that can pervade the dance world of ‘choreography’ versus ‘improvisation,’ where there is value judgement placed on

practice and aim (Lavender, 2019) but rather to explore where more bridges between somatic practice and life may be present and the utility of improvisation to get there.

Improvisation is woven into the very fabric of life, its ‘unscriptable’ nature requiring continual adaptability and ‘working it out’ (Midgelow, 2019, referencing Hallam & Tim in *The Oxford Handbook of Improvisation in Dance*). Whereas the day-to-day practice of improvisation is often an unconscious, patterned practice itself, the intentional practice of improvisation allows for increased awareness of the processes and possibility within improvising. When used with exploratory goals in the context of somatics, its capacity for increased awareness of movements and capacity to reinforce new movement patterns beyond the practice space is also apparent. Improvisation as a practice is a generative, relational, temporal way of going about things that allows a greater apprehension of the inseparable, entanglement of subject and environment (Midgelow, 2019, referencing Hallam & Tim). Although improvisational practice has neither inherent content nor form (Midgelow, 2019), it is also not ‘just do anything.’ Rather there is “thought, strategizing, and an implied study, as well as magical moments of chance happening and intuitive choice-making” (Buckwalter, 2010, p.10).

### **Improvisation scores**

Intentional improvisation practice offers a means of “finding or framing movement” (Buckwalter, 2010, p.12) and this frame is often referred to as a ‘score.’ The word ‘score’ in dance and movement improvisation is akin to the chosen framework, defining the field within which the dancer will move. Scores provide prompts for and focus decision making and creative action by both unsettling habits and opening possibilities. They provide common vocabulary and tools for movement and a language for understanding what is and has happened (Mees, 2020). Within a dance improvisation, scores are generally newly chosen, exploring the narrowing, unsettling and opening, with each new choice. Improvisation allows the recognition that knowledge is of motion, revealed

by enaction (Mees, 2020). Improvisation supports the exploration of the unknown, the discovery of what is possible, the expansion of the range of possible movement. The score is the known to frame the exploration of the unknown (Millard, 2012). Jazz musician and improviser Stephen Nachmanovitch (1990) expresses this elegantly: “Structure ignites spontaneity” (p.83), “limits yield intensity” (p.84), and “working within the limits of the medium forces us to change our own limits [as i]mprovisation is not breaking with forms and limitations just to be ‘free,’ but using them as the very means to transcend ourselves” (p.84). He concludes that improvisation “frees us to see the possibilities before us” (p. 87). I further suggest that improvisation likewise frees us to see the possibilities “within” us.

In many spaces, both inside and outside dance practices, ritual is used as a score. Ritual may be viewed as the acknowledged and reified structures humans use to find themselves in moments “in and out of time.”

Sometimes when I’m dancing I enter an existential world where I am simply the dance; nothing more, nothing less. My body merges with the space around me until I no longer experience it as solid, but as liquid light. In this state my sense of separateness dissolves into a field of awareness. This awareness is not bound by my body; rather, my body is bound by my awareness. (Roth, 1998, p.29, writing about her practice of *5Rhythms*)

This liminality devoid of social structure, given the name ‘communitas’ by cultural anthropologist Victor Turner (1969), allows for increased awareness and expansion through a temporary dissolution of sense of self, of believed edges and separation, where one may experience oneness with life. A growing somatic, improvisatory practice in the west that is often termed ‘ecstatic dance’ or ‘conscious dance’ is a practice of movement improvisation and somatic awareness in community. Gabrielle Roth’s work in the creation of *5Rhythms* has been particularly influential in the expansion of these practices and it is precisely her investigation into patterns of movement that led her to



develop the scores of each of the five rhythms utilised as the structure within the improvisatory practice (Roth, 1998).

Similar to the believed requirements of somatic practice, specific rituals and the separation of time and space are often believed to be necessary to access somatic connections to life via liminal dissolutions. There is no question that such rituals, ubiquitous across time and place in human cultures, can be powerful and expansive. Rituals can be sacred or secular. This research explores the possibility of applying such access and awareness to the mundane and quotidian areas of life. Rituals and rules around procedure and practice frame experience. Likewise, scores also frame experience yet their usage is far more accessible and could ostensibly be used in any area or experience in life.

What can be used as a score to frame an improvisational exploration is vast. Scores can be simple or complex. Scores can be linguistic, visual, auditory, abstract, tactile or any other manner of frame or input. A score could be a single word or image or it could be a detailed frame of a practice, complete with materials and time needed (*The Place of Dance: A Somatic Guide to Dancing and Dance Making*, Olsen, 2014). Scores can be freely chosen or part of the framework inherent in the space or one's body.

Scores have been used extensively in artistic practice, both for explorative and choreographic purposes. There has also been a practice to make such scores available to the public. The website, <http://scores.motionbank.org>, for example, documents a four-year project wherein its creators worked with six choreographers (Deborah Hay, Jonathan Burrows & Matteo Fargion, Bebe Miller and Thomas Hauert, and William Forsythe) to offer their choreographic scores available digitally. Oralsite ([http://olga0.oralsite.be/oralsite/pages/What's\\_the\\_Score\\_Publication/](http://olga0.oralsite.be/oralsite/pages/What's_the_Score_Publication/)) is another similar online initiative that shares details of many scores choreographers have used to frame their artistic creations, including examples of text, images, drawings, audio, and how the scores are used in practice. The practice of contact improvisation is generally guided by scores and from its open-

source orientation, practitioners have developed an online collection of scores that individuals have used to guide their practices and focus their attention (<http://livingscores.com>).

The intentional use of improvisation and improvisational scores promote values that include spontaneity, resilience, presence, adaption, readiness, responsiveness, risk, willingness, somatosensory attentiveness, connectivity, and reversibility (Fraleigh, 2019). Many of these capacities are also cultivated through the present-moment, embodied attentional focus of somatic practices and the use of improvisational techniques supports the translation of this skills to the day-to-day, which is the aim of this research. Not only does the intentional practice of improvisation in somatics and dance allow one to cultivate these qualities in practice and bring them to their quotidian movements (Fraleigh, 2019), the intentional practice of improvisation may be taken from the arts, wellness or personal growth arena to other areas, including research and writing. Although scores have generally been used in the artistic realm, practitioners have begun to bring them into academia. For example, Olivia Millard's doctoral dissertation (2012) explicitly considers the function and use of scores in dance and how they focus attention. What she found was that although scores could unite dancers in their practice, their meaning was ever-changing within and between dancers and that it was this openness of a score's meaning that allowed for the recurring discovery of newness. Similarly, Mees (2020) uses a letter writing score in her journal article, 'Letters to Sheila,' to document how scores can be used not only to frame the research itself but also to frame its representation. Scores in both artistic practice and research are used to direct attention and focus. When the scores used are somatic in nature, they guide the dancer/practitioner/research to tune into their sensorial experience to guide the practice and/or research itself. They are both means and methodology.

Improvisation in research offers an emergent approach to enquiry that recognises the intuitive, empathic and somatic as valuable information that can guide research and what it uncovers

(Sajjani, 2012). “When situated as research, improvisation functions as a kind of ‘disciplined empathy’, inviting researchers to engage in an iterative process of identifying emergent issues and to respond with a corresponding design that permits further exploration” (Sajjani, 2012, referencing Bresler, 2008, p.83). The process of improvisation in research understands knowledge as processual and contextual and offers the skills and methodology to flexibly and responsively meet such unfolding.

Just as the process of improvisation is not a means to create the dance but rather is the dance itself, so too is the process of improvisation the research itself (Sheets-Johnstone, 2017). Somatically-based improvisational research methodology also highlights the subjective and embodied nature of the researcher as an integral part of the research and its representation by supporting the researcher’s awareness of their somatic experience and awareness and encouraging innovative ways of conveying the somatic and subjective to their reader (“Feeling the field: Reflections on embodiment within improvised dance ethnography,” Martin, 2019).

According to Sheets-Johnstone, and interdisciplinary scholar and dancer, an improvisational research methodology allows for the experiential understanding of life-as-movement where there is “no ‘mind-doing’ that is separate from ‘body-doing’” (2017, p. 9). By recognising the inherent connection and dynamic process of thinking and doing, improvisation highlights the kinetic nature of thinking. And such recognition is at the core of somatic exploration.

### ***Cognition as embodied***

Over two thousand years of philosophical tradition has ingrained the notion that what makes us essentially human is our capacity for disembodied reason (Lakoff & Johnson, 1999). The dominant ontological and epistemological underpinnings, that follow the ideal of humans’ rationality triumphing over our ‘lesser’ animal nature, hold that perceptual input is in service of the creation of

meaning, which is ultimately abstract and disembodied; our sensory experience of the world is used for ‘higher level constructs,’ essentially the capacity to define information (Ehrenhaus, 1988). Indeed, the bulk of theorising in cognition and communication remains largely disembodied and continues to reinforce a dualism with its rigid ontological, epistemological and logical dichotomies “between the mental, conceptual, rational, cognitive, a priori, and theoretical, on the one side, and the physical, perceptual, imaginative, emotional, a posteriori, and practical, on the other side.” (Johnson, 1987, p. xxxvi).

When the body is considered within the dominant paradigm that venerates humans’ mental and rational capacity, it is often viewed as an objective object, as something in service to our cognitive faculties, that provides the input for ‘higher level’ linguistic and cognitive processing and understanding. Research grounded in such an orientation may use brain imaging (Segaert *et al.*, 2011) or eye tracking (Keysar *et al.*, 2000) studies with the aim of shedding light on our cognitive and linguistic capacities. Herein, however, the body is still regarded as separate and its movements are studied to gain insight into supposedly abstract cognition. There are increasing movements to soften such dualism. One example of such is the development of grounded cognition theories (Winkielman *et al.*, 2015), which conceptualise ‘embodiment’ as action that grounds cognition, which is an “embodied, situated, and social enterprise,” (Glenberg & Gallese, 2012, p. 905). Although acknowledging the embodiment of cognition, such theories are still established within an epistemological orientation that appreciates bodies as third person, objectively observable entities that recognise “the physical instantiation of the cognitive apparatus as a brain inside a body” (Fischer & Zwaan, 2008, p.826). While beginning to embrace embodiment, more development is needed to further lessen dualistic tendencies.

It is only when the dualist notions – mind versus body, sender versus receiver, etc. – that undergird our dominant paradigms have begun to be questioned that we see an appreciation of

somatic experience and increased consideration of the corporeal within cognition and communication studies. Cognitive linguist Lakoff and philosopher Johnson's *Philosophy in the Flesh* (1999) offers such an ontological overhaul, reinforcing LaMothe's life-as-movement paradigm. The concept of embodiment in this philosophy includes the physicality of neurons, phenomenological conscious experience and the cognitive unconscious. Drawing from cognitive science, Lakoff and Johnson (1999) empirically substantiate that thought is mostly unconscious, concepts are not just a reflection of the external world and that our conceptual systems are far more dependent on our bodily experience of the world, largely connected metaphorically, than the language we speak. Not only does this call for a revisioning of our understanding of cognition and language, which is inherently embodied, but for a recognition that all thinking and communication depends on our embodied understanding of a situation.

Abstract concepts arise via metaphorical projections from more directly embodied concepts and that most of the embodied mechanisms of conceptualisation and thought are hidden from our consciousness. Grammar is a neural system, thus an embodied one. Not only does this change how we conceive of cognition and communication but how we understand who and what we are. Dance scholar Anne Cooper Albright (2009) concurs that studies in neurology have reinforced that interoception is fundamental to empathy and connection to others' states. As embodied beings, we are not separate from our environment, and it is our capacity for empathic projection that we come to know and understand others and the world around us, forming the basis of an embodied spirituality.

Such developments see embodiment not only as central, but as everything there is. They question ideas of abstract meaning, of our conceptualisations of language and communication, and even the idea of separate individuals engaging in communication.

### ***Language and embodiment***

As written and oral language are woven into all aspects of our movements, interactions, and learning, language is a critical and specific aspect of cognition. In this research, I consider how language is utilised within somatic practices and within daily life and the bridging that is possible via its explicit consideration. Within the dominant life-as-matter paradigm and Cartesian dualism, language and the study of linguistics have been understood as abstracted objects. Although the movement and behavioural nature of language is recognised and the purposes of its use studied extensively, the consideration of language itself considers its structure and ‘thingness’: its symbols, lexicon, form, grammar, phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics, and its symbolic representation of all aspects of life, such as history and culture (Hanson & Inkelas, 2009, p. xi). In *A Concise Introduction to Linguistics* (2018), Rowe & Levine explain that language is a uniquely cognitive system, or code, that allows communication to occur via the sending and receiving of the code via forms of linguistic utterances both oral and written. The authors refer to Noam Chomsky, widely known for his contributions to our current conceptualisations of language, that define it “as a cognitive computational function” (Rowe & Levine, 2018, p. 3). This introductory text, similar to many in the field, goes on to describe the features of this ‘code’ of language, including the ways in which our brains are seen to function as computers and the ways in which non-human animals are viewed to similarly send and receive codes in their own manners.

In line with the cognitive theories that have dominated academic and popular paradigms, such conceptualisations of language become abstracted, deepening dualistic orientations to life where embodiment, in general, is seen as the machine that allows for being and doing. As such, “abstractions breed abstractions” (Lord, 1996, p. 15) and “nouns break the world and our experience apart, into *things*” where the potentials exist “to confuse the name with the thing named” (Nachmanovitch, 2019, p. 25).

Such dominant paradigms, however, have not remained unquestioned and there have been numerous trains of thought offered that postulate less dualistic and more embodied and holistic appreciations of language and our experience of it (Abram, 1996, Di Paolo *et al.*, 2018, Finnegan, 2002, Lakoff & Johnson, 1999, Lord, 1996, Ruthrof, 2000). For many, that starting point is to shed light on the unquestioned assumptions within the dominant ontologies.

The inextricable connection between all of cognition and the body is highlighted by developments in cognitive science, as noted above, particularly in the work of Lakoff and Johnson (1999), who recognise that all communication depends on our embodied experiences which are largely understood metaphorically. Johnson (1987) contends that words are meaningless unto themselves, that “imaginative structures such as schemata, metaphor, metonymy and mental imagery depend on the nature of the body, particularly perceptual capacities and motor skills” (p. xi). Although Lakoff and Johnson’s earlier work in 1980 still dichotomised cognition and experience to a certain degree, they later comprehensively explored how we understand abstract concepts by their metaphorical connection to our sensorial, embodied experience of life (Lakoff & Johnson, 1999). They demonstrate, via examples of linguistic expressions, how spatial orientation, experience of actions and physical objects, and personification are used to in the expression and understanding of language. They argue that even these ‘direct physical experiences’ have layers of interpretation, as “*every* experience takes place within a vast background of cultural presuppositions” (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). This is clearly demonstrated in the breadth of metaphors that are grounded in the idea of substance (such as time as a resource), which are situated in a life-as-matter ontology. This dominant ontology also features in their statement that we need to categorise in order to make sense of the world and they claim that categorising is “a natural way of identifying a *kind* of object or experience” (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, p.163). They delineate eight categories that are created by direct experience of life, which are also used to give abstract ideas form and boundaries.

Developments in anthropology also highlight the importance of considering the embodiment of language. Quinn and Holland (1987) call for a greater appreciation of how much culture is implicated in the organisation of our knowledge via their criticism of the ethnocentricity of our understanding of thought and language that upholds notions of duality. Another anthropologist Finnegan, in her book *Communicating: The multiple modes of human interconnection* (2002), furthers this notion by criticising our narratives as being not only ethno- but humano-centred, and proposes that culture is a product of communication and not vice versa. Finnegan sees communication as “a dynamic interactive process made up of the organized, purposive, mutually influential and mutually recognizable actions and experiences that are created in a variety of modes by and between active participants as they enter connect with each other” (p. 28). Embodiment is an integral part of this for Finnegan, who asserts all communication works through the resources of our bodies, questioning the underlying model of communication as being ultimately cognitive, relying on mental models. She reprimands our veneration of the rationality of humans and questions the general model of sender, receiver and message, claiming there is no existence of a separate, objective ‘message’ outside the embodiment of those involved in the communication but instead a “fluid, situational, and multiplex process” (Finnegan, 2002, p. 15).

In *The Body in Language*, Ruthrof (2000) considers the body in discourse, contending that language is meaningless without the body in what he has termed ‘corporeal semantics.’ Ruthrof cautions against our linguistic imperialism: that pursuits to disembody language fail to recognise there is no meaning without the body and that the ways in which language appears to be abstract and disembodied is actually dependent on the way a community has framed the semiosis of the corporeal. By demonstrating how nonverbal signs are the deep structure of language, Ruthrof, like those discussed earlier, invites us to recognise life – and communication – as dependent on embodiment.



Other prominent scholars have pointed out how not only language but the development of the alphabet and literacy have profoundly impacted how life is experienced in the body. Language “provided us with a conceptual framework for analysis and has restructured our perceptions of reality” (Logan, 1986, p. 18). Even the very notion of code is largely predicated on the creation of a phonetic alphabet which essentially codes all use of language. Logan, author of *The Alphabet Effect: The Impact of the Phonetic Alphabet on the Development of Western Civilization* (1986), contends that our intellectual capacities, that are often assumed to be natively human, of abstraction, analysis, rationality, deductive thinking and classification are by-products of the creation of the alphabet and have formed the basis of Western abstract, scientific and logical thinking. With a historic overview of the development of the alphabet, Logan demonstrates how this reifying, separating, categorising orientation to life that is generally unquestioned in today’s western society is not an orientation that was the norm in pre-alphabetic societies or current non-alphabetic ones. “The specialisation that the alphabet encourages discourages one from thinking holistically or environmentally” (Logan, 1986, p. 123) by encouraging fragmentation and specialisation. Logan (1986) contends that the Greeks became slaves to their linear either/or orientation of logic and life and this is still apparently embedded in the ways that dualistic thinking and understanding abound. Such thinking is antithetical to perceiving life as somatic practice.

Philosopher and historian Walter Ong’s (2012, 1980, 1979) seminal work dichotomises oral language as unconscious and natural and written language as conscious and artificial, noting that orality can exist without writing and not vice versa. Although this dualistic orientation fails to fully acknowledge the embodiment of all forms of language, Ong does point to the ways in which written language separates. Unlike live, oral communication, where there is a back and forth and awareness of the other with whom one is speaking, in written forms of language, “the writer’s audience is always a fiction” (Ong, 1979, p. 3) and “the reader must also fictionalize the writer” (Ong, 2012, p.

101). Ong (2012) notes the ironic occurrence that the writer is most often alone and although she may hope for many to read what she is writing, she does not want to be interrupted by them to write. One often separates oneself to write and the written form of language separates words, reinforcing a life-as-matter ontology, that does not necessarily occur in the originating oral forms of language. This may be even more prominent now than when Ong proposed such notions four decades ago with the advent of internet, smart devices and social media. Ong (1980) notes that “writing is not merely a transcription of oral performance” (p. 204) and that writing has allowed the advent of abstract conceptualisations that would not be possible to conceive of without the written form.

Ong (2012) contends that those of us who are literate can not fully conceive of a solely oral language, that all our thought processes are “structured, directly or indirectly, by the technology of writing.” (p.77). Like Logan, he asserts that writing has transformed human consciousness. Although he insists that writing is artificial and that “there is no way to write ‘naturally’” (Ong, 2012, p. 81), Ong claims that “artificiality is natural to human beings” (p.82) and praises writing as a technology that allows for distance and “invaluable for the realization of fuller, interior, human potentials” (p. 81). Ong does touch on the impact of literacy to our sensory experience of life, “moving the oral-aural to a new sensory world, that of vision” (Ong, 2012, p. 84). What Ong’s work highlights is that although it is increasingly established that all of life, including language, is embodied, our construction and use of language continues to uphold a belief and experience of separation. What Ong does not note is the inherent movement in the written form and the somatic and embodied experience of both the writer and the reading in the acts of writing and reading. Nor does he apprehend how written words arise from a writer’s cognitive and physical movements and inspire new cognitive and emotional movements in the reader.

In *Nine Ways of Seeing a Body* (2011), movement teacher, artist and therapist Sandra Reeve notes how we give primacy to sight, particularly in reading. Sight encourages a sense of distance and clear boundaries, in contrast to “smell, taste, hearing and touch [that] invite experiences of immersion and a sense of fluidity between boundaries” (p. 7). The primacy of sight can therefore reinforce the notion and experience of the body as an object. Ecologist and philosopher David Abram, who bridges phenomenology and ecology in his book *The Spell of the Sensuous* (1996), also points to how language has been part of an increasing experience of disconnection from our sensorial experience of life. Ironically, this distance that Reeve laments as objectifying, also provides the capacity for self-reflexivity, which is central in somatic practices and phenomenological approaches to life. Such a distance also provides the space to become aware of the movement and embodiment inherent in language and even in the alphabet itself.

Although linguistics has long been studied as semiotic, Abram (1996) contends that “language can never be truly severed from the sensorial dimension of direct, affective meaning” (p. 79) and that “the whole of the sensuous world... provides the deep structure of language” (p. 85). In *Letter by Letter: An Alphabetic Miscellany* (2007), designer and artist Laurent Pflughaupt points to the inherent movement and directionality of lines, strokes and angles even within letters and writing themselves and how the phonological aspects of letters activate different areas within the mouth and throat (the hard and soft palates, uvula, pharynx, larynx, glottis, alveoli, teeth, lips and tongue) with vibration that is felt through the entire body. Such work demonstrates some of the ways the reconnection to the somatic and life as movement is possible via the experience of language, instead of interpreting it solely as code. It is such inherent movement in language and the possibility of the sensorial awareness of it that is explored in this research.

There is much richness in phenomenological studies of language that demonstrate how the act of reflexivity can support a more holistic, embodied, present experience of life through language.

The developments in this area also readily support a life-as-movement orientation to life, by aligning with the contention that “Matter would not appear at all if the movement that it expresses did not interact with other movements” (LaMothe, 2015, p. 25).

Phenomenology is a philosophical, or even ontological, approach to the experience and meaning of life. Similar to the field of somatics, phenomenology is a loosely grouped and divergent tradition that began with Edmund Husserl in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century that continues to grow and influence a number of other disciplines and methodologies (Chemero & Kaufer, 2015). Although often poorly grasped because of this diversity, “Phenomenology is best understood as a radical, anti-traditional style of philosophising, which emphasises the attempt to get to the truth of matters, to describe phenomena, in the broadest sense as whatever appears in the manner in which it appears, that is as it manifests itself to consciousness, to the experiencer” (Moran, 1999, p. 3). Its relevance within somatic research is the importance that phenomenological places on the flow of these experiences being through the body and the role of embodiment in determining meaning in life. Merleau-Ponty, a phenomenological philosopher, discusses both the body and language at length and their relationship to the experience of life. He argues that language is not a code created by humans but rather derived from the primordial human acts of creativity, expression and communication. He discussed the ‘problematic’ of language, asserts that the meaning of language is embodied, and that all possibilities of language are contained in the sensed world and that the sensed world is inscribed with language (Froman, 1982).

Lord was inspired by phenomenology and philosophical hermeneutics (particular Gadamer who believed that humans can only think and know through language) to invite readers to deeply question their assumptions about language in *Words: A Hermeneutical Approach to the Study of Language* (1996). He criticises linguistics as myopic and that attempts to distance ourselves from language paradoxically tend to entrench us even more: “they go on dissecting, constructing and trying out

model after model, at a time when language has been bursting its bonds, leaving its exponents high and dry with their ever more ingenious deconstructions, instead of giddy at the marvellous vistas that beckon at every turn” (Lord, 1996, p.6). In line with Merleau-Ponty, Lord argues that our sensation, imagination and feeling of life is imbued with language and only has any meaning because of it. Conceptualisations of objects and of a self is only possible via language and words allows one “to think, feel, remember, plan, anticipate, dream and play” (Lord, 1996, p.7). Language gives form to all phenomena and allows for the articulation of perception. In addition to noting the objectification and material-based orientation of language, Lord also points to thoughts as movement and that movement is perpetually brought forth via language. Lord notes how communication gives rise to intersubjectivity, of a co-created life-world, and how language has the capacity to share one’s ‘private mental universe’ and that the intersubjective, meaning-making mode of language is always happening simultaneously with its sensorial aspects, the organic mode of “acoustic phenomena, perceptual cues, kinaesthetic servomechanisms within the speech musculature, neural networking and information processing” (Lord, 1996, p. 26). In this way, this approach ensures that the intersubjective mode is communicated.

Neuroscientists and philosophers Di Paolo, Cuffari and De Jaegher, in their book *Linguistic Bodies: The Continuity between Life and Language* (2018), further promote such notions by asserting we are ‘linguistic bodies,’ countering the idea that humans have language but rather are language. They highlight the agency in creating language, creating self and determining the experience of embodiment and invite awareness and questioning of the selves we create through utterances. Also highlighting the intersubjective, complex, entangled nature of life, they assert that questioning and shifting our beliefs and discourse of self and the body has the capacity to change not only one’s personal experience of life but that of others with whom they communicate. Although the notion of thingness is inherent in even the title of their book, ‘Linguistic Bodies,’ Di Paolo, Cuffari and De

Jaegher point to a life-as-movement ontology and state that no body exists but is rather in a process of continual becoming and a body is “better conceived as processes, practices, and networks of relations” (p. 7). Emphasising the lack of any end point and the continual act of creating via language, the authors reinforce the necessity of critical participation. Even as they question, however, a life-as-material paradigm remains apparent beneath the discourse on movement and becoming as they ascribe a sense of materiality and matter (albeit dynamic) of relations and the mind. LaMothe (2015), however, invites us to understand this mattering as movement: “In a movement paradigm, movement is the medium out of which matter is made. Movement is what matter represents, and what it exists to enable” (p. 25).

Taken collectively, what these aforementioned scholars highlight is, yet again, the potential to increase one’s awareness of the moving and sensorial nature of all of life, particularly in areas that have often been considered as disembodied, such as language. An ontological shift views language as patterns of movement with innately sensorial aspects in its creation and reception. Thus language becomes the movements made by and between individuals not their attendant articulation or documentation.

Eugene Gendlin’s (1982) phenomenological work, which includes his theory and tool of ‘Focusing’ offers a practical approach to experiencing language in the body. Via a multi-step psychotherapeutic approach, users are offered prompts to consider the ‘felt-sense’ of an experience and explore words that could best approximate the sensorial experience. It is believed that although no verbal explanation can accurately convey the experience, the process focuses our attention on the somatic experience, increasing our awareness of it and our ability to begin to articulate it to others. Such an intentional attentional process, that is both mental and kinaesthetic, actually highlights how meaning happens via language, and how the sensorial senses are interpreted and made sense of through language (Stelter, 2000). Focusing is often guided by a therapist but Gendlin has also

provided simple steps for its practice, intended to be used by anyone (1981), demonstrating how somatically-oriented practices can be accessible and used on one's own. Gendlin's process invites a practitioner to let the words themselves come from the sensation, or the 'felt-sense.' He believes that we know far more in our bodies than we are aware of in our conscious minds and that letting the words come from the sensation, and practicing 'tuning in' to the sensations and the sense of 'rightness' of the words in the body, we can access this embodied knowing. Gendlin's work and research has supported the recognition of embodied knowing as valid.

Since we assume that we think in language and are continually making meaning, largely unconsciously, intentional processes such as Gendlin's offers increased agency and highlights the choice available in ascribing meaning. Don Hanlan Johnson refers to Gendlin when he highlights the movement inherent in language: "The words carry us further into getting it... they, like our bodies, are things: material, sonic, audible, visible realities that are affecting changes in our experience just like these lattice-like lines in front of you now" (Johnson, 2015, p. xvi).

As incredible as language is for the experience of intersubjectivity, multi-layered meaning gives rises to similar but not always shared meaning. As noted above in the discussion of the terms somatic and dance, it is interesting to note that even the language used within somatics and related inner/embodied work is varied (and, at times, contradictory). In the field of organisational studies, Christian Gärtner (2013), for example, offers six conceptions of the term 'embodied knowing': brute embodiment (body as container), physiological embodiment (biochemical and neural systems), enactive lived embodiment (sensing and moving), intelligible embodiment (embodiment of thinking), situated embodiment, and social embodiment. Dance scholar Sheets-Johnstone (2015), on the other hand, rejects the use of the word 'embodied,' insisting it reinforces a mind-body separation and a superiority of the former. This idea of increasing one's knowing has also been referred to as 'connected' knowing – or empathic capacity in Somatic therapy (Cheever, 2000), cultivating an inner

authority in somatics (Johnson, 1995), intuition (Lawrence, 2012) and “consciousing” (Stanage, 1987) in the field of adult education, conscious embodiment in sociology (Crowdes, 2000), and “embodied knowing” in organisation studies (Gärtner, 2013). Other work in organisational studies conceptualises ‘participative knowing,’ which includes experiential, practical, presentational and propositional forms (Heron, 1992, referenced in Küpers, 2015).

What these inconsistencies do highlight is the possibility, and even imperative, of reconsidering and reconceiving of the language used when intending increased access to and further reach of somatics and improvisation in life. Somatics and dance scholar Sondra Fraleigh (2019) speaks to utilising somatic practices and improvisation to increase consciousness of the creating of self through language and linguistic movements and explores language and words that could foster more human potential and liberation. Dance professor Edward Waburton (2011) applies phenomenological philosophy to the practice as dance by having dancers ‘speak from the body,’ enacting dance and re-linguaging embodiment. By comparing somatic education with physical education, Jan Wright (2000), uses post-structural thought to demonstrate that language and discourse create the objects spoken about, explores how the specific objectification of the body occurs in sport and somatic practices and pedagogy, noting the ways in which power and authority dictate one’s beliefs, experiences and movements. Wright invites a more reflective awareness of the objectification that happens via discourse, specifically in pedagogical situations, so that language can be shifted from limiting and oppressive to more empowering and expansive. Cognitive scientists Parrill, Tobin and Turner (2010) present explorations that consider the experience of and through the body by exploring some distinctions readily apparent across different languages. Nachmanovitch’s (2019) practice of improvising is inspired by his mentor’s, Gregory Batson, counsel to “STAMP OUT NOUNS” (p. 25). Just as he intentionally engages in improvising (as opposed to improvisation), Nachmanovitch invites the use of “present-tense active verbs as



antidotes to thingness: *improvising, musicking, teaching, playing, creating, being*” (p. 27). Improvisation educator Nisha Sajnani (2012) notes how the practice of improvising allows the apprehending of knowledge as an emergent process, as opposed to a fixed entity. Robin Wall Kimmerer (2013) notes the static, objectifying nature of English, when she compares it to the Ojibway language, which languages many words that are nouns in English as verbs in Ojibway.

These explorations highlight the importance and possibility inherent in language itself to shifting discourse towards acknowledging the entangled, always becoming, expansive, non-material nature of life. If we communicate in patterns of movement, drawing attention to the co-creative capacity in language, we may better apprehend the interconnected nature of life and shift from understanding communicating as a means to control the environment to understanding its potential to know and become who we are and the movements we make (LaMothe, 2015). This use of writing scores in this research, particularly the inter-subjective dialogue embedded in my practice, offers a practical demonstration of such potentiality.

As the inherent creation of thingness through the structure of language remains intransient, the work of inviting more somatic awareness has the added capacity of refining and expanding our vocabulary for articulating what we think and feel. Deepening the connection between somatic experience and writing and reflection is a key feature of this research. Softening dualistic thinking and highlighting the human-created sense of meaning can allow us to wield language more intentionally.

### ***Summary***

With the aim of exploring the research question, *how can all of life be understood as somatic practice*, this chapter highlights some aspects of somatic practice that could impede such a possibility as well as considerations that could offer alternative understandings.

Somatics includes all orientations and practices that bring one's awareness to the first-person sensorial and interoceptive experience of life. The field of somatics has grown substantially in the past century, both in academic explorations and mainstream practices, endorsing more unified orientations to life that reinforce the interconnected nature of life and movement.

This research intends to add to that growth by bringing attention to some aspects of somatics that unwittingly reinforce separating tendencies. These include considering cognitive experience separate from sensorial experience, isolating internal experience from external movement, removing reliance on external expertise and prescribed environmental conditions, and subtle perpetuation of authoritarian educational systems that presume that there right and wrong ways of moving to correct, align or depattern.

A life-as-movement ontology softens the dichotomisation of aspects of experience by apprehending all of life as movement, including sensations, thoughts and language. Developments in quantum physics support a movement-based, interconnected understanding of all aspects of life. Such a paradigm underscores the importance of awareness of one's patterns of movements and this awareness is what LaMothe (2015) terms 'dance.'

Improvisational practices in dance offer powerful praxes to increase such an awareness and can readily be applied outside a dance studio. Improvisation requires attention to the present moment, supporting greater somatic awareness. A simple and accessible way to focus this attention is through the use of scores, an intentional framing of awareness and movement that frame choice and intentionality.

What can be considered from a somatic, movement perspective is also expanded by developments that demonstrate the embodied nature of cognition and language. As a source of meaning in our lives, language plays a powerful role in what one believes and experiences. Language, alphabet, syntax, and literacy can reinforce dualistic, separating experiences or unifying, embodied

ones. There have been growing developments in the intentional use of language to reinforce the latter, particularly in somatics and movement improvisation. This research situates itself within that trend of expanding the connecting potential of language, particularly through its use of varied literary forms.

Grounded in a life-as-movement orientation, with intentional use of language and improvisational scores, this research offers new ways of conceiving of somatic practice, including how research methodology itself can support greater somatic awareness.

## A Somatic Methodology

We are now at a time when the experience of the body has become integral to human research, both as a personal experience within oneself, as well as with regard to our interactions with each other. (Tantia, 2021, p.xxxi)

Developing methods of qualitative analysis which facilitate a focus on embodiment is important and challenging. The search for ‘fleshier’ methodologies is particularly important for feminists and other critical researchers as a means of trying to ‘do’ research which disrupts normative boundaries and subverts authoritative knowledges and discourses. (Chadwick, 2012, p. 94)

*What if the awareness of the experience and movement in our bodies was regarded as not only important, but foundational in our lives and by which everything else that we value is supported?*

*What if the awareness of the experience of being and moving in our bodies was something we had access to all the time, through all of our lives and did not require anything extra?*

*What if all our lives could be seen as somatic practice, opening up access, choice and connection in every moment?*

*What could be possible if the entire world was grounded in this belief?*

In order to answer the research question of *How all of life can be understood as somatic practice*, the research explores possibilities of somatic awareness and attention in all its unfolding, from

development to implementation to writing. All aspects of the research are explored as a potential for somatic practice. Below is a discussion of the methodological approach of the research and a description of how each aspect of the research methodology was approached somatically. Although the discussion includes connections and overlap with other somatically-informed and directed research methods, these pre-existing studies were a minor influence in the trajectory of the present research. In truth, I avoided extensive methodological reading until writing about it as I wanted the process to be directed from my somatic experience in each moment, as opposed to being directed by someone else's experience or methods. Thus, my research methodology could be most accurately termed as a somatic method. Having the development and implementation of the research be directed primarily from my somatic experience is in line with a practice-as-research methodology, where the practice is a key mode of inquiry and practice is offered as the evidence of the research inquiry (Nelson, 2013). My practice is somatics, an improvisational, emergent, sensorially-directed praxes and my research is guided by and written from somatic experience.

Practice-as-research... is a process of exploring how they [body and mind] work together to inform knowledge and uncover insights which would not be available without processes of bodily experience, thoughtful reflection, physical activities, collaboration with others, documentation and articulation across various media. In a process of layering, ranges of experience and expression can be revealed – which includes body-mind-movement-language as interrelated elements of practice. (Meehan, 2015, p. 315)

Additionally, although somatic research approaches do exist, they represent a relatively small and recent development in research methodology. As Jennifer Tantia (2021) states in her book that was published when I had already written much of this dissertation: “The elusive and often indescribable aspects of embodiment experience necessitates new research methods that are designed to address embodied data. However, to date no single text on embodied research has produced actual examples

of methods that show how to do that” (p. xxix). My process is an example of how I developed such methods somatically for this project and how, in doing so, I am actively contributing to the growing area of somatic methodologies. As a result, my contribution involves a bridging of established methodological practices that were ultimately guided by my own somatic experience. For this research, I used improvisational scores as the means to engage in autoethnography and participant exploration somatically. Below I discuss how my work aligns and expands methodological scholarship and practice.

### **Development of the research question**

The impetus for this doctoral work was to consider the accessibility of somatic practices and explore ways in which further its reach could be possible. This was a personally driven exploration as I had experienced the transformational potential of somatic practices in my own life. I conducted preliminary research studies wherein I examined some of the barriers of access to somatic and improvisational movement practices (see Kowalenko, 2017a), which highlighted how some of the requirements for most somatic practices – time, money, a qualified practitioner and a dedicated time and space for practice – can present obstacles to practice. Inspired by the work of Kimerer LaMothe (2015), who reconceptualises dance as intentional awareness of movement, I began to be curious about the ways that I could expand her work practically by taking somatic practice outside of the studio/practice space into other areas in our lives. Essentially how somatic practice could be brought to people instead of considering how to bring people to somatic practice. Initially I had intended to explore how work within an organisation could be conceived as somatic practice. As I began to pursue this, however, I saw the potential of exploration in all aspects of our day-to-day lives and felt the personal necessity of exploring the potential of somatic practice in all areas of my own life in order to be an advocate for this work.

We need scholarly projects that assess the degree to which a lived sensibility of one's own movement making feeds a willingness and ability to move with the earth in mutually life-enabling ways. Here the terrain is vast and open. There are extensive connections to make between the sensory education we receive at the hands of our technological inventions and the capacity for resisting obvious patterns of self-destruction. My deep conviction is that massive cultural change will not and cannot occur until humans cultivate within themselves the knowledge of their own bodily becoming that they need to see, imagine and act differently. Only when we cultivate this ecokinetic knowledge will we be able to understand the persistence, the universality, and the recurring eruptions of dance in human history as a force for change. (LaMothe, 2015, p. 206)

The terrain in asking the question *what if all of life could be understood as somatic practice* was indeed vast and I was acutely aware of the impossibility of one study exploring all aspects of life for all humans. I nevertheless desired an open, encompassing question to be part of the movement of scholars and practitioners in expanding the possibility of greater collective somatic awareness.

Like Robin Wall Kimmerer, such an all-encompassing question brought me up against the scholarly methods I had been schooled in, where “science is rigorous in separating the observer from the observed, and the observed from the observer” (2013, p. 42). The tension between standard ontological, epistemological and methodological approaches within academia and what I know through my somatic awareness has continued through all aspects of this project, including writing this methodological chapter. I continually experience friction between what is expected of me as a doctoral candidate and how I really want to conduct and write about research. I am not alone in the experience of this tension and the desire for academic methods and writing that align with and express more of the entangled, messy nature of life. Like Law (2007), my experience of academia is that it generally instructs me to:

Do your methods properly. Eat your epistemological greens. Wash your hands after mixing with the real world. Then you will lead the good research life. Your data will be clean. Your findings warrantable. The product you will produce will be pure. It will come with the guarantee of a long shelf-life. (p.595)

By making a mess with methods I am intentionally recognising that somatics research cannot be prescribed. The infinite possibilities for somatic engagement and expression do not align with traditional, science-based methodologies that seek to define and control the research and the research outcomes. Below I share what I believe is expected of me as a doctoral candidate in hopes that you'll gladly follow me into new and perhaps unfamiliar territory when I present the research itself in ways that I intend to embrace the embodied, entangled messiness a little more.

### **Methodological approach**

In our culture, and especially in academia, our primary way of knowing is often through the written word. In a materialist orientation, the aim of the written word is to concretise and to obtain substantive knowledge. As reading and writing privilege the visual sense, we often fail to recognise the entirety of our body in the practice of the written word, the movements necessary and how such movements can be in service of a life-as-movement paradigm (LaMothe, 2015). Jennifer Tantia (2019), a somatic psychologist and researcher, notes how traditional research methodology fails to match the elements and nuances of somatic practice and calls for more development of embodied research methods. This project responds to that call.

Although the academy is quite aware of our positivist history, questioning established ontologies, epistemologies and methodologies is a critical aspect of academia itself. Engaging in such an enquiry from the inside is part of what inspired me to pursue this research in an academic institution. Although many of us in the social science and humanities believe ourselves to be firmly



established beyond or 'post' positivism, "the positivist 'quest for certainty' (Dewey 1929) is tenacious, and there are always those, even in a field like education which touts diversity at every turn, who try to rein in difference and shut down knowledge produced by the Other" (St. Pierre, 2012, p.483). Yet academics continue to endeavour to expand the voice of the 'Other' in our scholarship – particularly focusing on who and what we have been oppressing and suppressing.

Since the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century, interpretive, critical and postmodern approaches to philosophy and social science have worked to establish the validity of oppressed epistemologies (St. Pierre, 2012). Such approaches do not believe in a single objective reality but rather countless interpretive and subjective experiences of it. Grounded in such an ontology, research, to be substantive, must acknowledge and include the "rich, complex, contradictory and contingent panoply of man-made, socially constructed interpretations" (St. Pierre, 2012, p.494). Critical, feminist, Indigenous, and embodied scholarship expressly voice the oppressed and invite in more nuances of life with their attendance to "confusion, paradox and imprecision" (Law, 2007, p.597). Somatic scholarship's focus is to establish the knowing of the body as valid without external or systemic corroboration.

Ruptures, rifts, crises and turns in ontology, epistemology and praxis have gained momentum and footing in academia particularly since the 1990's and Lincoln & Denzin (2003) attest that we were already in a 'seventh moment of inquiry' by the early 2000s. They perceive that this moment is:

Defined by breaks from the past, a focus on previously silenced voices, a turn to performance texts, and a concern with moral discourse, with critical conversations about how qualitative inquiry can contribute to contemporary discourses concerning democracy, race, gender, class, nation, freedom, and community. (p.2)

It is in this academic climate that authority, representation and praxis are continually being questioned via "experimental, literary, and 'messy' representations of lived experience" (Lincoln &

Denzin, 2003, p.3) through unorthodox applications of methodology and presentation. The result has been a:

Veritable explosion of “messy” forms—plays, poems, performance pieces and ethnodramas; fictional representations; “skirted,” “pleated,” and “layered” texts; and autoethnographies—all meant to be read out loud, performed, or savored as literature and community stories, [that] has reshaped entirely the debates around “appropriate” scientific discourse, the technical and rhetorical conventions of scientific writing, and the meaning of research itself. (Lincoln & Denzin, 2003, p7)

It is within this milieu that this embodied and practice-based inquiry situates itself. In so doing, I seek to acknowledge the wisdom of the body and the capacity of praxis to illuminate it.

The use of more qualitative modes of research in recent years has opened up many other possibilities of conceptualising experience and making changes in the world around us. Although these approaches are often pitted against positivist ways of knowing, the very nature of such an approach – holistic, nuanced, and socially-oriented – should lend itself to the inclusion of quantitative research as simply one way of knowing. Qualitative, arts-based and participatory researchers recognise that there are numerous ways of knowing. They posit that the inclusion of presentational (“symbolised”) and practical (“how to”) knowing in addition to the reputed propositional (“conceptual”) knowing based on experiential (“felt”) knowing can only increase our perspectives (Liamputtong & Rumbold, 2008).

Research and writing methodologies that expressly language the intersubjective, embodied, moving nature of life, are particularly notable in feminist, Indigenous, critical, and embodied discourse as evidenced in the fields of autoethnography, phenomenology, practice-as-research, dance and arts-based research and writing. Although there are other modalities such as audio-visual (Hahn, 2007) and staged performance (Spry, 2011) in dance and autoethnographic scholarship, the main way

that researchers share their work is through the written word. This research concurs that it is materially important as it is through language and languaging that meaning is created.

### ***Somatic research and embodied analysis***

“Embodied research methods that stem from embodied epistemology are necessary, not only for the identity of the field, but for its survival” (Tantia, 2019, p.136). Somatic and embodied methodologies represent a small but growing area within academia, their need reinforced by developments across numerous fields that confirm the embodied, interconnected nature of life. In a time of postmodernism, where truth is considered subjective and collectively created (Todres, 2007), modes of better exploring and representing this entangled subjectivity continue to expand epistemologies that respond to the challenges we face individually and collectively as humans.

There is no singular method for somatic research although an embodied methodology should be conducted “in full awareness that the ‘body of the researcher’ in relation to the ‘body of the participant’ shapes the data being collected” (Johnson, 2014, p. 87), which requires a researcher’s reflexivity, seeing participants as research partners, and collecting data from states of embodied self-awareness. The data itself should also be analysed and presented with somatic awareness. As such, research conducted somatically more than often takes novel and evocative written forms, such as poetry and narrative, clearly portraying the researcher’s somatic reflexivity as well as the participants’ somatic experiences (Johnson, 2014). “Often this means that the writing takes on the perspective of a first-person narrative” (Johnson, 2011, p. 18) allowing for the somatic experience and its “deeper layers of sensual, emotional, and psychological associations, memories, and undercurrents that attend such experience” (p.18).

Somatic researchers have explored how to include the embodied experience in all phases of the research, including design (Bacon, 2010, Bacon & Midgelow, 2014, Caldwell & Johnson, 2015,

Changaris, 2021, Dahlberg, 2021, Johnson, 2014, Lange et al., 2021, Meehan, 2015, Tantia, 2019, Tantia 2021, Todres, 2007), data collection and interviews (Tantia, 2021, Westland, 2021, Woodyer, 2021), transcription (Brooks, 2010, Chadwick, 2012), analysis (Bradley, 2021, Bryl, 2021, Chadwick, 2012, Freedman & Mehling, 2021, Rodríguez-Jiménez & Carmona, 2021, Todres, 2007, Todres & Galvin, 2008) and writing (Anderson, 2001, Anderson, 2020, Bonenfant, 2009, Cancienne & Snowber, 2003, Davison et. al, 2021, Johnson et al., 2021, Richardson, 2000, Skura, 2010, Ulmer, 2014, van Manen, 2006). Dance studies, in particular, offers explicitly embodied approaches to research and writing. By dancing through research, through findings, through analysis and writing, the interconnection, self-reflexivity and embodiment is an inherent part of such academic writing.

Dance scholar Susan Stinson's (1995) work highlights the capacity of kinesthetic imagery to represent fully lived experience. Other dance scholars Karen Barbour (2011) and Tomie Hahn (2007) offer academic analyses that are interspersed and supported by a personal narrative, sharing their own particular socio-cultural context and inviting their readers to experience their writing through their own bodies. Sheets-Johnstone (2010) insists that including such movement is imperative, as it validates and gives expression to an "I" not in the sense of self, a reified, conceptual entity, but in the sense of agency and capability and gives us access to an innate language that we all possess as moving beings. Celeste Snowber uses "body narratives" (Snowber, 2002): improvising dance inspired by data, performing an embodied ritual, in order gain insight that would not be possible from cognitive analysis alone. Her use of movement improvisation calls for the dropping into not-knowing and such a place allows for ambiguity and multiplicity. By putting the 'data' 'into one's body' and allowing it to move oneself, not only three-dimensionally through space but also through time, there is space for paradox and contradiction (Snowber, 2008). Such a methodology avoids clear and simple answers and instead opens up more questions and possibilities. The dance

itself generates new questions and new data, being both a process and a product in its use as methodology (Bagley & Cancienne, 2008).

The use of improvisational scores, discussed in the literature review above, offer rich possibilities of translating movement improvisation practices to be used as research methodology. Skura (2010) describes a collaborative process where improvised movement generates writing, Mees (2020) used scores to write about her research, and Dowler (2019) used improvisation practice to explore experiences in health care settings. This research builds on this type of translation by explicitly using scores in the development and writing of the research.

Somatic and embodied research methods may increase accuracy of biological measurement, virtual reality studies, robotics and artificial intelligence, and increase understanding in difficult-to-treat conditions, such as autism, chronic pain and medically unexplained symptoms. Embodied methods can increase specificity and understanding and reduce linguistic shorthand that falsely group experiences together. Somatic methods can also provide information about human nature in situations of unknown (Tantia, 2021).

### ***Practice-as-Research***

The ‘practice turn’ in the social sciences and humanities has been predicated on the assertion that theory maintains a certain abstract distance from the actualities of life and, to be grounded, it must be substantiated through practice and its associated processes. There is often a sense of dualism between theory and practice as “ordinary language pits practice against theory. Theory is tidy, whereas practice is messy. ‘That might be true in theory’, people tell us, ‘but it does not hold in practice’” (Kustermans, 2016, p.178). The practice turn recognises the role of practice in “the constitution of social meaning, identities and structure” through the “on-going *process* of bodily

doings” (Kustermans, 2016, p.179). As such, practice theorists exist across a wide range of disciplines and have contributed to understandings of:

Philosophical and social scientific significance of human activity; the nature of subjectivity, embodiment, rationality, meaning, and normativity; the character of language, science, and power; and the organization, reproduction, and transformation of social life. In making these contributions, practice approaches thereby oppose numerous current and recent paths of thinking, including intellectualism, representationalism, individualisms..., structuralist, structure-functionalism, systems theory, semiotics, and many strains of humanism and poststructuralism. (Knorr-Cetina *et al.*, 2001, p.11)

Because of this breadth within the practice turn, there is no unified methodological approach.

Practice-as-research is one approach within the realm.

In order to acknowledge the embodied engagement in all structures, while softening the idea of dualism between theory and practice, practice-as-research “highlights the crucial interrelationship that exists between theory and practice” (Barrett & Bolt, 2007) and expands the epistemological basis of research. Because practice-as-research seeks to validate artistic and embodied practices as legitimate academic research methodologies, it is commonly found in the artistic realm. Although not without resistance and criticism, the burgeoning use of practice-as-research continues to expand, articulate and substantiate its use in the academic realm (Nelson, 2013)

Nivel 10: *Researching (in/as) Motion*, edited by Vida Midgelow, Jane Bacon, Paula Kramer, and Rebecca Hilton (2019), is a web-based resource of European artistic doctoral dissertations. The many authors document the variety of ways they have played with form in practice-as-research endeavours, showing some of the multitudes of ways they can look at practice, what such approaches offer academia, as well as the challenges that may arise in the process. Very often, particularly in the arena of practice-as-research in dance studies, research is represented multi-

modally, through writing and performance, performative writing, or through a variety of registers, or voices, in writing. Bacon *et al.*'s (2019) web resources demonstrate a number of these registers (including journal writing, video, collages and letters), highlighting how doctoral research endeavours invariably “reticulate as much as they generate... bringing together and pulling apart” (Whalley & Miller, 2019), particularly linguistically. The use of multi-vocal writing in research offers novel ways of investing in what academic work does: create new knowledge through an expanded conceptualisation of language, innovative languaging, and new relationships between linguistic constructs and boundaries.

Within the realm of artistic research, Bacon suggests somatics as the basis of practice-as-research (2019). Although she intends this suggestion primarily for artists and those studying their art as research, she points to a ‘processual’ approach to research. Such an approach is very much in line with a life-as-movement ontology as it considers movements as opposed to things or events. She notes that a processual approach takes time and can attend to the ever-changing nature of practice. Although she does not call them ‘scores,’ she suggests that boundaries are necessary in processual practice-as-research. She suggests that:

Practice as research... and somatic practices as research, in particular, might usually be considered to be a unique kind of attention or ‘attending to’ requiring voluntary attention. What I mean by this is that when we undertake research, we are enquiring into something that captures our interest. That something is a something we do not yet fully understand, know, or see, in part because it has not been fully discovered or articulated or generated into form by others in the field. (Bacon, 2019)

This yet again highlights the necessary emergent nature of somatic practice and somatic practice-as-research as well as its capacity to articulate new areas of knowing and knowledge.

### *Autoethnography*

James Clifford (1986) asserts that the ethnographer's main task is writing and encourages leveraging the power of writing with more subtle methods, to create ethnography that is evocative and performative, exposing the interactive nature of life and culture. Many autoethnographers (Pelias, 2004; Spry, 2001, 2011; Jones, Adams & Ellis, 2013) write on and from the body and use thickly descriptive, metaphorical and physical language to speak about the body. They play with literary forms, writing non-linearly, vulnerably, evocatively, reflexively, creatively, poetically in order to "...speak the body as it speaks to me... in a desire to explore how it moves me and how I move in the world and in language." (Pelias, 2004, p. 28) As the many examples in Jones, Adams and Ellis' (2013) demonstrate, they write heterogeneously about process and personal experience, they write metaphorically and the primacy is on the aesthetics and the ability of the writing to bring in the reader's humanity and to question knowledge and knowing.

Also within autoethnography, Gannon (2006) advocates writing that questions concretisation – of self, of language, of "knowledge" as truth, by destabilising the notion of a singular self through discontinuous fragments. Hahn (2007) exposes the importance of movement and invites in the corporeal awareness of the reader by emphasising the necessity of multi-sensoriality, using non-literary forms and including imagined scenarios that directly invite the reader to imagine, feel her body, and be curious about its movements.

Spry (2011) is particularly detailed in providing deep and destabilising questions for the ethnographer in approaching investigation and its representation. Much of this methodology is in service of the autoethnographers' own growth and encourages the same for others. Already supportive of increasing 'life-enabling movement,' such methods can increase their capacity for such by recognising how dialogue is movement, relationships are movement, self is movement, and using existing and new creative forms to convey that movement. "Performative autoethnographic



writing is about the continual questioning, the naming, the renaming and unnamings of experience through craft, through heart, through the textualizing body” (Spry, 2011, p. 113).

Such holistic approaches to research and writing offer potential bridges between life and somatic practice. Autoethnographer Anderson (2006) admits that few researchers spend much time connecting their personal lives and scholarship, reinforcing a separated understanding and experience of life. Even if current ethnographic trends reject the colonial practice of anthropology, of objective knowledge, of the absent yet owning researcher, there is still a great deal of separation and compartmentalisation in much research that can be lessened through embodied and autoethnographic methods.

The growth and establishment of autoethnographic methodologies has provided scholars with means to articulate the subjective nature of experience. Much autoethnographic research, however, is not somatic nor does its methodology encourage attention to the sensorial experience of life. The inclusion of somatic awareness in autoethnographic methodology has the capacity to not only expand its capacity but also further validate the necessity of subjective research methods, as we can only apprehend our sensorial experience first-hand.

### ***Somatic writing***

*“If we read and write without sensory awareness of the movements that are making us, the words we think and write lose their connection to what our use of them is creating in our lives” (LaMothe, 2015, p. 72).*

*“Poetic devices... engage the listener’s body, even if the mind resists and denies” (Richardson, 2000b, p. 12).*

*“poetic form allows the shifting and paradoxical movement of... subjectivity” (Chadwick, 2012, p.93).*

*“What its words represent are not the thoughts of the author but the patterns of physical, mental, spiritual movement that allowed the author to receive and tumble and polish and perform those thoughts” (LaMothe, 2015, p. 77).*

In somatic research, it is important that not only the researcher’s and participants’ attention is drawn to their somatic experience, but the reader is as well. This is often explored through evocative forms of writing and directly speaking to and inviting the reader into the practice. “Vocal touch is a kind of social touch: it reaches, extends, radiates towards the outside world and outside bodies” (Bonenfant, 2009, p. 65). Todres (2007) recommends that the reader be personally and somatically invited into the reading on many occasions and in evocative language with a balance of familiar and new territory for the reader. Inviting the reader’s subjective experience through writing from a ‘textured bodily experience’ offers an “‘authentic productive linguistic gathering’ [that] keeps experiencing alive in ongoing embodied understanding” (Todres, 2007, p. 29).

Evocative forms of writing include autoethnography, narratives about the writing process, ethnographic fiction, poetic representation and ethnographic drama (Richardson, 2000b) and offer multiple ways of thinking about and experiencing a topic. Evocative writing within a poststructuralist context acknowledges that language “produces meaning and creates social reality” (Richardson, 2000b, p.8). Yet, “in postmodernist mixed-genre texts,” Richardson continues, “we do not triangulate; we *crystallize*. We recognize that there are far more than three sides by which to approach the world” (Richardson, 2000b, p. 13). This crystallization offers an “infinite variety of shapes, substances, transmutations, multidimensionalities, and angles of approach” (2000b, p. 13). Mixed-genre writing offers such crystallisation as it moves between writing forms such as journal entries, poems, essays, photographs, drawings, annotated transcripts, autobiography, academic

writing, narrative, collage strategies, self-reflection, quotations, self-reflexivity and dramas (Bonenfant, 2009, Chadwick, 2012, Johnson, 2011, Richardson, 2000b, Spry, 2011, Todres, 2007).

It is the writer's responsibility to offer a balance between structure and texture of multimodal and multivocal writing for the reader in order to advance, rather than deter, greater understanding and appreciation of response (Todres, 2007). According to Kirsch,

Multimodal and multivocal writing is espoused in numerous disciplines for its capacity to: reflect the interactive, dialogic nature of writing and research processes...[,] honor and preserve the voices of others, and... allow authors to situate themselves in specific social and cultural contexts. Furthermore, experimental texts expose the multiple subject positions writers and readers often occupy, collapse boundaries between different genres of writing, and challenge traditional forms of academic discourse (such as single-voiced, seamless research reports). In addition, multi-vocal texts disrupt the smooth, linear progression of argumentative and narrative forms of writing, thereby asking readers to confront multiple, at times conflicting, realities. (Kirsh, 1997, p.193)

In postmodernist thought, which rejects the notion of objective realism, such invitations, presentations and disruptions, celebrate multivocal, experimental writing. Although such celebrations are often contested and the specific methodologies less clear, a growing number of scholars ably demonstrate how multivocal writing is used in practice and its capacity to expand epistemologies.

Jacobs'/Four Arrows' compilation of Indigenous and multivocal dissertations (2008) discusses a variety of ways that doctoral candidates have used alternative writing to challenge oppression, focus on questions rather than answers, embrace multiple ways of knowing – including through stories, music and art-making, value diversity, invite reflexivity and mindfulness, criticise dominant hegemonies, and integrate knowledge, scholarship, research, reflection, and practice.

Written as a fictional conference, which offers an example of the play possible within writing, the edition brings together many voices to demonstrate how they have embraced and challenged the constraints of the English language through Indigenous stories, poetic inquiry, film, photography, drama, autobiography and autoethnography and the web.

Although Linda Tuhiwai Smith's (1999) book on decolonising methodology focuses on the 'insider' research within Indigenous communities, her work centres stories that have been marginalised by highlighting the criticality of voice within research. In composition writing, Kirsh (1997) lists a number of scholars who have employed multi-vocality through dialogue, play with pronouns, journals, transcribed phone calls, and multiple tellings of a story.

Ethnographic and autoethnographic scholarship is particularly rife with examples of multivocal and reflexive writing. Forber-Pratt (2015) offers her autoethnographic work as a screenplay, a unique choice she made that arose from her desire to convey the multi-subjectivity of it in a way that could make sense to her, to the academy, and to those outside the academy. Forber-Pratt shares that this experimental writing choice was not outlined methodological for her but something she needed to create herself. Barbour has also created unique multi-vocal texts, such as her piece 'Standing Center' (2012), wherein she presents conventional academic writing along with autoethnographic writing, activities for the reader, and photos from her performance. Bakke and Peterson (2020) bring 12 researchers together to explore the intersections between anthropology and art to collaborate and explore the possibilities through the play of language and multiple voices. Classen (1997) discusses some of the ways that ethnographers have specifically brought the sensorial element into ethnography, such as multisensory imaging and the explicit inclusion of sensory information and interplay in text. Combined, the work of these scholars establishes that there is no single way to write and represent the voice of the research or the research participants and that a multivocal, multimodal approach has the added benefit of displacing the authorial voice.

The above scholars demonstrate how knowledge and its associated epistemologies that have long been oppressed and suppressed are being effectively brought into academic discourse and thereby challenging the limited vocality and hegemonic epistemologies within it. Embodied knowing has long been disavowed with our history of venerating humans' rational capacities. This research argues that the inclusion of embodied knowing and somatic epistemology in academic and everyday discourse is critical for a holistic response to the challenges we face personally and collectively. Such a discourse needs to embrace multiple voices and the multivocality employed in the writing of this research demonstrates how we can include multiple ways of knowing and writing in academic work.

I contend that for writing to be genuinely somatic, it must be both guided by and convey the sensorial embodiment of the writer and those written about. Reflexive, multimodal writing has the capacity for such. Such a technique of writing guided by its topic is demonstrated by Law, whose informal, contradictory, paradoxical writing style conveys the 'messy,' entangled nature of methodology he writes about (2007). In doing so, he effectively conveys the inconsistent, multisubjective realities of life in a way that moves the reader. The writing modalities chosen in this dissertation attempt a similar feat. In order to argue for the importance of somatic awareness and embodied knowing, the writing itself comes from such a reflexive awareness and aspires to convey the personal, subjective nature of the somatic through multiple voices and writing scores.

Embodied, somatic writing should be invitational instead of summative (Todres, 2007). As I write about somatic practice, I also intend the writing to be a somatic practice, both for myself and the reader. Other somatic scholars have had similar intentions, offering somatic practice exercises for the reader, either in the body of the text (Hahn, 2007) or as a footnote (Johnson, 2011). Such approaches remind the reader that to read someone else's words is not distanced or disembodied. Just as languaging is a somatic act, so too is reading the words of others and attending to their somatic impact. Bacon (2010) speaks to the importance of speaking from experience rather than

about it in order to move away from the objectification of the body. This is why, after these introductory chapters, the presentation of the research itself is written from my body, sharing my and my participants' somatic experiences, employing multimodal, multivocal approach through a variety of writing scores to evoke somatic awareness in the reader.

### **Research design**

The research for this dissertation employed both a personal, autoethnographic approach alongside a somatic practice-as-research exploration with participants to engage the research question "*What if all of life could be considered somatic practice?*". The writing of the research employs the concepts of scores to frame and present these explorations in order to attend to possibilities for increased expansion of somatic awareness in academic writing.

An autoethnographic component of the research appeared to me as critical in research that is exploring the first-personal, sensorial, subjective experience of life. Recognising the vastness in human experiences and somatic praxes also necessitated exploring the research question with others, which prompted the participant research component of the exploration. While messy, such confluence of methods were imperative.

This research invites questioning of all of the separating and compartmentalising that is particularly strong within academia. As such, it plays with literary forms, just as scores are played with in movement improvisation to increase self-awareness of movement patterns and open up new possibilities for moving and conceiving. In doing so, I explore how language, with its inclusion of subjects and objects, inherently conveys materiality, yet will also use this primary mode of communication to encourage a movement-based view of life. LaMothe (2015) counsels that "Words succeed when they move. They succeed when they invite a reader to recreate the physical and mental moves – the patterns of attention and inattention – that the writing process expresses" (p.77).

Evocative and critical performance ethnographers aim to move their audience emotionally and kinaesthetically. Anthropologist Ruth Behar (1996), who advocates for subjective nature of research, contends it is an ethical necessity to include ourselves vulnerably in ethnographic sharing as it is such openness of self that invites in others. Spry's (2011) performative autoethnographic writing echoes Behar's sense of vulnerability by focusing on the 'textualizing body,' which attempts to convey movement and experience of the body through writing that flattens a hierarchy between words, body and movement. Spry encourages us to critically reflect upon our relationship with words, how language feels in the body, and collapse distinctions between creative and critical writing to encourage audiences to make meaning in their own lives.

The aim of this dissertation is do just this – to play and expand the use of writing and language in service of expanding the accessibility and reach of somatic practices and increased awareness of the experience in our bodies. By expressly considering the movement of language in somatics and to consider all of life, including language as movement, this writing intends to soften our dichotomisation through language, lessen the experience of separation, and question more than answer. In doing so, it aims to offer more bridges to practice and awareness that can hold and embrace multiplicity of experience and knowing.

The specific approach this research undertakes is to translate the notion of improvisational score to the development of the research, the research itself, and the writing of it. All scores are chosen with the intention of focusing attention on the somatic within a variety of frames. By translating an improvisational practice technique – the use of scores – to research, the research is echoing its own questions around translating and bridging, which is to expand somatics beyond the bounds it usually finds itself within. The scores chosen at all stages are used with this expressed intention: to focus attentionally upon somatic awareness to expand its reach. The score of somatic journaling is employed in the autoethnographic section and in the participant research section, there

were scores for the interviews, scores for developing the content, and the content provided to the participants themselves were scores. All of the data is then presented through a variety of writing scores, which are described in detail below (in ‘Specific Methods’).

## **Limitations**

Although the research question I have chosen is broad, the small-scale, largely autoethnographic methodology chosen to address it is necessarily limited in its capacity to answer such a question. The question was not asked in an attempt to find a summative or generalisable answer but rather to see what we could begin to explore when asking such a question, to “liv[e] in the body of the question rather than answer it” (Spry, 2011, p.65). The explorations, as such, are entirely subjective and cannot be generalized, leaving instead a range of possibilities and impressions, many of them my own, to conceive of life and research as somatic practice. As I did not intend this research to be solely autobiographically-focused, the participant exploration component, where I asked similar questions of my participants, helped to add breadth and diversity of response. As the study was designed with intentions of accessibility and ease in mind, participants were not required to participate in all aspects of the exploration and instead invited to participate to the degree that felt best for them. I was curious about what the motivations for participation would be but, because this was not an experimental design, causation cannot be ascribed as only the participants’ self-reports were part of the data collection.

This research uses multimodal, multivocal, reflexive writing to convey the personal, subjective nature of the somatic experience. All the writing I did about the participants was shared directly with them to ask for their feedback but because their experiences have been filtered through my own somatic interpretations, their responses are conveyed via my own subjectivity. As much as possible, I present the participants’ experiences directly to the reader and therefore share many of



their direct utterances. The choice of which quotes to present, however, was again my subjective choice, driven by what I was interested in exploring (namely how somatic awareness could support what matters to someone).

Although it is widely believed that reflexivity and multivocality are significant methodologies to convey the multi-subjective, embodied nature of experience, these choices are not without caveats and critique. Kirsch has asserted that multivocal representations can:

Disguise writers' continuing authorial control [and] can fail to provide the theoretical framework and cultural context necessary for understanding the multiple voices emerging in a single text, they make new and difficult demands on readers, require tolerance for ambiguity and contradictory claims, and they easily become elitist and exclusionary. (1997, p.193)

She also cautions that providing excerpts of others' communication without adequate situating of their words can be seen as a form of appropriation by presenting others' voices through the filter of our own experience. Although I attempted to present my participants' experiences without my interpretation so that the reader could have more space to have their own experience and interpretation, Kirsch would criticise such a choice as unfairly putting the time-consuming task of analysis and interpretation on the reader when they did not expect to nor do they necessarily have the tools to do so. I aimed to present a balanced representation of participants' voices, through their own words and my own interpretations.

Although I am intentionally challenging readers by my writing choices, I do not necessarily concede that this is an unfair task, particularly as my readers are mostly academics themselves. What is important to acknowledge, however, is the power I have in the role of the writer and researcher in representation on the behalf of others. I believe such an inequality of power is important to

acknowledge in any research, as my role as researcher and the prestige it conveys will necessarily impact my participants, their participation, and their experience.

In contrast to Kirsch's critiques, the choice to directly share my participants' voices as well as leave room for the reader's interpretation is an attempt to demonstrate that meaning-making should not be left to the writer alone and that acknowledging my power in the roles of researcher and writer is not enough. As Indigenous methodologies highlight, others' knowing and voices must be included.

I also intend the vulnerability I share with my participants and readers as well as the reflexivity employed in my writing to mitigate some of these challenges. By sharing my own subjective experience of the research as well of my direct engagement with the participants, I hope to situate myself in ways that assist the reader in recognising how my beliefs and behaviour have shaped and impacted the research and the participants. I attend to own my messy humanity and acknowledge that there are many known and unknown ways in which I influence this research – that I am neither objective nor value free (Russell & Kelly, 2002). I intend to make explicit some of the questioning I have explored with myself and my participants in conceiving of life as somatic practice. My reflexivity is also intended to be evocative in the sense that it invites the reader to become more aware of their own somatic experience engagement with the writing.

Reflexivity, although often viewed as critical in acknowledging our own power and subjectivity as researchers, is essential to somatic research, which privileges the body and embodiment as primary sites of knowing (Csordas 1990). Encapsulating both objectives can be a tricky balance to find. Reflexivity should be employed in order to expand on the topic, connect with the reader emotionally and somatically, be answerable for how one represents themselves and others, further our knowledge and be in service critiquing systems of oppression (Spry, 2011). Reflexivity can contribute to the epistemological rigour of research as well as its integrity, in terms of

“accountability, trustworthiness, richness, clarity, ethics, support, and personal growth” (Probst, 2015, p.42). Finlay warns, however that “the researcher treads a cliff edge where it is all too easy to fall into an infinite regress of excessive self-analysis at the expense of focusing on the research participants” (2002, p. 532) and Pillow cautions against excessive reflexivity as “we do not escape from the consequences of our positions by talking about them endlessly (2003, p.175). All reflexivity, or attempts to be reflexive, therefore, are not created equal. My intention is to balance my reflexivity and to continually use it in service of the questions asked. Because of the subjective nature of this research, however, ascertaining whether I achieved a successful balance is something that was difficult to do on my own and more peer feedback would have been helpful in this regard.

Offering another critique of reflexivity, autoethnography and non-conventional writing, Clough (2000) writes, is that “it is not clear, however, whether experimental ethnographic writing is... staying open enough to the future of the reconfiguration of culture, technology, and nature” p.282. In response, I do acknowledge that I have an agenda to be part of the movement to have somatic awareness in more spheres of our lives so that we can be more present and open to life in each and every moment. Although that is not something this singular project can achieve on its own, it is intended to contribute to such a movement.

## **Specific Methods**

### ***Autoethnography***

Although the autoethnographic and participant research components of the research overlapped temporarily and bidirectionally influenced the emergent unfolding of each process, I am presenting them separately in service of clarity of the methodological steps involved in both.

An autoethnography is “first and foremost a *critical reflection* upon one’s experiences” (Spry, 2011, p.129) and the gathering of data for this exercise in critical reflection consisted of a personal

journal that was written digitally, either on my computer or my phone. The intention of the journal was to explore how I could conceive of all parts of my life as somatic practice, including the practice of journaling itself. I intentionally journaled in different times and places to explore my somatic awareness within them, such as sitting at my desk or commuting on the subway. I had been positively influenced by Spry's (2011) writing about performative autoethnography that privilege the body as a site of knowing and insistence on one's attention to the sensorial experience of language. "Beginning performative autoethnography means beginning a continual critically reflective movement through one's everydayness" (Spry, 2011, p. 120) and I intended to explore somatic awareness in my own day-to-day activities. Every journal entry was an intentional exploration of my somatic experience in the present moment, including the sensorial experience of writing and how the words I wrote subsequently influenced how I felt in my body.

I had not set out any criteria in terms length or frequency of the journaling process and so these aspects were not consistent. Because I had not set out a timeline either, the journal entries spanned two years and four months. This allowed for some longitudinal consideration of my own experience through the process of the research although the lack of consistency in frequency lessens the possibility of a clear through line.

I utilised the journal process itself as a way to work out the methodology in the participant research component, both as I was developing the methods as well as my experience in enacting them. This was a process of me intentionally using my somatic awareness to create the methodological structure and to document that process.

Not only was the journaling process critical and instrumental in developing a somatically-informed participant research process, it also provided me with the opportunity to apprehend my own journey through the research. The practice of journaling quickly became a clear somatic practice for me.

The intention for the journaling process was not only to somatically inform and direct the unfolding of the research itself but also to be used as data to be presented in this final written work. I did not go into the journaling practice with a clear idea of the form that representation herein would take but I knew that, in performative autoethnography, “The text you write can take ANY form” (Spry, 2011, p. 14).

### ***Participant Research***

As with all aspects of this research, the participant research component was emergent and improvisational as I intended it to be informed by my somatic awareness at all stages. I continued my autoethnographic journaling through this process as part of that development. Because I wanted to find a way to explore an accessible somatic practice in day-to-day life with others, I intended to create an exploration that could evoke participants’ somatic awareness through their lives with as little extra doing as possible. This stemmed from the belief that our somatic experience is always available to us and can be attended to at any time. I also wanted to limit the barriers to somatic practice.

### **Recruitment**

The exploration consisted of an initial individual interview with each of the participants before a ten-week exploration, followed by a follow-up individual interview. As I wanted to attend to and present participants’ individual and personal experiences with the practice without an aim to aggregate or quantify the findings, I knew I wanted a small sample size. Without an intention to correlate findings to a specific demographic, I employed a passive recruitment strategy, using avenues already at my disposal to find participants for the study. I sent out a short invitation (see Appendix C) to the Centre for Social Innovation member listserv and also posted the invitation on my Facebook wall. I also invited participants who had participated in a preliminary exploration at the

Dance New England gathering in Massachusetts in 2018 to be part of the exploration. I invited both individuals I had previous relationships with as well as those I did not as exploring the relationships and the impact on our somatic experience of the study was of interest to me. I was aware that these pre-existing relationships would influence both my experience and the participants', and that "already knowing, trusting and respecting one another permitted a level of honesty and mutual self-disclosure that would otherwise not have been possible" (Johnson, 2011, p. 23). The only criteria for participation was that the individual had an interest in exploring how they could become more aware of their experience in their body through their day-to-day. All participants signed a consent form (Appendix D) before continuing.

As there was no intention to actively test or prove my findings within the frame of this research, the use of a non-random convenience sampling technique, where research participants do not provide an accurate representation of any group, was warranted (Taherdoorst, 2016). The small number of participants was chosen in order to present the research more as a case study. It is important to note that, because of the recruitment strategy, the participants' experiences cannot be said to be accurately descriptive or representative at a level beyond the individual. There are, of course, limitations to this approach in terms of applicability and evaluation of findings, in terms of any markers of identity such as gender and ability. All participants were able to access the internet, had sufficiently stable lifestyles so as to be able to participate in the research, and could were fluent English speakers.

There are, however, also some distinct advantages with regard to working with such as small sample including my capacity to respond to, reflect, modify and modulate the weekly scores, in subtle and overt ways, to meet the needs of the participants. Data, in the form of reflections, was submitted weekly, allowing me to see how the material was coming across and what I could do to be clearer in my prompts or to shift focus. The research sample was the right size to accommodate my

emergent, responsive approach and a larger sample would have curtailed this approach during the ten weeks of the program.

### **Initial interview**

*"Speaking is a special case of bodily interaction" (Gendlin, 1997, p. 28).*

The initial interview was semi-structured and unscripted, wherein I explored the participant's interest in participating, what their daily activities generally consist of, what 'embodied knowing' meant to them, what their familiarity and experience in somatics was, and how aware they believed they are of the experience in their body. The exact direction of each conversation was informed by my somatic awareness and tuning into the participant, following both their interest and my own. "I am there as a listener who is also focused on understanding as an embodied experience" (Todes, 2007, p. 39). The interviews also gave me an opportunity explain the focus, rationale and plan for the research, and answer the participant's questions. All interviews were recorded by video and audio.

I had 20 participants sign up to participate in my research: 12 of whom I had existing relationships with, six of those I did not know previously were recruited via my posting on the Centre for Social Innovation (CSI) members listserv, one heard about my research via a mutual friend who had seen my Facebook post, and one heard about the research from her father, who was also participating. Having recruited most of the participants via a post on my facebook wall, the existing relationships I had with participants included family, a colleague, those I dance in community with, and those with whom I've had other training and community involvement, such as choir, my housing community, Landmark, and my Ashram studies. I conducted all initial interviews over six weeks in the fall of 2019. I conducted nine of the interviews in person in various locations, including coffee shops, my home and the participant's home. Eleven interviews were conducted and

recorded virtually, eight with video and three without. Five participants were male and 15 were female. Seventeen of the participants were in Canada, 16 in Toronto and one in British Columbia, two participants were in the United States, and the final participant was a Canadian who was travelling in Japan at the time of our first interview. I intentionally did not ask demographic questions as it was important for me that I got a sense of what was important to their sense of self from the participants themselves as opposed to sorting them based on general demographic categories, such as age, gender identification, ethnicity or social status.

### **Ten-week somatic practice exploration**

*“[B]ringing attention to one’s embodied experience can make a significant difference in the ways in which embodied data is collected and analysed” (Tanta, 2019, p.138).*

Because I wanted the participant exploration to be woven into what they are doing in their lives, I decided to use an asynchronous email methodology for the participant exploration, believing that most people are already engaging regularly with email and online content. The exploration consisted of a weekly email with a somatic awareness invitation for participants to explore in their own day-to-day. The invitations were sent both as a video and a transcript of the video (and, beginning in week six, a podcast version of the video).

Choosing ten weeks for the exploration itself was an intuitive choice, which I sensed would allow for a progressive exploration and give participants time to incorporate the invitations into their lives. My years of teaching somatics as part of a university course informed how I structured the exploration and the courses I have consistently taught are 12 weeks long, generally with ten lessons in the course. This familiar structure also likely contributed to the length of time decided upon for this exploration.



I used jotform for the weekly invitations, a free, online service that allowed me to create forms with a variety of content all in one place that could include the video, the transcript as well as opportunities for written and verbal responses from the participants.

Each weekly invitation intended to offer some new ideas or ontologies to consider as well as a somatic question or practice to take into the week, such as becoming aware of one's somatic experience through a habitual activity. I intended short and simple questions or practices that could be made applicable to the participants' varied lives and activities. Tantia (2019) speaks to the importance of eliciting responses from participants about their internal sense of their bodies. Just as I invite my students into their somatic awareness through the use of scores in the classroom, each weekly prompt acted as a score to frame and focus the participants' attention to their somatic experience in a particular area of their lives.

The videos and their transcripts also included invitations for the participants to become aware of their somatic experience while watching/reading (and later listening, when I began creating podcasts from the videos in week six). Like Tantia (2019), I invited the participants to “‘sense’ their bodies in response to a question, bringing attention to embodied data that are comprehensive of physical, emotional and cognitive” (p. 141). I shared my personal experiences, modelling the processes of curiosity, awareness and listening, letting myself speak from a place of somatic awareness.

In the weekly invitations, I explained that somatic awareness is attention to the first-person sensorial experience in the moment. I also led them through guided somatic awareness exercises in some of the weeks. Each weekly invitation was intended to invite the participants to become aware of their sensorial, somatic experience in a particular action or activity by providing them with a reminder or anchor of when to notice the experience in their bodies. Although each weekly invitation intended to offer a succinct and specific attentional somatic practice for the week (such as

‘notice the experience in your body as you move through a habitual activity’ and ‘become aware of the experience in your body as you’re speaking’), I did also offer more specialised content in each weekly invitation to provide the participants with a deeper understanding of some of the practices and considerations in somatic practice. I included some ideas that were likely novel for them to consider – such as a life-as-movement ontology and the embodied nature of language. I also explicitly shared about the use of improvisational scores in movement practice in order to invite them to consider their use in their lives through our exploration and beyond.

I sent the emails with links to the jotform page weekly on Fridays for ten weeks, beginning January 29, 2020. The development of the content was developed as the exploration went as it was critical that my invitations were somatically informed and responsive to my own experiences as well as participant responses. Attention to my own somatic experience and an invitation for participants to become aware of theirs was an integral part of the ten-week exploration. Each week I allowed the main invitation to come to me through my somatic awareness and the ten-week process involved a continually tuning in and listening to where my own embodiment was guiding me to take the exploration. Just as scores for movement improvisation can be endless, I was aware that the possibilities for what specific score or frame to offer each week was quite great. Somatic listening allowed me to choose a score that I sensed was the next one in our progression. I would tune in by reading participant responses, by writing in my autoethnographic journal, by intentional movement practice, and by keeping an open awareness as I moved through my day to day. When I teach somatics in studio, I give the students ‘homework’ each week to notice their movement patterns and somatic awareness in their lives. Because I have been creating these focused improvisational scores for daily life for years, this practice and what I have explored with students also informed the scores chosen.

As I neared the end of the ten weeks, I was aware that I had only scratched the surface of what attentional scores could be used to bring one's attention to their somatic experience and desired to provide the participants with a tool they could use to continue the exploration beyond the research itself. I, therefore, shared the concept, function and use of improvisational scores with them in the final invitation in week ten and invited them to choose their own score. I invited them to continue to explore possible scores for themselves after the research was over.

Going into the research, I was aware that “the ‘body’ figures all too often in qualitative studies as an inert object which [the] research subject talk about” (Chadwick, 2012, p. 82). Like Chadwick (2012), I didn't want to ask questions about the body but from it. Employing an improvisational, emergent approach to the creation of the weekly somatic practice invitations allowed me to continue to attend to and follow what was alive in the moment, which is how I teach somatics. The intention of improvisation to continually explore each moment newly as it arises makes it ideally suited to explorations of the unknown. The strength of this orientation was particularly salient in the ten-week exploration, which unfolded from January to April 2020, wherein the global COVID pandemic began. Because the methodology was already emergent and responsive, it meant there was no changing or deviating necessary to respond to incredible changes in all of our lives. It also meant that the somatic practice invitations could easily invite a tuning into the embodied impact of the pandemic and this shows prominently in the participant responses.

For each invitation, I recorded a video of myself with my smartphone that I uploaded to YouTube. I explored various ways of presenting the invitation as well as some contextualising ideas for the participants to consider as part of it. Some weeks I explored creating an unscripted video and other weeks I prewrote the video content as I was curious how the various processes would both impact my somatic experience of creating the video as well as the participants' reception of it. The videos ranged from ten to 21 minutes in length.

To create the transcript for the videos, I utilised YouTube's transcription function, which I edited to be more readable, particularly for the weeks where the videos were unscripted. The weekly invitation transcripts can be found in Appendix E.

After a few weeks, I realised the act of sitting and watching and reading could potentially add more tasks to the participants' day and it was in week six, that I decided to also create a podcast from the videos, offering the participants the opportunity to listen to the invitation as they moved through their day. It did not appear, however, that many participants opted for the podcast option when it was offered. This may be because it was not in the design from the beginning.

### **Participant responses**

Tantia (2019) asserts that there are many ways embodied experience can be collected in a research study, including embodied data is collected through the researcher's reflexivity, observation of participants' non-verbal movements as well as their languaged self-report. As my initial intention for the somatic practice in daily life exploration was to ask for as little extra doing from participants as possible, I had not originally planned to ask for feedback. As I was created the first video, I quickly realised that it would be to the research's detriment if the emergent design of the weekly invitations was not informed by participant experiences as well as my own. I therefore decided to include an optional opportunity to provide feedback for each weekly invitation. With a desire to offer multiple modes of practice and sharing, the jotform platform allowed me to have both options for written responses and verbally recorded ones. The jotform platform also allowed for multiple responses for each form, which some of the participants did.

### **Follow-up interview**

I intended the follow-up interviews to be completely somatically guided and created in the moment through connection and listening to the participants. Because of this, the interviews were unstructured and guided by an interest in what the participant was aware of from their participation in the course, how they participated, and to listen for what they wanted to speak about and share. This is similar to Chadwick (2012), who used an unstructured approach in her interviews to elicit embodied narratives. “The quality of the conversation within this spirit is one of ‘flow’ rather than conclusiveness” (Todres, 2007, p. 39). As improviser Stephen Nachmanovitch (1990) counsels, improvisation is not without preparation; we prepare to hone ourselves to the field and when we enter the field, we let go of the preparation to listen. In preparation for each conversation, I reviewed the initial interviews for each participant as well as all of his/her feedback through the exploration. As I was transcribing the first interviews during this time, this often meant a substantial amount of time listening and relistening to the initial conversation during transcription. To bring my awareness to what I was bringing to each conversation and what could be impacting my somatic sensitivity during it, I also took notes right before the conversation of my current context and what was alive in me.

I was able to have a second interview with 13 of the 20 participants. Of the remaining seven, five did not respond to multiple messages I sent them to schedule a conversation, one let me know she was ill and would get back to me, one scheduled a conversation and then did not attend or respond to an email follow-up. Because all second conversations happened during COVID, they were all virtual and 12 of the 13 used video. I failed to record one of the interviews and I transcribed all 12 recorded interviews.

## Transcription

*"We must engage holistically, or in an embodied way, with our data" (Brooks, 2010, p. 1235)*

Transcription is often an unnoted aspect of research methods, assuming its process is neutral. In a somatic approach to research, however, it is necessary to consider the somatic sensibility in the process. Some researchers have explored and written about the somatic experience in transcription and have developed processes to intentionally attend somatically via transcription. Chadwick (2012) describes the 'listening guide' developed by Carol Gilligan that she employed in her research "that focuses on notions of voice, resonance and relationship and aims to explore the inner psyche or individual subjectivity" (p. 88). By using voice-recognition software where she respoke participants' interviews, Brooks (2010) brought attention to her body as an epistemological tool in making sense of the data. Both researchers employed multiple cycles or 'listenings' of recorded data, deepening their awareness of their somatic and intuitive interpretation of it as they did so.

I transcribed the first conversations that I had with all 20 individuals who began the research with me and the 12 final conversations I had recordings of. Additionally, I transcribed all the verbal responses sent by participants during the ten-week exploration. Although I did not employ a specific process for use in the transcription, I was acutely aware of my own somatic experience during the process and noted my reflections in my autoethnographic journal. I noticed the long hours of sitting in front of my computer listening and transcribing felt very tiring on my body and I purchased an air-compression massager that I used on my legs while I transcribed to encourage a greater sense of movement while I typed. Because I needed to go over the recordings many times to accurately transcribe them, I also began to take notes about what I was noticing in the data and my somatic experience of it that I then later used when I began to consider how to present the data.

### ***Exploration of the data***

According to Todres and Galvin (2008), “embodied interpretation is a body-based hermeneutics in which qualitative meanings are pursued by a back-and-forth movement between words and their felt complexity in the lived body” (p. 576). While “both the separation of language and the nonseparated ‘more’ of bodily-contextual-intimacy are utilised as sources of ongoing authentic understanding” (Todres, 2007, p. 40) and it is up to the researcher to listen for and find an authentic way of sharing that ‘more. With the recognition that “subjectivity is thus necessarily embodied, contradictory, and polylogical” (Chadwick, 2012, p. 86), it was important for me to explore the data from my participants in a way that not only honoured this embodied multiplicity but highlighted it. My exploration of the data took many forms, including listening, watching, moving, mapping and note taking and was interwoven with the writing process itself, described below.

### ***Writing***

*How can I find the voice of my body? What processes does my bodymind need to sustain and feed my inner processes sufficient that I might keep my body’s voice strong enough to be heard? And perhaps, more importantly, how can I be sure that the (artistic, academic, personal) ‘voice’ I have is being received in a way that is important for me? (Bacon, 2010, p. 71)*

*Sense making is not just a personal cognitive process but requires the participation of the lived body as an authenticating or validating procedure. Such lived body participation is always more than words can say, and the experience of sensemaking involves in engagement with a kind of language that is bodily and sensorily involved. (Todres, 2007, p. 30)*

My intention in playing with literary forms was in line with the impetus for the research and I explored a variety of writing to explore its capacity to be experienced as somatic practice, to evoke the sensorial experience of writing and reading. I again employed the idea of scores to frame the exploration and presentation of the research. I used a variety of scores in my writing of the research, which I describe below.

### **Methodology**

This methodological chapter is not the only presentation of my methodological approach, orientation and practice. Although it comes before the other depictions of the methodology in the linear form of the written word, it was created afterwards, when the feedback I received was that I was taking the reader into unknown territory without adequately preparing them for it and justifying, substantiating, and explaining my approach. While I initially resisted the transliteration of an organic, actively reflexive process, on retrospect, I agree that expanding upon it here is necessary.

There are three further sections that convey the methodology in, what I hope, are more somatically and personally engaging ways. One chapter explores the approach, subjectivity and validity of my methods through the use of a panel score, another chapter presents my autoethnographic methodology written as a letter, and a third chapter offers the participant research component as a fictional course syllabus. The reader will find some repetition through these chapters although it is my hope that this reinforces the important aspects of the research and offers different experiences of reading about my research.

Writing score #2, the panel score, which presents the process around the methodology, is offered as a dialogue between six researchers who share emotionally and personally about their experience in the research. Although I recognise it would be expected for me to explain the why and who of the panel in this section, I am leaving that explanation for after the panel. This is intentional



because I want the reader to read the panel discussion without a prior explanation and to be curious about how it engages them somatically and emotionally. If you would like to read about how this writing score was created before reading it, you can turn ahead to the section entitled ‘Writing scores.’

When I first began approaching my writing, I had conceived of writing my entire dissertation as a panel. As I began shaping it, however, I quickly realised that such a form for everything would not be in service of best conveying this research. Just as in movement improvisation, we dance with improvisational scores until we sense they are no longer right. Acknowledging this opened up the possibility and curiosity of what other writing scores I could use to explore somatic engagement in writing and reading.

My third writing score, entitled ‘a letter to you,’ intends to invite the reader into the autoethnographic methodology and highlights the interconnected nature of writing and reading. Because of the personal nature of the journaling, I wanted to share about the process and experience with the reader in a personal way and, as such, decided to write about the process as a letter to the reader. Writing directly to someone also allows for a juxtaposition of writing directly to someone with the quality of journaling - personal writing that only I will ever see in its entirety. In this letter I write more vulnerably about my consideration and concerns with more detail about how I experienced the autoethnographic inquiry.

My fifth writing score describes the participant exploration portion of my research as if it were a course syllabus. This syllabus is fictional and in service of how I decided to present the data I collected during the participant portion. Because I have been teaching somatics in studio for eight years, the development of the somatic exploration for this research was implicitly influenced by my experiences teaching and the ways of engaging and inspiring students I have explored.

It took me quite some time listening and engaging with the data before I conceived of the overarching presentation of the participant research. I spent many hours, reading, listening to, moving with, mapping and musing with the data and have countless colourful papers that contributed to the crystallisation of the data for this written component. There was quite some time when I had not been able to see a way to tie all the pieces together even though I spent much time thinking and writing about it. It was during a personal dance in the park one day that the score came to me. As these intuitive, body-informed insights often are, it was immediate and complete and I felt my entire body soften with its sense of ‘rightness.’

### **The autoethnography**

My autoethnographic journaling consisted of 42 entries and over 44,000 words written over two years. Although their influence in the unfolding of the research is implicitly part of the design and presentation, I also want to share what I discovered with the reader.

I initially spent time going over all the entries and highlighting portions of them that I was drawn to and extracted about 7200 words into a separate document. Reviewing the entirety of the journaling process allowed me to apprehend my own journey as well as my growth and to assess the personal impact of the research question in my own life.

I wanted a way to evocatively and somatically portray my own personal journey with the research question so I chose to present it as found poetry. Creating found poetry is the process of using already written material and putting it together in a new form. I pulled out portions of the 7200 words that I felt were most evocative for me. As I moved excerpts I had extracted from my journal to the page, I still felt a certain stagnancy and I wanted more movement. I, therefore, decided to play with how the words on the page were presented so I played with their placement, font, and size. The play came from my own somatic sense of how I felt the words move in me.

## **Participant research**

As noted, I present the participant research with the overarching scope of a dance course (like the one I often teach at university). I then present the components of the participant research as five ‘dances,’ likening them to the explorations I would have with my students in studio. In order to offer a comparison of these portions of my research with aspects of the course I teach, each of the five ‘dances’ begins with an invitation like one I would offer my students in class.

The five ‘dances’ are: an introduction to the participants by presenting the first interviews, a week-by-week presentation of the ten invitations sent to participants, created ‘dialogues’ from the participant responses each week, and a collage and short analysis of the final interviews.

### **First interviews (second dance)**

Similar to Meehan (2015), who writes the experience instead of about it, my presentation of each initial conversation with the participants consists of somatically returning to each videorecorded interview by watching, moving and writing my experience while moving. My mixed-method writing in this section then offers a description and summary of what each participant shared during our conversation, supported with quotes from the transcript. My subjectivity is interwoven into all aspects of this presentation, first by explicitly and poetically sharing the experience in my own body of the participant and our conversation. I also intend to share this subjectivity reflexively as I write not only about what the participants shared but also about the nature of my relationship with each of them and how I felt in the interview and rewatching/reading it.

I present all the final 12 participants who completed the exploration with me separately. I did this as I wanted to present the reader with an introduction to some aspects of each of my

participants' sense of self and past experience with somatics, which could then be considered alongside with how they experienced the exploration. Eleven of the participants are presented with a pseudonym and the 12<sup>th</sup> participant is my father, who agreed to waive his anonymity. I greatly appreciate this as I believe the particular nature of our relationship has a notable role in his engagement with and experience of the research.

By presenting the participants separately through movement poetry, my impressions and their quotes, I intend to offer some of the crystallisation Richardson (2000) speaks to. My writing intends to invite the reader into the experience in a variety of ways to discover their own subjective meaning making from what is written.

This way of sharing also offered the participants my embodied experience of them and our conversation. I shared the presentation of each participant directly with them to ensure I was accurately portraying them and invite any further feedback. I received quite a few positive responses from the participants and couple shared that reading my presentation of them provided them with new insight about themselves.

### **The weekly invitations (third dance)**

Similar to the presentation of the interviews, I present each of the ten weekly invitations that were part of the participant exploration separately. In creating this written presentation, I followed my own curiosity of what I noticed somatically as I rewatched and reread each of the videos of myself. To explicitly present a reflexive awareness of my own embodied influence in the videos, I discuss what I notice in my physical and linguistic movements through each of the invitations.

My writing of the weekly invitations presents the main points I speak about in the videos as well as the specific weekly somatic score I invited the participants to explore in their own lives. I uploaded all the weekly transcripts to an online word count and word cloud generator, to get a

different sense of the language I used in the invitations. Because I was not intending any quantitative analysis of the language, I presented these findings for some weeks when I found them somatically interesting and not for others. I also include some of the word clouds to present the reader with another visual means of connecting to the content of each invitation.

As I was slowly and methodologically going over and writing about the invitations, I noticed that my awareness often wavered from my somatic experience. I started each writing session with a somatic check in, that I journaled separately. I present some excerpts of this somatic journaling throughout the section to invite the reader into some of what I was noticing somatically for myself as I went through the process of engaging with the participants' responses.

### **Participant responses (the fourth dance)**

Linguistic articulation and sharing are critical components in the transformation pedagogy I employ in my classes. When I teach, students are regularly invited to share about their experiences with each other and in their weekly journals. This is intended to engage students in their own self-reflexivity, by naming their reality with their own voice, assess their assumptions, and have more awareness and choice in the meaning they ascribe to their experiences (Mezirow, 1991). This allows the students to connect their self-reflection and sociocultural context to the experience of their body and movement (Spry, 2011) and find a new language of their movement and somatic experience (Snowber, 2012).

Although it was optional for the participants to provide responses during the ten-week exploration, most of them did and I have an extensive compilation of written and transcribed responses. I wanted to present them phenomenologically, without commentary or analysis, and leave the interpretation more open for the reader.

Inspired by the sharing I encourage in my classes, where I validate all experiences of the students, I decided to present the participants' responses as if they were a dialogue. All participant responses were sent directly to me via the JotForm page and the participants did not have any engagement with each other (besides the father and daughter who participated in the research). Each participant had been invited into their own personal exploration along with me without connection to each other in this section.

I went through all of the participant responses and pulled out portions of their sharing that appeared most salient to me and highlighted what they were sharing in that response. I then organised the participant responses in a way so that they could 'talk' to each other. By grouping similar themes or responses to questions, I was able to present the multiplicity of experiences that the participants had through their participation. Even without commentary, it is my intention that the reader can apprehend similar and divergent participant experiences.

I shared the full ten weeks of 'dialogue' I created (Appendix F) with the participants. The responses I received from the participants was that they found it very interesting to see how their experience compared to others who had been in the research.

### **Follow-up interviews (the fifth dance)**

In the courses I teach, I provide my students with multiple ways of bringing the learning they have had over the semester together. I assign a final assignment to the students where they are to write about what they have learned about their movement patterns, using their course journaling as research material. Because we also explore dance improvisation, I also show them how improvisational explorations can also be used to choreograph dance and I support them in choreographing a dance piece, using the improvisational scores we employed in the semester.

The follow-up interviews functioned as a way to check back in with the participants and glean what they learned through their participation in the research. I therefore decided to present them as what I called ‘a dance’ and ‘an essay.’ For the essay, I considered what they shared with me in our final conversation in light of the research questions, specifically *What if the awareness of the experience and movement in our bodies was regarded as not only important, but foundational in our lives and by which everything else that we value is supported?* ‘The dances’ I created were collages of directly quoted excerpts of the participants’ speaking that complemented what I wrote about in the ‘essays.’

To explore whether the research was successful in this regard, I identified something that each participant valued and that they had spoken about in our interviews and their responses. I then considered their participation and level of engagement in the research and their self-report as to whether their participation and level of somatic awareness correlated with what they had shared was important to them.

While creating these ‘essays’ and ‘dances,’ my embodied experience of the participants was quite salient for me. Because I had engaged extensively with their speaking in my transcription process, I could ‘hear’ the participants speaking the words as I was reading them and feel their inflection, intonation, and manner of speaking. This embodied experience of the participants in turn also influenced what I deemed as important to the participant and how I presented them.

I had initially been pulling out excerpts of the interview transcripts and when I placed them on the page, similar to the creation of my autoethnographic found poetry, I could not feel the movement. It was because of this that I decided to cut out each phrase and glue them to construction paper, intuitively placing them on the page in a sense of movement guided by my own hearing and feeling of the participants’ words.

### **The discussion**

Similar to my choices in using dialogue in presenting the methodology as well as the participant responses, I chose to employ another writing form of dialogue for my discussion of the research. I wanted to bring attention to where my work is situated within the field of somatics by having a dialogue with the field. While developing this score, I realised the idea of ‘field’ did not convey as much movement as I believe there is within somatics. I decided, therefore, to use somatics as a verb instead: to soma, or somaing. In this way, I not only present the contribution of my research but also add an additional contribution with new language. By presenting a question-and-answer piece between the somaing and myself, I was able to highlight where my research is situated and how it responds to questions within the field of somatics and what further questions are left.

### **The conclusion**

As I went to write the conclusion, I was aware of the multiplicity of experience and the paradoxes and contradictions in my research and in writing about it. Because the practice of movement improvisation allows for such ambiguity to exist simultaneously, I employed a final writing score of ‘yes, and.’ These two simple words invite an explicit recognition of multi-subjectivity without negating or countering any aspect of it. Through this writing score, I intended to invite the reader to also become cognizant of their own somatic experience of paradox and contradiction, alluding to ideas and experiences that challenge their own.



### **Shifting gears to somatic writing**

This is the point in the dissertation where I move away from traditional academic writing to slip into and dance with evocative, somatic writing.

Before making that shift, I bring us back to the invitation at the start of the literature review, to notice the experience in our bodies of writing and reading the reviews of the literature and description of the methodology. *What did you notice in your sensations and movement as you read these sections? Did you remember to notice?* It is more so in hindsight that I seem to be aware of my body through this writing – the many hours in front of a computer, moving and organising and mapping numerous books and articles. Much sitting with scheduled movement breaks. When I did notice my somatic experience, there was often little movement and a fair amount of holding. Whenever I brought my attention to and noticed this, I often shifted my position and softened my face and breath.

What writing the literature review in this manner has helped me better apprehend is the patterns of linguistic movement utilised in academic discourse and highlighted my familiarity with such patterns, having been in academia for years. I experience a sense of striving in such patterns and even though it gives rise to discomfort in my sensorial experience, predicated on beliefs that there is a correct way of moving and expressing, there is a sense of knowing what I need to do. I now have greater appreciation for the multiple modes of discourse possible to create more possibility and expansion in how we understand life and how we bring it into being through language and believe that I've adequately substantiated my writing choices in the remainder of my dissertation.

The writing methods I choose to explore for the remainder of my dissertation do give rise to a greater amount of fear by entering the unknown and exploring the possibility in less familiar linguistic movement patterns. It may have felt simpler to continue to write the rest of the

dissertation in this manner, of providing the academic community with more of what I believe it expects from me as a doctoral student and yet it would have undermined what I want to accomplish through this research and writing. So the scores undertaken in the subsequent chapters were chosen intentionally in order to explore more space for somatic awareness: awareness of my patterns of movement, of our patterns of movement, in hopes of expanding the awareness of and possibilities for the patterns we choose in our lives.

### **Methodological overview: approach, subjectivity, and validity**

Having written the above sections in a ‘standard academic score,’ I’m exploring shifting this writing score for the transition to methodology, beginning with some more review of the literature of my methodology and how it connects to the research question, subjectivity and validity. The second specific writing score I’ve chosen for the paper is a panel discussion. The score of discussion within the written word involves the score of dialogue. The written word can often seem like a one-way communication, even though it is only possible because there are at least two – a writer and a reader. I intend to make the score of interconnection more explicit by bringing the conversation onto the page. By utilising a panel, it also offers the opportunity to see what happens when more voices are put onto a page and observe their somatic/embodied awareness of themselves and their movements through words. I hope, as well, that it offers more entry points for you, the reader, to read something that you feel more deeply resonant in your body and movements, that inspires questions, opens up new possibilities and keeps you present to the movements you are making. For this panel discussion, I’ve chosen five of the researchers who were involved in this project to share. These researchers took the research questions (*What if the awareness of the experience and movement in our bodies was regarded as not only important, but foundational in our lives and upon which everything else that we value is supported? What if all our lives could be seen as somatic practice, opening up access, choice and connection in every moment?*) into their lives, and, by letting them share their experience of the research, the panel score will begin presenting the methodology of the research while also being an example of the methods themselves.

In this score, I move as moderator and play the role of facilitator, keeping us on track, a bit of an academic gatekeeper. I intend to ask my questions from the most objective place possible although likely that’s often very far from any real objectivity. I’m fully a part of the research, I care about its approval, the impact it makes, and how the researchers are presented. I care deeply about

this project – it's been a focus of my life for years. And just as I dance all these pieces into being, so too, I dance the researcher, letting her leave the marks of her movements as lines on this page, a tangible mark of the movements of life moving through me, the capacity and curiosity of this lived experience. In the score of moderator, I get to ask the questions and I love to ask questions (as you'll soon see as we get into the research itself).

From the panel score, it is important to note that countless researchers have been involved in the research. To attempt to keep this discussion manageable, I'll be interviewing only five of them. Don't worry – I will provide the process and rationale for that choice later on. Providing the explanation after the presentation is intentional in how I want to use this score and how I want to invite you to experience it. And you do have choice in this dance. I would generally expect you to keep reading the words as they are presented linearly on the page, one after the other, reading the chapters and sections in order. And that's only one option of steps in our writing-reading dance. Another could be to jump ahead now to the end of the methodology section for a clearer explanation of why and how these others are involved in the research. And your movement choices will impact your experience just as mine have. And regardless of what you choose, let's at least be clear that the implied linearity of this written structure is not reflecting a process that is or was actually linear (and I expect the panel itself to become a little circuitous and tangential at times – I'll do my best to keep it focused and making movements that serve the written finale of a dissertation work). I think it will be more fun to keep reading from start to finish, even if you're confused about who and how exactly these researchers were all part of my project. *I invite you to hold that question – and any question – and let curiosity be part of your experience as you read.* (Did I mention I love questions?).

I'll start by inviting the researchers to briefly introduce themselves. Fully acknowledging the subjective orientation of the researchers constructed by their identities and contexts – their scores of themselves and their lives – will allow us to be explicit of our framing through this work and then to

consider how those frames, those identities, those beliefs provide the score that we are moving within, the score of life as somatic practice. This explicit reflexivity and acknowledgement is in line with an autoethnographic, feminist, critical methodology but more importantly, I believe it's a necessary piece in one of my strongest scores of honest and authenticity.

While reading about their scores of self (the frames the researchers see themselves in), *I invite you to consider what scores of yourself you are aware of and how they may be providing the space for you to experience your life as somatic practice.*

Despite some of their diversity in senses of self, the researchers are actually a fairly homogenous group: all them, including myself, are white, educated, heterosexual, cis-gendered, single mother, urban, Canadian females in their 40s. Although their sense of identities are largely uniform, I invite both the reader and the researchers to notice how the subtle scores of self are at play and influence somatic awareness when in dialogue.

### **Score #2: A Panel discussion**

Moderator: Welcome. As we begin this panel, could you introduce yourselves to the reader so they know a bit about who will be sharing this work? And reader: *begin noticing where you listen from as you read the introductions* from our five researchers: Marie, Lilian, Amaya, Aloisia and Vivian.

Marie: I'm happy to share. One of the greatest opportunities I've had through this research has been the opportunity to hone my practice as facilitator and teacher by getting to instruct a non-major studio dance class at the University these past 7 years. Sure, I've been pretty scared and plagued with impostor syndrome. After 7 years, I still get super anxious every time before I teach. And I totally love it. I feel alive and know this is part of my work. This is where I continually see this research in action, where I have the opportunity to keep looking for those bridges. The space holding I get to do in the classroom, on the dance floor and now over zoom and in the park is

incredibly powerful and brings me back to why I do it all every time. As a teacher, I want to inspire. I am committed to the growth and expansion of myself and other humans. To expand our connection to ourselves and life through our learning together. As an educator, I'm committed to lifelong learning and am a perpetual student! Being authentic and practicing and modelling what I teach feels critical for me. I'm asking my students to tune into and follow their bodies and wisdom, to listen and follow in the present moment and I know that's how I have to teach and research. I'm incredibly curious and want to inspire so much curiosity in my students. All of my learning weaves into my life and my teaching, expanding my experience of life and my repertoire, which is what I invite my students to explore through our work together.

Moderator: Thank you for sharing why you're passionate about this research Marie. Who would like to introduce herself next?

Lilian: I can share next. Being part of this research has been a large part of what has kept me grounded and sane. And it has honestly been quite hard at times. This feels vulnerable and risky to share and I am fearful of the consequences of doing so to be open to the public but it feels critical to state that I have living through emotional abuse throughout my entire involvement in this project. This work has been helpful in moving away from a victim mentality. Using somatic modalities, especially when I have been accused and threatened, helps me find my way back to centre, to find the support through my body and all its capacity. Five years ago I had to take a leave of absence because the fear got so bad, I could hardly sleep. I've worked through a lot of the trauma and some days are still really difficult.

Amaya: I really hear how hard it's all been Lilian and how alone you've felt and that it hasn't felt like there has been anyone there to protect you. It hurts my heart so much to feel how painful this has been.

Lilian: Thank you Amaya. I know you have been really supportive of me, even if it cannot change the situation. You are such an amazing mother. I wish I could be as great as you are. I attempt to show that I am because I honestly care so much and still make so many mistakes. I do try really hard.

Amaya: I know you do Love. And you're so much greater than you realise. You're doing amazing.

Moderator: I'm warmed by your support Amaya and how we're beginning this panel from this place. Amaya, can you tell us a bit more about yourself to help the reader situate you in this research?

Amaya: Of course. Well I started this research when my son was a year and a half old. Wow that was a big shift back then. He used to cry every single time I said goodbye and oh how I hated to say goodbye. He's 9 now and I still hate to say goodbye! And it's amazing how much we've both grown through these years together, how we dance together. He is an amazing teacher, we teach each other. Our dynamic certainly shows me where there is any stuckness in my experience, in my body and where I get to continually explore more somatic awareness in my day-to-day. He invites me into the physical engagement and I get to invite him into more listening. Maybe more than he wants at times! My son tells me I turn everything into a lesson! (Laughs) And it's true, I want to give him the world – for him to be the freest expression of himself. And most of all, I want him to get how loved he is. I believe deeply that all the hurt humans inflict on each other and even the greatest atrocities they commit stem from not really getting they're loved. Imagine the world we could experience if we all really knew, really felt it in our bones, how loved we are.

Aloisia: That's really beautiful Amaya but honestly pretty damn hard most of the time. I mean do you really get how loved you are? I mean sometimes probably you feel it, like we all do

sometimes. But it's not like we stay any place or can really hold onto it. Like holy shit. There is just so much pulling in all directions and life is so damn messy.

Amaya: I know Aloisia. And that's the beauty of being alive, right? To experience the fullness of this humanity, to hold space for and celebrate it.

Aloisia: You can call me Lola. And yeah it's totally beautiful but also sounds ridiculously idealistic. It's not like you can really hold space for it all. Shit. I can hardly hold space for my own stuff a lot of the time.

Moderator: Aloisia, can you also share some information about yourself for the reader so they have a sense of the context of your voice in this research and panel?

Aloisia: Yeah well, as I said, you can call me Lola. Or Aloisia if you want. I mean, how to situate myself in this research? Well what I would write you in this moment could be totally different from what I'd choose to say tomorrow or next week. Life is crazy full and moving. Writing a dissertation within all the million pieces in life? I'm amazed it's actually getting down on paper. I mean, I know I'm amazingly capable. Or sometimes I think I am. Like when I make stuff happen. And some days I'm just an emotional mess and I don't even know what happened. It doesn't help that my phone is sitting open beside me. Oh but I actually closed social media this morning... yeah sorry. What was I saying? I went to another document I think to answer the question but then I forgot what I'm answering.

Moderator: I've asked if you could tell the reader a bit about who you are and provide some of the layers of subjectivity you'll be moving within as we go through this discussion. I hear that it might not be clear of all the pieces which could be most relevant right now. What aspects of your life would you say had some of the greatest impact on how you moved through this project?

Aloisia: Um. Oh right. I just saw someone running up the hill outside my window and yeah, running has totally been an amazing practice for me since covid. I mean I need to move a lot



anyway. When I can focus on a physical task like that, I know who I am. And right now, I need to keep running, trying to go further and faster. I started running in March 2020 when all the places I would practice movement – my gym, dance spaces and yoga – had closed down. I didn't think I would last long as my knees had always gotten quickly painful in the past. Yet here I am, May 2021, still running and NEEDING to run. Needing to feel the strength in my body, the capacity to keep going, to keep going faster and further, to sprint at the end of 15 kilometres, to run up that hill. No day is the same. Some I'm inspired and light, grateful and energised. Then there are days like last Wednesday, where the whole 7 kilometres were just trying to get through it, feeling the exhaustion and overwhelm through my body. I still found that sprint at the end, the run up the hill. And even when my body is that heavy, such pain in my heart, grief and loss and fear and sadness, I run because I can feel in my body that I can get through. That I can keep going through it all. That my body can keep going through it all. Even if I'm not sure where I'm going. The sky is totally grey today. I'm bleeding and I have a headache and I've been at my computer since about 6 this morning and my plan is to go running after my coaching call. Yeah running. Did I say I was really into kickboxing before? The intensity of these things really helps me otherwise I often can get pretty lost in it all. I'll get to talk about dance too right? Since it's probably pretty central, being in the department of dance and the whole reason I am part of this research was because of how powerful dance is in my life. And yeah, my dances can be super intense too. It's not like I'm not still thinking a mile a minute when I'm moving that fast but there is also this point when my movements go faster than I can think... and yeah. Just had a big exhale there. Mostly because this work is about listening to our bodies and honouring the gifts and I think my capacity to change focus so quickly can be really powerful. I'm incredibly creative and get my insights and inspiration from all over the place. Word tells me I've written 2000 words today. Although they're probably pretty rambly and I'll

probably have to edit the shit out of this anyway, right? Like does anyone want to actually read it? Oh damn. My coaching call starts in 3 minutes and I forgot to get lunch.

Moderator: Thank you for that little window into your perspective Lola. I think it will help the reader understand how you've approached the research and some of the pieces that influence your subjectivity. Vivian, can you share some of your context with our readers as an introduction?

Vivian: This work, this research, this exploration continues to inspire and excite me. I'm humbled and expansive in having the incredible opportunity to be a part of this. To live here and now, incredibly privileged. Incredibly privileged. To be part of deep philosophical and spiritual work that explores what it means to be human, to be supported in a recognised institution, having the space to look inward and outward, to share what has been powerful in my life, in the lives of those around me. To play with words, to play with patterns of movement, to expand and learn and reflect life to itself with each utterance, each step. Knowing expansion from contraction, grief in love and love in grief, the incredibly palpability of it all through this embodiment. Do I really get to invite others to play in the distinctions we make up? I hope so. We separate to find the union. We practice somatics to remember the capacity to be aware of our experience in all moments. I would love the reader to know that these words I type, we type, are being danced into existence, to invite the reader into awareness of the dance of reading it, what lights up in their senses, where the aliveness is in the movements and stillness. I learn, we learn, more of our capacity of movement through creating this concretised document we can look at and continue to move with. Can you, too, become aware of how your repertoire, your patterns, your awareness of living can be expanded in sharing in this work?

Moderator: Thank you for that Vivian. I feel excited and nervous to have you share this. I think we all feel passionately about this work and about this opportunity to share it in this way right

now. And it feels a little riské. Albeit necessary to have our spiritual orientations openly shared and let the reader have their own experience, their own opinion, of this study.

Lilian: Can I advise us to be a little careful here? If we want to create a work that people will actually read, that could have a broader impact, we should be cognizant of avoiding excessive rambling, unnecessary navel gazing. This is not a blog post. This is academic work. Yes, of course I know it has been deeply spiritual for all of us and we can articulate that in a solid way here. This has been rigorous work and I would like us to be able to demonstrate that.

Amaya: I can hear you're worried Lilian and I think we'll be able to make a solid case that will be able to hold its own within the academy. We will certainly have a lot of space here for the substantiation of this work, articulating the methodologies and findings of the explorations we engaged in. And remember, because we are typing it all out, it can all be edited and will certainly be reviewed by our committee (and hopefully some helpful friends).

Marie: And this is how we learn, right? This is the unknown we're going into, which is the work we do in dance improvisation, in somatics, and this has to be brought to the creation of the dissertation itself to be able to be able to model how all of life can be somatic practice, including the writing of a dissertation. And don't forget, Twyla initiated this doctoral pursuit with the question of access of somatic and dance improvisation practices and wouldn't it undermine the project if the writing of it weren't accessible? It may be pretty tricky to find that delicate balance.

Vivian: (laughs) Well thankfully we're all dancers! We know how to balance, to access, to express.

Aloisia: Let's just not pretend this process was easy for any of us okay? That it was anywhere near as straightforward as these words on the page make it look like. It required really facing some hard shit, to come up against so much fear and insecurity. Many tears. I didn't know what the hell I

was doing a lot of the time. Hey, I'm still not sure. There are like little inklings and then I'm like... where am I?

Lilian: Lola, I think it is important for us to be able to convey that it is our somatic practices and awareness that have been what we continued to return to in the day-to-day and to demonstrate how this has served us, our research participants and our students. The research is about somatic practice in all of our lives, which include all levels and parts of it. This research is about how we have been translating the tenets of movement improvisation and somatic practice to all of life.

Marie: Right. I think what we've shared here is some of the unique and shared experiences we've had being part of this research and notably, how we're all passionate about the transformational and life-enabling potential of somatic and improvisational dance/movement practices, and how this project has been an exploration of the ways in which we can increase their accessibility by taking them out of a studio/practice setting and into all our lives.

Vivian: I think you are all pointing to critical parts of this research and how woven into all our lives it has been. And we can be honest that any implied linearity is just to tease it all into a form that can be shared and made sense of. Because we live our lives grounded in a shared belief that life and time are linear. It's almost impossible to have an experience beyond that when functioning in our linearly-oriented literate linguistic modes, particularly here, in this created two-dimensional space where each letter follows the one before it, logic built on the substantiation already presented.

Aloisia: I don't think pretending it's pretty or logical or everything fits into a box is really serving what we're trying to do here. I personally don't want to pretend something just to prove ourselves. And I get it Lilian. You're scared and you don't want to do this wrong and make a mistake. But can we be honest... sorry. I lost my train of thought there. God, this is exhausting trying to make it make sense.

Amaya: I honour each of your voices and authenticity in your sharing. Expressing our uniqueness through our actions – including our writing – is an integral part of the work we all do, so it's beautiful how you're all showing up.

Aloisia: It's been inspiring but often totally unclear, particularly for me. To really wade through it all, make sense of it. And I know we're expected to pretend we're experts...

Vivian: And we remember that we are the experts of our own experience with somatic work.

Amaya: I love how we are all grounded in what matters to us in this work – of our investment in creating something meaningful from all the work we've done on this, sharing your inspirations, your concerns. And I think there are ways we can powerfully honour all of our needs in presenting this work: Aloisia's desire that it be honest and authentic, even in its messiness, Lilian's appeal to have it clear and structured, Vivian's intention that it be a playful, expansive and interconnecting way of being with the material and life, Marie's wish that this offers a bridge, translation and tools for ourselves and others to be more aware of the experience in our bodies and expand our repertoire of movement in life, and my hope that it is all these things and more, an honouring of our humanity and an invitation for the reader into theirs.

Moderator: Thank you Amaya for that summary. I've been sitting back because I am so interested in your dynamic of working together, how this score of a discussion supports the aims of the research and see how the interplay of your voices moderate themselves. The ways of being you all have, the scores within which you move, covers lots of ground. I honestly wasn't sure how it would go and thought it may be a little too messy for a dissertation. And some may experience it as such and I also see how much you all bring to this, to help me share this research in such a richer way than I could have on my own. Although I'm sure we could have a long and interesting conversation about all sorts of things, I'd like to invite us to begin speaking directly about the research itself. Our panel is contained within the methodology section so it's up to us to have our

conversation present the methodology clearly for our readers. Let's all take a short break (pretending this was all created linearly and this would be a good time for one) and we'll come back momentarily and being presenting the specifics of the methodology.

*The Panel reconvenes:*

Aloisia: Holy shit guys! I kinda forgot where we are in the conversation but I want to share that I just ran 21 kilometres! That's half a marathon! It was fucking hard...

Lilian: Aloisia, I need to request that you refrain from using profanities in an academic text. It is inappropriate and unnecessary and risking undermining our work and even whether it would be passed.

Aloisia: I completely disagree Lilian. The fact that words that relate to sexual intercourse and natural bodily functions are considered profane is something that the critical thinking readers who are reading this hopefully will question. Like, it's totally connected to our western denigration of the body and this research and project and the work we want to do in the world is about transforming the relationship with our embodiment and our experience of it. How the fuck can we do that if we get all stuck and insulted about words connected to pleasure and the healthy processes of our body?

Vivian: Lola your intention is so integrous and there is so much here that reflects the paradigms we're in that we fail to see.

Lilian: I understand and I believe the issue is far more complex. Some of the words you are choosing to write do convey denigration and getting into etymology and agreed upon usage is taking us away from the topic. And I agree we want to have our readers be engaged with us in widening their awareness of the paradigms they function within. I think you are stepping a little beyond the realm of what we are to be speaking to right now. You mentioned a run?

Aloisia: It really isn't. It's all connected. Like all the ways we make up meaning and don't really take time to critically think about it and question whether that's the meaning we really want to make. Like the word 'fuck' is only experienced as offensive to many because of a collective meaning making. And then someone like me has a different meaning. I like the emphasis of the word. I like the power of sexual energy. Anyway, I don't actually want to talk about so-called swear words but I just want us to be honest that we're making up these containers. We make up all the scores. And I'm not just talking about the scores we've used in the research and writing. We agreed to this score of 'dissertation' and we have to do that all substantiating, literature review stuff. But I just want us to be really clear here and not be pretending. At least I don't want to pretend. *We're making it all up*. Like it feels real – all the scores, paradigms, ontologies, blah blah blah – because we all believe it's real. But that doesn't mean it's actually real.

Lilian: I am not sure that getting into this philosophical discussion of the nature of reality is central to our work. I believe it is not one of the scores we are working with.

Aloisia: Oh no we are... like that's what this 'life-as-movement paradigm' stuff is about... questioning our beliefs of what life is. And if we believe life is movement, we'll experience life as movement and then that is what's 'real.' So can we please just be straightforward with our readers that that's what this work really is? Inviting collective shifts in the paradigms we move in, the scores we live in, to intentionally choose those scores beyond the scores we were just born into and then just believed because we were told that's what life is and how we're supposed to be. Like we don't have to just keep believing things because that's what we believed. And we're also not saying that anything we're writing is some objective truth either. What we're saying instead is: 'Here. Try this on. See how it feels to move with these beliefs in your life' and exploring shifting our paradigms, either consciously or unconsciously.

Vivian: I love how you're bringing the conversation back to the research questions we've asked and providing clarity for our readers. That what we're doing here is seeing what could be possible when asking the question 'what if all of life could be somatic practice?', trying on a new paradigm. We suspect such a belief would support life-affirming and expanding movements and really it's up to each of us to feel into it for ourselves.

Aloisia: Yeah. I know there are so many ways I'm probably 'atypical' and I can feel confused a lot of the time but I get a lot clearer about what I believe and what supports me when I'm moving. And that's why I ran so long today. The longest I'd ever run before was 16 kilometres but at kilometre 9, I decided I was going to get to a half marathon. Because when I can feel it in my body, that's when I know I can do it. Like when I jumped out of the plane last year, to really understand surrender. Or why I do cold water, to feel the resistance that is so familiar and make a choice to stop resisting and accept. Like feeling it in my body is when I really get it and then understand how to accept and surrender and commit in other ways.

Lilian: Can we come back to the methodology please? I really think the reader is going to get tired of the banter if we are not going anywhere.

Vivian: Dear Lilian, this 'banter' *is* the demonstration of the research, it *is* the methodology, which is the layer upon layer of scores and how we move through them. This conversation with each other and the reader, these movements we are making, are providing the introduction to what this is all about – exploring tension and possibilities within a frame to expand our repertoire of movement.

Marie: I agree that we're also providing the reader with some greater clarity about our ontological orientations and subjectivities and motivations for the research.

Lilian: Yes I am aware of that and I do not believe it is working right now. I have been mapping the various methodological orientations that inform our work on a large paper all morning,



attempting to see how they fit and finding it hard to breathe fully. I have also been attempting to ascertain how they align with a ‘life-as-movement’ ontology that suggests there is nothing material but only patterns of movement, destabilising even the idea of separate individuals. This project aims to be part of a conversation that invites a broader reach of life-enabling consciousness that considers there is actually nothing but movement, matter is movement. Such an ontological overhaul not only shifts how we regard the field of somatics, which often is viewed within the realm of physical activity or physical therapy – helpful to stay fit or deal with an ailing body, but also calls for a reconsideration of the methodology we would use to study it. I have been feeling very stressed about the next right thing we need to write and communicate for clarity. And although I do not yet see it, I do want us to start so we can put the pieces together on the page.

Amaya: Can I invite you to begin sharing those pieces now Lilian?

Lilian. Um... well right now the tension between those scores is feeling like too much. What if it does not actually make any sense? Dance improvisation involves curiosity and exploration and expansion of movement. It is about the experience of movement, the creation of movement and can only be experienced in the moment. Yet these words on the page do not look like movement. And I certainly feel little movement right now with my brow furrowed, my lips pursed, my shoulders tight, my whole body feels almost frozen with anxiety. I am also just returning to this discussion after needing to navigate abusive communication and I find it very difficult to concentrate when my body is vibrating in this much fear. I feel like I live in a minefield, that every move is a wrong one yet I need to move.

Amaya: I hear you dear and remind you we’re here and that this is a powerful place for us to apply somatic practices, right here, right now in the writing. Somatic practices are those that bring our awareness to our internal sensations, movements and experiences and we know the ways in

which we can do that are vast and ever-expanding. What are you aware of in your somatic experience right now Love?

Lilian: As you ask me, I feel my face contract and tears form in my eyes. My throat closes up and there is a pain in the back of my neck. Besides my fingers moving on the keyboard, my whole body feels frozen, I can hardly even breathe.

Amaya: Can you tune into the movement of your fingers, notice the movement that is happening in your body?

Lilian: When you ask that, I breathe a little deeper, I remember what it feels like to soften my body. I feel my shoulder drop, my jaw loosen. I feel heavy and tired. I sit on my desk chair with my legs crossed. I hear children playing in the park across the street and the hum of the computer, peppered with the sounds of my fingers hitting the keys. When I notice that, I sit upright and then lean back and feel the support of the back of the chair. I move my head a bit to soften the tension in my neck. I remember that right here, right now, I'm sitting at my desk in my warm home on this sunny day. My son is at school. Some more tears come. I breathe again more deeply, some relief. And I am so tired of it.

Amaya: Of course you are dear. Those are some big issues you are continuing to deal with. And you're doing so well, remembering how even those little moments of somatic awareness can serve you in your grounding and how powerfully you continue to meet the pieces in your life, including responding to the abuse.

Marie: Thank you both. I think that was a really relevant demonstration of how somatic awareness can look and be utilised in our lives and provide us with tools to move in the ways that most serve us. Shall I help bring that back to the presentation of the methodology?

Moderator: Yes, thank you for that offer Marie. I think that will be very helpful. I am appreciating your vulnerability and willingness Lilian and your space holding and invitation Amaya.

Marie: Yes of course. What Lilian was speaking to was the reading and mapping we were doing to situate our research within established frames. Along with the concise overview of qualitative research methodologies provided by Given (2008), we've identified significant overlap with a number of articulated methodologies, including emergent design, appreciative inquiry, arts-informed research, hermeneutics, heuristic inquiry, interpretive inquiry, interpretive phenomenology, interpretive research, phenomenology, reflective methods and autoethnography. Emergent design is not a methodology per se but rather an orientation to qualitative research that allows for the specific process to unfold as pieces are uncovered within the research and an improvisational approach is emergent in nature. Although appreciative inquiry as a methodology has particular steps that were not explicitly employed in our research, a recognition of the socially-constructed nature of systems and an orientation of approaching the research appreciatively with curiosity to discover what works and how to expand it, as opposed to solving a problem, are very much in line with this research.

Lilian: Thank you for beginning to describe what we've been exploring Marie. I'd like to continue this unpacking, if I may?

Marie: Yes, please.

Lilian: This research is also arts-informed as the utilisation of a variety of arts were employed in the research process and its representation within this written work that includes dance and movement and also visual art and poetry. This play with representation is an important aspect of the final representing of our research as it is part of our commitment to accessibility of this research beyond academia and questioning of what constitutes knowledge. The use of arts within the final dissertation has been chosen to present the 'data' holistically and to evoke somatic responses in the reader. A hermeneutic approach is emergent as "data collection, analysis, and representation, as each is seen as part of a dialogic, dynamic, holistic, and self-reflective process where interpretation and understandings are developed continuously along the way rather than as separate stages of a study"

(Given, 2008). Engaging in research hermeneutically recognises that meaning is an ever-evolving, co-creation and that by bringing attention to language – the expression of one’s embodied experience – in dialogue, we can uncover the prejudices that contribute to that meaning making. This research also has tenets in common with heuristic inquiry, which focuses on the lived experience of the researcher. The participatory process of a heuristic inquiry that leads to greater awareness involves initial engagement, immersion, incubation, illumination, explication, creative synthesis and validation. We could say that our research involved all these processes even if they were not approached with these distinct phases in mind.

Aloisia: Can I interrupt here? Are you going to present all the types of research we’ve read and try to tell the reader that’s what we were doing? Because I’m really not going to stand by this bullshitting.

Lilian: Lola, what Marie and I have just been describing for the reader articulates some of the aspects and approaches of our research.

Aloisia: But that’s not how we were approaching the research! Give me a break! Wanna look back at the proposal that was written a few years ago and see if it says anything about hermeneutics and heuristic inquiry? Because it doesn’t. We’re just labelling it all now so we can do the academic proving thing. Not only does this feel dishonest for me, I think our academic readers are used to critical thinking and are gonna notice the inconsistencies, when they read that we aren’t totally consistent with any method or philosophy or ontology or epistemology. The more we want to claim we’re doing, the more proving we have to do to validate it.

Lilian: I believe we can be honest and still share how our methods align with what other academics have done. As Marie mentioned, this was in service of situating our research.

Aloisia: Well can we at least situate it where it really was?

Amaya: I'm really appreciating the collective desire to present our research fully – how it connects to what's important to us and how it connects to academy inquiry. I think it's a good idea you have Lola to represent somatics in the conversation and that our research first and foremost is an endeavour to conduct research about somatics somatically. The field of somatics privileges first-person, sensorial experience and the knowing through the body and every step of this process has been an attempt to remain faithful to producing research that could be fully somatic. I understand why we would want to line it up against established methods as it's expected that we establish validity to this work.

Aloisia: But just because someone else made up a process and gave it a name, it's then valid? What about all the debunking of supposed objective research as our 'scientific understanding' changes and we actually kinda get how it's all entangled and subjective anyway?

Marie: You're definitely not the only one who's questioned the notion of validity in research such as ours. There have been substantial discussions of how to reconsider validity beyond outdated positivist notions, such as Lincoln and Guba's (2007) work, and some of these translations relate to our research, such as prolonged and consistent engagement, participant checking, and thick description as they ensure an adequate depth and breadth of investigation in our topic. As we are not attempting to assert or reify a theory or even really evaluate our research – our research being focused instead on exploring what could be possible by posing our research questions – checking for 'external validity' is less relevant here. Another Somatic scholar, Jill Green (2015), asserts that although validity is important within post-positivist research, it is not about the legitimisation of knowledge but rather to ensure we have processes in place that question what and why we are evaluating and brings awareness to our biases and limitations as researchers.

Lilian: Yes Marie. With research that is somatically (i.e. first-person) oriented and largely autoethnographic, we are not seeking to validate any claim of absolute, verifiable truth...

Vivian: And we question whether there is such a thing...

Lilian: ... and it's still important for us to situate ourselves and to ensure we have processes of self-reflexivity and checking in with our participants.

Aloisia: Yeah and we've totally been doing that. Our autoethnographic journaling was pretty much continual questioning of what we believe and what we're doing and we've been sharing all we've been creating from the participants' involvement with the participants as we create them, getting their feedback and making sure we're presenting them in a way that feels true for them.

Lilian: Right Lola. And I know you were critical about situating our research within articulated methodologies but the use of a variety of approaches, particular in our representation via a range of written modalities allows for some triangulation and also opens up the space for our readers to have their own experiences and conclusions since we generally try to avoid drawing conclusions about what we and our participants have experienced through the study but rather aim to consider possibilities. Indeed the phenomenological and somatic approach to the research and its representation herein has been an attempt to present the 'raw data' in such a way that readers have access to it with less of our filters and can make their own meaning about them.

Aloisia: I don't agree. We totally have our own filters. I know we have this idealist notion that we can always be aware of how we make meaning but we totally still have blind spots and what the reader receives is through a tonne of our filters.

Amaya: Yes dear and that's part of the reason we're having this discussion on paper so that our readers can get a better sense of our motivations, our assumptions, the things we grapple with. And we can still be clear there is much we haven't yet been able to see.

Marie: That's a big reason we're doing this work in academia! To receive feedback and critique from others so we can continue to deepen our reflexivity and grow the work that's important to us in a way that really works.

Aloisia: I don't know. It's still super messy. There are too many things we could possibly consider when we're trying to conceive of all of life as somatic practice. I mean, then EVERYTHING could be part of this work. Like where do we even draw the line for anything? It's kinda all ridiculous to be trying to pull anything apart because then it's just partial and incomplete when really it's all tangled together.

Vivian: (laughs) It appears tangled when we believe they're all separate threads, a paradigm our linguistic orientation of life supports. We don't have to pretend that this process is linear even if the words on the page appear to be. This lengthy creation we're in the process of involves continual listening and following, weaving in and out of the writing, continuing to find the way in and the movement within the score of the moment, then the score of the next moment, and the next and the dance and the text unfolds. That's the exploration here – using our movement of language to play and to call things threads. Then we can explore the movement possible within the frame of that thread. Just as threads can tangle, so too can they be woven and that's the intention here – to explore some aspects of life and weave them together, expanding our awareness of and experience of life. When we can stay in curiosity and be open to what we can learn and discover, we learn more about the movements we do and can make. And when we know we're just moving in scores, we remember that that movement is only a small part of all movement possible, that we're adding to the possible repertoire of the movement. When we play with words, they can be fun. Things appear to be separate within language – the words convey something is one thing and not another. Implies materiality. Material that engages with other material. That's the way we usually play, the score we're usually in. And we can choose other scores, such as the one we're playing with in this work: a life-as-movement ontology (LaMothe 2014), where there is nothing but movement, patterns of sensation and response. We experience life differently within such a score, it expands our repertoire. And this score also invites us to consider the larger matrix of movement and that all movement is within it,

none separate or in a vacuum. It invites us to experience the words on this page as part of that matrix, part of the patterns of sensation and response I create and re-create, all of us create and re-create. The patterns of conversation, the patterns of academic work. We keep dancing it in to being, evolving its beingness, our experience of living and moving.

Moderator: Thank you Vivian for bringing in the notion of score. It has been helpful to have you all articulate some of the layers of subjectivity, our commitment to authenticity and how we conceive of validity. It has also been helpful to articulate how this work has been at least in part aligned with arts-informed, autoethnographic, heuristic, phenomenological and emergent practice-as-research and how that our use of such methodological approaches has all been in service of exploring how research can be somatic in all its aspects. I think it would be helpful for us to bring improvisation and scores into the conversation so we can complete this presentation and then move on to the actual details of research.

Marie: Thank you Twyla for directing us to speak about improvisation. You're all right that the best way to describe our methods is the translation of movement improvisation and somatic awareness, which only happens in the present moment, to all of life, including the writing of a dissertation. We've struggled with typifying our research within any box or established methodology because I think we haven't necessarily trusted or known how to articulate that our methods are that of improvisation. Just as I improvise when I dance, just as I invite my students to improvise, we choose a score and see what's possible. We follow its expansion, knowing it's only chosen to see what is possible. We listen from within to when the time to change arrives, when a new score is needed to explore new territory. Each articulation along the way of this 7-year process has been a score, each score allowing an opening and eventually an invitation to a new score. This is how I dance, how I teach and how we have been conducting this research. Rather than being wedded to any one method, we instead view them as scores that researchers and academics have utilised to



explore some aspect of their movements, of human movements. And we know that when we limit our exploration within a frame or score, that we are only seeing an extracted, partial piece of it all. So we don't make any claims that that we find or share within a score is all of it. Rather we are clear that we use the score to see what we can discover within it and what new movements are possible that we can take beyond the frame itself. Methods really are just like continually shifting scores and what we know and experience in life can keep expanding as new scores are created.

Lilian: Yes, for an approach to be truly reflexive and phenomenological, the process must indeed be fluid, allowing for uncertainty and spontaneity by following immediate experience (Küpers, 2015). Additionally, by combining various perspectives, we focus on expanding understanding of relationships and movement, emphasising “the ‘arrows’ between elements” (Küpers, 2015, p. 250) and how practices and processes are continually becoming and experienced, avoiding reification and notions of concrete and stable “things.” It is part of a movement to shift away from theorising about bodies to thinking with and from lived bodies (Küpers, 2015) and embracing a life-as-movement ontology. In order to embrace, explore and share more of the sensorial somatic experience and awareness of how we are co-creating the process and evolution within which we are in, an encompassing improvisational methodology also allows for an extended epistemology of knowing and experiencing embodied others.

Marie: And I think it's important to emphasise that this process was winding, as I think the ways we're discussing it reveal. The practice of somatics and of movement improvisation require a continual re-presenting to listen to what is needed next. To notice when we are in openness and curiosity and when we are not. We need to keep asking what can be created, what will be created, what invitations and possibilities open up through the movement. This requires play and trust that movement and knowing is possible within many frames. We have discovered that staying in a single frame feels eventually feels constricting and we need listen for when that frame no longer serves

what matters to us, to our values. What we value is all humans having greater access to their somatic experience and experiencing more expansive and fully self-expressed lives. Sometimes we work with a score and realise it isn't quite right and we play with it until we find its rightness. This happened to me numerous times in the development and implementation of our method and writing. And like my students, who would forget the bigger picture for the score, so too, I would forget and get really focused on trying to get the movement right within the score. The score wasn't allowing for movement yet sometimes we fail to see that the score is part of the block and push against it.

Lilian: Yes, there was a period when I was convinced that our research was entirely phenomenological. For a while, there was expansion, possibility and connection. Until there wasn't. And it took me some days and pouring over thick and cryptic phenomenology texts before I noticed my entire experience felt small. Somatically I was experiencing an incredible amount of tension, my forehead continually furrowed, I noticed my actions were snappy and I felt like I was drowning emotionally and mentally. It was the somatic awareness and my capacity to remember to return to it that allowed me to come back to that critical listening and realised a shift in score was called for.

Marie: Yes, and here is the commitment to presencing somatic awareness in our research. Knowing when we need to pause, create space for reflection, and listen for the score, a shifted score, that would open up more possibilities for movement and languaging movement.

Aloisia: Yeah. When I try really hard to think about the score, I usually just feel more confused. Where I get my ahas is when I get back into my body. I love it when I'm in intentional movement – dancing or running but it can also be in the shower or in doing my morning writing.

Marie: What is critical is that we're in a receptive state and tuned into our somatic experience. Excessive thinking and trying to get it 'right' can often keep us out of somatic awareness, so much so that we often fail to notice gross sensations, let alone the more subtle awarenesses, cues and knowing that can arise from a connection to life and insight about my movements within it. The

insight arrives when we're open and create the conditions for that openness. This is the practice of somatics – of creating the conditions, the intention to tune in to our awareness of our sensorial experience and movements in life and use that awareness to serve our movements. It's a practice and something we need to keep returning to, to have familiarity and practice in so we have the choice and capacity to tune back into it whenever needed or desired. And so the unfolding of the methodology has happened through a returning to, a listening and responding, which is an incredibly powerful methodology in research and also in life and how I believe we're demonstrating a somatic approach to research.

Aloisia: Yeah and this isn't always easy.

Marie: Exactly why somatics is referred to as a practice. As a somatic practitioner and teacher myself, cultivating and practicing somatic awareness takes repetition and a commitment to return to the practice. When we have intensity in our somatic experience, as Lilian does with an abusive dynamic in her life, the trauma can make it very difficult to tune in or listen. Or what we would tune into can be incredibly intense and overwhelming.

Amaya: This is why it's helpful that we do this work together, that we can help bring each other back to the practice when we forget or get lost. That continuing to come back is how we are exploring how we can conceive of all of life as somatic practice. Just as we move on the dance floor, here on the page, we listen and follow in the present moment, we stay aware of our patterns of sensation and response, the movements made and the lines left from those movements. When we improvise, we let go of notions of right and wrong, there is no movement that has to be done or perfected, but rather the aim of improvisation is to see what we can create and discover. And we're not the first to explore these scores within the academic frame.

Lilian: Thank you Amaya for the reminder to soften my need to get it right, the belief there is a right. Your words help me find a little exhale, softening through my face and settling into my

seat. And as I settle, I notice impatience arising. What I think would be helpful is just to summarise these pieces for the reader so we can move on.

Moderator: Yes, thank you Lilian. Could you do so?

Lilian: Certainly. As we've been describing we have been bringing a somatic orientation to our research that is continually informed and directed by our somatic experience in the moment. Despite their breadth, somatic practices are usually united in that they are almost universally practiced in a dedicated time and space, generally separate from other activities in our lives, which part of the paradigm we're shifting in our co-creation here, dancing a dissertation into being via our somatic awareness and movements with others in the project. This ties us back LaMothe's (2015) work, whose paradigmatic shift also vastly opens up somatic practice, while also providing a compelling rationale for such practices. As the very nature of academic work is to question and realign our assumptions, we've been inviting ourselves, our participants, and our readers to bring our awareness to our paradigms and try on new ones in order to apprehend how we can more deeply experience life somatically. And by co-presenting we can become more present to the beliefs, assumptions and paradigms that frame our understanding and experience of life, particularly when they don't align with others'. Even through the writing, we're in a continual process of this re-examining and modifying. Just as Jill Green shared in her dissertation in somatics almost 3 decades ago (1993), doing this deep work on a Somatic level will be continually opening things up and that can make the writing of it a little messy but this is necessary and critical to demonstrate this in the writing. What we need to bring the reader clearly back to is how we use scores within movement improvisation and somatics to frame and focus the attention. In dance and movement improvisation we intentionally chose the score, just as in any ritual. Although emergent, an improvisational practice methodology is not without structure. Indeed preparation, or 'honing ourselves to the field,' is critical as is the clear articulation of our scores. It may not be an appropriate approach

for quantitative research, research that aims to prove or substantiate theories or trends or causes but it's the perfect methodology for exploring what else is possible, individually and collectively, in our personal, work and academic movements, for exploring how we may expand our repertoire of movement as humans. An improvisational approach also invites us to recognise that limitations are like scores. Although they constrain the movements we can make, they allow us to hone in on what's possible within that smaller field, while we remember that life is greater than that field. Just as life is greater than COVID and just as our experiences, learning, insight and growth through this research process is far greater than the score of dissertation can convey. We know we are narrowing the field to create a container to focus and expand. The connection we are inviting our reader to consider here is that all beliefs, paradigms and assumptions can be conceived of as scores. Unlike scores, however, we are often not aware of the nature of our beliefs, paradigms and assumptions and do not feel we have chosen them. Not aware of the frame, we are often are not aware that there is movement possible outside the frame. So through our research and writing, we are inviting a consideration of how we would experience our paradigms if we saw them as scores, as frames to play in and see what is possible. Innovators often do this naturally – their innovations often arise from limitation, from being curious about what else, what other movements are possible within the restrictions. We see that right now in the global restrictions from the pandemic – innovations and creations are happening from those who see possibility in the frame. We will turn next to showing some of the ways we've intentionally chosen and drawn our attention to the score, the frame, of our movements in life so open up awareness and choice. One of those frames is a 'life-as-movement paradigm'. Although we are not arguing that it is true or absolute, we are instead trying on a frame that 'all of life is movement' to see what we can discover in it.

Marie: Yes as humans, we love to create frames. We love to categorise. When we have a name, we can make sense of things. When our categories shift, our experience of life shifts and we want to invite a shift to greater somatic awareness. This is why we liken paradigms to scores – by drawing connections between these terms, we can open up our experience of the former.

Aloisia: But seriously? This has been such a sticking point, the slowest part of the whole process – choosing the frame. There are so many frames to choose from! How could we just choose one?? We'll miss so much of life in the process!

Vivian: The ease comes when we let go of the idea that there's a 'right' frame – all frames can give us information about how we move within it. If we observe water with the frame of a riverbank, it's different than observing it bordered within the ocean, to putting it in the container of a glass, or watching it in the shape of a cloud. Every frame gives us some further information and expands our experience of water. And that's what we're intending here: expanding our concepts of somatic practice, expanding our ideas of how to experience life somatically, expanding our experiences and ideas of life itself.

Marie: And just as we've explored presenting our work within this frame, this coming together as a panel in conversation offer our readers the process in action, some insight into our subjectivities, conscious and unconscious, of offering some expected clarity and justification for the overall methods we've use, wanting to avoid arguing for the absolute truth of any frame (or if we are, then that's some further blind spot we hope to have pointed out to have a greater understanding of the frames we move within in in our lives). What is most important is to make sure our readers know what's framing each portion of our work as much as possible. And with that, perhaps a good time to shift to a new writing score and explain the panel for them?

Moderator: Great idea Marie. I agree that it's a good time to shift the frame and explore it all from a different angle.

Aloisia: Oh it's been fun but exhausting!

Marie: Right, just as with any score, we were able to explore new movements, staying present, until we realised a new score was needed.

Aloisia: Totally! The initial idea was to write the whole dissertation as a panel. I'm really glad we changed our minds!

Lilian: Well we realised it would not best service the message we want to communicate.

Amaya: Shall we let them in now?

Lilian: Yes, I believe that's necessary so we can more fully articulate and clarify the methodology of the project.

Moderator: I appreciate that you've all joined me to offer our reader an opportunity to explore one-way somatic awareness can be presented in writing and reading a dissertation. I'm going to close the panel now and share directly with the reader to spend a brief moment explaining why and how this score was chosen.

## **Writing scores**

As the panel has prefaced, this research and writing of it has been an improvisational endeavour that has utilised the notion of movement scores to frame the work and a number of scores are used in the writing. If you haven't already guessed, Marie, Aloisia, Vivian, Amaya and Lilian are all aspects of myself. Because of desire to play and be curious about your experience as the reader, I did not fully explain the panel earlier. I'm curious what your experience of these speakers has been, *what arose in your thoughts and sensations, anything you noticed in your body as you read* their viewpoints and explanations. Was it already obvious they were me? Or have you jumped ahead to read this section because you wanted to understand the construction of the panel before reading it?

*Did it open or close awareness for you? In what ways did they engage you?*

I would love to hear thoughts across time and space but instead I sit here alone to write, listening in to the curiosity in this moment. I chose a panel score to play with the movement of language by speaking from different voices, different aspects, different scores of myself, to discover more about the ways that certain identities I hold frame my somatic experience and the movements I make. I chose it out of curiosity of how the linguistic expression and dynamics would be if these aspects of scores could speak within a smaller identity of self and how they would move in relation to each other, out of curiosity about how use of such a score in writing could support greater somatic awareness of me as the writer and you as the reader.

The identities we adopt are often used to codify the movement patterns we already make, labelling the bounds of what we believe are our possible experiences and movements. By using some of my identities as a writing score, I wanted to be intentional in my choosing of them, to find play and curiosity within them, to explore my patterns and also invite myself and the reader to see what's possible beyond the frame.

The process of choosing which scores to write from was a whole process in itself, that required a lot of paying attention to my patterns and listening in somatically for what to follow. I'm aware I have many identities, many boxes that frame my movements and experience. Even filling the occupation box in intake forms can leave me feeling stuck. Depending on my focus at the moment, what has been primed, my location, my sleep, my cycle, those around me, the frame within which I'm moving and score of self I'm moving from is ever shifting. There are the scores I do not choose yet move within: time of day, time of year, time of my cycle, the limitations based on where I live. It was my intention to bring more awareness to them as scores and to recognise that although I may be moving within that frame at the moment, it does not mean life only exists within it. I can choose to explore what is possible within each frame, intentionally chosen or not.



My process of developing the ‘researchers’ for the panel was a somatic, arts-based process that involved intentionally observing myself moving through my life, writing, moving, painting, and more writing; a process of internal listening as opposed to relying on a process or codified system set by someone else. Ultimately listening for what wanted to move through me and listening for those internal ‘ahas.’ After feeling into the general score for each of the five scores of self, I explored really finding her voice, the way her language moves and I did so by watching videos of myself in my various roles, writing about my somatic experience watching myself, and then painting from that experience and writing. I had the paintings surround me as I writing from the scores. The writing and paintings from this process can be found in Appendix A.

As I’ve reiterated a number of times, the emergent nature of all of this research, including the writing has meant continual changing and unfolding. Months ago I had intended to write the entire dissertation as a panel score, hence why I also spent so much time developing the voices/scores of self. After much writing, it became apparent that something else was needed. So just as we continually explore new scores in movement improvisation, I offered a variety of scores through my participant research, and the remainder of the writing will also explore a number of scores that I briefly introduced in the introduction and methods sections.

## The Autoethnographic exploration

### Score # 3: A Letter to you (Autoethnographic methods)

Dear Reader,

I'm now curious to see how my linguistic movements will shift in this new score, a score of 'speaking' directly to you, being explicit that I'm writing to and for you, that this writing only matters because you're reading it. We write to connect to each other, which is what matters to me in this work and research and writing. We both know that I am required to create a final piece to complete my doctoral degree but if this endeavour were only about substantiating or proving, it would feel counter to what's important to me and what somatic work is about – awareness and connection and the experience of that in our bodies. *What do you feel in your body when you receive a letter addressed to you?*

When I receive a letter, I feel a warmth and softness in my body. I feel cared for and important. I feel connected. I'm kinda thinking of physical letters in the mail, which are particularly special these days. But it's also in emails, when most of what fills my inbox is generally impersonal mass emails, I feel an increase of energy in my body when someone writes me directly. So it's true that this 'letter' may be more like one of the mass emails that automatically fill in my name to make it seem personal when I know it's been sent to everyone on the mailing list but in this moment right here, right now as you are reading, you are the reader and it's to you I'm writing.

In this letter, I'd like to tell you about the autoethnographic portion of my research – the journaling of which was a notable part of my research. In some ways, the experience I have of sitting here alone writing feels similar – same desk, same computer, same sense of what matters to me. And yet different, as now I have an audience. It's about connection and not just a freeflow writing of my experience. My autoethnographic journaling was much rawer and

messier, knowing I was the only one who'd ever see them in their entirety. More vulnerable too. Less at stake. I could freely express and not be concerned about academic acceptability or what you think of me.

Although, as you may have noticed as I spoke to you above via some of my scores of self, authenticity, directness and candidness are ways I communicate. I'm a living, complex human being with lots of emotions and my practice of somatics and freestyle, improvisational dance that has supported a freer and fully self-expression (which is why this work matters to me and why this writing is deeply connected to my somatic and dance practice). Often that can mean saying what others are not, including the uncomfortable and emotional pieces. The pieces many of you may not even realise you're thinking or feeling. Do I reach you in this way in this letter? Sometimes others are shocked or angry when I name these things and sometimes relieved. Naming them authentically, however, is a particular imperative of mine – in my personal and academic life. Don't get me wrong – this isn't necessarily easy and I'm especially nervous writing you (especially the you who are evaluating the academic acceptability of this writing). I notice I keep chewing my nails. Actually my nails are pretty chewed these days from working on this writing. But another thing to know about me: even if I'm scared or nervous, I often do it anyway – whether it's jumping out of plane, going into a frozen lake, speaking up, initiating that difficult conversation or writing all this to you as authentically as I can. And I know that the messiness and vulnerability HAS to be part of this, that YOU being *moved, inspired* is critical. Writing only about how I am moved and inspired is matter for a personal journal. For academic scholarship, however, it's critical we're both engaged, that the conversation is furthered.

So to make sure what I'm writing you in this letter is actually furthering that – and specifically my sharing and your engagement of my autoethnographic methodology, I'm going to

draw on others' support and writing of such a methodology. And in my honest fashion, I'm going to be clear again, that a bunch of that support comes a posteriori. As my methodology was somatic and improvisational, following something exactly how I had – or someone else had – planned out ahead of time, would undermine the whole focus of this work. To be somatic and improvisational, I need to be able to be connected to the deep listening within me, in my body and it needs to be connected to what's alive and moving in this moment – something a loose planning helps me tune into and a rigid planning closes me off to. I'm going to thank Stephen Nachmanovitch (1990) for helping me to articulate some of that and because he's an academic too (has his PhD and everything), I like to refer to him often as I believe he helps me to legitimise improvisation. Like Nachmanovitch, I'm an improviser – dance improviser specifically. And for this work to be exploring the bridging of those somatic movement practices to all of life, my entire methodology needed to be improvised.

Improvisation doesn't mean no plan or no rules though. I'll quote Nachmanovitch for you here so it's not just me saying it: "Improvisation always has its rules, even if they are not *a priori* rules." (p. 26) And my most oft referred to quote: "We still engage in the important practice of planning and scheduling – not to rigidly lock in the future, but to tune up the self. In planning we focus attention on the field we are about to enter, then release the plan and discover the reality of time's flow" (p. 21).

So there is a lot of planning and experience and thought and reading that all fed into the unfolding, improvisational process. Translating my somatic and dance improvisation practice and methods to the rest of my life and to a research methodology, to stay in these questions for so long, has been a rigorous endeavour for me, even if that's not necessarily the rigorousness usually referred to in academe. And I'm not alone in feeling nervous with this performance and resonate a lot with Tami Spry and her vulnerable sharing in 'Body, Paper, Stage' (2011), where

she also acknowledges that this autoethnography and autoethnographic performance, and its interweaving processes of pulling apart and putting together, is a ‘nervous condition.’ So in this letter to you, a part of my performance, I intend to share with you that “We know who we are by reflecting on how we choose to communicate with others, or how we perform ourselves in everyday life. Performative autoethnography is the assigning of language to those critically reflected upon experiences” (Spry, 2011, p. 33). I have Spry supporting me in that this isn’t a linear or clear process, that this extraction, exploration, examination, explanation, exposition, explication – thankfully – doesn’t necessarily ‘coalesce into a coherent subject.’ What a relief I can be messy (because the belief I need to have it all together and make sense in an epic opus that few other humans will ever read (at least in its entirety) keeps my writing process fairly halted at times). But if I choose to align with Spry’s approach of performative autoethnography (which I largely do), then I don’t get off so easily as she reminds me this is scholarship and how I write is critical: “*All of the potentials and possibilities embodied in performative autoethnography depend on the quality of its report, of its linguistic and aesthetic construction, of its ability to make writing perform.* In other words, the quality of the writing, the aesthetics, is directly related to the quality of the scholarship epistemologically and heuristically, and its potential to be pedagogical” (Spry, 2011, p. 106). Not only that but that this moving aesthetic quality must be in service of broader critical reflection, that I have an ‘ethical imperative’ to have us all look critically at ourselves and the structures we participate in and reinforce. This sense of imperative, that I really do want to make a difference through this work and move you can have me feeling fearful and halted in my process. But as Nachmanovitch reminds me and what is at the heart of the somatic and movement practices I do is trust: “If we are transparent, with nothing to hide, the gap between language and Being disappears. Then the Muse can speak” (Nachmanovitch, 1990, p. 30).

How do I allow the Muse to speak? In part I figure it out as I go and continually re-present myself to the purpose of this specific scholarship: to explore how we can understand our lives as somatic practice and to open greater awareness and choice. So I experience a dual purpose of writing you now: to not only share what I explored in this research and specifically now clarify methodology, but also to continue that exploration by considering that this reification process – the molding of the ideas and experiences into words on a page – is also an opportunity for somatic practice. “In this process of writing narratives or autoethnographies I am also discovering myself, writing to know and to reveal the multiplicity of my experiences” (Barbour, 2011, p. 18).

What makes this writing somatic, a somatic practice, is the awareness and acknowledgment of the experience and sensations in my body while writing. Of noting and sharing of the dynamic movement and experience. Of the constriction in my chest as I fear the insufficiency of the words I'm typing to fully share and convey the fullness of that experience, the non-separation of it all. Of the sense of expansion and inspiration and the fluid movements of my fingers when something feels like a deeper truer expression. Of moving in and out of those experiences. Stuck and fluid. Halting and free.

Today in particular I feel like the heavy and continuous cloud cover of January in Toronto has infused my entire self, the heavy grey weighing on my dropped eyelids and rounded spine. If I didn't have a commitment to write and could fully honour my connection to nature, I may crawl under my covers like a hibernating bear, waiting out the dormant season. Somatically, however, I also experience the tension of a new year picking up, expectations and obligations of academia, of parenting, of life in a busy, pandemic saturated metropolis as... oh I guess there is a sense of great weightedness there too. But instead of a blanket enfolding me, it's more like a backpack with bricks I've opted to carry.

*What about you? How are you today?* Maybe you notice your brow is furrowed (mine is right now) and you notice you're frustrated and critical that I'm a few pages into my methods letter to you and I've yet to provide you with the process I followed. Maybe there is a sense of energy somewhere in your experience and you find new consciousness catalysed within yourself. Whatever your experience, your awareness of it is what matters – or at least what I'm intending to matter in my writing and your reading. And from one of the many pieces that moved me in LaMothe writing about her writing in *Spiritual Herstories* (2020) was a sense that when we are engaged with another's writing, it is just as much about our experience, our somatic experience, and what we experience as possible within our movements, as it is about the author sharing hers. Because of all of your experiences and movements, only you have your unique experience of what moves you, what moves within you and when we expand that awareness, we recognise we're not passive receivers and we grow our choice. Similarly as I read others' accounts and weave them into supporting my writing here, I feel what resonates. It's through my embodied experience, finding others' words that reinforce or convey sharedness, validating my experience and expression or providing something I can diverge from.

And none of it is static. Including our somatic experience. Especially our somatic experience, since it's essentially about tuning into the sensations we feel in this moment, which are movement. Just as the heaviness I was experiencing somatically yesterday that I wrote you about a couple paragraphs above has shifted today after a new record in my distance running this afternoon (22 km – in the ice and snow!). I knew I needed to move. As much as there was a belief that I need to just sit and keep disciplining myself to write, I also knew that denying my somatic awareness to write about somatic awareness would mean this is all just talk, which it isn't. And I also certainly have many ways I avoid or work counter to the somatic awareness I

have – and this was especially apparent when I was documenting my awareness through my autoethnographic journaling.

So yes: the journaling. Autoethnographic journaling was in the methods section of my dissertation proposal although I never actually stipulated the frequency or length. So I ended up writing 42 journal entries, that totalled a little over 45,000 words over the course of a little over two years. There were some periods that I wrote more frequently and other times there were months between entries. I wrote when I thought of it, believed it would be helpful, or wanted to explore something. Because of the lack of regularity or clear conditions of where and when and how I'd write, I'm not able to give you any substantiated truths. But hopefully you've gotten so far that I'm not trying to do that – I don't want to prove or reify or give you another system or theory. Instead I want to share what I played with and what I discovered, with deep conviction that that matters and there is inspiration and invitation for you in that.

My journal entries consisted of unedited, uncensored freeflow writing that was grounded in the question “how we can experience all of life as somatic practice?” It wove in all aspects of my life – my work, my parenting, my relationships, my dance, my challenges. More than data collection alone, these entries were where I grappled with the question itself, molding it between the words on the page, playing and refining, where I tuned into my knowing, my somatic experience, my confusion, my questions, where I began exploring what was possible, how I could and was bridging somatic practice into all of my life, my experiences of exploring this with others, and the awareness and learning that resulted from the practice. Questions, practice, and analysis were all part of the self-reflective, critical and honest writing. Using a score of an exclusively electronic written format, I played with what was possible in such writing – writing on my computer and on my phone, at home, while commuting or out. As I wrote about my own life, I described my somatic experience through it all, uncovering continuing themes.



This personally focused exploration served as a foundation for my research with others. By starting by asking the question of myself, I considered what was possible in my own life and what could be possible in others'. The self reflection opened up themes that then wove into my participant study. I also continued the self-reflection process during the participant portion, that explored my participation in the invitations I was offering others and also served as documentation and study of my own process of creator, researcher and participant. The awareness and themes that unfolded through my curiosity and writing have ultimately informed this entire process and all the pieces of writing in my final piece here. I also use them as a basis for an entire portion devoted to autoethnographic sharing you'll get to a bit later (assuming you're reading this from start to finish) where I continue to play with form and expression to see how I can share authentically and deeply and offer something that dances for you.

So for the analysis of all these entries, I just reread them all and it was pretty incredible for me to bear witness to the journey as I have been holding the research question in my flesh and bones and moving with it for all this time. I see how much I doubted myself, questioned the questions. And I also see how much I've grown, how embodying this question in all of my life has been part of great personal transformation. Of course, because you're an academic, you'll know I can't ascribe causation here. There has been a lot moving in my life these past years (and in case you're reading this years from now, it's currently the beginning of 2021 and we're still in a months-long global pandemic - just one of those movements!) What was incredible to realise through this process of documentation is how my deepening embodiment and understanding of the questions and has coincided with me now experiencing much of my life as somatic practice.

Because of the improvisational imperative to my research and my interest in exploring a life-as-movement ontology, there are ways my 'autoethnographic' exploration does and does not conform to ethnographic methods. The ethnographic methodology that I'm interested in and am

intending to apply in my research is dialogical, sensory, reflexive, holistic and spiritual, looks at patterns of movement, recognises how we create and cocreate them as well as the greater movement matrix within which they are being created, how our senses are involved, and how to share them in a way that acknowledges that representation is also movement. Indeed, I've been inspired by autoethnography methodologically because of its general consideration of the bigger picture and the trajectory, interactions and patterns over space and time. When life is understood as a movement matrix, the notion of separate parts is incongruous so we have to consider the greater context and social nature of movement. I'm not promising you I've done the most thorough job here as I muddle through the tension between autoethnographic methodology and life as somatic practice that recognises the inherent movement in all of life.

Although historically the aim of ethnography, grown out of colonisation, was about control and predicated upon the notion that knowledge is power (Clair, 2003), postmodern ethnography's call for a deeper knowing of self more closely aligns with a movement ontology (Madison, 2012). Autoethnography, in particular, focuses on the self with the ambition of promoting change and social justice. There is certainly a connection between such a telos and furthering 'life-enabling movement,' and yet there are still ways I don't feel completely aligned with autoethnographic intentions and their concern with structures, particularly social constructions of race, class, gender, age, etc. I really believe that this concretisation can serve to diminish awareness of movement if we don't look at these constructions as patterns of movement. Our language around them really reinforces reification – we generally understand these patterns as structures, as things. Because I'm so completely immersed in language, even when I intend to experience it all as movement, I find it challenging to shift my own experience. I really loved Ong's (1982) metaphor for this: trying to conceive of an 'oral literature' when we're literate, of really having the experience of the somatics and movement of orality when listening to words that we know as structures on the page, is like

trying to understand what a horse is when we've only ever experienced a car. I don't laugh that much when I read academic scholarship but I giggled out loud when I read about these 'wheelless automobiles'. That lightness helps me and I remember it's a constant practice, a continual reminding, re-membling.

As I was just writing those sentences to you above, I tuned back into my fingers moving on the keyboard, really feeling into that familiar sensation of the yielding firmness of the keys beneath them, taking in the blinking cursor that follows along as these letters appear on the page. I get curious about the pacing – sometimes those letters appear to be running, my fingers moving so quickly to get that thought on paper before it flees. Then, other times, there are great pauses, movements backwards, up and down, sometimes backtracking whole chunks. The culminating result appears linear to you, especially as you are probably generally reading it one word after the other (or at least one sentence after the other – I'm not going to be exploring or researching the actual physiological and mental process in reading – it's the somatic experience of reading I'm interested in).

So here's an invitation for you: *Are you able to consider the personal and the social as patterns of movement instead of distinct structures? What happens to your movements when you do? The movements of your eyes and body as you read, the movement of your thoughts.* This is necessary, I believe, if we really want to consider all of life to be potential somatic practice.

It's my belief that a methodology that is truly in line with a life-as-movement paradigm needs to be radical (and yes, that likely coincides with my own desire to be radical), yet still needs to speak to the masses if it is going to have an impact and foster an increase in life-enabling movement. Probably this is easier if we just stay away from the reifying nature of language completely, or at least weave in other modalities such as audio-visual (Hahn, 2007) and staged performance (Spry, 2011). But no. I've been clear. This is going to be through the written word – in large part because this is a

primary way that we share with each other as humans (and honestly the way I prefer to share – given the choice, I will always choose reading over watching or listening). Within the larger questions of how we can experience all of life as somatic practice, my ongoing curiosity has been: How does one cultivate sobriety of how language, with its inclusion of subjects and objects, inherently conveys materiality, yet use this primary mode of communication to encourage a movement-based view of life?

Can we apprehend how dialogue is movement, relationships are movement, self is movement, and how we can use existing and new creative forms to convey that movement in service of my growth and yours, increasing the ‘life-enabling movement’ we can and are making? How we know through doing and through connection with others (Toyosaki & Pensoneau-Conway, 2013).

So, as I often do, I come back to LaMothe (2015) because her invitation to understand it all as movement really speaks to me. She writes that “Words succeed when they move. They succeed when they invite a reader to recreate the physical and mental moves – the patterns of attention and inattention – that the writing process expresses” (p.77). Like evocative and critical performance ethnographers, I want to move you emotionally and kinaesthetically. In my writing to you, I attempt to follow her counsel and critically reflect upon my relationship with words, how language feels in the body, and collapse distinctions between creative and critical writing that offers you the space and inspiration to make meaning in your own life.

I’m inspired by evocative ethnographers, whose work I described in the literature review. The reflexivity required in a movement ontology also calls for a shift in the concept of the self. In life-as-movement paradigm, the notion of self is formed “as we create and become movement patterns...our experience of our (selves as) bodily selves shifts. This awareness is, again, *sensory*. It is not *conceptual*... [and] forms within us as a sense of having or being a “self”” (LaMothe, 2015, p.5), “Moving and being moved, we seem real to ourselves” (LaMothe, 2015, p.103).

To actually stay true to this within the score of academia is a tricky thing that shows up consistently in my autoethnographic journaling and the final writing here. As much as I profess my intention to work with movement, how “...to notice it, map it, recreate it, and align ourselves with it.. in all realms of our living, whether physical, emotional, intellectual or spiritual” (LaMothe, 2015, p.76), I continually feel the call for theory and substantiation in the academy as, indeed, it’s generally considered obligatory for scholarship.

What I’m hopeful and excited about is that the simple notion of scores in life and the translation of that piece alone can invite a shift in how we work with this tension. Whereas I (and others) may have tended to push against the norms, paradigm and boundaries, inviting the notion of score instead allows us to play within them. Instead of somehow believing I’ll find my way out of the confines of linguistic form, it’s a relief to believe we can find something new, experience expansion and greater awareness from inside them. A spiritual necessity for me to “..pull the rug from underneath such human-made absolutisms that become the dogmas that dictate the paths in which we make and search for meaning” (Ergas, 2016, p.21) and just as shifting our focus to somatic awareness can be simple and straightforward and in the moment, this too can be simpler that we can make it. Or at least I can make it. Or at least this necessity to write you hundreds of pages about it makes it seem.

*Weaving through words. But also through movement... Weave it into my daily activities. Yes weaving. How to weave it in. Isn't that what this is all about? Instead of something new and separate. How to weave it in?* (Autoethnographic journal, November 15, 2018)

The process of journaling as part of my research was the first step in my attempt to disentangle some of the threads of somatic practice, of my life, of my research question, of language to gain a deeper understanding of their colour, their texture, their sensation, and their relationships to see what patterns were present and what opportunities for knowing and new ways of weaving

them together were possible. There was a deep desire to understand and yet the recognition that I was only pretending to pull them apart, that their complex entanglement remained far beyond my capacity to fully apprehend it all.

*And yet it colours absolutely everything I do and there is no moment in my life that this is not part of my embodied experience. Perhaps that's my challenge – that I cannot separate and I let it fill up everything and take over. But it's also what I value in life – recognising the interconnection of everything*  
(Autoethnographic journal, September 28, 2018).

Yet with this appreciation, there was also a resistance to the deconstruction, to not wanting to dichotomise or pretend. And also an experience of getting lost in the unravelling, tangled in the threads. I spent months in this questioning, seeking clarity in the questions and directions. This experience was not unfamiliar for me in the process of research – the process of teasing apart, of examining, of moving with, had me questioning all of my knowing, of my reasons, of my research, of the concepts themselves, and I stayed in this messy middle for months.

*What the fuck is this dissertation about?*

*But what about being present to the experience of my body? I have so many years of cultivating tools for grounding. From being a telephone crisis line worker at age 19 and everything since. That's 20 years. And if I can't often find it, then what the fuck am I doing trying to help others find this for themselves?*

*What do I know? I'm sitting on a subway right now. I feel too hot with this jacket on. There is intense pressure in my skull. There is pressure on my right calf where it is pressing into my left thigh. I'm typing with my left forefinger and right thumb exclusively. As I type this on my Samsung smartphone. Awareness of the pressure on my legs has me switch the cross of my legs. I have discomfort in my lungs. I can feel my heart beating through my chest. I'm still hot. The sound of the subway's wheels against the track and voice of the computerised announcement feel uncomfortable. I want more quiet. I feel overwhelmed. I want more quiet inside and out. I want to hide somewhere. I push my glasses up. I feel fearful about going to teach the first*

*class of another semester of dance for non majors. I'm questioning myself and my capacity.*

(Autoethnographic journal, January 8, 2019)

As I questioned myself and my research through words, through the movements of thinking and writing, it was the process of coming back to my experience in my body, time and time again, that invited a sense of clarity when the language itself had me in knots.

Although my autoethnographic findings have informed all other portions of the research as well as the writing of it, I also want to share some of what I discovered through the autoethnographic exploration with you. The score I've chosen to play with for this portion is that of 'found poetry.'

A resistance to distillation, to extraction also pulls me now, in my writing. Because I don't want to pretend the pieces are separate, I want to include all my autoethnographic meanderings, to provide you with a complete picture of my movements, of my expression of life through words on the page. Yet it's too much. Both the 45,000 words and the 7200 or so of them I've already pulled out as most moving for me (which you'll find in Appendix D if you're so inclined to read those pieces).

It is for this reason that I've chosen the score of found poetry, playing with the words on the page. As the intention for this research on all levels is to explore how we can have greater awareness of the experience in our bodies, *I invite you to tune into the experience of your body as you take in the poetry.* I am not going to summarise, explain, or analyse the journal writing at all herein. Instead I present it with curiosity of what your experience as reader will be, *what knowing through your body may become alive through the process.*

So there you have it. A pretty long letter about the autoethnographic portion of my research as a thread within the larger interweaving of this writing, this research and life. I do tend to repeat

myself to really ensure I've heard but they also say that repetition is important for change. Totally not doing the academic thing and referencing here – a vague and perhaps bullshitting 'they' – oh but at least I can reference Brown (2017) and call myself out on potential bullshit.

Yours Somatically,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a series of connected loops and curves, appearing to be a stylized name.



**Score #4: Found Poetry (An autoethnographic sharing)**

*Weaving through words.*

the **interconnection** of everything.

I want more quiet inside and out.

I've been present

What is impelling me

It's there. Something.

Little pieces.

So used to the linguistic **shortcuts**.

capacity for choice.

**pull** of the habits

queen of <sup>high</sup> expectations

adding the *being* back *into* the doing.

a different way of experiencing it all.

come *back to* it.

Feeling *into*

What is *alive*

*Maybe I dance with them.*

What is consistent of how I get

there?

*When I allow things to move through me.*

Dancing is *dancing with anything*.

Dancing is the presence

in **life**

we are moving.

We are movement.

Movement is all there is.

*my heartbeat is still super **strong***

Deep <sup>inhale</sup> and exhale.

Feeling of something **rushing** through me

I was in my head and could not really *drop into* what it felt like.

Where is the place to dance in this?

Maybe maybe maybe

my chest is constricted, I ~~cannot breathe~~, I have no awareness of my feet

... as I pause to scratch my inner thigh...

desire to scratch intensifies as I search

I feel fearful  
I'm questioning

I'm really *curious*

.. what is it?

Is touching my body **perhaps** some way of finding the answer?

Some furrowing of my eyebrows.

*Does this help me figure it out?*

I'm wiggling around on my ball because I have to pee

These sudden insights from my body feel so much more *alive*

than pouring through texts for hours on end.

feeling more **weightedness** in my body

Glasses *push*. *Scratch* my face. Move again.

How often am I connected to the knowing in my body?

*How do I know when I'm connected?*

when I could feel the holding

my practice this week

has been

about following

the **sensations** and feeling

the movement

Perhaps this kind of |holding| is helping with my *concentration*?

I want to find something **reasonable** to incorporate **in** the day

how do I **do** this practice while sitting at my desk?

I **roll** on the ball a little more.

I soften through my neck and **roll** my head around.

I could have a deep and **full** experience of those emotions without *drowning* in them.

To not go into STORY.

Is it possible for those actions to bring us

closer

to our experiences

instead of

distracting us

from them?

figuring out how to more consistently connect to the wisdom in my body.

My body where the trauma LIES and where the debilitation SITS and IS experienced.

When I dance I am **doing**.

it provides **space** to be while doing.

Of allowing what is **alive**

to **move**.

I dance to feel.

To move.

To experience life.

To allow.

*That is not why I do most things.*

I am in awareness of the experience of my body.  
 I've connected this work, this action to somatic awareness.  
 And now it's there  
     each time I return  
*focuses me*  
     on the dance of language.

I hear the words,  
 I feel my fingers moving,  
 I see the screen.  
     More senses involved in the process.

It's taking me forever to do this transcription.  
 This doesn't really feel connected

    What does my body know right now?

I am drawn to the sides of my nose, a sense of melting down.  
 The sides of my mouth get heavier.  
 What does my body know right now?  
     It knows this heart is beating,

    I suddenly get present to the immense *wisdom* and *capacity* of this body.  
     And a capacity to connect  
     with the knowing  
     that matters.

And that the knowing is a lot <sup>less</sup> ~~complicated~~  
 than our linguistically oriented thinking believes  
 or tries to make it to be.

Knowing there is always a choice  
 I don't know  
 I also don't know where

the end.

    I'm going.

It makes so much sense and makes none.  
     I'm more comfortable in these seeming paradoxes.

it's the *weaving*. It's the **and**.  
 And **this** and this and **this** and this.  
 It's about listening through life.  
 and playing the game

But fuck it

I presence myself to **what** is important.

For humans  
 to *be* in the *presence* and *knowing*  
 of our connection to life and the love that we are.  
 we **reify**, **categorise**, **isolate**.

Playing with those scores  
 to have experience,  
 to know ourselves,  
 for life to *know itself* within that score.  
 Yet the score is not ~~truth~~,  
 neither is what we believe ourselves to **be in**.

the **potential** of this time  
 recognise that quantum entanglement  
 To **dismantle** our ideas  
 as a fringy, body based, revolutionary-wannabe, reading avoidant academic.  
 I reject about theory is its appearance of stagnancy

Knowing |edges|,  
 knowing the |edges|  
 of the |box|  
 we're in  
*feels comfortable*.

Maybe more so  
 than the pain of accepting  
 we're in a fucking |box|.  
 What are the boxes I stay in?

wanting to let go let go let go  
 And at the same time, being **clearer** with boundaries.  
*But* isn't that a paradox or oxymoron or something?  
 What the fuck is a boundary if everything is interconnected?  
*But* some things are either/or ¿right?

When I **soften** what I believe I am,  
 what time is,  
 what consciousness is,  
 then  
 I'm **in** this house  
*and*  
**outside** of it.  
 I'm the whole world.

Do I want to stand or do I want to weave?  
 Do I want to dance?

There are these legs and they definitely don't want to stand still....

I don't really feel like I'm never not distracted right now

**reinforcing** a s e p a r a t i o n

I want so badly to **dissolve**.

Is it the dichotomisation that exacerbates the feeling of distraction?

writing the last sentence to be present with my body this moment had me immediately feel the  
heaviness in my chest, the sadness in my heart and the tears were immediate.

I hate how       distracted

I am.

Really hearing my body with what it wants.

It's amazing

how **clear** it often is.

I'm choosing

this restriction.

To explore

choosing restriction.

That resonates so deeply.

Maybe I'm making meaning where there is **none**.

But I'm human.

So I'm going to make meaning.

I often want to be in all scores of myself at all time.

I don't know ~~who I am~~ or ~~what I'm focused on~~

or *why* or *where* or *what* or *when*.

But there is something else.

Keep wanting the nice ribbons to tie it together. And I do get

beautiful *threads* to weave into it all.

Feeling my weight <sub>drop</sub> into the ball. Feeling my shoulders <sub>drop</sub>.

*Relaxing* my forehead. And feeling such a <sub>well</sub> of **tears**.

If I just figure out the 'right' thing to do

Then I'll know what I'm supposed to

this <sup>fluid</sup> musing feels like where I need       to       go .

No one will ever read this.

A desire to be **seen**. To **matter**. To make a **difference**.

I am in this.

Let me **notice** the score.

And notice what **choice** I have within it.

Big exhale there. I want to play. I want to play.

My spine continues to <sup>u</sup> <sub>n</sub> <sup>l</sup> <sub>d</sub> <sup>l</sup> <sub>a</sub> <sup>t</sup> <sub>e</sub> and my head continues to move **fluidly** on it.

Exhale and scratch my head.

I *feel* like

there are so many unfinished *threads* here.

My spine <sup>t</sup> <sub>w</sub> <sup>i</sup> <sub>s</sub> <sup>d</sup> <sub>t</sub>

The *itch* on my right forehead is still there.

Mouth o p e n again.

*I need to feel it in my body.*

my eyes noticed it and something said **yes** and I followed even if it *didn't make sense*.  
identify the opposites.

The right answers are

'WORK' and 'play.'

And the *irony* and *absurdity* just hits me.

First needing to define self with | boundaries | so

we can then let it go.

Experience the | boundary | so

we can experience the ~~not~~.

I feel so tender with the care and softness I've given myself this morning.

I'm used to moving EFFICIENTLY.

W <sub>e</sub> <sub>a</sub> <sub>v</sub> <sub>i</sub> <sub>n</sub> <sub>g</sub> <sub>a</sub> <sub>r</sub> <sub>o</sub> <sub>u</sub> <sub>n</sub> <sub>d</sub>

Running smoothly

Dancing **big** and expansively

Wanting to be done. To get *there*

I  
feel  
the waves  
move  
through  
my body.  
My heart

*softens*

Being here.  
 Feeling here.  
 Just being here.  
 Moving  
 without trying to get anywhere.

and I already *feel* <sup>over</sup>whelm by the sheer volume of writing material and musings  
 the belief I need to *distill*,  
 accurately **reference**. Provide something **new**.  
 And a need to be *special*.

the |limitation| of that movement

Feeling my brow furrow and my lips purse  
 Much more <sup>circu</sup>itous,

winding,

unfinished

thoughts,

peppered with *assumptions*

in our *linguistically*-oriented world,  
 our **internet**-oriented world

maybe all I *need* is  
 just  
 to keep *being aware* of my body. *Feeling* it. *Listening*  
 And as I *write* about it, I *reconnect* to the experience of it,

I feel my lips turn downward,  
 my face likely  
 displaying *discomfort*,  
 disgust and  
 as I *tune into*  
*really feel* into  
 what is happening in my face,  
 the experience intensifies,  
 my brow begins to **furrow**.

Seems to be a lot of brow **furrowing** in this orientation.

The orientation of **proving**,  
 of needing to be **right**,  
 of the *fear*

of *wrong* and *failure*, *fear* of *critique*, of *loss*

To know that ~~no~~ **matter** how much I write,  
it would *never*

be **all** of it.

It's only some small part of it  
So *it is* what *it is*

Not the whole,  
*not even*

a **large** proportion of the whole,  
but something  
to be *curious* about,  
to see what can be

o p e n e d up.

What can be o p e n e d up is infinite so the *invitation*  
is what's most important.



## Participant Somatic Practice Exploration

### Score #5 Dance for non-majors: a participant process (and a dance in five parts)

For the presentation of the methodological specifics and what was explored in the participant exploration component of my research, I'll be using the score of a non-major in-studio dance course. I have taught such a course at York University for seven years (pre-COVID) and it has been a main arena for me to explore inviting others into greater somatic awareness in their movements and their lives. As a studio instructor, I have had the incredible opportunity to develop a powerful pedagogical approach for my students wherein we explore somatics and improvisation in the studio and in our day-to-day lives. The bridging I developed with my students over each subsequent iteration of my course has provided a practical experience of weaving together, blurring the lines of “official” and “unofficial” learning, spiritual and mundane, day-to-day and academic, doing and being, which I believe is the most critical element for me and for my students. In this course, I have supported students in tapping into the experience of themselves as movement and cultivating enough of a presence and relationship to be able to bring it to all of their lives.

*Movements I busy myself with and it feels good to do. Movements I know how to do. I know why and the process. This dissertation trial is not a familiar pattern. I don't really know. I'm trying to connect it to patterns I do know, like my teaching. I connect with my students by reading their journals. I look back at what I've done past years. I look at what we've covered so far and where we could go. This doesn't completely apply to this situation. So it's about trying things out. And that can feel scary and uncertain*  
(Autoethnographic journal, February 2, 2020).

The explorations with my students and what I've learned about myself as a somatic practitioner, facilitator and human have provided a strong foundation for the explorations in my dissertation. In my one semester dance course, I meet with my students once a week for 12 weeks and each week they are given 'homework' to bring the explorations and awareness to other areas of

their lives, outside of the studio. The research questions of this work take a next step forward: what happens if we skip the studio and bring the practices straight to our lives? How do we translate somatic practice beyond a facilitated approach, letting go of the requirement of an external expert in order to access our inner authority, and aim to shift the access, importance and reasoning of why we do somatic work – to support what’s important to us, not just as a practice to turn to when something is wrong?

I’m curious to see how the movement of my language here on the page unfolds within this score of bridging my in-studio pedagogy and the progression of a participant exploration that formed the main focus of this research. I am curious how using this score to write about the process can further support greater somatic awareness as I write and as you read.

I did not structure the participant exploration to match my class progression. I acknowledge, however, that my experience teaching and years of exploring how to support my students in bridging their somatic explorations in studio with the rest of their lives has been a very notable influence in how the research progressed and what I explored with our participants. Choosing this score also influenced how I decided to consider and present the experiences and pages and pages of transcription that came out of the participant portion of the research. By making these connections I can see how my somatic pedagogy within the studio informed a somatic exploration outside the studio without having explicitly intended it to.

*I want to return to revisioning my methodological approach by applying the dance practice to it as well – my practice of listening, of internal trust and knowing, of questioning the external expert, of improvisation, of following in the moment. Yes, trickier when I’m recording videos without seeing the response of those receiving them, not being able to respond and adapt as I go through listening to them. We’ll be separated by space and time and this listening has to be much more unidirectional. It can’t look like my classes in that way*

(Autoethnographic journal, January 30, 2020).

An improvisational score-based methodology allows us to explore possibility within a frame, to pull things apart to explore new connections and combinations, and writing about scores I used in my research within a variety of scores acts as multi-layered pulling apart. By using a variety of scores/frames it also offers different vantage points, triangulation of the research ‘data,’ and new perspectives. Using these frames further supports exploratory research, which looks for patterns or ideas rather than trying to test or confirm theory.

I believe one of the most critical pieces for providing inspiration and guidance for others to explore their somatic experience and to explore and expand their movement repertoire improvisationally is by modelling that myself. Therefore, like the course I teach, the methodology for this research in this research involved a deep listening and connecting to my participants, tuning into my somatic experience, planning and reflecting to hone myself to the field and focus my attention, and cultivating space and curiosity to listen. When I teach, I invite my students into explorations that I explore along with them. Like the course I teach I do not know the progression of these invitations. What is critical is that they come from tuning in, tuning in somatically into my knowing and connection to the present moment, instead of conforming to rigid pre-planning or someone else’s codified progression.

As with all pieces in this research, this is not a linear process. Although I’ve presented the participant exploration separately from the autoethnographic presentation, they overlapped temporally and bidirectionally influenced each other.

*I sent out the first email with the first video on Friday. For months I felt like I had to start sending the emails and that I had to work on it but was continually stopped by not having a sense of what it was I was actually supposed to work on. The vague proposal I had made didn’t clarify what the actual process is. I dealt with a lot of impostor syndrome. I finally let go of needing to be an expert in somatics and see if I could focus more on the inner expertise we all have (so I believe) when we are tuned in to our somatic experience. So*

*I watched/ listened to clips of all of the participants' initial conversations with me. I let images and ideas arise and tried to put them in words for all 20 participants. I went back over my notes from the interviews and highlighted things. I went back to LaMothe and had the idea that working through her chapters through the 10 weeks could give me some grounding in what I'm presenting and weave it together with what I get from the participants and my own experience (Autoethnographic journal, February 2, 2020).*

Writing about the participant exploration within the course score will be presented in five sections, which I have called 'dances,' corresponding to important components in the course I teach. I chose the word dance because of the sense of movement it contains. The first will be a presentation of the specific research procedure via a course introduction and 'course syllabus,' created for the written presentation here. This is where I begin each course I teach – with a thorough explanation of what we will be doing over the course of the semester and why.

*I'm onto Gary's recording now. I notice that this process of typing out someone's words really slows the listening process. This isn't a usual thing most of us tend to do. I noticed my jaw became relaxed and my mouth is slightly open. This is the same thing I have cultivated in my movement practice. To relax and soften and allow. If I were in public I likely wouldn't sit here with my mouth open. But even now as I type, I'm exploring it being opened and closed. The softening and allowing that is possible... (Autoethnographic journal, February 2, 2020).*

The second section or dance of this presentation will be a detailed introduction to each of the 12 participants that completed the participant research exploration. The introductions will be based on what the participants shared with me in our initial conversations with some information about the background of our relationship. As a somatics educator who employs an improvisational pedagogy, tuning into my students somatically and by listening to them is an important component of how I teach and allows me to listen for and sense where an exploration needs to go. It is for this reason that I present each of the participants separately, sharing aspects of themselves that they

shared with me and that informed how the exploration unfolded. For the presentation of each participant, I watched and moved with a portion of our videotaped conversation and wrote somatically from my movements. Then I carefully went through the transcript of our first conversation, pulling out what occurred to me as the salient components of their sharing. The participant presentations were shared with the participants to ensure their accuracy and invite any further feedback about how I have presented them.

*My 10 weeks of offering of scores is infinitesimal. Cannot even begin to scratch the surface. And they are tools. Invitations. No one size fits all. Each moment, each body calling for something. And it's up to us to listen. To practice that listening. I've offered a few possible ways into that listening. And they may or may not have inspired more listening. And it's up to each of us to listen to what invites more presence. More awareness in our bodies. And ultimately more choice. Because ultimately it's ourselves we have to listen to*  
(Autoethnographic journal, April 4, 2020).

In the third section or dance, I will be presenting the ten-week exploration I offered the participants. Just as I invite my students to notice their habits, movements, experience in their bodies through in class explorations and homework assignments, each weekly invitation that I created for this participant exploration offers the participants something they can explore to expand their somatic awareness. I present not only what I invited the participants to explore for each of the ten weeks but I also bring a somatic lens to the presentation, wherein I carefully rewatched and tuned in somatically to what I presented in each video invitation to explore some of the various layers that were part of what and how I was inviting the participants to explore with me.

*There is a sense of dropping into it all now as I sit at my desk. Feeling my fingers move easily across the keys. Not really trying to get anywhere. The fingers moving inviting me to be. I feel curious about the black letters appearing on the screen as my fingers move. So familiar they are with the keyboard. I enjoy typing. Sometimes I imagining myself typing my thoughts, feeling my fingers move on the keys. Feels so satisfying. Perhaps the*

*creation of something. I see my thoughts in front of me. I see my thoughts in front of me. They aren't me anymore. Is this the gift of literacy? I've felt constricted and confined by language, by literacy, by the concretising of thingness and lamenting that it keeps me from experiencing the movement I am. I see the movement now. I see it in front of me. Coming out as I feel and think and I don't know where it is going. I don't know the next sentence. Maybe I know the next word. And it just flows. Me. Not me*  
(Autoethnographic journal, September 2, 2020).

An important component of learning is the capacity to articulate that learning in language. This is a critical piece in my pedagogical approach and what I will be sharing in the fourth section or dance of this presentation. In my course this articulation happens via regular sharing in small and large groups as well as twice weekly journal reflections. Unlike my university courses where students are required to participate and submit reflections, my research methodology was entirely voluntary. Nevertheless, I still invited and offered participants regular opportunities to send me written and verbal reflections on what they were noticing as they explored the weekly invitations. In my classes, a lot of sharing happens with the entire class, which I believe is important for students to validate their own experience and hearing others' experiences that may be similar or different to their own, reinforcing that there is no right way to experience the work. Although the participants in my research shared directly with me and not with each other, the fourth section will present their responses to the invitations as if they were happening in a conversation. This allows me to juxtapose the responses. I do attempt to limit commentary or analysis, opening the space for the participants and reader to have their own experience and interpretation of the sharing. The full 'dialogues' I pulled out from the weekly sharing which can be found in Appendix F were shared with the participants.

*This is the methodology. Right here. In this. Maybe it couldn't be considered rigorous or clear or even valid to many. I don't actually know. I haven't done enough of the reading maybe. And I also continue to balk at*

*the reading. Fuck reading. The knowing is in my body. The fucking knowing is in my body. I don't want to read another goddamned book of someone mentally linguistically articulating 'knowledge.' Sure reading can excite me. It's fun to get my head spinning sometimes. And and and.... The real knowing is in my body. Which is why I need to keep just listening in. Why the process each week of these emails is different. How I hear the wisdom of my body comes through differently each time. How I prepare myself, hone myself to the field is different. Of course things have changed. We're in the middle of a fucking pandemic right now. What made sense a month ago is certainly radically different now. And yet. And yet. The choice. The capacity to tune in and listen to our bodies (April 4, 2020).*

Exploring new ways to weave together the pieces we've pulled apart through our weekly classes is a final critical component of my teaching that brings the learning back to the course objectives and I use this as the score for the fifth and final section or dance of the participant research presentation. In the course I teach, this happens through both self reflection and performance. My students are required to write a final essay, describing something they learned about their 'personal movement signature,' their unique way of moving. They are guided to use their journal reflections to pull out and present something new they learned about their movement patterns and somatic awareness. The other final component of the course is a co-created dance and this is usually the highlight of the students' experiences in the course. Although for many of the students, this is their first dance course, I have them choreograph their final group pieces with my artistic direction. With my guidance and creating activities, they create a piece that allows them to share their unique ways of moving individually and together. I use these two components of my pedagogy to present the final post-exploration conversations I had with the participants, offering an 'essay' and a 'dance' for each of the 12 participants. The 'essay' allows me to bring their sharing in our conversation back to the research questions: *What if the awareness of the experience and movement in our bodies was regarded as not only important, but foundational in our lives and upon which everything else that we*

*value is supported? What if the awareness of the experience of being and moving in our bodies was something we had access to all the time, through all of our lives and not requiring anything extra? What if all our lives could be seen as somatic practice, opening up access, choice and connection in every moment? What could be possible if the entire world was grounded in this belief?* From these questions, I present something that the participant identified as important to them, describe their participation in the research and consider if and how their participation in the research supported something that is important to them. As a way of offering triangulation of the ‘data,’ I also present the participants’ sharing in our final conversation through what I’ve called a ‘dance.’ The ‘dances’ consist of collaged excerpts of what the participants said in our conversations together. These ‘essays’ and ‘dances’ were all shared with the participants to ensure their accuracy and invite any further feedback.

Through these detailed and varied ways of sharing what was explored and discovered in this research exploring life as somatic practice, I want to re-emphasise here that the aim of this research is exploratory, to see what could be possible, to offer more questions than answers. It is for this reason I am not intending to ‘analyse the data’ or aggregate the participants. Instead, I hope that the ways I’ve chosen to present the exploration and my participants’ responses reinforces the multiplicity of experience and the countless factors that influence our experiences. I have not aimed to validate a somatic program nor investigate the factors of what makes a program ‘successful’ or not. My intention is to allow each of us to explore the meaning we want to make in a way that serves us connecting to our own somatic awareness in support of what matters to each of us.

In order to keep the connection to my course through the five subsequent sections or dances that present the participant research, I preface each of these sections with an invitation like I would offer students in my course. The course invitations are written recollections of what I generally communicate to students in our classes and are not transcripts of my teaching so although



they contain the general ideas and general language, they are not a reflection of the actual verbal movements I make in class.

*Welcome! I'm really looking forward to working with you this semester! I'm passionate about this work and here to support your learning. Today is all about introductions – we'll find out more about each other and you'll learn what we're going to be doing together this semester. What you may be surprised to learn is that this is a research course and the subject of your research is your own body. Over the course of our lives, we develop habitual ways of moving and the combination of all those ways are uniquely yours. Being able to move from habit allows us to move automatically, and having this capacity is great and allows us to not have to think about every movement we make. When we move habitually and automatically, however, it is not within our awareness. When we bring our awareness to these habits, that's when we have choice. So through our work together this semester, where we'll pull out some pieces of dance and movement, use somatic exercises to tune into the experience in our bodies, and use improvisational activities, you'll begin to look at your movement habits and expand the choice and capacity you have for the ways you move.*

The first piece in presenting the participant exploration portion of my research is to share the specific methodological 'procedures,' the what of the exploration. Within the dance course score, I will be presenting the methods via a fictitious course syllabus. I am referring to myself as 'the facilitator' for this fictitious course syllabus.

**The first dance: Course syllabus****Course: FA/DANC 7000 Life as Somatic Practice****Facilitator: Twyla Kowalenko, PhD candidate****Format/term: fall 2019 – spring 2020****Office hours: appointment by request**

Prerequisites/corequisites: This exploration is open to anyone who is interested in exploring their somatic awareness in their day to day. Knowing about the opportunity to participate, however, will require that you have seen (either directly or have had shared with you) the notice for the opportunity via Twyla's facebook wall, via the Centre for Social (CSI) Innovation's member listserv, via the 2019 Toronto Landmark Self Expression and Leadership course whatsapp group, or participated in a session Twyla facilitated in 2018 at Dance New England in Massachusetts. (See example of this recruitment notice in Appendix C). These avenues are chosen not because they are associated with any qualities sought after but rather because these are avenues easily accessible for the facilitator to reach a wide range of people. The facilitator is interested in knowing what interests people in expanding their somatic awareness and so no specific demographic will be sought out or excluded.

Course size: Although the size is not set, the facilitator hopes to have 10-25 participants in the course.

Learning Outcomes: This course aims to explore ways that the course participants can increase their somatic awareness (awareness of the first-person sensorial experience in their bodies) with as little extra doing as possible. Through weekly invitations, participants will be invited to bring awareness to their movement patterns and habits in their day-to-day. The course aims to provide participants with

tools they can utilise for themselves to continue to increase their somatic awareness beyond the course itself.

Expectations: Participation is voluntary at all times. Before participating, all participants will be required to sign a consent form that provides them with a brief overview of the course and ensures they understand their rights and well as option to withdraw from the course at any time without penalty (see Appendix D). All pre-course, course and post-course activities are optional. You will be invited to provide written or verbal feedback with every invitation throughout the course, which is not mandatory. Although your level of participation in the course is entirely your choice, the more participation and feedback you provide the facilitator, the more you may influence the direction of the course as the facilitator will be creating it as it unfolds along with any feedback you provide.

Pre-course activities: All participants are invited to have an initial conversation with the course facilitator either in person or virtually, via zoom. The conversation will be semi-structured. The facilitator is most interested getting a sense of what is important to the course participants. In order for the facilitator to have a sense of the participants' starting point, they will likely be asked what their interest in the course is, what their daily activities generally consist of, what 'embodied knowing' means to them, what their familiarity and experience in somatics is, and how aware they believe they are of the experience in their body. The conversation will also be a chance for the facilitator to explain the focus, rationale and plan for the course and to answer any questions the participants may have. The conversation will be guided by both the facilitator and the participant. The facilitator will not be asking typical demographic questions as she is more interested in the ways in which the participants define themselves and what they choose to share and what to speak about.

The conversation will be recorded by video and audio and the audio will be transcribed by the facilitator.

The course: After the facilitator has had an opportunity to have a conversation with all the course participants, the course will begin. The course will be asynchronous and virtual in nature. With the aim of asking for as little extra doing as possible, the course content will consist of an email once a week for ten weeks. Each email will include a link to a jotform page, wherein participants will find a video invitation for the week along with a transcript of the video. Each weekly invitation will include some content and ideas to consider as well as a specific invitation of something to pay attention to in one's somatic experience through their regular activities. The facilitator will also be participating in the course by exploring the invitations in her own life and writing about her experiences. The facilitator will be creating the course content each week in response to her experience in the course as well as any responses she receives from the participants.

Weekly Responses: There will also be a space in the jotform page for the participants to share anything about their experience watching, reading and/or exploring the invitations in their life and any form or thoughts are welcome. The jotform page will offer the opportunity to write or verbally record a response and there is no limit to how many responses can be submitted through the page. In weeks two through ten, the participants will also be asked how many times they watched and listened to the invitation the previous week. If participants choose to provide a verbal response, it will be transcribed by the facilitator.

Post-course check in: Following their participation in the course, all participants will be invited to have a second conversation with the facilitator. Although the intention for post-course check in is to

again offer in-person or virtual options for the conversation when they were planned in 2019, because only virtual conversations will be considered safe in April 2020, when the final conversations will be held, all conversations will be over zoom. The conversations will be recorded and the facilitator will transcribe the recordings. The conversations will be unstructured and the facilitator's approach will be one of space holding and listening through the body. The facilitator aims to be tuned in somatically to each participant and follow the mutual interest in the conversation. In preparation for each conversation, the facilitator will spend time orienting herself to the participant by reviewing the transcript from the first conversation as well as all of the participant's responses and transcripts. She will also take notes right before the conversation noting her own somatic experience and what she is aware of her current context going into the conversation. The facilitator will be interested in what the participant is aware of from their participation in the course and how they participated. Although no course activity is obligatory, if a participant does not have a post-course conversation they will not be introduced separately in the post-course write up (i.e. the written dissertation).

Evaluation: There will be no grading or official evaluation for this course. The participants' participation in the course, however, will be shared with a wider audience via a written dissertation via a range of written formats or scores. Just as these scores in the course have not been decided ahead of time, how the participants' sharing and feedback will be presented will be created as the writing unfolds, somatically and improvisationally. It is the facilitator's aim to avoid evaluating the participants' participation in order that the participants and readers can make their own sense and meaning. Whether the course is considered 'successful' will for each participant to interpret for themselves. The facilitator, however, will be interested in learning what aspects of the course the participants found helpful or challenging.

*As this course is all about improvising, I'll also be improvising as I teach. Improvising involves tuning into the present and cultivating curiosity to respond and unfold our movements. Tuning into the present moment in our class together also means I'll be tuning into you with the goal of listening and offering explorations that best serve your learning. It's important for me to get to know you and what's important to you. I'm going to invite you to turn to the person next to you and share a little bit about yourself and why you're taking this course. Then each of you will introduce the partner you just met to the rest of the class.*

### **The second dance: An introduction to the participants**

“I get excited and so curious about each and every person and, you know, get excited about having these conversations and getting into your world and, and, and, you know, every conversation I have is shaping.” *Quoting myself from one of the interviews*

I had 20 participants sign up to participate in my research, 12 of whom I had existing relationships with, 6 of those I did not know previously were recruited via my posting on the Centre for Social Innovation (CSI) members listserv, one heard about my research via a mutual friend who had seen my facebook post, and one heard about the research from her Father, who was also participating. Having recruited most of the participants via a post on my facebook wall, the existing relationships I had with participants included family, a colleague, those I dance in community with, and those with whom I've had other training and community involvement, such as choir, my housing community, Landmark and my Ashram studies. I conducted all initial interviews over 6 weeks in the fall of 2019. I conducted 9 of the interviews in person in various locations, including coffee shops, my home and the participant's home. Eleven interviews were conducted virtually, eight with video and three without. Five participants were male and 15 were female. Seventeen of the participants were in Canada, 16 in Toronto and 1 in British Columbia; two participants were in the United States and the final participant was a Canadian who was travelling in Japan at the time of

our first interview. I intentionally did not ask demographic questions as it was important for me that I got a sense of what was important to their sense of self from the participants themselves as opposed to sorting them based on general demographic categories, such as age, gender identification, ethnicity or social status.

I was able to have a second interview with 13 of the 20 participants. Of the remaining seven, five did not respond to multiple messages I sent them to schedule a conversation, one let me know she was ill and would get back to me, one scheduled a conversation and then did not attend or respond to an email follow up. Because all second conversations happened during COVID, they were all virtual and 12 of the 13 used video. One second conversation was not recorded and this participant had not participated in the weekly emails.

When I began the emails, I did so with all 20 participants in mind, including their varied background with somatics and their general day-to-day activities. As I continued the weekly email content, I still held the 20 participants in my awareness and it was those that reached out to share feedback and their experience of the process that added more direction to the unfolding of the content. My presentation herein, however, will only be considering the 12 participants who I had a beginning and final conversation with that I have a recording of so that I can consider and present the participants' experiences in the study.

In my presentation of the conversations, I am interested in pulling out threads for each of the participants and presenting some aspects of what centres as important for each of them. These threads are quite subjective and influenced by many factors, which include varied degrees of background and knowledge with my participants (knowing some very well and some not at all), the focus of the conversation and my questions around somatic practice, somatic awareness and their day-to-day, and the score of the interview and both of our performances within such a score. I base the pulling out of these threads on my assumption that the participants shared what they believed



was most relevant to the study as they knew I was recording and transcribing our interviews and their sharing would be used in my presentation.

There was an open, semi-structured approach to the initial conversations, where I intended to tune into and follow the participant and let the questions and curiosities I had for the research weave into our conversation. I notice how my performance in the conversations differed in each one, impacted by my relationship with the participant as well as my state at the time, many more threads and scores than can accurately be teased out. With the belief that life is a complex entanglement of innumerable threads, or co-created patterns of movement, I pull out these threads not to contend that they are the only threads but rather to argue that when we increase our awareness of any of these threads – our patterns – we have more awareness of how they weave into the co-creation of life and more choice in our patterns of movement.

I intended to tease out some of the threads via both somatic tuning in as well as attention to linguistic movement patterns. I returned to each conversation first by watching and/or listening to a portion of our conversation and moving and writing from my somatic, felt sense. Then I went through the entire transcription of each conversation and pulled out threads of movement and language – my participants', my own, and our dance together through words. I spent many days with the transcripts of our conversations, going back to them many times to continue to draw out and map what I was noticing and drawn to in the participants' sharing.

Below I present each of the 12 participants from our first conversations via a somatic poem and a detailed textual presentation of the conversation. All participants are presented through a pseudonym, except my father, who is really my father and who agreed to waive his anonymity for my writing. As my relationship and movements with him are quite unique, I appreciate that I can articulate some of those pieces.

***Dad***

Dancing with the conversation January 9, 2020 13:55

*there*  
*almost... just...*  
*abbb... the relief in finding the right movement*  
*deepening in its repetition*  
*repetition*  
*purrriiiiiiiii*  
*oh there's the breath*  
*open and soften and pull it in, pinch pinch*  
*is this freezing or pausing?*  
*"am I grasping here?"*  
*Where... not quite....*  
*Ride it outward expanding*  
*Waiting... I want to say patiently. But no. no. not patiently*  
*Apprehensively?*  
*When do we get there?*

I knew I needed to start with Dad. The engagement that has by far the most threads. No way I could come close to teasing them all apart, articulating all of them, let alone be aware of them. A complex entanglement. In this moment, I write while tuning intently into my somatic experience – the sensations are drawing me to the buzzing in the sides of my neck. My neck and head feel almost frozen. I sit on the floor in my living room, this word document on one side of my screen, the video of my first conversation with Dad (in October 2019) in this same living room over a year ago. My screen is projected onto my wall. I move with the voices – mine, my Father's, the purr of Fonz the cat on the video (and in this moment he's under the coffee table behind me, underneath our new baby rats Eternimax and Pikamax).

Come back to sensation. Noticing the only movements are in my hands, a stuck frozenness, particularly in my neck and face. Eyes blink, narrow a bit. I finally have a bit of space to myself as my partner took my son out so I could work. The video ends. I'm uncomfortable on the floor. I move to my desk.

As I sit now with the transcription of the video, I painstakingly transcribed months ago, my attention is drawn to the same experience I was having somatically while listening to the conversation. As I moved with the video, I experienced constriction, small movements, seeking. Then a sense of finding the right movement and I'd exhale and enjoy the release of being in that movement for a while. Then I would discover I'd contracted again, my body in a new holding. Maybe fingers reaching. My shoulder tightening up towards my ear until the contraction pulled me all the way over the floor, then my knee would pull up and tighten in.

And similarly I notice this waving action in my Father's movements, both physically and linguistically. "But you know, there's a lot of autonomous processes going on, your heart's beating, you're breathing, everything is working. And you're oblivious to that..." "I'm rambling..." "Anyway But beyond that, I don't know. Am I grasping here?..." "It's always trainable in that sense, isn't it?..." "I don't know where I'm going with this...."

The uncertainty, of doubting himself is a familiar experience I have of my Father. From my experience within the research and of a lifetime with my Father, this is a score of his I'm particularly aware of – likely in large part because I share it. Then the moments where he seems to step beyond that score and be in the freedom of expression (which I also very much relate to):

"Intuition, to my mind if I think about it, is something that your mind goes beyond what it's born with, it evolves...

...then gives you a way of making a decision, not with a deliberate focus on, you know, like pros and cons and this and that I just say, Oh, I just know that that's true. Or I just know how I feel. Alright. I just know. As opposed to analyzing something, to figure out an answer. So intuition is like a leap."

Another thread I'm really aware of as I tune into our conversation from 14 months ago and tune into my 41-year relationship with my Father is a sense of longing, of striving to connect. This

feels the same somatically as the dance I just had with the interview, all interwoven. There is so much that I sense is part of this – love, care, I could tease it out with words but it is about connection, deep connection. Different flavours for each of us, in our distinct roles as Father and daughter. I know for me it involves being seen, heard, loved, held, accepted no matter what. There is a lot of striving within myself caught up in that. And as soon as I write about it, I'm aware of the tension between the striving to prove myself as loveable and the desire to be accepted no matter what.

My Father's main reason for participating in my research was to support me and to better understand what I'm doing – to really hear and understand me. "I want to help you out. And I was interested in your research, it gives me a better idea of what you're doing for your dissertation. I'm interested in I think this is a good way to, to know."

My entire body softens all that tension from the striving, from the not quite connecting when I fully take in the bigger picture of my Father's movements – beyond the minute strivings and disconnection. And I suddenly have a deeper awareness of the broad reaching, entangled somatics of it all as my son (who's now home) comes in to keep sharing or showing me something, pulling me away from my writing. Until I realise he's also pulling me towards it. The striving to connect, to feel loved, seen, heard and accepted. And I realise it's time to close the computer and move physically towards him.

When I come back to the conversation, I look for other threads to pull out from the linguistic movements. What I am pulling out comes from my review of our conversation although my meaning-making of them is informed and influenced by knowing my Father far more than what he shared in our recorded conversation. My Father wants to understand how things work both cognitively and somatically. "Alright, so back up a second." "Is that correct? Let me interpret." "let me interpret what I'm thinking so I'm understanding a bit more." "Let's use Fonzie as the example."

He works out his understanding through his linguistic movements, reflecting ideas by putting them in his own words to ensure understanding. He explores physical descriptions and offers examples and metaphors, both in a broad sense as well as imagining himself in a situation, connecting it to his movements and awareness of emotions. I note this in the evolution of his words about what somatics means to him – he expands his comprehension and deepens his awareness through practical examples and putting it in his own words. “Like, for me, everything is, not everything, you know, it's all in the mind. And you make notes and your body just is there to take you from point A to point B to write things out. But I'm not really aware of using my body any more than just the basic locomotion and eating.” “So it's like I don't know if I'm on the right track or not but the body is you, it's your tool and your brain or your consciousness controls the body to a certain extent but the unconsciousness I and maybe my physiology is off. But you know, there's a lot of autonomous processes going on, your heart's beating, you're breathing, everything is working. And you're oblivious to that, you know, you measure your numbers, you measure your blood pressure, you measure all kinds of statistics on your body and BMI and weight and Whatever you do that.” “So, while you're talking, I was thinking okay the body provides typical five senses... But there's more to it than that, is that right? I feel hunger, I feel odd sensations.” “a person is the whole.” “So let's say we come with a with a basic package of instinctual behaviors that are, you know, have evolved and people have different abilities for sure.” “it's I guess you can also tie it to your emotional experience or your emotional reaction and but it goes beyond the emotions.” “How part of this I think should be able to reconnect with what you already are given what you already are born with, what you're capable of and recognizing that as a starting point and building on that. walking barefoot in the grass connecting to the earth. and that sensation by itself, isn't there some sort of science, you know, if you're connected to the earth, you're just feel better. There's a lot of

healing practice that that's related to the earth. The earth is able to heal you.” “So what part does sensation play in here? Hot cold, cats biting you. Mosquitoes buzzing around.”

From the beginning to the end of our conversation, what he shared linguistically about his belief about his embodiment evolved from believing it is a vehicle to seeing more possibility for himself in increasing his somatic awareness: “I think it'll be just make me more aware of, of how I can, not use my body, but be with my body as I do things. So as it'd be an enabler, it'd be you know, a partner, it'd be a tool, however you call it, but be more aware of it.”

Although he stated that his is not generally that aware of his body or somatic experience, his speaking showed that he actually was more somatically aware of his movements and experience: “I wasn't still for long, I would stretch, I would sit like this. Grab my feet, just pull gently and it's feeling so good but I'm being still and quiet. Or you know, and you take a position that feels good. And I think that helps me. Like, I can't just sit like this. doesn't feel that good. So I'll move. But only as much as I'm pretty flexible. So I'd like to know, stretch things.” “You chewing on my arm? See that sensation is nice.” (As my cat lightly bites his arm) He also spoke directly to increase somatic mindfulness: “I do and let's say in my life, I think more, it's hard to compare. But you know, I think I'm more mindful of that in the last decade, I'd say than previous times. and maybe I'm wrong. Maybe there's some body sense to that. So where am I going with that? Yeah, to be aware of your body, mindfully, sometimes you feel here, feel here, feel here, you go down your body, you go down your arms, your legs, and just be aware of the body in a deliberate fashion.”

I note several reasons why he may believe he has less awareness than he does. One is that his life is often sedentary and his work as a data management professional has him sitting at his computer for long hours: “But I have to consciously make an effort to do things I mean to, to move. Otherwise, I'll sit and read a book.” “Just a hand I don't use voice, I use hands and the mouse and two monitors. And that's my professional world. It's all there. And even interacting with people,

I don't hardly interact with people in person.” Another is his shame around eating comfort food: “It's really afterwards that. It's not unconscious, it's just hard to describe. It's, it's become semi autonomous. Says it's really like the taste. And you do it. The taste buds are stimulated. And then the realization sets in the stomach says Oh my god, what have you done to me? You know that feeling?” A third factor that came up in his verbal sharing was the connection of his movements and awareness to emotional state: “And then then my energy level is so low, that you don't feel like doing anything... But it's not pervasive. It doesn't happen all the time, but it's there enough time, that, you know, my moods are, are often down.”

Although his work has him seated a fair bit, his words show he does make deliberate choices about the somatic input that supports his work “You're just looking at the other person. It doesn't buy you anything. In the meeting room, the dynamic is certainly different. Because the meeting room you have the body, you have all of that. But in a strict conference call, which is why I like conference calls, you can focus just in on the subject matter.”

In both his work and his life, I see his desire to understand and make sense as a way to help him navigate space and to make choices that feel good somatically and help him in his movement patterns: “because we'd like just programming as a, as a, as an art, as an art or as a practice not necessarily to solve a program but programming in terms of how do you structure programming objects, how do you structure a problem? How do you? How do you make things work? How do you use the tools that are available? How do you make your own tools? Like he's in that level of programming; him and me are similar.” “And I freeze a lot. So I'm low on chicken soup. So I made some stock the other day so when I get back tomorrow or the next day, I'll make a big batch of chicken soup because I have room in the freezer now because I took all the chili out.”

Through the many movements he makes, there is continual orientation to feeling good. For example, what he describes as ‘comfort eating’ is movement towards feeling good. He also makes

other conscious choices in this direction: like walking most days, going swimming, meditating every day, listening to things he enjoys, reading and learning new things. Understanding and making sense of things is another pattern that makes him feel good. I see this reflected in his energy and engagement and movement, which increase when he has understanding and details to share.

Although his primary motivation to participate in the research was to support me and to better understand my work, he also saw possibility for himself in increase understanding and movement patterns towards feeling good “but I can see the merit of that in your curiosity and saying I am wondering what practice or what you can do - people do this and they do their knuckles, you know, sometimes that's, that's unconscious behavior, you know you're reacting, there's a bite, you know, there's a scratch, rub your nose, you know.”

He also believed he was in a place of transition and saw his participation as supportive of determining how he will move forward. He spoke of his life as stages, believing he is entering a third stage that opens up new possibilities. He sees the first 70 years of his life first to growing then to family and he sees this openness in the next 30, providing him with space from older frames and scores. Now he chooses to work because he wants to, not because he has to. He is also aware of the decline of his physical body as he ages and has motivation to seek out practices that will support his health while feeling a lot of space in his life. “Where does that leave me? So I was thinking phases. I'm in a transition right now. From full on work, and that's been a transition for some time now, but I think my third phase, which is my last 30 years, live to be 100, live to be 105. I don't know. And I'm thinking about that. So the body becomes more.. the older you are, the more aware you are of your body. Only because in most cases because it hurts more.” “I think I'm at a juncture, at an inflection point in my life. That I could actually make use and make more active use of your suggestions and your practice than, say somebody who's already in the middle of their career and into a daily routine. I'm not into daily routine. The first thing I do is make coffee. That's the only



thing that counts as my daily routine. Oh, yeah and shower. Maybe shave once or twice. So I have a lot of flexibility.”

### ***Jacqueline***

Dancing with the conversation January 15, 2020 11:03

*fluidly moving*  
     *attuning to*  
     *taking the time to*  
*softly curious*  
*decreasing spirals folding in*  
     *exhaling into expansive space*  
         *still there*  
*process of reintegrating*  
     *okay yeah*  
     *okay yeah*  
     *okay yeah*  
*there's space to breathe*  
*waving reach*  
     *feeling*  
         *exploring those*  
             *more mobility*  
*oh yeah*  
     *want to settle here*

The interpersonal scores: Jacqueline and I have been friends and colleagues for over 7 years and have generally spent time together one-on-one, working and sharing. Jacqueline is also a dancer and Somatic educator and we are comfortable sharing in academic and somatic-specific terminology and jargon. Although we don't see each other regularly, we have shared deeply with each other and have a familiarity and closeness. I feel a lot of care and support from Jacqueline. She has supported me in my work and research a number of times over the years. I believe she is exceptionally intelligent and articulate and believe she doesn't think as highly of herself as I think of her. As her friend and someone who knows of her talent and capacity, I always want her to step beyond her insecurities and share her gifts more powerfully with the world.

The conversation with Jacqueline was my first one in the research, where I was still getting honed in on my interview questions and process. I had technical difficulties, which means only part of our conversation was actually recorded. What I'm reviewing for this specific interaction is therefore incomplete. As with all of my participants with whom I have a relationship beyond the research and with whom I have had informal conversations about the research through the process, there are many layers of experience and knowledge and interaction that impact my somatic experience of the relating. I will nevertheless, consider below just what's recorded in our first interview by going over the written transcription but acknowledge that my beliefs and experience with Jacqueline will be colouring my descriptions and analysis.

Jacqueline is a lifelong dancer and was in a Somatics Practitioner training program at the time of our first conversation. When asked about her day-to-day activities at the time of the first conversation, she responded with:

“okay, Yeah, a lot of sitting at a desk in front of a computer writing. A fair amount of walking, it kind of depends. A lot of times I'll go write like at a cafe or something. So I'll walk to the cafe or walk to the TTC. Yeah, when I am engaging with my regular movement practice, then I'll do some, it's usually like lying on the floor and doing the basic Bartenieff movement fundamentals, which tend to be done lying on the back. If I'm feeling more adventurous and or willing to take a little more time with exploring those, then they can take me to other positions and more mobility. But I tend to really enjoy just staying like on my back and doing, kind of running through the routine a little bit. Yeah, I think that that's probably most of it. Mostly sitting and walking and sometimes that movement elemental practice.”

When asked about what she believes her general level of awareness is of her somatic experience, she responded: “it probably depends. I think that I definitely have more awareness now

than I did probably like a year, year and a half ago, it's again from going through this program. And again, because my research is centred on bringing that awareness to my writing and whatever else. I think it's easier to be aware of what my body is doing or how I'm moving and posturally what I'm doing, in terms of writing when I'm not super focused on the writing, like when I get really into it, I, everything else is kind of gone and I'm really just (video cut off)”

Because much of our initial video was not recorded, I have less to consider in what I sense as some of her scores. She spoke to two main scores of herself that she had experienced quite separately and was in a process of reintegrating those parts: “I really had separated out like myself as a moving body and myself as like an academic who has to just do work and whatever.”

Another score she speaks to is that of tuning into or embodying others, both because she does so as part of her work as a somatics practitioner and as part of the way she attunes to others. “I think kinaesthetic empathy is kind of a big thing. Like, like, there's sort of this thing of attuning to and taking the time to come into your own body and come into the space that you're in with a person and, and try to bring that kind of deeper level of engagement and awareness and attunement.” “spend that time when I'm walking or outside with other people around more looking at what they're doing sort of sometimes I get in the habit of like embodying the way they're walking or something”

Because of both her work as an academic and use of language within the academy and her somatics practitioner training, she was acutely aware of language opening up awareness for her. “I don't know if I would have necessarily thought of them or thought of those differentiations and how I'm moving but not have had clear language for them. I think I wouldn't have really thought of them.”

**Melanie**

Dancing with the conversation January 16, 2021 16:45

*light fluttering*  
     *an orchestration*  
*waving rebound*  
*first position, like a ballerina*  
     *hands forming a heart on my lower belly*  
     *poised*  
     *poised*  
*still here, grounded, rising up*  
*in position*  
*head cocks to the side*  
     *are you sure? i'm not sure i believe you*  
*this is what i know*  
     *i know*  
*poised, like a ballerina*  
*exhale, letting it go*  
     *oh yes, here is the light orchestration again*  
*hands gently moving, adept*  
     *spirals and a light plucking of the pieces*  
*oh but still poised*  
     *still poised*

I dance with the original zoom meeting with Melanie. She was on the phone so she was only voice and my video was the only visual. Although I have now seen what she looks like after having our second conversation, I did not know what she looked like during this conversation. She discovered my research through my CSI post and we had never met before. Unlike some of my participants, we entered into the research scores together without pre-existing interpersonal scores. I knew she was involved in social innovation in some way, was female and had an interest in somatics. It was curious to have a voice-only interview, particularly as I am someone who is visually and kinaesthetically oriented – I felt like I couldn't have a full orientation with her without the visual and kinaesthetic cues. I believe part of it is because of how I orient myself to what I know of someone's demographics – like how I may engage differently if someone is older than me versus younger, same or different sex, same or different ethnicity, first language, as well as their physical appearance.

Which I find interesting as I intentionally did not want to record such demographics yet they still influence me. It also meant my engagement with Melanie, at least in our first conversation, couldn't be swayed by any of these factors – knowing we were the same sex, involved in social innovation, and believing we were not vastly divergent in terms of our ages nevertheless gave me a sense of sharedness, a belief that we would be able to understand each other.

My poem above came from feeling and moving with the interview now, 15 months since the interview itself yet reflects what I recall of my initial impression of Melanie. I could hear a slight accent in her voice but because it was not part of my methodology – which was more curious about the other's sense of self, I did not ask her about origins. What I perceived as an accent and a definitiveness in articulation provided me with an immediate embodied sense of precision and care. I also sensed knowledgeability, a surety - whether genuine or performative, and a certain guardedness and skepticism – all things I have in my ways of moving that likely increased my belief that I experienced them in her.

I notice that most of our first conversation stayed very close to my curiosities for the first conversations: interest in the research, experience of somatics, understanding of 'embodied knowing,' level of somatic awareness, and the general activities in their day to day. Unlike some other conversations, where I began getting into deeper discussions about what was meaningful to the participants, my conversation with Melanie was relatively short and focused. Because I largely directed the conversation, surmising anything about Melanie's life beyond the questions means being curious about her expression and is much more based on my interpretation of her than knowing definitively about other aspects of her life.

Melanie's interest in the research was because she saw a connection with her work and had a desire to be more active as she had been in the past. "I think I was faster to seize the day when I was

doing more regular exercise.... And I just remember feeling just enormously powerful and, and resilient. Physically.”

Melanie was less direct about her history with somatic practices and this may be mostly based on the term itself being less familiar for her. When asked about her experience with somatic practices, she shared that she facilitates them with others through the work she does, with a background and focus in writing music, theatre, accountability and creativity. From my explanation, she indicated that somatics sounded like mindfulness, practices that she indicated she doesn't “sit with terribly well,” except when there is a creative, imaginary component, “just letting things emerge.”

Accessing creativity and inviting others into theirs appeared to be important to Melanie and she seeks out access to a being in flow and a conduit for this creative expression in herself and others. “I'll pull people into experience their senses in a very in a focused way and, and see what sorts of things can be pulled out in terms of giving them insights into things and creativity... So I come with that predisposition.”

When asked what she believes is her general somatic awareness, she indicated she wasn't sure but believed it was low. “So it's hard to know but I am going to say I probably have a low body awareness would be my guess.” As we discussed further, however, it sounded like she was often quite aware of her somatic experience but not necessarily focused on what she felt through her senses, but rather an overall interest in listening through the awareness of the experience in her body, as well as a proprioceptive sense of body posturing and paying attention to movement.

Asked about ‘embodied knowing,’ Melanie said that to her it would mean a reason for the posture, shape and sensations in our bodies, that it is sharing its wisdom through its position, movement and sensation. I notice she also used movement focused language to share. “I sniff about and say: This is what I'm going to do next.” “So if you're trying to do a stretch on your arm, tag it

every time you stand up from your computer do a stretch or, or maybe do it after dinner or before dinner?” “I don't always find it easy to jump in and focus on the thing that I really need to focus” “Oh, like when I personally feel I'm in the feeling of flow. A conduit” Because she wasn't exercising as much as she would like or has in the past, she also appeared to believe she was less aware of the experience in her body.

When asked about her day to day, Melanie shared she wears, and has worn, many hats, moving between the various work scores in her life. “My days are not, no day is the same... most of what I do is self focused and self run... So I've got a breadth of experience and a little bit of and some concentration and experience as well.” “I actually think right now that a lot of my work is solitary. And I have to create my own goals. I create my own trajectory.” Melanie shared that most of her solitary work is on a computer. She also indicated she's done a lot of online learning and was curious about the research.

Reading over our conversation now, especially with the information I now have from our second interview, I see where there may have been gaps in communication, where notions of somatics, somatic awareness and even what I was looking for through this research was unclear “I don't really know what you'd want to know if you know what I mean.”

We also spent the end of the conversation discussing meeting in person, which Melanie seemed interested in. I also thought meeting physically would help me better tune into Melanie, especially as I had never seen her. Later, however, I ultimately ended up cancelling an in-person meeting, believing I didn't have time for it.

**Ruby**

Dancing with our original conversation January 17, 2021 17:30

*yes here, over the shoulder  
 oh but with a smile  
 and what about this shoulder?  
 let's try this easy movement, a little wiggle  
 and back and forth  
 oh yeah, we've got this  
 let's make it fun and easy  
 i'm here.  
 nodding.  
 nodding in agreement.  
 really tuned in  
 moving together  
 right, right, okay.  
 and we can lighten up too  
 smiling  
 i get you, i get you  
 yeah.  
 even more settling  
 feeling deeply, deeply  
 come and settle here.  
 yeah, yeah.*

Moving with my first conversation with Ruby, I'm invited again into her welcoming easefulness. I notice that instead of asking much about her first, I share about the research and my intentions and curiosities and orientations very early in our conversation, having sensed curiosity and willingness from her. I feel this again as I move with our conversation, sensing her sensitive tuning in, her positivity and engagement. I recall experiencing a lot of easefulness and shared excitement as our conversation continued, as we got to know each other and shared what really mattered to us. Immediately I sensed that Ruby is someone who feels and cares deeply and thrives in connecting about what she cares about with others and this came right through my somatic experience and movement again now. "I love talking, as you can tell, and sharing, I think is important to share." "as I said, we could talk forever."



This encouraging openness shows up strongly in Ruby's movement in language in addition to her physical movement: she regularly used positive adjectives and exclamations such as 'awesome', 'I love it', 'cool', and 'that's great'.

Because my work is about our movement patterns and awareness of them, I was impressed with Ruby's self awareness and conscious choices of patterns that do and don't serve her.

She has considered and questioned a lot of the norms, expectations and societal scores, recognising how tuned into others and empathic she is. She shared a sense of confinement of other people's expectations, the 'scores' she needs to fit in. Although she loves people and social time, she values time alone where she can be free to feel and express all she needs to without the constraint of others. This curiosity about others and the world can have her lose her sense of and awareness of herself and, because she recognises this, she makes sure she takes time regularly on her own to think and feel fully without judging her emotions. "a lot of that has to do with being alone, being able to really think about what I think and what's going around in my head." "No, just, if you need to feel bad, and you feel shit, feel shit. You know, it's okay. It's not bad. Like, it's better to get it out now than to keep it inside and blow up. So, that's another part of the 'me' time." She recognises the importance of self care, including listening to the body in order to have the capacity to do meaningful work.

She recognises that she has a love/hate relationship with the internet that both exposes her to different insights and ways of life but can also be something she gets so deep into, she loses a sense of herself and it dampens her somatic awareness. This getting so deep into the internet comes both from a desire to escape and because of a desire to keep learning and expanding. Because of this self awareness of her relationship with the internet, she's chosen not to have it in her home and has made conscious choices to limit her internet use. This internet usage including 'twitter speak,' such as "hashtag not all men."

She speaks in physical language about feeling cramped in the city, needing to fit into a position, particularly as a woman, feeling the need to 'make herself smaller.' Ruby shares a somatic sense of taking on the norms through her movement and being active in creating other movements consciously. "And which I'm like, actively working on breaking that down by like, putting my arm behind my boyfriend's chair or you know, like, putting my legs up and you know that like, just small things like that, but they do really make a difference."

Ruby shared that she grew up following authority but as she learned more, she began questioning all the structures. "Question authority. Question why we live a certain way. You know... You're just like questioning like, who I'm supposed to be and where I'm supposed to be." She recognises and actively questions structures that oppress and recognises that her privilege allows her to speak up and make a difference "I'm a privileged white woman whose, you know, I'm pretty okay in Canadian society, you know." "if I have this privilege, like I want to talk about it like and like to talk about it."

She actively questions and works against society's norms of how a woman should look and act and notes this takes consistent practice and remembering. "sometimes I'll revert back to like, you know, the old ways of thinking of like ugh, my body, it's not what I want it to be." One area she had particular interest was how norms and trauma can impact our connection to our sexual experience, pleasure and knowing, particularly as women, and how shifting norms or removing goals could reopen our awareness and connection to that pleasure. "In a capitalist society, like we're all products, and people are selling us products to make us better. We need to have the latest diet thing, because that's gonna bring us happiness, because we have to be happy all the time. Anyways, I could go on forever"

This resistance of imposition also shows up in a purported dislike of routine and structure "But I don't like rigidity and regularity.. I don't want everything to be structured." This dislike,

however, appears to be more connected to being told to do something without understanding the purpose or usefulness of it. “before I did swim lessons, so it's very rigid. You do this and then you don't really think ‘what is my body doing?’ Wow, my body's like, shifting water, my hands are shifting water by closing its fingers together, kind of thing. And that's what I am starting to learn now and what I wish I had learned when I was younger, in different courses about like, why certain things are important because that's how they affect our body instead of being like, well, you just have to do it.”

She also shared there were things she wanted to do more regularly in her life but wasn't, such as mindfulness and exercise and a lack of accountability made it harder for her to maintain these habits. In fact, the reason she shared that she wanted to participate in my research was to be more aware of the experience in her body and have that as a regular baseline. “I've been so focused mentally, that my physical body has kind of been lacking attention... I want to bring it back to the centre in a way.” “like I do need to focus on my body more and I think this will help me reconnect to it a bit and be like, but not in like this like very militaristic, like, regimented thing but more like a free flowing, curious, safe space, which as we've talked about, is so important.”

Her age was a notable part of her sense of self, particularly as she believed she had an existential crisis when she turned 30 and began questioning much more of life and herself.

In my own sharing and conversing with Ruby, I notice a lot of sense of shared orientation and questioning of structures, which is a central piece to my research. I noticed myself engaged and excited by the sharing, especially when she would articulate things I think. “I mean already gender is becoming a thing and people are like gender's fucked, like why did we create gender? Oh, we needed something to be like, oh, you're this, you're this, you're this.”

Ruby demonstrated her continual questioning and curiosity and openness to learning in our conversation together, by accessing new insights about herself and her movements through sharing

with me. “Which I never would have thought of, to be honest until we had this conversation about embodied knowing.”

Along with this questioning of structures, Ruby also questions why some linguistic expressions are more acceptable than others. “Like, you must use the most upright English thing or else like, you're not worthy of publication. Like, that removes so many people's stories and experiences. And I mean even, you know, cultures and communities that don't even write things down.” Ruby also reflected to me part of my own experience: although it is central to who and how I am that I question things and don't follow without asking, such an orientation can be quite unstable, without a clear sense of what to stand on: “that's scary, like everything that you thought you knew is wrong or not exactly right.” Which is a reason I surmise that I get quite engaged with someone else with a score of questioning like mine. I noticed both of our increased energy through our conversing and that both of us get excited about connecting things. “because I'm generally interested in like, how everything connects and how we're connected like energy wise and like, cellular-wise. It's just fascinating.”

Ruby was looking for work at the time of our first conversation so she indicated variability of the movements in her day: sometimes alone and at home, time with friends, her boyfriend or travelling around the city and she attempts to limit her time on a screen.

Ruby's language around embodied knowing included both intuition and movements we can recreate without thinking about them “I guess, to me that I immediately think like gut feeling... I feel like that's an embodied knowing of like, just what, what kind of energy you get from someone. And also, but on the other hand also makes me think like, knowing Oh, you should breathe. Like it's embodied in me to breathe. Like I don't even have to think about it but it is knowledge that I know.”

When asked about her believed level of somatic awareness, Ruby mentioned that it “goes through waves,” and that she will be more or less aware and generally more aware with negative than positive sensations.

### ***Hazel***

Dancing with the conversation January 18, 2021 16:20

*tentatively stepping forward*  
*looking up, smiling shyly*  
*a little weave*  
*a little wiggle*  
*rocking gently*  
*the back and forth feels comforting*  
*comfortable*  
*easy*  
*side to side*  
*evolving into a figure eight*  
*shifting weight*  
*as I move with you*  
*are you okay?*  
*we're okay.*  
*yeah but not quite comfortable again yet*  
*holding a bit here*  
*oh something to hold helps*  
*helps soften, refinding the movement*  
*still, still, a little much*  
*oh smile here, smile here*  
*okay, okay*  
*i'm getting it a bit now*

As I watch the first conversation I had with Hazel, I'm aware that I cannot look at it without the knowledge of her participation and sharing in our second conversation. The video was the first few moments we had met, knowing very little of each other, as Hazel was another participant who responded to my post through the Centre for Social Innovation. We're still relative strangers now, but less so. Particularly in our second conversation which invited some more vulnerability.

I'm also aware that, as I feel into Hazel in that moment recorded on camera, that the act of being recorded impacts our embodiment. It certainly impacts mine and it was one of the first things I told Hazel in the recording: how the experience of being recorded heightens my sense of needing to perform. "We'll have a couple of minutes of video and then we'll take it off because I find I act, I notice there's like this performer on video right?"

Hazel mentions that she studied Psychology as her bachelor's degree, which I wonder if it was connected to Hazel's interest in the technical pieces of the research – how many participants, their reasons for participating, what and how I'm assessing. She has had some experience with mindfulness practices, including meditation apps but indicates it was limited and she wasn't as aware or calm as she'd like to be. As an office manager, Hazel spent most of her day in front of a computer with minimal physical interaction with her coworkers. She attempted to stay active with varied exercise a few times a week and otherwise preferred one-on-one time with friends or her boyfriend. She mentions stress at work and feeling like she's on autopilot often and that she doesn't have regular mindfulness practices. In general, she wasn't feeling happy with her work or day to day. "I don't feel that content at work, I don't feel that satisfied with my career path and just how I am living every day, I just feel like it passes by without even realizing. And I know that I used to not feel that way. I'm trying to get back to that. And I'm thinking maybe I should be more present and not multitask every time. Be intentional with everything that I do. At work. After work. Even in my relationship." It's this stress and desire to be more intentional and aware that prompted Hazel's interest in the study "maybe it can help my some stress at work or any kind of day to day negative feelings"

I notice her linguistic expression is minimal – her sentences are short and there is not a lot of elaboration. I notice that I do more speaking in the conversation than Hazel and she often has questions. She does share that is interested in others' experiences "I think I'm also really curious

about how others experience. I'm curious to see how they, like, what their focuses are... in fact maybe even more than, like or equally as much as how I experience it. I'm usually more interested in other people.” I sense a fair amount of reservation in Hazel and I do not get a great sense of her beyond her direct response to my questions. I notice this in contrast to my other conversations where participants would often begin sharing about something that mattered to them and take the conversation in that direction. In contrast, I feel like I’m directing the conversation with Hazel and she’s following me, less of a back and forth and shared leading.

When asked about her perceived level of somatic awareness, she mentioned that she feels quite connected to her intuition but less aware of the actual sensations. “I don't think I have that as much but definitely more of an intuitive feeling about it than logical, you know, rationalized thought that you can't, you try to explain it to someone logically you can't. But you just feel that way.” The term ‘embodied knowing’ meant “your body is knowing before your brain does and then you find that out through your body and lot of people may not taught to recognize that.”

In considering how I moved with Hazel, I see an assuredness in my movements but also sense anxiety and I recall the confident sharing – and that I spoke more than Hazel – was connected to a sense of awkwardness I felt in the conversation.

### **Brian**

Moving with the conversation January 19, 2021 11:05

*furrowed rocking*  
*narrowed*  
*narrowed directionality*  
*the way we all*  
*the way we all have anxiety*  
*tension*  
*neck and shoulders*  
*safe up here in my head*  
*safe up here*

*a little shake there*  
*a little more release*  
*a little more movement*  
*furrowed*  
     *yup yup*  
     *i got it*  
     *hold it*  
     *name it*  
     *i got it*  
*oh there it is, a little settle*  
     *soften*  
*hold*  
*soften*  
*hold*  
*there's a reason for everything.*

Brian and I had been friends for a few months before our conversation and knew each other from our participation in Landmark, sharing an interest in personal development. We had recently gone skydiving as a group before our call and gotten to know each other more deeply on our trip together. Brian had shared that he often resonated with my sharing in our groups and felt similar to me in many ways. This resonance and interest was one of Brian's main reasons for participating "you, primarily you, interest me in it, like, I think you're an interesting person, and you're up to interesting things." "I'm so connected to you, like I've said on pretty much anything you say, I relate to, which is really nice to meet someone like that and have a connection like that because everything that you talk about, I'm like, that's how I think like, that's how I feel, sort of."

My first conversation with Brian was over zoom. One of the first things I notice in my own score with Brian is how differently I move than I did in other conversations I have considered and presented – with family members or women. I sense and see a shy flirtatiousness in my movements with Brian, a young, attractive man and I know I feel differently interacting with him. This notable difference in my movements is what first draws my attention when I watch and move with the video, drawn to my coy smiling, cocking of my head, I see more of a little girl than in conversations



where I feel like I'm more of an authority. I had thought that this was likely in response to how Brian is with me but at least in this video of our conversation, it seems to be coming more from me.

As my writing of my somatic experience of Brian conveys, I don't feel a lot of movement, instead there is a lot of holding, furrowed seriousness and I notice that my movements in the video also shift when tuning in and listening to his sharing – the smile turns serious, a gravity in my face as I follow his words and movement. And indeed, Brian speaks a lot of his experience of anxiety – which, for him is tension in his neck and shoulders and often connected to having “too much stuff to do” – and this was his other reason for participating: having more body awareness, which he believes is necessary for everyone. Brian believes that we aren't doing the critical work we need to do for ourselves and the planet because we're all too busy. Even if he also often believes he's not doing as much as he wants, he continues to say yes to the work because “mental health and physical health, wellness, well being and learning about how to understand these things is super, super important to me because I think like literally the, the survival of our species, and so many other species, and like the life support systems for life on this planet, depend on people, like doing whatever they can to raise their awareness in whatever realm.”

In connection to Brian's experience of 'too much' and 'too busy' he shares his view of the external and internal world as being very large and expansive “the universe is so massive, it's so expansive and there's so many galaxies, and so many stars within each galaxy that it's just like it's mind-bendingly incomprehensibly big externally, but so is our internal world, like our internal world is as big as the cosmos outside of us.”

Brian believes his anxiety does mean he has a heightened awareness of himself, including somatically: “anxiety is the constant questioning and being hyper vigilant and trying to you know, control yourself in every way possible.” Brian notes that his regular awareness of his experience in his body is often when things are 'wrong': when he is feeling anxious, there is tension in his

stomach, poor posture or back pain. “it's like noticing something sort of with a negative context.”

He also has awareness of the experience in his body when he gets into focused and flow states:

“I really notice that I'm sort of, I sort of get fixated and kind of lost in my phone, particularly when I'm making art because I'm literally just staring at my phone in this creation process but I do really notice that you know, I'm, I'm like sitting in an uncomfortable position or I don't have good posture or I feel tension in like my neck and shoulders and back or my arms and I'm, I'm constantly trying to like, most of the time, as soon as I notice, I try to fix it, I try to like get a better posture, better position. But a lot of a lot of times I actually just notice it and do nothing about it... So I think I have I have like a pretty, a pretty decent, like body awareness insofar as it is something that I notice frequently and I either try to change, or notice and sometimes I don't try to change, but I still notice like the awareness is there.”

I even reflect that this heightened awareness is something I'm aware of with Brian: “you're somebody who has a lot of awareness of the experience in your body and just in general, you know, awareness and increasing awareness is something that's important to you.” He responds: “I think I've always had a high level of self awareness and I've always been really in touch with myself internally and my emotions and my thoughts and questioning other, like questioning like, why do I think and act the way I do? And why do other people think and act the way they do? And why is the world the way that it is?”

As my writing above, Brian has a desire to figure it out and understand and does a lot of courses and learning for growth and personal development and often has a lot to share about his learning. He believes that awareness and understanding is critical “You can't really change anything without awareness, more awareness of what's going on.” “I'm a huge question person myself.” His extensive studies and perpetual curiosity have also provided him with a sense of understanding of

why things are the way they are “I've always had a heightened awareness, particularly because of how my family showed up and lack of like dysfunctional family, poor communication, lack of consistency, not knowing how someone's going to show up... I think if I didn't have, you know, the life and the experiences that I had that, I wouldn't, I wouldn't be this like, hyper curious person who is like super committed to, like making an impact in the world to, like, transform what we know about ourselves and each other and the world and the things that we're doing.”

Brian's curiosity, desire to learn and understand, and sense of being on a “healing journey for quite a long time” has meant that he has experience with a fair number of somatic practices, including yoga, meditation and MBSR. I also note he shares a lot of detail to convey understanding – he often shares his personal experience, his feelings about something, and provides real or metaphorical examples. Brian also shares having done a lot of learning and research and can cite a lot of researched material, including anatomy and how researchers have codified our understanding. This connects to my writing above and what Brian has conveyed – a detailed understanding of phenomena provides him with a sense of control. And I believe speaking allows him to access this sense of control. “like it's your brainstem, it's your amygdala, it's the fear centre that controls the fight or flight, like it's actually all the same... But what you're actually doing is you're teaching your, you're teaching your adult rational mind, your frontal cortex to speak to your child emotional mind and your fear centre and communicate... there's this whole page they have of let's say like 60 different emotions and there's like a healthy kind of healthy emotions like love and peace and stuff that like a healthy, emotionally mature adult has... people tend to either be like a person that reacts on the mad side when they're afraid or reacts on the shutting down side when they're afraid... Those are all from when we were like, between three and seven years old or are between like zero and seven years old. All of that shit got encoded into us, right?.. Because we also know that when you

have an emotional reaction, your frontal lobe shuts off, because you, you divert blood to, like the limbs, in fight or flight.”

My conversations with Brian, both in the research as well as outside of it, are generally long and are connected to both Brian’s desire to share and articulate a lot in his sharing but also in his curiosity and question of the other “So what are you? What are you thinking? Do you have like some plans or ideas of what you're thinking you want to do?” These are also tendencies I see in myself, particularly in analysing the conversations with Brian: sharing a lot (including repeating myself) and finding a lot of curiosities and excitements of ideas I want to follow with the other. In this sharedness of the way we converse with each other, Brian speaks to a differentiation between speaking from “having to figure it all out in your head before doing it” versus “like when we're in conversation, this is more from nothing like I'm not thinking about what I'm saying right now. It's just sort of whatever's coming through at the time,” noting the distinction between pre-planned movements and improvisation in our lives and his movements and that he doesn’t feel like he can do the latter easily because “we want to even limit any small mistakes from happening” and “it's too scary or it's too hard for me. Or like, I can't get out of my mind, type of things.”

I find Brian’s assertion that the “typical way we all have anxiety” is that “most of us carry a lot of our stress and like anxiety is tension in our neck and shoulders and stuff like that” thought-provoking. I use the word ‘anxiety’ very frequently in my every day when referring to my experience, yet my somatic experience is a constriction in my chest, like I can’t breathe and I’m going to die – heightening my belief that our use of words and categorisation can increase or decrease our actual somatic awareness of what we are naming.

When asked about ‘embodied knowing’ he responded that “it's like something you don't have to think about” that includes both the body’s sense of safety “like getting good vibes about

something or like bad vibes about something” and also a “muscle memory,” referring to the notion of tacit knowing.

I notice that I don’t ask Brian specifically about his day-to-day activities. He worked as a manager in a bar and had a lot of computer work and movement there. He shares that he exercises somewhat but not as much as he would like.

### **Gary**

Moving with the conversation January 19, 2021 13:10

*comfortable swaying*  
*arms wrapping around middle in comfort*  
*solid and grounded*  
*warmth and tickled*  
*little wiggle*  
*inflection*  
*intentional*  
*intentional expression*  
*a dance of the voice*  
*harmony and expressive flow*  
*madly off in all directions*  
*flow*  
*flow back and forth*  
*like waves*  
*waves*  
*fluid waves*  
*in and out*  
*up and down*  
*grounded and expansive*

In watching the zoom conversation I had with Gary, I’m particularly unsure of what I’m moving with. I intend to move with my somatic experience of tuning into the video and audio recording of him and yet I’m aware of how much my experience and what I know of Gary is all part of it, it isn’t separable. I just need to make sure the somatic experience is there, even if my knowing of Gary as a singer impacts that somatic experience. Coming back to hearing and feeling and recording his actual linguistic expressions helps.

I notice that I don't open the conversation with questions as I have done with other participants and instead jump in to introducing him to the research. When I watch the conversation, I don't seem as connected to Gary as I would like and I'm making my choices to impress him. I've known Gary for probably close to 10 years but our interactions have not been regular. I met him through singing in community and I know he was particularly impressed by a performance I did as part of a singing event years ago. I liked impressing someone that much and I know I want him to keep having that impression of me. Gary did share that this performance of mine was memorable and part of why he was drawn to participating "I know I had a really strong reaction about how you, how you are... I guess I would say that you inhabited with your body an imaginary character that was so strong. It was just it completely freaked everybody out I believe. In a good way."

As I reread the transcript of our conversation, I realise that I also have really positive impression of Gary and in my consideration now, I notice how rich his communication is – how much he conveys about his experience, including a strong somatic sense. His way of speaking and sharing draws me in and I also sometimes feel lost and not sure how to respond. And I see this with how I don't always directly respond to the things he says because I don't know what to say although I did tell him directly: "I'm really enjoying your descriptions of things and how in your awareness and your Yeah, I'm really enjoying just, you know how you're depicting things and the things you're sharing about your experience. It's like really bringing a lot of vividness to my connection of listening to you."

I ensured that Gary knows that the conversation is mostly "an open space for us to see, you know, what's there, what's of interest and following that." Gary was interested in being involved in "the kind of research that there should be more like things that build harmony and expressive, expressive flow between people." And that connection and flow seems to matter and interest to him. We went a little longer than we agreed to and at the end, Gary shared "pleasure leads us where

we go, and I'm aware of when you're having a good time, It's like this discussing, this is pleasurable... . And I'm trying to accept that I can get good lessons by doing something that's a little bit hard. But that's not how I really like working. I really like it when it when there's a lot of flow and, and pleasure and you know, exciting things that that get shared and expressed.” He also sought to be part of the research because he said “I'm trying to be more aware of my body anyways.”

Although I don't directly ask Gary many of my first interview questions, he answers most of them through his sharing – including his reasons for participating in the research, his somatic awareness and his generally day-to-day activities. I don't ask him directly about his history with somatic practices and he shares some but I don't get a full picture without having asked.

Although he often shares with somatic language “if I'm going madly off in all directions, you'll have to find a way to drag me back into the middle,” Gary indicates he generally doesn't believe he has a strong somatic awareness “Random body awarenesses that's, you know, like, in a way I feel like I have very little body awareness but the things that I am aware of, I'm really passionate about,” and he does believe his upbringing “in a body fearing religious culture” was a large part of this and that it has inhibited him enjoying being in his body as much as he would have liked. “I might have enjoyed social dancing more if I hadn't been taught to be so afraid of what body expression was.”

Growing up, Gary had body shame and felt “I wasn't very capable. I felt short, slow and awkward.” His sense of his physicality and sense of self are very connected as he shares through his sense of his height, and the length of his hair and his beard. “When I was trying to become comfortable and centered and spiritually brave, I feel tall and when I feel tall, it's such a it's such a great feeling. It means that my breath is flowing and I'm standing up in a balanced way. And I'm feeling capable. And I'm feeling like myself, and I'm not worried about what I can't do. I just feel tall. And tall is like, Man, it's a weird feeling.” “there's a strong body awareness for me of what I look

like when my hair is really nice and short... Whether I have to wear a hat indoors, like funny things are, are connected to that that I don't think of as body awareness and movement and, and all of that.” “And the importance of my beard... I know that I'm kind of unusual and not conservative and not conventional, but I don't feel that way. I feel like it's like, completely normal to have a beard that grows really long.”

Gary spoke about his children, particularly his oldest in University and “I'm just astonished by her all the time.” And that when she “was born, I realized that I was a mammal, and that mammals like to be close together.” This was important to him having grown up in a strong religious framework “because I didn't feel that touch and bodily physical engagement was, was healthy and right.” He shared that having children helps him notice his engaged body is domestic work. Gary shared that “I don't like guy talk” but that singing, particularly Georgian music, provides him with a “masculinized ritual closeness” where “people sang in in like really inhabiting their bodies and singing Georgia music, which was an exotic thrill for me”

I know Gary from singing and singing is what he does professionally “What I have trouble keeping in line is the tons of administrative crap that you have to do to have a career and my body doesn't like doing that shit. So all my body wants to do is sing.” He, however, spends a fair bit of the time in front of the computer feeling distracted and finding “ways of subverting myself so that I'm not actually keeping up.” And only spends “maybe four or five hours a week at the most” singing with others. When asked directly about his general days, he responds that he is “not good about establishing a routine” and his days appear to be varied with computer work and domestic work but that “I don't have work that's actively supervised or engaged in supervising or being involved with other people very much.”

His somatic awareness showed up again in sharing that he spends a lot of time sitting and in front of a computer “My eyes are focused on the wrong, the wrong distance for real life outside,



because they're just this far they're just looking at that screen, and my eyes don't, don't see life very well. And they really love life. So they, I get outside and I start looking around and I can't focus very well. And then I say, Oh yeah, that's what happens when I've been sitting there at the computer trying to trying to do stuff. And failing or getting distracted. My eyes start shrinking down to the size of the screen. And not, not living.. not living in the real world.”

When Gary mentions sitting so much, I ask him about cycling as I knew him as an avid cyclist, and he responded “I don't want to ever give that up” and that “(When) I have to take the TTC that is just the worst. Don't like that at all. I don't like walking that much. Really love riding a bike. It's, it feels like freedom and good balance and yeah, all of that. All that stuff.” He mentions it's the speed of cycling he really likes.

Reading over and analysing our transcript also bolsters my work now in writing as Gary shared that his experience of my performance those years ago was “it represented somebody being the most ready to actually make a song go somewhere and not be perfect, but be like, Okay, time to sing, you know, not practice anymore. I'll never forget it. It was a really beautiful surprise. And, yeah, more of that, please.” I notice how the connection and insights and movements happen across space and time as his words support me in moving forward in the writing, instead of stalling until it's perfect.

### ***Harry***

Moving with the conversation January 19, 2021 17:50

*Desire to settle*

*lay down on the floor*

*stretching long*

*rolling over*

*working with the body*

*bring consciousness to the body*

*existing in the here and now*

*coming back to myself*  
*Big exhale*  
*dropping back in*  
*healing healing*  
*nurturing*  
*Dropping back in*  
*Awareness expands*  
*Everything softens*  
*Tension flows out*  
*Resting here*  
*resting here*

Harry is another man I met recently in Landmark and who lives in New York state. I notice some of the similar scores come up as they do with Brian, or really any male, different from interacting with a female. Harry was calling into our zoom call, however, so I don't have visuals of him in either of our calls together and at the time of this writing it's been probably a year and a half since I've seen Harry in person. I experience Harry's way of speaking as metred and calming and I notice how this softens my experience of sharing, how I experience less anxiety or less of a need to get anywhere than I often do. We needed to restart the zoom call midway through our conversation and I missed recording the beginning of the second conversation so some of the details we spoke about in our conversation have not been recorded. What was and was not recorded was all within the theme of us both sharing our experiences with a variety of somatic work.

Harry brought up his study of Gurdjieff philosophy and other somatic modalities that bring him into the "here and now" as part of his interest in participating "I've done a lot of yoga and stuff and just like working with the body and bringing consciousness to the body and finding a lot of like self healing happening from awareness to the body." "as I bring more awareness to my body, it kind of brings me back to myself"

Harry shares his history of being in the military for eight years and then as a state trooper for another two years that contributed to "the whole trauma to bodily experience." After these

experiences, Harry told me “I decided to resign because of how stressful it was” and that he went back to school to “pursue a career in therapeutic massage and integrative health care” that have supported him on a “holistic path, path of healing, like a discover like all different types of religions and their, each of their practices for healing the body and the mind and the soul and emotion.” Healing the impact of past traumas has been an impetus and interest in Harry’s pursuit of a career and personal development focused on increasing body awareness.

Harry shared that he now attends weekly meetings with the local Gurdjieff group where “just by paying attention to different body parts I could like associations from the past and like thoughts about the future, all associated with just like different body postures and stuff like that was kind of interesting to discover.”

Because of Harry’s interest and experience in body awareness and movement modalities and I believed he already had an understanding of somatics, I shared more with him about my background in dance and what led me to my PhD and a desire to be part of making somatic awareness practices more accessible, including the specifics in my work in ecstatic dance and 5Rhythms as well as my personal and spiritual evolution through my practice. As Harry shared his own spiritual orientation and a desire for personal growth and had a consistent interest in my development and growth, our entire conversation was more back and forth, sharing and curiosities of each other’s experiences, than in most of my conversations. Over the course of our talk, Harry also asked me many questions about my specific experiences with somatic work. “And in doing the somatic work, has there been like specific somatic practices that you've discovered to be like specific exercises that you found very beneficial for you?” I notice my opening up and sharing as a response to Harry’s ongoing curiosity, interest and questioning. As I shared about my movement experiences, Harry continued to share more of the practices he has explored including Sufi dancing and contact

improvisation. Our deepening personal interaction also included shared experiences we had in our development work together and its connection to somatic work and awareness.

In terms of his current focus, Harry shared that he had recently taken a break from massage therapy to take on “this new project of building a tiny house.” He is aware of and shares a shift in his somatic experience from the shift in his work “I've been kind of really wrapped up in this like construction modality which is been a recent change for me because just doing like massage therapy it's kind of very like relaxing, easygoing type of work. And then switching into this construction work where I'm really pushing forward really hard to do all this like hard labor and get a bunch of it done and trying to enroll others in participating in the project and stuff and, and just all this really strong physical exertion. I'm actually finding to be very emotionally beneficial for me.” Harry brings somatic awareness and a meditative approach to his work: “I like to focus my thoughts on like the physical activities that I'm doing instead of letting water or wander. Finding by focusing while I work and bringing awareness to the things that I'm doing. By focusing my mind on my physical actions are kind of like a good spiritual discipline for me. And for kind of like controlling my mind, disciplining my mind.”

Although I did a fair amount of the sharing in our conversation, there was a lot of richness and specifics in Harry's sharing and a real response to a strong curiosity and supportive orientation from him. I notice that I was impressed and interested in his work as well as well as the somatic awareness that Harry shared: “I do get a lot of benefit. Just by noticing my body throughout the day, or like through doing different activities. Cuz I notice, despite being aware of my body, it like brings me back to the here and now like and it's like a return to the self like space of peace and calm.”

That peace and calm comes through just as much in Harry's energy and speaking as through his specific words. My somatic writing above reflects that and my interaction with Harry invites

more peace, calm and presence in me. Less of a desire to get anywhere and more of an orientation to connect.

### ***Stella***

Moving with the conversation January 22, 2021 4:55

*am i?  
constantly looking  
contract to hold  
          narrowing  
hold on a sec  
yeah, yeah i get it  
hold on  
          it's a little uncomfortable here  
made me fit  
throw myself into dancing  
          felt so good in my body  
          my body needed it  
          craves  
          used to  
          healing  
patting it together  
fit  
fits here  
longing  
          too long  
wow  
long  
longing*

I have known Stella peripherally for years in community but we have never gotten to know each other very well. We had our first conversation over zoom as Stella was out of Canada travelling. As I sit with and feel into Stella and her sharing, my somatic sensations and her words dance together. I sense a discomfort and seeking and her sharing echoes such an experience. “I've got a super over analytic mind and I'm constantly looking for little efficiencies in the way I do everything

to the point that it becomes inefficient because I'm spending more time looking for the efficiencies than just doing things sometimes.”

Dancing is central in what is important to Stella and she said “it really did change my life... it made me fit. It made me happy. It made me sane... I have to take a moment every, like a few times a week and just throw myself into dancing.” Stella said she’s been practicing ecstatic dance for six years but has always loved dancing. She contrasted herself to ‘normal’ people and what they may need by speaking to how much she needs and craves dancing and how healing it is for her. We spoke about our shared love of dancing, and she contrasts mindful dancing to “my memories of my parents ever dancing when they were, you know, blind drunk. And it wasn't, you know, it wasn't conscious or happy or anything. No, it was almost kind of yeah, it wasn't a pleasant thing to witness.”

Stella said she worked at a desk job for years and decided to go travelling because “I just decided my life wasn't working out” and she got rid of most her belongings to go learn more about how others live, particularly intentional and spiritual communities. She is really curious about people and said “I love stalking people.” Like her sense of ‘fitting’ when she dances, I sense a desire to find where she fits in the world. She seems to see herself differently, that she doesn’t quite fit, “they all they always look nice and I just felt like I was doing something wrong all the time.” There appears to be a current of judgement against herself and she would put herself down in her speaking “It's really dumb... it's too embarrassing.” This fixing or fitting shows up in her movements “Sorry I'm messing with my watch strap too. I think I broke today somehow.”

Even in her dance, which she shares as so meaningful for her, this awkwardness and self-consciousness shows up “I was kind of awkward about it at first I told friends that I was going on dates actually.” “And I was, while I was doing it, I was thinking like, why am I dancing to this? But I had to. Like something about it made me want to dance, so I did. I guess I mean, I just needed to

dance or whatever, but it came out in this, and that was one of the oddest urges I've experienced as far as dance.”

She shared that “my big goal now is to find the right community, find the right place. And if I don't find it, then to build that community.” She had plans to travel to many places in South-East Asia and was drawn to change and beauty “I think it's gonna change and it's, it's really nice right now just peaceful and, and there's beautiful quiet places, and it's kind of, it's magically gorgeous. I loved it. So anyway, I think I'm gonna go back there.”

Because she was travelling, her day-to-day activities could be quite varied “a lot of my days are unpacking and repacking.” She shared that she does move a lot with yoga every morning, hiking, mountain climbing and swimming. She told me “I'm a yoga teacher, so I try to keep that up” and that she's been practicing yoga for 20 years and been teaching for 10. She meditates daily, anywhere from 2 minutes to an hour, depending on the space she has for it. “I find because I'm, I'm bouncing along a lot and I got really ungrounded so meditating just, it really helps me to land. So it's become kind of more important to me than yoga or anything and just have, I have to do something a little bit every day.”

She said “I'm reading a tonne,” that she writes often and that “I spend about, about 70% of my time alone, maybe, maybe even more sometimes.” Although she tells me “I should have written down everything else I do,” she provided me with a detailed picture of her day-to-day and the movements within it. Her words reflect deeply diving into whatever she is doing, whether it is dance or “sometimes, you know, like, I get overwhelmed by life and I just want to hide, and I'll literally spend a day net like Netflix, binge eating, and then I won't touch my computer for three days.” Overall she said she spends about two or three hours a day on her computer.

Like her dancing, Stella is drawn to activities that brings her awareness into the present “I find that to be so meditative because you have to be so aware of what you're doing in every

moment. Every place you put your foot is a cognizant decision. I like it, it really brings me into the present moment.” She appears to have judgement of herself for times she is not present “I forget like the thoughtful movement practice when it's not important, you know, and manage to hurt myself.” Like her contrasts of herself and others, she seems to have a sense of contrast within, particularly in her level of somatic awareness. “Like when I'm aware, I'm really aware and when I'm not, I'm, I'm, it's like, I'm not paying attention at all. I'm not in my body.”

Stella is curious and noticing of me and what she sees in my space in our conversation, asking questions about my life. We speak about shared interests and overlap such as dance and the community where I live.

### *Alise*

Moving with the conversation January 23, 2021 14:15

*ready & open*

*meander*

*meandering*

*wondering*

*spongy*

*taking in*

*moving through*

*filling*

*that's enough*

*speaking allows the flow*

*the release*

*the following*

*where does this go?*

*listening for*

*a grasp*

*over here?*

*exploring the edges*

*touch*

*touching*

*holding the edges.*



I met Alise a couple years ago at a community dance gathering in the United States. Although we only spent those few days together at the gathering in 2018, we shared deeply and had a lot of resonance. Alise also participated in an offering at the gathering that I had originally intended to utilise in my research. Because of this Alise already knew about the general focus of my research and had shown a lot of interest in the focus when we met. I feel a lot of similarity and affinity with Alise and I notice my comfort level with her in my speaking and movements, not awkward or flirtatious as I was with men or those I did not know. Alise's sharing also shows an affinity or resonance with me: "Because I relate to all of that... there's a lot of things in my life that seem very related to this." Alise agreed to participate in the research in part to support me and also about her own curiosity of somatic work. Through our first conversation she also realised the possibility that participation could have in what she was navigating at the time in her life.

Alise's speaking shows a fair amount of familiarity with and comfort with terminology connected to somatic work and healing modalities. Her articulations demonstrate an understanding of the energetic interconnections and entanglement in these processes as well as a desire to somatically experience and understand these processes and patterns. Her word choices also reflect a somatic and movement orientation "So that's one of the pieces that's coming up as really alive as I'm kind of stepping back into with you into this conversation." "it is constant movement. It's a chemical process, it's, and it's moving, it's pulsation, it's breathing, it is not a static thing you know we, parts of it, we excrete them or they die and are flushed out and new parts grow and like it's not a, it's not it is less like a thing than a process."

Being able to tune into life somatically is central for Alise "And I think at the core I would explain this program as like learning, learning to listen to people like with, with my body in a way that allows them access to more possibility in their bodies. And so it's about, I call it body work, but it's about, it's like this very broad frame that's, that's about relationality and body energetics and I

think it's, it's for me, it's about you know, if, if someone has some place where they're stuck, can, can we actually take, take that into the body and can I learn to hold space for that in a way that like speaks through the body?" When she shares about what she has and is exploring, Alise shows a depth of questioning and analysis and a focus of understanding patterns. "I'm really oriented towards patterns, right?" "I'm like thinking about, like, yeah, subject object duality and like it's, it's, it's I did in my own PhD program, I've done a lot of reading about this and I understand that a bunch of, specifically native languages don't have nouns or, or that thing, that grammatically like the word to describe this is a verb."

At the time of our first conversation, Alise was engaged in two somatically focused practices/training programs, which is part of a curiosity and commitment to learning that Alise has been engaged in for at least 15 years. "It's more been like over a long time. It's just been this area that's been really curious for me, and I just keep, I just kept taking workshops like Oh, what's this? Oh, what's this? And, you know, I started meditating. I don't know, that was a long time ago. I don't know, 15 years ago."

When speaking about the experience in her body, Alise shares that she was in the military for nine years and the PTSD that she was diagnosed with from her experiences within it started "a long healing process" for her. Because of this work, Alise considers her experience in the military somatically "So my experience of like, being a body in that organization has really informed my own, like frame and curiosity. And like, what it was to go through boot camp, and like how that experience of repatterning, like my body, my movement, my speech, my language, my clothing, my identity, like how that influenced. How do I place myself in the world? How do I relate to people? How do I kind of orient myself morally? So that's really informed my curiosity."

With all her experience in somatic modalities and how impactful they have been in her life, Alise seems to have a desire to work in the field of somatics and said "Because I haven't gone

through a degree program... when do I feel like I'm, you know, I have enough, like internal authority or motivation or, you know, knowledge or wisdom to set up some kind of practice and what the hell does that look like?"

At the time of our first conversation, Alise was in a process of transition, where she had just moved across the United States and was "just trying to reinvent my whole life" as "I walked out of my life for like, no logical reason. It was like nothing was, nothing was bad and nothing was quite working." Because of this, Alise's days tended to be quite varied and not how they had been in the past when she wasn't in transit. Having regular movement was important for Alise and she said "I go to yoga. I have these things that are kind of my, like sanity touchstones. So I've been taking yoga classes. I swim laps. I run, do some trail running. And hiking are things that are helping me create some kind of structure in my life because it's been so disheveled." Her physical life and situation appeared to mirror her deep healing and somatic work of looking into and questioning the deeper structures of her life and feeling uncertain and lost in the process. "Like that's kind of the shape of my life right now. I don't know where I live really. This doesn't feel like my home and I needed a place to land so, and I found a rental so I took it. I don't know what my job is. Like I don't know how I earn income. I haven't really been working for most of the summer. Like really like I'm in the space of I don't know who I am." This pulling apart, questioning and reinventing had also been present in Alise's somatic experience "I've had somatic sensations in the past year that I've never had before. They're not comfortable. Like, kind of weird, emotional, energetic nausea... When I moved out of Maine, I had this visceral experience of like, I couldn't stand to put any of my old clothes on. There was like this visceral kind of nausea or resistance or like, repulsive kind of feeling towards like putting my clothes on my body and, which is just weird." This deep questioning and uncertainty made Alise feel concerned "I hear myself talking about it and I question my sanity. And at the same time, like that's, that's my experience right now."

I shared with Alise that something I had noticed when I had met her a year earlier and in our conversation that “your listening and trusting and following is really notable. I think most people don't. I don't know many people who would listen and follow in the way that I've heard you do and even how scary that is because, you know, of letting go of, of the needing to let go without knowing where you're, where you're going.”

Alise shared that it did feel like she was listening and following to something set out for her but she couldn't understand what or how and the whole experience was frightening and difficult for her. “it's been so hard, like, I have been so scared. And so many strange things have happened... it's really made me question my beliefs about like, I don't know... So many synchronicities and ironies and it's, it's actually part of what's so terrifying is like, how could that series of events possibly have happened in exactly that way to set me up for that particular experience? You know, am I, am I being tested or is this just all random and chaos?” Her overall experience is a sense of needing to figure out the right answer to get out. “Like what, what's the what's the answer? That'll get me out of this mess that someone has set up for me to figure out. like it really feels like that.” And yet Alise had a sense that this is what she had to be doing “I just did what I had to do like I couldn't really have made any other decision. Sort of has that quality. Like it's what I have to be doing, I couldn't really have made any other choice. It was so you know, whatever the choice was, like they feel many of them felt very like this is the only, this is the only thing for me to do right now.”

Although Alise demonstrated an acute awareness of and sharing of her somatic experience through our conversation, I still asked directly what she believed her level of somatic awareness was. Alise responded “Definitely my general level of awareness has increased over time. It is part of what I pay attention to” and that there are very specific somatic experiences she is aware of and curious about. Alise recognises the choice the awareness opens up “You know, it might it might just be moments, I might actually realize I'm doing it and keep doing it anyway. It's like I have the capacity

to see it, but not necessarily make a different decision. Sometimes I do catch myself and oh, I'm not breathing or can we pause this conversation? Like, something's happening for me that I don't understand. I want to give it a little space to come to clarity. Like I do have more capacity for those kinds of awarenesses, which is both exciting and also kind of humbling”

### **Sarah**

Moving with the conversation January 24, 2021 13:10

*solidly here*  
*yeah here*  
*like this*  
*this twist.*  
*straight and directed*  
*settled down into the ground*  
*winding*  
*winding a little*  
*to find*  
*grounding down*  
*reaching up*  
*the line*  
*solid*  
*allowing the movement up*  
*solid centre*  
*yes yes with that*  
*softening the movement on the edges*  
*full*  
*full movements*  
*full integration*  
*full. solid. integrated.*

I have known Sarah for a number of years in community and have had some one-on-one time in the past with some sharedness in our situations. As I watch the video and feel into my experience of Sarah and her movements, I am aware that there is a certain amount of nervousness with her. I want to be liked by her and my score of fearing I won't be liked is notable with her. I

sense that because she seems so solid and has herself together that I may not be good enough for her, a familiar score for myself that I see activated here.

When asked about her interest in the research, Sarah shares some of her current central scores of supporting youth “I’m a high school teacher, and I’m in an alternative school. So I have a whole community of students who are young, and who are learning how to regulate themselves. And I’m also a parent of a 12-year-old who is in the thick of that kind of stuff. And so, for me, I find it’s sort of one of the things that’s driving me right now is to gain my own training in understanding the connection between body and emotion. And the connection between those two things and being able to function in society, in the in our social world, but also in our working world, whether that’s school or something else”

Somatic awareness and connection to her movements is something Sarah knows is important for her understanding of and connection to herself “I feel like the body is a big part of that. And so I personally to, to understand myself, and to go deep into, like a meditative state. And in terms of problem solving, or sort of things in life, the stuff of life, I have to be physical. And so for a long time, I was a marathon runner and going running was my meditation.” Tuning into her own experience as well as supporting others in her life to do so is a central focus for Sarah “I literally find that I’m repeating again and again, ‘what are you feeling in your body right now?’ Okay, how can you calm the glitter, how can you breathe? How can you walk it off, and those kinds of things. And so and I find that I’m bringing, like exercise balls into my, like things, tactile things into my world, to give to people in order to help them be able to focus on the thing that they need to thrive. And I find that I automatically do that with myself but I’m more conscious of it now that I’m helping facilitate with other people. If that’s what, that’s what I mean by like this system of integrating your emotions and your thoughts and your actions in some way.”

Sarah is interested in how our environment can support our somatic awareness “Getting back to connecting a space with an ability to be somatic and, and finding opportunities to either design a space where people can remember to be in their bodies while they're doing their daily things or give opportunities to take breaks in the spaces would be amazing.” With her limited budget as a teacher, Sarah was continually investing in materials to bring somatic materials into her classroom while recognising in most situations the resources are not there to have what she believes are the “ideal working conditions.” “But I, in this climate, it's really hard to find the funding for any kind of support like that, because you're being asked to do 7000 other things, that the less and less and less and less resources that we have are needed for even more, right?” “So that notion of place as unembodied is a real barrier. And the notion of access is a real barrier to be able to create a space that facilitates somatic existence.” She notes that many of her students would rather be in their phones or somewhere else than their bodies. “I think we live in a time where students are, where young people are having an easier time not being in their bodies. Right? they can, they can be in another place just by looking at a device and, and it can absorb their focus so much that they can forget that they have bodies very, very easily” so she felt that “I need to create it and find it and resources for but if I had like a somatic basket of things so that people have like their elastic or their balls or their this or they're that that they're not going to break the second that they have them”

Sarah was aware of her commitment and limitations “So, I'm not going to pretend to know all the techniques or answers, I'm just making it up as I go along. But I'm really conscious of these things... So I'm kind of steeped in it, and I'm kind of like pursuing it.”

Sarah is also aware of the conditions in her life that present a challenge for her to be as embodied and somatically aware as she would like, such as needing to sit at a computer a lot “So that's challenging, but I sit on a ball while I do that. And I try to. And I try to remember to take breaks. But it's hard because I get sucked in when I can have a moment to focus. And if I don't ride

my bike to and from work, I'm really conscious of how much tension I'm feeling. And so I try to sort of carve out time... it all depends on the circumstance. And it's, it's a challenge to find the time to do those things and find the time to get outside.”

Taking care of her own needs within the climate of supporting other could be tiring for Sarah but she stayed committed to it “It's tricky, and it's all about exhaustion. So how do I manage it? And am I conscious of it while I'm in while I'm in it? If I'm working with somebody in crisis, I'm conscious of my own body because I'm reminding them to be conscious of their body.”

Sarah has a somatic and movement focused orientation to her challenges and her language reflects this “I know that I have to move, to move through whatever it is that I need to move through.” She was also aware of the need to create habits to do so and the challenges with developing new habits “And I did for a little while and then I stopped. And I'm like, why am I not doing that? I feel so much better when I do it. You know, like, if I do three things in one day, why can't I do that? So there's a, sometimes I can let myself off the hook. But often I'm like, I'm just too tired. I can't take another thing on. I can't do that. Right?” Her capacity to sit and focus for extended periods of time also could limit Sarah from be in as much awareness and movement and she believes she should be “Like, I will go for four hours straight without, without getting up. And I know that the science says that every hour, you need to take 10 minutes. Like I know that that's the case I should actually set my alarm. But I tend to not bother doing that. I'm like, I know that I instruct other people to do that and like but I just sometimes don't follow that myself.”

Sarah's orientation to somatic awareness is connected not only to the idea of thriving but also the idea of healing trauma and the somatic work she has done to work through hers. There is a strong emotional connection and awareness in Sarah's focus on somatic awareness and movement. “Like, it was really therapeutic and really, surprisingly liberating, to say words out loud and do things with impact that were not the kinds of ways that I respond to things. So it was really cool. So that



can be added to my somatic experience.” As part of this, Sarah had taken on what she called ‘a personal project’ that she would focus on for a year and she had spent three years already engaging in this self-directed practice and growth. “And so those were practices that I needed to work on consciously and committedly for an entire year to incorporate into my universe in order, order to be able to work through all the things that I was working through.” “And so the work that I’m doing now is really informed by that work that I’ve been doing on my own. Right? And there was an element of therapy in there, but it was those decisions were all self driven.”

Sarah’s strong orientation to somatic awareness was supported by years of practice in a variety of modalities, including regular physical activity, including dance, running, hiking, wrestling with her child, cycling, kickboxing, camping and canoeing. ‘Interacting with the natural world’ is an important component for Sarah in her activities “And so that’s kind of another reset that I do on a daily basis so that I can that I can get centered. So it’s not only just physical activity that does it for me. Nature is a huge part of that for me.” Having both an awareness of our embodied experience and connection to nature are both important parts of somatic connection for Sarah “Let’s go and see what we can find. Let’s go see what we can use from nature to make this home for us. Right? Like it was beautiful. It was really cool. It’s easy to do... But I consider that a somatic experience. I consider that to be embodied not just because we’re outside but embodied because we’re actively engaged in our physical spaces.” She saw all these components as critical for our awareness and our health, including the food we eat “The one other thing that I can think of that connects to your understanding of somatic, somatic practice is, um, is access to food that allows you to thrive. And I don’t have to go into a whole lot of that but, but I find that affects me and it affects the people around me. So if all you have is junk and not fresh food, you’re gonna be less motivated and more lethargic and less able to take that first step towards being within your body.”

Sarah's passion for connection to nature and the planet had recently had her go back to school to complete a masters in environmental studies. This passion and care is palpable in Sarah's sharing and when I reflected my awareness of that back to her, Sarah responded with deep feeling "That just made me emotional. Thank you."

Sarah's commitment and intention inspired me in our conversation and had me also reflecting on the things I do and can do to support more awareness and connection in my life and the lives of those around me. I was also aware of Sarah's presence with and tuning in to me through her movements and expressions when I shared about the research and some of my own experiences.

### **Wendy**

Moving with the conversation January 25, 2021 5:40

*pause*  
*holding*  
*wait*  
*okay, here*  
*a little settle*  
*moving towards*  
*yes yes*  
*moving with it*  
*moving to align*  
     *align and grasp*  
*here*  
*here it is*  
     *the movement*  
*Placing here*  
     *gathering*  
     *feeling into*  
*this here.*  
*the fingertips*  
     *the precision*  
     *the meeting point*  
*can soften*  
     *within the structure*  
*a breath*

I had not previously met Wendy before our conversation yet had known her Father and Mother for years. I know before our conversation that Wendy is a dancer and in a professional dance program and interestingly, I seem notice myself moving more in the conversation, dancing my words more expressively than I believe I do in other contexts, being more centralised in a shared score of dance practice with Wendy. We also have our first conversation in the dance graduate student office at the University.

As an undergraduate student, Wendy is likely my youngest participant but since I did not decide to record the typical demographic information, such as age, exact knowledge of my participants' age only happened when they decided to communicate it to me. Although Wendy did not share about her age, I do notice my movements shift when I'm communicating with someone who I believe is younger than me, versus the same age or older. Like with the undergraduates I teach, I notice wanting them to think I'm 'cool' and knowledgeable and this impacts my physical and linguistic movements.

My overall impression as I get to know Wendy is drawn to her focus on balance and integration in all of her life and her interest in participating in the research appeared to also come from this place. She had a fair amount of self awareness physically and emotionally "I'm also very aware of what's happening emotionally most of the time and I'm a very expressive person emotionally" and regularly attending to how she feels and her needs is important to Wendy.

Wendy is studying dance professionally and shared that she had some exposure to somatic work and when asked about her interest in participating in the research, she responded "I like to integrate exercise into my daily routine, especially when there's enough time for it." Wendy appears to look for efficiency "And if I'm, I have to get off at the Glencairn train or do some hip stabilizing exercises because if I'm there, you know, I might as well do something while I'm waiting."

Because her professional studies are more weighted towards practice than theory, Wendy also takes courses outside of dance to satisfy her desire for more academic rigour. Wendy wasn't yet sure what she would do with her dancing and studies and in part chose her studies because "I didn't think I would keep dancing if I didn't study it." Dancing was something that Wendy started in high school "because it gave me autonomy and something to focus on that was bodily and, and sensory in a time when there was a lot of attention that needed devoting to my brother because he was so sick for a long time it was like it, you know, it becomes a part of your life that you don't really question just even devoting all of your physical needs." And that "Dancing in high school helped me grow into my body in that, through that awkward teenager phase. You know where you're stretching and kind of widening and growing a lot in your person as well as your body"

Wendy appears to be acutely aware of the balance she needs in her life: of autonomy and interdependence, of physical and mental stimulation, of her needs and others'. I noted Wendy's awareness of balance and she responded "I think after my brother stopped being sick, I had to actually relearn how to do that. And I think that might be why I'm good at it now... And so you, I had to learn how to... Put.. I don't want to say put myself above other people because like you said, it's about finding balance in your life and caring for others, as well as caring for yourself. Because you can't really have one without the other."

As a student, Wendy shared that she spent her entire weekdays at the University campus, which also included a long public transit commute before and after. Wendy was less interested in sharing about the specifics of her studies, which were more from questioning from me, and more interested in sharing what she was interested in "I also love to travel" and "And I'm still dating a man who lives in Cuba." She realised in the travel and touring she did in the year off between high school and university on a choral group tour and dance training abroad that "then I really realized how important it is for me to devote some time to being alone every day for a little bit. And to

remind myself to be present in my body that could be actually with other people like that's they're not interdependent or codependent.”

Wendy is particularly aware of her movements and her movements in relation to others and her language reflects this “I readjusted to move, to living with my family again... that was a real readjustment and reconfiguring of how to... And when I went to Cuba and came back, it changed how I was independent and move through the world in a different way... the way I found my own trajectories and interests changed.”

When asked specifically about believed level of somatic awareness, Wendy responded “I would say when I'm home, I'm often not aware because it's a place of comfort in and relaxation. When I'm like sitting on the couch I'm often not aware of, of my posture, or if I'm eating dinner at the table might be in a weird, twisty thing with my feet, which I sometimes do, actually not just in my home, but if I'm around friends, or in a friendly relationship... I would say actually, though, that I'm aware of my body as I move through spaces that are quotidian but not my own.” Echoing the focus of her childhood having been more on her brother's needs, Wendy shared “I move through the world in a way that's aware of the people around me almost more than I'm aware of myself, but also like aware of myself in relation to those people, just in terms of not trying to bump into people on the street. I'll often move out of the way.” Wendy also shared that she believed this was very connected to gender roles and her being a female.

When asked specifically about her awareness when interfacing with technology in a variety of ways, Wendy responded “I would say I'm more aware of my body when I'm watching Netflix. Because I think if I'm writing an essay, sometimes I think so, in so many ways about what it is that I'm writing that one: it can make my writing really convoluted. And two: it, it just takes me out of myself. Yeah. Which can do some weird things to my body. Sometimes it makes me sit right up and

like do the thing. And sometimes I'm like a zombie." Wendy also believed that sometimes her dance practice requires a hyperawareness of the body "and then they do something weird."

*Imagine you are a newborn baby and experiencing this body for the first time. Can you drop any self-consciousness and be in a state of curiosity of what this body can do and how it can move? From this place of curiosity, bring your awareness to your head. Explore how long you can make your neck. How far you can move your chin towards your chest. How far it moves to one side. And the other. Begin to explore circles with your head. How large and how small of circles can you make with your head and neck? Now begin to explore other pathways and shapes with your head and neck. How many different ways and directions can you move your head and neck? Can you find new movements and new pathways for your head and neck? Can you stay curious of all the ways your head and neck can move?*

### **The third dance: The weekly invitations**

As described earlier, participants were sent an email once a week for ten weeks with a weekly invitation of something to explore in their somatic awareness for that week of a video of myself and a transcript of the video. Each weekly invitation intended to offer some new ideas or ontologies to consider as well as a somatic question or practice to take into the week. The videos and their transcripts also included invitations for the participants to become aware of their somatic experience while watching/reading (and later listening, when I began creating podcasts from the videos in week 6). I shared my personal experiences, modelling the processes of curiosity, awareness and listening, letting myself speak from a place of somatic awareness.

As writing about the description of my linguistic and physical movements in the invitations is a process that takes place over time, I come to the description with different curiosities, concerns, emotions, energies and thoughts moving through me at each time. Part of my somatic practice for this section is to spend time with a somatic writing check in before turning back to this document, tuning into and keeping my somatic awareness alive as I document the descriptions. Therefore, what I am drawn to and what I describe in the moment of writing is influenced by all the larger movements in my life. I let this influence guide me, rather than an external or pre-set idea of what or

how I should be describing the movements. Indeed, there are countless ways I could describe the physical and linguistic movements of these 10 weeks of invitation, not to mention all the movements that led to their creation through the process. I want to be able to follow the evolving curiosity of description and feel like my process is somatically connected and authentic, not just an intellectual exercise. I want the two-dimensional words on the page that reflect my curiosity to also reflect an evolution and a multitude of possibilities with no right answer. Just curiosity and awareness. *And though this, I invite your curiosity and awareness. To notice what movement patterns you make in the reading of these words, of these descriptions.* If you're so inclined, I invite you to dip into some of the video invitations described 2 or to turn to the written invitations in Appendix E and really tune into what you experience through the listening or reading of the invitations themselves. It would be interesting to do so either before or after my descriptions below as I imagine they may influence your somatic response to the invitations themselves.

### ***Week 1: Patterns of movement***

The invitation for the first video/transcript of the 10 weeks was developed by re-watching/reading the first conversations with all 20 participants, tuning into my somatic experience of them and taking notes for each one. There was also much musing, moving and note-taking about what I wanted to include in the invitations and how to ensure the speaking, recording and

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2 Week 1: <https://youtu.be/z4f47JYBVO4> week 2: <https://youtu.be/g2bx9wuq-Cw> week 3:

<https://youtu.be/4qn0-IR72uk> week 4: <https://youtu.be/rLb2HvUvJxQ> week 5:

<https://youtu.be/dj8HCONsIkE> week 6: <https://youtu.be/bHQHZ5Jn61Q> week 7:

<https://youtu.be/DmzJkXaWshw> week 8: <https://youtu.be/VH86gLDYEoo> week 10:

<https://youtu.be/ngoE2gVZEvk>



listening/reading of the invitations invited somatic awareness through the process. These notes were informed by my years of teaching somatics and particularly the homework portion of my classes and what I knew supports my own somatic awareness, including having journaled as part of the research. With these ideas and scores in mind, my first video was planned in a general way but unscripted, created in the moment improvisationally as I recorded myself with my cell phone. The written version of the invitation was largely the transcript of the video recording with some small edits (generally removing space holder expressions: um, you know, etc.)

In order to be as present as possible to my experience and the recipients of the invitation, the way I moved in the moment, speaking in front of the video, was to share openly about my experience and to be really clear that I was speaking directly to the viewer. “I am super awkward and this whole process of recording myself and needing to feel like I sound really articulate... I've placed a lot of pressure on myself... I'm noticing my own experience and my patterns around that.”

I shared about my research process and languaged my sharing to clarify their role in the research and my relationship to that “I really got present with all of you by going back to the conversations that we had to feel how all of us are co-creating this... You're the expert in this. I'm not going to require anything from you and all of this is an invitation to become aware and notice. An invitation to not have to change or do or be anything different than what you are.”

By sharing vulnerably and unscripted, there was a tuning in and moving towards. I moved towards the participants and invited them to move towards me, both in my language and movement. My languaging involved invitations for engagement without requirement: ‘I invite you,’ ‘notice,’ ‘see if you can be curious,’ ‘feel into,’ ‘I want you,’ ‘listen,’ and ‘consider.’ I speak only in first and second person, personalising the sharing and focusing on our particular experiences. My linguistic and physical movements model the ideas and invitations I’m offering: particularly of curiosity, somatic awareness, trust, listening, and following, choice, self as expert, life as movements and movement

patterns by explicit verbalisation of concepts, verbal examples and embodiment of the concepts and invitations.

Without the physical presence of the participants, I stayed focused on myself in the video, watching myself as I recorded the video and named this explicitly with the participants. Because of this, I don't look directly at the camera, instead looking at the image of myself on my phone recording so my eyes continually appear to be looking to the left of the viewer. I move and look around as I speak to the camera, intending to come back to the participants while looking at myself. I smile and have a tendency to look to the left, both up and down. I accentuate certain words with a smile ("you're the expert in this"), with a furrowing of my brow ("that there is a 'right'"), with shaking of my head ("lessening this idea"), with tilting my head ("the idea that expertise," "feel into that knowing"). I also tend to pair raising my eyebrows with the verbal accentuation of certain words (which is a movement pattern I had not been aware of until this rewatching and description). My body moves forward and back towards the camera and my head is in constant movement along with my eyes and mouth as I express to the viewer. Although not reflected in the transcription, I also pause in my speaking after inviting the participants to tune into their somatic experience. When I shift from sharing about my experience and inviting the participants into theirs to sharing ideas and ontologies, I tend to look up to the left even more and become more animated with my physical embodiment of the concepts I'm speaking about (such as the experience of learning to ride a bicycle and the movement patterns we create).

I follow my words with my movement, such as exhaling, moving my energy downward and smiling as I share "I'm going to soften into that with you." As I stayed aware of my somatic experience through the recording, I also explicitly invited them to be aware of theirs "So as you are reading this, I want to invite you to become aware of your experience: the position of your body, of what's supporting you now. I invite you to feel the movements that you're making as you're reading

this. Notice if you're reading it with your eyes moving. I also want to invite you to try to read it out loud and feel into that experience. See if you can be curious about what you're feeling and notice in your body in this reading right now.”

As I intended movement towards them in my physicality and words, I also invited their awareness and movement inward “Be curious and listen to that” “what is alive, what you're curious about, and what you're finding...” as well as their movement towards me “Even though right now I am by myself in this room looking at my screen, I know that you're looking back at me, across time and space, and that you're part of this research with me: all 20 of you.” This inner invitation also included inviting them to tune into and trust their own expertise (“I’m softening this idea that I’m an expert.” “and you don't have to believe anything that I'm saying; they're my thoughts or curiosities or wonderings” “It's always up to you to take that in a way that would work for you... I want you to trust yourselves about this.”)

My words continually invited ease (“soften” “notice” “feel” “hold lightly” “see what arises” “it’s always up to you” “trust yourselves”). By inviting us all into our own somatic awareness and towards each other, I intended a somatic co-creating in the unfolding of the research “this is a co-creation... So that we can follow this together” “I appreciate your being willingness to curiously explore this together.”

The key notion I invited them to consider in week 1 was a life-as-movement ontology, referring to LaMothe. I invited them to consider that we are patterns of movement and that these often-habitual patterns are automatic and outside our awareness. “That all of life is movement, that we are always moving; that through making movements, we create patterns of movement and those patterns become who we are... The thing about patterns is that when they become automatic, we no longer have choice. Being able to bring our awareness to these patterns allows us to have choice and allows us to make a different choice.” Indeed patterns was a main theme of this invitation – a word

that showed up 24 times in both the written and oral versions of the invitation – and I provided examples, explanations and it was what the participants were specifically invited to pay attention to: “My invitation for you for this week is to (I’m going to feel into the articulation of this; I’m used to teaching where there’s the embodied feedback of my students) **get curious about the patterns in your life, particularly the movement patterns.**” My verbal articulation of this invitation in the video involved pausing, breath, smiling and movements of my hands that showed movement back and forth between me and the camera (or me and those I’m speaking to).

Although I had made it clear at all points in their participation that there was no requirement from them, I did invite them to provide me with feedback, either written or oral, via the online platform I used to share the invitations (jotform.com). I let them know that any feedback they provided me would help me tune in to them and inform the unfolding of the explorations.

I received responses from 11 participants from the week 1 invitation, including 6 verbal recordings from one participant. Because I had not asked for their names in my first use of the online platform, I could not be certain who all of the responses belonged to, although some included names and voices and a number of them were clear to me from my experience of that person before as well as their subsequent responses in the research.

As I review and describe all of the weekly invitations, much of what I described above of my physical and linguistic movement tendencies remains present throughout the remaining video and written versions. Therefore, I do not describe them with as much detail in the description of the subsequent invitations but rather notice what shifts over time through the invitations.

*There is stuckness in my body as I sit to continue to write.*

*I’ve been avoiding continuing this document, feeling inauthentic, not wanting to prove anything.*

*I’d rather move.*

*Not wanting to sit.*

*Even in the middle of writing those past few sentences, I got up and moved around, poured tea and multi-tasked.*

*I haven't yet reconciled academic writing and somatic practice and I feel*

*like a hypocrite and impostor.*

*I take a deep breath.*

*Settle down into my cushion on the floor (having started to work at my coffee table this past while).*

*I feel a deeper grounding from a single breath.*

*A desire to trust this process.*

*I read over my past few sentences, pausing and breathing.*

*Curiosity bubbles up.*

*Without a wrong,*

*what can be possible with the intention of writing about research as somatic practice?*

*....*

*An hour later, the quality of my writing has shifted*

*New clarity and focus*

*I still don't want to sit here though*

*Just a little more, just a little more, I tell myself*

*Then you can go for a run.*

## ***Week 2: Self as expert***

Similar to the first invitation, the invitation for the second week was created by reading/listening to all the responses to week one that had come in from the participants and tuning into myself to see what arose in response to their sharings and my experience of the week. It was by tuning into the responses to the invitation in the first week that I was able to see where deepening of certain ideas and invitations would be helpful. Part of this tuning in included autoethnographic

journal entries, that record both my awareness and processes of taking the first week invitation into my own life and the development of the second week's invitation.

*Movements I busy myself with and it feels good to do. Movements I know how to do. I know why and the process. This dissertation trial is not a familiar pattern. I don't really know. I'm trying to connect it to patterns I do know, like my teaching.* (Autoethnographic journal, February 2, 2020)

*...there was a continued wondering. But also a sense of forcing... But I've had a lot of trust today and things have flowed beautifully. So I can remain receptive to seeing if it arises in my consciousness again... This evening I've not followed usual patterns... I'm thinking of Nachmanovitch's words – that we plan to hone ourselves to the field and when we enter the field, we let go of the plan. I'm keeping myself honed to the field. And it's when I'm receptive that I can hear the muse, know and trust what is to move through me next. It was so effortless when it happened, compared to the mental exhaustion of trying before and frustration of feeling stuck.* (Autoethnographic journal, February 5, 2020)

For the second week, this was a deeper exploration of the idea of self as expert, which I had conveyed in the first week and made more explicit in the second, as well as an invitation to begin to notice linguistic movement patterns.

With the general ideas of what I wanted to convey, I again created the verbal invitation improvisationally, in the moment of the recording, which I believed would help me stay present to my somatic experience while speaking, which I named explicitly and described to the participants. "I've been staying in this curiosity of where are we going to go next and then feeling worried: 'what's the next step? I don't really know.' It was when I started to get really open and receptive - particularly yesterday morning as I was waking up and was in this half-awake state - that a lot of clarity came to me. Then in listening and reading your sharings and following my own day, it was really exciting to see the interconnections of things." The written version of the invitation was again principally the transcript of the recording with small edits. This editing does remove some of the

improvisatory process in action, such as I when I start talking about an idea and then stop myself mid-sentence “... actually you know what, I don’t want to go there, and sorry I don’t know how to edit that out so it’s just going to be a blip.”

I continue the verbal and physical modelling of the invitations in the video, beginning by taking a moment and a breath to visibly tune into my somatic experience while speaking and being recorded. I then share about awareness I had gained in noticing my movement patterns in the past week and the choice that had opened up from that awareness, including in-the-moment awareness while on video. I shared in detail about an experience I had had the week prior “This noticing of patterns also helped me become more authentic with myself this past week.” And the patterns I notice in the moment “I’m now noticing my patterns. I’m playing with my... I’m scratching at my nails right now and I am a little anxious and really excited.” I noticed a tendency to use the word ‘want’ when I really wanted to invite the participants, so I made their choice and autonomy again explicit. “I was really curious that I was being a lot more directive than I thought I was and that I didn’t think that was how I was communicating. I’m now trying to be more mindful so we’ll see if I can be a little bit better at inviting you. I’m saying up front that I want you to experience this as an invitation.” I continue to reinforce ideas of curiosity and life as movement through my movement and language “...back to what’s moving through me.”

In the second video, I’m positioned similarly to the first, looking at myself on my recording camera screen instead of directly into the camera, giving the viewer the sense that I am looking to their left. My movement patterns are very similar to my first video. Without a quantitative finding to back this up, it appears I narrow my eyes more often, which could be connected to my expression and/or connected to the fact that the room I am in is sunnier in this video than the first.

I had been feeling inspired by a number of pieces related to my research, my experiences and the participants' responses and attempted to include them all in the video. With this orientation, my linguistic movements attempted both connection to myself and movement towards the participants.

I connected these experiences to the invitation for awareness for the coming week: "What has come up for me in that listening to you, to myself, and to life this week is following this thread of expertise that I invited you to consider last week. This idea of external expert or internal expertise. I'd like us to really go into that with more curiosity and focus this week because this is a big piece about what I'd like to explore with this research."

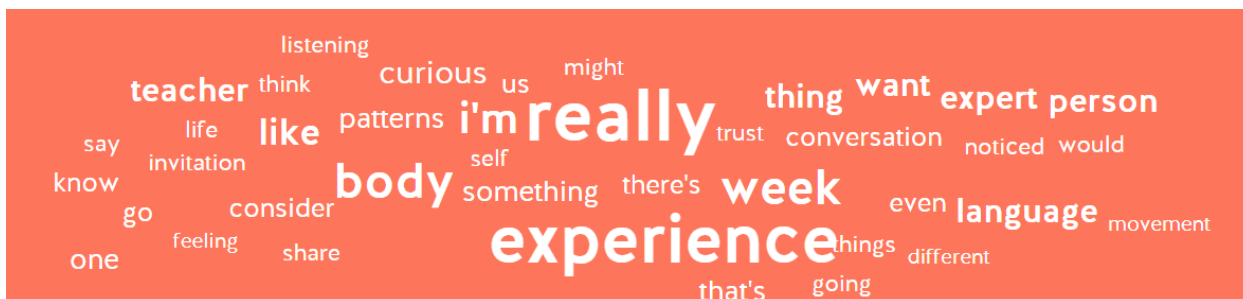
I speak about somatic practices generally being practiced with a coach, teacher or therapist who has been trained and likely certified and what I question about this approach: "For me there's some tension in there because this work is about our somatic experience and we're the only ones who can access that. Yet there's this dichotomy of feeling like we have to go to somebody outside of ourselves to help us listen to the experience that only we can have." And I suggest that many of us have had experiences that undermine our trust in our bodies. "How many of us have actually even been guided to listen to and trust our experience? How often do we need to tune out those sensations and knowings in our body because it doesn't line up with what an external expectation of us is?" I model this practice of trusting through the sharing and modelling of my improvisational process in movement and language. "to start to be curious about how we can cultivate trust in that. This could be pretty big, especially if we never have. I want to let that land with me because it's also an invitation for myself." I share my own questioning of the external expert and invite the participants to join me in that questioning "So what is most easeful, comfortable, efficient, and self expressive for my body isn't the same as yours. So this idea that there's one movement without listening in is really not honouring that expert and not trusting our own bodies."



Because of my curiosity around language and the movement of language, I also wanted to explicitly bring in this focus and invited the participants to also begin to notice how they language their experiences and ponder how it may be connected to experiences of trust and awareness of somatic experiences. I invited them to notice if they make their body a separate ‘thing’ and to consider “instead that this is a combination of patterns of movements that is your unique expression of life, of life moving.” My invitation appears paradoxical in this sense – by inviting a consideration of ‘body as expert’ there is an other-thing-making happening in my linguistic formulation of the invitation, while as the same time, inviting a softening in this thing-making by considering patterns of movement.

I name the tendency to speak of our experiences in the second person and I notice I furrow my brow more in this sharing and I feel judgement coming across in my linguistic and physical movements on this topic. Because of this, I become extra curious about how my physical movements move with my linguistic ones. I offer the quote here with, inserting parenthesised italics of the movements I notice I make while speaking. I also italicise words with verbal emphasis. “notice if you (*pause*) tend to do that (*head tilting*): instead of fully owning and experiencing (*hands come up to chest*) those movements *as yours* (*eyebrow raised, slow and punctuate the words while moving towards the camera*), as your unique expression of self to *share that with others yours* (*eyebrows raised, slow and punctuate the words while moving towards the camera*) when speaking (*scratch face and tuck hair behind ear*), if you speak in second person. And what would happen if you shifted (*head shifts – had been tilted to left and tilts over to left*) and spoke in the first person? What would happen if you experienced your movements (*right eyebrow moves down*) as you (*brow furrows, words slowed and punctuated*) and not something separate from you? What would happen if you honoured your experience (*small shake of head*) as valid and your movements as valid? (*exhale, pause camera*)”

Finally I get curious about the words individually and take a moment to tune into the computer generated word cloud that sizes words according to their frequency in the transcript. Without any further description, I offer it to you as well to *notice what is alive and moving in your somatic experience as you take a look at it.*



I had 11 participants respond to week 2, which included 10 written and 3 oral responses.

*Pull pull.*

*Like an itch I need to scratch (my chest suddenly felt itchy writing that).*

*This keyboard is still uncomfortable.*

*May be excuses. Is it time to take break yet?*

*I settle into my chair.*

*Drop my weight a little.*

*Feel the support of the foam.*

*I feel my head settle into the support of my spine.*

*The itching on my chest is getting pretty intense.*

*Okay scratch.*

*Is this what it takes?*

*A checking in and dropping into?*

*Sometimes takes some time to really drop in.*

*dropping in.*

*that feels like a bit of a relief.*

*Still want to get up and do something else.*

*Or at least check.*

*Pull pull.*

*Okay settle.*

*Soften face.*

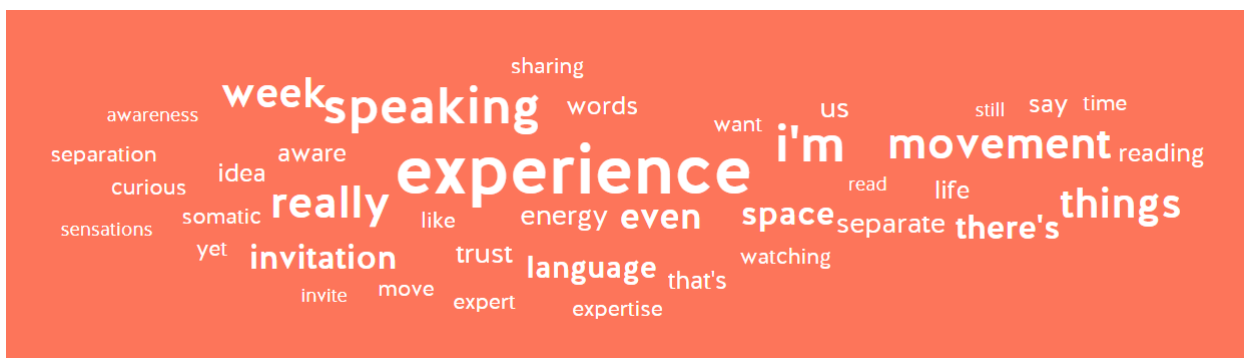
*Settle.*

*Soften face.*

*Open document and take next step*

### ***Week 3: Awareness of the movement of speaking***

For the description of the third weekly invitation, I try out starting with the computer generated word cloud of the written invitation (not the transcript). The larger the word, the more often it was used.



And although only a few extracted words from a 16 minute and 48 second long video, there is a simplicity here. I stay here for a moment and *invite you into the curiosity of it with me*. I take a breath, letting my eyes fall on the words and noticing my experience. Tuning into most to my proprioceptive awareness: the pressure in my head, sensation of gravity, as I take in the visual field.

And from there, diving into a more nuanced and detailed description of the invitation in week 3. The preparation for the third video invitation involved reviewing participants' feedback, both verbal and written, via jotform, two autoethnographic journal entries, review of what I believed was important to convey through the weekly invitation and allowing the invitation to arise in my consciousness from there. Which it did.

*I feel quite fuzzy-headed about pretty much everything right now. Like I'm just trying to get through the day, through the research. And none of it really makes sense... the interconnected movements. None separate. Sometimes I feel like I just dance through the movements. They all come together and I feel expansive and connected and it all makes sense. Then grey days, like today, I'm just muddling through. Not sure what I'm doing or why. My eyes hardly focus. My head certainly not. (Autoethnographic journal, February 10, 2020)*

*And was content just being... A big reason why I dance. To get space around the judgement, the guilt, the stories... To get space around the language that is always there. Because it is going to be there and it's how we think and share and express and are immersed virtually and every way. Language is part of it all. I think part of it is to not take it as truth. To see it as a construct that allows for things. But isn't what is real or true. To have space around it. Curiosity. Noticing how language constructs shape our experience of life. And making different choices. (Autoethnographic journal, February 11, 2020)*

The tension between linguistic constructs and a connected somatic awareness being particularly salient for me, I knew I wanted to explore some of that tension with the participants.

I begin the video invitation with my head tilted to the right (whereas in my previous two videos, my head started upright). I start the video making it explicit that engaging with the invitation of the week (through watching or reading) is intended to be a somatic practice and I invite the participants to consider these questions as they read or watch: "What's happening in your internal

experience? What are you aware of in yourself? What sensations do you notice? Notice the position you're in right now, where you're making contact with something beneath you and how that feels.”

*Softening my brow.*

*Noticing my crossed legs and how incredibly twisted my body is in this position.*

*The only movement I feel is in my hands and eyes.*

*Even very little movement with breath.*

*Stuck stuck stuck.*

*Oh god I feel like I write the same shit every time I come here first before my writing.*

*Breathe.*

*Soften.*

*Soften belly.*

After inviting the participants to tune into their somatic experience with my head tilted the whole time, as soon as I tune into my experience and start sharing from that place my energy shifts. My head straightens. The quality of my speaking shifts, like it's coming from a deeper place. Whereas there was a sense of quiet and calm while introducing and inviting the participants, there is more animation when sharing personally, smiling, moving my body more, moving the camera to show them my cat sleeping next to me. Watching it now, my somatic sense is of softness then openness. When I then begin to thank them for their feedback, tuning back into them, my voice softens again, my head tilts again to the right. Something more penetrating in my gaze (still at the screen and not directly at the camera). I know that I really wanted the participants to know that their feedback was taken in and considered and a really integral part of my process, something I wasn't sure they would know in the asynchronous format of the sharing.

After my experience in my first two weeks of invitations of speaking live without a script, “I had this idea that I was going to write out what I'm sharing today so that I could be more focused

and that it would be easier because transcribing this after is a lot more work I think than writing it first. Then I realised that, with the invitation of today, I needed to just share imperfectly.”

My tone and movements shift again with a change of focus to presenting concepts. More irregular cadence of speaking, more full body movement with my speaking, more emphasis of my words. Weaving personal sharing and modelling with explanations and invitations, I share two notions around language with the participants. First, that the structure of literate language, with its separated nouns and verbs, separates things and reinforces experience of separation. I connect this back to the ideas from the second week of teacher and expert and the words we use “have inherent separation and there are power differentials in those words. Teacher conveys that there's a student and expert conveys that there's a there's somebody who's not an expert and there's still this idea of separation in that language.”

Second, I share that all of life is movement and that somatics connects us to the awareness and experience of this movement and its interconnection. I quote a Quantum physicist, Karen Barad (2007), who writes about the entanglement of life and that existence is only through this entangled ‘intra-relating.’ I move a lot less when reading the quote and watching now, I feel less engaged and interested. I bring this idea back into sharing from my own experience, modelling the invitation, as I invite the participants to consider “*That the speaking is the movement of energy*” and invite them to notice the experience in their bodies while speaking “Even as I'm sharing it, I'm becoming more of the sensations in my mouth, how those words move through my body, and the continuation of sound. Even though, in my head, I have these ideas of separate words, there's this flow of movement of sound that I hear and that I speak.” My hands move along with these words, demonstrating this separation and movement. I invite the participants to speak words that have strong connotations for them to and notice the sensation of speaking them aloud. I introduce the idea that we can get some space around the sense of separation words convey when tuning into the physical experience of

speaking “Can we (I'm really curious because I haven't done this, so this is an invitation for me as well this week) - can I - remember to become aware of my embodied experience when I'm speaking? Can I/we be curious without needing to make things right or wrong or find an answer? Just be curious and hold space and feel into the movement? The movement in that speaking, the movement in my speaking. I softened my voice there and I had a really different experience in my body of it. I'm enjoying this already.” This invitation weaves in some of the grounding concepts of the somatic practice of curiosity, tuning in and first-person awareness. Every time I shift into inviting them to notice their experience, my body and speaking shift back into the tilted head, calm, metered and slow.

Because of the invitation, I ask them to both read the invitation, if they're reading and not watching the invitation, and to be willing to provide me with their sharing via jotform by recording themselves so that the exercise can provide them with an opportunity to notice that experience.

#### ***Week 4: Becoming aware of others' speaking as movement***

Preparation for the invitation involved tuning into participants' feedback (I had seven participants respond to week 3, which included 7 written and 5 oral responses) and my own process through 2 autoethnographic journal entries, where the ideas began bubbling up.

*There is something about that movement of energy through language expression – speaking, writing. The movement of that energy... If I were saying these words I'm typing right now to someone, I would be moving my hands around in some way, my mouth and face would be moving. The movements I'm making with this being typed out is much different. I still move a lot. The movement is mostly in my fingers. My eyes are moving as well but only slowly as they go back and forth across the page along with the words I type. I wiggle a lot on the ball. The wiggling often involves my whole body. I may roll back slightly, which pulls my body back and then I change the angle of my neck and have a larger exhale. My movements are a lot smaller*

*though than if I were speaking this to someone. Even the language I use is different. I don't use any of those habitual sayings (um, you know) that I do when I speak. (Autoethnographic journal, February 17, 2020)*

Because I had asked for verbal sharing in the previous week, I received more recordings that I transcribed and described my process and somatic awareness in my journals. This process began pointing me to an awareness of having different experiences of self through different uses of language.

*I've often noticing how I experience myself differently in different languages. And I'm realising this applies to the English language as well – when I'm writing in a journal, writing an email, speaking with students, with friends, in an academic setting, a formal one. I am noticing how I have very different experiences.*

(Autoethnographic journal, February 17, 2020)

*I was considering this process of me listening to Dad's words and then my fingers moving to type out the words. Which would be different than just listening. Different than just reading. Different if we were in real time. Different if we were physically present. Different if I were typing from something else, like I am right now. So many ways we have these dances (Autoethnographic journal, February 20, 2020)*

Being curious about ways to approach and experience the process of inviting and recording and connecting to the participants in this asynchronous way, in the fourth week I explored a different approach to the video creation: writing out the invitation first then presenting what I'd written in the video. Because of this, there is a more notable difference between the written and videoed invitations, the former being language I composed via writing and the latter being my in the moment speaking of the pieces (moving between reading and then adding in pieces that felt more alive for me in the moment). Although there is no in-depth or qualitative analysis of the language difference, when I look at the word counts, as well as bigrams and trigrams, of the written invitation and transcript of the video, the numbers are actually quite close of the most often used words (not



surprisingly, the top two are awareness (word counts 38 and 40) and somatic (word counts 29 and 30)). Word cloud from the written version of the invitation:



This brought up more curiosity for me in the different ways we move with language. I shared in the video that this process felt more awkward. I felt less connected to my own experience and the participants when I was sharing something pre-written as opposed to following my physical and linguistic movements in the moment. Just as I noted the difference in my physical and linguistic movement between reading and speaking spontaneously in the moment in week 3, this is quite notable in week 4. Because I'm looking down frequently to refer to the written words, I look at the camera less (still to the right, not right at the camera) and move my eyes less often to the left, as I have noticed myself doing when I'm considering something. I don't furrow my brow while reading, which I do often when speaking. I also notice less animation in my tone, words and body and I feel less interested in watching myself read.

*My head feels so heavy,*

*so congested.*

*Like it's filled with cotton*

*and being pressed in a vice.*

From the participants' responses to the third invitation, I recognised a need to more clearly describe somatics. Although I had introduced them all to some of the grounding principles in our first conversation and had explicitly invited them into noticing the experience in their bodies in the

previous invitations, it had been months since the more explanatory conversation and some of the participants had not had much experience with somatic practices prior to participating in the research.

I distinguish body and soma, third and first-person. I note there are experiences, usually stronger, that bring our awareness to our somatic experiences and that somatic practices are those that guide us to becoming aware of the subtler aspects of our first-person sensorial experience. I share my beliefs regarding the relationship between somatic awareness and language: “Generally a lot of our lives pull us away from somatic awareness, a lot that calls for our attention more than sensory input: language, concepts, meaning-making, habits, patterns. So the sensorial input is there but we’re attending elsewhere. I believe language and our tendency as humans to want to make sense, make meaning, understand - particularly through language - greatly pulls us away from our somatic experience and we can feel less balanced in our awareness.” I also note that I believe that collectively we are less connected to ourselves, each other and the planet and somatic practices can offer more connection and choice. I tie this back into the research questions: “Since we’re always moving - the sensorial input is always there - could we increase our awareness in the day to day of all of our movements? Without it being yet another task to add to our task-filled lives? What could help bridge what we find in those intentional somatic practices to the rest of our lives? And what could help open up more awareness and choice in the day-to-day? How do we bring more balance into our awareness?”

Sharing that we often use language to bring our awareness to our somatic experience, I guide the participants through a somatic activity of noticing the sensations in their bodies. And then guide them to the invitation of the week: “to become aware of other people’s speaking as movement. And specifically to become curious about what in their speaking pulls you towards or away from being aware of your own somatic experience.” I invite them to at least listen to a bit of the video if they’re

reading in order to practice this. I also invite their feedback in their experience of me sharing improvisationally, as I had in previous weeks, or reading.

I notice the expressions of movement or sensation in my week 4 invitation – beyond the verbs of the sentences, things that draw me to become aware of movement, experience movement: “weaving into,” “tune into,” “jumping ahead,” “rewind,” “pull us,” “louder sensations,” “calls for,” “represence,” “what that feels like,” “land with you,” “shifted the experience,” “throw out.”

*The words are swimming*

*Not really*

*Actually they're not moving at all*

*I can see them*

*But I can't really see them*

*Printed text*

*A multitude of colourful pen notes*

*This looks nice*

*I think?*

*What does it really mean?*

*It's my thoughts that are swimming*

*Words thought*

*The words on the page are stationary*

### ***Week 5: Noticing our dance with time***

As I continue the weekly exploration of creating a video invitation for the participants, I continued to play with aspects of its creation and execution. The first things I notice when I reopen the fifth invitation is that I've oriented my camera vertically instead of horizontally, as the previous

videos had been, “so me and my talking is more the focus than the bookcase”. And I notice brightly coloured lipstick I’m wearing along with my brightly coloured clothes – green, turquoise, pink and yellow. This is the first video where I actually look at the camera and not to the screen and so, as the viewer, we have the experience of being looked directly at. Interestingly I don’t seem to notice as much brow furrowing – something that was often present in previous weeks. Instead I notice that I narrow my eyes. I sense more confidence and grounding in myself in the process of videotaping myself – something I noted discomfort with at the beginning of the process. Watching myself again now, I sense more lightness in myself, that I’m not trying quite as hard as I was in the earlier weeks.

I share with the viewer what appeared to be a disconnect or irony for me: “This brings me back to one of the starting points of this research – recognising most of us feel like our lives are so full already, how do we invite more awareness of our experience of movement and of our bodies through our day to day, without being another thing to add? Yet I’m adding here – sending you 17-21 minute long videos, attached transcripts and now questions and continued invitations to write and record and send to me!” In an attempt to reconcile this tension, I attempted to shorten the video. Prompted by what had been arising for me the previous week in my life and my autoethnographic journaling and participant responses (I received responses from 6 participants for week 4, including 6 written and 3 oral responses), I prewrote the invitation once again so my video shows me sometimes reading and sometimes being prompted by the page in my hand.

Having spent a few weeks inviting participants to notice their speaking and language as movement and noticing a specific aspect of the language (how we speak about time) that was relevant to the prompts of my research, I invited participants “to notice your dance with ideas of time. Simply: notice when you or someone else speaks about time in any way, noticing how it is spoken about, and notice the sensations in your body as notice.” I represented some of the earlier constructs I presented: that all of life is movement, ““to dance” is to become aware of the

movements we make – in all of lives – and how the movements we make make us. We create patterns and patterns of movement.” I also presented some new notions: “It has been shown that we use quite a lot of metaphors in our speaking that connect abstract ideas to our embodiment.” I point to Lakoff and Johnson’s (1980) idea of ‘time as commodity’ metaphor. I provide the viewers with some examples of expressions involving time and invite them to consider how they experience time in their bodies and movement through paying attention to the experience of time when it is spoken about. I invite them to consider: “Making time into a thing allows us to talk about it. And talking allows us to connect with each other. But then does it limit our experience as we relate to time only as this thing we’ve constructed?” I provide the participants with a link to a blog that discusses our ideas of time in different languages, demonstrating the way we construct the notion of time is not universal.

I notice how this seems to prompt more movement-oriented language in my speaking in the video: “My dance with time,” “brings me back,” “As I dance with you all,” “I’ll throw in here,” “let’s see how we move with it,” “let them land,” “I’m going to skip ahead,” “and how they help shape,” “bring me towards or away,” “I’m going to narrow into,” and “keep the invitation alive.” I specifically name this awareness with the participants: “I just got really curious about my language of movement around that: that I’m “throwing” something that may “land” on you.”

With a shorter video than the previous weeks, I do less personal sharing or guiding the viewer through practice as I had done in previous weeks. I also keep the presentation of ideas shorter, believing that I had provided some good explanation of the core notions of the exploration in the previous weeks. I end the video by tuning into my somatic awareness in the moment as an example of connecting to the experience in our bodies through the invitation: “I wanted to end by saying: “That’s it! Short and sweet!” And I got curious about this experience of a short time as sweet, feeling into my body, the sensations – that feel slightly contractive and pink, the firmness and

juiciness of fruit. Then I thought for a moment of “Spending time to drop deep” and I experienced this as brown and spreading, a sense of giving away to receive, my body becoming more weighted. Sharing briefly how I experience language around time in my body. I’m curious what yours are.”

When I speak directly from my somatic awareness, my expression shifts. I move my body more and as I watch myself now, it appears to me that I’m seeking the words through my movement, feeling the movement first and then finding the words to describe the sensation and movement. I furrow my brow more at this point and spend more time looking to my left. Whereas I appeared confident in presenting the ideas earlier in the video, when I share directly from my experience, there seems to be less confidence and I offer the caveat “I don’t know... you can leave any of that if it didn’t make sense (laughs). I was just trying to feel into it in the moment.”

***Week 6: Noticing a habitual activity***

*Sitting down to write again*

*Brow furrowed*

*Face still*

*Body feels frozen*

*except for the*

*fingers moving*

*skillfully*

*over the keys*

*I find my breath*

*Let my jaw soften*

*Mouth hangs open*

*This isn’t a usual way to write*

As I tune back into the invitation from week 6 to describe it to you now, I am struck by the juxtaposition of feeling like I need to complete this dissertation writing in a certain way and what I shared with the participants in week 6: “I would like you to experience your involvement in this research as a complete invitation that you have complete freedom to accept or not at any time. There is absolutely nothing you are required to do or experience. You have complete choice to leave the research at any time and also complete choice to stay and engage however it feels right to you. There is no right or wrong in this. Nothing I need or require you to do. My intention is to offer a variety of ways in and for you to explore what works for you.”

Although I wanted the participants to participate fully in all aspects of the research, I did not believe that requiring them to do so would be aligned with the intentions and inspiration for the research itself – to explore what is possible, to have somatic practice be easy and accessible, for people to trust and follow their own knowing as opposed to an external requirement. Hence the continual use of invitations and curiosity. Coming back to this premise also allowed me to keep staying in curiosity and openness of what invitation to offer next in the 10-week exploration and for me to continue to follow what feels moving and alive and engaging for me in reviewing the invitations now, a year later, and sharing salient aspects with you from a somatic perspective with the hope of some through line.

Just as I shared with the participants that I offered a variety of access points (visual, written, and auditory invitations), so too are these descriptions an attempt to explore a variety of access points to understanding and gaining something from reading about this research. I shared that I know that I engage more easily with written material than audio or visual and invited the participants to be curious about how they best engage, to find “what is most easeful and nourishing and can help you invite more awareness of the experience in your body that serves you in your life. I believe that may be quite different for each of us with our varied lives, history, orientation, tendencies, etc.

Which is why this is completely experimental and fueled by continual curiosity within me and by tuning into you.”

This recognition and acknowledgement that there are a variety of ways into somatic practice and that some may work better than others, my exploration in week 6 was to be “exploring less esoteric or philosophical musings and instead inviting in a tangible, physical anchor for the week.” I received responses from 9 participants for week 5, which included 9 written and 2 verbal responses. For this invitation, I was inspired by a homework exercise I have given my dance students for years: “to choose a habitual activity you do every or most days, something that you do so automatically that it would be interesting for you to notice what your body is doing and how it feels while doing this activity, and to use that activity as your anchor for the week.”

There is less personal sharing as well, although I engage myself in the research by choosing a habitual activity I intended to notice for the week and sharing with the participants my rationale – that I chose driving because I believe I am quite somatically unaware while driving and my body is often achy after driving.

Without a requirement, I still encouraged the participants to make a commitment to what habitual activity they would notice throughout the week and to send me a response via the jotform page immediately to name this commitment for themselves (a practice I have my students do with the same assignment). Three participants shared their choice via jotform.

With a desire to keep making the participants’ explorations as easy as possible, I created podcasts from the videos of the previous weeks so they could be downloaded and listened to and also recapped all the previous invitations with links to the videos so the participants would have all the previous material in one place if they wanted to refer to any of it or go back.

Watching the video of myself, I get a sense of a lot of care. That certainly is at least partly from the words I choose to use – inviting participants to honour and choose what works for them. I



notice that I often rock towards the camera. I notice that, similar to week 5, I often tilt my head to my right when expressing care. I also seem to shrug my shoulders and shake my head a fair bit.



Although the word counts are generally lower with this invitation than earlier ones that were longer, the sense I get from looking at the particular word cloud above (drawn from the written invitation for week 6) also provides me with a faint echo of the encouraging nature of this invitation.

*What moves through you while looking at the word cloud above?*

***Week 7: What does my body know right now?***

*weeks of internal struggle*

*like my body*

*is being pressed*

*the sensations are overwhelming*

*and i just want to hide*

*so it's interesting*

*here i am again, a question i asked almost a year ago*

*as the pandemic loomed*

*'what does my body know right now?'*

*a question for today*

*as i continually feel like i can't breathe*

*'what does my body know right now?'*

*like the calm i found in the intensity of the icy cold lake*

*this morning*

*a calm knowing*

*beyond words*

*space around it all*

It was at the seventh week point that one of the great benefits of my improvisational approach revealed itself as world events took a turn in ways we had not expected. I had started the weekly invitations at the end of the January 2020. I sent them out weekly on Fridays for the following nine weeks and the week seven invitation was sent on March 13, 2020. As I've been describing, I listened through my somatic awareness, intending to connect to myself and the participants, believing in the interconnection and entanglement in life that can only be accessed through our embodied experience of it, to uncover the invitation that would be that week. The days leading up to March 13, 2020 saw the world beginning to shut down, a collective fear response to the unknown of the novel coronavirus. It impacted my sensorial experience and quickly became clear that I needed to respond to what was arising for me and for others and I named this in the invitation, sharing the somatic work has lessened my experience with anxiety and that "I am a sensitive person and, with everything going on right now, it felt like I really needed to listen to this intense collective state of really being in the unknown, of higher anxiety and fear. I imagine we each experience it differently and we're all in a place right now of not knowing from moment to moment and day by day."

After weeks of exploring heady notions such as a life-as-movement ontology, the metaphor of language, and the quantum entanglement of life, when things began arising globally and

personally in the week leading up to March 13, I wanted to come back to some of the basics of somatic practice. This consisted of the deep listening through our bodies, awareness and presence and the belief that tuning into the sensorial awareness we have access to grounds us in the present moment and through which we can find “some sense of knowing that I can sense... a sense of knowing in my body that maybe doesn’t have words.” “The invitation this week is to ask yourselves: “what does my body know right now?” and just being a state of curiosity and listening.” Compared to week 1 of the invitations, where I sent a 1880 word document and 17:23 video, the invitation for week 7 was 538 words and 10:16. I note that in my recording I say “Welcome to week 7 of our life as movement practice” whereas in the written invitations, I continue to call the exploration “Life as somatic practice.”

Beyond a simplified invitation, what I explored this week for the first time was providing the invitation at the beginning, as opposed to prefacing it with ideas or sharing first. “The reason why I wanted to start with it is to start from that place from my body.” I did not prewrite the invitation for this week for this reason (although the written version created after the video was much more succinct than the recording). By using somatic practice adaptively through the weeks of the invitation, I was also demonstrating how somatic practices can be a support in the unknown and challenging times of life, which I share “is, for me, one of the places where this work is more powerful.” With this belief, I offer some more specificity in the invitation: “The specific invitation is to ask the question above (“what does my body know right now?”) of yourselves when there's a state of anxiety, high arousal, intensity, confusion, overwhelm, numbness or just being in the unknown – be it physical, mental, emotional, when it feels like a lot on any level... and see what arises, whether there are words or not.”

In the video, I intentionally look directly into the camera and, because I have not prewritten and intend the sharing to come from tuning into my somatic experience, I tend to look up, to the

left, and down more often, pausing, appearing to search or listen to the words arising from that experience. I share that “I notice how less coherent I am when I’m just speaking from this place, going into the unknown with you.” At some point in the video, I forget to keep looking in the camera and begin to look at the screen recording me again before looking back into the camera.

Before concluding the invitation, I shared briefly my own experience of asking myself the question while recording myself (from transcript, italics indicate words emphasised verbally):

“Asking my body (closing my eyes), what does my body know right now? (a long pause while I look up to the left, seemingly seeking) Again (closing eyes), similarly to, I have this, there’s a *shift* that happens in me when I just ask that question (eye down and fluttering). It’s almost like a relief of (sigh) listening. Of just *listening* (moving head forward with word) and not.. well because I know my, as somebody (looking briefly in the camera) who experiences things *strongly*, I have had tendencies of *pushing* things away (looking at camera, moving body quickly back and forth, eyebrows furrowed) *or running away* from how I feel and there’s such a, it’s like a *relief* (closing eyes) I experience of just, oh (with sigh) I’m attending, I’m attending (nodding). And in this moment asking that question brings up (frowning) some intensity of *feeling*, like I have tears coming (eyes begin to water) and (looking up to left, pause, blowing out through mouth) there’s just a lot of, a lot of feeling in my *heart* (raising eyebrows). The tears don’t necessarily (shaking head) feel *sad*. I think they’re (closing eyes) more just tears of relief, you know. (shaking head) I don’t necessarily need to know what they’re from. (looking back at camera) You know, it could be, it could be from a lot of the stuff (frowning) that’s been coming up for me *mentally* and *emotionally* (looking down, eyes widened) already, just in *today alone* with new information (smiling, shaking head at camera) and changes and navigating the things that are *already* going on in my life and then now the things that are going on collectively. (looking back down) And yeah. I can my body’s asking for a bit more space to feel (looking at and head moving toward camera) and I’m gonna see if I can honour that later today. Hmm (nodding).”

I end the invitation to an intention to connect back with the participants: “I am wishing you so much ease in this collective unknowing, reaching out to you across the spaces to share my sense of connection with you, particularly in this increased distancing that that we're entering into right now.”

### **Week 8: Noticing experience with text-based technology**

In the week leading up to the eighth invitation, I explore the previous invitation for myself, which leads to awareness of how the process of somatic listening and improvisation serve the development of the participant exploration and a sense of connection to my own somatic knowing.

*What does my body know right now? I am drawn to the sides of my nose, a sense of melting down. Increased heaviness in body. If I were to name it I would say it feels sad. That it feels like loss. Sadness of loss. My body knows the squishy feel of the ball beneath me. The rounded twisted spine sitting on a ball typing with my left leg over my right and turned slightly to the right. My ear still has a slight twinge that still comes up mildly from time to time since the ear infection. What does my body know right now? The sides of my mouth get heavier. Seems like sadness even more. My body knows there is so so so much heaviness. And also a tingling expansion in my head, ears, eye sockets. A deep breath and sitting up on the ball, uncrossing legs. My body knows that sitting up, I feel less heavy and dropped. What does my body know right now? It knows this heart is beating, the sensation of that heart, the slight buzz in the ears along with the sound of the freezer humming, my friend turning pages, cars driving by, people walking and talking outside. My body knows the textures of my arms resting on the wood of my desktop as I type. It has learned the texture and give of the keyboard of this new computer. It knows how to breathe, digest, move. (Autoethnographic journal, March 15, 2020)*

Writing that “I suddenly get present to the immense wisdom and capacity of this body,” I reflect on how I choose the invitations each week. “When I happen upon an idea that feels ‘right’ it

does feel like it's my body that knows. It isn't a rational choice." (Autoethnographic journal, March 15, 2020) In my autoethnographic explorations that spanned back to 2018, I had been really curious about my somatic awareness while typing my journal, which I did either on my computer or on my phone. Because of the developments locally and globally between March 13 and 20, 2020, and as we were going into lockdown in Toronto in response to coronavirus, this exploration seemed even more salient as we were not allowed to see others but only interact with them virtually "most of us need to rely on technology more than we ever have." I could sense a potential way of weaving these insights I had been exploring personally together with where I had been doing with previous invitations (with a focus on speaking and language and a curiosity of the relationship between somatic awareness and language) and what was happening globally.

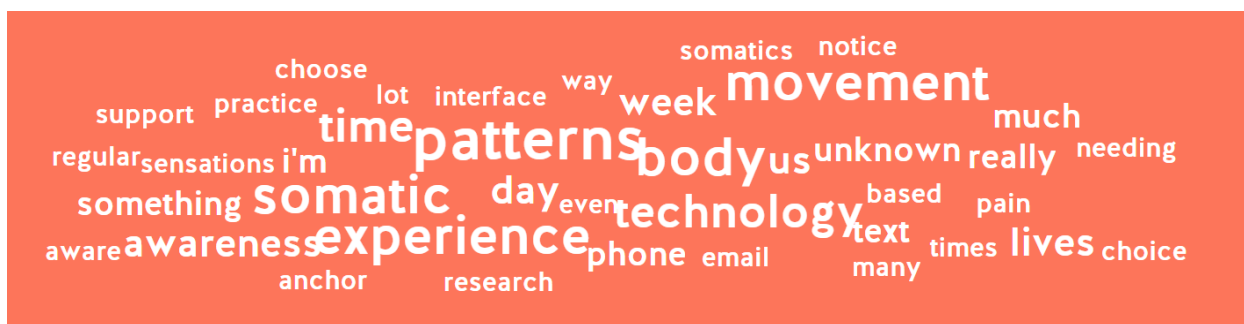
I received responses from five participants for week 7, which included five written and three oral responses. In the invitation for the eighth week, I share some information I believed was relevant about the history of somatics in the west: "many of the people that are considered pioneers in somatic practices (such as Feldenkrais and Alexander technique) were prompted to develop these systems for somatic understanding because of a lot of upheaval, change, chronic illness, and debilitating pain. Big challenges in their lives prompted a consideration of what was and wasn't working in their movement patterns. Even now, many people turn to somatic practices when something isn't working their lives, such as chronic pain."

I refer back to the notions of movement patterns becoming habitual and thus out of our general awareness. Although my intention for the research was to explore access to the subtle sensations and movement patterns without needing an issue arising, I found it interesting "that this was one of the guiding ideas around this research and that collectively we seem to be entering into extreme time.... And within this time of change, we can have more awareness and choice of the

movement patterns that we want, that support our well-being, that support our connection to ourselves, and that support a connection to what's important to us.”

I share about my rationale for being curious about text-based technology and how my personal explorations had uncovered that I find myself generally less aware of my somatic experience when engaging with text-based technology “and in talking to people it seemed like a common occurrence.” I note that the pioneers of somatics in the west were not interfacing with technology as we are now. I present the invitation: “The invitation or anchor for this week is to choose text-based way that you interface with technology, either active or passive, whether it’s texting, writing emails, or reading the news. Choose a specific text-based interaction you have with technology on a regular basis (rather than all text-based interactions) – something specific and concrete. And notice the experience in your body: how you’re holding your body, how you’re moving your body, the sensations that you feel in your body. Explore using this intention as an anchor this week to invite somatic awareness throughout your day.” I let the participants know that “I’m going to choose my texting, like just my regular phone texting, not the, I have a lot of other ways I text on my phone, like messenger and whatsapp, and I’m just going to specifically choose when I text and see what I can notice about my sensorial experience.” I note that I’m already aware that “something bubbles up in me.. a quickening” when I hear the text notification vibration on my phone and that I only use one thumb and one index finger when texting on my phone but haven’t really tuned into feeling my body while actually texting.

After having come up with the idea of an anchor, a touchpoint to remind us to tune into our somatic awareness, I continue to use the term. As I review, rewatch, and describe the invitation now, *I’m curious once again about my use of words and how to play with representation.* I like the sensations that arise in my body when looking at the word cloud generated from the most often used words in the written form of the invitation and invite you to take a moment to look at it:



I did not prewrite my invitation this week but had planned generally what I would communicate. I notice how my language indicates movement inward and outward and invite the participants to move together and to turn inward. I use language that indicates tuning in to my movement and experience: “...keep getting a strong reminder for myself how critical it is for me to stay connected to my somatic experience, particularly in times of unknown.” “was a really helpful anchor for me. A simple way in that was in my conscious awareness.” I move from my experience to my beliefs of how it is connected to general experience and invite us to consider our sharedness “It’s amazing we can attend to other things because we have this embodied habituation of certain ways of moving.” “It takes a lot of repeating of these patterns, going these habits, until the negative impact gets so loud that our bodies start screaming at us.” “collectively we seem to be entering into this extreme, calling us to be aware where we might not have been to shift our patterns and have more mindfulness” I consider my experience in relation to the participants, moving my attention towards them “I’m not sure how it was for you in whatever you’re moving through right now.” “I’ve been really called to listen for another simple anchor to offer you this week.” I invite us to move together in a collective exploration “recognising something isn’t working. What do we need to consider?” “How do we have greater awareness as we move through our day to day without needing to wait until something gets really loud?” “We’re patterns of movement. We create and reinforce these patterns of movement.” “As we move through this unknown together” “these are movements that



have collectively developed pretty recently and are shifting right now.” “What a great time when these patterns are shifting.” And I invite the participants to turn their attention inward “how you’re holding your body, how you’re moving your body, sensations in any place.”

### ***Week 9: Space to listen and hands***

I received responses from 6 participants for week 8, which included 5 written and 3 oral responses. In one of these responses, a participant asked me to consider not sending another video/invitation for the 9<sup>th</sup> week. She noted “Now I feel as though I've missed too much to participate, and I won't make the time to go back and catch up,” and asked for a week to catch up and just reflect and notes “Everyone must be noticing the awareness of the body and pattern-changing.” As I, too, was in the initial days of the responses to coronavirus at this time, I welcomed the invitation as it seemed like a good idea to pause and reflect. Therefore I did not create a new video or written invitation for the participants and sent them an email that Friday, as I had told them I would, with the following invitation: “As we enter our 9th week of this exploration together, everything is feeling so technologically saturated that I have not made yet another video/podcast to add to the time you spend online. Things have changed so much since we started in January! So this week is much more open and I want to give you more space to listen to what your bodies need during this time. An **optional invitation to take on is to notice the movement of your hands.** With the awareness that much of the COVID transmission appears to spread from people's hands to their faces, it could be a supportive practice to notice those habitual movements of our hands (I know I touch my own face a lot!). And the bigger invitation, especially through these times of unknown, is to see if you can take moments to listen in to what you're experiencing in your body and **what you most need and can give yourself right now.**” I provided them with links to the jotform pages, which contained the videos and written transcripts for each week, as well as the links

for the podcasts for all the previous weeks if they wanted to return to any of the previous invitation. I created a separate jotform page for any feedback they wanted to provide me from the week. Even without a video/written invitation for the week, I received responses from five participants from this week.

***Week 10: Choose your own score***

“What’s alive in your body in this moment? What position do you find yourself in? What’s supporting you? Notice the movement in your eyes, the subtle movements in your body. What sensations are calling most loudly for your attention? Are there any quieter sensations you can notice around those? I invite you to stay in curiosity of the experience in your body as you read this, to experience where and how what I’m sharing lands for you in your experience.”

This is how I begin the invitation for week 10 and I welcome the re-presenting of somatic awareness as I continue to write and you continue to read and as I describe some of the threads from the tenth and final invitation in my participant exploration.

*I notice  
a tingling in my skin  
a pleasant buzzing  
I follow it  
around  
to a softened mouth  
almost smiling  
soft eyes  
gaze  
at the greening sprouting*

*grass outside*  
*like the sap beginning to flow*  
*in the trees I gaze upon*  
*a sense of increasing fluidity*  
*in my body*  
*and in my writing*

I let the participants know that I started from somatic awareness just as much for me as for them – as I had spent a lot of time thinking and planning the final invitation, wanting to get it just ‘right,’ and realising I wanted balance between what I had wanted to say and being present in my body as I say it. The second representing I offer the participants is to invite them to remember what their intentions and hopes were for in their participation in the research and to be aware of what they’re most interested in while receiving the invitation.

My tenth and final invitation was longer again, as I wanted to tie things together and provide the participants with a clear tool for somatic awareness in the day-to-day moving forward. My video was 17 minutes and 49 seconds long and the written invitation was 1251 words. It was by the final invitation that I had a greater clarity of the purpose of the invitations and how they were created. “The methodology of this exploration has been to offer you a score – a defined framework and focus, a smaller frame within which to consider your movement patterns – each week.” I was aware of the focusing nature of the invitation, just as an improvisation score allows us to hone in on one aspect of our movement. “A score intentionally provides limits, narrows the field, and imposes parameters on our movements”. I reference Nachmanovith (1990): “We use limits and scores to transcend ourselves, to transcend what we believe about ourselves, to question the edges of ourselves, to become aware of our patterns and open the possibility to new movement.” And just as movement improvisation scores are potentially endless, so too are invitations for somatic awareness

in our lives. “There is also not a ‘right’ score. What could be used as a score, as a limitation, as a focus, is infinite.” “One of the most helpful approaches in using scores is to recognise them as tools, as opposed to truth (of ourselves, of the situation, of life). Rather when we use them to play, explore, and create, they offer us opportunities to know aspects of ourselves, our embodiment and our movement patterns.”

What I wanted to leave the participants with was the structure so that they had the capacity to continue to choose invitations, or scores, and see possibility in limitation, for their own continual exploration of somatic awareness in their lives in the ways that serve them: “What my hope has been, rather, to offer you a small sampling of tools to add to your toolbox that could serve you into finding just a little more awareness of your movements and open up more choice for you where it feels most helpful.”

I weave back in the notion of self as expert and invite the participants to continually tune inward “Each moment, each body calls for something. And part of the larger invitation through this is to practice the listening in to your own experience, your own body, your own movements. To create new movement habits in the listening... There is no ‘right’ here. Only what’s right right now for you in this moment. And it comes back to listening, to curiosity, to trust, and honouring what would most serve you, which you are the best expert of.” I shared of my experience, letting them know that “honestly not all of the scores I offered were particularly resonate or helpful even for me in the week I offered them.”

I also share a personal experience that demonstrates how we can choose to explore any limitation in life, even those we don’t choose, as a score: “It’s certainly easier when we choose the score. And we don’t always have choice. I’ve been attempting to see this time of physical distancing and isolation as a score. I admit it’s been challenging to stay in that mindset consistently and I have struggled a lot in these past weeks. Yet when I can actually find my way back to curiosity and seeing

the restrictions as opportunity then the doors open much wider for me to gain more awareness – of my movement patterns and I’m in a greater choice around those patterns.” I invite the participants to consider the limitations that could choose as scores: “Similarly any restriction could be approached as a score – as an opportunity, whether it’s a physical restriction, a cultural norm, a category, the meaning of a word, a focus.”

The final invitation is to practice this choosing of a score: “So my final invitation in my last email in this exploration to you is to choose the score – choose the restriction, limitation, focus – that would most serve you right now, this week. And to see it as opportunity, to get really curious: ‘what are my patterns within this restriction? And what are the possibilities? Where’s my choice here?’” I invite them to tune into somatically to listen to the score to choose.

Having been curious about describing my physical and linguistic movement patterns throughout the invitations, I notice the consistency of many of my tendencies and much of what I have described in earlier weeks shows up again in the final invitation – the movement of my head and eyes, the changing of my voice when speaking about an idea versus personal experience versus an invitation for them. I tune inward, I tune into them, I invite them to tune into themselves. I seem to have forgotten to look into the camera and am looking at myself on the screen again. I feel a sense of familiarity by the final invitation and I also recall the sense of increased knowing and confidence, the same as I feel whenever I have practiced a new movement.

I end the invitation reminding them to let go of a need to get it ‘right,’ letting them know that invitation was just as much for me as for them: “I’ve been hoping to find how to ‘perfectly’ weave together of it all, to say it the ‘right’ way. And as my 8-year-old reminded me this week, maybe it’s not that it’s imperfect, but it’s just my idea of perfection that needs to change. And just like my body, there is much wisdom there.”

*We'll spend the first part of the class exploring our internal space, what we feel and notice inside our bodies, using our imagination to sense and see and feel the shape, location and movement of our bones and muscles and the space between them. We will then explore our personal kinesphere – the limits where our physical body can reach – sensing and exploring its size and shape and how it feels to take up more and less of this space around us. We'll then begin moving ourselves and our kinespheres through the room and explore our relationship to this larger space around us and between us. In partners first, and later in groups, we'll explore moving in the space around each other, in response to each other, listening and feeling how our inner space responds when we move bigger, smaller, closer, further, faster, slower, lower, and higher with each other.*

### **The fourth dance: Participant 'dialogues'**

An important pedagogical piece of the course I teach is to support my students in critical self-reflection and bring their awareness to the meaning making they are doing by linguistically articulating what they are learning. I provide students the space to reflect on almost all activities we engage in together with lots of in class sharing. My students also write in their journals at the end of class and again as part of their weekly homework. The dialogue aspect is also important for the students to both have their experience heard and accepted and hear similar and disparate experiences. Some of the participants in research very much valued the opportunity to put some of their experiences into words in responses they sent to me. Although their responses happened through online submissions and the participants had no interaction with each other, I am presenting their responses as a dialogue to provide both the participants and the reader an opportunity to observe the variety, similarity and range of responses. From the many pages of responses I received from the participants over the 10 weeks of the exploration, I have pulled out some of each participant's sharing. The full 'dialogues' I created for all the 10 weeks can be found in Appendix F. Below I offer a smaller sample of the dialogues I created to get a sense of the participants' responses

and their juxtaposition. *I present them without commentary and invite you to notice what arises for you when reading the participants' responses, what happens in your body?*

**Week 1**

*My invitation for week 1 was sent out January 31, 2020. I received 18 responses (11 written, 7 audio recorded) from 12 participants submitted from February 2 to February 22, 2020.*

Twyla: My invitation for you for this week is to get curious about the patterns in your life, particularly the movement patterns.

Dad: Although I've been vaguely aware of my body in the past, I think I'll make it a point to be more aware as I go forward.

Jacqueline: This really resonated with me: "that we need some special time and place to be aware and to feel into that knowing." This feeling immobilizes me more than anything. It is nice to be reminded that I don't need to mark of special time, place, or circumstance to be aware.

Dad: I'm taking some notes, as I always do, and I'm looking at dance and patterns, self awareness, habits and I'm going to make some notes every day as I go through this.

Sarah: I think it's Laban who characterized movement on a series of continuums. I imagine the patterns for me on those continuums would be that I've been moving slowly, directly, and methodically through space this week.

Dad: I live in my mind more than physically, I guess

Twyla: The thing about patterns is that when they become automatic, we no longer have choice. Being able to bring our awareness to these patterns allows us to have choice and allows us to make a different choice.

Harry: It is great to have this attention placed towards the ability to choose and how patterns are a part of life.

Sarah: My small movements are interesting to take note of this week.. I put my hair back and twist it when I am working through something.

Jacqueline: I tend to pick at my face, even while I was reading this invitation.



Sarah: I sometimes rub behind my ear when alone.

Stella: When I am happy, I see my body and movements expand and when thwarted, I shrink. I whine, I whine with my shoulders down, back hunched, I don't look around. Blech. I expand with happiness, I whistle, I look around and notice every detail around me.

Alise: There's a lot of disruption to my patterns.

Gary: The most insignificant movements of my own Holy body.

Stella: I really wanted to get into this to break some bad habits, most of which I am not even aware of.

Jacqueline: I continued to notice "bad" habits that have been bothering me... I noticed that I tend to notice the "bad" things more than the "good," and that I tend to judge these habits and things I do with or in my body. This particular observation isn't a surprise to me, but perhaps an invitation to notice "good" things, or even notice things without judgment either way.

Twyla: I just want you to consider that again: "the movements we make make us." That all of life is movement, that we are always moving; that through making movements, we create patterns of movement and those patterns become who we are.

Dad: I went back to my early childhood and the feelings I had about my body image, about my, and I have to say that I was ashamed of myself... I didn't think too much about it later in life but it, I think it did affect the way I had an outlook on life is early experience.

Alise: I think it's really a shame that we have a lot of shame around, I don't know, anuses and like the things that come out of our bodies.

Gary: I'm aware that I over-share.

Dad: Thinking about overcoming my own shame... what I did was, I got into a regime of physical activity, starting with swimming, then running and triathlons and pushing myself to say hey, I'm normal, I can do these things.

Alise: The degree to which I have lost touch with my ability to feel - due to physical injury, trauma, habit, socialization, shame, and a host of other factors - is the degree to which I have lost my ability to create and live a meaning-full life.

**Week 2**

*My invitation for week 2 was sent out February 7, 2020. I received 13 responses (10 written, 3 audio recorded) from 12 participants submitted from February 8 to February 21, 2020.*

Twyla: I want to thank those of you that have shared some of your experiences.

Sarah: Thank you for the gentle reminder to share the experience with you. Listening, allowing and following is an apt way of describing the process.

Alise: I'm really enjoying being able to respond because I just have this brain that does this: it makes all these connections and I listen and I get excited and I say: Oh that reminds me of this and that reminds me of this and there's this concept over here... what a relief to actually like be able to respond to what, to the input I'm receiving and like move that energy in a way.

Ruby: Turns out this post sparked a lot of thoughts! Thank you for the space to share them.

Alise: I like feeling like my thoughts are useful in some way. That they become part of some feedback loop, like the energy gets put back into a system in some way and is digested and given direction or purpose beyond myself.

Twyla: My invitation to you is to be curious about this idea of your self as expert, your experience as expert.... Be curious about your relationship to your experience and your sensations as teacher, as expert. Be curious about the trust that you have there and whether you could cultivate more trust.

Ruby: It's very interesting that you bring up the idea of us as expert because I am currently struggling in that realm, especially while job searching... I have also had a hard time trusting my body because I started to experience atrial flutters a few years ago... That only furthered the disconnect of autonomy I felt with my body and broke the already weak trust I had in it.

Alise: Expertise is about knowing, which is valued culturally; what if we re-trained ourselves to place more value on a different metric, like delight or curiosity or aliveness? Might this render our currently held notion of expertise often irrelevant?

Ruby: The thought of being an "expert" causes my heartrate and anxiety to increase because it reminds me that I will never be one because for so long, the idea of an expert is a person of authority who is smart and stoic and skinny and probably blonde

Melanie: My internal dialogue has been: I'm the expert at my body, I'm listening to my body, I know that what's important, I know that these things are important and you have to listen to me... I'm angry at my trainers for not listening to me.

Sarah: When you talk of trust and self as expert, this is something I have explored explicitly... I spent a year focusing on a personal project I called "mapping the body", honing my body as instrument for understanding my mental and emotional state, and nonverbally trusting my responses to things... I'm feeling very trusting of my instincts at this point, and am curious to explore how and why I'm making choices with my movements at this time in my life.

Harry: So it is interesting for me to be able to discern what is talking body, soul or spirit? and it is inviting me to look at what do I want to listen to? What is my aim? What do I want to be? What is most important for me to listen to when there is contradiction between body, soul and spirit? Is there a way to bring all three into unison with each other? What experience am I looking for?

Twyla: Continue to be curious about what these sensations, this expertise, these movement patterns have to say and have to teach you.

Melanie: Everything is different when it is observed - the act of observing changes the object.

Sarah: How do I express feelings in my body? That is an interesting question of identity... So in this way, I'm feeling like I'm trusting my instincts implicitly. I'm making healthy choices to

slow down, to listen, to be in tune, to stretch, move, walk, exert, or breathe when I need to, and be totally present for the people around me. I'm feeling like I'm fully participating in an embodied way even if my use of body is low key. Thanks for the prompt on this. I hadn't thought about it that way and it is helpful to see how well I feel I'm doing under distressing circumstances.

Gary: All of this web of life and support is part of how I'm holding myself, how I'm standing and moving and leading with my best foot, and moving forward in the world, against the struggles that I feel so deeply.

### **Week 3**

*My invitation for week 3 was sent out February 14, 2020. I received 13 responses (8 written, 5 audio recorded) from 8 participants submitted from February 14 to February 27, 2020.*

Gary: When I watched the video, I did it again by watching the video rather than reading with the caveat: I sometimes listen as aware of my body posture, sitting in my work chair, sometimes I was looking down – my laptop isn't positioned in a good position to be looking forward for good spine health but the laptop is kinda sitting down, so I would look, I would watch you delivering the word story and I would watch your earrings if they happened to be distracting or I would watch the art hanging on the wall – I really liked the child art – but sometimes I would close my eyes and sit up straight and favour making my body just relaxed and ready and attentive, taking in the words

Sarah: My legs are straight in front of me, computer on lap, back propped up with 5 pillows, and up to my chest under a duvet, sheet, and wonderfully heavy blanket. I love that blanket. It is incredibly comforting and calming.

Alise: I listened again, because I had a sense that I wasn't really present the first time to this. The second time, I was having the somatic experience of eating ice cream and listening without watching the video recording, occasionally skimming the transcript.

Dad: I'm looking away in the distance so I'm actually consciously doing some body movements. But then noticing my position. I'm back here on my chair. My feet are wiggling a bit. I'm not nervous. I guess the act of speaking – physical activity – comes naturally. There's no extra effort to speak. Although sometimes there's a conscious effort, disembodied effort to remember something from time to time and put things in order. So, okay, so I'm speaking and I'm searching for a word and what happens? I look away... I'm up walking around now.. I look away, I look down and I think aha! I found the word, I just remembered.

Twyla: I want to invite you to read this out loud. If you choose to continue to read silently to still be an awareness of how you move in watching or reading.

Dad: Now one thing that did stand out to me is in all of my interactions with your research I've always chosen to speak. I've never wrote anything. I haven't written anything. And I guess that's just how I'm comfortable in speaking and that maybe shows you state of mind and process of my thinking.

Jacqueline: It is much less convenient for me to do things that involve sound rather than just typing, but I also know that I prefer to communicate in written form.

Sarah: I like the idea of reading aloud. I tried it, but wasn't in a place that made it reasonable to continue when I first received the prompt.

Dad: Thinking about my embodiment but not thinking of my embodiment directly but thinking of my embodiment, like an outside, detached observer. I don't know if that makes sense but I'm going to try something right now, I'm walking over to a mirror and I've never done this before. I'm looking at it in real time as I speak to you.

Gary: I thought I could sit still for the whole thing. I'm kind of a wiggly person. I could not sit still for the whole thing so, at a certain point, I paused, walked around and then pressed pause again and continued.

Twyla: That the only way we actually know or connect or are in the world is embodied. That everything is movement and everything is embodied.

Gary: Everything is embodied. Hm. I said. (Big, deep, primal -- but quiet, and calm, assured - - agreement.)

Sarah: The only way we know and connect in the world is movement and embodied. I'm not sure I agree with that... My thoughts are not movement. They are thoughts. My feelings are embodied, but thoughts can evoke a reaction in my body or not. They don't have to. In fact, when I

am lost in thought, I tend to forget my body - even if I am biking or running or using my body at the time I get lost in thought. In fact, I tend to get lost in thought when I move repetitively through space. The pattern of repetition invokes thoughts, which distract me to forget to notice my body. Does that mean I'm embodied, or the opposite?

Twyla: So my invitation for you this week is: to be aware of the experience in your body as you're speaking.

Stella: When I am engaged, I talk with my hands, when I am angry, I am very still. when tired, I am very lacklustre and toneless.

Dad: I felt a little tongue-tied. I don't know. maybe that's just me... I don't know if this gives you any insight but walking and talking yeah we do that all the time don't we?

Stella: I tend to concentrate on the feeling in my belly when I talk, is it relaxed, or tense? Watching the people around me, do I need to stop? Do I want somebody else to talk more? or less? When I sing, I let it all out. In the woods, I whisper with my voice and footsteps.

Jacqueline: I have also noticed that I tend to keep my body contained, and my thoughts/speech contained when sharing things. I recently shared some things with someone and tried not to contain my thoughts/speech as much, and I found that I contained my body less too. I'm not sure which beget the other.



**Week 4**

*My invitation for week 4 was sent out February 21, 2020. I received 10 responses (7 written, 3 audio recorded) from 7 participants submitted from February 21 to March 2, 2020.*

Twyla: As living beings, we are always moving – in gross and subtle ways... When we bring our conscious awareness to the movements we are making, any of the movements we are making, we bring choice to what movements we make and can consciously decide whether those movements serve us and what's important to us. And yet we're often out of this awareness.

Hazel: I resonated with your content this week, as I am trying to figure out the best way for me to recognize my somatic experiences. It is still very difficult for me to stop and take a second to see how my body feels throughout the day, especially during work. I was wondering if this comes naturally to some people.

Sarah: I'm highly somatic in my day-to-day actions... I'm not feeling like your average person who's a "walking zombie."

Stella: I read recently that some people have an internal monologue and others don't. I definitely do and when I can simply shut it up, I am MUCH more aware of my body. Otherwise, it is my inner voice, saying 'now I chop these vegetables, I am putting pants on' It is not helpful in mindfulness. It is me narrating my life, rather than living it.

Sarah: When I say things out loud it's very different from when I say them as a running commentary in my head. And I'm trying to feel the difference.

Dad: As I record and speak about my experience it helps me focus on embodiment.

Twyla: Many of us intentionally include practices (of which there are many) in our lives that are dedicated to focusing on our somatic awareness – meditation, yoga, conscious dance, somatic therapy, pilates, etc.

Stella: Meditative dance has always been about leaving my words behind. I like to forget how to speak and be slightly incapable of it when I am done.

Sarah: I've started dancing again... My body remembered... I was super somatic while trying to synthesize my thoughts and feelings through movement without words.

Sarah: So I've not wanted to speak in movement. I've really wanted to separate watching, saying, and doing and not multitask but be focused on each thing 100 percent.

Jacqueline: I found it hard to allow myself to slow down and just watch the video and not try to multi-task or do something else

Sarah: I like to listen and watch and write and read all together.

Jacqueline: I guess part of why I gravitate to the written text, in addition to convenience, is that it feels more active and so I feel less compelled to do something else at the same time.

Twyla: I'm curious: if and what language pulls you towards or away from somatic awareness in your life?

Jacqueline: I enjoyed allowing myself to bring awareness to my somatic experience while reading the invitation, but without feeling the need to alter anything I was doing.

Dad: What affects me? Certainly the content of the speaking so when you talk about noticing my feet and going up my body and things of course that makes me aware of that.

Sarah: It feels like a real mix between getting very still in order to listen to my instincts and responses and needing to push, move, participate, embody my mullings, especially during times of crisis or heightened emotions.

Dad: I believe that generally my body is very calm while I listen to or, yeah, listen to or interact with other people speaking.

Sarah: I think I'm becoming more conscious of being still and listening but the risk of being disembodied or un-somatic in the listening is higher because I become so absorbed in the listening.

Dad: I'm aware of how I want to be. I want to be calm.

Twyla: Keeping the notion from last week – speaking as movement – my invitation for you (and for me) this week is to become aware of other people's speaking as movement. And specifically to become curious about what in their speaking pulls you towards or away from being aware of your own somatic experience.

Jacqueline: Considering your speaking as movement in the video, I was aware of the minute movements--twitches of the head, eyes flicking up toward the camera, etc. I sometimes found myself... not mirroring exactly, but if you would shift your weight in a certain way, I would follow by doing something of similar magnitude--shifting my weight, moving my torso, etc.

Sarah: To get back to my experience of listening to the video of you, my feet are resting, my legs are a little stiff but also rested, my back slightly compressed but propped up. My core is supportive and aligned. Arms are resting on the computer. Fingers flowing if needed. Neck and head propped and poised.

Dad: I'm still unpacking what these layers are in my own experience, in my experience, language, my own speaking and watching others speak and listening to other people speak.

Twyla: I believe language and our tendency as humans to want to make sense, make meaning, understand - particularly through language - greatly pulls us away from our somatic experience and we can feel less balanced in our awareness.

Alise: I challenge the notion I think I heard you voice that meaning-making takes us away from somatic awareness. Instead, I think that somatic experience flows into meaning-making, that meaning is actually a felt experience.

## **Week 5**

*My invitation for week 5 was sent out February 28, 2020. I received 13 responses (11 written, 2 audio recorded) from 11 participants submitted from February 29 to March 9, 2020.*

Twyla: It has been shown that we use quite a lot of metaphors in our speaking that connect abstract ideas to our embodiment – taking something we cannot directly experience through our senses and connect it to our sensorial and spatial experiences. One I'm quite curious about is how we speak of time metaphorically as a thing, with substance.

Dad: You know me, I like to leave early for events, for travel, whatever. I don't like to be late.

Ruby: Whenever someone mentions time and me, I feel shame because I have a history of never being on time and I used to be relaxed about it and then it morphed into shame.

Dad: So you're dancing with impending possible doom of yourself. Of course, it's not that dramatic. But I think, as you grow older, the sense of, you get more perspective and the sense of drama lessens. Small things aren't as dramatic as maybe once they were. So, dancing with time I think gets easier as you move on.

Twyla: Making time into a thing allows us to talk about it. And talking allows us to connect with each other. But then does it limit our experience as we relate to time only as this thing we've constructed?

Harry: My experience of time is that it changes based on the way I'm perceiving it. The way things are observed changes based on the way they are being observed. Does time even exist? Time comes and goes. Does anything that comes and goes exist?

Sarah: Time doesn't exist but rules us completely.

Stella: The way we package time, and rush it is the problem, we have codified it. If only we were free to taste and experience each particle of time.

Dad: For me time is about events. If there are no events, nothing changed, there would be no idea of time.

Jacqueline: My awareness of time--worry about taking up or wasting people's time, pressure on using time a certain way (sometimes to the point of not using it at all), trying to allow other people to be responsible for managing time (e.g. at appointments), "time as a container"

Stella: Once I let go of any control over my time, I relaxed. I biked, and danced very much in the moment, and slept very well.

Dad: That's one aspect of time: going forward in time... One aspect I'd like to talk about this morning is historical time. Historical time in the sense of memories, of lives lived and how that impacts, impacts my somatic experience... In the afternoon I sat and was relaxing in the sunshine at the end of the couch by the window and I got into looking at some archival videos and the effect it had on me and I was mindful of that. And 1984, I had 2 children, ages 5 and 2, I was married for 7 years, starting my life as a mature adult and so on and so forth... the impact it had on me, taking me back to that time and the feeling I got in thinking about that time, not reliving it as much as saying to myself, now Alex what did you do then?

Stella: Time is in my opinion, all that we have. We are given the time between our birth and our death to live in a body on this earth.

Dad: So time has, and it's easy to say it has an emotional impact but emotions and body experience are inseparable to me. It becomes that way. I've always had this obsession and maybe more so now about time, not that time is running out. How can I explain it? 'Time is... I... I like to do things in order. I like to keep things organised and time is the same way for me. I like to keep time organised. And historical time and I go back and I try and sense a pattern of my personal experiences from childhood onwards and how does that inform me today? And when I think I know, thinking about this now and I thought about this before. It's a learning experience so you

become a better person by going back and experiencing the highs and the lows, the good times and so on from your history.

Sarah: Happiness is when we are in the zone and lose time participating fully. We live in an age when we are hard pressed to escape constructs and constrictions of categorizing every moment of time.

Harry: When I perceive that time does not exist, I feel expansion in my body especially in my heart.

Gary: Dance with time was a liberating idea, both for practical things and for the BIG things: a song workshop that nourished me, and a deathbed singing visit that was strangely blank AND unsettling both. In fact, your sending out encouragements, but knowing that some of them fall upon people's ears that are otherwise occupied, or simply not attending kept resonating with me.

**Week 6**

*My invitation for week 6 was sent out March 6, 2020. I received 7 responses (5 written, 2 audio recorded) from 5 participants submitted from March 7 to March 25, 2020.*

Twyla: My invitation for this week is to choose a habitual activity you do every or most days, something that you do so automatically that it would be interesting for you to notice what your body is doing and how it feels while doing this activity, and to use that activity as your anchor for the week.

Stella: I choose walking because I am wobbling around on a boat and I have to relearn to walk. I am terrible at it.

Sarah: Walking to me is a conscious endeavor. Each step has become a mindful re-engagement in understanding how to place my weight to do non-harm. It's as if I am working all the time at re-programming my brain to re-program my body to function effectively and efficiently to do less harm and allow me to live an active and good life. It's really hard. I move a LOT in my life. I work on my feet.

Stella: After a few days, I am more relaxed, I keep my eyes in the distance to keep my balance and I can more or less walk forward without a problem. But I have to pay attention. Every time I step off the boat, I have to relearn walking again.

Sarah: This week I am working on retraining to be conscious of this, every single step. It is exhausting. And also good work.

Stella: Mindful walking is a very great practice for me.

Sarah: And of course, running up and down hills is a habitual thing. I go slow. I count. I focus on my breath. It calms and invigorates me.

Dad: You're going to laugh at me but what habitual activity I picked – making my first coffee of the day – that is a ritual or a routine... something I actually look forward to in the morning, which is making my first coffee of the day.

Gary: Make my morning coffee ...

Dad: Yeah, I'm describing a process and I fill it up and with my hands and I notice my hands I have to be really mindful of my hands and that I grip things tightly enough that it doesn't slip out of my hands. Yes, I do have butter fingers, more so now than I maybe in the past years and things will slip away so I have to be careful and I put the water filled container into the back of the coffee maker...

Stella: I can be a sloppy walker.

Dad: I have a yellow mat that prickles my feet. A small yellow mat on the floor and I'll stand on that in my stocking feet and I feel it in my feet. So that's sort of a waking up ritual, I haven't drunk the coffee yet but I'm waking up...

Gary: I wasn't so attentive of my chosen habit, which is coffee in the morning. When I WAS, though, a couple of times, it was rewarding.

Harry: I like this idea of picking a week-long task to have a noticing experience with. It reminds me of the Gurdjieff work.

Dad: ...a little game I have with myself in doing the process, how I feel in certain aspects of it, coming down the stairs, standing on the floor, shifting from one end of the little kitchen to the other end, going into the fridge and you know, being careful and nothing slips out... it's been 3 days now I've been especially cognizant of my first coffee morning ritual making of the day.



### **Week 7**

*My invitation for week 7 was sent out March 13<sup>th</sup>, 2020. I received 10 responses (7 written, 3 audio recorded) from 7 participants submitted from March 14<sup>th</sup> to March 25<sup>th</sup>, 2020.*

Twyla: I'm somebody who can tend to be prone to anxiety and through years of somatic work my experiences of anxiety have greatly lessened in my life. Today, however, has been a pretty high anxiety day for me and I've had the experience in my body of feeling overwhelmed and flooded, particularly around the unknown.

Dad: I never would have believed that my anxiety rose to the level it did over the past week.

Sarah: My anxiety is also very high. I'm trying to keep it at bay.

Stella: This week became one of the most stressful I have had in a long time.

Dad: The week unfolded yes, with a pandemic and a lot of changes. Unprecedented things happening around the world. Personally it hasn't affected me directly as much as most people because, for the most part, I live alone and I go out once in a while but not much. So it's not affecting my routine. However the... looking at the news, looking at what's happening around the world, I can't not help but feel a level of anxiety rising and how does that feel in my body? It's almost... it's visceral. Once again, I think I mentioned this before, it's not a trembling. But it can be. I'm going to stop right now because there's a phone call coming in.

Stella: I was in the US when all gatherings and flights got cancelled. The job I was heading to was cancelled, and then my flight there, and I had to make plans in a hurry. Those plans changed underneath me twice before I managed to get on a plane and end up in Costa Rica. Then, the place I had planned to stay fell through and where I ended up staying was not hygienic and I had to move to get to place I could isolate properly, and all of that took me four days.

Hazel: It has definitely been a crazy week this week with the COVID-19 situation... I would say I have felt a little bit of anxiety but also a little frustration on how people are handling the situation.

Dad: The phone call was from P... we talked about the nonsense going on. He thinks the craziness about people coming out of Walmart with piles of toilet paper and we're wondering: why do people do that?

Alise: Noticing when I have anxiety it's really hard to be in touch with my body, like it's just hard to be in my body. Like I don't want to be in it. It's like, get me out of here.

Sarah: I feel it in my chest, the shortness of my breath, a heightened agitation in all of my muscles.

Dad: Trying times I guess is a word you can use. And people get animated. And they get worried and concerned of the unknown. Like you said it yourself, the unknown always has a certain amount of anxiety around it.

Sarah: What if he brings infection to me and I can't see my son again?.. This too, causes a tightness in my chest, shallow breathing, tense muscles that don't want to move but to close in.

Stella: I finally landed in a safe place and that is what it felt like, I landed. I calmed, My body let go of the fierce grip I had on fear. I regained joy. I grounded. I got groceries and I danced while I cooked. My body knew there were no more major problems to be solved, so my soul got to relax. I started attracting a lot of grasshoppers.

Sarah: We are practicing mindfulness. We are running up and down hills.

Hazel: And as weird as it sounds, I also felt a little ease from knowing that my job's workload will be a little less with all the meetings being canceled.

Twyla: The specific invitation is to ask the question “what does my body know right now?” of yourselves when there's a state of anxiety, high arousal, intensity, confusion, overwhelm, numbness or just being in the unknown – be it physical, mental, emotional.

Sarah: What does my body know right now? It needs to work - on the computer, checking off the large to-do list (taxes, lesson plans, recommendation letters, emails). It needs to move (cleaning, shopping for needed goods, exercising). It needs contact (dance, cuddle, caress, intimacy). It needs somatic calming that is unavailable.

Harry: What does my body know right N O W? The intelligence of the body does need to be acknowledged. In times when the knowledge of the body is not being acknowledged is may sometimes manifest as pain or tension or anxiety etc. Sometimes the body experiences anxiety when the body is trying to catch up to when the mind is and it doesn't want to be where the mind is. When honoring the body where it is at and by asking what it knows or what does it want to communicate, the body becomes at ease as it finally feels listened to. Isn't that all that most people want? Just to be listened to? What center is of a faster energy? M(I)nd or ego? Heart? Body?

Alise: I also really relate to just the relief, just taking a few minutes after watching the video and saying what is my body know right now, and I didn't even do it for very long, but there was this similar sense of Oh, right. Like I don't have to figure anything out out there. There's a relief in figuring out the in here. Or even not even the figuring out like I don't even know what's going on but just in the in the coming back to the feeling (pause) there's a big relief.

Dad: What does my body know right now? How does it affect my body? And I'm living it. Day by day... So I am calmer. I am sipping my tea. I'm sitting in my chair. My feet are crossed on the floor. My toes are wiggling a little bit. I'm looking around and today's, it's a good day.

**Week 8**

*My invitation for week 8 was sent out March 20<sup>th</sup>, 2020. I received 9 responses (6 written, 3 audio recorded) from 7 participants submitted from March 23<sup>rd</sup> to March 28<sup>th</sup>, 2020.*

Twyla: The invitation or anchor for this week is to choose text-based way that you interface with technology, either active or passive, whether it's texting, writing emails, or reading the news... And notice the experience in your body: how you're holding your body, how you're moving your body, the sensations that you feel in your body.

Dad: So I'm thinking back – I've been interfacing with technology one way or another for over 50 years – I can't believe that... So my activity at the keyboard is this week's selection and I'll see how my somatic awareness unfolds throughout the week.

Alise: I'm on a futon mattress on the floor with my left arm kind of hanging off the mattress and kind of like twisted a little oddly and then my head is looking the other direction and that seems to be the most comfortable position. So anyway I can lay in this awkward position and I can listen to this video and actually sort of accomplish something and so here it is about the position of bodies and technology and this is what I'm doing.

Stella: I have a laptop because I am fast typist, I can type almost at the speed of my thought, and when I type, I am relaxed, I often get sweat patches under the heels of my hands because I barely move them.

Dad: My position at the keyboard is always the same. It's at the desk in my office and I'm sitting on my chair. I try to maintain good posture with my feet on the floor or my ankles lightly crossed. My wrists in front of the keyboard. And trying to keep the keyboard in front of the screen or between the screens where I'm typing so I'm not contorting my body too much in any given direction.

Stella: As I type right now, my eyes can stare off to the view, while my fingers just do their thing. My U key is problematic, so I can tell every time my finger lands on it. My posture is good, my spine is relaxed, my feet play on the floor.

Dad: I'll maybe stay at the keyboard longer than I should and I try to stand up and walk around and get something or do something and the coffee in the morning is a good excuse to do that of course.

Sarah: When I am working (on taxes, lessons, etc.) I'm at my computer at the table. My body is in a working position that is healthy - straight back, good alignment, easy breathing, patient awareness.

Dad: So my office set up has two screens. Screen number one on my left, number two on my right. Number one is my primary screen, my keyboard is usually in front of it... I won't even think to move my keyboard or move my chair to focus my right screen. I find myself, even though I'm working on the right screen and thinking about my right screen at about 2 o'clock on the clock, actually more like 1 o'clock, the keyboard's at 12 o'clock and I am – my hands at the 12 o'clock position, my neck is moved over so I'm looking at the other screen and I catch myself and I said: Oh if I just move my keyboard over to the 2 o'clock position, 1 o'clock position, to face the right screen and swing the chair over and face it straight on, it's a more comfortable feeling but it's only if I consciously think of doing that will I actually do that.

Sarah: My phone is where I consume information about the virus so I can shield it from my son. I use text instead of sound. I am more stressed, so I usually use this after bedtime while I am lying down. I specifically do this left handed (not my good hand) so I don't react or respond. I practice just taking things in and sitting with them. It is not great for sleep but good to protect from ongoing fear during the day. As I do this, I am ALWAYS moving.

Stella: I dislike texting on my phone. I use an app called swiftkey that I can slide over the keyboard to type, but the auto text on my phone is basically a drunk, insane sociopath who adds the most random words to my texts. I end up hunching over my phone, usually grumbling. My shoulders come in, I am always frowning.

Alise: I'm a little foggy so I'm like what else am I going to say? Yeah and of course I've had these weird, like I don't, I'm not, like I don't like the technological interface actually.

**Week 9**

*My invitation for week 9 was sent out March 27<sup>th</sup>, 2020. I received 6 responses (4 written, 2 audio recorded) from 6 participants submitted from March 28<sup>th</sup> to April 12<sup>th</sup>, 2020.*

Twyla: An optional invitation to take on is to notice the movement of your hands.

Stella: Wow, I love touching my face! it is scary.

Alise: So as I'm reading your invitation I am realising that I'm picking at this little pimple thing on my nose, under my nose. Not really a pimple just a little whatever blemish. So I definitely touch my face a lot.

Dad: Touching my face? Not really. Only if things get itchy, I blow my nose, scratch my eye. Scratch my back – that's really something yeah... I find my back is itchier than my face.

Stella: I am very busy with my hands, learning how to do a few things. I learned how to pick fruit with a cage on a long stick. Learning that felt good, and tough. Not many times in my life anymore that I have to make a large, jerking movement. I think using twitch muscles like that is something I need to work on. My shoulders are too weak, I start to lift weights. I love gripping the weights. I so miss working with my hands. I set up a little place to do some art, and watch my hands play.

Dad: Oh did hear that? I can even still crack my fingers. Nah. I don't want to do that too often.

Alise: I did some weeding in front of my apartment building last night just because there's this area that's been driving me bananas the whole time I've lived here. I just took an hour and listened to the frogs and I didn't realise there are little blackberry vines sneakily in the vinca so I have all these thorns in my fingers. So any time I touch anything I get these little prickles.

Dad: My hands do what they normally do, they support me.

Harry: In noticing my hands, I see that as we are encouraged to stay home and do nothing, I find my hands are more busy now than before the global situation. My hands are busy building.

Dad: I do have to be mindful always if I'm picking something up like the mug with my children's pictures on it, I don't want to drop it. So I have a habit of taking my pinky finger always and putting it at the bottom of the mug or the bottom of the glass or something and it never falls off.

Twyla: And the bigger invitation, especially through these times of unknown, is to see if you can take moments to listen in to what you're experiencing in your body and what you most need and can give yourself right now.

Sarah: My somatic experience in week 9 was really to go inward more than ever. I have been doing this metaphorically, exploring myself and my place in the world; and that was reflected in my movements or lack of them. I needed time to sift through and regroup. It was useful.



**Week 10**

*My invitation for week 10 was sent out April 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2020. I received 16 responses (4 written, 12 audio recorded) from 6 participants submitted from April 4<sup>th</sup> to April 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2020. Ten of the audio recordings were submitted by my father.*

Twyla: In week 1, I invited you to represence your interest in participating in this exploration with me, what it was you hoped to find for yourself. I invite you once again to see if you can recall what that was.

Dad: My goal was from week number one... I think I'm looking for a deeper understanding of my body of what it's telling me, what happens with it and the somatic experience and understanding the term somatic experience.

Harry: My reason for participating in week one was to bring more awareness into my body. This has been my experience. I am grateful that you did this project for your PHD program. Thank you for supporting us in our growth! It has been very beneficial for me to be in the routine of practicing somatics.

Hazel: I reflected on why I wanted to join this experiment last year in 2019. I wanted to learn another tool to help de-stress from work. Have I achieved that through this experience? I think so, to a certain extent. Although the somatic awareness and experience was something new to me and I struggled to practice it, I have definitely gotten more aware of my bodily feelings than before. I am now more aware that my chest feels tight and I'm not breathing fully if I am under stress. I also now do more breathing practices and relax my body when I notice that.

Sarah: In revisiting my original intention, I'm not certain I recall what I said, although I have been ever present in terms of my focus - to learn about myself in understanding the connection I have with my body as I live life.

Alise: I was just thinking that when I started talking with you, I was homeless... I mean in in a sort of privileged, privileged kind of homelessness... I have been thinking of this week in relation

to your project as kind of some sort of metric or something like that is where I have been over these months. Yeah, it's just mind boggling to me.

Twyla: One of the most helpful approaches in using scores is to recognise them as tools, as opposed to truth (of ourselves, of the situation, of life). Rather when we use them to play, explore, and create, they offer us opportunities to know aspects of ourselves, our embodiment and our movement patterns.

Sarah: I would like to focus on the fact that these limitations are a choice: to see them as an opportunity to be curious versus a constricting challenge. I for one have focused mainly on the former.

Dad: I'm thinking about body today during my mindful meditation practice and awareness of the body in the second person. I'm thinking I can experience my body's feelings, my anxiety, or agitation or anything as my mind saying: hey you body, what are you doing? Second person: you. So introducing the second person into the narrative brings a bit of distance from the body and how it may or may not affect you.

Alise: I'm so relieved in a way that the world, like, I'm doing the same thing without the feeling that I had so often before that I was like missing out on something or I was doing something wrong or everybody else was like in on something. And I just wasn't in the world in the same way and that was somehow to my detriment... Like I actually feel tears to say this. I feel like instead of that the world has, is happening and I'm missing out on it, I feel like I have something that the world is missing out on. And the world is pausing. And I'm like stepping into the woods.

Sarah: I know also that sometimes I need to get quiet and still. When I am really in the muck of it, I consciously do this. I'm learning to trust my instinct on this, and not see it as depression or shutting down, but as a chrysalis or cocooning when I need to regroup and reshape myself. All of the input from the world says get a routine, exercise regularly, it'll get you out of your funk. For a

long time I followed suit. For now, though, I think I will choose to incorporate stillness into my new perfection and let that be okay.

Twyla: As I complete these 10 weeks of emails and worked on what I was going to say in this final one, I've been hoping to find how to 'perfectly' weave together of it all, to say it the 'right' way. And as my 8-year-old reminded me this week, maybe it's not that it's imperfect, but it's just my idea of perfection that needs to change. And just like my body, there is much wisdom there. I invite you to take this on this week and to take all the explorations of these past weeks together and add them to your toolbox, weave them into what you know and what's important to you and allow them to support you in the best and most 'perfect' way for you.

Dad: Over the past 10 weeks you invited me and others to participate in the somatic awareness project, and I thank you for that. It's opened my mind, open my thoughts. And during that time, unprecedented changes have been going on in the world. As the backdrop, this has caused a lot of feelings and a lot of emotions and a lot of body awareness.

Harry: I agree with what your 8-year-old son taught. I as well struggle with perfectionism and the way it impacts me is that I procrastinate and move like a snail in projects that are very valuable to me. In every new project I take on I learn new things about myself.

Sarah: Building my toolbox to revise the idea of perfection: I love that. What a wonderful way of pivoting that negative connotation!

Hazel: As you said, there's no right way to do this and I have been trying to navigate it my way. Thank you for this opportunity.

Dad: I think, for me, the future means that I have more awareness and thank for you for that. More awareness about somatic experience. I understand what it means. I understand what it means really inside. I understand what it means. It's my level one experience yeah. First person. Look at that. And what can I do with that? Well I can be more aware. I guess that's some time for

the future but I can take this moment Twyla to thank you for inviting me to be part of this research project. It's been a great 10 weeks.

*Today we're going to begin working on a final dance piece together that you'll be choreographing! This is a chance for us to bring in all our explorations this semester in an expression that's uniquely yours. It's like we've been separating the story into words and then the words into letters and played with the letters and we're exploring how we can put them back together in a new story. So today we're going to start with just that: letters! Let's start with the letter A. Moving beyond the literal, how does A feel in your body? What is its shape? Its movement? What associations do you have with the letter A? How do they move in your body? Say the letter A. How does the sound move you? How many ways could you express the letter A? Once we've played with the ways we can move letters in our bodies, we'll begin 'spelling' some words through our bodies, making them into sentences, paragraphs and a whole piece to see what dance we can create.*

### **The fifth dance: Final 'essays' and 'dances'**

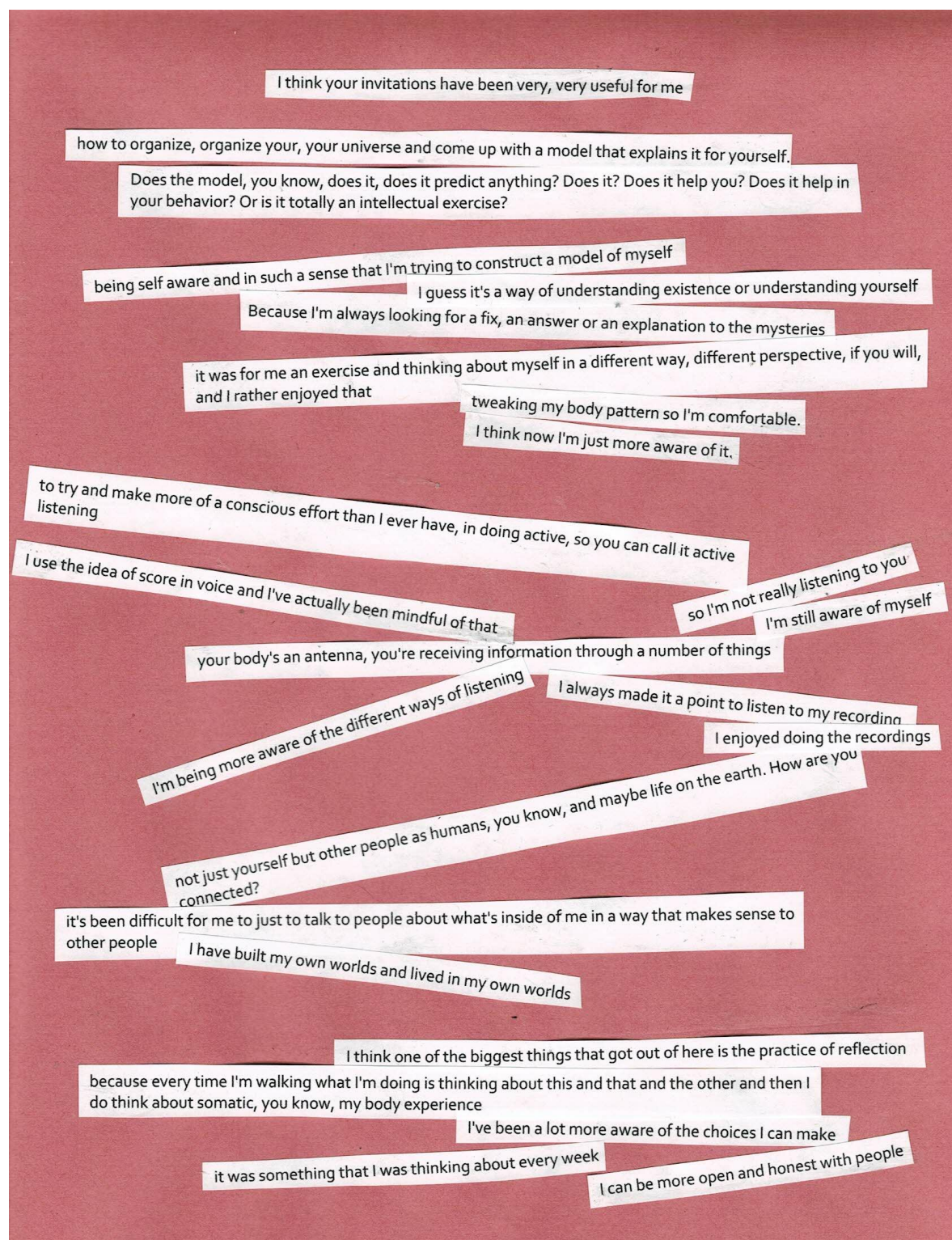
Just as my students have opportunities to reflect on their learning and explore new ways of weaving back together the aspects of movement and dance we've pulled apart through our weekly explorations, these 'essays' and 'dances' I've created for each of the 12 participants offers some reflection and weaving. Unlike my course, where my students write their own essays and choreograph their own dance, I'm the one who has created these pieces for the participants in this writing. Although certainly influenced by my subjectivity, I have attempted to present the participants as they've presented themselves. The 'essays' for each of the participants bring their participation in the exploration back to the research questions. In order to create these 'essays,' I spent a lot of time carefully going through each of the transcripts of our final conversations in order to identify something that the participants conveyed most clearly as being important to them and connected this to their participation and experience in the exploration. Just as I guide the explorations and creation of their final dance piece, acting as an artistic director, the 'dances' for each of the participants is a sharing of their words that I've made creative decisions as to how to

present. In service of continually exploring how the written word can support our connection to our somatic awareness, I've played with the presentation by creating a collage for each of the participants.

As noted earlier, the final conversations with the participants were very open ended where my primary goal was to tune into and connect to the participants, to follow what was interesting and meaningful for them. As a co-created conversation, I was also engaged in sharing what was interesting and meaningful for me in response to the participants. Like Nachmanovitch (2019) writes “The most ordinary act of creativity is spontaneous conversation – the art of listening and responding, interacting, talking in environmental factors unconsciously but with precision, modifying what we do as a result of what we see and hear, touch and make, a multidimensional feedback” (p. 6)

*Dad*

A 'dance'



### **An 'essay'**

As he communicated often in our conversations and his weekly responses, understanding (himself, others and the world around him) is important to my father. He is an avid reader and loves to find solutions to problems – indeed this is the work he does as a computer software developer. He could choose to retire but has not because the work of providing solutions for others is deeply satisfying for him. My father acknowledges that his tendency has been to be in a thinking world, an analytic world, often listening more to his own thoughts than others. Yet connection to others and finding solutions that make a difference also matters deeply to him.

My father shared that he really enjoyed his participation in the research and that it had a notable impact on his awareness through an increased practice of reflection and he made many connections for himself through his participation. Although he had heard about the research because I'm his daughter, he acknowledged that he participated as an exercise in thinking about himself in a different way.

My father was by far the most engaged participant and it was clear in all his sharings (as well as all the personal interactions we had during this time and afterward) that he really took his participation seriously, was fully committed, and practiced daily through his awareness, reflection and sharing. He watched all the videos and read all the transcripts, usually at least twice each. He actively brought the invitations into his life on a daily basis and usually took notes. Over the course of the 10 weeks, he submitted 3 written responses and 28 audio responses, which is why he is so active in the 'dialogues' I created from the participants' responses. He clearly brought his capacity to create structures to his participation by creating ones that supported regular engagement.

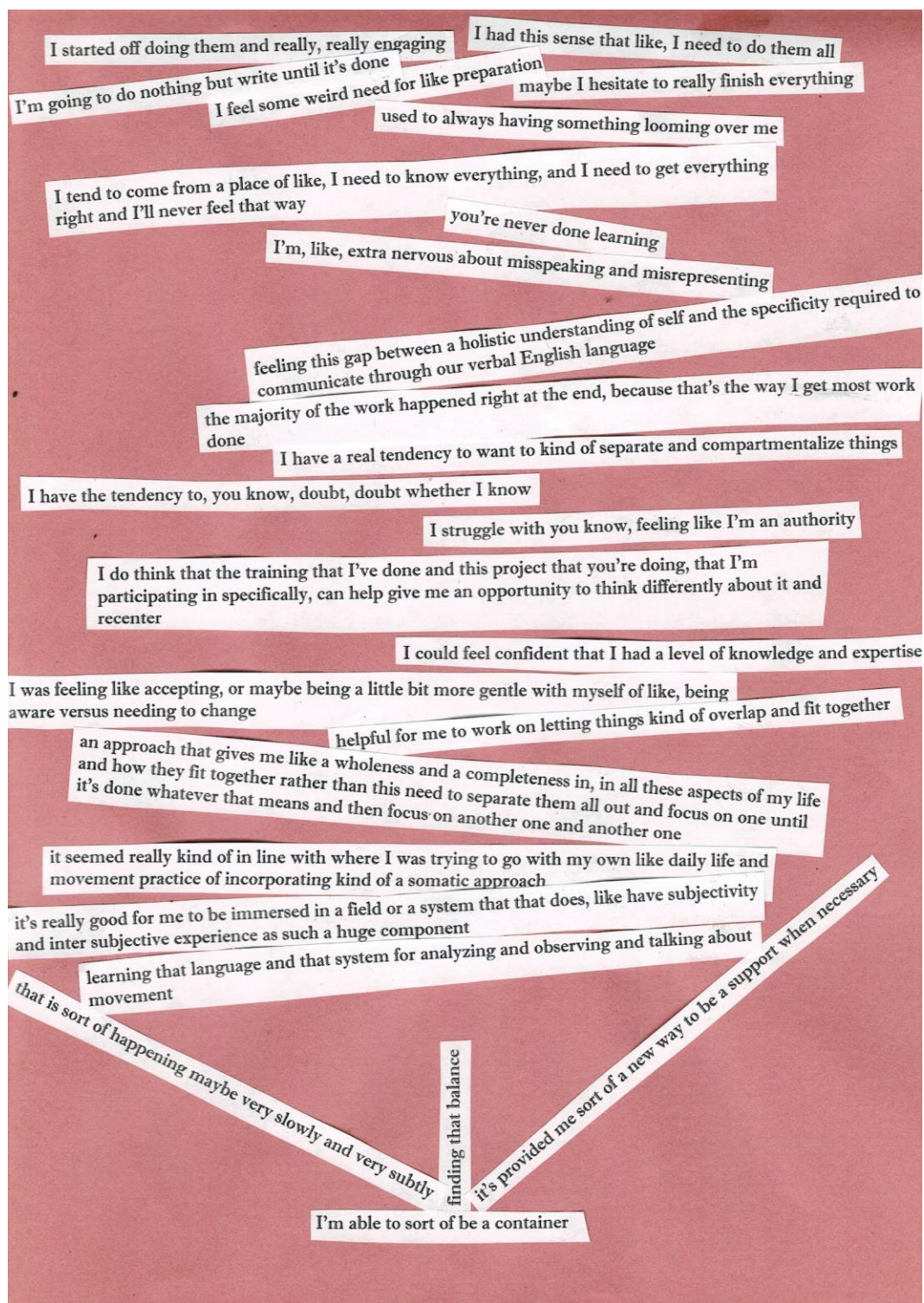
One of the ways that he really applied his participation in the exploration to his value of understanding is by utilising somatic awareness and the exercises to practice and expand his listening, both to self and others. By listening and reading the invitations multiple times he really



practiced his listening and he also listened to all the recordings he made. In contrast to his predominantly cognitive way of interacting with the world, the invitations to notice his body while speaking and listening allowed him to begin to listen more somatically – with his whole body – to himself and to others, to deeply listen to what is being said. Although many of his recordings were prompted by the notes he had made watching and reading and while exploring the invitations in his life and on his walks, he also began playing with his voice and expression – recording himself reading, recording himself while in front of a mirror, and recording streams of consciousness. As time went on there was more and more playfulness in his speaking with more attention to his somatic experience of speaking and listening. He discovered that this expanded his capacity to listen holistically and to better express himself to others in his life in both personal and work contexts. He believed his experience to be very beneficial and saw himself taking these practices forward with him in his life.

## Jacqueline

### A 'dance'



### **An 'essay'**

One of the things that Jacqueline conveys is important to her is a desire to do things fully. This includes being able to give something her full attention with adequate space and preparation for them. Doing things fully also means doing them very well and getting them 'right,' ensuring she has learned and studied enough to know what the right thing is. Therefore, Jacqueline tends to give things her full attention and may not attend to other things while she is doing so. Because of the weight she places on the things she does and wanting to do them well, they can feel quite enormous to her at times. She can often hesitate to start something and then much of her work is done at the last minute.

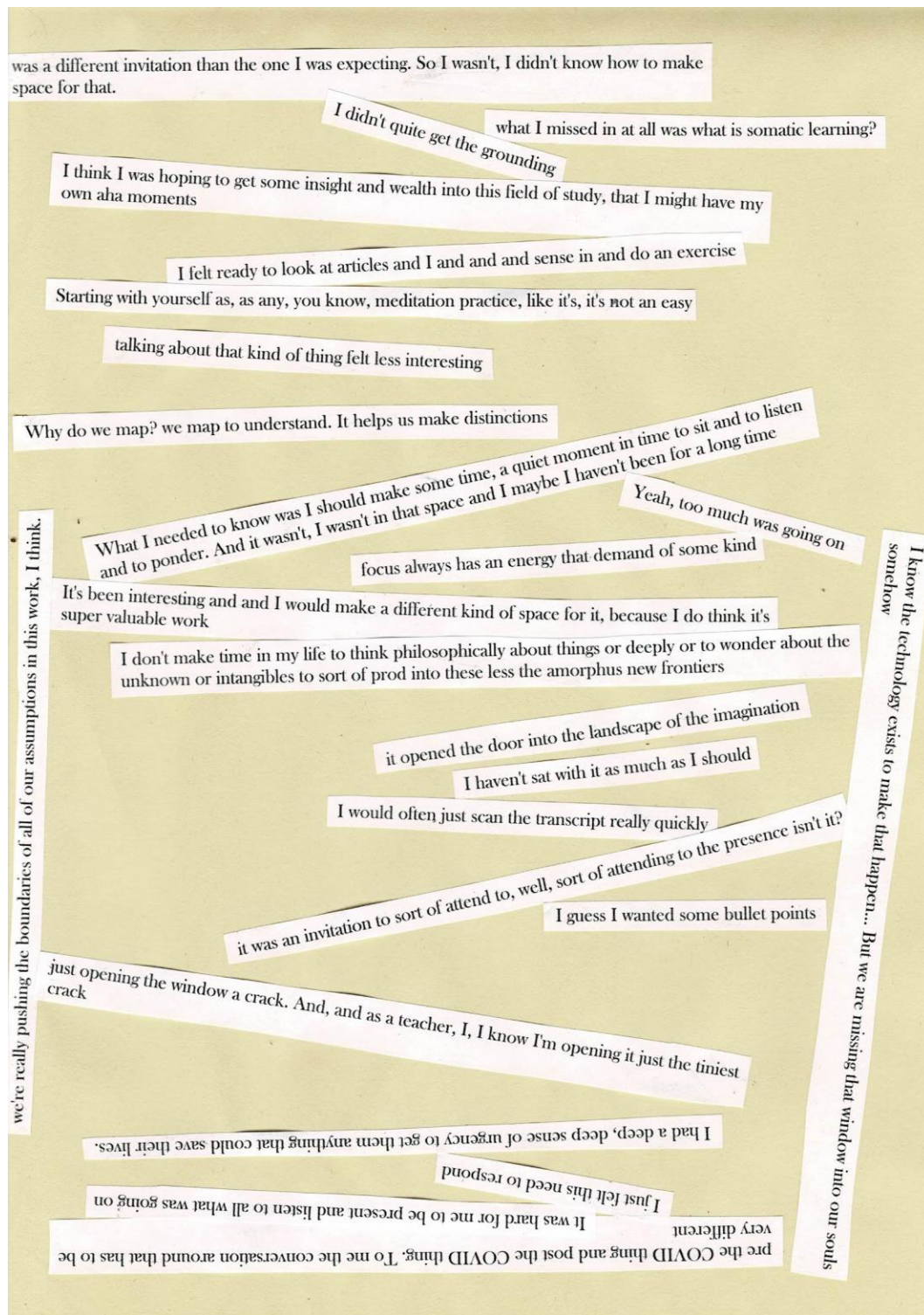
Jacqueline was fully engaged with the invitations for about the first half of the exploration and provided responses for a number of them. She noticed that sometimes she would be aware of the invitation as she moved through her days and sometimes they would be out of her conscious awareness but she would come back to them and reflect retroactively when she returned to the invitation. About halfway through the ten weeks, Jacqueline felt like she got behind in the invitations and, because of the importance of doing things fully, she did not believe she could attend to the later invitations without attending to all the ones before. She intended to go back and complete all the invitations but as they increased and we entered into the COVID pandemic, she hadn't yet done so when we had our second conversation. She had an intention to still go back and complete them although she was also needing to finish the final requirements of her movement analysis program and was curious if there is some comfort or familiarity for her to have things hanging over her and not have to be considered an expert or authority, something that does not feel comfortable for her.

Somatic work and its focus on subjectivity as well as my invitation to just be aware without needing to change has felt helpful for Jacqueline to begin softening some of the rigid expectations and tendency to separate and compartmentalise she has and cultivate more of a sense of balance and

wholeness that she desires in her life and her relationships. Although she acknowledges that shifts don't happen overnight, she recognised increased awareness through her committed somatic work and being invited to reflect as she was in the study as well as greater capacity to be gentler and more accepting of herself. She felt the invitations opened her awareness to ways that she can weave her somatic work more into her life instead of keeping it in a separate time and place and how she can meet all her commitments fully without needing to separate them quite so much. Through her participation and also through the somatic movement analysis program she was in, she also discovered new ways that she could hold space for others in her life, upholding the importance of fully supporting them without needing to be an expert or get it 'right' and seeing how she can still do things well without them feeling quite so enormous for her.

Melanie

A 'dance'



### **An 'essay'**

Melanie told me that she thirsts for and seeks clarity. She did not, however, seem to find the clarity she had hoped for in participating in the research. She questioned whether she missed something but did not believe she understood what somatic learning was from my invitations nor received the clear tools she had expected from participating. She wanted to receive articles and specific practices to give her a clearer map and help her explore new territory. She had initially hoped that the timing of the exploration would help her gain more clarity with some things she was dealing with physically. She believed she needed to make some time to sit with the invitations and consider them but they were not her priority. She engaged in the questions in the first two weeks but then it wasn't clear for her why I had been inviting the participants to consider patterns and speaking as she did not see it connected to somatic learning.

It appeared Melanie watched one or two of the videos and said that she scanned some the transcripts. She indicated she would have had time to read an article and try out an exercise but she did not have the time or energy she believed was necessary to focus her attention and notice. What this pointed to for Melanie was that she did not make time to think philosophically and believed she should make more time for this. She believed the participants were being invited into an imaginary space she hadn't expected and was curious about the connection between imagination and embodiment but that my exploration was more about what I was learning as opposed to what she was or wanted to learn. One of Melanie's interests in the research was because she saw a connection with her work and had a desire to be more active as she had been in the past, which she did not appear to find in the invitations. She let me know at week 5 that she had thought she'd missed a week and asked for a list and links of the previous links, which I provided for everyone in week 6.

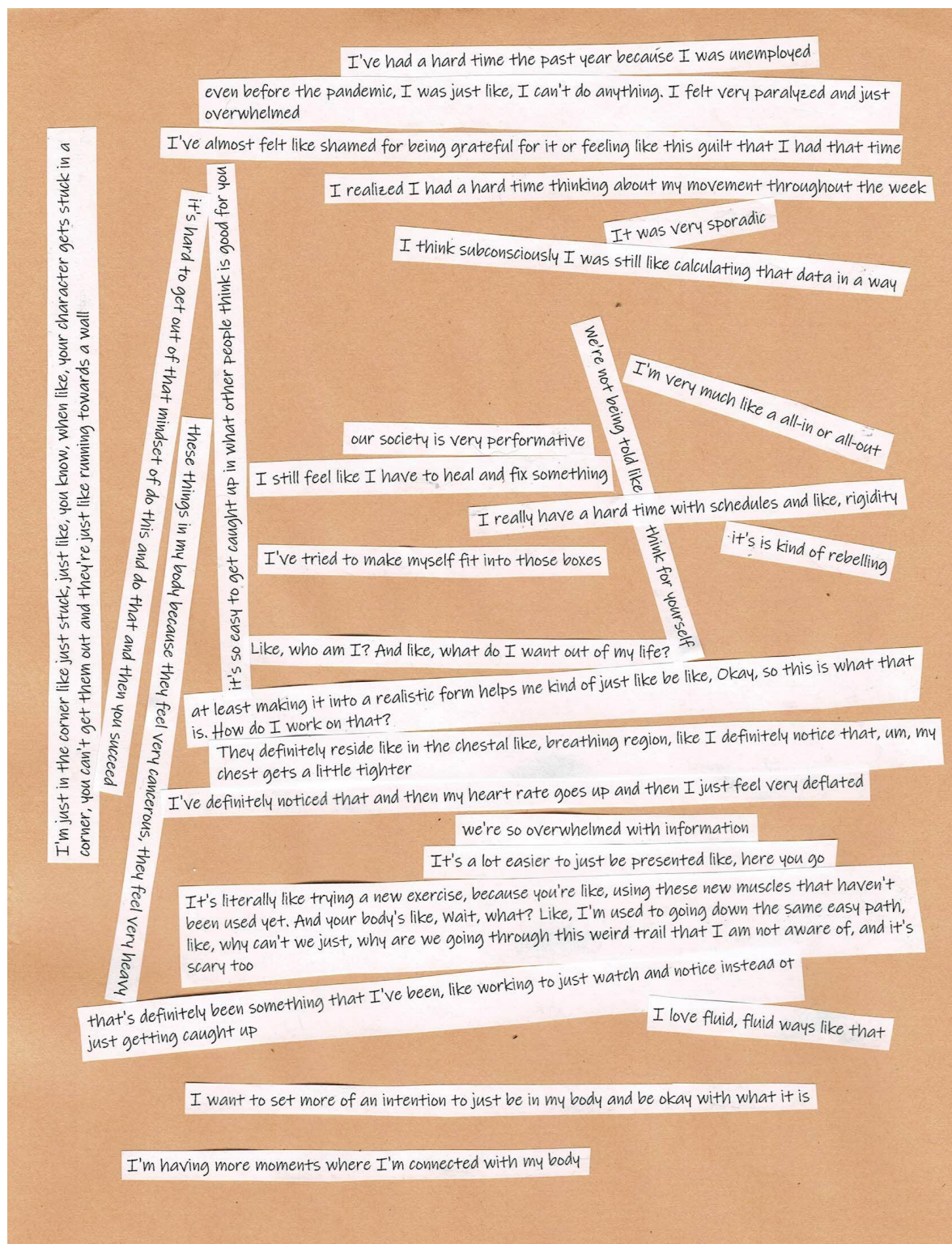
When COVID hit in week 7, her priorities went to actively supporting others and she no longer had any space for participating. She requested some more space in week 8 to just share her

experiences and that is what prompted me to not create a video for week 9. She did not, however, end up having space to respond any further or engage with the invitations.

During the time of the exploration and our second conversation, Melanie had started a somatic practice called the 20 minute dance, which invites awareness of movement and stillness and she found this a beneficial exercise. She also shared that she was presenting an embodiment session at an online conference and lamented the lack of full connection virtually versus in person and explained what she planned to offer was going to be quite different than what she would have done had she been in person. Although she did not explicitly say this but I'm curious if a lack of connection could be a contributing factor to her experience of the exploration that was not only virtual but asynchronous and contributed to her not finding the clarity she had wanted or hoped for through her participation.

# Ruby

## A 'dance'





### **An 'essay'**

Something that Ruby has communicated that is very important to her is actively questioning norms and constructs in order to know who she is beyond them and be able to honour that knowing. This active questioning and unravelling has been something Ruby has been engaged in for years.

Ruby shared that she believed she opened all the emails and that her engagement lessened with the advent of COVID as she felt overwhelmed by engaging virtually and turned off the internet for a while. Ruby watched some of the videos and read some of the transcripts and said she did not keep the invitations in her conscious awareness but believed she was still engaging with them subconsciously as she moved through her day to day. She shared that the invitations tended to prompt reflections in the moment while she was with them and she provided responses for 3 weeks of the exploration. Although she was engaged in questioning norms, she still recognised how she was impacted by them, such as tendencies in education that focus on receiving and memorising information as opposed to thinking for oneself. She had believed that engaging in self-directed somatic inquiry in my research would be something easy to do but quickly realised that it required quite a different kind of effort to be responsible for presenting the inquiry in her day to day as opposed to being directly guided and that felt challenging. Although she was not employed during the exploration, receiving the invitations on Friday also felt like a conflict with the structure of a work week for Ruby.

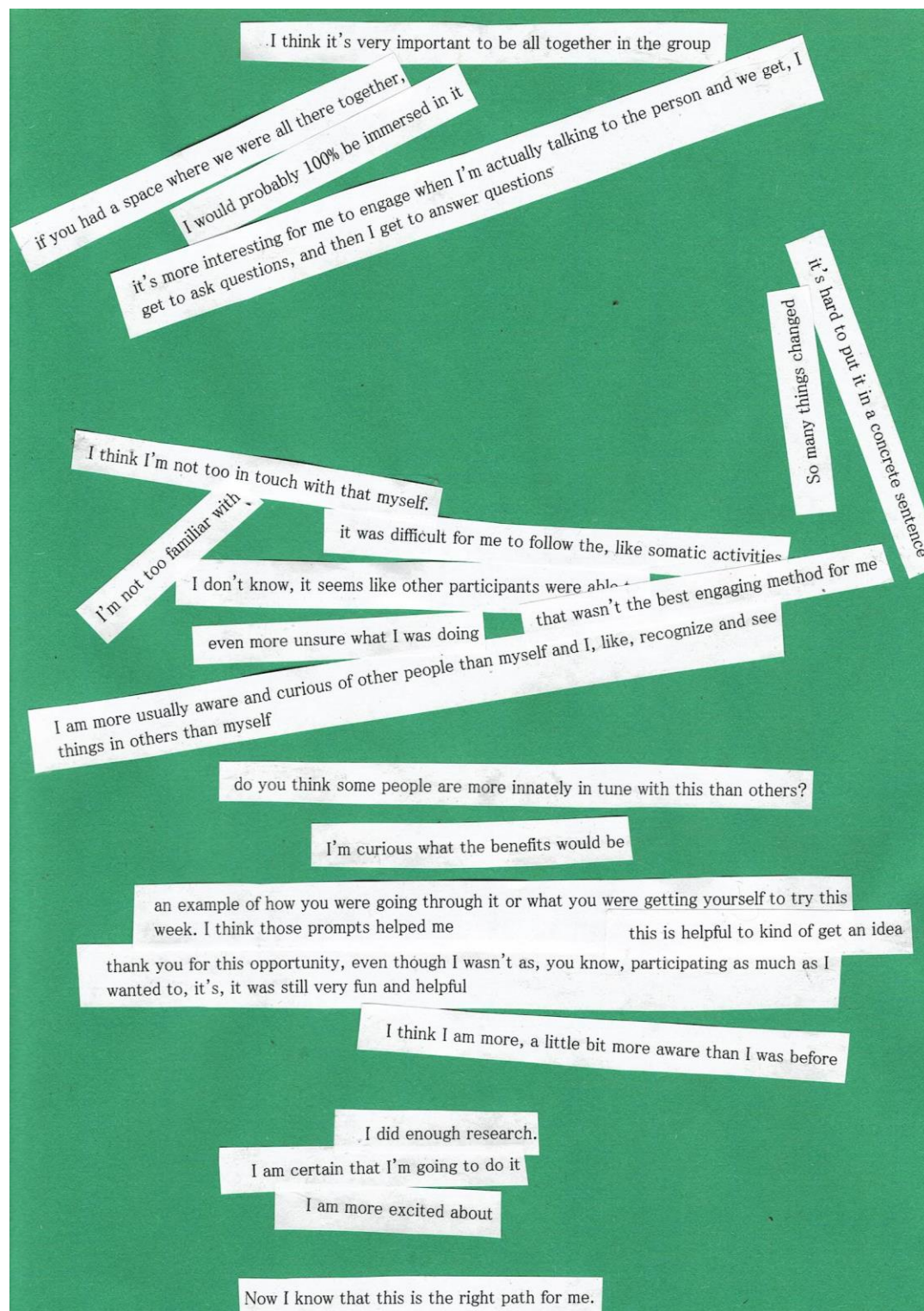
Her struggles with engaging with the invitations reflect the tension Ruby has experienced between questioning norms and feeling caught and stuck in them. Ruby actually had a very acute somatic awareness of how she experiences this sense of constraint in her body as well as how she experiences freedom somatically. She is also very aware of the guilt and shame she carries in her body and has been actively engaged in releasing and healing it from her experience. She has found

that she is so influenced by others that it is harder for her to find space to listen to what's true for her. Although I attempted to present the invitations as a choice and not a requirement, it still appears that Ruby experienced a sense of obligation in the participation, which heightened her guilt and desire to rebel, including against routine and schedule. When I offered that the invitations could be something she could play with and not work or obligation, Ruby shared she felt interest and excitement in her body to explore them in that way instead.

Although she noted more awareness of the experience in her body, she also expressed frustration that her relationship and awareness was not what she wanted it to be, still feeling quite constrained by norms. She welcomed the idea of play and believed it would help her open to more awareness in a less rigid way.

*Hazel*

A 'dance'



### **An 'essay'**

What I sense is important for Hazel through how and what she speaks about is a sense of familiarity and understanding, clarity about the what and how of things. In some of her weekly responses and in our follow up conversation, Hazel conveyed that she didn't believe she participated the way she thought was expected of her and she found it difficult to follow the somatic activities.

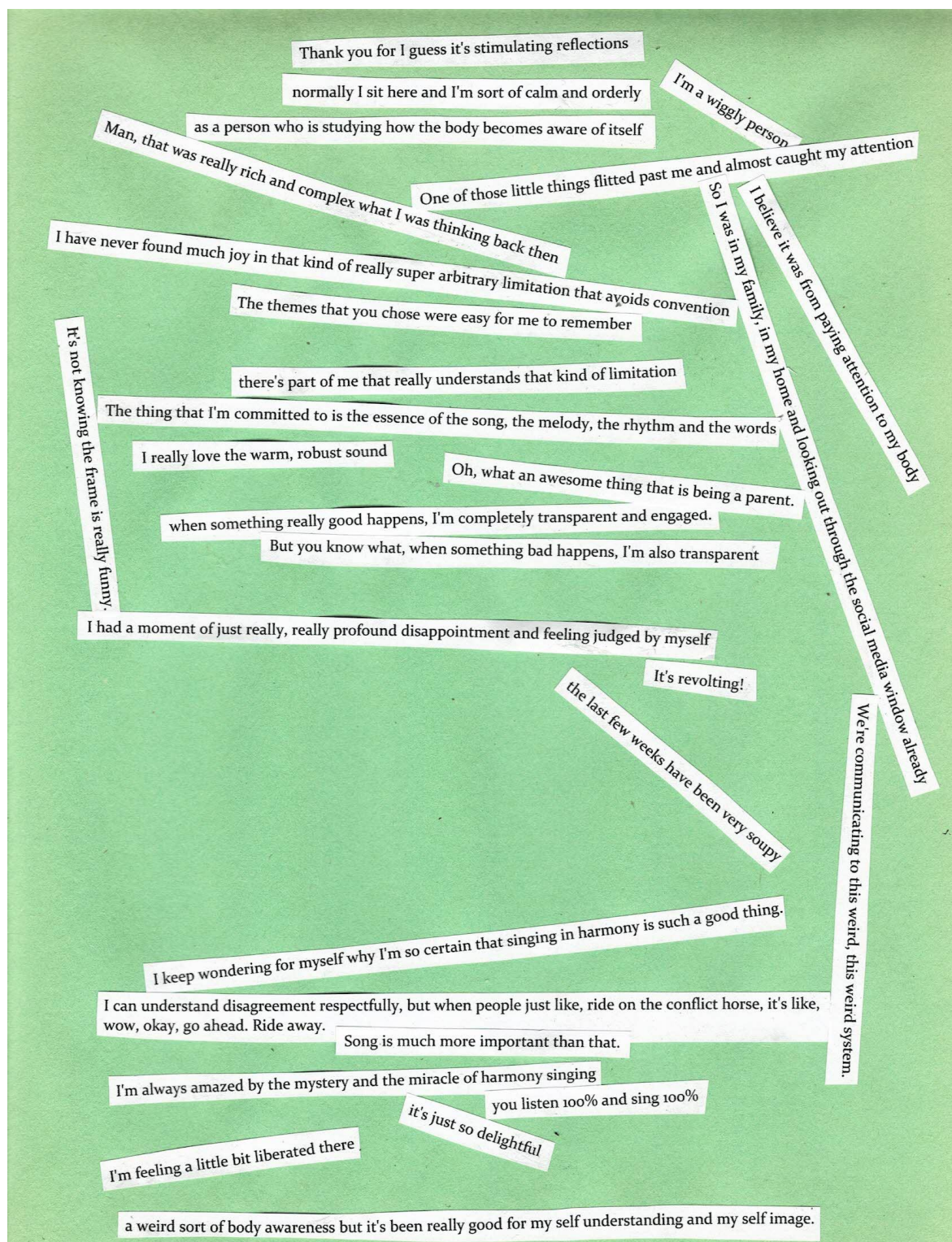
Hazel engaged with the email content and also shared that the asynchronous videos and transcriptions are not her ideally way of engaging with material, that she desires more immersion and conversation, an opportunity to ask and answer questions. She said she had difficulty keeping the prompts alive for herself through the week and didn't have much familiarity with the practices offered. Although Hazel conveyed that she did not have much somatic awareness or know how to tune into her body, when I challenged her on this, she shared, as she did in our first conversation, that she has a strong intuitive sense and a sense of knowing in her body. What she did not believe she had was a clear way of expressing this. What she shared was most helpful in my emails was when I provided concrete examples of how I was applying the invitations in my own life, demonstrating a clearer how of the process. She also shared that she enjoyed and appreciated our final conversation where she was able to ask many questions and engage. Hazel knows that she is quite tuned into others and conversing with them helps her to recognise what she knows. Connected to this, she prefers really being together and immersed with others. When I followed and listened to what was opening up for her, the energy of our engagement shifted and Wendy began sharing more.

When we had our first conversation six months earlier, Hazel shared that she was unhappy with her work and wanted to be more intentional, aware, mindful and happy, which was part of her interest in participating in the research. Between our two conversations, Hazel became clear with herself that she wanted to pursue psychotherapy and had been accepted to a training program that fall that she knew was the right path and she was excited about and relieved about her current job

ending. Although she did not think she participated enough in the research, she did believe she was more aware of the experience in her body than when we first spoke and it was clear that she was following what she knew was right for her.

Gary

A 'dance'



### **An 'essay'**

One thing that is important to Gary is harmony and flow and the experience of beauty. He is drawn to the embodied pleasure of that experience. The significance of this came through in both my conversations with Gary and the ways that he shared about many of the aspects of his life and notably singing, which Gary loves. He particularly enjoys when harmony, flow and beauty arise in unexpected ways.

Gary shared that he is someone who is studying how the body becomes aware of itself and he engaged with the weekly invitations as they prepared him intellectually to pay more attention to his somatic experience, which he believed he did through the exploration. He appreciated being able to choose between listening to and watching me and shared he doesn't read much these days. Although he couldn't necessarily remember the invitations themselves when we spoke, he shared that one of the weeks had a really strong influence on him. He said he was attached to each invitation for the week and then he let them go. He also shared that when COVID hit and his household responsibilities increased in the latter part of the exploration, he paid less attention to his body. He also believed the earlier invitations were easier to remember before his sense of time became blurred with COVID restrictions.

An example that Gary shared of how somatic awareness supported an experience of flow within himself was increased awareness of his posture and placement of his laptop, which led him to make shifts in his set up to support more ease.

Playing with limitations, such as what I invited in my ideas of score, is something Gary has enjoyed doing to create harmony and beauty, particularly in his choir directing. He also very clearly expresses a strong somatic aversion to conflict, discord, and lack of harmony and sometimes struggles with how these experiences arise through his commitment to community and inclusion. He is aware that he is quite expressive with embodied responses to experiences he find beautiful and

those that he finds revolting and that otherwise he tends to present very calmly, even though he knows himself as a wiggly person.

Gary expressed that he enjoyed and found pleasure from his participation and delighted in finding pleasure in happening across one of the emails again years from now, which is something he knows and appreciates about himself.



Harry

A 'dance'

Vision is to be connected to a community like that's always there

This has been like a life dream for me.  
The process of building this little tiny house I'm actually building like a whole community of people that support me

Meeting others that are also creating, pursuing their dreams and creating their dreams into reality as well

When we move, everything in the universe moves with us.  
It feels like I'm like tapping into that kind of energy. It's present.

Perfect timing and alignment with this other spiritual, philosophical work that I'd been getting into

Learning that it's a lot more than just building, doing the outward action of building a house. It's another, like there's something being built within myself through this whole process

Each new project that I take on in life, like it brings out new things about myself that I didn't know before.

Journey of exploring my body through bringing more awareness in the body

My heartbeat, heart rate increasing, like trying to be perfect out of fear instead of perfection out of love

Brought all that information to the surface  
I kind of had like a self inquiry thing there: Why is this coming up for me?

It's amazing how much intelligence in these bodies and what we can learn from them just by paying attention to what's going on in the body and our movements and the way our bodies react to things.

It was just a great reminder for me to come back to my body, put more awareness into my body.

Set me up for like, the rest of their week to kind of be more aware of what's going on in my body and to be more open to what my body's communicating to me

Something that I can bring healing to. Just by, just by accepting my imperfections as perfections.

I am worthy of good things

### **An 'essay'**

What comes through clearly in Harry's sharing, and that reflects what I had previously known of him, is his value of connection: to his own body and its wisdom, to others and community, to energy, to his spirituality, and connecting his dreams to reality.

Harry was active in his participation in the research, connecting to the invitation via the video and transcript at the beginning of each week and he told me he stayed really present to the task for that week, which supported him with increased awareness of his body and what he experienced of his body communicating to him. Harry also sent me a short response most weeks of what was arising for him in his exploration of the invitation.

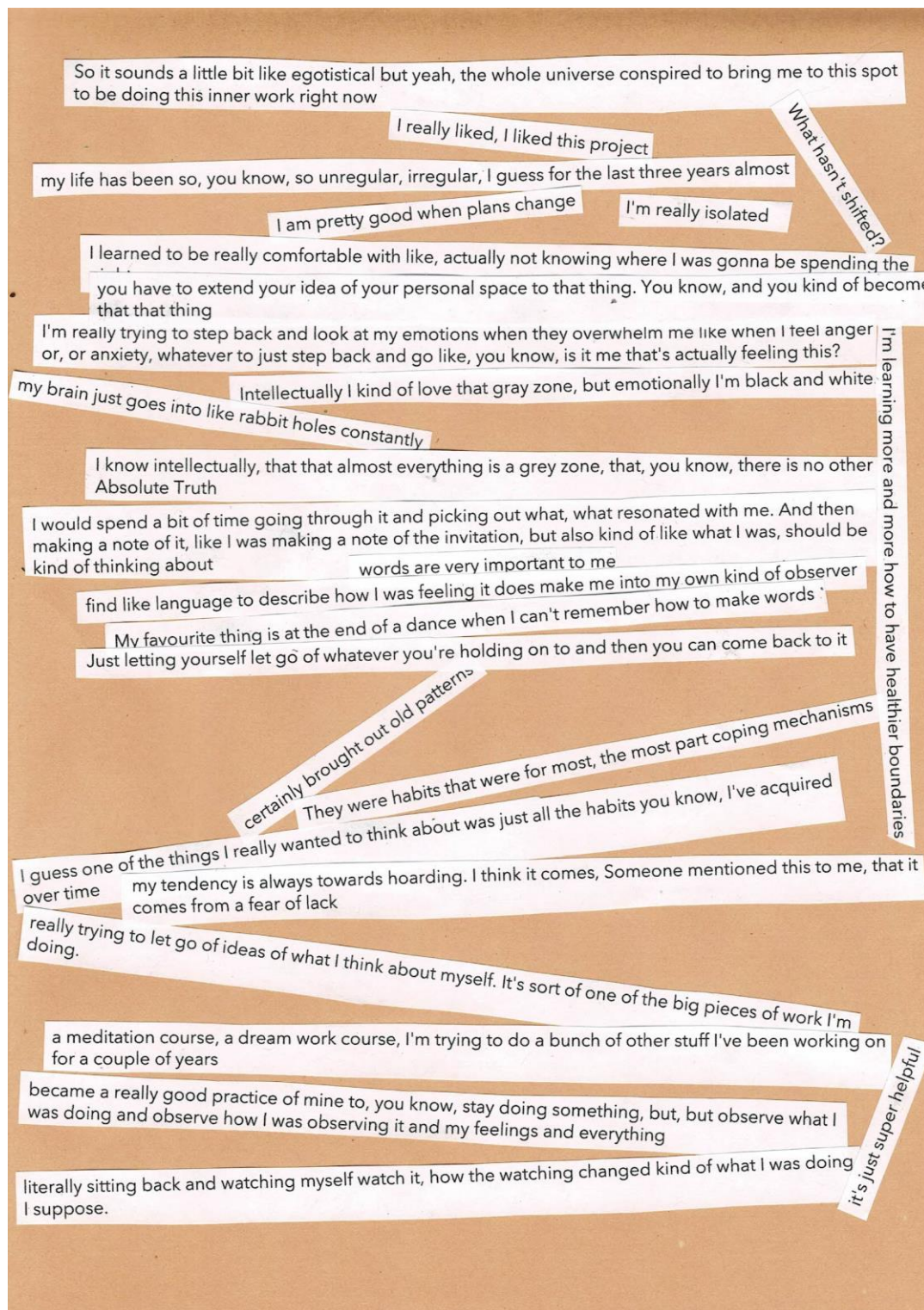
Harry demonstrates his care for connection in his words, his reflections and his actions. He connected the invitation to his day to day and to other things he was exploring in his life. He connected his awareness of his body to shifting old patterns, such as a tendency towards perfectionism and its connection to his childhood experiences by tuning in specifically to what he felt physically and energetically in his heart. He connected his physical work to personal growth. Harry's manifestation of building his dream of a tiny house has also supported him in connecting with others, connecting his project to his dreams of fostering more connection and community, which ties into his visions of promoting tiny homes, sustainability and community.

By bringing his value of connection into his participation in the exploration, Harry was able to use his awareness of the experience in his body to further expand the connections in his life. He shared that he got great benefit from his active and committed participation and experienced greater connection to his body, its wisdom, his creativity, imagination and dreams. When we had spoken in our first conversation, Harry shared that he found bringing more awareness to his body helped 'bring him back to himself' Through sharing about his participation in this research, Harry revealed he increased his awareness of and connection to a number of aspects of himself through his somatic

awareness. In our first conversation Harry shared that his interest in participating arose from his desire to continue to bring more consciousness to his body, allowing him to be increasingly present in the here and now and to foster self healing. Harry showed that his participation helped him with this and he moved through some healing pieces, such as overcoming perfectionism and procrastination as well as getting him out of his shell to manifest his dreams.

Stella

## A 'dance'



### **An 'essay'**

A focus that is important to Stella is looking at and exploring ways of expanding her beliefs and sense of self and the world. Stella had been travelling for almost three years and this outward exploration was mirrored with inward exploration – a continual curiosity to learn more about herself and also be able to shift patterns.

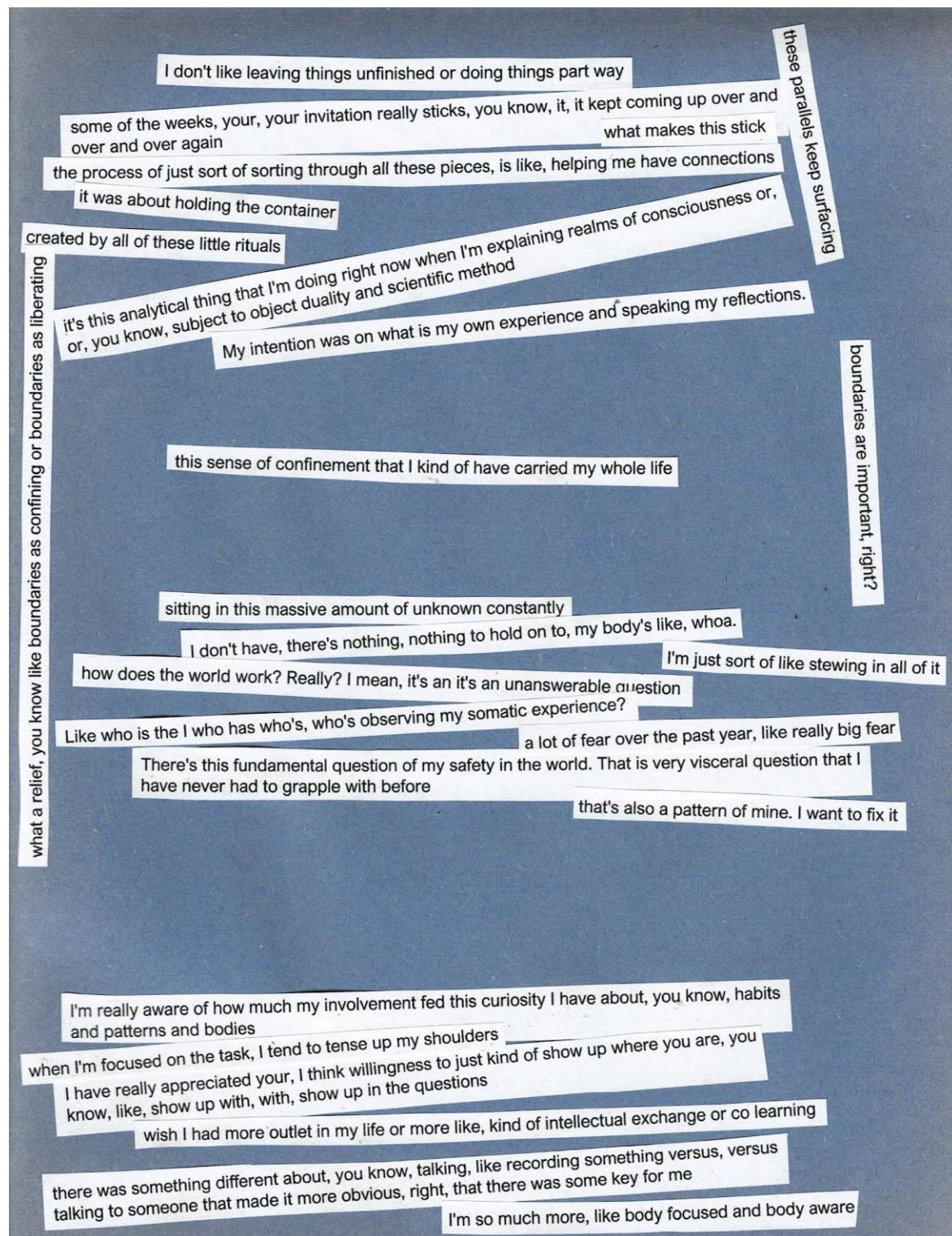
Through her travels, Stella engaged with all of the invitations. She watched the first four videos or so but then shifted to the transcripts as she found it easier to engage with the written form. She would spend time going through each invitation, see what resonated and take notes for herself. She would return to the invitation a couple times a week and take more notes about what she was noticing from carrying the invitation into her day to day. She was able to use the scores in her life and they provided her with an opportunity to sit back and observe a little more what was happening in and around her. She noticed two seemingly paradoxical processes were reinforced – two processes that she engages with often: 1. Letting her thinking soften and just being present to the experience and movement in her body without needing to analyse or put words to – what she loves about her dance practice; and 2. Observing and deepening her understanding of her patterns and being able to increase her articulation of them through language. She liked the idea of having a score, particularly scores around speaking and increasing her sensorial and kinaesthetic awareness in speaking.

Because she had been engaging in a lot of self reflection, she had practice and experience with self-directed inner inquiry and had a lot to share about what she had learned about herself through attention to her movement patterns, which included more superficial noticing such as weight gain through her travels as well as deep-seated patterns of wanting to hold on emotionally and physically to things out of fear. Through her travels and the advent of the global pandemic, a lot had shifted for Stella, both internally and externally. She found herself isolated from others for an

extended period of time and welcomed the opportunity to have more time and space to engage in self-awareness practices and courses. For Stella participating in the exploration was one of the many practices she continued to explore as part of her interest and commitment to learning about and shifting her beliefs and experience of self and the world. In particular she noted how just the act of observing would shift what was being observed, a phenomenon she welcomed as part of positively shifting her habits.

Alise

A 'dance'



### **An 'essay'**

One of the things that Alise has conveyed is important to her is an engaged exploration of life – in particular its relationships and patterns. Alise wanted to participate in the research because she saw it as aligning with her life in a number of ways and, indeed, she continued to experience a lot of alignment and synchronicity between my weekly invitations and what she was exploring in her life.

Finishing things in their entirety is important to Alise and she actively engaged with and provided responses to all the invitations except week 6, sometimes watching, sometimes reading and sometimes both. Although her participation was very high, missing that one week did continue to weigh on Alise. Because of observing the relevance of many of the invitations in her life, Alise was often quite aware of the invitations as she moved through her day to day, particularly in the beginning of the exploration when the exploration was novel and she was excited to explore something new. When Alise noticed she had not been fully present when watching the video, she made a point to go back to the invitation to review it. Alise really appreciated the opportunity to record her thoughts as it provided her with more information about her somatic experience than if she had shared her responses in writing. She noted the importance of being with what feels alive in her and also the importance of the container and feedback (which doesn't always happen in writing when we don't get a response) as well as having the freedom to fully be with her experience and not have to attend to another's speaking, face and expression. The experience of watching me on video and really being with the inquiry had her create a familiarity with that process and she noticed she'd forget she was interacting with me in real time when we had our follow up conversation as she had gotten used to the asynchronous format of the exploration.

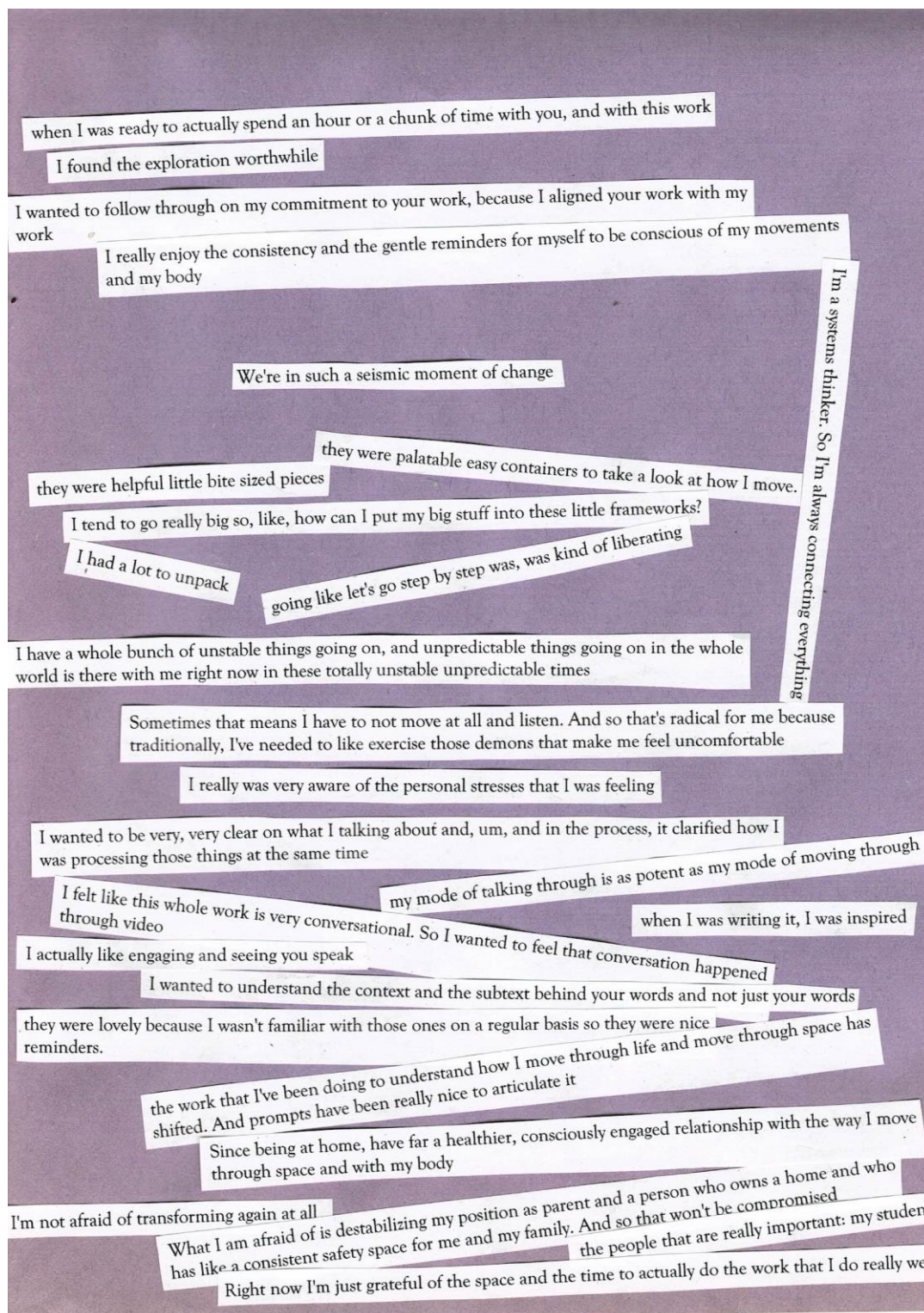
Alise found it particularly interesting that the project framed a unique period her life – where she was in a particularly notable place of unknown, having given up much of the structures in her



life and moved across the country. Alise shared that she had experienced extreme amounts of fear and anxiety in her experience of groundlessness. Although she did not explicitly state this, it appeared that part of what Alise really appreciated from participating in the research was the provision of frames and a container – specific frames she could explore and ground herself in what she knows, and a container to explore her thoughts and experiences and know she was being witnessed while actively contributing to something. Although her experience of life left her often feeling very unsafe, she recognised the importance of boundaries, which the invitations and structure of the research could provide in some small way. The opportunity to be present to her somatic experience and speak from that place freely and know more about herself in the process supported the import of engaged exploration and understanding for Alise, allowing her to make important connections for herself from her somatic experience. Because of her shared interest in somatic practices and desire to work within the field as well as being part of intellectual exchange, participating in somatic research could also support Alise’s exploration of how she would move forward with these desires in her life.

*Sarah*

## A 'dance'



### **An 'essay'**

One of the things that clearly matters to Sarah is her commitments. Her commitment as a parent and to her child is particularly high for her and she also has and continues to make commitments to other people and things in her life, such as her students, her projects, and her personal growth. This was very apparent even in her participation in the research. She took her commitment to participating in the exploration seriously and intentionally carved out time and space to engage with every invitation in a way that worked for her, allowing her to continue to meet her commitments and use her participation as a way to support those commitments. She values consistency, and noted an appreciation for the consistency of my weekly invitations as well as some surprise when I did not send a video in week 9.

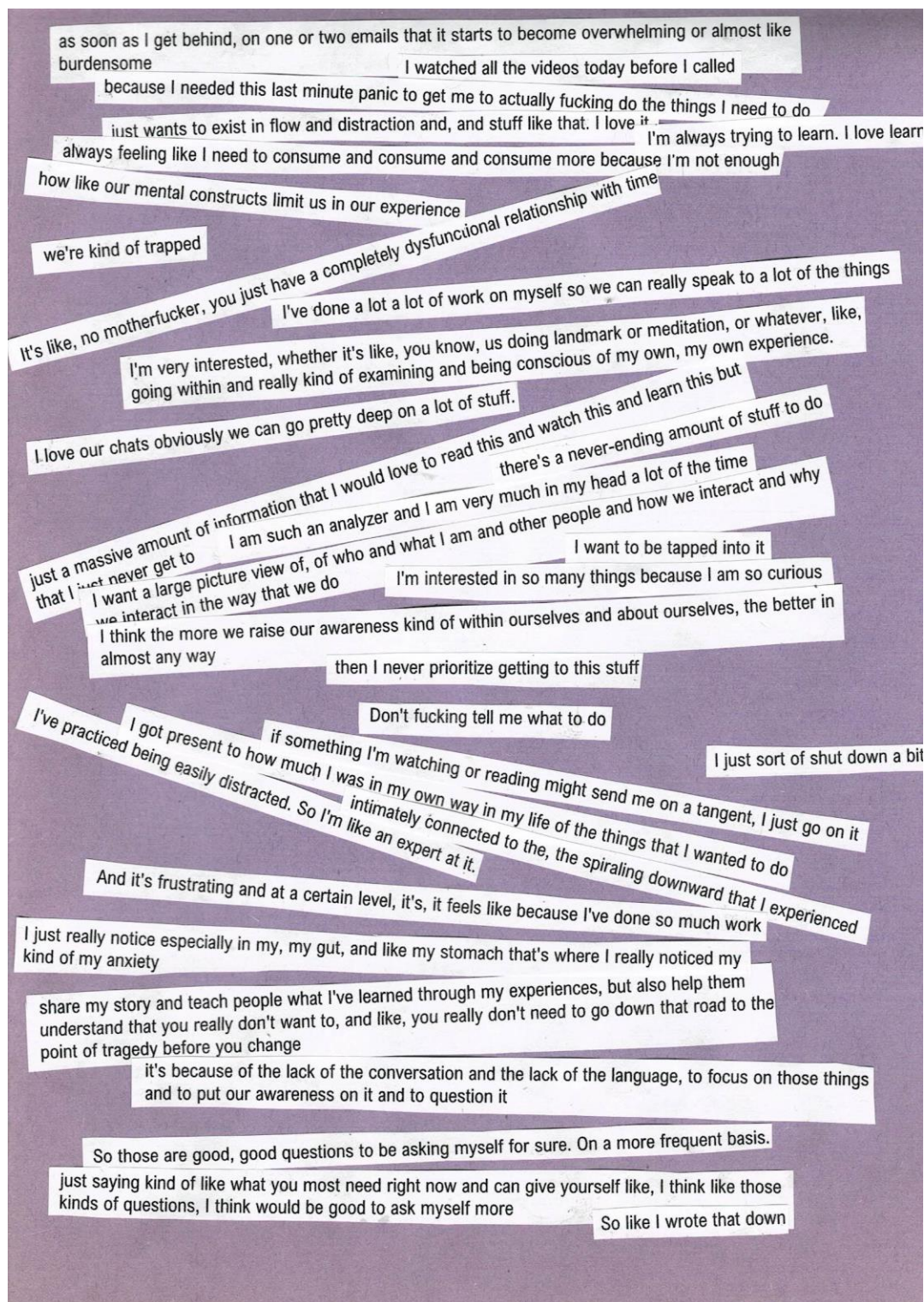
Sarah made about an hour or so for each invitation to be fully and thoroughly with it. As a 'systems thinker,' Sarah shows a lot of capacity to uphold a variety of threads in her life and values exploring the interconnections between things. She created a holistic approach to being with the invitations where she would watch, listen, read and take notes of all the threads that arose for her in relation to the invitation. She wanted to engage conversationally with the invitation and this practice of listening and responding at the same time allowed her to do this and experience inspiration in what she was writing.

Sarah has made personal commitments to herself for years to be engaged in personal growth and somatic practice so the self-responsibility necessary to stay in this inquiry is something she has been practicing. She noted that she tends to think on macro levels so she welcomed the focused nature of the invitations, which she found to be helpful small containers to gain deeper awareness into her somatic experience and life and consider her movement patterns in new ways. Sarah appreciated the inquiries during a time of collective and personal change and unknown, helping her to clarify and articulate what she was continuing to learn about her movements in response to stress

and supporting her continued commitment to all the things that are important to her: her child and family, her well-being, her relationship, her teaching and contribution, and finding the best balance for herself.

Brian

A 'dance'



### **An 'essay'**

For Brian, understanding who and how he is, and who and how humanity is, is important to him. This is one of the reasons that Brian wanted to be part of the research and why he continually signs up for courses and more information.

Because of all the personal development and self-awareness work and courses Brian has done, he is also quite aware that he struggles with actually doing everything he wants and signs up for and often feels behind in things in his life. He believes a lot of it comes from his fears and insecurities, beliefs that he needs to keep consuming to know enough, and from years of practicing distraction. Although he had not yet read any of my invitations, Brian wanted to finish the research with me as he felt the work I'm doing is very important and so we scheduled a follow up conversation. Brian then listened to all of the videos the morning of our second call and took notes. Brian had many reflections related to his experience and the many things he learned and also thoughts and ideas for how I could expand my work that he shared in our conversation. Brian recognised that although he has a lot of awareness about himself and his patterns, he does not pay a lot of attention to his somatic experience.

Although he hadn't been participating on an ongoing basis in the invitations, I did invite Brian to become more aware of his somatic experience during our conversation, which he admitted was difficult to stay present to for very long. He did, however, really appreciate the conversation and the opportunity to share his thoughts, experiences and to expand his knowledge further and believed the conversation was helpful in the reminder to pay more attention to his somatic experience. Although most of my follow up conversations were 45-90 minutes long, Brian and I spoke for two and a half hours on our second call. He thought some of my questions could be helpful for him to cultivate more of that awareness and said he was going to put some of them up on his wall. He particularly liked the question 'what does my body know right now?' and believed it could be a

helpful piece in his continued commitment to expanding his knowledge of himself and others and making a positive impact on others from sharing his experiences.

Wendy

A 'dance'

On Boxing Day my aunt died by suicide. And so it's, that shadowed my whole term

I started crying in the middle of the plies, but I kept plie-ing

most of the time dance was catharsis. But some days I was in class and I was like, Why? Why like, what are we doing?

I tend to overachieve and take 120% of my course load

I'm a very curious person

the new term really presented some motivation issues that were grief related

being in a grief-filled personal time pulled me out of those practices to a certain extent

in a way of realizing what's important to me and what's good for me

engaging in other creative practices in my life, like singing is a way for me to dedicate some time

it's something that I really value and try to set time aside for in my life or at least set awareness aside for so that I can move through my day with tenderness and respect for myself

It's like a calm, removed-ness with respect to my body and, and how it moves

whatever I had read in the email or even something else that was affecting the way that I moved through the world and just taking a removed step back and acknowledging that could change the way I was being in my body

it was separate from most of my experiences moving through the world, in terms of the intentionality involved in my thought process, and my thinking about the word time for example, and how we use it or however that affected my week

I engage better hearing the intonation in someone's voice and all of the complexities of someone's face and their inferred connotation of words

his experience of that was so different from mine so I think about that sometimes



### **An 'essay'**

In both of our conversations, Wendy stated clearly that she values self-care and that somatic practices have been in her self-care toolbox. A month before I began sending the weekly explorations, Wendy's aunt died by suicide and Wendy was acutely aware of being impacted by really heavy grief. The intensity of that grief and the desire to continue to focus on her studies meant that Wendy did not feel she could fully be with her somatic experience and the strength of the grief in her body and she lessened her somatically-oriented practices during this time.

In an act of self care, Wendy did not open and participate with most of the weekly invitations. Because she is someone who tends to overachieve, not opening all my emails when she was dealing with grief was a form of self-care that was supported by my invitation to not feel like she needed to add any more work to her life. She shared that engaged with two or three of the invitations, watched two of the videos and she submitted short responses for two weeks. She chose to watch the videos when she engaged with the invitations as she finds being with the physicality of the sharing with someone's face, voice and intonation more engaging and impactful. Her experience of the two invitations that she engaged with provided her with an opportunity to cultivate what she described as a 'calm, removed-ness' from her somatic experience, an opportunity to witness without being fully in the experience.

Along with this witnessing and being a very curious person, Wendy stayed curious of others' experiences that were different from her own as well as other creative practices that felt supportive to her self care.

## Discussing

A discussion is where I discuss my findings and clarify my contribution to the field. I sensed another dialogue, and opportunity to ‘dance’ with the field of somatics, would both be in service of this intention and keep the sense of movement and somatic sensing as part of that reading and writing.

As I brainstormed and worked out the structure of this score, I wondered: who am I having this dialogue with exactly? Through linguistic movements with my partner, I felt into my somatic sense of this ‘field.’ At first an image of the shapeshifting Pokémon, Ditto, came to me. As I continued to feel into that sense and let it guide my linguistic movements, I listened for the ‘rightness’ in my words.

I continued by explaining the somatic ‘field’ to my partner: this loosely held interconnection of ideas, practices, humans, ever growing and shifting. A very fluid, shapeshifting, evolving, moving web. The embodied experience of this ‘field’ felt very watery - soft and strong, flowing, resting, boiling, raining, finding its way into the cracks, expanding into the space. This image and embodied sense reminded me of the words of Vivian from my panel and the words of Robin Wall Kimmerer:

A bay is a noun only if water is *dead*. When *bay* is a noun, it is defined by humans, trapped between its shores and contained by the word. *But* the verb *wiikwegamaa* – to *be* a bay – releases water from bondage and lets it live. “To be a bay” holds the wonder that, for this moment, the living water has decided to shelter itself between these shores, conversing with cedar roots and a flock of baby mergansers. Because it could do otherwise – become a stream or an ocean or a waterfall, and there are verbs for that, too. To be a hill, to be a sandy beach, to be a Saturday, all are possible verbs in a world where everything is alive. (p. 55, italics in original)

And it became clear to me: a notion of a ‘field’ is very static. I imagine a soccer field in my mind – symmetrical with clear borders. This is not how I feel or want to envision somatics, nor what I believe is in greatest service of its expansion. I saw a potential contribution to the field of somatics in the conceiving of new language around it – something that conveys the vast, interconnected, growing and even contradictory web of movements.

What single term could convey such complexity, such vastness, such ever-expansion, and include the movements of all the ideas, practices, workshops, classes, books, journals? That could include me and Moshe Feldenkrais<sup>3</sup> and Bonnie Bainbridge Cohen<sup>4</sup> and Gabrielle Roth<sup>5</sup> and someone practicing a somatic meditation? It most certainly needed to convey movement, it needed to be a verb.

The verb that arose for me was simply ‘to soma’ or *somaing* \soma-ɪŋ\. Clearly a verb and clearly etymologically connected to soma and somatics. Yet also not only including somatic, the adverb, as a descriptor of something else but rather the very movement itself. *Somaing* can include all the movements you and I and all humans across space and time have enacting in service of cultivating more conscious awareness of the embodied, sensorial experience of life. I liked how much simpler this word felt in my body, especially compared to the word ‘practice,’ a word that features over 450 times in this document alone. The word practice has aspects of work, of dedication, of something that requires its own time and space. Practicing somatics in this way can be a growth-oriented endeavour and somatic practices have positively supported countless lives, including my own. And yet, somatics can be and is more than this. *Somaing* doesn’t need anything

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<sup>3</sup> Moshe Feldenkrais is the creator of the Feldenkrais method, a somatic practice, and is also considered one of the pioneers of somatics

<sup>4</sup> Bonnie Bainbridge Cohen is the creator of Body-Mind-Centering, a somatic practice

<sup>5</sup> Gabrielle Roth is the founder of 5Rhythms. Although it does not call itself a somatic practice, 5Rhythms is a somatically-oriented intentional movement and dance practice

special, it is an enacting that can occur alongside anything else – while I’m typing these words, washing the dishes, in a heated argument, going for a run.

This offered terminology is quite aligned with LaMothe’s (2015) revised definition of ‘dance,’ yet, unlike dance, the word itself has never been used before and comes with less baggage. As a contributing scholar, I get to articulate its defining.

To soma is life as somatic practice. Somaing is life as somatic practice.

What would this movement of somaing ask about my movement within it? In responding to this, I envision myself in dialogue with the movement itself, conveying the linguistic movements I add to expand it further.

#### **Score #6: A dialogue with somaing**

Somaing: How would you begin to articulate how you’ve expanded my reach, grown my movements?

Me: I believe that asking the question of how somatic awareness can be woven into all we do, something available at all times, not necessitating the addition of anything represents the larger contribution I have made. A question that has invited curiosity within my own daily movements and how to approach and enact a dissertation.

Somaing: How would you describe what this curiosity looked like in your own life?

Me: Over the course of my research, I have noticed a substantial expansion of my own somatic awareness. The more I presented the question, the more often I found myself asking myself how I can maintain awareness of my sensorial experience through all my mundane movements. In the beginning, the asking of the question was more of a conscious action. As I kept asking it, however, the more the orientation became habitual for me, I no longer had to intentionally ask it. Although I have no quantitative measure of my own somatic awareness, I have zero doubt that it is

substantially higher than when I began this inquiry. I notice how I more and more regularly access my somatic awareness through my day to day.

Somaing: And why has this been important? What has it served?

Me: Just as Bacon (2019) suggested, by paying attention to the processes of my somaing, I am definitely more responsive in all areas of my life than I used to be. Yes, as someone who has practice a lot of self-reflexivity for years, a mindfulness and intentionality with my actions has long been important for me. This, however, has often looked like specific tools and practices. I have a long history of engaging in this self-awareness through writing, dancing, reading, attending workshops, ceremonies and rituals. What I am noticing now is how I can more readily access and invite an awareness of my embodied experience in the present moment, how I can feel what is moving within me and around me and, from that awareness, have greater mindfulness of what actions I take in any given moment. This has been particularly salient and helpful in challenging moments in my life, in difficult situations, and when I'm experiencing strong emotions.

Somaing: I hear you attribute this to this research you have undertaken.

Me: I sense you're cautioning at applying cause here, which I cannot do. Many things have happened in my life over the past few years and I have continued to engage in learning and practice. So no, I cannot definitively say that I'm more somatically aware *because* of this research and because of the question. What I do see, however, is how actions and movements I have long participated in, such as writing, now involve a lot more somatic awareness. My autoethnographic exploration involved somatic journaling and through this practice I believe I now more regularly tune into my somatic awareness as I sit at the computer and type anything, including emails or documents. Asking the research question regularly has also increased my awareness of how somatically aware I am in each moment. By intending all aspects of my research to be somatically-informed, I have learned

and expanded the ways I can bring more somatic awareness to my work and life and support others in doing the same.

Somaing: Can you articulate how you've expanded somaing beyond your own experience?

Me: Well, I believe there are a variety of levels of contribution in this exploration. There is what I've contributed to academic theories in somatics and language, what I've articulated for possibilities in somatic research, teaching, and practice, as well as the personal contributions to my own life and what I've offered my participants. I've added to scholarly work on somatic research methodology and documented how I expanded this methodological area and how the use of scores as method can be in service of a somatic method. Additionally, I've contributed to scholarly work that demonstrates a play with evocative forms of writing, to offer crystallisation of the data through novel presentations of my research. I've woven theory, ontology and practice together from a variety of areas – somatics, improvisation, language and life-as-movement.

Somaing: What are some of the ways you've contributed to how I move in the academic realm?

Me: I think I've helped further articulate and substantiate somatic methodology, by bringing in other existing practices: autoethnographic, emergent methods and improvisational scores. This has expanded both these methods and offered new possibilities for somatic research. Bringing a somatic awareness into autoethnography not only expands the practices of autoethnographic methodologies but it also further substantiates them. Although there is great diversity within somatics, they all recognise the value of placing more attention on the somatic – the first-person, sensorial experience of life. From the pioneers in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century to the present day, countless practitioners have articulated how somatic awareness can improve our physical, emotional and mental well-being, increase our presence and capacity with the world around us and make positive changes in our lives and others. As Eddy (2016) notes, somatic information can help us be more

comfortable, relaxed, natural, efficient and capable of full expression. Bringing a somatic awareness to autoethnography, as I have done (as have movement scholars such as Spry, 2011), adds a layer of focus to the reflexivity in autoethnographic explorations that can bring our awareness to our habitual movement habits so we have more choice – which is the aim of somaing (Eddy, 2016).

I also showed how research can unfold when guided by somatic awareness and how this can intersect with codified methodology. I intended my research to be guided by my own somatic experience, responsive to the present moment needs and embodiment of myself, my participants and the research. Instead of relying on someone else's somatic research methodology, it was through the knowing that I already had in my own body, of my experience practicing and teaching somatics, that directed the unfolding methodology. I actually resisted much academic reading during the process and this did have me believe that my methods were quite unique. By retroactively considering the methods along with extensive methodological and academic research, I see both similarities and divergences in my processes.

Scholarship already exists around emergent methods and I believe I've highlighted how somatic awareness can inform such an emergence by documenting how the recurring attentional focus on my somatic experience would guide me to the next steps in the research. Emergent methodology requires a continual responsiveness but what is being responded to in the majority of these methods is not somatic awareness (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2008). A researcher's attentional focus on their own somatic awareness offers new ways of guiding the unfolding research while also further substantiating the value of the knowing one has through their body. Similar to the inclusion of somatic awareness in an autoethnographic exploration, I believe it can expand what emergent methods are responsive to as well as support their rationale as somatic awareness can increase one's awareness of our patterns and capacity to make intentional and informed choices in research.

A further bridge my methodology offers is a somatic practice-as-research method explicitly using improvisation score as method. By applying the notion and practice of an improvisational score in the development, participant exploration, and writing of my dissertation, I demonstrated how Nachmanovitch's (1990) invitation to improvise in life can include improvising in research.

Although I employed specified scores for my participant invitations and my writing, the overall score was a continual 'tuning in' or cultivating the habit of placing my attention on my sensorial experience in the moment.

Although there has been some scholarly exploration of using improvisational scores as research method, I believe it's an area where a lot of growth is possible, especially in the small but growing area of somatic and embodied research methodology. As I discussed in my first methods section, there is a need for more somatic methodology, more articulation of the practice and specifics and demonstrate of what new knowledge such methodology can uncover. I believe a truly somatic research methodology needs to be guided by both the researcher's and the participants' embodiment and somatic awareness, that such a method is inherently response, emergent and ever-evolving. I broaden Tania's (2021) edition on somatic methodology, which offers examples of how specific somatic practices, such as Laban Movement Analysis and the Kestenberg Movement Profile can be used to conduct research. The non-codified practice of improvisational score increases the accessibility of somatic methodology and my research demonstrated how scores can be used by anyone without needing certification in a codified methodology. Almost all of my participants noted positive increases in their somatic awareness and I most certainly expanded my somaing in my life and we did not need to employ a specific somatic technique. My usage of scores also expands the work of movement improvisers and dancers, such as Bacon & Midgelow (2014), Cancienne & Bagley (2008), Margolin (2014), and Snowber (2002, 2012) by making somatic methodologies accessible for those without training in dance. Although the success and growth of an increasing



number of somatic techniques and systems attest to their power to affect positive change individually and collectively, I believe there are notable gaps within them where somaing could flow into.

Somaing: Can you rearticulate those gaps you saw?

Me: Of course. My research was initially guided by a sense of the ways somaing remains inaccessible. Through my review of the practices and literature, I identified subtle ways that practices and beliefs in somaing reinforces separation and lessens its accessibility and applicability. These include a tendency to see body over mind, instead of mind as part of embodiment, and language as part of embodiment. There is a prioritisation of internal over external, thereby separating the co-created nature of movement. The belief in the necessity of external factors, such as another individual with 'expertise' in somaing and specific environmental conditions is something that I believe keeps somaing much more contained than it can or should be. Through my research, I wanted to invite somaing to flow into those cracks.

Somaing: Do you believe you have?

Me: Yes, I believe I've invited more movement towards softening those separations. And I also believe the movement has been small and has highlighted some of the difficulties in softening these tensions.

Somaing: How did you believe you would soften them?

Me: As I just spoke to, it involved taking an open-source approach to somatics, which is part of the growing trend to hybridise and empower more people to access somatics. This is particularly notable in the somatic practice of contact improvisation, which was developed as an ad hoc practice that intentionally blurred the lines of teacher and student and of life and practice (Novack, 1990). This is not to argue against codified techniques and established practices in any way as they greatly expand somaing. As Eddy (2016) mentions, however, somatic practices are often shrouded in highly

nuanced terminology, images and constructs. My work intended to open and disentangle some of this.

Somaing: How do you think you did this?

Me: It started initially with my own practice – wherein I intended to cultivate a greater trust in my own inner, somatic expertise (which was continually strengthened as I enacted the somatic methodology). I also explored somaing in all of my life, not just intentional practice, and noticed how I began to view my thinking movements and linguistic movements as part of my somatic experience. I became more aware of my sensorial experience of thoughts and language and more attentive to their movements. It was from these explorations and discoveries that I explored a similar expansion with my participants. Through the weekly invitations, I presented them with all of these ideas: the idea of internal expertise and how we can tend to devalue it, the scholarly support for the idea that all of life is movement, and the possibility of somaing through all of life. By speaking to them from my own somatic awareness and sharing about these explorations in my own life, I modelled ways of somaing in life. I also provided them with specific practices and scores to begin experiencing language somatically and weave somaing into parts of their daily lives. I showed them how to take the notion of improvisational scores into their own lives, to be their own expert in their somaing, to see how somaing is possible beyond formalised practice.

Somaing: What do you think the success of this was with your participants?

Me: Because of my methodology, I can't ascribe any causation of course. This was not an experimental design but rather an exploratory one. So all I have to go on is the participants' engagement and sharing. Most of them did share that they noticed greater somatic awareness in their lives from their participation. So there is no objective validation of this, but, at least subjectively, quite a few of the participants shared how exploring this somaing in their day-to-day benefited them and what is important to them.

Somaing: How did you envision that the methods you chose would answer how all of life could be conceived as somaing?

Me: I knew my methodology could not provide any broad sweeping answers but rather hoped that even asking the questions within a research framework could begin to point towards what could be possible. So although I did not expect myself and all participants to be able to experience all of life as somaing by the end of our time together, I believed the exploration would increase our ability to conceive it as such. I recognised that such shifts take time, which is why I planned a 10-week exploration. I have witnessed countless students experience shifts in their somatic awareness, their movement patterns and their relationships with their bodies in our 12 weeks of class. I also know I have had more shifts in my own life in courses and practices that continued over time. For years I have been giving my students 'homework' to pay attention to their somatic experience and movement patterns between our classes and have seen them experience a lot of growth. I wanted to see what would happen if we did the homework part without the weekly class part, but still weave in the teachings in the invitations. I wanted to see if my participants would have as positive of shifts in somatic awareness as I have had and my students have had. Of course, I knew that the experiences of only 21 people (myself and the original number of participants) couldn't really *answer* the questions I posed. But again, I was less interested in answers but more about what could be possible if we begin to ask the questions, even in small ways (like with a dozen people over a couple of months).

Somaing: And what inspired the particular attentional practices you gave your participants?

Me: This may not be the answer you're hoping for but I can't really ascribe direct lineage to any of the invitations. Like when I teach, I acknowledge that I have been exposed to many lineages within somatics as well as other attentional and personal growth practices and all of these experiences and explorations, combined with a tuning in somatically with my students – connecting

to my empathic or connected knowing (Cheever, 2000) – is where the exercises I offer come from. Quite often they are informed by my years of 5Rhythms practice and my work with dance improvisation with a number of teachers (who, themselves, often have a varied background of practices like modern dance, butoh, and somatics). Overall, however, they were informed by a processual somatic practice-as-research methodology, which involves “studying our practice, practicing our study, attending to our practice, practicing our attention” (Bacon, 2019).

Many of the specific invitations I offered in the 10 weeks with my participants were new to me. Just as I explore somatic awareness in a classroom setting, the practices focus on what is there in the present moment. As I developed the invitations from week to week, I was curious about the things that we could attach attentional practices to in our day to day and wanted to offer something that everyone would have in their lives. Because of the tension that is often present between embodied experience and language, I specifically wanted to explore the somatic aspects of speaking, writing, and reading with the sounds and textures of letters and words. Many of the attentional practices were quite simple whereas others, such as ‘notice your dance with time,’ blurred conceptual ideas and attention a little more.

Somaing: Beyond the 10 weeks, why the asynchronous format?

Me: I intended the exploration to be as easeful and accessible as possible. I know having to attend something at a specific place and time, especially a physical place, can present barriers to participation as does attempting to schedule a time that works for everyone. By providing content that participants could access at any time, they could choose what worked best for them. I also wanted the participants to feel free to participate in as much or as little of the explorations as possible.

Somaing: Can you share more why you did not require participation?

Me: This very much came from a desire to invite people to follow their own guidance and desires. I am very aware of the tension between this and the desire to support the participants in cultivating habits. Habits are consistent and habitual patterns of movement. This includes attentional habits and somatic practice is an attentional practice. So, by not requiring consistent practice or engagement, this certainly could lessen their capacity to cultivate greater somatic attentional habits in their lives. Not only that, but not requiring them to participate, including responding to me as the research also limits my findings, which it certainly did, as I had a 35% attrition rate. Yet I still wanted participants to participate because they wanted to, because they were interested and that they felt they were in full choice at all stages and did not only continue out of obligation to their initial agreement. Outside a research arena, I would certainly want my students and clients to participate with full choice at all times and I'm also aware that this isn't necessarily the best practice in research.

What I do wish I had more clearly invited at least, is that participants communicate with me if they wanted to stop the exploration at any time. Because I wasn't able to have follow up conversations with seven of the 20 initial participants and do not know if they participated or what their experience was, I also cannot say whether the attrition was because of the research design or due to countless other factors in the participants' lives. So it certainly would have served not only my research but my and others' future work in somatic offerings to know why these participants did not continue. Nevertheless, two thirds of the participants did complete the exploration with me out of their own volition, knowing they were not required and it was an invitation. I am also very aware that my participant exploration occurred over the beginning of the COVID pandemic, which constituted a large shift for most people and even a few of my participants who had final conversations with me shared they didn't feel they could participate when this shift happened. I see there are many things that could be done to explore the research questions more extensively.

Somaing: Are some of these things you would have liked to have done differently?

Me: I am very grateful to have had this exploration and though I wouldn't necessarily change much because all the successes and failures contributed to learning and growth, I believe it's opened up quite a few areas of possible expansion.

The only piece I would have liked to have done differently is a little more attention to the possibilities of harm and I acknowledge this was a blindspot in my research. Although attention to the somatic is something we can all access, my invitations to participants to tune into their own was not as trauma-informed as it should have been. The growing use of somatic therapeutic methods reinforce the embodied nature of trauma (Chesner & Iykou, 2020, Leuzinger-Bohleber, 2015). When somatic methods are used therapeutically, however, they are done so with the guidance of a trained therapist, who can support a client who may not be able to self-regulate when traumatic experiences are tapped into somatically. With a background in social work, when I work with others in real time, I have the capacity and training to hold space and recognise when an exploration may be unsafe for a student. Because of the asynchronous nature of the participant exploration, I was not able to do this. To be more sensitive to the possibility that participants could access trauma or other difficult experience by tuning in somatically, I needed to have been clear about this possibility with the participants ahead of time and guide them to stop if any experience were to arise that felt unsafe for them. I could have invited them to reach out to me and provided them with resources were they to have somatic experiences that felt traumatic or unsafe. In order to further mitigate possible harm, direct check ins with the participants, more trauma-informed languaging, and providing them more explicitly with grounding techniques would be helpful. Interestingly, when I teach, I almost always start my classes with grounding. Moving forward, I believe such an initial practice is not only helpful but critical to ensuring safety.

Somaing: Are there other aspects of somaing that conducting the research in this way has invited you to become aware of?

Me: I think the reflexivity and linguistic articulation piece can be an important way that we grow. Because of how I initially set up the research, I didn't require the participants to actively reflect on their experiences. Many did when I invited them to and I also believe it would be even more helpful to have that as an explicit aspect of exploring somaing in daily life. I also noticed how some of the invitations worked for some and not for others. Usually, I teach and guide in real time with others and can be more attuned and responsive to their experience. Although I could offer the invitations to more people by creating a single invitation for everyone, they lacked personalisation. I think it would be helpful to explore working one-on-one with people in such an exploration in the future. I also recognised how watching/reading required an extra doing and I'd like to explore more auditory invitations in the future, where participants can be actively engaged in other activities in their lives while listening.

I also see it could have been helpful to have another follow up with participants at a later time, to see if there seemed to be a lasting impact from their participation, to see if they were able to apply the practice of scores for themselves and to see if they were able to maintain the increased somatic awareness they purported to have experienced.

Somaing: And what else did you learn from the exploration that you could use in the future to expand my reach?

Me: I'd love to have this research expanded to bring in more participation, participant interaction, and collaboration between with multiple researchers, contrast real time and asynchronous offerings, separate the conceptual pieces and attentional practice scores, offer a variety of levels of practice – more tailored to the participants' experience with somatics, more clearly distinguish between attention and doing, offer more facilitation of simple somatic tuning in, and explore individual and group engagement.

Somaing: Can you expand on how you could envision some of these ideas?

Me: Well although I think my somatic methodology and using multimodal and somatic representation did expand somaing, I can also see ways it could be further expanded. Through the multiple voices of the writing, I intended to share the participants' experiences. I also shared all my writing of the participant process with the participants themselves. Many of the participants shared they were moved by my writing – the descriptions, constructed 'dialogues,' collages and summaries. Offering more ways into somatic awareness is what I intended in the writing and the responses from the participants about the writing seems to support that it did. I do believe there is validity to my methodology, particularly with its inclusion of self-reflexivity and checking in with participants for the accuracy of my presentations (Green, 2015). I also think this could be greatly expanded by more active voices – by creating a methodology that engages the participants to a greater extent, involves them more directly in the research and its representation and even have co-collaborators and lessening the power differential inherent in a researcher-participant dynamic. I'm inspired by Bakke and Peterson's (2017) work where they had 12 collaborators work together and apart and write about their own experiences of the intersection between anthropology and art. A similar collaboration would be exciting with the question 'how could we see/envision all of life as somaing?' This would also broaden the limited and narrow number of experiences I was able to offer in this research, having only reached out to my own networks. Being more intentional with outreach and recruitment, more attention used to outreach materials would really broaden how a wider variety of individuals, with differing abilities, would respond to somaing attentional practices in their lives.

Somaing: And your other ideas?

Me: Well, I've spoken to some of the pros and cons of asynchronous explorations and how it would be helpful to have more direct engagement with participants through the process and support them on an individual basis. And beyond that, what I realised complicated what I intended to be simple offering was the interweaving of conceptual ideas and attentional practices. Similar to



the distinction of these pieces when I teach, in the future I think it would be helpful to separate the ideas for participants to consider and the practices for them to apply. Specially I could envision creating a library of conceptual ideas in the form of video, audio, and written word that would cover topics such as an overview of and introduction to somatic practices, trauma and somatics, embodiment and language, and life-as-movement that participants could explore at their own pace. I would also separately provide clear and specific somatically attentional practices, such as choosing a habitual activity for the week, or noticing the somatic experience of speaking (which are two attentional practices I offered through the 10 weeks).

Somaing: And what do you think all this has to say to the scholars you presented in your literature review and first method section?

Me: Well, as I've noted, it responds to Tantia's (2021) call for more development of somatic methodology and shows how autoethnographic and improvisational methods can be part of this. I believe, however, that I invite a broader recognition of what somatic research can be in service of. Whereas Tantia lists a number of arenas that somatic methodology could be applied to, such as how to increase resiliency, articulate oppression, increase accuracy of biological measurements, and understand health conditions, I contend that the reach can be much broader than that. How I have termed and explored this possibility with myself and my participants is to consider how it could support "everything that we value." This lofty goal is what aligns my work with that of LaMothe (2015), who maintains that greater somatic awareness of our patterns of movement is "biological, ethical, spiritual, and ecological necessity" (p.14), and with Abram (1996), who insists that "we must renew our acquaintance with the sensuous world" (p.x). By exploring how LaMothe's (2015) life-as-movement ontology can look in practice within life and research through somatic analysis and writing methodology, I've not only drawn attention to the embodied nature of language by using it reflexively and intentionally, but I've demonstrated some of the limitations to do so, in particular in

academia. My intention has been to expand somaing by bringing our awareness to and disrupting some of the separations that can be part of somaing. Although I entered the study saying I wanted to ‘soften’ these separating tendencies, I believed that I could create a methodology that would overcome them altogether. I have realised that that is not actually what will further somaing. I still believe awareness of them is critical but by ‘softening,’ I now mean embracing them as a way to expand our somatic awareness. Our language distinguishes by conveying what is inside and outside the boundary of a word. Boundaries let us explore what is inside and outside and apprehend the movement of the relationship. Like Di Paolo *et al.*, (2018), I want to further our questioning of the sedimented, cemented nature of some dualisms, in academia and somaing. And I invite us to use the dualisms as a score, as frames to play within, instead of being bound by them.

By empowering individuals to trust their internal somatic knowing and how to soma through life, I may have unwittingly discounted expertise, thereby reinforcing the dualism I intended to soften. On the other end of the spectrum, I am pursuing a PhD, which is often seen as a confirmation of expertise (similar to Marsh, 2019, who sought to circumnavigate the academic ‘gatekeepers’ through her autoethnographic research and then realised she became one through the process). I now see the potential for this work to weave back in to somaing, especially in those practices led by trained somatic therapists in specific environments, is to see what’s possible when we play within the frames and how potent it can be to do so.

To be clear, I see this work as a supplement or complement to codified and existing somaing practices that are powerful and transformational. Practicing led somatic attention in specific times and places can be even more greatly supported by somaing in other ways, on our own, through all the areas of our lives. To find balance between the knowing through our bodies and the expertise others have cultivate and can support us with. I also want to add to the possibilities of languaging around somatics, such as Gendlin’s (1981) ‘felt-sense,’ Hanna’s (1991) ‘somatics,’ Summer’s ‘Kinetic

Awareness,' Todd's 'Thinking body,' Bainbridge Cohen's 'Body-Mind Centering,' among countless others (Eddy, 2016). Although I believe slowing down and quiet can be helpful scores to practice, I do not believe that they are the only scores for somaing and this is what I intend in my coinage of this movement: 'somaing'. I agree with Lord (1996) that each and every somatic practice and its associated conceptualisations offer new possibilities for sensorial awareness and apprehension of our patterns of movement with its frame. Rather than 'shake off' any of these terms, as Ellis & Hilton (2019) invite, we can embrace them in an expanded way.

Somaing: I hear you are passionate about expanding my potential and reach.

Me: Oh yes! I'm grateful to be part of 'field' intending to increase health and life enabling movements. I think my revisioning of you as somaing and my demonstrating of this how somaing can be enacted in life and research offers a powerful contributing to others involved in this movement. I look forward to continuing the dialogue with others involved in somaing, to see how they can take my contribution, methods and terminology to further your reach and assist me in my ongoing work in this area.

### Concluding and Beginning

*As I gaze upon my dance map, I am overwhelmed by the number of branches, categories, relational arrows and contradictions. Reducing the map to main ideas or grouping the aspects into central themes would make it more manageable but would also fail to represent the paradoxical complexity of the notion of dance. So instead of trying to use my head and cognitive intellectual capabilities to make sense of my research findings, it seems the only way to truly grasp its intricacy is to dance it. I stick the large map up on my wall and as my eyes take in the colourful written words: rhythmic, mastery, illusion, ritual, body movement, organic flow of energy – my body begins to move, feeling into the resonance of each word, each concept. Mentally I am aware of playing with the many paradoxes that pepper the map but I notice how the body integrates such seemingly disparate notions with ease. It appears that the entirety of the map can find its way into my dance and my movements are not troubled by the paradox but rather welcome the vast complexity of dance. Every item finds some level of truth in my body even if I may have wanted to reject some of them when mentally contemplating them. As my body and its dance demonstrate that dance is and must be all of what is contained in my map, there is a sense of softening into that knowing and even a joy from the recognition of the inclusivity of dance. (Kowalenko, 2017a)*

*i've been here before  
dropped into the flow  
what happens when i do this  
and this  
and this  
and this  
endless curiosity  
play  
the unknown  
it's why i show up on the dancefloor  
again  
and again  
and again  
why i'd dance every day  
if i could*

*i could  
 but i don't every day  
 some days i can't find the could between  
 the lines on the computer screen  
 the lines for the 196  
 the lines on the sidewalk  
 the lines i've drawn in the sand  
 as to what productive work looks like  
 as to what i'm supposed to be doing  
 as to what makes me a respectable, contributing member of society  
 worthy  
 of?  
 worthy  
 worth something  
 and really i know it's bullshit  
 every time i dance  
 and find space around the stories  
 the drama  
 the smallness i can so easily fall into of what life is, what i am, what this is  
 and instead move freely in that space  
 where worth morphs into the unknown  
 where every line my body makes  
 is full  
 and beautiful  
 and worth it all  
 (Kowalenko, 2017b)*

So here I am. After months and months and months of researching and reading and writing and rewriting, mapping, painting, dancing, being in movement, being stuck, listening, listening, listening, reinforcing patterns of movement, creating new patterns of movement, the many pieces and documents I had been creating as my presentation of the years of this exploration have come together. Although I couldn't even yet see it a few days ago, there is a document now with the drafts of most of the chapters you've read up to now. The question that arises now is how to conclude this exploration. I've had a lot of intensity come in my body at the prospect of writing this out, not yet knowing what I'm going to say, what there is to say. And the intensity has kept me away from the page.

And when the somatic intensity comes up so strongly that I'm not able to listen, I know I need to use my tools to come back to the questions, *how can I have this moment be one of somatic practice?*

There is still a clear tightening in my somatic experience. My mouth in a grimace, my brow furrowed, my shoulders held tightly and only my fingers move as I feel these expectations in my body. I know the commitment I've had to the written word, to dissertation as vehicle and how rife with tension and paradox it's been. I want to invite more awareness of the MOVEMENT of life, more somatic awareness through our experience of movement, and then each word I type appears to sit statically on the page. Although I know language is movement and connection is possible via the written word, there is still a sense that I'm continually creating more THINGS when I want to be questioning thingness. I believe we can still maintain a sense of somatic awareness even with concretisation, through the mundane, the linguistic, the virtual and that such awareness can serve us in what is important to us in our lives, whatever that is for each of us. Sometimes the how seems so clear, and other times so opaque.

I prepare myself and my space with the sensorial input that I've learned supports me in quieting the racing thoughts so I can listen inside to what needs to move through me. I have my diffuser emitting calming, focusing essential oils, I have tea from herbs I've foraged and purchased, I am mixing non-vocal music and binaural beats that I'm listening to, I feel the breeze of the fan I have on to cool myself in this current heat wave. I've cleared space in my living room and spread it all out. The maps and maps, notes and musings. The books and articles, painting and collages. I have the complete document of all I've written so far open on my computer, where I sit. I'm on the edge of the score needed for this last chapter. But I haven't quite gotten it. The aha that releases the holding and furrowing hasn't arrived. As I often can feel when I have so many ideas – like those represented in my documents, notes and maps, the many thoughts and questions and doubts feel like a spinning in my embodied experience.

I have an expectation of myself, particularly in this written form in the academic arena, that I provide a final clear summation of the research, tying it nicely together. I feel an expectation that I have provided support for the rigour and validity of my research and an expectation that this all contributes something clear and tangible to the collective opus of knowledge. And I need to it be authentic. I need it to be part of what matters to me about this research.

*I feel the familiar intensity of a deadline in my body.*

*It seems to be mirrored*

*by the intensity of the construction right outside my window.*

*I can't get away from it*

*(though I want to).*

*The familiar pattern of wanting to freeze.*

*And there is also the other familiar pattern*

*of feeling pushed forward,*

*of using the intensity*

*to speed up my movements*

*of my thoughts and actions.*

*The fingers move.*

*Externalising the internal movement, continuing the movements*

*here on the page.*

The name Twyla means 'woven of double thread.' And indeed, the theme of weaving has come up often through my research. I often liken the work I'm doing as the process of pulling apart some threads, spending some time with them, becoming curious as to how they're woven together and exploring new possibilities for what else can be woven. Since I started intensely working towards the completion of this writing draft, I picked up knitting again. My hands remembered the

familiar movements of over and under, looping and threading. The process feels fitting. When I knit, I work with a pattern, I follow along. It's a relief to not have to think too much. And in this improvisational writing, I'm less sure of the pattern. Or it's more the other way around – as I move, I'm attempting to figure out the pattern, as opposed to the pattern telling me how to move. Oh that may be an interesting way to knit. But I diverge.

I've pulled apart so many threads here and indeed they feel like a tangle right now. Yes, and the metaphor of threads and weaving invites a softening in my body. Yes, yes, I know what it feels like to untangle threads, and to weave them together in interesting and beautiful ways. The experience of the movement.

*A twinge, yes weaving, weaving, the movement of weaving,  
here it is,  
a glimpse of clarity...*

So here are my final thoughts, messy weaving, more questions, reflections, exploration of limitations all written in a new score. A score of weaving, of 'yes, and.' And I invite you, the reader, into this score with me. *To be curious what arises for you in the experience in your body and in your thinking as you read the words I've left as marks on the page with my movements, while saying to yourself "Yes, and." Can we both give space for all of the thoughts and experiences without needing to negate any of it or put it into contradiction with any other part?*

### **Score #7: Yes, and; Continuing the weaving**

One way we weave in improvisation, to find the embodied inclusion of seemingly disparate pieces, is with the score of 'Yes, and.' This is a score many improvisors have played with, particularly improvising outside of dance and improvising with others, where the requirement is to continue what has already been offered and add to it. I will be weaving my final reflections, concerns, and



thoughts together through ‘yes, and.’ Each idea will be followed by another one, sometimes contradictory. By using ‘yes, and,’ I hope to keep the space open for plurality, paradox and contradiction. It conveys my own subjectivity in concluding this research and invites you, the reader, to discover your own thoughts and conclusions, considering them alongside mine.

‘Yes, and’ invites the movement of weaving, brings our awareness to the co-creation. I have often felt very solo and alone in my work, especially many hours in front of a computer and isolated at home.

*Yes, and* writing actually expands our connection to an incredible degree. Written language is but one way our movements can intersect, whereby we can expand the reach and intersection of our movements. Because of written language, we can influence each other’s movements across space and time. When we engage with another’s writing, we connect to their movements and further them. Words on a page may appear static but they actually expand movement through the literate world, past, present and future.

*Yes, and* I notice the many written questions I have continued to ask through the research. The questions that include *can we find the possibility of somatic practice in all of life? What if the awareness of the experience and movement in our bodies was regarded as not only important, but foundational in our lives and by which everything else that we value is supported? What if the awareness of the experience of being and moving in our bodies was something we had access to all the time, through all of our lives and not requiring anything extra? What if all our lives could be seen as somatic practice, opening up access, choice and connection in every moment? What could be possible if the entire world was grounded in this belief? What do you notice in your body right now? How can a dissertation be conceived as somatic practice? How can we translate somatic practices to our day to day? What opens up? What else is possible? What happens when we use an improvisational score to bring our awareness to our somatic experience and movements in all of our lives? Including in researching, writing and reading?*

*Yes, and* I feel the need to prove that the answer can be yes.

*Yes, and* this research is not about proving. It's about asking the question. It's about the practice. *The Canadian Oxford Paperback Dictionary* (Bisset, 2000) defines practice as the actual doing of something; action as opposed to ideas; a way of doing something that is common, habitual, or expected; a habit or custom; repeated exercise in an activity requiring the development of a skill; session of this; action or execution as opposed to theory.

*Yes, and* what has been the practice herein? After reading over my draft to this point, I'm inspired by the movements I have been making, the articulation of many of those movements through words, the invitation to keep inviting you into the movement with me, to tune into your somatic awareness, what you feel in your body as you read, what movements my movements inspired in you. I take in the threads that have been pulled apart to consider and experience through the research and writing. I notice how much weaving has been done already through this work.

*Yes, and* there were many movements that were inspired by the questions. Including even shifting the language from 'the practice of somatics' to 'somaing.' I notice all the reading I've done and the aspects of others' writing that I've shared and new ways I've offered of weaving these ideas together in support of conceiving of how we can expand somatic practices: considering all life as movement; the history and practice of somatics; dance and movement improvisation and its aim and practices; the embodiment of cognition and language; some of the creative ways that language has been used to intentionally bring our awareness to our somatic experience and movement; repositioning 'dance' as the awareness of the movements we make; some of the ways improvisation has been used in research and writing; qualitative research explorations that invite further reflexivity, creativity, forms of representation; how language separates via its reification of nouns while simultaneously allowing us to connect in deeper ways through our sharing; how we conceive of and

engage with knowledge. I've considered how these explorations can support more somatic awareness in our day to day.

*Yes, and* I've intended to play with different ways of framing our experience and awareness of it by inviting in ontological and epistemological orientations as scores to play with.

*Yes, and* questioning things can be destabilising. Questioning what we believe we know destabilises our sense of self and the world. Humans long to create meaning and new meaning will be created in the space left. And there is often a lot of messiness in the middle of old and new meanings.

*Yes, and* although I claim to not be arguing for any one framing, there are beliefs that I do hold and influence my work: a belief that it is only through our senses and embodiment that we can know anything, that meaning is created through our use of language, that we have choice about that meaning, that language allows reflexivity and awareness, that it is possible to choose to tune into our somatic awareness in any context, that having the capacity to access our somatic awareness increases our capacity to choose our movement patterns, that life is all interconnected. I notice how there is a continual play of reification and movement in what I've been exploring internally and externally.

*Yes, and* I've intended to remain committed to the intention of exploring somatic awareness through all aspects of the research. To explore aspects of somatic practice or somaing in daily life, including inner authority, trust, listening, tuning into one aspect, awareness of sensation and movement, importance of just sensing and observing, that there is no 'right', support, ease, invitations, curiosity, attention, wholeness and focus, exploration, improvisation, and noticing patterns. I explored conversations as somatic practice, research as somatic practice, writing as somatic practice, reading as somatic practice, technology as somatic practice. As such, I intended to be somatically aware while I was in conversation with the participants, when I created the content of

the invitations, and when I returned to the conversations and all the videos and transcripts to present them from a somatic sense.

*Yes, and* I have played with scores of the written word to see how they may support more somatic awareness, how I've attempted to write somatically, vulnerably, evocatively, honestly, poetically, personally. I notice the ways I've invited more awareness of the movement of language, of the embodied nature of it by writing scores of dialogue, by considering intersubjective movements through my relationships with the participants, through varied different forms of writing such as poetry and collage, explicitly considering my embodied experience and paying attention to the movements and writing somatically, by using a somatic journal to check in before writing.

*Yes, and* I was committed to exploring the interconnections of movements by considering many aspects of my life, by weaving together the autoethnographic and participant exploration, the inward and outward. To explore how the openness of somatic practice and approaching life improvisationally can hold space for seemingly contradictory experiences and frames: distraction and awareness, mental and somatic, beliefs and experience, overwhelm and clarity, written and oral, rational and emotional.

*Yes, and* sometimes that meant my sense of the frame was blurred. I was simultaneously trying to explore what is possible within a limited frame while also wanting to consider the entirety of life. When I was pulling out threads to look more carefully at their colour, texture, the sensation of the threads, I knew I wasn't fully able to apprehend their larger weaving.

*Yes, and* pulling those threads out to look at them was a critical part of this research and many aspects of movement were still shared through this research. I did not want to aggregate or come up with a summary of participant experiences but rather present each participant with a lot of detail for the participants and readers to have space for their own experience and meaning. I also

presented the participants' sharing as dialogue to further this, pointing to the commonalities and divergences. This was part of the intention of research that is exploratory and not analytical.

*Yes, and* I notice how my teaching of somatics has influenced how I explored this research with the participants, how I could translate the practices to the day to day. I notice how committed I've been that this exploration opens up something new for myself, for my participants and for you, the reader. I see how I invited the participants and the readers to explore paradigms that could support greater somatic awareness because it matters to me. This importance imbued all my movements in the research: my languaging, patterning, softening, trusting, disentangling, weaving, asking, listening, writing, exploring, choosing, framing, weaving, speaking, and thinking.

*Yes, and* in my exploration of connecting somatics to what matters to each of us, I'm aware it is a small fraction of what could be explored. I notice there are aspects of the methodology I chose that worked for some and not for others and became aware of some of the assumptions and challenges in the methodology that I had not been aware of when I began it.

*Yes, and* this research explored only one participant methodology that consisted of 10 weeks of asynchronous email with a just two live conversations, one before and one after the 10 weeks. There are both benefits and challenges with asynchronous virtual format. By not being live with the participants through the 10 weeks, I was not able to be fully tuned into the participants and respond to their questions or provide them with clarity they were lacking.

*Yes, and* there was a lot freedom and openness with an asynchronous, voluntary methodology that I intended to be as full of ease and choice for the participants. It meant I could reach more people by sending out content to many at once, that scheduling was not an issue because I could create the content when I was available and they could listen when they were available. One participant shared how much she appreciated the space to just record her thoughts without having

to be in dialogue with another. The ability to respond on their own time could allow them to fully be with their experience and share, unlike in a conversation where attention is also on the other.

*Yes, and* the experience of one-way communication is very different than two-way communication. I definitely experienced a lot more richness in the conversations I had with the participants where I was really able to listen and respond to them and we could find more clarity together, as opposed to the one-way dissemination of information and invitations in the videos. Many of the participants also reflected how rich the conversations were and how much they felt they got from being in real time communication with me.

*Yes, and* having an open methodology for most of the exploration was important in what I wanted to explore within somatics, such as prioritising inner authority and letting go of the idea of a ‘right’ way so that participants could find *their* way. Because of this, the degree of participation was open, not even required. Although invitations were sent out weekly, there was not a requirement to participate in them weekly or even all of them. I was able to get some feedback as to what felt supportive for the participants, connecting the practices to something that mattered for them. But because my intention was for the participants to have choice, to find what worked for them, and not feel like more obligation and work, feedback was not required and therefore I don’t know all that did not work about the format for the participants.

*Yes, and* it’s actually possible that I was less likely to know about challenges because of the non-obligatory nature of the study. Seven participants did not complete the exploration with a follow up conversation and five of those never answered my multiple messages about scheduling and I have never heard from them since, nor know if they participated or not. Another participant scheduled a conversation but did not show up and was never in any further communication. Because I had no response from them, I don’t know the reasons why they did not agree to a final conversation.

*Yes, and* those that participated in the final conversations had quite varied experiences and varied levels of engagement, from reading and watching the invitations multiple times a week and sending responses to each one, to watching all the videos at once right before our follow up conversation. Some only provided verbal feedback and preferred it, whereas others found the idea of recording themselves aversive and only wanted to provide written feedback. My invitation to provide verbal feedback when the invitation was about noticing our somatic experience while speaking actually lessened one participant's engagement with the invitations from that point on. Also, I had one further follow up conversation that was not included in this paper because I failed to record it. That participant only engaged with the first invitation and then did not engage with any other invitation. She was still willing to have a follow up conversation. Unfortunately I do not fully recall all the reasons she believed she did not engage with the invitations although I recall her mentioning feeling too busy.

*Yes, and* I believe that there is at least a partial connection to engagement and what is important to us, which is why I have attempted to connect somatic practices to what is important for people. I do not think someone would engage in somatic practices if they do not see a benefit for themselves or how it connects to what matters in their life.

*Yes, and* I became aware that despite wanting an open, spacious exploration that required very little extra doing and could be easier for participants to fit into their lives, there was actually a high degree of personal responsibility necessary to be in the inquiry and to continually re-present the invitation in their day to day and there was certainly mental effort required. I was basically asking them to create new habits on their own, which is a pretty big ask. Although, it doesn't take necessarily more time in their lives, it could be far more effortful or intentional than the effort needed to attend a class and follow someone else's facilitation. That, despite being what I thought were simple questions to notice in one's life, it could actually be very challenging to create new

attentional habits on one's own. This was echoed in my conversation with Ruby where she realised that creating these new habits was much harder than she thought it would be. Unlike a class setting where the teacher directs the activities and sets up the space to support the exploration, the participants needed to set up these pieces for themselves. As my study was not explicitly focused on habit formation, I did not necessarily tell them how to do create such a habit.

*Yes, and* that was actually part of the curiosity – to see how people would keep an inquiry present in their lives and engage with it. For those that really engaged with the invitations, it seemed that they either created their own rituals around their participation (like my father, who would watch and take notes and record, as well as Stella, who also took notes while watching the video and then took notes of her experience in the week in a journal) while others did not, and some had more familiarity with these sorts of inquiries and the experience of being tuned in somatically, having done a lot of personal somatic inquiry, while others did not. It appeared that participants who had been engaging in this somatically reflective practice were able to take it on more easily than those who had not done this before.

*Yes, and* it still appeared I was providing the participants with tools to begin such practices if they had not done personal somatic explorations before and almost all of them did share that there were at least small shifts in the frequency with which they noticed their sensorial experience of life. It appeared that they were at least partially supported in growing a habit of somatic practices in their lives.

*Yes, and* I remember that practices take time to practice. And that somatic practices and somaing are not necessarily about getting somewhere, but rather to be more present to what we are experiencing moving in this moment. I believe that somatics and somaing is about the continual cultivation of such presence in our lives and my participants did reflect that this short exploration could support them with that.



*Yes, and* one participant shared how my invitations did occur to her as specific and focused and she appreciated those ‘bite-sized’ invitations that could allow her to notice small shifts rather than having to pay attention to a larger perspective.

*Yes, and* beyond the asynchronous ten-week exploration, the methodology did include two one-on-one conversations with the participants, where I found myself in a more active role of facilitator and teacher. In these conversations, I was able to check in with the participants and follow what was important to them and to offer more clarity. By getting present to some of the beliefs they had about themselves or the research, I was able to make the exploration more relevant for them. In these conversations, I was also able to reflect back things I sensed about them through my own somatic experience of them and intuition – including questioning some of the things they believed about themselves or their participation. For example, I shared with Hazel that I sense she does have somatic awareness but believes she needs it or herself to be different and that how tuned into others she is may be having her question her own somatic knowing. In most of my conversations, I was able to reflect my experience of the participants back to them and they felt that the observation was correct and they appreciated receiving it. As a facilitator and educator who is guided by tuning into the other through my somatic awareness, the asynchronous methods in most of my participant research and definitely in my writing have made it more difficult to hear the way forward. When I teach and facilitate, I want to contribute to the other’s growth and being in person with them helps me feel into where that may be.

*Yes, and* my participants were able to reflect a lot more back to me as well about my movements in our conversations. For example, Hazel noted how ‘somatic’ she found my language to be, that the words I choose include a lot of movement and sensation, and she found that very interesting.

*Yes, and* because of my methodology that did not intend to employ any sort of assessment or control, there is no way to really ascertain what the impact of participation was on the participants, beyond what they believe about it are. Indeed, the timing of my study also coincided with global reorganising and many personal shifts with the advent of the COVID pandemic in the middle of the ten weeks. What the participants shared is that almost all of their lives shifted notably in March 2020, right in the middle of the ten-week exploration.

*Yes, and* one thing I did notice even in the first conversations I had with the participants in the fall of 2019 is that many of them were already in transitional periods of their lives where they were figuring out next steps or building them. I could surmise that this was a factor that prompted their interest in participating in the first place but, again, this is only speculation.

*Yes, and* having already planned an emergent, improvisational, virtual methodology for participant involvement meant that there was nothing I need to shift from what I'd planned as the plan always involved listening and shifting.

*Yes, and* despite wanting a methodology that was accessible as possible, there were certainly barriers to participating. Beyond finding out about the opportunity with my fairly passive recruitment strategy, a person would need to speak English and have reliable internet connection. I think it also requires a certain amount of privilege to have space for self reflection and have one's basic needs met to be able to do so.

*Yes, and* this overview is far from complete as to why and what worked for the participants, nor is it providing conclusive evidence about what supports or detracts from one's somatic engagement.

*Yes, and* this research was about beginning an exploration of how we can experience life as somatic practice, continually representing the question instead of seeking an answer.

*Yes, and* I believe the participants gained more tools in their somatic toolbox and expanded their awareness through their participation. All of them shared that they received new ideas and many of them explored the invitations in their lives.

*Yes, and* because I did have the conversations with the participants, and some provided feedback, I could still intend some approximation at tuning into them across space and time. With you, the reader, that is more challenging as I may not even know who you are, reading this at some point in the future.

*Yes, and* I can still write from what is important to and inspires me and let you have your own experience of those movements.

*Yes, and* I am also quite aware of the incredible privilege I have had to be able to pursue doctoral work in my life.

*Yes, and* I also believe somatic awareness is critical for human beings to move forward in balance with the planet, ultimately ensuring our survival.

*Yes, and* something has, without question, supported what matters to me in life, such as my relationships, connection to myself and others, and my contribution to the world.

*Yes, and* I most certainly grew and shifted from this research. I have become much more aware of my somatic experience in my day to day through holding this inquiry, particularly in my engagement with technology, such as my computer and phone. Through practice, I am much more aware of my somatic experience as I sit here and type this on my computer. I also notice increasing capacity to be aware in the mundane moments as I move through life. This capacity to notice and observe has positively impacted my relationships because I am becoming increasingly better at taking responsibility for my needs and my emotions and communicating about them more clearly with others. I recognise when I need space and practices to calm myself.

*Yes, and* it's still a practice to keep somaing. After years of tuning out my sensorial input while typing on a computer, it requires intention and continued practicing to invite my awareness to include my somatic experience. I am still quite often more aware of the movement of my thoughts than the sensorial movements in my body. Habits are tenacious because we've practiced them so much. Cultivating new habits takes practice. For any of us to have a somatic practice, it requires a continual practicing.

*Yes, and* I also notice how much I've been moved and touched by the work and by the sharing of the participants. Although most of what they said will never be in the final dissertation, their movements are in me, they've impacted my movements, and what I'm writing. I spent so many hours 'with' the participants, months of going over our videos and transcripts and all their sharing that I actually experienced a lot of intimacy with all of them, with increased acceptance of the varied experiences we all have. I notice this most strongly in the relationship with my father. Although it was not reflected in my writing earlier, my father's participation in the research did impact our relationship in positive ways. I was so grateful for my father's contribution and experienced a new level of appreciation of how much love and care and support he offers me. His sharing also let me get to know him more – more about his history and what matters to him. It also provided more sharedness in our communicating.

*Yes, and* although I don't have the same degree of close relationship with any of the other participants as I do with my father, I do feel closer to all of the participants and with those that I have continued friendships with, I can see how this sharing contributes to the ongoing nature of our friendship.

*Yes, and* beyond the participant's experiences and some consideration of what worked as well as the limitations of the methodology and some of the impact I've experienced from undertaking this research, I want to consider what else there is left to say here. I do believe this work has

positively contributed to how we can use the improvisational method of a score to a research endeavour and how we can use the idea of a score personally in our lives to increase our awareness and choice.

*Yes, and* I've spread out all my maps and notes on the floor, taking in all the movements I made on those pages while working through this, to see what else is there. I notice how many of the pieces made their way into this writing and others that didn't. How there were threads and frames that I followed and then decided not to present. For example, I began creating a complex mapping of the participants, attempting to draw the interconnections between them. After the map got messier and messier, I realised the interconnections would only be a fraction and I had not wanted to aggregate the findings or attempt to draw conclusions about causality or connection yet the reader make their own.

*Yes, and* I notice how much I've woven into it all. And I also notice how much is missing, much more than I'm even aware of. I notice the conflicting beliefs I have. One that life is a complex entanglement of innumerable threads and co-created patterns of movement and more than we could fully comprehend. And another that I should be able to make sense of them.

*Yes, and* I know that this could be considered just the beginning, that there are many directions that these inquiries will take. I know for certain that this is the work I will continue to do in my life, exploring and expanding the access of somatic practices through a variety of ways, playing with methods and scores. This research has highlighted some potential for virtual asynchronous opportunity as well as the greater richness that's possible when working directly with people. I believe it's also reinforced an improvisational method as a powerful one and presented some of the ways one could employ an improvisational methodology.

*Yes, and* when we begin to consider what we could bridge within our own lives, ways that we can weave in more somatic awareness, there are many more possibilities. For example, I was recently

invited to engage in a personal ‘somatic retreat’ as part of a working group I am part of. Because of the nature of my research, I wondered why there is often a practice of ‘retreating’ from life for somatic practices. Indeed, so much facilitation in somatics involves taking quiet time and space away from everything else in our lives. And I certainly know these experiences can be very nourishing. And I also wondered how we can couple that with more somatic awareness IN life, in the full busyness of it. From that inquiry, I decided that instead of a ‘retreat,’ I would take what I termed a ‘somatic advance’ (as a countering idea to ‘retreat’), which provided me with some exciting ideas of how I could facilitate more day-to-day somatic awareness and tuning into somatic knowing with future students and clients.

*Yes, and* I’m aware that beyond my own future endeavours, inside and outside of academia, there is much potential in such an inquiry of conceiving all of life as somatic practice. Although I could not begin to cover all the directions this could take, I see potential in intentionally translating specific somatic practices to a day-to-day context, supporting students/clients with habit forming tools, more integration of linguistic play in somatic practice invitations, providing somatic educators with more tools for supporting their students and clients with somatic awareness in their lives, and cultivating more dialogue between somatic practices and practitioners, to collectively broaden the reach of their practices.

*Yes, and* this score of ‘yes, and’ feels clunky and awkward and disjointed and messy. Not the bow I thought I really wanted.

*Yes, and* life is often messy and bows are often the fantasy of fiction because in real life, movements are entangled and ever ongoing.

*Yes, and* I’m curious what remains for you as we approach the end of this written piece. *When were you aware of the experience in your body while reading? What matters to you? What has inspired you in reading this? What has puzzled you or closed you off? What sensations do you notice in your body while reading my questions?*

Yes, *and* this chapter has been a lot of thinking movements. Yes, informed by my somatic awareness but I still want to return to intentional somatic practice, seeking clarity as to the completion needed here, guided by my embodied knowing.

*I come back to my body, intending to listen  
to any final things  
that want to be moved through it  
in this moment  
as part of my final words here.*

*I sit in my living room  
with all the maps and notes and collages and paintings and articles surrounding me.*

*I type out my notes of my experience on my phone as I move,  
a familiar texting experience.*

*And I turn away from the note taking to lay down in the middle of the floor...*

*I tune into sense what else needs to be said through my body.*

*When I ask it what there is to say, it doesn't even want to formulate words.*

*It feels so good*

*to pause*

*and rest*

*with so many hours working, running each day as I approach my submission*

*I feel the ease in my body.*

*A release of the tension, the contraction, vibration, buzzing I've been feeling as I push my way toward the end.*

*Just be*

*Just be*

*'There must be something' form the movement of my linguistic thoughts*

*Body rests. Stretches. Feels good to twist my spine.*

*Some slight rocking releases more tension.*

*I can certainly be somatically aware when writing. In life's movements. In stressful and challenging moments.*

*And somatically it feels so much better to lay here and rest.*

*I'm drawn to connection that feels good. The sensation of the carpet on my fingers.*

*Rolling my hips to massage them against the floor.*

*The connection. The connection. The connection I'm aware of  
in this moment*

*Movement of thoughts wander away from the present moment.*

*I come back to the maps.*

*All marks of movements that moved through this body,*

*formed from my engagement with life and my embodiment.*

*Small, small movements in the vast interconnection of movements of life.*

*It feels good to move.*

*It feels good to have moved these pieces into being.*

*Body doesn't have anything else to say in this moment*

*about the words on the papers around me.*

*My body moves to clean up the papers.*

*File the articles and notes, roll up the maps.*

*I sit back down*

*in the space cleared,*

*feeling my energy reach out into the space.*

*Some trepidation and excitement.*

*What will move into the space now?*



*I reconnect with the floor.*

*Feel myself getting heavier.*

*Not needing to know*

*what comes next.*

*Present and curious*

*to see what movements unfold from here.*

## **The Beginning**

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## Appendix A: Scores of self

### Marion



Marion is the teacher. In order to have a sense of Marion, I began by watching a recently recorded zoom call where I was teaching dance students.

*Watching me watching myself, the cycles of zoom. And the curious experience of both watching myself on video in real time and watching the video after the fact. Who is this teacher? Her **passion and care** come through. The **dynamism** of her hand and face movements, the smiles. She really wants to **inspire**. She wants to **support**. She wants to see these students be in their **fullness**. Her **humility and honour shine** through. Also her **aliveness**. She loves being in this role of educator. It **lights her up**. I know prior to entering the space holding with her students, she almost always feels an intense amount of **fear and anxiety**. And what high expectations she has of herself to support and inspire and make a difference in her students' lives. So much of her is pulling her away, wanting every excuse to not have to teach. Even though she knows that this is one of the places she feels most alive, in the **listening**, in the care. Maybe the preparatory fear and anxiety is part of that? The intensity of the emotions in her body. Even if she wants to run from the somatic intensity of the crushing in her chest, perhaps it is part of what opens her up, supports the conditions of channeling from a sense of **something greater than herself** when in the role.*

## Amaya

Definitely a day of mothering, that **juggling** act, attempting to stay on top of work and care for us both. A zoom meeting, making soup, special time, putting the elderberry syrup on the stove. I've caught a small snippet of our day with video... watching it now (while still multitasking with my son next to me as I watch, type, check on the stove) to tune into the movements.. who is this mother? Her movements want to be **playful**, there is **intensity** there, something about to burst. Or a holding. **Softness** and strength. The **tuned in-ness** is vast and full. She is **full** this woman. **Continual** movement, so much **tenderness** and **care**, drawing the **lines**. Figuring it out as she goes. **Deep grounding**. **Listening** and **responding**. **Questions**. **Solid** and **light**. **Strong** listening. She cares about what she says, wants to **convey** understanding, wants to **check in**, ask, **collaborate**. She wants to **hold tight**. Relationships **mean the world** to this woman. Guidance and love.



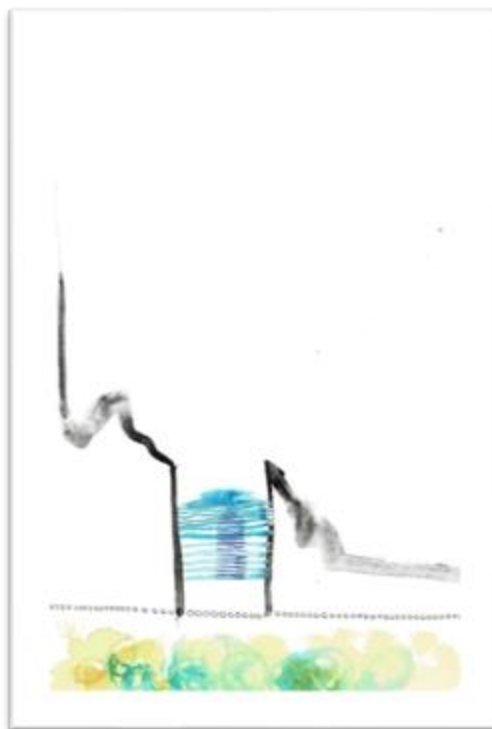
## Lilian

“I went so far down that I didn’t have enough breath to make it all the way back to the surface” describing last night’s dream. Chest constricted. Is the breath being held? “I feel like I’m dying” is often the expression when here. Run, run, run. I call this anxiety. Crushing. Weighted. Too much too much. The constriction in the chest becomes dominant. Thoughts feel muddled, feelings of being loss. Of loss. Grief. Of what has happened and will happen. Sadness. And panic. Heaviness and agitation, feeling central in the chest. Up to ears and chest. Franticness of needing to DO something – to stop it, run.

I sit here. Not doing.... Then the doing of the fingers moving. An expression. Stop again. Be and listen....

What had felt like a pulling down through the chest into depths I may never rise again from... softens. A deep inhale. Neck lengthens. Shoulders roll back. The tightness in the chest calls me back. Calling. “No, no, no...” a quiet protest...

And then following as a friend asks for support. What are the movements? The holding space invites so much more openness, allowing, clarity. This shift happens easily from the preparatory anxiety every time I teach to the holding space as an educator. And it doesn’t happen easily in the abuse. I never quite make it all the way to the allowing. Glimpses and mostly fear. And likely fear about failure when teaching is not the same as fear in an emotionally abusive situation where I am continually exposed to intimidation, accusation, demands. An external telling me over and over I AM a failure.



*..I watch myself editing the court documents that describe the abuse. Who is this woman? Brow furrows, then eyebrows raise. She’s trying to **figure it out**. Her eyes are **sad**, her lips downturned. She begins to bite her nails, **recoiling**. Her focus narrows, honing in on the details, she **HAS to get it right**. Has to get it right. Her moves are **careful**. **Calculated**. No wrong move will be tolerated. Her neck is **stiff**. Her head pulled back, like a turtle retreating into her shell, **seeking protection**. A flicker of hope, a **small breath**. Then back to the details. The **holding**. The protection. Lips purse. Mouth **tightens** even further. More **furrowing**. Concern. This is a **big fucking deal**. Her eyes close under the **weight** of it. She holds strong because she has to. She has no choice. She smooches the skin on her face, not even noticing the **contorting** she’s doing to try and work it out, make it right. It needs to be **perfect**. Some part of her notices the tension as she moves her hand to her own shoulder and rubs at the tension for a moment. Okay, she feels she has some clarity, she knows one right step and can follow it. The **doubt** creeps back in quickly. A large swallow as the **fear** moves up into **her throat**. How does she protect herself? Her child? Tears form in her eyes. She holds tightly. She almost takes a large breath but then **stops herself**. There is such a **heaviness** she holds up. She’s **exhausted**. She **supports** herself with her hand. Rubs at the strain in her forehead. Eyebrows raise. She begins to **plead**. Is this okay? Is this? She **needs the approval**, to tell her she’s gotten it right. **Holding, holding, holding, small breaths only**.*

## Vivian

*I watch the video of myself dancing earlier today, having joined a zoom dance (while simultaneously observing a ballet class at York). I know from experience that each dance can be vastly different and how I move one day isn't necessarily the same as I move another. To really see this dancer's range, I'd need to watch her over a period of time. And so what were her movements this morning, this dancer? She came into the dance tired, heavy and grumpy. Feeling overwhelmed with a headache and snapping at her boyfriend. And her dance? Heavy, flinging. Connected to music, focused on the exhale. Fluidity, curving, exhale. Holding and release. Control and surrender. Gaze is soft, focus is internal. There is*

*so much **authenticity** in her movements, not hiding her exhaustion, her sadness, her overwhelm. And still finding strength, rhythm, grace. Large and small movements, energy moving outward. **Energy moving through.** Changing expression. **Life and breath.** The energy keeps moving through moving through, changing shape, quality, expression and the energy continues, the movement continues. As heaviness moves to the floor, it's followed by lightness bringing the arms up and overhead that swing around, bringing the spine, and neck and head along. Rounded then sharp. **All of life could move through this woman. She holds but doesn't hold back.** Freedom and sweetness. Intensity and release. She is beautiful this woman, her shape and movements. I want to be her. Stuck by her fullness, her **expansiveness**, her **capacity.** **All the movements are within her, are possible, and she knows this.** She follows and allows.*



## Aloisia/Lola

I watch the video of the multitasking I was doing earlier today (that I am often doing). Recalling myself switching between quite a number of foci. What are the movements of this woman as she **constantly shifts** her attention? The shift is fluid. She is dancing, grooving to the music, then tucks her hair behind her ears as she reaches for a notebook. She continues dancing as she opens the book. Then her movements become very narrowed. She sits down watching her hand move the pencil across the page with much intent. Her body moves up and down with her breath and her lips open and close slightly, as if she's verbally articulating the words she's writing. She looks pensive as she cocks her head to the side. There is a sense of building of energy. The movement of her pencil increases and gets faster and faster. It appears that the energy builds to such a degree that she moves to standing, still writing, bending over to reach the notebook. Her body begins to pulse with the music again as she looks thoughtfully at her paper. She moves away from the table and then back again as she rounds her back down again to scribble quickly. She puts the pencil down, appears done. Then picks it up again, writing something further. Her head sways to the music in between writing and I notice how still I'm holding my self while writing and wiggle my body a little on the chair while typing. Back and forth. In and out. She tugs at her hair. The movements between are fluid and there is tension. **Pulling**. It isn't clear what she's focused on. Moments of spark pepper spinning in circles. There is **no clarity** on this path. Is there even a path? The tension builds.. to collapse or expression. She clears her throat. A look of concern? Indecision? Frustration? Back to dancing and leaving suddenly to grab another book. Planning. Attempting to focus, clarify, direct. Find the direction, the path, reconnect. **Rushing** to write as she glances over her shoulder. A text pulls her attention. A friend outside pulls her to the window. **Juggling and dropping**. Then the phone rings as I'm writing this. The irony of being distracted yet again. Pulled into the call. **Pulled** into other ideas. Constant stopping and starting. Sometimes skimming. Sometimes dropping deeply quickly and being pulled out just as rapidly. Bam bam bam... and then... where am I?? **Little sense of anything**, including self. A big **muddle**.



## Appendix B: Autoethnographic journal excerpts

Wow. Just through the process of writing this, I feel like I've had another big insight. I've been feeling my body as I type. I've been present to it since I started. Was it the intention? Knowing that this autoethnographic work is about somatic awareness?

The big insight is a shift in what I'm trying to do. Starting from a believe that we are always with our bodies. So just getting something out of the way of being aware of our embodied experience as we live. (April 9, 2019)

I'm really curious about what is actually in the way. Because it's not thought, it's not action, it's not screens. As I've explored in this research so far, I can engage in all those things and be aware of my somatic experience while doing them. But I WANT to be aware of my somatic experience. Perhaps a belief about what the body is and the important of attending to it. This is bringing up things I've felt passionate about for a long time – this culture of the external expert, the belief that we don't know what is going on in our bodies, cannot trust them, need to go to an expert to tell us what is wrong. (April 10, 2019)

What is impelling me to keep doing what I'm doing?... I want something accessible. Something to easily include in our lives as they are. But the way we live our lives is so often not serving our connection to our bodies. (another deep inhale). It's there. Something. That's why I'm doing this work. Little pieces. I'm making a difference in my students' lives. (November 1, 2018)

And how do I share the experience? It has appeared to me that a first person somatic description is key. But it's challenging. So used to the linguistic shortcuts. Fear, anxiety, overwhelm, exhaustion. Even joy and excitement. (November 27, 2018)

Becoming aware of the habits and then having capacity for choice. Yet the pull of the habits is strong. And I find myself wondering how the hell am I going to offer something useful for humanity around this? What can I uncover through my own work that can be of use to others? Pretty high expectation here. But I'm a queen of high expectations. (November 22, 2018)

But what about being and doing? That's what moving meditation is about. And maybe that's a key in my dissertation? Instead of getting people to add one more thing, to do something different, it's about adding the being back into the doing. The awareness of being back into the doing. Not a critique on our modern lives and the speed at which we move and all the things on our plate and the interconnectedness and absorption in screens. That's not my work to critique. That's not what I want to be doing. I want to help shift – for myself and others – a different way of experiencing it all. With more awareness of our bodies. (April 9, 2019)

That my understanding of what the organisational structure and functioning of The Move is, is to take what we do on the dance floor and apply it to how we run an organisation. Although I think I put it more eloquently. And heard and felt the resonance of others when I shared that, at the very least Layah. I felt the desire strongly in my own body as well as the disappointment that it felt we haven't been accomplishing that, particularly last night, with a lot of heated conversations, arguments and accusations, people leaving early, feeling of fractioning, general feeling of frustration by most involved. (September 10, 2019)



A break from the work... come back to it. Chew my nail. Hmm... where to start?? Which is often where I feel stuck. How do I start when I dance. Generally on the floor. Laying down, settling. Feeling into the stuck spots, the sore spots, then beginning to explore range, flexibility. What is alive emotionally comes in. If there is music playing, it is another element to dance with, to feel with. If there are other humans, yet another element. Maybe I dance with them. Maybe their presence inspires something in me – through their movements, the relationship I have with them, the stories I have. I have been dancing regularly for over 10 years and it feels familiar. I know how to start. But where it goes is not necessarily known. If it's an event, perhaps I know the structure, the timing. I know what I expect or desire by the end of the dance. To feel more connected, freer, more alive. And I often do. And sometimes not. What is consistent of how I get there? As I also feel these experiences when I allow other things to move through me – in my teaching, facilitating, mothering, socialising.

When I allow things to move through me. When it is not me. When I can witness. And this is the spiritual underpinning of my dancing. What I believe my goal and purpose are. And not solely in the world of dance but what it appears the aim of much spiritual practice is about. And this dissertation work is spiritual and yet I don't want to make it explicitly or solely so. (September 10, 2019)

Dancing is dancing with anything. Natural, man-made, whatever. Dancing is the presence of our somatic experience in life, that we are moving. We are movement. Movement is all there is. And I can certainly get present to movement being all there is when I'm typing on a computer. Even if I'm watching something? Writing on a computer? (September 10, 2019)

And my heartbeat is still super strong. As I tune into it and feel where I feel it, it softens a little. But is still strong enough to call attention to itself whereas usually I'm not aware of my heartbeat when I'm not trying to be aware of it. Deep inhale and exhale. Feeling of something rushing through me. Heartbeat is even stronger now. Can feel it up to my head and down to my stomach. Not moving my body much as I sit on the edge of my chair. I type on my phone with my left forefinger and right thumb. Do I always just use these two appendages? I would have thought I used both thumbs. It feels odd now that I'm noticing. My heartbeat still pulls my attention. I look at the clock. 7 minutes over. (November 19, 2018)

That feels so oppositional to this somatic work. In the technique class I remained focused on trying to get the movements right, to copy what I saw the teacher and others doing in my body and my body was more tense and stressed. I was in my head and could not really drop into what it felt like. It felt too fast, I felt overwhelmed. (August 17, 2018)

Where is the place to dance in this? Is there room for less black and white? Maybe that's within me... On some level I need to accept the physical constraints of living in this society and its separation. And I can fight it or work with it to some extent. And maybe there are other ways? Is it possible to be creative here?

My tummy is feeling upset. Bloated and distended. Maybe it was the cold pea pasta I just ate. Maybe it is the nerves. Maybe it's the windowless room with recycled air. Maybe maybe maybe (November 19, 2018)

My anxiety is increasingly worsening these days – I'm regularly feeling like my chest is constricted, I cannot breathe, I have no awareness of my feet, I feel overwhelming panic and that I need to do

something, my mind is racing – generally to projected futures and emotionally I'm focused on the biggest fear of losing my son. I've restarted the presence process and so every day, I attempt to sit with and just feel the anxiety, attend to my bodily sensations, just be, not do. Just breathe and hold space. (September 28, 2018)

I notice:

... That I rub and pick at my body, chew my cuticles, run my fingers through my hair and similar activities when I need to write something and want to... as I pause to scratch my inner thigh... desire to scratch intensifies as I search for what I want to say.. what is it? Is touching my body perhaps some way of finding the answer? Getting it from my body? I scratch my temple. There is a big aha happening as I write this but it also feels not quite clear and I feel like I'm the verge but not there and there is tension and it feels a little bit like anxiety. Wipe the side of my mouth. Look up to my mid-left. Deep inhale and exhale. Constriction in my chest. But that was there before I even started, my anxiety has been so bad lately. I'm aware my face is in a grimace. There in tension in my cheek muscles as I pull them out to the side. Some furrowing of my eyebrows. Does this help me figure it out? I go up and edit the format of this paragraph, deeply inhale again and rub my belly. Scratch my thigh. Do I always move this much when I'm writing? My eyebrows go up as I write that sentence. I want to have more calm in my body as I write, this feels like a lot of tension and isn't helping my anxiety. So I intentionally soften my face muscles and my writing becomes a lot faster. My mind is racing at the research potentials and wonder what has been doing in this realm of what people are actually doing with their bodies and they work, particularly on a computer. I think that that narrowing of focus will really help my dissertation. (October 12, 2018)

When I begin to think about the journal, I realise how unaware of my body I've been as I go through tasks – which involve writing emails and doing online research. As I sit in front of my computer, I don't notice that I'm wiggling around on my ball because I have to pee. (October 12, 2018)

Interesting how these autoethnographic writings start with an intention to notice my body and then all these questions and ideas for my research come forth. It hardly takes any time at all, I'm not spending a long time ruminating about these things – they come suddenly. A flash of inspiration... These sudden insights from my body feel so much more alive than pouring through texts for hours on end. (October 12, 2018)

I noticed how being invited to tune into my body somatically has impacted how my day has unfold since. How I left the class feeling more weightedness in my body, more relaxation in my face, a greater connection to the sensations in my body and more spaciousness in my thoughts. Even how I've been in a more curious and winding place with this writing since. (Autoethnographic journal, August 17, 2018)

I sit on the southbound train, arriving at Sheppard west, Sheppard west station; doors will open on the left. Push my glasses back into place. My hip scootched forward on the seat so only the space below my shoulder blades is touching the back seat. Not the most comfortable position. But neither is sitting with my backpack on my lap, arms resting on it as I type on my phone. And yes, it's still right thumb and left forefinger. So perhaps this is actually how I always write on my phone... I spend almost all of my time commuting on this subway, generally at least 3 hours a week, on my phone. Reading and typing. Usually email. Sometimes text. Sometimes work. Sometimes personal.

Scratch it harder as it's really itchy. Today I did both before this journal entry. Glasses push. Scratch my face. Move again. Finding another position where I can push some parts of me into the structures around me - knee, left arm and upper back, right outer arm. Scratch my right ear. Push glasses. I should see about tightening them. I must do it a lot. (November 20, 2018)

Is that part of it – when I focus on what I do know? There is so much I don't and can't know. Yet isn't this dissertation about connecting to the knowing in our body? Half the time I don't know what that means. How often am I connected to the knowing in my body? How do I know when I'm connected? There are those moments in dance when I'm being danced and witnessing myself. But the rest of the time? Scratch my head. Deep exhale. Scratch the back of my thigh. (October 19, 2018)

I noticed how when someone else held the directionality or when I could feel the holding- of the floor, of my partner – I could drop into more witnessing and following. How my practice this week has been so much about following the sensations and feeling the movement and increasingly so. (August 17, 2018)

Uncrossing legs, spine lengthens, face softens. I feel I'm getting ready to shift focus now. (November 30, 2018)

What is it about being so frozen this morning? I often seem to move and fidget so much while working on my computer. There was a sigh and my face softened a bit. Perhaps this kind of holding is helping with my concentration? (November 30, 2018)

Can I release some of the tension, anxiety and fear? Can this be something I can do for a moment? I don't feel I can't devote hours to such a practice. And practically I know I want to find something reasonable to incorporate in the day. Okay. So how do I do this practice while sitting at my desk? I have the option of moving to my living room but that option is not available to many who work in an office space.

I roll on the ball a little more. I take a deep breath and let sound come out of my mouth. Continual sighs and moans start to come out. I hear the tension I'm holding come out in sound. I soften through my neck and roll my head around. I'm writing while I do this all. I'm not stopping the work I'm doing while tuning into my practice of tuning into my body, finding movement, finding release. But of course I'm writing about what I'm doing. (December 13, 2018)

I've watched myself spiral into stories and difficult emotional states and habits. Feeling overwhelmed but also not fully feeling. Watching myself attempting to run from, distract from, numb from my feelings... But the practice of gibberish, of movement, of intention meant that I could have a deep and full experience of those emotions without drowning in them. Without much story... I could feel what my body was expressing but also have space. To not go into story. It was so strong and yet also not gripping me (February 17, 2019)

And maybe there is a key here? That somatic practice is a doing that brings us closer to the experience of it. Whereas so much of our doing can keep us from the experience (emails and checking cell phones in point).

Is it possible for those actions to bring us closer to our experiences instead of distracting us from them? (February 21, 2019)

The mindfulness and sensorial processes in line with my desire of figuring out how to more consistently connect to the wisdom in my body. My body where the trauma lies and where the debilitation sits and is experienced. My interface with this world and how I experience it. This belief of being able to connect with less filters to the knowing and experience without interpretation and story. Rare that I'm free of that. (March 7, 2019)

When I dance I am doing. But it provides space to be while doing. An allowing. Because of the open nature of my movement practice. Of allowing what is alive to move. Whereas most of my day to day is prompted by other things: goals to accomplish, task set by others... actually I'm not really sure how to name the difference of the reason and why I do the other things I do. Maybe there is something there.

I dance to feel. To move. To experience life. To allow. That is not why I do most things. The rare moments of present moment connection line up with these reasons. And those moments are so precious. Could it even be possible to do the rest of what I do for these reasons?(March 18, 2019)

(I'm taking a divergence here to note that now when I write these entries that I'm still referring to as autoethnographic journal entries – even if I question that that's what I'm really doing or know how they're supposed to be or look – I am in awareness of the experience of my body. Because it became an orientation of the journal writing process, it is now part of it. Seemingly with less conscious intent around it. It's just there. The practice and now it's part of it. The rest of the time I'm typing on my computer, I'm not necessarily in this awareness. But I've connected this work, this action to somatic awareness. And now it's there each time I return) (February 2, 2020)

The reading of written text outside of 'real time' seems to be the least amount of stimulation, of sensory input, of cues to be somatically aware. And yet it is still movement. And can still be dance if we become aware of it.

So I'm aware that the process of transcribing allows me more sensorial input that focuses me more on the dance of language. I hear the words, I feel my fingers moving, I see the screen. More senses involved in the process. (February 2, 2020)

I notice how little I seem to enjoy this process. It's taking me forever to do this transcription. Because I don't really want to. I am doing all these other things that feel more connected – mostly messaging people – speaking about plans, connection, supporting them. This doesn't really feel connected listening to dad reading me and typing it out. The slow process that I'm not really connecting to or feel like I'm getting anything further out of the process.

Although I'm moving, seeing, listening, it feels like a passive process. There is no agency in it. (February 2, 2020)

What does my body know right now? I am drawn to the sides of my nose, a sense of melting down. Increased heaviness in body. If I were to name it I would say it feels sad. That it feels like loss. Sadness of loss. My body knows the squishy feel of the ball beneath me. The rounded twisted spine sitting on a ball typing with my left leg over my right and turned slightly to the right. My ear still has a slight twinge that still comes up mildly from time to time since the ear infection. What does my body know right now? The sides of my mouth get heavier. Seems like sadness even more. My body knows there is so so so much heaviness. And also a tingling expansion in my head, ears, eye sockets. A deep breath and sitting up on the ball, uncrossing legs. My body knows that sitting up, I feel less heavy and dropped. What does my body know right now? It knows this heart is beating, the sensation of that heart, the slight buzz in the ears along with the sound of the freezer humming, my

friend turning pages, cars driving by, people walking and talking outside. My body knows the textures of my arms resting on the wood of my desktop as I type. It has learned the texture and give of the keyboard of this new computer. It knows how to breathe, digest, move. (March 15, 2020)

I suddenly get present to the immense wisdom and capacity of this body. And a capacity to connect with the knowing that matters. And that the knowing is a lot less complicated than our linguistically oriented thinking believes or tries to make it to be.

And the awareness isn't always there in the quieter times. The choice is still there though. Isn't this work really about practicing choice. Knowing there is always a choice, getting used to being aware we can make it.

When I happen upon an idea that feels 'right' it does feel like it's my body that knows. It isn't a rational choice.

It's always there. What is that knowing? A knowing of beyondness. (March 15, 2020)

And yet the anxiety is way way stronger today...

And still much trauma in me, so many places for others' stuff to stick to me. And not really knowing how to keep from having it stick so much...

Wow the crushing of the anxiety is still so so strong. My whole body is buzzing...

I couldn't afford to just do nothing. And yet it was exactly what I needed to do...

for me it's clear that honouring what that awareness is asking for is critical. Or at least being in choice and awareness if we make a decision that is not in line with what our bodies are asking for...

There was still obligation, responsibility, guilt. Needing to do...

And yet, and yet so much has shifted. Inside and outside. Outside reflecting the inside. Reflecting how much more compassion, love, listening, honouring, as well as how much more space for the chaos to come to the surface. (April 2, 2020)

I don't know the end. I also don't know where I'm going. And we don't. I don't. I started writing an hour ago and have actually been pretty focused that whole time. Pretty notable for me. I suppose because the space of flow allows for my focus to follow what it's following. Not stay focused on what I think I need to stay focused on. And it all feels so rich. It makes so much sense and makes none. I'm more comfortable in these seeming paradoxes. That's the work right? On the wall behind me I've had a poster up for months and months that I'm not really paying attention to yet it's still part of my awareness on some level. Starting from a sense of dichotomising and realising it's the weaving. It's the and. Here are the perpetual ANDs of my experience. And this and this and this and this. (April 2, 2020)

Because it's not about separating. It's about listening through life. Through all of the life. (April 2, 2020)

Yes, of course, there is some is some jumping through the hoops and playing the game. But fuck it if I was just doing it to get a PhD. Yeah, there is something in that. But it's really not what is important. It's not what really moves and inspires me in life. And I feel so much in my chest, I begin to cry again as I presence myself to what is important. For more of us humans to be in the presence and knowing of our connection to life and the love that we are. (April 2, 2020)

This is completely a stream of consciousness typing. Not what I planned on writing. Yet I don't know if I had a clear plan. I need to do this for me. For my work. They are not separate. It's not

separate. None of it is. And I continue to come back to that. Of not separating. And being conscious in that it's just a score, a game, when we do. When we reify, categorise, isolate. Playing with those scores to have experience, to know ourselves, for life to know itself within that score. Yet the score is not truth, neither is what we believe ourselves to be in. such such deep spiritual work. And it just can't not be. It wouldn't be authentic. (April 2, 2020)

And the potential of this time, with very little physical presence and touch, to act as a score, to give us the opportunity to more deeply cultivate this capacity and really recognise that quantum entanglement. To dismantle our ideas of touch, of connection. Quantum physics appears to support this, which is nice. Particularly as a fringy, body based, revolutionary-wannabe, reading avoidant academic. Oh hey look – I want to throw out theory without being that versed in much of it but at least there are some academic legs to stand on.... Do I really want to stand? A think I reject about theory is its appearance of stagnancy. And the categorisation and separation.

I suppose a gift of this mind of mine – to constantly consider many angles, aspects. Maybe why I want to reject categorisation. And others don't question it as much. And also. Knowing edges, knowing the edges of the box we're in feels comfortable. Maybe more so than the pain of accepting we're in a fucking box. I can only speak about myself really. This analysing others isn't what I want to do. What are the boxes I stay in?

wanting to let go let go let go. Of holding. Of it needing to be a certain way.

Softening. Weaving. The work I'm intending to do in this academic realm. And at the same time, being clearer with boundaries. But isn't that a paradox or oxymoron or something? When I'm trying to soften categories, binaries. What the fuck is a boundary if everything is interconnected? Maybe it calls for a shift in understanding what a boundary is. Maybe more like clarity in needs, in expression. I think I really don't like the word boundary. I use it a lot though. Especially when dealing with narcissistic abuse. No or Yes. Those are pretty discrete categories. But I'm in maybe a lot. But some things are either/or right?

There are distinctions. Boundaries. I'm inside the house or outside. I guess maybe only boundaries in relation to the categorisations of things. That there is a house and this is where it is and there is where it ends. I have a body and this is where it is and this is where it ends. When I soften what I believe I am, what time is, what consciousness is, then I'm in this house and outside of it. I'm the whole world.

the spider. And only being able to focus on the 8 legs, the 8 threads. In a moment perhaps. And the threads feel far reaching. If multiple threads are woven together, do they become one focus, something one leg can handle? Back to the leg imagery I notice come up earlier in this writing – something to stand on. And there is choice. Do I want to stand or do I want to weave? Do I want to dance? There are these legs and they definitely don't want to stand still.... (April 12, 2020)

I don't really feel like I'm never not distracted right now. Wouldn't it be easier to say always distracted? Never present? That black and white dichotomy feels like it may not be helpful and reinforcing a separation I want so badly to dissolve. Is it the dichotomisation that exacerbates the feeling of distraction? No not only. Could be part. At least dichotomisation of work/play sorts of things. What's productive and what's not. But right now it feels far more intense than I recall it being before. When my life wasn't so much online.

Just the intention in writing the last sentence to be present with my body this moment had me immediately feel the heaviness in my chest, the sadness in my heart and the tears were immediate. I'm not even sure what they are about. And maybe I don't need to know. But I do want to be present. I hate how distracted I am. (May 14, 2020)

Suddenly pulled by 'shoulds.' I feel I'm at least somewhat focused in that direction as this is a 'dissertation journal.' Of course there is judgement and questioning as to whether my naval gazing can be consider valid academic inquiry.

Perspective.

Not sure I have much right now.

Listening to my body. (May 14, 2020)

A beautiful gift I received and kept since being pregnant with Sasha. Really hearing my body with what it wants. It's amazing how clear it often is. And so amazing that previous addictions and challenges with eating, such as sugar, were just gone and haven't ever come back. My body is so clear it doesn't want much sugar at all. I have so much capacity to hear and listen. (May 14, 2020)

That I'm choosing this restriction. To explore choosing restriction. That resonates so deeply. I'm choosing this restriction. That means I can choose to change my mind at any moment. Maybe I'm making meaning where there is none. But I'm human. So I'm going to make meaning. This meaning making feels constructive though. Feels empowering. (May 14, 2020)

Because I often want to be in all scores of myself at all time. And I'm overwhelmed and distracted. I don't know who I am or what I'm focused on or why or where or what or when. But there is something else. Something about somatic awareness. Of course there is. Wanting an answer. Keep wanting the nice ribbons to tie it together. And I do get beautiful threads to weave into it all. (May 14, 2020)

Amazing how the similarity triggers anxiety in my body. Wow it's flooding me right now. There is no immediate threat. But I'm in tears again. I feel my chest constricting. It feels like I'm not going to be able to breathe. And I'm actually holding my chest. Holding my body. Furrowing my brow. My hands are moving and the rest of my body is rigid. Noticing. Intentionally softening. Feeling my weight drop into the ball. Feeling my shoulders drop. Relaxing my forehead. And feeling such a well of tears. Ping: need to check my phone. So regular. Such an addiction. I chose the restriction in this moment. (May 14, 2020)

And yet almost everything feels unbalanced. Never feels like I do enough work. Too much on my plate. Unable to really focus on any work while I'm with Sasha and when I'm not with him I want to do other things and am also often distracted. I pause and scratch the back of my shoulders. Was it even itchy? As I write that I feel an itch to the right of my right eye and scratch. My head hurts a lot today. Has been pretty bad the entire week. It's been really grey most days and it's even snowed in the middle of May. There is a field of fear and anxiety and overwhelm and stress around me. (May 14, 2020)

Back to Dr. whoever with his lectin theory. Which one is it? Which one is the answer? If I just find it, it will all change. If I just figure out the 'right' thing to do. Then Greg will be kind to me and stop abusing me. Then I'll know what I'm supposed to write in my dissertation, be clear what my offering to the academic community and world is. (May 14, 2020)

Something about this fluid musing feels like where I need to go. And I still feel like I'm naval gazing. No one will ever read this. But am I writing it for it to be read?

A desire to be seen. To matter. To make a difference.

A participant noted how much my language uses embodiment. I noticed the metaphor of holding and dropping I just wrote about. Itch in my right cheek. Scratch it right away. (May 14, 2020)

And yet the entire questioning and wanting to throw it all out isn't even reasonable. I am in this. Let me notice the score. And notice what choice I have within it. What choice I have to step out of the scores.

My mouth has been lax and open since starting this paragraph. I so want to let go. To step out of the score of mother, of responsible, of holding it all together. Big exhale there. I want to play. I want to play. (May 14, 2020)

Meaning making. Categorisation systems. They can help. And I still resist them.

I want the answer.

I want to make a difference. In my life. In others' lives. I want to make a difference. There is an egoic part for sure, I won't deny that. And it goes beyond that. I continue to move on the ball. My spine continues to undulate and my head continues to move fluidly on it.

How this feels fluid and I wondered if writing my dissertation could feel this way? Maybe at least partly. Depending on which score I'm embodying. There is the score that is here. That is moving fluidly on the ball. The one that continues to give rise to a new wave of tears.

I feel like I can't hope right now. It feels bleak and endless. (May 14, 2020)

Exhale and scratch my head. I feel like there are so many unfinished threads here. I notice an itch on my right forehead but am intentionally not scratching it. Noticing the sensation intensify and begin to shift as I keep writing instead. I notice the congestion in my head, the slight pain and constriction in my throat. My spine twisted. Some mucous from my nose I want to wipe and that is itching underneath my nose. An itch on my outer left upper arm. My mouth slightly opened. As I tried to remember how to spell slight my mouth closed. Wiped my nose and sniffed in. Need to pee again. The itch on my right forehead is still there. Mouth open again. So so so so so so so much desire to let go. I need to feel it in my body. I need to feel letting go. One reason I believe I dance. Making meaning. Seems to make sense. It usually does. Finally scratched that itch. When I stopped paying attention. The scratch was happening before I noticed it happening. (May 14, 2020)

I've uncovered some of the following I have been doing. This listening to the urge in my body to purchase the cleanse. That my eyes noticed it and something said yes and I followed even if it didn't make sense. I followed the sense of yes, do it now, even if that still didn't make sense. (May 14, 2020)

A short window... as they often feel. Window. Something to look through but still create a barrier. Instead meaning it as a space.

Earlier this afternoon I was trying to support Sasha with his virtual schoolwork. I'm totally challenged by how it's done and what it's teaching and the isolation of ideas from life, separating them from any sense of value or connection. But feeling like I have to or am suppose to.

So he's working on these grade 1 exercises which seem really easy and then he gets to the last question, which asks him to identify the opposites. The right answers are 'work' and 'play.' And the



irony and absurdity just hits me. Here I am, my doctoral work attempting to question and soften binaries, a big one being work and play. And yet my movements are totally reinforcing them... And now shifting from this window to another... (May 19, 2020)

Settling. Connecting to the pleasure in sensation. Returning to pleasure in sensation. That then guided me to keep tuning back into the sensations of the water, the caressing of my hands washing my skin in the shower. Thoughts kept returning. The analysing. The planning (which even included planning writing about it, which I'm doing now). I then sought out my most comfortable clothes. Rubbed some of the last drops of my sandalwood oil on my wrists and neck and around my nose so I could keep inhaling it. I cleared all the paper off my desk. Set up my fan and made sure my windows were open. Moved my salt lamp (after gently cleaning all the salt that had melted off) to my desk. There is a sense of dropping into it all now as I sit at my desk. Feeling my fingers move easily across the keys. Not really trying to get anywhere. The fingers moving inviting me to be. I feel curious about the black letters appearing on the screen as my fingers move. So familiar they are with the keyboard. I enjoy typing. Sometimes I imagining myself typing my thoughts, feeling my fingers move on the keys. Feels so satisfying. Perhaps the creation of something. I see my thoughts in front of me. I see my thoughts in front of me. They aren't me anymore. Is this the gift of literacy? I've felt constricted and confined by language, by literacy, by the concretising of thingness and lamenting that it keeps me from experiencing the movement I am. I see the movement now. I see it in front of me. Coming out as I feel and think and I don't know where it is going. I don't know the next sentence. Maybe I know the next word. And it just flows. Me. Not me.

First needing to define self with boundaries so we can then let it go. Experience the boundary so we can experience the not.

I feel so tender with the care and softness I've given myself this morning. Really attending to comfort, pleasure, the sensations. This isn't my usual.  
(September 2, 2020)

Feeling confined, stressed. Wondering if I need to get up earlier (as I already get up at 5:40am), what I need to stay focused, move more efficiently.

I'm used to moving efficiently. I love moving efficiently. Weaving around traffic. Running smoothly over rocks and logs. Dancing big and expansively in a room full of people. Completing a task with ease and efficiency. And the transcription takes what it takes. I speed the audio up to 1.25. Hoping it's a little faster. And it feels sooooo slow. I don't want to move slow. I want to be done.

There is a piece. Wanting to be done. To get there. For it to be over. And I've been challenging that consistently. And here it is.

I feel the waves move through my body. My heart soften. The warm tears fill my eyes. Being here. Feeling here. Just being here. Moving without trying to get anywhere. okay, writing this, there is some hope that it's moving me towards the end of the my dissertation. Although I have absolutely no idea how. Actually it's just giving me more to analyse and I already feel overwhelm by the sheer volume of writing material and musings... so I don't know. Being. Trusting.

Moving slow. Transcription. Ease. Not trying to get anywhere. Yet I do want and need to complete the transcription.

Although maybe feeling like I need to have it done first before I can start my writing isn't true. This feels far more fluid. Of course this isn't the dissertation. Still musing for it. The fear. The fear. How is it even possible to take in all the words and writing? But don't I feel that way about all writing?

The books on my shelf. The dozen books I'm reading concurrently. All the reading I believe I need

to do for my dissertation. And the belief I need to distill, accurately reference. Provide something new. And a need to be special.

Yesterday while running I thought about how I would be sitting for hours writing to create my dissertation. And the limitation of that movement. Right now as I sit here and type I'm aware of the limitation. Sitting in the hard kitchen chair that I put some couch cushions on. Feeling my brow furrow and my lips purse. The blinking of my eyes. I have my right foot up on the chair. In a twisted position. Spine rounded. A deeper breath. Fly lands on my nose. Eyes look up and out the window for a moment and then back to the screen. I have been thinking about how to make the set up for this more comfortable – a monitor so I can look straight ahead instead of down, an ergonomic office chair to support my back. And still the sitting and typing. Yet this is how we write. I could record audio of myself speaking. From all the transcription I know it will be very different. Much more circuitous, winding, unfinished thoughts, peppered with assumptions “like... yeah.” I shift to legs crossed. Familiar and more comfortable. And then my hips ache after a while. Sitting for long periods just never feels good to me. And yet, in our linguistically-oriented world, our internet-oriented world – many/most of it in the west spend hours and hours sitting in front of a screen with words. To be engaged in what we're doing, that's what we're doing. And it doesn't feel supportive for my body. Or maybe all I need is just to keep being aware of my body. Feeling it. Listening. (September 2, 2020)

And then the overwhelm of the high expectations I have of myself, the fear of missing so much, of having failed already, of not knowing what I'm doing, of needing to do something. What am I supposed to be doing? And as I write about it, I reconnect to the experience of it, I feel my lips turn downward, my face likely displaying discomfort, disgust and as I tune into the really feel into what is happening in my face, the experience intensifies, my brow begins to furrow. Seems to be a lot of brow furrowing in this orientation. The orientation of proving, of needing to be right, of the fear of wrong and failure, fear of critique, of loss... and then I notice I'm not even writing anymore. When do I say it's done? Such fear around that. What will I close if I say something is done? No surprise I hate goodbyes, never want to close things. Fear I'll miss something, it won't be enough. So what about trying this on – to declare the autoethnographic journals as done, at least for the purposes of writing my dissertation? To know that no matter how much I write, it would never be all of it. It's only some small part of it. I would have to write constantly for the rest of my life to have a sense of wholeness and then I'd miss out on so much of life because I'm writing and limiting what else I can do.

Fonz is snoring loudly. Running in his sleep it appears.

So it is what it is. Something to examine. Not the whole, not even a large proportion of the whole, but something to be curious about, to see what can be opened up. What can be opened up is infinite so the invitation is what's most important.

Okay. Here is the period for these entries. (December 20, 2020)

## Appendix C: Research recruitment

### **Are you interested in having the day-to-day work you do support your connection to your body?**

Yes? Amazing! Then I'm inviting you to consider exploring with me:

This is an invitation to participate in my doctoral research on how our day-to-day work in an organisation can be understood as somatic practice, basically practice that helps us be more connected to the experience in our bodies. By participating you could gain tools to help you have a greater awareness of your body and contribute to a larger body of research to make somatic practices more accessible.

What participation would entail includes:

- an initial conversation (in person or via skype) with me
- receiving and reading weekly emails from me for 10 weeks
- a follow up conversation (in person or via skype) with me

Participation is voluntary, free and you can withdraw at any time.

If you're interested, please get in touch with me and I can go over the research in more detail with you, see if you're interested and set up a time to connect for an initial conversation if you are!

You're welcome to share this email with anyone who you think may be interested in joining me on this exploration! I'm looking forward to hearing from you!

Twyla Kowalenko, MSW, PhD Candidate, York University

## Appendix D: Participant consent form

### INFORMED CONSENT FORM FOR DISSERTATION RESEARCH

**Date:**

**Study Title or Topic:** Organisational Work as Somatic Practice

**Researcher:** Twyla Kowalenko, doctoral candidate, Graduate Program in Dance Studies, York University

**Purpose of the Research:** To investigate how one's somatic/embodied awareness can be supported through day-to-day organisational work

**What You Will Be Asked to Do in the Research:** Participate in an individual interview (in person or via video online) with the researcher lasting 30-60 minutes. You will be emailed prompts and ideas weekly for 10 weeks by the facilitator to consider in your day-to-day tasks. Weekly emails will require 20 minutes or less of reading each week and you can choose to incorporate ideas into your work but are not required to respond to the researcher via email. After 10 weeks of emails, you will participate in an individual interview (online or in person) with the researcher lasting 60-90 minutes.

**Risks and Discomforts:** You will not be asked to move outside of your safe range of motion and are free to participate to the degree that is accessible to you. I do not foresee any risks or discomfort from your participation in the research.

**Benefits of the Research and Benefits to You:** You will have the opportunity to explore the connections between aspects of your work and deepen your somatic awareness in your organisational activities. You will contribute to a body of knowledge that can help others increase their somatic awareness in the work they do.

**Voluntary Participation:** Your participation in the study is completely voluntary and you may refuse to answer any question or choose to stop participating at any time. Your decision not to volunteer will not influence your status in the department of Dance at York, the nature of your relationship with Twyla Kowalenko, or the nature of your relationship with York University either now, or in the future.

**Withdrawal from the Study:** You can stop participating in the study at any time, for any reason, if you so decide. Your decision to stop participating, or to refuse to answer particular questions, will not affect your relationship with the researcher or York University. In the event that you withdraw from the study, all associated data collected will be immediately destroyed wherever possible. However, it may be impossible to remove your contributions from the focus group discussion as individuals are not identified in the discussions.

**Confidentiality:** All data will remain anonymous, where possible. Your name will not appear on any of the transcripts or depictions of your responses and you will not be identified in any way unless you provide permission for the researcher to do so. All materials will be separated from consent forms. Data will be stored safely in a locked office and password protected computers and will be retained indefinitely. Confidentiality will be provided to the fullest extent possible by law.

**Questions about the Research:** If you have questions about the research in general or about your role in the study, please feel free to contact Twyla Kowalenko, PhD candidate in Dance, *contact information redacted*. This research has received ethics review and approval by the Delegated Ethics Review Committee, which is delegated authority to review research ethics protocols by the Human Participants Review Sub-Committee, York University's Ethics Review Board, and conforms to the standards of the Canadian Tri-Council Research Ethics guidelines. If you have any questions about this process, or about your rights as a participant in the study, please contact the Sr. Manager & Policy Advisor for the Office of Research Ethics, *contact information redacted*.

**Legal Rights and Signatures:**

I ( \_\_\_\_\_ ), consent to participate in *Organisational Work as Somatic Practice* conducted by Twyla Kowalenko. I have understood the nature of this project and wish to participate. I am not waiving any of my legal rights by signing this form. My signature below indicates my consent.

**Signature** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date** \_\_\_\_\_  
Participant

I ( \_\_\_\_\_ ), consent to be audio recorded during my participation in the interview outlined above. My signature below indicates my consent.

**Signature** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date** \_\_\_\_\_  
Participant

I ( \_\_\_\_\_ ), consent to the use of my name in the publications arising from this research. My signature below indicates my consent.

**Signature** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date** \_\_\_\_\_  
Participant

**Signature** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date** \_\_\_\_\_  
Researcher

## Appendix E: The weekly invitation transcripts

**Video transcript for week 1** (if you'd like to read instead of or in addition to the video):

Hello again! I am really excited for these 10 weeks together.

I am super awkward and this whole process of recording myself and needing to feel like I sound really articulate and I'm saying exactly what I want to say is not that easy. I think I'm still getting stuck on this idea that there is a right and this idea of expert: an external expert. That as a researcher and as a doctoral candidate, I should have some sort of expertise and that you're waiting for this expertise from me. I've placed a lot of pressure on myself and have been sort of stuck. This is part of the reason why it's taken you this long to receive this email from me.

I'm noticing my own experience and my patterns around that. I'm trying to soften into it and make a different choice and come back to the intention of this research, which is about lessening this idea of separation, that the expertise is on the outside, and that we need some special time and place to be aware and to feel into that knowing.

So I'm going to soften into that with you. I'm going to take a breath and feel myself sitting here with you. Even though right now I am by myself in this room looking at my screen, I know that you're looking back at me, across time and space, and that you're part of this research with me: all 20 of you.

I really got present with all of you by going back to the conversations that we had to feel how all of us are co-creating this. I'm softening this idea that I'm an expert and instead I'm going curiously into the exploration. The curiosity of how we increase the awareness of the experience in our bodies in the day-to-day. I don't have an answer. I don't know if there is only one answer. It's about how we find that for ourselves. You're the expert in this. I'm not going to require anything from you and all of this is an invitation to become aware and notice. An invitation to not have to change or do or be anything different than what you are. I'm excited to see what will show up there.

So as you are reading this, I want to invite you to become aware of your experience: the position of your body, of what's supporting you now. I invite you to feel the movements that you're making as you're reading this. Notice if you're reading it with your eyes moving. I also want to invite you to try to read it out loud and feel into that experience. See if you can be curious about what you're feeling and notice in your body in this reading right now.

I know it's been a couple months since we had our conversation about this research when you initially shared with me what it is that drew you to it. When you saw this possibility of increasing your awareness of the experience in your body (in all that you do, in your work, in whatever it is for you). I want you to take a moment to reconnect for yourself of where that intention is. Where you're feeling it and what it is for you. Just be curious. It's also something moving and it doesn't have to stay the same. Likely lots of things have happened in your life and you've made lots of movements between the time that we talked and the time that you're reading this and there might be something new arising for you in this moment. Be curious and listen to that. Hold that intention for yourself lightly and see what arises for you when I share some of my thoughts and my invitations.

I've probably shared with a bunch of you but I am really inspired and influenced by a woman named Kimerer Lamothe. Her book "Why we dance" is really influential for me and you'll hear a bunch of ideas from it as I share week to week. They resonate really deeply in my experience of my body and I'm sharing that from my experience. The words of LaMothe are "the movements we make make us." I just want you to consider that again: "the movements we make make us." That all of life is movement, that we are always moving; that through making movements, we create patterns of movement and those patterns become who we are. This idea of patterning means that there's a lot of things that we can create patterns for and that we don't always have to be as aware.

When we were learning to ride bicycles (if you don't ride a bicycle, consider something you have practice and proficiency in), there was a lot of awareness we needed of every part of our moving

selves as we were learning to ride that bicycle. Yet once we learned it, it became this pattern that we just knew how to do that we could recreate and recreate and reinforce the more that we cycled. We didn't need to have the same level of awareness. We have this amazing ability to not need to have awareness about things and we can rely on the patterns that we've created. We create patterns from a lot of places - some that are really helpful, like learning to ride a bicycle, so that we can do that with ease and be able to do and notice things around us as we're bicycling. There are other ways that we create patterns that maybe aren't the healthiest patterns.

The thing about patterns is that when they become automatic, we no longer have choice. Being able to bring our awareness to these patterns allows us to have choice and allows us to make a different choice. Sometimes we might see that the way we ride a bicycle is really efficient and we can allow ourselves to keep continuing the same patterns. There might be some other patterns that we see and notice in our lives that we might realize aren't serving us in some way. There are certain things that call us out of these patterns sometimes, such as when we're somewhere new and we can't rely on the pattern in the same way or when there's pain in our body - that's a very large signal. I think quite often, particularly in the routine part of our lives - and I know many of you mentioned that you don't necessarily have routines and it's interesting because I think (and you don't have to believe anything that I'm saying; they're my thoughts or curiosities or wonderings) that the routines that we have are often habitual and the things that are habitual are often where we tend to have the least awareness. We may do things intentionally to bring more awareness: we go somewhere new, we have a more intense experience, we move our bodies more some, and have more intense physical activity. The more challenging piece, I think, is to bring the awareness to the things that are not necessarily painful, that are those routines where our bodies aren't moving greatly.

I just want you to continue to be in the experience of your body reading me and seeing what is arising for you, what the sensations are.



My invitation for you for this week is to (I'm going to feel into the articulation of this; I'm used to teaching where there's the embodied feedback of my students) **get curious about the patterns in your life, particularly the movement patterns**. Let's start to see where there are patterns - movement patterns in anything. It's always up to you to take that in a way that would work for you. If that feels too broad, perhaps you want to only look at movement patterns when you're at work or I'm not sure. All of you have very different lives and very different lifestyles so I want you to trust yourselves about this. Be curious about patterns. Maybe there's one pattern you start to notice and then you hone in on that for the week. You might forget. I do this work and I forget all the time. See if you can remember. There isn't a requirement to read or watch or do anything in the interim between receiving this email and when I send you another one next week. You always do have a choice to watch or read again.

I am going to ask you afterwards if you ended up reading or watching this more than once and obviously there's no requirement or expectation that you do.

I was realizing as I was feeling into this first week of emails that this is a co-creation and although I can trust into a deeper embodied listening, having some feedback from you of what is alive, what you're curious about, and what you're finding will help me to listen into and respond. So that we can follow this together and this can be something that is meaningful for you about your experience and exploration and about you inviting and finding more awareness of your experience in your body as you move through your life.

I know I had said I'm not going to ask you to do anything extra and so there's no requirement, but this is an invitation: underneath this video, there are a couple boxes that you could type something out. It can be a word, a sentence, or poetry. It could not make any sense or be point form. It could be something that you experience, think of, or feel called to share immediately after reading or even during reading. It could be something comes up through the week. I also put a voice recorder option

if you wanted to speak something to share. It could be a question, curiosity, or something that doesn't work for you or you're stuck about. It could be about anything so that I can keep listening and connect to what would serve all of you the most in our weekly explorations together. There is always the option as well of emailing me at any time if there's stuff. I would love it if you filled one of those out now or later and, again, no requirement for any of it.

Thank you again. I'm really appreciating your willingness to do research together - and I don't even necessarily know what it looks like so certainly you don't. I appreciate your being willing to curiously explore this together. To see what supports us in lessening separation in our lives and helps us to really become aware of that movement.

I want to invite you to consider something about the idea of patterns. I know many of us have this idea of what dance is but I invite you to consider a new definition. For LaMothe, dance is bringing our awareness to the patterns of movement that we make and how those patterns of movement we make make us; that we are a collection of patterns of movement. The more we have choice around those patterns, the more we have choice about who we are and how we show up in the world.

**Here is the video transcript for week 2:**

Welcome to week two of our exploration together. Okay, I've got to get over that additional recording myself thing again. This is totally a new movement pattern for me so it's still really odd.

I'm feeling how I bring myself to it.

So this past week - the first week - has been about inviting more curiosity; particularly about the movement patterns in our lives. I want to thank those of you that have shared some of your experiences. Absolutely everything you shared - you've shared different things in different ways - has been really helpful for me to presence me to you and your experience.

I think this was maybe apparent to you already but this whole process is one of improvisation, which is really about listening and allowing and following. The way we best do that is by keeping ourselves honed to the field that we're in. Your sharing really helps keep me honed in.

I've also kept the invitations alive in my own life and there are some interesting things that I noticed about my patterns. One of them was that, despite this belief that what I'm doing is inviting people, when I listened to the video last week and wrote my transcript, I noticed how little I actually used the word 'invite.' Instead I really seem to be telling you what to do. When I taught this week at the University, I noticed the same thing in my language. I was really curious that I was being a lot more directive than I thought I was and that I didn't think that was how I was communicating. I'm now trying to be more mindful so we'll see if I can be a little bit better at inviting you. I'm saying up front that I want you to experience this as an invitation. If I use language that doesn't feel inviting, to be present to whatever that brings up for you and I'll keep being mindful of my own language.

This noticing of patterns also helped me become more authentic with myself this past week. I was at a gathering - a small house party - with some people. I was engaged in a conversation with two women who I really like and we were having this really deep, meaningful conversation about stuff that I really care about. I started to be curious about my body's patterns and I started to notice that I

was doing a lot of ear pulling, scratching and playing with my ring. I got really curious and asked myself: “why am I doing all these things? I think I'm really engaged in this conversation.” Then I realised I actually was really anxious and I wasn't fully present in the conversation. I'm really sensitive to sound and there were some people playing music on one side of the room and people talking on the other. I got present that I wasn't being as engaged in this conversation with these two women as much as I wanted. I was able to name that with them and tell them: “I really care about this conversation. I want to feel connected to you and I'm not fully here right now. I'm feeling overwhelmed and anxious in my body and I want to leave.” Just being authentic with these women helped me connect with them and it helped them connect to their experience. Then I was able to honour myself and, even though the conversation was interesting, I chose to leave so that I could honour what my body needed, which was more quiet at that time.

I'm now noticing my patterns. I'm playing with my... I'm scratching at my nails right now and I am a little anxious and really excited. I've been staying in this curiosity of where are we going to go next and then feeling worried: “what's the next step? I don't really know.” It was when I started to get really open and receptive - particularly yesterday morning as I was waking up and was in this half awake state - that a lot of clarity came to me. Then in listening and reading your sharings and following my own day, it was really exciting to see the interconnections of things.

What has come up for me in that listening to you, to myself, and to life this week is following this thread of expertise that I invited you to consider last week. This idea of external expert or internal expertise. I'd like us to really go into that with more curiosity and focus this week because this is a big piece about what I'd like to explore with this research. Most somatic work is done with a coach or an educator or a therapist and we go to this person because we believe they have expertise that we do not. For me there's some tension in there because this work is about our somatic experience and we're the only ones who can access that. Yet there's this dichotomy of feeling like we have to go

to somebody outside of ourselves to help us listen to the experience that only we can have. I wanted to read a quote from Martha Eddy, who's done a lot of academic and teaching work for many decades in Somatics. She writes that “while any person can freely engage in bodily self-discovery, there are many people who are not inclined to pay attention to the body or have no clue how to do so. This may be because they do not have strong activation of proprioception or kinesthesia - the mechanisms that allow for self perception - or because they repress these sensations due to pain or strong discomfort. Or a person or culture may have been taught to ignore body signals.” I think even more than that... I know for myself, I feel like I've grown up in a society and culture where I've been told not to listen to my experience; that I don't know. Going to school or what I would eat. This idea that a teacher or a parent or someone else knows better and that we don't know. How many of us have actually even been guided to listen to and trust our experience? How often do we need to tune out those sensations and knowings in our body because it doesn't line up with what an external expectation of us is?

**The invitation for this week is to be our own educator, expert, teacher, guide, and coach.** When we have somebody in our life - a coach or a teacher - one of the most important things in that relationship is trust. So a big piece around understanding ourselves as the expert, our selves and our experience as the teacher, means to start to be curious about how we can cultivate trust in that. This could be pretty big, especially if we never have. I want to let that land with me because it's also an invitation for myself. Even with all this work, I noticed (in a yoga class yesterday) this striving to look like what some expert expected. I had a wonderful teacher yesterday actually remind us all that it's really our bodies and yet that's not a normal yoga class. Yoga can be a very somatic experience and yet even when we go to classes, we're viewing the teacher as the expert. Yes, they probably have anatomical knowledge that we don't know and yet all of our bodies are different. Anatomically we're similar but the patterns of movement are not the same. So what is most easeful,

comfortable, efficient, and self expressive for my body isn't the same as yours. So this idea that there's one movement without listening in is really not honouring that expert and not trusting our own bodies.

My invitation to you is to be curious about this idea of your self as expert, your experience as expert. Whether there's trust there and how you can cultivate it. One piece in particular **I invite you to consider is how you experience, perceive, and language this experience of yourself.** I know quite often we have this tendency in our language and in our culture to make our body this thing that is not us. It's mine, it belongs to me or sometimes it's not even. I might say 'the body' or I might say 'my body' and I see it as this thing that isn't quite me. We can often feel like we're in a relationship with this thing that I might be in battle with. Angry that my body is hurting and I can't fully do the thing I want to do. Somehow that's not me and it's limiting me or allowing me. It's like this vessel. Just noticing if that's something that you tend to do - make your body a thing, a separate thing. If you notice that, seeing if you can start to try on instead that this is a combination of patterns of movements that is your unique expression of life, of life moving.

The other piece I wanted you.. see there I did it. Wanted. Well I do want that and that language feels more forcing than I'd like. So I'm going to invite you - I would love it and I'm going to do for myself - I would love it if you started to consider the language of how you express your experience of yourself and of your body. There is this tendency that many of us have at least in the English language - at least around here (and I noticed it even in some of the sharings that you guys shared with me) - to put our experience and self in the second or third person. As I mentioned already, we do this third personing of the body. My body: it's this third person, separate thing. We also do this really curious thing (I say 'we' but I don't know if I do anymore as I've been really mindful about this for a number of years with myself and my students) that we put our experience in the second person. We might share about something that we noticed and we might we say 'you' instead of 'me'

and 'I.' For example, I'll say "when you're hungry and you go to the fridge and you find that there's no food there then you're not sure what to do." In some ways by saying this 'you,' maybe I'm projecting that everyone else has the same experience as me when that's not this case. I think there are a variety of different experiences we might have of going to the fridge and finding it empty. That was a totally random example. What I mean is this speaking about our experience in the second person instead of the first. I'm going to invite you to notice if you tend to do that: instead of fully owning and experiencing those movements as yours, as your unique expression of self to share that with others when speaking, that you speak in second person.

What would happen if you shifted and spoke in the first person? What would happen if you experienced your movements as you and not something separate from you? What would happen if you honoured your experience as valid and your movements as valid?

I think there are maybe some other thoughts I have in connection to that and that also feels like enough to consider for one week. So to recap: **the invitation for this week is to consider yourself, your body, and your experience as the expert, as the coach, and as the teacher.** To consider your relationship as being both student and teacher (or however you want to language that), being the one **guiding and listening at the same time. Be curious about your relationship to your experience and your sensations as teacher, as expert. Be curious about the trust that you have there and whether you could cultivate more trust.** From that consider how you experience and language your experience in your body and sensations. **Do you speak in third or second person? How do you honour and really make that yours? Continue to be curious about what these sensations, this expertise, these movement patterns have to say and have to teach you.**

That's the invitation for me and for you this week. Again I love the sharing. The jot form is set up so you could send multiple entries. If you have a thought after reading this and want to share it but feel

like it's incomplete, you can share it. Then you can always go back and share something later. You can make multiple entries at different times. You can record audio and/or write something. You can always email me. Pretty open and I'm really happy to have any sort of sharing. Maybe there's something that's not written or recorded. As you honour your own experience as guide and teacher, perhaps there's something that's feeling alive and you're guided to. You may be connected to things that are happening in your life and you want to share something that you've done or created or made. I love any of it, so thank you, it helps keep me connected to you, to myself, and to this exploration together.

That's it for me today. Have a wonderful week honouring and trusting and listening to yourselves and you'll see me again next week!



**Transcript for the week 3 video:**

Welcome to week three of our life as somatic practice exploration together!

Starting today I'd like to represent us all to the practice of Somatics, of what somatic awareness is. I want this interaction - this reading of me - to be done with an invitation for it to be done with awareness of your experience. So if you're reading this I want to invite you (at least I said 'invited' with 'want') to read this out loud. If you choose to continue to read silently to still be an awareness of how you move in watching or reading.

*What's happening in your internal experience?*

*What are you aware of in yourself?*

*What sensations do you notice?*

*Notice the position you're in right now, where you're making contact with something beneath you and how that feels.*

It's interesting that, as I say that, I presence myself to this couch. I get more aware of my cat snoring next to me. I'm going to show you my cat sleeping here. He's totally a teacher for me, just being in experience.

**I'd like to invite this to be a somatic experience of reading or watching.**

From there, I want to thank you for all your sharing. It's been really helpful for me to get present to all your experiences; to hold space for all your experiences in the ways that you've shared - some of you've written, some of you have recorded and it's all part of it. I really, really welcome it. I loved reading, hearing, and experiencing you, being present to the multiple experiences together. If you haven't been sharing, that's okay. The invitation is still open.

I had this idea that I was going to write out what I'm sharing today so that I could be more focused and that it would be easier because transcribing this after is a lot more work I think than writing it first. Then I realised that, with the invitation of today, I needed to just share imperfectly. So it won't

be as well written as if I had written it out, edited it, and read it to you. I may try that in the in the future.

This past week the invitation was around expertise and trust. I hear that that's brought up a lot of things for some of you. It has for me too. I really noticed my inability to trust myself in a particular area of my life and how challenging that felt. How challenging it felt in my physical experience - this pulsating energy of of not knowing. Then I had this experience last night of someone listening to me. Just holding space and not judging. Just listening. And that listening of me sharing this area of my lack of trust in myself allowed me to drop into trust and not knowing. So not any sense of "expertise" but I could trust in the not knowing and whatever that pulsating energy was settled and I felt grounded. I recognised being able to move that energy through speaking and having it witnessed.

So it's an extra invitation for you: if you do want to record or write something, know that I am witnessing you. If you do explore that to see how you experience that witnessing (I know that it's across time and space and I still really am here and witnessing you).

I did take notes of what I was going to say... so in the sharings that some of you gave me this week, you also spoke to challenges around this idea of expertise and trust. It really presenced me - or represented me - to this thing I'm really curious about. I'm not sure if I've clearly stated yet, but I will say it again anyways. That our language - the way it is - separates things. We have this written form of language and because we are all literate (the 21 of us here), that literacy means we have this experience of ourselves through language as separate things. We have nouns and verbs and things that do things. There is separation in that even when trying to shift that languaging.

A shift I invited last week was this idea of: what if we experienced our sensations and somatic experience as teacher and expertise? Yet the words 'teacher' and 'expertise' - for many of us and for some of what you've shared - have inherent separation and there are power differentials in those

words. Teacher conveys that there's a student and expert conveys that there's a there's somebody who's not an expert and there's still this idea of separation in that language.

So sometimes just shifting it reinforces that separation. Yet this work of Somatics is about the connection, about experiencing and being aware of our experience in life and movement through this embodiment. That the only way we actually know or connect or are in the world is embodied.

*That everything is movement and everything is embodied.*

Maybe some of us have had that experience of all of life as movement and interconnected. Yet that's not what we experience or how we live our lives most of the time. It's not how I live my life all the time. Even developments in science, such as quantum physics and cognitive science, show us that this idea that there's anything solid or separate is actually not true. We know that, on a quantum level, *there's not a substance. It's movement; it's energy moving and it's all interrelated.*

I'm going to share a quote from a quantum physicist named Karen Barad who wrote "Meeting the Universe Halfway." It is academic and I feel shares some of this. She talks about how all of life is entangled and she says:

"To be entangled is not simply to be intertwined with another as in the joining of separate entities but to lack an independent self-contained existence. Existence is not an individual affair. Individuals do not pre-exist their interactions; rather, individuals emerge through and as part of their entangled intra-relating. Which is not to say that emergence happens once and for all, as an event or as a process that takes place according to some external measure of space and of time, but rather that time and space, like matter and meaning, come into existence, are iteratively reconfigured through each intra-action, thereby making it impossible to differentiate in any absolute sense between creation and renewal, beginning and returning, continuity and discontinuity, here and there, past and future."

**I invite you to be curious about your experience reading that, or listening to yourself read that.**

My curiosity for this week is really about this tension of how we language things and how that language conveys separation. We have ideas of separateness and yet, on some level, we are always experiencing the interconnections of all of movement. That the movement isn't separate; that things aren't separate and discrete as we have this idea that we are. My invitation for this week is specifically around language. That's why I felt I needed to do the recording myself and then transcribe so that I could be in the experience of speaking, of speaking language.

So my invitation for you this week is: **to be aware of the experience in your body as you're speaking.**

Something that I was presented to with regards to space holding and witnessing (when I hold space for someone else to share or someone holds space for me) and the experience that I shared with you earlier: the experience I had of having this energy and that, by speaking, it allowed that energy to move. *That the speaking is the movement of energy.*

It's interesting: right now I'm actually watching myself on the screen and I'm watching my lips and I'm watching them move and it gives this feedback. Normally we don't see ourselves moving. I have this extra feedback right now that speaking is movement. Even as I'm sharing it, I'm becoming more of the sensations in my mouth, how those words move through my body, and the continuation of sound. Even though, in my head, I have these ideas of separate words, *there's this flow of movement of sound that I hear and that I speak.*

That's the invitation: to become aware of your experience of speaking. Even though we're speaking with words, we're speaking about things that do things, things that are separate from each other. We might speak about things that we think are abstract (although really, as cognitive scientists have

shown us, there's nothing that we don't experience in some embodied way; even abstract ideas are experienced in our bodies, there is connection).

It might even be interesting saying words that have real connotation for us like 'expert.' And really feeling the sensation of saying the word 'expert.' Connecting to the movement of our bodies, both saying and hearing ourselves say it. Or maybe hearing someone else. Maybe as I say 'expert' or 'trust.'

Can we (I'm really curious because I haven't done this, so this is an invitation for me as well this week) - can I - **remember to become aware of my embodied experience when I'm speaking?**

Can I/we be curious without needing to make things right or wrong or find an answer? Just be curious and hold space and feel into the movement? The movement in that speaking, the movement in my speaking.

I softened my voice there and I had a really different experience in my body of it. I'm enjoying this already.

I hope that you take this on, even if it's just a little bit. **What I'd love to invite you to do is do your sharings via recording this week.** Even if you record two minutes and that's the only two minutes of your entire week that you are intentional around your speaking being a somatic practice. To see what it's like to be in awareness of your sensations, about what information is there for you when you're speaking. Even for those couple of minutes that would be amazing. And, of course, you're welcome to share if there's anything else that comes up. I'm sure there'll be a lot that comes up for me as well.

Okay, I'm making this really long again so I can end it here and look forward to what we discover this week. Thank you all!

### Written exploration for week 4

*note: this is not identical to the video as it was written before with some small updates after the recording. It does, however, contain the same ideas and invitations.*

Welcome to week four of our life as somatic practice exploration.

This has been an exciting week for me in my research. The questions and invitations I posed last week have been weaving into my life and I've gotten a lot of insights and made connections that feel exciting for me. They also feel more than I can or should include in one week's email so I'm experimenting with writing my content first and then reading it. I'm curious how that will shift my experience of the process and the somatic connection to what I'm saying (and I discovered – through needing to make the video twice – that being cued without directly reading felt more connected for me).

I want to thank those of you again who have shared some of your experiences in this – either written or recorded. I haven't responded individually to you yet and please know I am hearing and feeling your sharing and it's informing me, my movements, and this research. And intending to tune into all of you and myself also continues to inform.

It's been many months since we had our conversations last fall and I've become aware that I may have been making some assumptions about some terms and perhaps jumping ahead. I'd like to rewind a little, clarify, and represence some of the main ideas and intentions for the research.

The word **'body'** conveys a *thing* – a thing we can see and describe. And something *we describe in the third person*. I can talk about my body: my body is sitting on the couch, my hair is short and curly and slightly greying brown. I can talk about others' bodies – I can tell you my cat is sleeping on the couch. He's outstretched, laying on his side, he's making slight snoring noises.

The word **'soma'** was coined to describe the *first person experience of a body*, of embodiment. Although we sometimes still use the third person to describe that experience, it is an experience of which we

only have full access to our own. The **somatic experience** is all of the experiences we have from our 6 senses – sight, sound, taste, smell, touch and what’s referred to as proprioception or kinesthesia – the internal sense of our bodies in space (it's often this sixth sense that is focused on in somatic practices but it isn't necessarily the only or the primary sense to notice). So I can describe the body of my cat but I cannot tell you his somatic experience of being in that body. If you and I were in the same position or doing the same movements, you could describe us – our position and movement – similarly. And likely we would have different somatic experiences of the positions and movements.

There are things that pull us away or towards our somatic experience and change our level of awareness. Things that cue or invite awareness. Intensity can pull us towards the awareness, such as pain/soreness, movement – particularly intense movement, orgasm. Emotional experiences that prompt a strong physical response – like the experience of the heart racing after almost getting hit by a car or the face flushing with embarrassment. New experiences and new sensations can pull us towards.

Somatic practices (of which there are there are dozens and dozens and a continually growing number of) are those that specifically help guide us to the subtler somatic awareness in our bodies. Sometimes these are meditation practices, sometimes movement, sometimes intentionally therapeutic, although generally fairly gentle to help cultivate more awareness of the subtler somatic experiences – as it’s often easier to attend to the louder sensory input.

Generally a lot of our lives pull us away from somatic awareness, a lot that calls for our attention more than sensory input: language, concepts, meaning-making, habits, patterns. So the sensorial input is there but we’re attending elsewhere. I believe language and our tendency as humans to want to make sense, make meaning, understand - particularly through language - greatly pulls us away from our somatic experience and we can feel less balanced in our awareness.

The growing use, popularity and types of somatic practices reflect a growing recognition of the importance of retaining our capacity to be aware of the somatic, sensorial experience in our lives. There are many benefits in physical, emotional, mental, collective and spiritual aspects of our experience by cultivating greater somatic awareness. As we humans, at a general/collective level, feel increasingly disconnected from ourselves, each other and the planet, increasing our somatic awareness helps us to feel life and can help us have greater awareness of our interconnection with life. It can help us move less out of habit and more with intention. It opens up choice in our lives. As living beings, we are always moving – in gross and subtle ways. It is wonderful and amazing that we can learn to recreate patterns and do things without great conscious awareness, like drive a car or type this out on a computer. And when we do things habitually, we generally do them out of our conscious awareness allowing us to attend to other things. When we bring our conscious awareness to the movements we are making, any of the movements we are making, we bring choice to what movements we make and can consciously decide whether those movements serve us and what's important to us.

And yet we're often out of this awareness. Many of us intentionally include practices (of which there are many) in our lives that are dedicated to focusing on our somatic awareness – meditation, yoga, conscious dance, somatic therapy, pilates, etc. I personally have a lot of intentionally somatic practices in my life. And then there is the rest of my life, the rest of our lives. The responsibilities, busyness, thinking, reading, writing, speaking, phones, computers that continually pull our awareness elsewhere. We try and make space for intentional somatic practices – I know I feel better when I make space to dance, or to meditate in the morning, for example. And it can feel like a challenge with all the other pieces, everything else we want and feel we need to attend to. We can strive to find balance of that awareness.



So that was the inspiration for this research. Since we're always moving - the sensorial input is always there - *could we increase our awareness in the day to day of all of our movements? Without it being yet another task to add to our task-filled lives? What could help bridge what we find in those intentional somatic practices to the rest of our lives? And what could help open up more awareness and choice in the day-to-day? How do we bring more balance into our awareness?*

Through our explorations so far, I have gotten really curious about language's role in this. In somatic practices we often use language to invite more awareness:

*As you read this, become aware of the contact you're making with what's beneath you, feeling the sensations of it on your skin or through your clothing. Feeling the sensation of it supporting you right now. Become aware and curious about your feet. Notice their position. Tune into any sensations in your feet, notice what is calling your attention. Notice what happens when you shift your attention to your feet and if the attention prompts any movement or shifting. Let your awareness travel up your legs, again becoming curious about the position of your legs, what they're touching, if anything, seeing what sensations you can feel through your lower and upper legs. Tune now into your pelvis. Feeling if there is anything making contact with the skin around your pelvis and also feeling internally, being curious about what is calling your attention. Continue slowly scanning your body in this way, noticing what sensations you can feel and perhaps areas you cannot feel as you move through. Let your awareness travel to your abdomen, feeling skin, movement, sensation. Let your awareness and curiosity move into your chest, noticing sensation and movement and breath. Become aware of your ribs and their movement. Feel your ribs connect to your spine and feel into your spine from your tailbone all the way up to your neck. Let that awareness spread to your entire back, feeling shape, sensation. Let your noticing find its way to your shoulders, feeling the skin and anything else calling your attention in your shoulder area. Shift your attention now to become aware of your arms, their position and any sensations in your arms all the way down and into your wrists and hands. Let your awareness move back up to your neck and up into your head and skull, feeling its position, any sensation. Become curious about your face as you feel into your eyes and forehead, your nose and cheeks,*

*your lips, mouth and jaw. See if you can let your awareness now spread to your entire body, from your head to your toes, noticing position and sensation that only you have awareness of.*

Using language to specifically call our attention to our somatic experience, to the sensorial experience in our body, generally pulls us towards awareness of the movement and sensation of movement, towards somatic awareness.

I believe that certain uses of language can pull us towards or away from our somatic awareness, from the experience of sensation and movement. And I'm curious: *if and what language pulls you towards or away from somatic awareness in your life?*

Keeping the notion from last week – *speaking as movement* – my invitation for you (and for me) this week is to **become aware of other people's speaking as movement. And specifically to become curious about what in their speaking pulls you towards or away from being aware of your own somatic experience.**

If you're only reading this, I encourage you to listen to at least a little of the video this week to take a moment to intentionally become aware of my speaking as movement. To see what that feels like for you to consider another's speaking as movement. And to notice how you are pulled towards or away from your somatic awareness and experience in listening to me speak. This is of course uni-directional listening, which you likely do at times in your life when listening to something recorded or broadcasted. We also have a lot of listening to others in real time: in conversation, in person or virtually, in pairs or in groups, with strangers, friends, colleagues, family.

I'm throwing out a number of layers here, recognising the desire to offer a variety of access points, of curiosities and also wanting to keep things focused enough so it's easier to keep the invitation in your awareness as you move through your day to day. So, as always, if something doesn't land with you, let it go. Be curious about what does land and be curious about experiencing others' speaking as

movement. And be curious about what cues your own somatic awareness – the awareness of your senses and your movement – in response to their speaking.

I'm curious if my pre-written approach to this invitation shifted the experience for you in any way.

For me it actually took me a lot longer to create the content. Instead of listening and following after grounding myself in the concepts that I wanted to say, I spent more time trying to compose it clearly and logically. I tried to be more careful in my language and had greater awareness that it wasn't quite as 'perfect' as I'd hoped or intended. My awareness of my use and connection to language was certainly different by writing first. Definitely lots of things for me to be curious about!

I look forward to hearing anything that comes up for you this week through the invitation if you feel called to share any of it with me.

I wish you all a lovely week and you'll see me again next Friday!

### **Week 5 written invitation**

*This is not an exact transcript but a more direct form of the ideas presented in the video:*

Welcome to week 5 of our Life as somatic practice exploration.

Today I'm really curious about time. My dance with time this week has felt challenged. It has felt like time is this "thing" and I have all these things to fit into it and it's challenging to make them all fit. I have an opportunity for more dance this weekend and I haven't been able to commit, even though I know I would love more dance, because I don't feel like I have enough time.

This brings me back to one of the starting points of this research – recognising most of us feel like our lives are so full already, how do we invite more awareness of our experience of movement and of our bodies through our day to day, without being another thing to add?

Yet I'm adding here – sending you 17-21 minute long videos, attached transcripts and now questions and continued invitations for to write and record and send to me!

As I dance with you all in this research exploration, I'm hearing that some of you haven't felt you have the time to really participate. (And I'll throw in here that you're all participating – whether you're reading and watching each Friday and providing me feedback or haven't opened a single email from me – it's all the exploration and seeing what invites more awareness and what doesn't).

So my intention is to keep today's invitation short and rich. And let's see how we move with it.

For the last few weeks I've invited you to become aware of speaking as movement – both yours and others'. Recognising all of life as movement and tuning in to this one aspect of our movement: language (a pretty big aspect of our unique movement as humans).

I had also invited you – back in week 1 – to consider that "to dance" is to become aware of the movements we make – in all of lives – and how the movements we make make us. To have more awareness and choice in our movements.

So I've been becoming really curious about experiencing language as dance, the movements we make by and through language, and what it would be like to have awareness of our movements with language.

As I often do, I'm throwing out some big ideas here. And I'm choosing to let them land however they do for you (and I just got really curious about my language of movement around that: that I'm "throwing" something that may "land" on you...), without spending more time now writing deeply about them.

Instead I'm going to skip ahead (more movement) to the invitation: our dance with time.

I have been becoming more aware of our ideas through language, our linguistic constructs, and how they help shape my experience in life in certain ways – that bring me towards or away from my somatic experience. The language we use reinforces many unconscious ideas we have about life and what it means to be human.

It has been shown that we use quite a lot of metaphors in our speaking that connect abstract ideas to our embodiment – taking something we cannot directly experience through our senses and connect it to our sensorial and spatial experiences.

One I'm quite curious about is how we speak of time metaphorically as a thing, with substance (i.e. "We don't have enough time," "You're wasting time," "Can you give me a minute?" or, as I just said above: "Without spending more time.") This "substance" of time can stay stationary as we move (i.e. "As we approach the end of the year"), move towards us as we stay stationary (i.e. "The time will come when," "I look forward to the arrival of summer"), or be a container that we move in (i.e. "He did it in 10 minutes"). We experience it often linearly, as a line (in English it's a horizontal line from left to right).

It isn't surprising that so many of us feel we don't have enough time for it all, including being more aware of the sensations and experiences in our bodies.

Yet these ideas of time are not universal. If you feel like you have the time (!!), here is a short post with just a few examples of how we create this idea of time in different languages:

<https://eurotalk.com/blog/2015/09/04/talking-about-time-insights-from-other-languages/>

Making time into a thing allows us to talk about it. And talking allows us to connect with each other.

But then does it limit our experience as we relate to time only as this thing we've constructed?

So here's the invitation for this week: *to notice your dance with ideas of time*. Simply: **notice when you or someone else speaks about time in any way, noticing how it is spoken about, and notice the sensations in your body as notice. Nothing extra to do – when you notice something being said about time, can you tune into the experience of your body for a moment, even as you continue to do whatever you are doing?**

I wanted to end by saying: "That's it! Short and sweet!" And I got curious about this experience of a short time as sweet, feeling into my body, the sensations – that feel slightly contractive and pink, the firmness and juiciness of fruit. Then I thought for a moment of "Spending time to drop deep" and I experienced this as brown and spreading, a sense of giving away to receive, my body becoming more weighted. Sharing briefly how I experience language around time in my body. I'm curious what your experiences are.

I'm also going to send multiple messages this week to keep the invitation alive for all of us as we move through all of our lives. Wishing you all movement that feels alive and rich this week!

### **Written invitation for week 6**

This week I feel called to simplify and represent your participation in this research.

I would like you to experience your involvement in this research as a *complete invitation* that *you have complete freedom* to accept or not at any time. There is absolutely nothing you are required to do or experience. You have complete choice to leave the research at any time and also complete choice to stay and engage however it feels right to you. There is *no right or wrong* in this. Nothing I need or require you to do. My intention is to offer a variety of ways in and for you to explore what works for you. I offer video, transcript and now audio as different access points, not as a requirement to use all 3 (unless you want). I, personally, don't generally access materials via video or audio only and prefer to read and I have also learned I engage differently with things depending on their media. I encourage you to be curious about what supports you the most and feels most accessible at any point in your life.

I recognise that things like accountability and responsibility can help us create patterns and follow through and this is also not what I'm exploring here. If it feels like it serves you to have a structure around your participation, I welcome you to find and create that for yourself and it's not a requirement in any way.

What I am interested in rather is what is most easeful and nourishing and can help you invite more awareness of the experience in your body that serves you in your life. I believe that may be quite different for each of us with our varied lives, history, orientation, tendencies, etc. Which is why this is completely experimental and fueled by continual curiosity within me and for you. Some of what I invite may work really well and resonate for some of you and may be totally uninteresting and even confusing or aversive to others. I personally welcome all your experiences and hope to have a conversation with you all at the end to learn more about what, if anything, felt in service of you finding more somatic awareness in your life.

The larger invitation through all of this is to listen to what you need most, what can serve you most in any of this. If you missed a week, you're completely free to let it go if it weighs on you in any way. If you missed a week and want to explore it for yourself, I encourage you to. I recognise you agreed to participate and you also did so with complete freedom to leave at any time. What is most important to me is you finding what is in support of you. I have lots of curiosity about your experience, not matter what it is.

I've attempted to provide some philosophies or ideas to consider and also provide you something concrete to explore somatically in your week. I recognise this amount of content may or may not be ideal for you. This week I'm exploring less esoteric or philosophical musings and instead inviting in a tangible, physical anchor for the week.

**My invitation for this week is to choose a habitual activity** you do every or most days, something that you do so automatically that it would be interesting for you **to notice what your body is doing and how it feels while doing this activity**, and to use that activity as your anchor for the week. I will send you reminders through the week to remember this anchor. And the invitation is also to be curious of what helps you keep the anchor in your awareness. That every time you do the activity you think: oh yeah, my body – what I am doing exactly right now and how does it feel? Keeping it as *simple and direct* as you need. No need to make meaning or change or do. And complete freedom to do any of it if it serves you.

You all have different regular activities in your lives so please choose what would be most interesting for you to notice. Maybe it's brushing your teeth, cooking, talking on the phone, or watching tv.

I am going to choose driving this week. It is not something I do every day or all the time and it's also an activity I haven't really paid attention to my position and experiences while doing. I know my body doesn't tend to feel that good after driving for a while so I'm curious of what I may notice. My intention will be to remember to notice my body while I'm driving as often as I can while I drive this



week. To notice my breath, my position, my movements, how I'm feeling. I may notice that noticing changes things or it may not.

**What will you choose as your anchor, as your habitual activity to notice this week?** *I encourage you to choose the activity right now and even write it in the feedback box right away to commit to noticing it through the week.*

Wishing you all a nourishing week.

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Previous weeks:

Although there is no requirement to do the invitations of the weeks in order or even do all of them, I want to offer all of the previous weeks' invitations here if you want to refer to them in any way for yourself. Again, only if you feel like you want to go back or cover something you didn't get a chance to because it feels supportive for you. I have also made them all into podcasts if listening to them through your life is something you'd like to support.

With absolutely zero requirement for any of it and only an invitation to use whatever is here in the greatest support of what matters most to you.

Here is the recap of the first five weeks if you'd like to look or read or listen to any of it:

**Week one: noticing our movement patterns**

- <https://www.jotform.com/twylayork/life-as-somatic-practice-week-1>
- podcast for week 1: <https://www.buzzsprout.com/902530/2936581>
- direct link to audio mp3: [https://www.buzzsprout.com/902530/2936581-week-1-noticing-our-movement-patterns.mp3?blob\\_id=10206331&download=true](https://www.buzzsprout.com/902530/2936581-week-1-noticing-our-movement-patterns.mp3?blob_id=10206331&download=true)

**Week two: Our bodies and selves as expert and the language we use when referring to ourselves and our experience**

- <https://form.jotform.com/200368238899065>
- podcast for week 2: <https://www.buzzsprout.com/902530/2936590>

- direct link to audio mp3: [https://www.buzzsprout.com/902530/2936590-week-2-our-internal-expert.mp3?blob\\_id=10206403&download=true](https://www.buzzsprout.com/902530/2936590-week-2-our-internal-expert.mp3?blob_id=10206403&download=true)

**Week three: Become aware of our experience of our body and movement when speaking**

- <https://form.jotform.com/200435354677053>
- podcast for week 3: <https://www.buzzsprout.com/902530/2936614>
- direct link for audio mp3: [https://www.buzzsprout.com/902530/2936614-week-3-speaking-as-movement.mp3?blob\\_id=10206535&download=true](https://www.buzzsprout.com/902530/2936614-week-3-speaking-as-movement.mp3?blob_id=10206535&download=true)

**Week four: Become aware of others' speaking as movement and notice language that pulls us towards or away from somatic experience**

- <https://form.jotform.com/200513764663050>
- podcast for week 4: <https://www.buzzsprout.com/902530/2936623>
- direct link for audio mp3: [https://www.buzzsprout.com/902530/2936623-week-4-others-speaking-as-movement.mp3?blob\\_id=10206607&download=true](https://www.buzzsprout.com/902530/2936623-week-4-others-speaking-as-movement.mp3?blob_id=10206607&download=true)

**Week five: notice dance with time and experience in body when time is spoken about**

- <https://form.jotform.com/200586676736063>
- podcast for week 5: <https://www.buzzsprout.com/902530/2871601>
- direct link to audio mp3: [https://www.buzzsprout.com/902530/2871601-week-5-our-dance-with-time.mp3?blob\\_id=9916864&download=true](https://www.buzzsprout.com/902530/2871601-week-5-our-dance-with-time.mp3?blob_id=9916864&download=true)

Written invitation for week 7

**The invitation this week is to ask yourselves:**

***“what does my body know right now?”***

and just being a state of curiosity and listening.

My invitations continue to come from a deep listening: listening to my experience, listening to your experiences and a listening through my body to find a sense of knowing.

Where the invitation comes from today: I'm somebody who can tend to be prone to anxiety and through years of somatic work my experiences of anxiety have greatly lessened in my life. Today, however, has been a pretty high anxiety day for me and I've had the experience in my body of feeling overwhelmed and flooded, particularly around the unknown. I am a sensitive person and, with everything going on right now, it felt like I really needed to listen to this intense collective state of really being in the unknown, of higher anxiety and fear. I imagine we each experience it differently and we're all in a place right now of not knowing from moment to moment and day by day.

This place of the unknown is one of the places where this work of Somatics is most powerful. I personally have had so much fear of the unknown and a striving to know. I can be an obsessive planner. When it's so hard to plan these days, it brings up that familiar challenge of being in the unknown.

I've kept it short this week since I'm aware that many of you have lives that feel full with so much already and now with things happening with precautions, preparations, people getting sick, and closures. Much is changing and intensifying moment-to-moment.

The specific invitation is to ask the question above (“what does my body know right now?”) of yourselves when there's a state of anxiety, high arousal, intensity, confusion, overwhelm, numbness

or just being in the unknown – be it physical, mental, emotional. It could just be trying to process a lot mentally and how that may show up for us.

When I asked this of myself in the video, I experienced a shift in my body that felt like relief, a relief of listening. I experience things strongly and have had tendencies of pushing away or running away from how I feel. So asking the question, there is a relief in me, of feeling like I'm attending. Asking also brought up some intensity of emotion and tears for me. Not tears of sadness but more of relief. The relief of just being with and not needing to make sense, understand or do. I don't need to know where the sensation and tears come from. They could be from what I've been processing mentally and emotionally already in today alone with new information and changes and navigating the things that are already going on in my life adding on what is happening collectively. And I can just feel. I am wishing you so much ease in this collective unknowing, reaching out to you across the spaces to share my sense of connection with you, particularly in this increased distancing that that we're entering into right. You will see/hear/read me again next week.

### **Written invitation for week 8**

Welcome to week eight of our life somatic practice exploration.

I'm not sure about you but life is giving me a lot to practice these days. It's a strong reminder for me of how critical it is for me to stay connected to my somatic experience, particularly in times of unknown. The invitation that I offered for the last week ("what does my body know right now?") was a really helpful anchor for me. I found it was a way to remember to bring my somatic experience into my conscious awareness, particularly in times of confusion or needing to make decisions within so much unknown.

During this time of unknown and changes to how we live our lives, I began thinking about the start of Somatics as a field of practice in the west. Around 100 years ago, many of the people that are considered pioneers in somatic practices (such as Feldenkrais and Alexander technique) were prompted to develop these systems for somatic understanding because of a lot of upheaval, change, chronic illness, and debilitating pain. Big challenges in their lives prompted a consideration of what was and wasn't working in their movement patterns. Even now, many people turn to somatic practices when something isn't working their lives, such as chronic pain.

One thing I have been curious to explore through this research is: *how do we have greater awareness as we move through our day to day without needing to wait until something gets really loud in our experience to stop and listen?*

*We are patterns of movement and we create and reinforce these patterns of movement until they become habitual.* It's amazing to be able to do so, to have an embodied habituation, so we do not always have to attend to our body and its sensations. Yet if we rely overly on the habits, we lose the choice in the movement patterns we make. Some of our ways of moving can really serve us but other times they might not be. Often it's subtle and requires a lot of repeating of these patterns until the negative impact gets so loud that our bodies start screaming at us.

My curiosity is how to maintain awareness so that we have more alignment and choice throughout our lives without needing to have something extreme, such as pain, illness, debilitation. It's interesting that this was one of the guiding ideas around this research and that collectively we seem to be entering into extreme time. With all of the layers, it does present us with the opportunity to become more aware of our movement patterns.

Over the past year of my own exploration of Somatics in my day to day, I became more aware of the way that I interface with technology. Often when I interface with technology, I seem to be less aware of the experience in my body. I would notice that I would be in some awkward position on the subway while I was on my phone or I'd be typing at my desk in this hunched, twisted position. I find it so interesting that, in the space and time that this research is unfolding, we're in this space where most of us need to rely on technology more than we ever have. Technology is already part of all of our lives and becoming that much more so as so much necessarily moves online.

Our regular movement patterns have shifted so much since the pioneers of Somatics did their work a century ago and now we're in an intensified shifting. I recognise it's an intense and difficult time for many. And within this time of change, we can have more awareness and choice of the movement patterns that we want, that support our well-being, that support our connection to ourselves, and that support a connection to what's important to us.

**The invitation or anchor for this week is to choose text-based way that you interface with technology, either active or passive, whether it's texting, writing emails, or reading the news. Choose a specific text-based interaction you have with technology on a regular basis (rather than all text-based interactions). And notice the experience in your body: how you're holding your body, how you're moving your body, the sensations that you feel in your body. Explore using this intention as an anchor this week to invite somatic awareness throughout your day.**

I'm going to choose my regular phone texting (not messaging apps) and see what I can notice about my sensations, my experience, and what comes up for me somatically. As I think about it, I know that when I hear the sound of the text vibration (I intentionally changed it to vibrate only and I'll still hear the vibrate even if I'm on a different floor in my apartment), something bubbles up in me: a to respond need to respond, a quickening in my system. I haven't really tuned into my experience while I'm texting on my phone although I noticed that when I compose emails on my phone, I do so consistently with only my left pointer finger and my right thumb and no other fingers.

I will continue with the consistency of a weekly email sent every Friday even through the time of unknown so expect another email from me next Friday!

### **Written invitation for week 9**

As we enter our 9th week of this exploration together, everything is feeling so technologically saturated that I have not made yet another video/podcast to add to the time you spend online. Things have changed so much since we started in January!

So this week is much more open and I want to give you more space to listen to what your bodies need during this time.

An **optional invitation to take on is to notice the movement of your hands**. With the awareness that much of the COVID transmission appears to spread from people's hands to their faces, it could be a supportive practice to notice those habitual movements of our hands (I know I touch my own face a lot!).

And the bigger invitation, especially through these times of unknown, is to see if you can take moments to listen in to what you're experiencing in your body and **what you most need and can give yourself right now**.

Here is the jotform link to share any experiences, thoughts, feedback from this week's optional invitations or anything else that's arising in your somatic experience: <https://form.jotform.com/200868070684056>

And if you'd like to spend any time revisiting any of the previous weeks - ones you've missed or would feel supportive to revisit - you'll find the links for all the previous weeks below (with zero obligation to return to any of them).



### **Invitation for week 10**

Welcome to the tenth and final week of invitations for our life as somatic practice explorations.

*What's alive in your body in this moment? What position do you find yourself in? What's supporting you? Notice the movement in your eyes, the subtle movements in your body. What sensations are calling most loudly for your attention? Are there any quieter sensations you can notice around those? I invite you to stay in curiosity of the experience in your body as you read this, to experience where and how what I'm sharing lands for you in your experience.*

In week 1, I invited you to represent your interest in participating in this exploration with me, what it was you hoped to find for yourself. I invite you once again to see if you can recall what that was.

And whether or not you recall it clearly, can you notice what may be similar or different for you now, 10 weeks later? One thing I'm certain is that there has been change in the movements around our lives these past 10 weeks.

We use something known as improvisational scores in movement improvisation and Somatics. A score intentionally provides limits, narrows the field, and imposes parameters on our movements.

Stephen Nachmanovitch, a Jazz musician writes in Free Play: Improvisation in Life and Art:

“Structure ignite spontaneity. Limits yield intensity. Working within the limits of a medium forces us to change our own limits.” We use limits and scores to transcend ourselves, to transcend what we believe about ourselves, to question the edges of ourselves, to become aware of our patterns and open the possibility to new movement. “Making do with the material at hand... frees us to see the possibilities before us.”

When we use restriction as an opportunity, when we do so with intention and curiosity, we create possibilities for more awareness, innovation, creativity, and new ways of moving. The more we're in the full choice of seeing it as opportunity, the greater the possibilities. When we feel stifled and restrained in the restriction, we tend more to stay in habitual patterns.

The methodology of this exploration has been to offer you a score – a defined framework and focus, a smaller frame within which to consider your movement patterns – each week. It was your choice whether and how to explore these invitations. My intention was that these scores would occur to you as an opportunity to explore, discover, perhaps increase your awareness of your experience in your body, your movement patterns and the choices available to you.

One of the most helpful approaches in using scores is to recognise them as tools, as opposed to truth (of ourselves, of the situation, of life). Rather when we use them to play, explore, and create, they offer us opportunities to know aspects of ourselves, our embodiment and our movement patterns. We remember that we've imposed the restriction and that the movement within it is only one aspect of ourselves.

There is also not a 'right' score. What could be used as a score, as a limitation, as a focus, is infinite. And what I've offered you through these 10 weeks is an infinitesimal example of what could be used as a score, they barely scratch the surface of possibilities.

What my hope has been, rather, to offer you a small sampling of tools to add to your toolbox that could serve you into finding just a little more awareness of your movements and open up more choice for you where it feels most helpful. There is no one size fits all. Only you know what tool you need at any time. Each moment, each body calls for something. And part of the larger invitation through this is to practice the listening in to your own experience, your own body, your own movements. To create new movement habits in the listening. And you may have discovered that my scores, my invitations have aligned with you or not. I have the experience in my own body and movements but am certainly not an expert in yours. And honestly not all of the scores I offered were particularly resonate or helpful even for me in the week I offered them. There is no 'right' here. Only what's right right now for you in this moment. And it comes back to listening, to curiosity, to

trust, and honouring what would most serve you, which you are the best expert of. Trust in the listening to the experience right now in our bodies and movements.

When we choose a score and to intentionally limit our range of movement or parameters – when we know it’s just play and isn’t actually real, it’s easier to remember it’s an exploration and to stay in curiosity. And life often presents us with scores or restrictions we didn’t choose. Practicing with imposed scores gives us skills we can use to approach these limitations we haven’t chosen in our lives. Just as cultivating curiosity in more contained and ‘safe’ ways helps us to cultivate curiosity when we find ourselves in a place of transition and unknown outside our choosing.

It’s certainly easier when we choose the score. And we don’t always have choice. I’ve been attempting to see this time of physical distancing and isolation as a score. I admit it’s been challenging to stay in that mindset consistently and I have struggled a lot in these past weeks. Yet when I can actually find my way back to curiosity and seeing the restrictions as opportunity then the doors open much wider for me to gain more awareness – of my movement patterns and I’m in a greater choice around those patterns.

Similarly any restriction could be approached as a score – as an opportunity, whether it’s a physical restriction, a cultural norm, a category, the meaning of a word, a focus.

**So my final invitation in my last email in this exploration to you is to choose the score – choose the restriction, limitation, focus – that would most serve you right now, this week. Perhaps it’s something that you choose – like my invitation to become aware of your speaking as movement, or perhaps it’s something that has chosen you.**

*Can you take a moment right now, feeling into the experience in your body in this moment, to listen to its wisdom of where you could focus to cultivate more awareness where it would most serve you? Can you be curious of whatever is there, letting go of a need to get it ‘right?’ Just as this research has been about the questions and not about the destination, can you be open to the questions?*

I'm saying this as much as a reminder to me as an invitation to you. As I complete these 10 weeks of emails and worked on what I was going to say in this final one, I've been hoping to find how to 'perfectly' weave together of it all, to say it the 'right' way. And as my 8-year-old reminded me this week, maybe it's not that it's imperfect, but it's just my idea of perfection that needs to change. And just like my body, there is much wisdom there.

I invite you to take this on this week and to take all the explorations of these past weeks together and add them to your toolbox, weave them into what you know and what's important to you and allow them to support you in the best and most 'perfect' way for you.

## Appendix F: Complete participant 'dialogues'

### Week 1

*My invitation for week 1 was sent out January 31, 2020. I received 18 responses (11 written, 7 audio recorded) from 12 participants submitted from February 2 to February 22, 2020. Because I had not asked for names in the responses for week one, I am not certain who all the speakers are for this week.*

Twyla: I think I'm still getting stuck on this idea that there is a right and this idea of expert: an external expert. That as a researcher and as a doctoral candidate, I should have some sort of expertise and that you're waiting for this expertise from me. I've placed a lot of pressure on myself and have been sort of stuck. This is part of the reason why it's taken you this long to receive this email from me.

Unknown 4: Your comments of being stuck resonate with me right now, experiencing the same about putting down my words as there is discomfort in doing so.

Alise: It occurred to me that I hadn't heard from you and I was wondering if you were somehow struggling with like mustering like, I don't know, sort of courage or capacity or belief or whatever the words are.

Twyla: I'm going to take a breath and feel myself sitting here with you. Even though right now I am by myself in this room looking at my screen, I know that you're looking back at me, across time and space, and that you're part of this research with me: all 20 of you.

Gary: I read your words and typed mine on my phone, while seated alone. And all of that, a blessing of connection.

Twyla: My invitation for you for this week is to get curious about the patterns in your life, particularly the movement patterns.

Unknown 5: I have very little body awareness so this is an exploration into uncharted territory for me.

Unknown 3: Without intentionally working time into my day to 'notice' the patterns, the movements that my body makes, I find it difficult to stay aware for any length of time.

Dad: Although I've been vaguely aware of my body in the past, I think I'll make it a point to be more aware as I go forward.

Jacqueline: This really resonated with me: "that we need some special time and place to be aware and to feel into that knowing." This feeling immobilizes me more than anything. It is nice to be reminded that I don't need to mark of special time, place, or circumstance to be aware.

Dad: I'm taking some notes, as I always do, and I'm looking at dance and patterns, self awareness, habits and I'm going to make some notes every day as I go through this.

Sarah: I think it's Laban who characterized movement on a series of continuums. I imagine the patterns for me on those continuums would be that I've been moving slowly, directly, and methodically through space this week.

Unknown 5: My body hates stasis - and my mind does too. It makes me feel trapped and limited.

Dad: I live in my mind more than physically, I guess

Twyla: The thing about patterns is that when they become automatic, we no longer have choice.

Being able to bring our awareness to these patterns allows us to have choice and allows us to make a different choice.

Harry: It is great to have this attention placed towards the ability to choose and how patterns are a part of life.

Unknown 1: It is so interesting that you brought up patterns that become habitual with very little notice because I have been noticing a comforting yet problematic movement pattern in my daily life.

Sarah: My small movements are interesting to take note of this week. . I put my hair back and twist it when I am working through something.

Unknown 2: I noticed two patterns this week that I am not sure serve me.

Jacqueline: I tend to pick at my face, even while I was reading this invitation.

Sarah: I sometimes rub behind my ear when alone.

Stella: When I am happy, I see my body and movements expand and when thwarted, I shrink. I whine, I whine with my shoulders down, back hunched, I don't look around. Blech. I expand with happiness, I whistle, I look around and notice every detail around me.

Unknown 4: I had already been working on really bringing awareness and changing how I use my right arm... So this week I had been reflecting this habitual pattern and how I am actively changing it through awareness.

Alise: There's a lot of disruption to my patterns.

Unknown 4: There are so many more patterns, many much more subtle.

Gary: The most insignificant movements of my own Holy body.

Stella: I really wanted to get into this to break some bad habits, most of which I am not even aware of.

Jacqueline: I continued to notice "bad" habits that have been bothering me... I noticed that I tend to notice the "bad" things more than the "good," and that I tend to judge these habits and things I do with or in my body. This particular observation isn't a surprise to me, but perhaps an invitation to notice "good" things, or even notice things without judgment either way.

Harry: I get the importance of learning the wisdom of the body and not making my experiences wrong. I get there are created patterns that can be helpful and that some patterns are unhealthy.

Jacqueline: Some of the above observations are more neutral or positive, which I like.

Twyla: I just want you to consider that again: "the movements we make make us." That all of life is movement, that we are always moving; that through making movements, we create patterns of movement and those patterns become who we are.

Dad: I went back to my early childhood and the feelings I had about my body image, about my, and I have to say that I was ashamed of myself... I didn't think too much about it later in life but it, I think it did affect the way I had an outlook on life is early experience.

Alise: I think it's really a shame that we have a lot of shame around, I don't know, anuses and like the things that come out of our bodies.

Gary: I'm aware that I over-share.

Unknown 2: This vulnerability made me feel even more nervous and perhaps a sense of shame for feeling this way. Shame that I really recognized I needed him more than I was willing to let on... All sorts of emotions swirling in one event. Lots to work through.

Dad: Thinking about overcoming my own shame... what I did was, I got into a regime of physical activity, starting with swimming, then running and triathlons and pushing myself to say hey, I'm normal, I can do these things.

Alise: The whole exercise was something that was really edgy for me and it involved, without going into details, really deshaming and considering our butts in a different way.

Dad: Notice how I separated myself from my body. It's subtle but it's there.

Alise: The degree to which I have lost touch with my ability to feel - due to physical injury, trauma, habit, socialization, shame, and a host of other factors - is the degree to which I have lost my ability to create and live a meaning-full life.

Twyla: I'm softening this idea that I'm an expert and instead I'm going curiously into the exploration. The curiosity of how we increase the awareness of the experience in our bodies in the day-to-day. I don't have an answer. I don't know if there is only one answer. It's about how we find that for ourselves.

Alise: Finally after a lot of procrastinating and fighting with my demons, I have decided to start a healing practice, using all the learning and experience I've gathered over the past 10 years and more.



Sarah: So... for week 1 my body has been experienced as hyper-tense, and then seeking outlet and stillness to support loved ones, then breathing and stillness to calm my own responses, then softening into being held by a loved one.

Gary: wisdom meditation is where I'm resting. The expertise for my life comes in with the breath, if I allow myself to will it.

Unknown 3: He then went on to say how someone he knew felt certain that she had, over time, cured her frozen shoulder by dedicating herself to the practice of deep breathing. Why not?

Dad: And one thing that I do do, and my work is not physical but one thing I do do, you know, getting up, walking around and stretching and that makes me feel good. Getting up and just stretching a joint or you know, your neck, your back. So that's my form of awareness.

Twyla: We may do things intentionally to bring more awareness: we go somewhere new, we have a more intense experience, we move our bodies more some, and have more intense physical activity.

Sarah: This first week includes a crisis that is ongoing with family and that intensified during week 1, so my introspection into my movements was not a priority as my second reason to be dis-embodied included my own trauma response, that caused tension and then need for release, but also stillness.

Gary: I noticed the wounds this morning, as I tried to meditate. But I was stuck in the feeling of being wounded... Meditating didn't soothe. But gave awareness.

Unknown 1: We are both craving a surge of endorphins with these patterns and I notice us continually falling into these patterns, even when we know it isn't best for us.

Sarah: It's a habit, like picking a scab, exploring crevices to find things, then cleaning house. I think it could be a metaphor.

Harry: What I get is the topic of having new experiences. Movement gets things moving through instead of stuck. There is a process of trying new things to discover what is grounding for the body.

Sarah: I'm feeling the need, despite overload of work, to do this emptying of my space. Again, while I should be getting work done, this feels a little ritualized and full of meaning.

Alise: How do I know something is meaningful? I feel it. It is a felt sense. Meaning speaks in the language of emotion and sensation.

Dad: What I can think about is having a conscious use of body language when you're in public whether it be to convey a message or put people or whatever so body is a big impact when you're in the presence of other people, in a meeting, in a party, presentation and so on.

Alise: It just really made me look at that pattern again about who, where, when do I not trust my own expertise?

Twyla: I appreciate your being willingness to curiously explore this together. To see what supports us in lessening separation in our lives and helps us to really become aware of that movement.

Gary: Sorry if I've overshared. It's my super-power. And. You asked. Please forgive if it's too much.

Sarah: Hope this is helpful.

Alise: I hope it was useful to you and I hope you are well.

Twyla: Thank you again.

Harry: Thank you for sharing these weekly encouragements of exploration and experimentation!

Dad: Thank you.

## Week 2

*My invitation for week 2 was sent out February 7, 2020. I received 13 responses (10 written, 3 audio recorded) from 12 participants submitted from February 8 to February 21, 2020.*

Twyla: So this past week - the first week - has been about inviting more curiosity; particularly about the movement patterns in our lives.

Stella: Specifics help for me.

Dad: Your first week exercise made me curious about my movement patterns and experiences each day. Thank you.

Stella: This week, I got to climb a mountain, in the rain. It was pure physicality, clambering over branches, up cliffs, along logs, over rock dams on streams. Having to keep my balance through muddy wallows. My body felt engaged and whole. My eyes in particular drank it lots of beauty.

Toward the end, when tired, it became a slog, it was all I could do to put one foot in front of the other, I stumbled, uncoordinated, I felt old. My body was telling me to get to bed and rest.

Sarah: My son informed me he likes puzzles and so we chose one to work on. I've never done that kind of thing before, and strangely am drawn to the focus and stillness it brings... the stillness of last week has morphed into mobilizing this week to experience things in community in the world. This has an element of breaking habits, and also an aspect of intuiting what's right in the moment.

Twyla: I want to thank those of you that have shared some of your experiences. Absolutely everything you shared - you've shared different things in different ways – has been really helpful for me to presence me to you and your experience. I think this was maybe apparent to you already but this whole process is one of improvisation, which is really about listening and allowing and following. The way we best do that is by keeping ourselves honed to the field that we're in. Your sharing really helps keep me honed in.

Sarah: Thank you for the gentle reminder to share the experience with you. Listening, allowing and following is an apt way of describing the process.

Alise: I'm really enjoying being able to respond because I just have this brain that does this: it makes all these connections and I listen and I get excited and I say: Oh that reminds me of this and that reminds me of this and there's this concept over here... what a relief to actually like be able to respond to what, to the input I'm receiving and like move that energy in a way.

Ruby: Turns out this post sparked a lot of thoughts! Thank you for the space to share them.

Alise: I like feeling like my thoughts are useful in some way. That they become part of some feedback loop, like the energy gets put back into a system in some way and is digested and given direction or purpose beyond myself.

Twyla: This noticing of patterns also helped me become more authentic with myself this past week... I'm now noticing my patterns. I'm playing with my... I'm scratching at my nails right now and I am a little anxious and really excited.

Alise: I really related to your example of the fidgety habits. I do that a lot while I'm talking.

Sarah: Your description of your own anxiety feels interesting to compare to my own. I don't do what you do, but recognize the boundary work as something that I have also been doing in different ways and using different movements - mine are to be drawn to my hair, or ear (and then let it go), and then to be still.

Stella: I have so many unnecessary habits.

Twyla: I know for myself, I feel like I've grown up in a society and culture where I've been told not to listen to my experience; that I don't know. Going to school or what I would eat. This idea that a teacher or a parent or someone else knows better and that we don't know. How many of us have actually even been guided to listen to and trust our experience? How often do we need to tune out

those sensations and knowings in our body because it doesn't line up with what an external expectation of us is?

Alise: Does our agreement to value something collectively, in this case the teacher's expertise, actually in part essential to create connection and belonging and "organize" energy flow in a group? When might it serve me to participate in this, and when might it not? How much am I in choice about it?

Melanie: I guess one of these questions that is sticking with me a little bit is that tension, I suppose, between feels to me that some people think of the body as being a more pure sense of, pure source of information and it's really what we should be tuning into and listening to and I really struggle with that.

Harry: Some interesting ponderings came up for me during the listening of your sharing. I experienced having more attention on what the body, soul, spirit is communicating to myself.

Ruby: I feel almost helpless and not in control... I start to see myself and my body as an object and I've been noticing how my patterns are very much reflecting this through the self mutilation and constant refreshing of my phone screen... Instead of seeing my body as a precious creation, I despise it as a failing machine for the capitalist patriarchal system.

Twyla: My invitation to you is to be curious about this idea of your self as expert, your experience as expert.... Be curious about your relationship to your experience and your sensations as teacher, as expert. Be curious about the trust that you have there and whether you could cultivate more trust.

Ruby: It's very interesting that you bring up the idea of us as expert because I am currently struggling in that realm, especially while job searching... I have also had a hard time trusting my body because I started to experience atrial flutters a few years ago... That only furthered the disconnect of autonomy I felt with my body and broke the already weak trust I had in it.

Alise: Expertise is about knowing, which is valued culturally; what if we re-trained ourselves to place more value on a different metric, like delight or curiosity or aliveness? Might this render our currently held notion of expertise often irrelevant?

Ruby: The thought of being an "expert" causes my heartrate and anxiety to increase because it reminds me that I will never be one because for so long, the idea of an expert is a person of authority who is smart and stoic and skinny and probably blonde

Melanie: My internal dialogue has been: I'm the expert at my body, I'm listening to my body, I know that what's important, I know that these things are important and you have to listen to me... I'm angry at my trainers for not listening to me.

Alise: Perhaps I instead want to reframe the whole notion of expertise, so I'm not seeking "better", I'm seeking coherence. A state where knowing is not assumed to be better than not knowing. Or something.

Hazel: I think often times the conversations that we think we are very present and engaged in, turn out to have some level of uncomfortable feelings more than we think.

Ruby: I wanted and still want to be seen as an equal, as someone who gets it and who wants others to feel less alone because when I am vulnerable and own my shit in an honest way, it opens up this world of empathy and understanding and instead of experts or teachers, there are just ordinary people trying to figure their shit out.

Alise: Like what if expertise isn't the "problem", it's the cultural assumptions/connotations we hold in relation to the idea of an expert, like how we collectively mythologize the expert or cultivate the habit of deferring to or giving power to the expert?.. I'm not sure I'm making any sense, but something feels important.

Ruby: It's only through years of therapy that I have started to trust myself...., I am learning to be my own guide and be kinder to myself. Slowly and steadily do good things for myself.

Sarah: When you talk of trust and self as expert, this is something I have explored explicitly... I spent a year focusing on a personal project I called "mapping the body", honing my body as instrument for understanding my mental and emotional state, and nonverbally trusting my responses to things... I'm feeling very trusting of my instincts at this point, and am curious to explore how and why I'm making choices with my movements at this time in my life.

Harry: So it is interesting for me to be able to discern what is talking body, soul or spirit? and it is inviting me to look at what do I want to listen to? What is my aim? What do I want to be? What is most important for me to listen to when there is contradiction between body, soul and spirit? Is there a way to bring all three into unison with each other? What experience am I looking for?

Melanie: It's another set of information that is really important. But I don't know that it's more important than any other information, except insofar as that we often don't access it at all.

Alise: The Point is not to know, but to be more alive.

Twyla: I would love it if you started to consider the language of how you express your experience of yourself and of your body... consider how you experience and language your experience in your body and sensations. Do you speak in third or second person? How do you honour and really make that yours?

Jacqueline: I think this gets to the crux of why I use a general second person instead of first person sometimes (though I have been observing and trying to shift that in myself as well) --to avoid giving the impression that I think my experience is particularly special, more challenging than others', etc. It is perhaps a means of invalidating my experience

Sarah: I think as a result of this curiosity, I am distinctly specific about referring to my body and movements in first person. It was interesting to hear you speak of how people do not... I do know that when I am teaching to others, I refer to the second person.

Jacqueline: I try to maintain an integrated sense of self in both my physical and non-physical aspects, but I find that sometimes the limitations of language (or the English language, at least), force me to speak of "my body" in a separating way simply out of the need for specificity.

Gary: Someone else suggested the Greek term hamartia, from tragedy, and from theology, about missing the mark, trying your best and not being a bad person, but knowing that you didn't quite hit the target you'd intended. In light of all that, I'm still working on saying words that I really mean, at the right time and to the right audience

Twyla: Continue to be curious about what these sensations, this expertise, these movement patterns have to say and have to teach you.

Melanie: Everything is different when it is observed - the act of observing changes the object.

Sarah: How do I express feelings in my body? That is an interesting question of identity... So in this way, I'm feeling like I'm trusting my instincts implicitly. I'm making healthy choices to slow down, to listen, to be in tune, to stretch, move, walk, exert, or breathe when I need to, and be totally present for the people around me. I'm feeling like I'm fully participating in an embodied way even if my use of body is low key. Thanks for the prompt on this. I hadn't thought about it that way and it is helpful to see how well I feel I'm doing under distressing circumstances.

Gary: All of this web of life and support is part of how I'm holding myself, how I'm standing and moving and leading with my best foot, and moving forward in the world, against the struggles that I feel so deeply.

Twyla: You may be connected to things that are happening in your life and you want to share something that you've done or created or made. I love any of it, so thank you, it helps keep me connected to you, to myself, and to this exploration together.



Gary: I'm grateful for all you've done to give me inspiration to consider and attend to my own body's movement, for the intricate connections between body and mind, for the many ways we find ourselves led, toward good goals and deep understanding.

### Week 3

*My invitation for week 3 was sent out February 14, 2020. I received 13 responses (8 written, 5 audio recorded) from 8 participants submitted from February 14 to February 27, 2020.*

Twyla: Starting today I'd like to re-present us all to the practice of Somatics, of what somatic awareness is... What's happening in your internal experience? What are you aware of in yourself? What sensations do you notice? Notice the position you're in right now, where you're making contact with something beneath you and how that feels.

Sarah: Thanks for defining somatic experience.

Gary: When I watched the video, I did it again by watching the video rather than reading with the caveat: I sometimes listen as aware of my body posture, sitting in my work chair, sometimes I was looking down – my laptop isn't positioned in a good position to be looking forward for good spine health but the laptop is kinda sitting down, so I would look, I would watch you delivering the word story and I would watch your earrings if they happened to be distracting or I would watch the art hanging on the wall – I really liked the child art – but sometimes I would close my eyes and sit up straight and favour making my body just relaxed and ready and attentive, taking in the words

Sarah: My legs are straight in front of me, computer on lap, back propped up with 5 pillows, and up to my chest under a duvet, sheet, and wonderfully heavy blanket. I love that blanket. It is incredibly comforting and calming.

Alise: I listened again, because I had a sense that I wasn't really present the first time to this. The second time, I was having the somatic experience of eating ice cream and listening without watching the video recording, occasionally skimming the transcript.

Dad: I'm looking away in the distance so I'm actually consciously doing some body movements. But then noticing my position. I'm back here on my chair. My feet are wiggling a bit. I'm not nervous. I guess the act of speaking – physical activity – comes naturally. There's no extra effort to speak.

Although sometimes there's a conscious effort, disembodied effort to remember something from time to time and put things in order. So, okay, so I'm speaking and I'm searching for a word and what happens? I look away... I'm up walking around now.. I look away, I look down and I think aha! I found the word, I just remembered.

Sarah: I find, however, that I am worried about my son when he is not in my presence and feel that so clearly in my body with shallow breath, tension in my muscles, and racing thoughts that stop me in my tracks. I'm also surprised by how much I miss my love, and how that is literally an ache in my chest, and a longing in my mouth and throat.

Twyla: I want to thank you for all your sharing... I loved reading, hearing, and experiencing you, being present to the multiple experiences together... if you do want to record or write something, know that I am witnessing you.

Sarah: You are saying you are witnessing me, and that feels comforting in my cave of independence... Day and night are morphing, and try as I have to regulate, I'm free-falling because I'm untethered from access to those who help me define my best self.

Dad: Now one thing that did stand out to me is in all of my interactions with your research I've always chosen to speak. I've never wrote anything. I haven't written anything. And I guess that's just how I'm comfortable in speaking and that maybe shows you state of mind and process of my thinking.

Jacqueline: It is much less convenient for me to do things that involve sound rather than just typing, but I also know that I prefer to communicate in written form.

Twyla: I want to invite you to read this out loud. If you choose to continue to read silently to still be an awareness of how you move in watching or reading.

Sarah: I like the idea of reading aloud. I tried it, but wasn't in a place that made it reasonable to continue when I first received the prompt.

Dad: Thinking about my embodiment but not thinking of my embodiment directly but thinking of my embodiment, like an outside, detached observer. I don't know if that makes sense but I'm going to try something right now, I'm walking over to a mirror and I've never done this before. I'm looking at it in real time as I speak to you.

Gary: I thought I could sit still for the whole thing. I'm kind of a wiggly person. I could not sit still for the whole thing so, at a certain point, I paused, walked around and then pressed pause again and continued.

Alise: Your cue/suggestion/experience about paying attention to fidgeting has been really interesting for me.

Twyla: our language - the way it is - separates things. We have this written form of language and because we are all literate (the 21 of us here), that literacy means we have this experience of ourselves through language as separate things. We have nouns and verbs and things that do things. There is separation in that even when trying to shift that languaging.

Gary: Language. Around language. The word around. I'm aware of that word. To me, it means "in relation to" something. It reacts to something. It relates to something. The something sometimes reacts back, or relates to me. But it's not just "around" me, and I always wanna know what "around" means. It sticks in my mind.

Jacqueline: The biggest thing that I've reflected on is how different it can be to speak something than to write it or think it. That sometimes I can have an emotional reaction when I say something out loud, even if I've written it or thought it many times before. And I have observed this in others as well.

Gary: Abstract ideas. What does speaking words mean? Expert. Welcome. Taking someone for granted. Responding to alienation, when someone doesn't seem to be engaged with me?

Sarah: I hadn't considered speaking as movement. I need words. It's my "love language". Where my love needs physical touch, I need to talk, to tell stories, to speak and listen to feel connected.

Twyla: Yet this work of Somatics is about the connection, about experiencing and being aware of our experience in life and movement through this embodiment. That the only way we actually know or connect or are in the world is embodied. That everything is movement and everything is embodied.

Gary: Everything is embodied. Hm. I said. (Big, deep, primal -- but quiet, and calm, assured -- agreement.)

Sarah: The only way we know and connect in the world is movement and embodied. I'm not sure I agree with that... My thoughts are not movement. They are thoughts. My feelings are embodied, but thoughts can evoke a reaction in my body or not. They don't have to. In fact, when I am lost in thought, I tend to forget my body - even if I am biking or running or using my body at the time I get lost in thought. In fact, I tend to get lost in thought when I move repetitively through space. The pattern of repetition invokes thoughts, which distract me to forget to notice my body. Does that mean I'm embodied, or the opposite?

Harry: I got present to imperfect-perfection. That accepting things as they are even though they may be perceived as imperfect become perfect in their acceptance. I got present to Somatics is that which relates to the experience of the body. This body of frequency and movement is in the here and now. There is no us and them. There is no separation. no individuals. its all one. there is no past. no future. how is life dancing through this body in the now? is the question that I inquire into.

Twyla: So my invitation for you this week is: to be aware of the experience in your body as you're speaking.

Stella: When I am engaged, I talk with my hands, when I am angry, I am very still. when tired, I am very lacklustre and toneless.

Dad: I felt a little tongue-tied. I don't know. maybe that's just me... I don't know if this gives you any insight but walking and talking yeah we do that all the time don't we?

Hazel: With my therapist last week, I actually explored my somatic experiences. I think I am not well trained/had the opportunity to explore this in the past, so I do struggle noticing any bodily sensations in relation to how I feel at the moment.

Stella: I tend to concentrate on the feeling in my belly when I talk, is it relaxed, or tense? Watching the people around me, do I need to stop? Do I want somebody else to talk more? or less?

When I sing, I let it all out. In the woods, I whisper with my voice and footsteps.

Jacqueline: I have also noticed that I tend to keep my body contained, and my thoughts/speech contained when sharing things. I recently shared some things with someone and tried not to contain my thoughts/speech as much, and I found that I contained my body less too. I'm not sure which begat the other.

Twyla: Can we (I'm really curious because I haven't done this, so this is an invitation for me as well this week) - can I - remember to become aware of my embodied experience when I'm speaking? Can I/we be curious without needing to make things right or wrong or find an answer? Just be curious and hold space and feel into the movement?

Alise: I have been having something come up this week several times that when I am feeling grief or internal static about something, what comes out is received as some sort of criticism. The thing is, it doesn't feel like criticism. Or, I don't see myself as being critical. I can see from the outside that I - am- being critical, but It -feels- like something panicky inside, trying to get out.

Gary: Even when the other person chooses words that make me uncomfortable. I don't acknowledge the discomfort until much later, when I'm alone, and "out of danger." I do experience the aggression, but I turn it aside and try to accomplish the goals of harmony that are uppermost in

my mind and my moral universe. I don't know how to insist, at the appropriate moments, upon an engagement with the things I know are right and healthy and good.

Harry: What language can I speak into my somatic experience? is another question that i inquire into. Speaking is the movement of energy! :) I inquire, What is the experience of these moving energetic words that move through my body? IAM experimenting with trusting my expertise. Let there be light!

Dad: So I soften my voice and I'm whispering. Things all of sudden become calmer and quieter. Yeah, I can feel the difference. So volume. I'm not yelling but if I yelled it would be another experience. Maybe more stressful.

Gary: The words I choose do have an effect on my feeling in my body. And so do the words I hear.

Alise: Someone said to me today, "People seem to like you," and I had an unpleasant response.

Hmm, what's up with that?

Sarah: My embodied response to these two conversations about highly stressful experiences and worries with two empathetic women who either knew me well or my son, and who could hold that space with empathy and honour enabled me to come to terms with the gravity of the situation. I was surprised at how calmly I could speak my words, how I was able to make eye contact, to hold my structure still and strong, to not feel shame, fear, anger, sadness in the telling, but to allow all the mix of feelings and thoughts to come and go as I sought help, understanding, and to be seen.

Sarah: Being in community, speaking aloud and being heard without judgment, and practicing observing and describing and participating nonjudgmentally has been my focus.

Gary: I decided to start my Tuesday morning with a careful or attentive somatic meditation to figure out.. I guess about how to be intentional about my day... So I wanted to be ready to think about how I use my words. Think about words as being movement, not as being exact things that... you don't get to say something and have it come true. You get to use words to come to an understanding

and you can only do your best and if the person that you're working with isn't ready or doesn't work like that, it doesn't mean that you shouldn't do your best.

Sarah: In a way, I am working through my own trauma trying to support a struggling son by being mindfully embodied as I navigate trying to find help, support, and options to offer.

Twyla: I look forward to what we discover this week. Thank you all!

Alise: I really liked the first week that you sent a reminder halfway through the week about the invitation - it was really helpful. And I don't remember that arriving again for subsequent weeks. I may have missed it? I'd like it if you'd keep doing that.



**Week 4**

*My invitation for week 4 was sent out February 21, 2020. I received 10 responses (7 written, 3 audio recorded) from 7 participants submitted from February 21 to March 2, 2020.*

Twyla: It's been many months since we had our conversations last fall and I've become aware that I may have been making some assumptions about some terms and perhaps jumping ahead. I'd like to rewind a little, clarify, and represence some of the main ideas and intentions for the research.

Dad: thank you for defining the terms body and soma at the very beginning again, just to clarify third person and first person and what the difference is.

Twyla: As living beings, we are always moving – in gross and subtle ways... When we bring our conscious awareness to the movements we are making, any of the movements we are making, we bring choice to what movements we make and can consciously decide whether those movements serve us and what's important to us.

Harry: What I'm getting is that by bringing attention or awareness to the movement of the body that the movement moves out of sleepful (unconscious) movement into awake (Conscious) movement.

Sarah: I'm watching and typing and reading and listening after 8 hrs of working on my bed. I'm restless, and also calm.

Twyla: And yet we're often out of this awareness.

Hazel: I resonated with your content this week, as I am trying to figure out the best way for me to recognize my somatic experiences. It is still very difficult for me to stop and take a second to see how my body feels throughout the day, especially during work. I was wondering if this comes naturally to some people.

Sarah: I'm highly somatic in my day-to-day actions... I'm not feeling like your average person who's a "walking zombie."

Stella: I read recently that some people have an internal monologue and others don't. I definitely do and when I can simply shut it up, I am MUCH more aware of my body. Otherwise, it is my inner voice, saying 'now I chop these vegetables, I am putting pants on' It is not helpful in mindfulness. It is me narrating my life, rather than living it.

Sarah: When I say things out loud it's very different from when I say them as a running commentary in my head. And I'm trying to feel the difference.

Dad: As I record and speak about my experience it helps me focus on embodiment.

Twyla: Many of us intentionally include practices (of which there are many) in our lives that are dedicated to focusing on our somatic awareness – meditation, yoga, conscious dance, somatic therapy, pilates, etc.

Dad: So my own internal experience. I hardly ever think about but of course in this case you do because that's the subject of the whole week by week process you're doing so of course it encourages me to think about that... but I have to dissociate myself from this experience and talking to you and looking at this research into general life and how language and other people's motion and other people's language and listening to things, making me aware of my own.

Stella: Meditative dance has always been about leaving my words behind. I like to forget how to speak and be slightly incapable of it when I am done.

Sarah: I've started dancing again... My body remembered... I was super somatic while trying to synthesize my thoughts and feelings through movement without words.

Stella: Having to communicate plans and desires and needs always takes me out of a moment of enjoyment. I had to explain a slightly bad encounter with a man on the street and it made my movements jerky and awkward, as though I had retreated to an awkward, unsure teenager.

Sarah: So I've not wanted to speak in movement. I've really wanted to separate watching, saying, and doing and not multitask but be focused on each thing 100 percent.

Jacqueline: I found it hard to allow myself to slow down and just watch the video and not try to multi-task or do something else

Sarah: I like to listen and watch and write and read all together.

Jacqueline: I guess part of why I gravitate to the written text, in addition to convenience, is that it feels more active and so I feel less compelled to do something else at the same time.

Harry: In bringing awakened movement the option of choice becomes available. That by becoming aware of my bodily experience I get a greater knowing of the now that my body experiences.

Jacqueline: I find that when I'm invited to become aware of xyz in my body, my instinct is to "fix" it

Twyla: I'm curious: if and what language pulls you towards or away from somatic awareness in your life?

Jacqueline: I enjoyed allowing myself to bring awareness to my somatic experience while reading the invitation, but without feeling the need to alter anything I was doing.

Dad: What affects me? Certainly the content of the speaking so when you talk about noticing my feet and going up my body and things of course that makes me aware of that.

Hazel: I think I usually have an idea about intuitive feelings, such as when I think 'I have a good feeling about this' or 'I feel like this is the right apartment for me to move in'. But there's still disconnect in the actual physical feeling behind it. It's hard for me to articulate that 'feeling' in verbal/written language.

Sarah: It feels like a real mix between getting very still in order to listen to my instincts and responses and needing to push, move, participate, embody my mullings, especially during times of crisis or heightened emotions.

Dad: I believe that generally my body is very calm while I listen to or, yeah, listen to or interact with other people speaking.

Sarah: I think I'm becoming more conscious of being still and listening but the risk of being disembodied or un-somatic in the listening is higher because I become so absorbed in the listening.

Dad: I'm aware of how I want to be. I want to be calm.

Twyla: Keeping the notion from last week – speaking as movement – my invitation for you (and for me) this week is to become aware of other people's speaking as movement. And specifically to become curious about what in their speaking pulls you towards or away from being aware of your own somatic experience.

Dad: I never thought about that and let illustrate that with a few stories that maybe make me think about.

Stella: I spent most of this week with one person; we talk almost endlessly. When I am listening, I lean forward; when I am zoning out, I sit back, eyes unfocussed. I have to talk to a few people to organize things and am always so pleased when people are unnecessarily kind. I can see the smile in their voice.

Dad: I didn't notice anything until we were in the vestibule and I was looking at the mirror on the hall tree. and I noticed myself. and it was curious that when I saw myself I became self conscious and I pulled away and I did not become curious about looking at myself as I reacted to them speaking to me.

Sarah: I'm listening a lot in my work and life as well, and this gets me out of my somatic state of being - I'm stilling my body to focus not on it but on the expressions of voice and movement in the people I'm around, so I let go of my own conscious somatic awareness to absorb the awareness of the other into my experience.

Dad: The second thing is visual, is watching, watching you and other people and how their body movements can sometimes trigger my awareness in my own experience: touching your ear or looking away or movements like that.

Jacqueline: Considering your speaking as movement in the video, I was aware of the minute movements--twitches of the head, eyes flicking up toward the camera, etc. I sometimes found myself... not mirroring exactly, but if you would shift your weight in a certain way, I would follow by doing something of similar magnitude--shifting my weight, moving my torso, etc.

Sarah: To get back to my experience of listening to the video of you, my feet are resting, my legs are a little stiff but also rested, my back slightly compressed but propped up. My core is supportive and aligned. Arms are resting on the computer. Fingers flowing if needed. Neck and head propped and poised.

Dad: I'm still unpacking what these layers are in my own experience, in my experience, language, my own speaking and watching others speak and listening to other people speak.

Twyla: I believe language and our tendency as humans to want to make sense, make meaning, understand - particularly through language - greatly pulls us away from our somatic experience and we can feel less balanced in our awareness.

Alise: I challenge the notion I think I heard you voice that meaning-making takes us away from somatic awareness. Instead, I think that somatic experience flows into meaning-making, that meaning is actually a felt experience.

Dad: People become disconnected from themselves, disconnected from the planet; and language has a lot to say about that.

Twyla: I'm curious if my pre-written approach to this invitation shifted the experience for you in any way.

Hazel: I usually appreciate more shorter and concise writing.

Sarah: I liked what you said and I liked your questions for this one.

## Week 5

*My invitation for week 5 was sent out February 28, 2020. I received 13 responses (11 written, 2 audio recorded) from 11 participants submitted from February 29 to March 9, 2020.*

Twyla: Today I'm really curious about time. My dance with time this week has felt challenged. It has felt like time is this "thing" and I have all these things to fit into it and it's challenging to make them all fit.

Sarah: Dance with time - I like that term. We all have it.

Twyla: As I dance with you all in this research exploration, I'm hearing that some of you haven't felt you have the time to really participate. (And I'll throw in here that you're all participating – whether you're reading and watching each Friday and providing me feedback or haven't opened a single email from me – it's all the exploration and seeing what invites more awareness and what doesn't).

Alise: I seem to be particularly busy and I'm a week behind in watching the videos. Feeling like I have to catch up, and where before I was really enjoying the experience of watching and responding and paying attention (pay attention, spend time, hmm), as I write this I feel little stressed.

Dad: This week has been an especially timely week because I think I was the busiest I've been in recent memory this week.

Hazel: I seem to only think about somatic experiences when I receive the emails from you and watch/read the videos. I don't feel that I am contributing much and I almost feel like opting out myself.

Twyla: It has been shown that we use quite a lot of metaphors in our speaking that connect abstract ideas to our embodiment – taking something we cannot directly experience through our senses and connect it to our sensorial and spatial experiences. One I'm quite curious about is how we speak of time metaphorically as a thing, with substance (i.e. "We don't have enough time," "You're wasting time," "Can you give me a minute?" or, as I just said above: "Without spending more time.") This

“substance” of time can stay stationary as we move (i.e. “As we approach the end of the year”), move towards us as we stay stationary (i.e. “The time will come when,” “I look forward to the arrival of summer”), or be a container that we move in (i.e. “He did it in 10 minutes”). We experience it often linearly, as a line (in English it’s a horizontal line from left to right). It isn’t surprising that so many of us feel we don’t have enough time for it all, including being more aware of the sensations and experiences in our bodies.

Ruby: One thing that I immediately noticed as I was watching the video is when you mentioned how this week would be focused on time, I immediately started to feel stressed and anxious. I've been dreading time, feeling as though I both don't have enough of it and too much of it. It never feels right.

Dad: One thing that happens if I am working on a time, what does my body do? It focuses. For example, yesterday I was working on preparing and there were other events as well and I was feeling I don’t have time to go to the washroom, I’m not doing that. I don’t have time to drink coffee, I don’t drink coffee. I’m just focused on something and my body is just sitting there and my mind is racing through all the things I have to do... But I do realise that after 16 hours of doing something I have to step back and relax and go to sleep.

Sarah: I "lost" time taking a much-needed nap, and keep racing to keep up with a huge workload, then racing to spend quality time with my son, my friend, whoever, or with myself. I always need 4 times as much time as I have to be satisfied.

Dad: You know me, I like to leave early for events, for travel, whatever. I don’t like to be late.

Ruby: Whenever someone mentions time and me, I feel shame because I have a history of never being on time and I used to be relaxed about it and then it morphed into shame.

Dad: So you’re dancing with impending possible doom of yourself. Of course, it’s not that dramatic. But I think, as you grow older, the sense of, you get more perspective and the sense of drama

lessens. Small things aren't as dramatic as maybe once they were. So, dancing with time I think gets easier as you move on.

Twyla: Making time into a thing allows us to talk about it. And talking allows us to connect with each other. But then does it limit our experience as we relate to time only as this thing we've constructed?

Harry: My experience of time is that it changes based on the way I'm perceiving it. The way things are observed changes based on the way they are being observed. Does time even exist? Time comes and goes. Does anything that comes and goes exist?

Sarah: Time doesn't exist but rules us completely.

Stella: The way we package time, and rush it is the problem, we have codified it. If only we were free to taste and experience each particle of time.

Dad: For me time is about events. If there are no events, nothing changed, there would be no idea of time.

Jacqueline: My awareness of time--worry about taking up or wasting people's time, pressure on using time a certain way (sometimes to the point of not using it at all), trying to allow other people to be responsible for managing time (e.g. at appointments), "time as a container"

Twyla: So here's the invitation for this week: to notice your dance with ideas of time. Simply: notice when you or someone else speaks about time in any way, noticing how it is spoken about, and notice the sensations in your body as notice. Nothing extra to do – when you notice something being said about time, can you tune into the experience of your body for a moment, even as you continue to do whatever you are doing?

Stella: I suddenly had very different plans that I originally had this week, because I had to leave Asia early, because of Covid-19.



Gary: I ran out of time, myself, over the weekend. I did some things that were spiritually necessary, some things that I had to do to make money, some things that were neither one of those, but compelling for a choir that I sing in (performance at a banjo concert, and singing bedside for someone who was clearly dying in the near future). But I didn't plan for my own work. Didn't get ready for a meeting that I thought I'd find difficult. I went directly TO the meeting, and confronted the problems, and came out feeling much better.

Melanie: I'm noticing that I FEEL as though I have no time yet I DO have time (but I don't...). I'm experiencing a real tension. Holding this paradox is confounding for me.

Alise: I'm starting to pick up more work, and I am not enjoying the feeling of things being rushed to fit it all in. The work is necessary, and there is a sense of loss with the shift.

Melanie: I've recently under-committed myself, yet the pressure I feel to make my commitment is tremendous. I do juggle many multi-faceted projects, so there is a never-ending pull on energy.... I remind myself of circularity - something I would call social circularity.... feedback loops: energy out needs energy in, and the source of energy in is more tactile/tangible when it is connected to the energy out.

Wendy: My dad (Gary) and I both just happened to have watched this. Then I called him, and we were both describing how we felt a funny transference of motivation from watching your video. It's almost as if becoming aware of time inspired us to take advantage of the window of time right in front of us.

Gary: Also? Someone made a tremendous financial gift to me. And the blessing I felt in my soul, and my body, was just immense. Altered my sense of time, too. The pressures I felt to do things.

Stella: Once I let go of any control over my time, I relaxed. I biked, and danced very much in the moment, and slept very well.

Dad: That's one aspect of time: going forward in time... One aspect I'd like to talk about this morning is historical time. Historical time in the sense of memories, of lives lived and how that impacts, impacts my somatic experience... In the afternoon I sat and was relaxing in the sunshine at the end of the couch by the window and I got into looking at some archival videos and the effect it had on me and I was mindful of that. And 1984, I had 2 children, ages 5 and 2, I was married for 7 years, starting my life as a mature adult and so on and so forth... the impact it had on me, taking me back to that time and the feeling I got in thinking about that time, not reliving it as much as saying to myself, now Alex what did you do then?

Stella: Time is in my opinion, all that we have. We are given the time between our birth and our death to live in a body on this earth.

Dad: So time has, and it's easy to say it has an emotional impact but emotions and body experience are inseparable to me. It becomes that way. I've always had this obsession and maybe more so now about time, not that time is running out. How can I explain it? Time is... I... I like to do things in order. I like to keep things organised and time is the same way for me. I like to keep time organised. And historical time and I go back and I try and sense a pattern of my personal experiences from childhood onwards and how does that inform me today? And when I think I know, thinking about this now and I thought about this before. It's a learning experience so you become a better person by going back and experiencing the highs and the lows, the good times and so on from your history.

Sarah: Happiness is when we are in the zone and lose time participating fully. We live in an age when we are hard pressed to escape constructs and constrictions of categorizing every moment of time.

Harry: When I perceive that time does not exist, I feel expansion in my body especially in my heart.

Gary: Dance with time was a liberating idea, both for practical things and for the BIG things: a song workshop that nourished me, and a deathbed singing visit that was strangely blank AND unsettling

both. In fact, your sending out encouragements, but knowing that some of them fall upon people's ears that are otherwise occupied, or simply not attending kept resonating with me.

## Week 6

*My invitation for week 6 was sent out March 6, 2020. I received 7 responses (5 written, 2 audio recorded) from 5 participants submitted from March 7 to March 25, 2020. I note the lower response of week 6 and also how I prefaced the invitation this week: "I would like you to experience your involvement in this research as a complete invitation that you have complete freedom to accept or not at any time. There is absolutely nothing you are required to do or experience. You have complete choice to leave the research at any time and also complete choice to stay and engage however it feels right to you. There is no right or wrong in this. Nothing I need or require you to do."*

Twyla: My invitation for this week is to choose a habitual activity you do every or most days, something that you do so automatically that it would be interesting for you to notice what your body is doing and how it feels while doing this activity, and to use that activity as your anchor for the week.

Stella: I choose walking because I am wobbling around on a boat and I have to relearn to walk. I am terrible at it.

Sarah: Walking to me is a conscious endeavor. Each step has become a mindful re-engagement in understanding how to place my weight to do non-harm. It's as if I am working all the time at re-programming my brain to re-program my body to function effectively and efficiently to do less harm and allow me to live an active and good life. It's really hard. I move a LOT in my life. I work on my feet.

Stella: After a few days, I am more relaxed, I keep my eyes in the distance to keep my balance and I can more or less walk forward without a problem. But I have to pay attention. Every time I step off the boat, I have to relearn walking again.

Sarah: This week I am working on retraining to be conscious of this, every single step. It is exhausting. And also good work.

Stella: Mindful walking is a very great practice for me.

Sarah: And of course, running up and down hills is a habitual thing. I go slow. I count. I focus on my breath. It calms and invigorates me.

Dad: You're going to laugh at me but what habitual activity I picked – making my first coffee of the day – that is a ritual or a routine... something I actually look forward to in the morning, which is making my first coffee of the day.

Gary: Make my morning coffee ...

Dad: Yeah, I'm describing a process and I fill it up and with my hands and I notice my hands I have to be really mindful of my hands and that I grip things tightly enough that it doesn't slip out of my hands. Yes, I do have butter fingers, more so now than I maybe in the past years and things will slip away so I have to be careful and I put the water filled container into the back of the coffee maker...

Stella: I can be a sloppy walker.

Dad: I have a yellow mat that prickles my feet. A small yellow mat on the floor and I'll stand on that in my stocking feet and I feel it in my feet. So that's sort of a waking up ritual, I haven't drunk the coffee yet but I'm waking up...

Gary: I wasn't so attentive of my chosen habit, which is coffee in the morning. When I WAS, though, a couple of times, it was rewarding.

Harry: I like this idea of picking a week-long task to have a noticing experience with. It reminds me of the Gurdjieff work.

Dad: ...a little game I have with myself in doing the process, how I feel in certain aspects of it, coming down the stairs, standing on the floor, shifting from one end of the little kitchen to the other end, going into the fridge and you know, being careful and nothing slips out... it's been 3 days now I've been especially cognizant of my first coffee morning ritual making of the day.

Harry: I feel that by noticing things that are normally habitual can bring more consciousness to things that may be in auto pilot. So why not have conscious movement? is the question I will be pondering.

Sarah: Finally, I'm settling in to the rituals I always do with more conscious mindfulness. Every morning I brush my teeth and wash my face and moisturize it. At night I brush, floss, and use an almond oil on my face. the ritual of touching my face is soothing. All of these things, washing, touching my face, touching my hair, are self soothing.

## Week 7

*My invitation for week 7 was sent out March 13<sup>th</sup>, 2020. I received 10 responses (7 written, 3 audio recorded) from 7 participants submitted from March 14<sup>th</sup> to March 25<sup>th</sup>, 2020.*

Twyla: The invitation this week is to ask yourselves: “what does my body know right now?” and just being a state of curiosity and listening

Hazel: Thank you for writing back to me to remind me that there are no specific expectations from me.

Alise: I feel really, I don't know if guilty is the right word about not watching the video last week. It's not quite guilty. It's, um, it's regret. Like I just really like things to be in order. And when I do things I want to do I want to do them right.

Hazel: Although there are times where I feel that it may be better to not participate further, I also understand that this is part of your PhD research and I do not want to jeopardize that in any way by not doing what I initially agreed on.

Alise: I've been really intrigued how your invitations have often aligned with you know, conversations I've had or inquiries I've had or interactions or themes that have come up for me even before I, you know, before I knew what your theme would be for the week, so I find that pleasing.

Twyla: I'm somebody who can tend to be prone to anxiety and through years of somatic work my experiences of anxiety have greatly lessened in my life. Today, however, has been a pretty high anxiety day for me and I've had the experience in my body of feeling overwhelmed and flooded, particularly around the unknown. I am a sensitive person and, with everything going on right now, it felt like I really needed to listen to this intense collective state of really being in the unknown, of higher anxiety and fear. I imagine we each experience it differently and we're all in a place right now of not knowing from moment to moment and day by day.

Dad: I never would have believed that my anxiety rose to the level it did over the past week.

Sarah: My anxiety is also very high. I'm trying to keep it at bay.

Stella: This week became one of the most stressful I have had in a long time.

Dad: The week unfolded yes, with a pandemic and a lot of changes. Unprecedented things happening around the world. Personally it hasn't affected me directly as much as most people because, for the most part, I live alone and I go out once in a while but not much. So it's not affecting my routine. However the... looking at the news, looking at what's happening around the world, I can't not help but feel a level of anxiety rising and how does that feel in my body? It's almost... it's visceral. Once again, I think I mentioned this before, it's not a trembling. But it can be. I'm going to stop right now because there's a phone call coming in.

Stella: I was in the US when all gatherings and flights got cancelled. The job I was heading to was cancelled, and then my flight there, and I had to make plans in a hurry. Those plans changed underneath me twice before I managed to get on a plane and end up in Costa Rica. Then, the place I had planned to stay fell through and where I ended up staying was not hygienic and I had to move to get to place I could isolate properly, and all of that took me four days.

Hazel: It has definitely been a crazy week this week with the COVID-19 situation... I would say I have felt a little bit of anxiety but also a little frustration on how people are handling the situation.

Dad: The phone call was from P... we talked about the nonsense going on. He thinks the craziness about people coming out of Walmart with piles of toilet paper and we're wondering: why do people do that?

Sarah: I'm reading a lot on social media about people who are bored. I'm the opposite. I need to get things done.

Stella: The stress built up inside my heart chakra, that big space inside my chest. It felt like sadness and fear, every further change I had to deal with made it worse. I felt terribly ungrounded, missing



the people I had left behind, confused about choices and convinced I was making the worst ones possible. I radiated sadness and stress, my head was always down.

Dad: Fear and panic being amplified, being echoed in the social media and newstreams. Amplified and echoed. Going around and around. Unknown, fear, panic and that was rising and I was certainly affected by that.

Alise: Noticing when I have anxiety it's really hard to be in touch with my body, like it's just hard to be in my body. Like I don't want to be in it. It's like, get me out of here.

Sarah: I feel it in my chest, the shortness of my breath, a heightened agitation in all of my muscles.

Dad: Trying times I guess is a word you can use. And people get animated. And they get worried and concerned of the unknown. Like you said it yourself, the unknown always has a certain amount of anxiety around it.

Sarah: What if he brings infection to me and I can't see my son again?.. This too, causes a tightness in my chest, shallow breathing, tense muscles that don't want to move but to close in.

Dad: So unpacking the reasons why the anxiety increased, certainly in me, were 3 unknowns, 3 classes of unknowns. First is the pathogen, the pathogen itself and how it could, may affect my family's and friends' physical well being. Two, the economy, its violent reaction and how it's going to affect our financial well being. And last, but not least, of course family and loved ones, unknown how they're reacting and they're being affected.

Sarah: How can I convince my child's father to let go of winning enough to do what is right for our child? Do I isolate myself completely while my son is away to be ready for him when he comes back?.. his wellbeing is what is primary for me, and that uncertainty is making my body weepy and shaky... How do I feel in my body? Like I need to take one moment at a time and keep the gremlins at bay... I spent 4 hours making dough chiboureckis filled with greens. They are delicious. It is a meditative thing.

Stella: I finally landed in a safe place and that is what it felt like, I landed. I calmed, My body let go of the fierce grip I had on fear. I regained joy. I grounded. I got groceries and I danced while I cooked. My body knew there were no more major problems to be solved, so my soul got to relax. I started attracting a lot of grasshoppers.

Sarah: We are practicing mindfulness. We are running up and down hills.

Hazel: And as weird as it sounds, I also felt a little ease from knowing that my job's workload will be a little less with all the meetings being canceled.

Alise: I'm starting a new job on a trial basis and I did a ton of gardening work last week... I've been starting this healing practice which I got some big pieces worked out I got my insurance worked out. I have space to run part time, kind of as needed. I think I have my business license taken care of I open a bank account for the business. This is a terrible time to start a business.

Twyla: The specific invitation is to ask the question “what does my body know right now?” of yourselves when there's a state of anxiety, high arousal, intensity, confusion, overwhelm, numbness or just being in the unknown – be it physical, mental, emotional.

Sarah: What does my body know right now? It needs to work - on the computer, checking off the large to-do list (taxes, lesson plans, recommendation letters, emails). It needs to move (cleaning, shopping for needed goods, exercising). It needs contact (dance, cuddle, caress, intimacy). It needs somatic calming that is unavailable.

Harry: What does my body know right N O W? The intelligence of the body does need to be acknowledged. In times when the knowledge of the body is not being acknowledged is may sometimes manifest as pain or tension or anxiety etc. Sometimes the body experiences anxiety when the body is trying to catch up to when the mind is and it doesn't want to be where the mind is. When honoring the body where it is at and by asking what it knows or what does it want to

communicate, the body becomes at ease as it finally feels listened to. Isn't that all that most people want? Just to be listened to? What center is of a faster energy? M(I)nd or ego? Heart? Body?

Alise: I also really relate to just the relief, just taking a few minutes after watching the video and saying what is my body know right now, and I didn't even do it for very long, but there was this similar sense of Oh, right. Like I don't have to figure anything out out there. There's a relief in figuring out the in here. Or even not even the figuring out like I don't even know what's going on but just in the in the coming back to the feeling (pause) there's a big relief.

Dad: I took some notes and I have some thoughts. They may be rambling at times but I put together a few ideas about what does my body know right now.

Alise: I'm just kind of rambling, but like I think I think this is what you're wanting, I think you're just wanting my responses and experience and so, so actually like taking the time to, to verbally engage with it. It's so different than typing right?

Dad: So as I sit here, having my tea, I've started a practice of having tea in the afternoon, coffee in the morning. Having my tea. I'm thinking yeah, I'm relatively calm. Why is that? Well I think there are 2 major factors. One is knowledge...

Alise: ...I'm realizing as I'm talking that I feel more curious that I'm, I'm sort of as I'm talking, like finding my way through my thoughts and I'm, I'm kind of back to one of your earlier invitations. I think there's a lot for me in the movement of speaking. That feels actually really true as I say it. I think it's part of why I struggle with, with electronic communication...

Dad: ...People are distanced. There's a much greater need now for remote connection...

Alise: ...I'm just noticing as I'm talking like I'm looking around the room and I'm my gaze is, is just soft. I'm not really looking at anything. I'm really, really more paying attention to my attention and what's interesting and you know, I'm making gestures with my hands. And I'm kind of moving around in my seat and I'm noticing my breathing like I just feel more alive in the sharing of thoughts

through recording much more alive than I do in typing for sure that's, that's really unpleasant and sometimes painful actually...

Dad: ...And I think the second major factor is connection. Connection to family and friends... I have a continuity of connection going forward and I'm going to feel better about that and my body's going to stop turning itself into knots involuntary or otherwise.

Alise: I have just shoulder tightness that can be exacerbated by typing, especially on a laptop. So it, yeah, it's just it's, wow, I'm just really appreciating right now. Thank you for this little insight, the difference I feel.

Dad: What does my body know right now? How does it affect my body? And I'm living it. Day by day... So I am calmer. I am sipping my tea. I'm sitting in my chair. My feet are crossed on the floor. My toes are wiggling a little bit. I'm looking around and today's, it's a good day.

Twyla: I am wishing you so much ease in this collective unknowing, reaching out to you across the spaces to share my sense of connection with you, particularly in this increased distancing that that we're entering into right now.

## Week 8

*My invitation for week 8 was sent out March 20<sup>th</sup>, 2020. I received 9 responses (6 written, 3 audio recorded) from 7 participants submitted from March 23<sup>rd</sup> to March 28<sup>th</sup>, 2020.*

Twyla: I'm not sure about you but life is giving me a lot to practice these days. It's a strong reminder for me of how critical it is for me to stay connected to my somatic experience, particularly in times of unknown.

Wendy: Especially in this time (globally and locally at the end of the term) I am having trouble focusing and keeping my stress at a minimum. Perhaps I can't control it, but the more stressed I get, the more I tend to avoid the stress. Being aware of my posture as a starting place for my decision making will be important.

Stella: I got to talk to people on zoom a lot now. and dance! yay for my laptop. I have much gratitude to it.

Dad: I attended The Move dance party online and that was fabulous...I listened to the music the whole time and although I said I was moving I was maybe tapping my feet or more but I was still at the keyboard and, as the music was playing, it created in me a feeling, an uplifting feeling that I feel, in that, you feel good, you feel alive, hope, promise and interacting with people on the screen gave that feeling as well.

Alise: Oh yeah, today, this morning I joined an ecstatic dance via zoom, which was actually quite beautiful. I was able to dance with my community in Maine.

Melanie: Everyone must be noticing the awareness of the body and pattern-changing..

Harry: What I'm present to is why does it take world chaos in order to tune into what is happening in the body? Is it lives of comfort and luxury that distracts us from tuning in due to us thinking that we don't need to due to the facade of everything is ok? Why is ok and not ok a deciding factor on whether or not one should have awareness of the body?

Twyla: My curiosity is how to maintain awareness so that we have more alignment and choice throughout our lives without needing to have something extreme, such as pain, illness, debilitation. It's interesting that this was one of the guiding ideas around this research and that collectively we seem to be entering into extreme time. With all of the layers, it does present us with the opportunity to become more aware of our movement patterns.

Wendy: What do I have in me? What can I do right now?

Alise: I've been getting this tension headache over the past couple weeks... It really messes with me. It feels like there's a point above my left eyebrow that sort of goes through my head to a point kinda right below, that skull bone in the back of my head, if you know what I'm talking about, like that bony prominence at the base of the skull and then it feels like it goes down one side of neck and connects to this place as I'm like following it, it's flaring up, kind of behind and under my shoulder blade... , I don't think it's like a migraine but I start finding hard to focus on words a little bit, like I feel kind of mumbly, you can probably tell in my voice.

Sarah: I'm relying more and more on my body awareness and positioning to live within my body as I move through these uncertain times. Thinking back to the stress of working and balancing all of these things, I am finding myself more grounded and aware of my body in all of my aspects.

Twyla: The invitation or anchor for this week is to choose text-based way that you interface with technology, either active or passive, whether it's texting, writing emails, or reading the news... And notice the experience in your body: how you're holding your body, how you're moving your body, the sensations that you feel in your body.

Dad: So I'm thinking back – I've been interfacing with technology one way or another for over 50 years – I can't believe that... So my activity at the keyboard is this week's selection and I'll see how my somatic awareness unfolds throughout the week.

Alise: I'm on a futon mattress on the floor with my left arm kind of hanging off the mattress and kind of like twisted a little oddly and then my head is looking the other direction and that seems to be the most comfortable position. So anyway I can lay in this awkward position and I can listen to this video and actually sort of accomplish something and so here it is about the position of bodies and technology and this is what I'm doing.

Stella: I have a laptop because I am fast typist, I can type almost at the speed of my thought, and when I type, I am relaxed, I often get sweat patches under the heels of my hands because I barely move them.

Dad: My position at the keyboard is always the same. It's at the desk in my office and I'm sitting on my chair. I try to maintain good posture with my feet on the floor or my ankles lightly crossed. My wrists in front of the keyboard. And trying to keep the keyboard in front of the screen or between the screens where I'm typing so I'm not contorting my body too much in any given direction.

Stella: As I type right now, my eyes can stare off to the view, while my fingers just do their thing. My U key is problematic, so I can tell every time my finger lands on it. My posture is good, my spine is relaxed, my feet play on the floor.

Dad: I'll maybe stay at the keyboard longer than I should and I try to stand up and walk around and get something or do something and the coffee in the morning is a good excuse to do that of course.

Sarah: When I am working (on taxes, lessons, etc.) I'm at my computer at the table. My body is in a working position that is healthy - straight back, good alignment, easy breathing, patient awareness.

Dad: So my office set up has two screens. Screen number one on my left, number two on my right. Number one is my primary screen, my keyboard is usually in front of it... I won't even think to move my keyboard or move my chair to focus my right screen. I find myself, even though I'm working on the right screen and thinking about my right screen at about 2 o'clock on the clock, actually more like 1 o'clock, the keyboard's at 12 o'clock and I am - my hands at the 12 o'clock

position, my neck is moved over so I'm looking at the other screen and I catch myself and I said: Oh if I just move my keyboard over to the 2 o'clock position, 1 o'clock position, to face the right screen and swing the chair over and face it straight on, it's a more comfortable feeling but it's only if I consciously think of doing that will I actually do that.

Sarah: My phone is where I consume information about the virus so I can shield it from my son. I use text instead of sound. I am more stressed, so I usually use this after bedtime while I am lying down. I specifically do this left handed (not my good hand) so I don't react or respond. I practice just taking things in and sitting with them. It is not great for sleep but good to protect from ongoing fear during the day. As I do this, I am ALWAYS moving.

Stella: I dislike texting on my phone. I use an app called swiftkey that I can slide over the keyboard to type, but the auto text on my phone is basically a drunk, insane sociopath who adds the most random words to my texts. I end up hunching over my phone, usually grumbling. My shoulders come in, I am always frowning.

Alise: I'm a little foggy so I'm like what else am I going to say? Yeah and of course I've had these weird, like I don't, I'm not, like I don't like the technological interface actually.

Sarah: I'm also consuming shows as a way to bond with my son... My connection with technology here involves cuddling, laughing, and love. This is positive. It is not text based, unless you consider video a text, which I do.



## Week 9

*My invitation for week 9 was sent out March 27<sup>th</sup>, 2020. I received 6 responses (4 written, 2 audio recorded) from 6 participants submitted from March 28<sup>th</sup> to April 12<sup>th</sup>, 2020.*

Twyla: As we enter our 9th week of this exploration together, everything is feeling so technologically saturated that I have not made yet another video/podcast to add to the time you spend online.

Things have changed so much since we started in January! So this week is much more open and I want to give you more space to listen to what your bodies need during this time.

Alise: I'm just launching my healing practice... It's just such a bizarre time to be starting, like a somatic healing practice... So interestingly while everyone else brings their practices to a technological platform, I seem to be moving mine outdoors, which is kind of, in a way, well I was going to say what I always wanted to do anyway but it's not that clear.

Gary: There's a rush to put things online, from all directions, which is part of our collective anxiety and hunger for collective action and presence... I awakened just now with a strong vocation dream, in which I was clearly the sacral age that I am, but was arriving somewhere new to meet an old mentor who had some kind of assignment for me. He believed in me and welcomed me to the community, but I didn't know what the assignment was. It was so hopeful.

Alise: I did spend 2 hours walking on the trails this afternoon to try and find some, to find a location.

Sarah: I closed down quite a bit. I didn't listen to music, only the radio. I stopped training running hills. I worked at my computer non-stop, or worked equally as hard on the most impossible jigsaw puzzle. I still made my bed and got dressed daily. I still made food, cleaned up, did laundry, washed the dishes, brushed my teeth. I still checked in with my loved ones. AND I shut down to regroup. It was like a week under water. It was a close study in mindfulness not to lose control of my "wise mind" - a combination of emotion mind and logic mind. While moving my body is what resets, I

somehow needed to be still. To focus my energies inward to sort through how I would cope with my feelings of fear and loss.

Stella: I got to hug somebody this week, after isolation has ended. My hands felt joyful at the experience.

Twyla: An optional invitation to take on is to notice the movement of your hands.

Stella: Wow, I love touching my face! it is scary.

Alise: So as I'm reading your invitation I am realising that I'm picking at this little pimple thing on my nose, under my nose. Not really a pimple just a little whatever blemish. So I definitely touch my face a lot.

Dad: Touching my face? Not really. Only if things get itchy, I blow my nose, scratch my eye. Scratch my back – that's really something yeah... I find my back is itchier than my face.

Stella: I am very busy with my hands, learning how to do a few things. I learned how to pick fruit with a cage on a long stick. Learning that felt good, and tough. Not many times in my life anymore that I have to make a large, jerking movement. I think using twitch muscles like that is something I need to work on. My shoulders are too weak, I start to lift weights. I love gripping the weights. I so miss working with my hands. I set up a little place to do some art, and watch my hands play.

Dad: Oh did hear that? I can even still crack my fingers. Nah. I don't want to do that too often.

Alise: I did some weeding in front of my apartment building last night just because there's this area that's been driving me bananas the whole time I've lived here. I just took an hour and listened to the frogs and I didn't realise there are little blackberry vines sneakily in the vinca so I have all these thorns in my fingers. So any time I touch anything I get these little prickles.

Dad: My hands do what they normally do, they support me.

Harry: In noticing my hands, I see that as we are encouraged to stay home and do nothing, I find my hands are more busy now than before the global situation. My hands are busy building.

Dad: I do have to be mindful always if I'm picking something up like the mug with my children's pictures on it, I don't want to drop it. So I have a habit of taking my pinky finger always and putting it at the bottom of the mug or the bottom of the glass or something and it never falls off.

Twyla: And the bigger invitation, especially through these times of unknown, is to see if you can take moments to listen in to what you're experiencing in your body and what you most need and can give yourself right now.

Sarah: My somatic experience in week 9 was really to go inward more than ever. I have been doing this metaphorically, exploring myself and my place in the world; and that was reflected in my movements or lack of them. I needed time to sift through and regroup. It was useful.

## Week 10

*My invitation for week 10 was sent out April 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2020. I received 16 responses (4 written, 12 audio recorded) from 6 participants submitted from April 4<sup>th</sup> to April 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2020. Ten of the audio recordings were submitted by my father.*

Twyla: What's alive in your body in this moment?

Sarah: I have a pent up energy that drives me, kind of like a race-horse at the gate waiting to be released.

Dad: Feelings is a somatic experience.

Twyla: What position do you find yourself in? What's supporting you?

Sarah: I am at my desk. My legs are bouncing as I exercise my toe joints to get them moving as I type. I'm sitting very straight in my chair, core activated, back and neck aligned, arms in a healthy angle on the table.

Alise: I don't really like typing. I don't like the position I put my body in. I don't like the way my brain feels after looking at a screen. So I'm not really sure how to like break this pattern.

Stella: My movements are more and more limited, but I got to go to town the other day to buy shoes. I was driving an old, standard vehicle that I had never driven before. It was a good car, and soon, my body became a unit, shifting, braking, checking mirrors, I was so comfortable on the insane, winding roads of these mountains. It was joy to witness myself learning.

Twyla: What sensations are calling most loudly for your attention?

Sarah: Eyes are darting as I listen between the page and the light shining on the plants in the room.

I'm very embodied at the moment, partially because I've been sleeping well and long for a few weeks now and am fully participating rather than in a fog. I've been wearing stretchy clothing, so I'm aware most of my body's core, which is helping me to be conscious of holding my body in healthy ways.

Alise: I'm sitting here with you, with this jot form pulled up thinking alright when I... went right into it. Didn't get up or like look around... didn't take a little walk or stretch or notice that my neck

is kind of crunched. So anyway that's where I'm at and in the moment as I'm talking about it, I feel like kind of infuriated actually. Just infuriated at the... I don't know, what is it? Like sense of take over or like powerlessness isn't quite right. Yeah, sort of like spitting out and I'm like, I want my fucking time back, like I want to reown my time.

Twyla: Are there any quieter sensations you can notice around those?

Dad: Instinct is something we're born with, and we instinctually and I can go on from there breathe, and the body does a million things instinctually, automatically, without my awareness, my heartbeats, my synapses send signals amongst themselves, my corpuscles roar along the veins, and so on and so forth. The body is a hive of activity. And there's no not much awareness in that, not much awareness at all, in the hive of activity until there's something going on.

Twyla: In week 1, I invited you to represent your interest in participating in this exploration with me, what it was you hoped to find for yourself. I invite you once again to see if you can recall what that was.

Dad: My goal was from week number one... I think I'm looking for a deeper understanding of my body of what it's telling me, what happens with it and the somatic experience and understanding the term somatic experience.

Harry: My reason for participating in week one was to bring more awareness into my body. This has been my experience. I am grateful that you did this project for your PHD program. Thank you for supporting us in our growth! It has been very beneficial for me to be in the routine of practicing Somatics.

Hazel: I reflected on why I wanted to join this experiment last year in 2019. I wanted to learn another tool to help de-stress from work. Have I achieved that through this experience? I think so, to a certain extent. Although the somatic awareness and experience was something new to me and I struggled to practice it, I have definitely gotten more aware of my bodily feelings than before. I am

now more aware that my chest feels tight and I'm not breathing fully if I am under stress. I also now do more breathing practices and relax my body when I notice that.

Sarah: In revisiting my original intention, I'm not certain I recall what I said, although I have been ever present in terms of my focus - to learn about myself in understanding the connection I have with my body as I live life.

Dad: So somatic experience is first person what I feel deeply. And I guess that's what I thought all along but you clarified it. So as I'm going for my walk, which I did again today, I have feelings inside your body that generate certain responses. So I guess those are first person and those are somatic experiences because nobody else can see them, looking outside in.

Alise: I was just thinking that when I started talking with you, I was homeless... I mean in in a sort of privileged, privileged kind of homelessness... I have been thinking of this week in relation to your project as kind of some sort of metric or something like that is where I have been over these months. Yeah, it's just mind boggling to me.

Twyla: We use something known as improvisational scores in movement improvisation and Somatics... When we use restriction as an opportunity, when we do so with intention and curiosity, we create possibilities for more awareness, innovation, creativity, and new ways of moving.

Stella: I love the idea of a score, restrictions are always my path to creativity.

Dad: I drew three concentric circles, three layers. I'm thinking I'm gonna couch... my thoughts this week in those terms of those layers... what your senses tell you, so that's the environment layer,.

The mental layer is... I'm gonna call it culture, whether it includes religion, society, beliefs, all the things that we attribute to civilization and how we form rules, either conscious or unconscious;...

And then at the bottom layer, I have the core, my natural body... Physically, you're, you're restricted. But there's a whole vast layer of restrictions, opportunities, limitations in the cultural layer, for sure.

Sarah: It's interesting that this score of physical isolation has placed limits on my ability to carry myself as if I am always modelling positive outlooks and behaviours for others. I find in those longer periods alone the potential for not practicing what I preach is higher.

Dad: Keeping mindful of limitations and restrictions on our body, somatic experience, layer two, I think has some very major restrictions. The two biggest ones are actually taboos in many cultures, societies, and nudity and sexuality... What does that mean for society as a whole? I'm not gonna get into why or how well how or why the, the rules and restrictions came about. It's just that they are there and they inform us, affect us, daily in different ways.

Twyla: One of the most helpful approaches in using scores is to recognise them as tools, as opposed to truth (of ourselves, of the situation, of life). Rather when we use them to play, explore, and create, they offer us opportunities to know aspects of ourselves, our embodiment and our movement patterns.

Sarah: I would like to focus on the fact that these limitations are a choice: to see them as an opportunity to be curious versus a constricting challenge. I for one have focused mainly on the former.

Dad: I think what you mean is score as structure... I put together a three-level structure, which I like to do that, I guess as a just an intellectual challenge. Trying to put form to chaos, order to chaos, what seems to be chaos. So structure for me as a way of explaining things, whether it's accurate, whether real, structures can change.

Sarah: I recognize this is a hyper challenging time with stress and anxiety through the roof.... And yet... I have choices... Even if I have a new path ahead of me for work that is unknown, I am embracing the possibility of change for the better.

Dad: Now what does it mean to strip away those layers? That's the way I'm choosing to think about this: strip away those layers. Not that they're a bad thing, but maybe stripping away the layers and

putting it back on again, maybe gives you a view of your naked body. And that's a metaphor. Really, the natural body without those layers imposed, either, like I said, unconsciously or not, and what that would mean. So that's where I'm trying to drive through for a deeper understanding. And today, I'm sitting in my office, my feet are on the floor, my fingers are on the table. And I'm liking this. I'm liking this, this weekly, this weekly practice that we've been doing.

Sarah: I am letting it override the anxiety about the unknown - we are all living in the unknown... I'm more efficient, and more effective, and more playful, and more healthy in this score. I'm breathing deeper. I'm philosophizing and caring more. I'm more whole. I hope this has been useful to you. It has for me in helping me to map my thoughts during this weird time, and connecting these thoughts to my physical experience.

Alise: I am so relieved in a way by what is happening in the world. I spent at least two winters... more than that... basically doing what everyone is doing now. I just I didn't have a job but mostly by choice. And I just realized I needed to be quiet and inward.

Dad: I'm thinking about body today during my mindful meditation practice and awareness of the body in the second person. I'm thinking I can experience my body's feelings, my anxiety, or agitation or anything as my mind saying: hey you body, what are you doing? Second person: you. So introducing the second person into the narrative brings a bit of distance from the body and how it may or may not affect you.

Sarah: I know I need to work through my conflicts using my physical body - especially when it comes with feelings of being oppressed. Over the last few years, I've trained by body to crave movement to move through these things mindfully and meditatively and creatively and socially.

Alise: I'm so relieved in a way that the world, like, I'm doing the same thing without the feeling that I had so often before that I was like missing out on something or I was doing something wrong or everybody else was like in on something. And I just wasn't in the world in the same way and that



was somehow to my detriment. And I know that's just a story and it's not necessarily a true story, but I just, you know, and I've gotten pretty good at ignoring that story, but the story doesn't go away... Like I actually feel tears to say this. I feel like instead of that the world has, is happening and I'm missing out on it, I feel like I have something that the world is missing out on. And the world is pausing. And I'm like stepping into the woods.

Sarah: I know also that sometimes I need to get quiet and still. When I am really in the muck of it, I consciously do this. I'm learning to trust my instinct on this, and not see it as depression or shutting down, but as a chrysalis or cocooning when I need to regroup and reshape myself. All of the input from the world says get a routine, exercise regularly, it'll get you out of your funk. For a long time I followed suit. For now, though, I think I will choose to incorporate stillness into my new perfection and let that be okay.

Twyla: So my final invitation in my last email in this exploration to you is to choose the score – choose the restriction, limitation, focus – that would most serve you right now, this week.

Harry: My personal score for this week will be to be aware of my back while doing projects and or activities and to notice my experience of that.

Stella: A couple days into the week and I was still trying to choose my score, but I think it will be simply observation. Observing my own observation of my movements.

Dad: My score is my voice, mindful of my voice. I tend to over pronounce. No, overemphasize the last syllable of words. I say words, words, words - last syllable. Pronounce. So I'm focusing on the voice as why did I emphasize as as as, as? I'm using a low voice, I think it's coming across quite clearly. I'm going to relisten to myself. Yeah, this is an opportunity for me to listen to myself when I make these recordings. This is great. Yeah, this is great. So I'm sitting here looking out the window. Feeling my body, but focusing on my voice.

Alise: My sort of self-prompted exercise for the past week has been that every time I do anything online.. I wanted to set a timer... for 20 minutes. And so the timer goes off, my reminder to breathe and kind of check in with my body because I tend to get sucked in and a whole lot of time passes which sensation I don't like.

Twyla: Can you take a moment right now, feeling into the experience in your body in this moment, to listen to its wisdom of where you could focus to cultivate more awareness where it would most serve you?

Dad: I went to these levels for a while... It's a way of helping making sense of this week or this week or the past 10 weeks or my thought. Language. The body feels from the first person we understand calm, we understand pain, you see I'm using words here. But what I'm feeling, what I'm seeing, I see red, green, blue. Red, green, blue by themselves those words mean nothing to anybody but what is red actually look like? Is your red the same as my red? Is your red, my blue? we don't know. But somehow language is necessary to communicate, communicate body awareness, communicate the somatic awareness somehow... Abstractions as a way of coming up with a more general theory or a general approach of understanding something.

Stella: Mostly I stay present, but when I am cranky about chores, I start a narration in my head that is mostly negative. When I hear myself doing it, I force myself to sing silly songs to stop the narration. I judge myself a lot about the crankiness, but now I can observe my own judging and try to stay impartial to it.

Dad: Does the perception of the body from the first person and not just aches and pains - Those are going to come and you will feel them, nobody else will see them, that's the first-person experience but just the body as a whole, does that change over time?

Sarah: I've been working through my emotional and mental conflicts. I've been finding I go inward to sift through multiple perspectives on a conflict, and get quiet to listen to my gut once I

methodically weigh potential options. Once I know where I stand, I can move forward and that literally kickstarts my body in motion. So my quieter sensations are telling me to align, listen, and know what I need.

Dad: As I mentioned last night, maybe this is something I can practice as I go forward just speaking... And maybe you think about what you're going to say. Instead of listening to the other person. I know I mentioned that last night too, but that's becoming less important. I'm more mindful of that. I know this afternoon listening, speaking with my daughters and trying to listen more intently and not trying to analyze, not trying to think of what to say next. Not looking around but really focusing on the other person, the other people.

Sarah: I am hyper sensitive to his needs, (and in general) and when he yells it is an assault on my system, as if he is yelling into a stethoscope connected to my ears. I calmly ask for a quieter connection that he doesn't often know how to do, and that affects me in my body, which starts to shut down.

Dad: I don't consciously feel the restrictions, but they're there.

Twyla: As I complete these 10 weeks of emails and worked on what I was going to say in this final one, I've been hoping to find how to 'perfectly' weave together of it all, to say it the 'right' way. And as my 8-year-old reminded me this week, maybe it's not that it's imperfect, but it's just my idea of perfection that needs to change. And just like my body, there is much wisdom there. I invite you to take this on this week and to take all the explorations of these past weeks together and add them to your toolbox, weave them into what you know and what's important to you and allow them to support you in the best and most 'perfect' way for you.

Dad: Over the past 10 weeks you invited me and others to participate in the somatic awareness project, and I thank you for that. It's opened my mind, open my thoughts. And during that time,

unprecedented changes have been going on in the world. As the backdrop, this has caused a lot of feelings and a lot of emotions and a lot of body awareness.

Harry: I agree with what your 8-year-old son taught. I as well struggle with perfectionism and the way it impacts me is that I procrastinate and move like a snail in projects that are very valuable to me. In every new project I take on I learn new things about myself.

Sarah: Building my toolbox to revise the idea of perfection: I love that. What a wonderful way of pivoting that negative connotation!

Hazel: As you said, there's no right way to do this and I have been trying to navigate it my way. Thank you for this opportunity.

Dad: I think, for me, the future means that I have more awareness and thank for you for that. More awareness about somatic experience. I understand what it means. I understand what it means really inside. I understand what it means. It's my level one experience yeah. First person. Look at that. And what can I do with that? Well I can be more aware. I guess that's some time for the future but I can take this moment Twyla to thank you for inviting me to be part of this research project. It's been a great 10 weeks.