THE EXPERIENCE OF AN INTERMODAL ARTS EXPLORATION

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THE EXPERIENCE OF AN INTERMODAL ARTS EXPLORATION

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT........................................................................................................................................9

CHAPTER ONE: Introduction..............................................................................................................10

Background of the Research Problem.................................................................13

Accounting for Individual Perception.................................................................14

Making Implicit Awareness Explicit.................................................................15

Describing the Limits of Discursive Communication........................................15

Including Perception as Data...............................................................................16

Expanding Concept of What Research Is/How Conducted..............................18

Why Utilize an Intermodal Expressive Arts Process?..........................................19

Embodied Phenomenology..................................................................................21

Definition of Terms..............................................................................................22

Expressive Therapies (plural) ..............................................................................22

Expressive Arts Therapy (singular).................................................................22

Intermodal Expressive Arts Therapy.................................................................22

The Pilot Study that Grounds the Current Study...............................................23

The Research Design and Questions.................................................................25

CHAPTER TWO: Literature Review........................................................................27

Arts-Based Research............................................................................................30

A Holistic View of Creativity...............................................................................32

Creativity Theory and Research.........................................................................35

Sensory Experiencing Theory and Research.....................................................38

Nonverbal Awareness Theory and Research.....................................................41
Clarification of Major Tenets of an Intermodal Expressive Arts Process...........49

Play and Imagination.................................................................49

Low Skill/ High Sensitivity........................................................50

Decentering.............................................................................51

Intermodal Transfer.................................................................51

Poiesis......................................................................................52

Intermodal Expressive Arts Process in Research.........................53

CHAPTER THREE: Method................................................................56

Methodology..............................................................................56

Participants..............................................................................57

Recruitment Procedure............................................................60

Participants’ Rights and Expectations of Privacy, Confidentiality... 60

Participant Safety Regarding the Pandemic.................................61

Procedure.................................................................................61

Art Making Three-Part Process and Materials.............................62

Interview....................................................................................63

Video Recording.......................................................................64

Data Analysis.............................................................................64

Triangulating Data....................................................................65

CHAPTER FOUR: Results..............................................................67

Themes from Participants’ Verbal Interviews.................................68

(1) qualities of openness..........................................................69

(2) play.....................................................................................70
(3) heightened sensory experiencing……………………………71
(4) embodied knowing………………………………………………72
(5) a transformative process………………………………………73
(6) altered sense of self …………………………………………..74

Researcher’s Observation of Process……………………………75
Data Analysis of Non Verbal Data…………………………………76
Themes from the Researcher’s Observation…………………………70
  (1) Degree of absorption………………………………………77
  (2) Experience of time……………………………………………83
  (3) Animation of the body………………………………………87
  (4) Pauses in speech………………………………………………89
  (5) Experience of Self-Consciousness…………………………90

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION .................................................93

The Efficacy of this Study ..................................................93
Familiar verses Unfamiliar Modalities…………………………….95
Findings that Surprised the Researcher……………………………100
Summary of Findings………………………………………………101
Contribution to the Field of Expressive Arts Therapy………………105
Contributions to Field of Research………………………………110
Limitations of this Study………………………………………….112
Further Recommendations………………………………………..114

Conclusion ……………………………………………………………116
Abstract

In this study, a sequence of visual, sound, and movement expression was utilized to explore how engagement in the intermodal combination influenced participants’ articulation of tacit, felt sense awareness associated with their creative process. The research questions were, “What are artists’ experiences of engagement in an intermodal expressive arts process?” and “How does engagement in non-verbal intermodal arts (visual art, sound/music, and dance/movement) influence participants’ articulation of tacit, felt sense awareness associated with their creative process?” This qualitative and arts-based study included participants ($N = 5$) over the age of 18 who were purposefully sampled based upon their having expertise (sustained engagement for at least 10 years) in one art form of visual art, sound/music, or movement/gesture. An interview followed a three-part intermodal art making process, and participants were asked to describe their sensory experiencing associated with engagement in their creative process. Findings suggest that for these participants an intermodal expressive arts combination heightened sensory experiencing for the amplification of implicit awareness. The intermodal art making process led participants to encounter the unfamiliar and new awareness came from attention paid to emerging experiencing. Each participant described arrival at a threshold where implicit awareness associated with engagement in their creative process met explicit realization of the ineffable qualities of their creative experiencing. A full account of experiencing, for these participants, included both language and intermodal art expression.
Chapter 1

Introduction

Under the umbrella of Expressive Therapies (plural) are many distinct therapies including the individual modalities of art therapy, music therapy, dance/movement therapy, drama therapy, poetry therapy, and expressive arts therapy (singular). Kossak (2015) described expressive arts therapy as “the integration or use of all of the arts in therapeutic practice” emphasizing the interrelatedness between all art forms for employing the imagination in a multi-sensory and multi-dimensional way (p. 45), McNiff (2004) utilized the term, “total expression,” to describe a holistic approach to creativity and healing through integrated expression using a variety of art modalities. The utilization of various modalities in combination is thought to emphasize the interplay between body, emotion, and imagination to generate fresh perspective. Discovery is invited through establishment of different vantage points on an experience, enlarging the discourse in exploration of that experience (McNiff, 2004). Estrella (2005) described expressive arts therapy as that which is “founded on the interrelatedness of the arts and takes an integrated approach to the use of the arts as a tool for psychotherapy” (p. 183). Estrella described the interrelated therapy technique as applying the arts either simultaneously or in transition from one to another.

It was Knill (1978) who termed the integrated approach “intermodal expressive therapy” and described specific tenets of this method. Knill considered that all the arts are equal in general and described the concept of low-skill/high-sensitivity (Knill et al., 2004), which values the process of creative engagement over the creation of a skillfully crafted product. A major tenet of intermodal expressive arts therapy is that play and
imagination affect change (Knill, 2005). The combination of expression in various art forms allows individuals to decenter into alternative experiencing. In this theoretical perspective participants enter a liminal or threshold space where active play through the arts aids in the revelation of unconscious contents (Knill et al., 2005; Levine, 2019; Rogers, 1971). Levine (2005) suggested that artmaking is “the human capacity to respond to and to shape the world” (p. 10), so utilization of a variety of art forms in combination invites a constant shaping and reshaping of the play experience. With specific attention paid to the strategic management of the transfer between modalities, shifting from one art form to another expands the range of play to activate imagination. Understanding art as a process that emerges out of play, not reason, Knill (2005) explained that when engaging in imaginative possibilities, one is able to redirect one’s focus away from one’s everyday experience of reality into an imaginary state where unexpected things can emerge. According to Knill (2005), when the artmaker can expand beyond restrictive perspectives into imaginative reality there is the potential for healing through a renewed sense of possibility. Levine (2005) wrote of the importance of exploration in which “letting go of control leads to surprising results” (p. 11). Associating the element of discovery with playful immersion in the creative process, new knowledge is elicited as the artmaker moves away from narrow logical thinking to open to new perspective.

Rogers (1993) held that the use of various expressive arts in combination heightens and intensifies a journey inward. Many expressive arts theorists have encouraged the use of various expressive art modalities in combination for the inclusion of a range of sensory experiences, explaining that attention to embodied awareness can amplify tacit and felt sense insight for a multidimensional account of experiences
Identifying the limits of language for representation of ineffable qualities of awareness, Estrella and Forinash (2007) wrote, “…new perspectives cannot always be translated into words. Rather, at times our insights and understanding remain a tacit knowing, that is, a felt sense of knowing through the experience of the art” (p. 379). In intermodal expressive practice, the shifting between one art modality to another aids in the heightened awareness between psychic and sensory motor activation, so intermodal art expression can incorporate body, mind, emotions, and spirit to amplify sensory and emotional awareness (Knill et.al, 2005). Since each modality is expressed through the body, an intermodal approach increases awareness of embodied experience that includes tacit or felt sense processing (Halprin, 2003). Levine (1999) explained that during the art making process an emerging awareness is born from the interplay between implicit and explicit awareness.

In all expressive arts processes, the ability to communicate through nonverbal art expression shows that language does not define the limits of cognition (Eisner, 1998), so it is important to investigate ways of knowing that reach beyond traditional verbal language structure. As preverbal awareness can become more formed through attention paid to creative experiencing (Zorn, 2011), an intermodal expressive arts combination can explore sensory experiencing for the expression of emotional awareness elicited through direct physical engagement in a creative process. While many theorists recognize the limits of language for representing ineffable qualities of awareness that account for the multidimensionality of experiencing (McNiff, 2004; Levine, 1999; Rogers, 1993; Snowber, 2016), there is very little research to support or challenge their theories.
Therefore, this qualitative and arts-based study investigated the nonverbal art expression of lived experiences during and following intermodal art expression to explore tacit, felt sense knowledge elicited through the experience. The study encouraged a holistic awareness accessed through inclusion of affective or embodied modalities (Polanyi, 1969), and invited alternative conceptualization, beyond limits of language expression (Wittgenstein, 2003). This study contributes to the field of expressive arts therapies as it utilized nonverbal art expression, adding alternative information to a field of research dominated by verbal ways of knowing (Leavy, 2009). Including tacit aspects of experiencing, this study has important implications for the field of expressive arts therapy as it may influence a process of meaning making through the cultivation of renewed perspectives.

**Background of the Research Problem**

As cognitive science bases thought as the paradigm of intelligence, it restricts a scope of study to the measurable and the physical while it fails to account for implicit knowing and ways of knowing that reach beyond traditional verbal language structure (Cazeaux, 2016). Historically, theorists have countered reductive practices that ignore implicit awareness and have advocated for ways of knowing that precede or elude verbal articulation (Johnson, 1992; McNiff, 2015; Merleau-Ponty, 2002). A phenomenological theory of embodiment, such as Merleau-Ponty’s (2002) “Embodiment though intercorporeality” claimed that the full complexity of perception is not reducible to purely cognitive measures. Like Merleau-Ponty, Gendlin (1981) described a “felt sense” as a way of being informed by the wisdom of the body attuned to an authentic and intrinsic response for the identification of the next right steps in creative processes. Gendlin’s
reference to the attunement to the “felt sense” is similar to what Polanyi (1969) described as tacit knowing. Polanyi held that the foundation of all knowledge is either tacit knowledge or is rooted in tacit knowledge. Polanyi described tacit knowledge as preverbal and disconnected from the verbal-thinking self---, emphasizing the importance of the feeling that provides access to the aspects of the tacit dimension of nonverbal thought. Leavy (2009) states that beyond discursive communication, new knowledge can be evoked through pre-conscious sensing. Tantia (2021) elaborates upon qualitative methods that include body-based inquiries that operationalize embodied data in the research process. Still, there remains a call for clarification of what the senses offer as knowledge (Cazeaux, 2016; Tantia, 2021), and there remains a need for creativity research that does not separate functions of the mind from those of the body (Krichman, 2014).

**Accounting for Individual Perception**

Merleau-Ponty (2002) believed that rationalistic ideas of fixed truths fail to adequately account for human experiencing. Opposing ideas of fixed truths, Merleau-Ponty explained that “truth” is contingent and revisable. The objective world is encountered by an individuals’ subjective experiencing or perception of the world; this individual perception and individual response to the objective world is not determined. Therefore, truth is not an exact objective or fixed reality, but related to perception. Perception aims toward truth but any truth that it reveals is contingent and revisable. Also, meaning is contingent upon individual experience. Wittgenstein (2003) explained that there is no autonomous meaning outside of our lived experience. Emphasizing
contextual contingencies implicit in meaning-making, these theorists emphasize that both meaning, and truth vary with individual perception.

Making Implicit Awareness Explicit

Gendlin (1981) described a “felt sense” as a way of being informed by the wisdom of the body attuned to an authentic and intrinsic response for the identification of the next right steps in an individual’s creative processes. Focusing and Focusing-Oriented Therapy are terms of Gendlin that reference attention paid to inward sensations to bring embodied communication to participants verbal speech. Gendlin represented the felt sense as experienced implicitly as vague and unclear sensation until it could be expressed explicitly. As implicit or pre-reflective awareness becomes explicit and determinate only when it finds expression for itself (Merleau-Ponty, 2002), expression through symbols, such as language or art expression, make implicit awareness explicit. Langer (1954) explained that symbols have meaning only when an individual gives them meaning. Symbols can be language or art expression. However, language may limit one’s ability to articulate meaning. Langer (1954) recognized that some concepts elude languaged description, and that distinct awareness exists in a pre-languaged form. This suggests the arts can express in ways that language cannot.

Describing the Limits of Discursive Communication

Hutcheon (1988) explained that everything that is presented and /or received through language is already loaded with meaning inherent in the conceptual patterns of the speaker’s culture. According to Hutcheon, discourse is influenced by social contexts, and privileged discourses create meaning systems that represent dominant conceptualization. This restricts how we understand our reality and how we communicate
and conceptualize our experience. Art expression provides alternative conceptualization opportunities, allowing individuals to imagine beyond the restriction of codified language and structures (Foucault, 1972). Because language is bound by already agreed upon meanings, Langer (1954) explained that language may be incapable of fully articulating felt sensation and explained that the ineffable quality of feelings is more congruent with art expression.

Limits on our communication strategies limit our conceptualization (Wittgenstein, 2003). To expand beyond restrictions that language imposes upon our ability to conceptualize, Langer (1954) supported the idea of combining visual, audio, and kinesthetic art modalities for expression of felt sensation.

**Including Perception as Data**

The current study is an exploration of an intermodal expression for the articulation of felt sense (Gendlin, 1981) awareness, to account for individual interpretation and meaning-making, and to expand upon limits of languaged communication. Intermodal expression was utilized in this study with intent to counter restrictive mindsets and limiting conceptualization strategies, instead inviting possibilities to imagine in holistic and authentic ways.

In his work, Critique of Pure Reason, Kant explained that while a noumenon refers to what exists alone from human perception (Kant, 1998), a phenomenon is what exists as informed by perception. This phenomenological study accounted for implicit or emerging experiencing; that which is informed by each individual’s perception. This study was done with interest in expanding upon rationalistic research methods based in
reason and fixed realities, instead including perception as data for a full account of subjective human experiencing (Vacchelli, 2017).

The omission of knowledge gained through sensory experiencing leaves a great deal of information out of the description of experience. Tantia (2014) identified an “awareness that emerges as a vague bodily-felt sense or unintentional movement that is not fully conscious, yet accessible” (p. 5). Likewise, Gendlin (1981) explained that by attuning to a “felt sense” through inward listening for sensations that are perceived but not fully conscious, one could identify the right next-steps in their creative processes. Understanding the body as a meeting place where felt sense awareness encounters the explicit realization of that knowledge (Chodorow, 1991), these theories suggest that there is a need for research methods that account for tacit dimensions of experiencing.

Kossak (2015) wrote, “…our bodies store memories, feelings, associations, and has its own kind of intelligence” (p. 37). Tantia (2014) explained, “By directing a client’s attention to visceral as well as emotional experience, new knowledge is revealed, and unconscious information is made conscious through embodied awareness” (p. 6). Additionally, Polanyi (1969) explained that (1) all knowledge is either tacit knowledge or is rooted in tacit knowledge, (2) tacit knowledge is preverbal and disconnected from the verbal-thinking self, (3) feeling that provides access to the aspects of the tacit dimension of nonverbal thought, and (4) embodied expression may account for feelings that elude languaged expression. It has been suggested that creating art provides access to the aspects of the tacit dimension of nonverbal thought by tapping into participants’ imaginative and contemplative sources of knowledge and insight (Moustakas, 1990). Inspired by these theorists, the researcher in this study employed an intermodal
expressive art making three-part process to amplify tacit awareness in participants, accounting for individual perception, making implicit awareness explicit, including perception as data, while inviting unrestricted conceptualization.

**Expanding the Concept of What Research Is and How It Is Conducted**

Tacit knowledge is one of the main concepts of Moustakas’s Creative Synthesis theory (1990). In Moustakas’ heuristic method of understanding phenomena, a *process of discovery* is emphasized, thereby expanding beyond rationalistic methods based solely in logic and reason. The interaction of implicit knowledge with explicit knowledge is amplified as one remains open to experiencing and allows tacit awareness and new meaning integrate. This threshold at which implicit and explicit awareness encounter each other is of specific interest to the current study. While the researcher in current study was inspired by Moustakas’ method for the inclusion of perception and aesthetic features as data, the current study focused on the experience of participants, not of the researcher, so Moustakas’s heuristic approach was not utilized in the current study. Instead, an intermodal expressive arts therapy approach was utilized to look at the preconscious, emerging, and tacit experiences of participants.

**Why Utilize an Intermodal Expressive Arts Process?**

As phenomenological research focuses on lived experience and aims to describe the nature of a particular phenomenon (Creswell, 2012), an intermodal expressive art making process was utilized with aim at accounting for experiencing over time which includes adaptation, exploration, and adjustment. Expressing ineffable qualities of experience (Langer, 1959), an intermodal expressive arts process was utilized with the intension of including facets of awareness such as unfinished processes (Lombard-Cook,
2016; Vacchelli, 2018) and emerging, felt sense knowledge (Tantia, 2014; Panhofer, 2009). The intermodal art making process was chosen with interest in recognizing knowledge building as an embodied and evolving process.

**How an Intermodal Process Accounts for Continuities and Emerging Awareness**

Describing the continuity of experiencing, this study found that participants’ experience of awareness was something that included past memory, present moment impulses, and future projections. Participants’ description of their experiencing in their intermodal art making process suggested that every moment’s experience was connected to that of the next and the previous moments. Awareness emerged during and after the artmaking process and included memories and future imagining.

These participants encountered emerging awareness from engagement in their intermodal art making process. Theory explains that the emerging imagery of visual, sound, or movement expression, ought not be treated as data to be analyzed or things to be utilized, but rather, as encounters (McNiff, 1992). The artmaker is an active participant in an encounter with the emerging imagery. No rigid assignment of meaning is given to images. Instead, the artmaker can dialog with images (1992, 2004). The artmaker can enter a relationship with the image and both are transformed by the encounter. McNiff (1992; 2004) explained that a process of dialoguing with images opens the artmaker to what messages the images bring. McNiff explained, “Personifying images, gestures, and other artistic expressions enables them to act as ‘agencies’ of transformation rather than simply ‘illustrations’ of the psyches of their makers” (McNiff, 2004, p. 85). This concept is further explained by Levine (2019) who emphasized that the artwork itself expresses. “The work does not merely represent what is inside a person, but
also brings something new. It has a physical, sensory presence and that presence impacts the person experiencing it” (p. 14). It is in the process of artmaking that things reveal themselves. The art making process is an engagement with emerging images, sounds, movements, and concepts that are malleable, revisable, and transforming.

The difference between interpreting images and dialoging with images is how the image is engaged. According to the theoretical perspective, intermodal art making can invite participants to enter the realm of ambiguities where contradictions can coexist (Knill et al., 2005; Levine, 2005). The process of intermodal art making can engage the interaction with image, sound, or movement and can expand expression beyond restrictive conceptualization (McNiff, 1992).

Unique to an intermodal expressive arts practice is the strategic management of transfers between various expressive arts modalities for opportunity to elicit alternative world experience that emerges out of play (Knill et al., 2004). As this practice is one of play, it encourages willingness to meet stimuli from both the external world and the inner world without contorting them for self-protective reasons (Rogers, 1971). The ability to receive conflicting information without forcing closure can precede the possibility of imagining freshly. The intermodal three-part art making process was designed for this study in an effort to evoke what Whitehouse (1956) described in movement as a moment-to-moment processing of “continually changing contours of perception, motivation, and emotion” (p. 19) and what Marks-Tarlow (2012) described as an intuitive awareness that is different than awareness the ego already knows.

McNiff wrote, “Creativity occurs in environments where the expression of the body, the senses, and the physical space flow naturally in a vital ecology” accounting for
“the total range of human expression” (p.148). Therefore, sensory experiencing through an intermodal expressive arts process in this study was explored with interest in amplifying awareness not accessible through verbal expression alone (Estrella, 2005; Kossak, 2015; Levine, 2003; McNiff, 2011). The intermodal artmaking process in the current study increased participants’ receptivity and responsiveness for change and new meaning making and revealed the limits of language for describing felt sense awareness. This study recognized the intermodal art making process as that which amplified the threshold between implicit and explicit awareness.

**Embodied Phenomenology**

Husserl (1859-1938), a pioneer of phenomenological thinking, was interested in the study of things as they are, or the direct lived and ongoing experiences of individuals. As Merleau-Ponty (2002) claimed that the full complexity of perception is not reducible to purely cognitive measures, the current embodied and phenomenological study challenged reductive practices that view cognition and creativity as processes that exist only in the head. Adding to research on how the articulation of emotional awareness may enhance understanding of the process of creativity, this study aligns with early theorists who understood creativity as a developmental process of self-realization, wholeness, health, and an ability to be aware and respond spontaneously to life (Maslow, 1959; May, 1975; Rogers, 1971; Sartre, 1956). The current study understood creativity as a holistic process (Gendlin, 1981), and was interested in an embodied epistemology associated with the creative process (Gendlin, 1981; Hanna, 1986; Kossak, 2015; Tantia, 2014).

To fully account for experiencing, this study included emerging experience as well as tactic awareness in the creative process. The researcher included implicit, explicit,
and ongoing ways of knowing, and explored the limits of language conceptualization (Langer, 1954). A three-part intermodal expressive art making process was designed to encourage play as well as nonlinear and non-hierarchical ways of conceptualizing. Creative imagination and emotional responses in participants were encouraged through the transfer between expressive art modalities. Interested in a holistic view of phenomena, the researcher in this study included emphasis on the body as a place of inquiry, a place of learning, understanding, and perceiving (Hanna, 1986; Johnston, 1992; Merleau-Ponty, 2002; Sheet-Johnstone, 2018; Tantia, 2014), and emphasized creativity as a holistic process (Krichman, 2014).

**Definition of Terms**

**Expressive Therapies (plural).** The term refers to a variety of distinct disciplines that use the creative arts as a form of therapy such as art therapy, music therapy, dance movement therapy, drama therapy, poetry therapy.

**Expressive Arts Therapy (singular)** is a specific discipline under the umbrella of Expressive Therapies. It is an integrated approach that refers to the interrelatedness of the arts for use in psychotherapy.

**Intermodal Expressive Arts Therapy.** This term refers to a specific discipline that focuses on how various art mediums in combination enhance each other in a strategic way. Knill (1978) termed Intermodal Expressive Arts Therapy, emphasizing opportunities for strategic transfer between modalities in a therapeutic application as the artmaking process expands the realm of imaginative possibilities (Knill et al., 2005; Levine, 2019).
The Pilot Study that Grounds the Current Study

The current study was developed from findings from this author’s pilot study (Mahar, Unpublished Pilot, 2019) that suggested that multiple arts modalities evoked ways of knowing that reach beyond traditional verbal language structure in participants engaged in an intermodal expressive art making process. Participants (N = 3) were experienced artists in one of three modalities of visual art, sound, or movement. Participants were asked to utilize McAdam’s (1985) Life Story Interview activity to structure a brief yet poignant way for participants to consider their autobiographical review. Participants were asked to write a table of contents to their life story, then to express their autobiographical review nonverbally through each art modality of visual art, sound, and movement, in an order of their preference. Adhering to tenets of intermodal practice (Knill, 1978), opportunities for strategic transfer between modalities were managed to decenter participants into alternative experiencing, amplifying sensory awareness and sense of play.

Each participant reported that the modality they were most reluctant to utilize offered the most surprising insight. This emphasizes a key element of the intermodal art making process that is referred to as ‘low skill/high sensitivity’ which prioritizes a participants’ artistic inquiry and responsiveness to the creative process over the mastery of a modality (Knill, 2005). Participants engaged in artmaking outside of their comfort zone. Letting go of habitual ways of conceptualizing, participants tolerated suspension in unfamiliar space. Participants’ familiar way of expressing was juxtaposed against unfamiliar ways of expressing. This brought participants beyond their rote and developed ways of experiencing and invited participants to experience freshly.
Expressing in a foreign modality participants may have found greater insights by not relying upon habitual strategies (Halperin, 2011). Persistence despite not-knowing accompanied an attitude of curiosity as participants explored in modalities that were not their areas of expertise. Vulnerability was a key quality associated with this process. As control over outcomes was relinquished, an attitude of curiosity increased. Surprising and fresh perspectives were gained as engagement in unfamiliar forms of art expression allowed space for play, or improvisation.

Unfamiliar experiencing increased feelings of self-consciousness or hesitation in participants. Levine (2003) described a need to tend to the sense of aliveness in the self, explaining, “This aliveness does not necessarily presume joy or ecstasy. It encompasses the whole of our felt or lived experience: joy and pain, ecstasy and despair” (p. 50). An intermodal process aimed to stoke the fires of imagination and heighten emotional and sensory experiencing by encouraging exploration through transfers among visual, auditory, and embodied expression, to include both comfortable and uncomfortable experiencing. Participants reported a delight in discovery and also reported feelings of discomfort such as self-consciousness, reluctance, and unease associated with awkwardness associated with expression in unfamiliar modalities. Participants persisted despite reluctance.

Neuroscientists (Dietrich, 2003; Ruff, 2016; Siegel, 2007) studied ways of freeing individuals from top-down thinking that perpetuate habitual and entrenched thinking. Identifying meditative or “the witnessing” state of mind practiced by esoteric traditions, these researchers found the “narrative” part of the mind can be overridden by evocation of the “observing” mind. These researchers explained that the meditative attention states
that produce the “witness” mindset may have aided in the shifting from restrictive thought patterns to more expansive, inclusive, and original conceptualization. This idea is supported by Ruff (2016) who explored contemplative traditions for themes of uncertainty, vulnerability, existential transformation, mindfulness, and humor. Findings from Ruff’s study demonstrated that confusion and immersive vulnerability taught in meditative traditions open our minds to new insights and revised conceptualizations. The intermodal expressive arts practice utilized in the pilot study as well as the current study also employed a mechanism of disorientation, referred to as decentering (Knill, 2004, Levine, 2019) similar to Ruff’s ‘confusion and immersive vulnerability’. In the intermodal theory decentering is amplified by the act of transferring between various expressive art modalities. Facilitating an altered state of attention, decentering through an intermodal expressive art making process was implemented in the pilot study and in the current study to shift participants’ mindsets from habitual experiencing toward the development of new perspectives.

The Research Design and Questions

The current study was an exploration into how engagement in an intermodal expressive arts process may evoke new knowledge through the elucidation of emotion and precognitive awareness. Therefore, an arts-based process with a qualitative interview was utilized with interest in the incorporate of information from the senses and to account for knowledge that may be pre- or non-verbal. The utilization of an arts-based method in this study is supported by early theorists such as Langer (1953), who wrote that a unique experience is illuminated through art that is beyond what words alone can convey. Therefore, the research questions were “What are artists’ experiences of engagement in
an intermodal expressive arts process?" and “How does engagement in non-verbal intermodal arts (visual art, sound/music, and dance/movement) influence participants’ articulation of tacit, felt sense awareness associated with their creative process?”
Chapter 2

Literature Review

The first research question was, “What are artist’s experiences of engagement in an intermodal expressive arts process?” The intermodal expressive art making process was intended to situate artist/participants in their comfort zone as they expressed themselves in their modality of familiarity, while also decentering participants through unfamiliar experiencing as they expressed in modalities that were not their specialties. The utilization of unfamiliar experiencing was with intent to heightened emotional and sensorial awareness. The second research question was, “and “How does engagement in non-verbal intermodal arts (visual art, sound/music, and dance/movement) influence participants’ articulation of tacit, felt sense awareness associated with their creative process?” Langer (1954) explained that feelings are more congruent with art expression and can reveal the nature of feelings where language cannot. Wittgenstien (2003) explained that limits on our communication strategies limit our conceptualization. Therefore, language may limit one’s ability to articulate experience.

While preverbal awareness can become more formed through attention paid to creative experiencing (Panhofer, 2009; Zorn, 2011), the current study explored emotional and embodied ways of knowing of artists in their creative process. This inquiry reflects Eisner’s (2004) idea that artists, in their creative process, can bring different ways of seeing, understanding, and articulating to the research process, thereby inspiring new questions. This exploration was inspired by theory that expressive arts therapy as a treatment modality is “founded on the interrelatedness of the arts and takes an integrated approach to the use of the arts as a tool for psychotherapy” (Estrella, 2005, p. 183).
Levine and Levine (1999) point out that while defining expressive arts therapy with any specific terms is a difficult task, the disciple is not “an incoherent collection of approaches” (p. 11). Expressive arts therapy is a specific discipline under the umbrella of Expressive Therapies. Knill (1978) termed the integrated approach “intermodal expressive therapy” and described specific tenets such as decentering through intermodal transfers.

The current literature review is a collection of the published literature and historical texts of the specific discipline that is intermodal expressive arts therapy. The following search terms were applied to the Lesley University online library data bases: “intermodal expressive arts therapy, expressive arts therapy, integrative arts therapy, expressive therapy, creative arts therapy, and creativity studies.” The following journals were explored for peer-reviewed articles: Creative Arts in Education and Therapy, International Journal of the Arts in Society, Journal of Creativity in Mental Health, Person-Centered & Experiential Psychotherapies, Frontiers in Psychology, Arts in Psychotherapy, Journal of Applied Arts & Health, American Journal of Dance Therapy, Journal of Humanistic Psychology, Reflections: Narratives of Professional Helping, Qualitative Inquiry.

The current study was initiated through an interest in how various art modalities enhance each other in a strategic way. A dearth of research exists on the topic of integrating the arts through the specific discipline that is intermodal expressive arts therapy. While individual expressive art modalities have been researched, a significant gap exists on how the unique discipline of intermodal expressive arts therapy techniques utilize various expressive modalities in combination. Also, confusion exists when
applying the search term “expressive arts therapy.” In the Lesley on-line library, the term is being used to describe the use of one or more art forms, but not how the use of a variety of art forms strategically interrelates.

This literature review explores the utilization of expressive arts therapy, and of the intermodal art making process specifically. It focuses on sensory experiencing through an intermodal expressive arts process with interest in awareness not accessible through verbal expression alone (Estrella, 2005; Kossak, 2015; Levine, 2003; McNiff, 2011).

In this chapter, theory will be described in terms of suggesting that an intermodal three-part process can evoke a multidimensional, holistic experience by eliciting emotional, physical, and cognitive awareness to amplify felt sense knowing and preconscious awareness (Estrella, 2005; Knill, 2005; Kossak, 2015; Levine, 2005; McNiff, 2004; Rogers, 1993). This theory will be supported by research that utilized intermodal principles to amplify sensory experiencing, inquiring into ways nonverbal expression related to verbal articulation of tacit, felt sense awareness associated with participants’ creative process.

This literature review will address theory and research of (1) the creative process, (2) sensory experiencing, and (3) intermodal art expression for the elicitation of awareness beyond that which is elicited through discursive communication alone. This study was inspired by early theory of Csikszentmihalyi (1996) called “Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience,” which described creativity as a non-reductive, holistic process in which body and mind are not separate. Associating embodied experiencing with the creative process, research has shown that creative expression can
allow implicit or abstract knowing to be further formed (Panhofer, 2009). As verbal and nonverbal expression articulate different information (Federman et al., 2016), this review describes research into how nonverbal expressive modalities, such as visual art, sound, and embodied expression, evoked distinct sensations, or invited experiences beyond what verbal communication alone could do (Albert-Proos, 2015; Brache-Taber, 2010; Davis, 2011; Federman et al., 2016; Halperin, 2011; Panhofer; 2009; Rhoads et al, 2015).

**Arts-Based Research**

Arts-based research adapts the tenets of the creative arts as a part of the methodology and respects that individuals practicing art making can produce new knowledge (McNiff, 2015). Curious about emotional and embodied ways of knowing, arts-based researchers inquire about preverbal and nonverbal expression associated with the creative process in all art modalities (Eisner, 2004; Leavy, 2009). Arts-based researchers hold that artists, in their creative process, can bring different ways of seeing, understanding, and articulating to the research process, thereby inspiring new questions (Eisner, 2004). Utilizing all forms of the arts as a primary mode of understanding and examining experience (McNiff, 2015), the arts may be utilized during any phase of the research process (Leavy, 2009, 2014). Arts-based research can express alternative information than that which is conveyed through verbal language alone (McNiff, 2011). Research methods can be designed to amplify intuitive knowing by including nonlinear, pre-conscious sensing (Leavy, 2009).

Moustakas’ (1990), ‘creative synthesis’ theory suggests that creating art aids in investigating and articulating the meaning of the data by tapping into participants’ imaginative and contemplative sources of knowledge and insight (p. 52). Inquiring into
ways that artistic expression invites awareness to emerge, arts-based research aims to illuminate ways of knowing evoked through preverbal and nonverbal expression (Allen, 1995; Leavy, 2009; McNiff, 2011; McNiff, 2015).

Vacchelli (2018) believed that the creative art making process is a reflexive and embodied method of data collection that can be utilized to evoke insights beyond what rationalistic methods of data collection do. Expanding the concept of what research is and how it is done, aesthetic features can be recognized as data. Arts-based research seeks expression of what cannot be conveyed in conventional language, and accounts for information that eludes traditional research methods. Like traditional methods, arts-based research is concerned with the creation of new knowledge. Beyond traditional research methods, the aesthetic experience represented through art and art making accounts for sensory experiencing, ongoing, implicit, or abstract awareness (Gendlin, 1997; Panhofer, 2006; Tantia, 2014; Wu 2002; Zorn, 2011). Open-ended inquiry as part of arts-based inquiry invites surprise. It is about noticing, wondering, and exploring for the cultivation of awareness (Eisner, 2004).

Supporting an arts-based research approach, Langer (1954), explained that feelings are more congruent with art expression and believed the ineffable quality of art expression can reveal the nature of feelings where language cannot. Halperin (2011) found that art expression, working in metaphor and abstraction, transcended the limits of language communication to increase emotional and embodied awareness, for an inclusive understanding of experiencing. Able to account for ambiguity, and nonlinear, pre-conscious sensing (Leavy, 2009), arts-based research explores knowledge-building from a holistic perspective including ways of knowing that reach beyond traditional verbal
language structure. Recognizing that the full complexity of perception is not reducible to purely cognitive measures (Merleau-Ponty, 2002), arts-based research can account for human experiencing including intuitive, felt sense experiencing, as well as logical reasoning. Embodied and phenomenological methods articulating emotional awareness may enhance understanding of the process of creativity.

The present study aligns with Kossak (2013) who claimed that arts-based inquiry may provide richness and an additional in-depth understanding of the research because it engages not only parts of the intellect but also creativity, imagination, and all the senses and provides space for "unpredictable states" (p. 22). Similarly, Leavy (2009) claimed that using art-based research "promote(s) a dialogue," "evoke(s) emotional responses," and provides "multiple meanings" (pp. 14-15). In addition to qualitative interviews, this study utilized art making to explore if deeper meanings may emerge, that words alone cannot always supply (Barone & Eisner, 2012; Leavy, 2009; Kossak, 2013; McNiff, 1998; 2008). McNiff (2008) defined art-based research as a systematic use of the artistic process as a primary way of understanding experience. This qualitative and arts-based study employed the art making process with the intent to elicit felt sense knowing, and then employed a qualitative interview process with interest in noting participants’ verbal description of their experience.

**A Holistic View of Creativity**

The overarching consensus discussed by Kaufman and Sternberg (2010) in ‘The Cambridge Handbook of Creativity’ is that more work needs to be done to continually define and expand our knowledge of what creativity is and where it comes from. In his TedTalk, Robinson (2006, February) called intelligence "dynamic” and "interactive" and
associated abstract thinking as a tool of imaginative conflict resolution. Robinson described the vital role of creativity to prepare future generations to think originally. This is relevant here because the current study was an investigation of the theory of art as a process that emerges out of play, so an intermodal art making process encouraged possibilities to imagine in different ways (Knill, et al. 2005). To expand current thinking of the creative process, the researcher in this study accepts the idea of an embodied, creative intelligence (Kossak, 2015) and described ways an intermodal expressive art making process can foster the imagining of new possibilities.

Emphasizing the interplay of various art modalities, Rogers (1993) coined the term ‘creative connection’ to describe a process in which one art form stimulates and fosters creativity in other art forms. Rogers (1993), in her expressive arts therapy method, valued a holistic approach through expressive arts engagement to delve into emotional depths through the integrated arts process. Utilizing various art forms to let go, to express, and to develop emotional and pre-conscious awareness, Rogers suggested that discovery through an interplay of several styles of artistic expression invites a holistic account of experience that includes insights, emotions, physical sensations, and cognitive thought processes associated with the lived body experience. Holding that the arts are utilized to express and release emotions, Rogers also believed that the most therapeutic value is yielded from engagement in the process itself.

The current study was done with interest in non-languaged conceptualization, exploring participants’ tacit experiences in their nonverbal creative process. Supported by Langer (1954) who recognized that some concepts elude languaged description, and that distinct awareness exists in a pre-languaged form, the current study inquired about how
the arts can express in ways that language alone cannot. Limits on our communication strategies limit our conceptualization (Wittgenstein, 2003), the current study explored how nonverbal art expression influenced participants' verbal expression, and with interest in the interaction between verbal and non-verbal expression. While creativity studies have measured aspects such as memory, logical reasoning, concentration, and retention, there is a need to expand the understanding of the creative process from that which is purely cognitive to that which is embodied. Researchers have developed creative methods to explore verbal and non-verbal communication (Westland, 2009), interoceptive bodily awareness (Freedman & Mehling, 2020) and other methods of gathering data on embodied awareness (Tantia, 2021). More research is needed into how cognitive, affective and sensing lived body come together and influence one another in the creative process (Runco, 2014). Beyond quantitative studies of creativity that focus on objective qualities of experience, subjectivity needs to be included as part of the research problem (Saikat, 2017). Like embodied research methods, a way to address subjectivities inherent in the creative process is found in narrative approaches (White & Epston, 1990).

Additionally, art expression can lead to ways of knowing beyond purely cognitive processes (Allen, 1995), so expressive art making is a way to explore subjective, embodied ways of knowing associated with the creativity process. “Creativity is perhaps the most commonly used concept to talk about the present and future human competences” Adomaitye, et al, 2018, p 203). Therefore, questioning current knowledge of what creativity is, how it is fostered, and why it is important, the current study explored how new insight can come from an intermodal expressive art making practice.

The current study was designed to investigate the creative process for inclusion of
insights, emotions, physical sensations and cognitive through process for imagining in new ways. A key mechanism in the intermodal expressive arts discipline is the transferring between art modalities. The transferring from one to another modality increases opportunities for suspension in unfamiliar experiencing (Knill, 2004). Suspension in a liminal space develops tolerance for ambiguity to increase opportunities for imagining in new ways (Levine, 1999). This reflects Rogers (1993) explanation that creative process evokes a holistic account of experience by including insights, emotions, physical sensations, and cognitive thought processes associated with the lived body experience. The current study aligns with theory of Rogers (1993), Knill (2004), and Levine (1999).

**Creativity Theory and Research**

Historically, creativity was defined in terms of strictly cognitive processes, as early theorists respected divergent thinking (Guilford, 1959), remote associations (Mednick, 1962), and production of something novel or useful (Mumford & Gustafson, 1988; Runco & Jaeger, 2010). Wallas (1926) theorized that a four-stage model of the creative process includes Preparation, Incubation, Illumination, and Verification. Current creativity theory resists reductive practices that view creativity as a purely cognitive process and resists delineating the creative process into steps (McNiff, 2013).

Gendlin (1981) linked the creative process with sensory experiencing, describing a “felt sense” as way of being informed by the wisdom of the body. Gendlin (1981) described attuning to a “felt sense” through inward listening for sensations that were perceived but not fully conscious to identify the right next-steps in creative processes.
Maslow (1967, 1968) wrote that motivation for creativity is man's tendency to fully actualize himself, while others understood creativity as a holistic process.

Of specific relevance to the current study, Rogers (1971) argued that openness to experience reflects a willingness to meet stimuli from both the external world and the inner world without engaging habitual strategies. The ability to receive conflicting information without forcing closure is a quality of openness. The current study had a focus on qualities of openness associated with participants’ art making process and the utilization of an intermodal expressive art making three-part process was utilized for the amplification of an attitude of openness in participants. While the intermodal experience offered opportunity for participants to express in art modalities that were familiar to them, the three-part process also asked participants to tolerate exploration in unfamiliar modalities.

Researching the creative process, Krichman (2014) investigated the idea that creativity is an evolving, non-reductive, process. Interested in somatic awareness in association with artists’ creative process, Krichman expanded upon Wallas’s (1926) theory of the creative process of thought and articulated a continuing, changing experience that developed through four stages: preparation, incubation, insight, and verification. Krichman’s qualitative design explored the additional somatic dimensions underlying creativity and documented through interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA). Participants (N=10) were artists who were asked to connect inwardly with the somatic sensations associated with their creative process, then report their sensations in semi-structured interviews. Krichman (2014) interviewed each participant twice. With the preliminary interview, the researcher aimed to increase understanding of participants’
experience of their creative workflow. The second interview aimed to inquire about participants’ association of somatic experience in different stages of their transforming creative process (Wallas, 1926). For a two-week period between the two interviews, participants were asked to take notes about their somatic experiencing related to their creative process. Findings suggested that for these participants, creativity was not accounted for by solely cognitive measures, but rather that the role of the soma and somatic awareness was important.

Defined as “bottom-up” processing (Gibson, 1966), Krichman’s (2014) participants described an initial felt sense, or vague intuitive sensation that preceded their ability to verbally articulate concepts. These participants also reported a somatically based experience of seeking describing a felt sensation in their bodies from which participants worked to find the right expression to fit that embodied feeling. Krichman (2014) called for more research into participants’ creative experiences, beyond Wallas’s description of the creative stages, to enrich understanding of the complexities of the creative process. The current study was done in response to this call in that it was a study of the creative process free from predetermined steps.

Krichman’s (2014) research amplified an embodied process of internal awareness to account for yet-unarticulated feelings and intensions. It also accounted for a process of transformation, noting that awareness alters over time. Krichman (2014) recognized knowledge as developing awareness, different than predetermined thought. Building upon Krichman’s (2014) research, the current study was an exploration of an intermodal art making process to amplify and evoke tactic awareness and amplify opportunities for emerging and revisable understanding of phenomena.
Sensory Experiencing Theory and Research

In the field of education, Dewey (1931) wrote that the human mind was not in the head, but throughout the living body. Opposing rationalistic approaches that associate knowing with logic alone, the following theorists questioned what types of knowledge were considered important. Somatic theorists Hanna (1986), and Johnson (1992) distinguished an objective body from a subjective, perceiving body. Johnson further articulated the idea of a socially constructed body, describing bodies and bodily experiences as shaped by the cultures in which they live (1992). Noting that cultures experience the body differently, embodied epistemology came to factor in the social context in which the body is experienced, including the social relations that produced embodied experiences. This questioned what is considered knowledge, where knowledge comes from, and which forms of knowledge are deemed legitimate by whom.

Conceptualizing the body in continuous interaction with the culture in which it is embedded, Deleuze’s and Guattari (1988), understood the body, not only as a place of knowing, but as a process of becoming. Butler (1993) identified invisible norms of society that influence the experience of embodiment. Specifically addressing gender, Butler named heteronormativity and advocated for transcendence of categories when referencing an individual’s gendered embodied experiencing. These somatic theorists expanded the conversation about how knowledge is produced through somatic experience. Contrasting with the framework of Cartesian duality that suggested the human mind could exist independently of a body, somatic theorists conceptualized the mind as being part of lived-body environment structure that emerges over time.
Linking sensory awareness with new knowledge production, Tantia (2014) conducted a study that incorporated perception as data. To explore intuition in clinical practice, the researcher employed a phenomenological study and purposefully sampled participant/somatic psychotherapists to analyze their descriptions of embodiment and clinical intuition in their practice. An original methodology created by the researcher integrated two methods; a body-focused interview informed by the Focusing method of Gendlin (1981) and a method of descriptive analysis which was an adaptation of Giorgi’s (2009) Descriptive Phenomenological Psychological Analysis. In this original method, data were gathered from a traditional qualitative interview and analyzed in a way that included postural and gestural descriptions of the experience. To avoid interpretation, the researcher extracted verbatim verbal and nonverbal themes (Giorgi, 2009). Findings showed that gestures revealed implicit information. In contrast to methods that only focus on verbal descriptions of a phenomena, Tantia’s original method included perception as data by documenting both the embodied experiences of participants and their verbal reports about their embodied experience. The inclusion of nonverbal gestures accounted for more of the participants’ experience than methods that do not account for embodied experiencing. A holistic account of participants’ lived experience included nonverbal expression and brought the somatic perspective to the study of the phenomena.

Supporting the current study’s interest in knowledge production, Tantia (2014) explained that “By directing a client’s attention to visceral as well as emotional experience, new knowledge is revealed, and unconscious information is made conscious through embodied awareness” (p. 6). This aligns with Gendlin’s (1981) description of a “felt sense” as a way of being informed by the wisdom of the body and Polanyi’s (1969)
recognition that tacit knowledge can be preverbal and disconnected from the verbal-thinking self. Theses theorists support the current study as they suggest that (1) a holistic accounting of human experiencing includes an account of subjective perception, and that (2) knowledge can be acquired through embodied awareness.

Regarding the inclusion of embodied awareness as data, Vacchelli (2017) also incorporated perception-based experiencing in a research study. A creative art making process was utilized to evoke a reflexive and embodied response in participants. In a mixed method approach, Vacchelli’s data included words and text, but also accounted for perception and experiential aspects of sensing. The research project aimed to map community-based mental health service providers that were available to migrant, refugee, and asylum-seeking women in London, assessing barriers to access to care. Data were gathered from an online survey of community service providers, a series of semi-structured interviews, two focus groups, and workshops. An art-based approach was utilized as part of the focus groups to include the experiences that occur through the body. In the focus group, Vacchelli included non-linear, pre-conscious ways of knowing, such as intuition, as data and nonverbal awareness was differentiated from discursive awareness. Embodied knowing accounted for experience that discursive methods did not.

Vacchelli’s (2017) embodied study utilized collage-making and fragments of found images or materials were composed on paper. Images were removed from their normalizing contexts. No linear structure or hierarchical orientation was imposed, so collage-making evaded predetermined conceptualization. Images were arranged by individual art makers according to their personal truths, meaning, and perception. As artwork elicited preconscious, intuitive, and tactic awareness, art making expressed what
discursive communication could not. The act of making was a bodily practice that was
differentiated from a discursive process of talking about the making. Vacchelli (2017)
utilized collage making to gain information on phenomena beyond what could be
accounted for by rationalistic methods. Collage-making was utilized to account for
reflexive and embodied awareness, bringing perception and experiential aspects of
acquiring awareness into description of phenomena.

Nonverbal Awareness Theory and Research

Semiotics theorist Hutcheon, (1988) explained that everything that is presented
and/or received through language is already loaded with meaning inherent in the
conceptual patterns of the speaker’s culture. Because language is bound by already
agreed upon meanings, language may be incapable of fully articulating felt sensation
(Langer, 1954). Language does not contain meaning within it, but meaning is attributed
to language through interpretation (Atkin, 2013; Langer, 1954). These theories align with
ideas of Foucault (1972), who explained that alternative conceptualization through the
utilization of nondominant expression can counter codified language and structures. As
Wittgenstein (2003) wrote, limits on our communication strategies limit our
conceptualization, the present study looked at the way language may limit one’s ability to
articulate experience.

The current study was an exploration of an intermodal expression to counter
structuralist limits and over reliance upon language to articulate awareness. Transcending
the limits of language, art expression in the forms of visual art, sound, and movement
invited alternative conceptualization. Engagement in an intermodal expressive art making
three-part process utilizes the imagination to invite the participants away from their
habitual reality and into a different state of conscious awareness (Knill et al., 2005). Differentiating deterministic thought from emerging imagination, an intermodal expressive three-part process encouraged curiosity, exploration, and openness to new experiencing.

Theory supports the idea that embodiment and somatic awareness account for very important information that verbal articulation does not represent (Langer, 1954). Suggesting that verbal and nonverbal expression communicate differently, Panhofer conducted several studies through the lens of dance/movement therapy. In 2009, she explored how creative expression can allow implicit or abstract knowing to be further developed. In 2006, she explored the difference between embodied communication and non-languaged ways of knowing by comparing the therapeutic effect of writing (Bruner, 1991; White & Epston, 1990) to embodied therapy, utilizing participants as co-researchers who were dance/movement therapists. The participant/co-researcher/therapists studied their clinical notes for significant moments wherein which change in client’s movement or speech was observed, or when the therapist believed there was an event which developed the therapeutic relationship. In a methodological process of writing-moving-writing, participant/co-researcher/therapists (1) wrote about the significant moments, (2) created movement sequences based on the significant moments, then (3) created a written response to their movement sequences. Comparing the participant/co-researchers’ narratives written before with those written after the movement process, Panhofer (2006) found a significant decrease in length of narrative after movement, as if the movement had replaced the words. This is similar to thoughts of
Langer (1954), who believed that art expression could account for experiences that verbal expression could not,

Questioning how far movement could be languaged at all, and if so, to what extent, Panhofer’s (2006) study inquired about knowledge production attained through sensory processing and supported the existing knowledge that movement activated both conscious and unconscious processes (Chodorow, 1991). Findings contrasted a ‘thinking-observing self’ experienced through verbal communication with an “I-who-feels” experienced through nonverbal conceptualization. Panhofer’s findings supported how embodied practices can access knowledge that is distinct from knowledge evoked through verbal thinking.

More recently, Federman, Band-Winterstein and Sterenfelda (2016) compared verbal and nonverbal expression and found the two modes of expression articulated different information. The researchers used a phenomenological approach to investigate the verbal life stories and body movement expressions of 16 Holocaust survivors (nmale = 7, nfemale = 9) aged 73–93 years. Purposive sampling was used to recruit the survivors through the Ghetto Fighters’ House Museum, in the Western Galilee, in Israel. Participants were asked, “What are the most important memories that you have from your Holocaust experience?” and “What bodily sensations do you remember from moments of distress, relief, horror?” The verbal narrative analysis was conducted by two phenomenological narrative experts, while movement analysis was conducted by two expert movement analysts. Both physical and verbal expressions were equally significant in telling the story of their experience; verbal expression was informative, but the total expression included gesture, posture, gaze, and facial expression. It was the integration of
verbal and embodied expression that gave a holistic description of the experience, as the
chronological story was told verbally while the physical expression of emotion added
unique interpretations. Nonverbal expression was needed to account for the
multidimensionality of experiencing and included important information that was not
accounted for by verbal expression alone. As Knill (2005) encouraged the utilization on
nonverbal art expression for the redirection of focus from restrictive perspectives into
imaginative space for a renewed sense of possibility, the inclusion of more than just
verbal expression can invite unrestricted imagining to account for awareness that is not
accounted for by methods that only include discursive methods.

The phenomena of integrated experiencing that includes both physical and verbal
two qualitative, arts-based studies conducted by Albert-Proos (2013, 2015) inquired about the influence of immigration on participants’ sense of home
and sense of self. In a pilot study that preceded the other, five participants ($n_{female} = 4$, $n_{male} = 1$), were all expressive therapists who had immigrated to the United States from various countries. At the end of an hour-long interview, participants were asked to respond artistically in a variety of art forms to their interview content. Findings suggested affective and embodied states were evoked through art making. Nonverbal articulation of experience elicited awareness that was previously held in the subconscious thereby revealing information that verbal articulation alone did not. Participants were asked to respond to the research topic both artistically and verbally. The researcher analyzed the contents gathered from the semi-structured interviews for themes and paid attention to the participants’ emotions, experiences, metaphors, and ideas that came up in their art-making process. The data included (1) the researcher’s collection of participants’ thoughts, reflections, and experiences that came up during the art-making, (2) the researcher’s collection of participants’ own observations of their images, movement, and music pieces, and (3) the researchers collection of participants’ use of verbal metaphors, images, and symbols in the interview after the art-making. The analysis identified themes that emerged which were (1) belonging-not belonging, (2) home here-home there; home nowhere-home everywhere, and (3) old me-new me (evolution of identity). The researcher’s creative synthesis (Moustakas, 1990) of findings included creation of a poetic text and a film that combined metaphors, quotes, and experiences from what participants shared, the researcher concluded that participants’ implicit awareness was amplified through participants’ nonverbal art expression.

Exploring the relationship of nonverbal expression and awareness, Brache-Tabar (2010) was interested in ways that dreams were interpreted by different people.
Participants ($N = 8$) were Puerto Rican Women in Boston between the ages of ages 38–51 ($m = 46$). Brache-Taber described embodied dreamwork as a non-interpretive method of working with dreams in which the dreamer focuses attention on dream images in a lucid state of awareness. Based on the premise that images in the dream are real, a dreamer re-enters the dream setting through a hypnagogic state to revisit the dream, as if re-experiencing a scenario. Participants drew images of their feelings after the dreamwork, then were interviewed for 60 to 90 min. Participants reported that drawing furthered their experience of affective states, making implicit awareness explicit and accounting for awareness other than what words alone revealed.

In another study, Halperin (2011) found that nonverbal expression through art making changed the power relations between individuals. In this study, Halperin (2011) utilized a qualitative action research method conducted with Israeli Jewish and Palestinian women using Expressive Therapy for creating a dialogue about peace. An effort was made to offer alternative communication strategies to supplement verbal communication methods that increased participants’ defensiveness. Participants were Palestinian (nfemale = 4) and Jewish (nfemale = 8) women, aged between 40 and 60 years old. Data came from two workshops held 10 months apart, in 2006 and in 2007. Verbal communication invited participants to speak about themselves and their lives while artistic communication invited participants to express nonverbally. The artistic activities included creating with a variety of materials, painting, dance, storytelling, drama, and role-playing. Non-verbal expression through art making created possibility for the participants to expand their interpersonal communication by amplifying expression of feelings. Nonverbal art expression provided new and less threatening ways...
to communicate than verbal because language was described as “too direct”. Halperin found that non-verbal language of art allowed participant to overcome defense mechanisms and increase empathy towards one another. Participants in Halperin’s study reported they were able to express through art making what could not be expressed through discursive communication. Nonverbal art making played an important role in participants’ ability to transcendence of limiting perspectives.

Exploring implicit awareness, nonverbal conceptualization associated with the art making process, and the transcending of limits of languaged communication strategies, these researchers support the current study’s utilization of an intermodal expressive arts process to expand abilities to imagine in new ways. These studies demonstrate that an intermodal expressive arts process can expand the ability to conceptualize possibilities. As alternative conceptualization can be invited through nonverbal expression, these research studies support the inclusion of an intermodal expressive art making process for the elicitation of new awareness, accounting for awareness that verbal communication alone does not represent (Albert-Proos, 2015; Brache-Tabar, 2010; Halperin, 2011).

Theoretical perspectives suggests that through the art making process, awareness that exists in a pre-languaged form can express experience that language cannot (Langer, 1954). This theoretical stance emphasizes that each embodied individual, with their tactic and pre-reflective awareness, encounters objective reality, each experiences their own truth and makes their own meaning. Inspiring critical engagement with questions of ontology, deconstruction, and subjectivity, understanding truth as not fixed but mutable, revisable, and contingent upon contexts can be encouraged. This suggests that a holistic
account of experiencing must include nonverbal expression and also must include subjective perception.

An example of how personal tacit awareness encounters objective reality to form contingent and revisable meaning is seen in an art presentation by Lombard-Cook (2016). The researcher/artist randomly placed a collection of art objects, including dollhouses, lanterns, drawings, and photos throughout a galley space. The art objects were placed in no determinate order and no hierarchical status was assigned to the objects. Objects were uncoupled from their normalizing context and no linear, narrative structure was implied. Viewers encountered fragments without a totalizing whole. As no construct existed, each viewer encountering the exhibit was asked to construct meaning by drawing on their own experiences and meaning making strategies. Multiple meanings emerged from the various viewers’ subjective, embodied, tacit, pre-reflective awareness as they encountered the objective reality of the gallery exhibit. This subjective construction of perceived reality challenges a rationalistic notion of fixed truth.

This exhibit was a part of Lombard-Cook’s (2016) doctoral work in which the researcher/artist explored the limits of memory. The researcher/artist created artwork in various art modalities and multi-modal communication strategies were meant to trigger different personal memories. Aiming to escape constructed and socially imposed narratives, the project questioned the constructed nature of identity. The interplay between multiple forms of art expression were intended to represent the complex layers of superimposed truths that make up lived experiences. Like the gallery exhibit that invited different viewers to make their own meaning, the artist/researcher, in the personal exploration of identity, used different forms of art expression combined in various ways
to welcome a variety of interpretations. The example of Lombard-Cook’s gallery exhibit, and the example of the Lombard-Cook’s personal artmaking for exploration of identity construction, both show truth, not as a fixed or static thing, but as a continuous, malleable, and unfinished process of experiencing.

As phenomenological research is done with the aim to account for human experiencing, a full account of experience would include perception as data. These studies were included in this review as examples of how art making processes encouraged fresh perspectives and expanded beyond limiting thought patterns in participants. To understand phenomena in research, it is important to access authentic responses in participants, beyond judgment or preconceived ideas. The studies described here accounted for emerging and changing awareness in participants.

**Clarification of Major Tenets of an Intermodal Expressive Arts Process**

The utilization of a variety of expressive arts forms in combination invites various iterations of expression to facilitate the possibility of new understanding (McNiff, 2009). The term Intermodal Expressive Arts Therapy was coined by Knill (1978), and specific tenets of this method will be described here.

**Play and Imagination**

A tenet of intermodal expressive arts therapy is that play and imagination affect change (Knill, 2005). Malchiodi (2005) explained that this suspension in unfamiliar space, with an attitude of discovery and playful exploration, serves to redirect an individual’s attention and focus away from restrictive mindsets. Nachmanovich (1990) called play “the starting place of creativity in the human growth cycle,” and continued, “without play, learning and evolution are impossible” (p. 42). Flexibility, play,
spontaneity, and adaptability are evolutionary necessities, and the arts are “highly evolved forms” of play (Nachmanovich, p. 42). Holding that imagination is the capacity to break with the ordinary and to open to possibility, engagement in art making utilizes the imagination to help bring the individual from their habitual reality to immersion in a different state of conscious awareness (Knill et al., 2005). “Play is experimental; it opens up the possibilities of the world. Play also requires that we give up knowledge and control and surrender to the back and forth of a process without knowing the result in advance. With an attitude of playfulness, one is open to possibilities and discovery” (Knill, 2004, 71-72).

**Low Skill/ High Sensitivity**

Knill (2005) described low skill/ high sensitivity to prioritize a participants’ artistic inquiry and responsiveness to the creative process over the mastery of a modality. The engagement in the process is valued over the creation of a finished product. Exploration in a variety of expressive art forms amplifies sensory experiencing through playful immersion in the creative process. Insight is developed through amplification of the artmaker’s creative imagination and emotional responding (Knill, Levine, & Levine, 2019). Low skill/high sensitivity applies to the utilization of an intermodal arts process because it is by letting go of habitual ways of conceptualizing, exploration in variety of art forms invites manipulation, shaping and transforming of the art materials. (Knill, 2004, P 98). Low skill /high sensitivity relates play to creativity as both can be ‘autotelic’ activities, enjoyed for their own sake (Csikszentmihalyi, 1996; Winnicott, 1971). This study asked artists to engage in creative processes that were out of the artists’ comfort
zone in order to amplify the artists’ sensory experiencing by decentering the artists into a suspended liminal space.

**Decentering**

Shifting from restrictive thought patterns towards the imagining of new possibilities, McNiff (2004) described that the interplay between body, emotion, and imagination generates fresh perspective on issue as an experience is explored through a variety of expressive modalities. Levine (2019) explained that art making in a variety of expressive modalities creates opportunity for new awareness to emerge. Moving from the world of everyday life to enter the world of imagination, Levine (2019) described a “transitional or liminal space in which all creative growth is possible” (p.199). Levine (2005) described suspension in a space in which the familiar is relinquished, so new awareness comes from encountering the unfamiliar. One can only enter this liminal or threshold space “by letting go of the need to know and control what is happening” (Knill, 2004, p. 72). After the process of decentering into the imagination through art-making has been carried through can one return to the world of everyday life and reflect on what was learned” (p.40). Growth and new awareness come as a crystallization process moves from a chaotic phase toward clarification and sense-making, bringing order out of chaos (Knill, 1999).

**Intermodal Transfer**

Intermodal transfer is “the practice of shifting from one art form to another” (Knill, 2005, p. 125), and this brings shift in awareness. “Play comes in the moving between materials and in the decision-making between art forms in search of a way to express effectively” (Knill, 2004, p 125). Amplifying opportunities for decentering into
an alternative reality may expand the range of play (Knill, et al., 2005), the intermodal transfers invite a chaotic phase in which a client moves in and out of their familiar realities to transcend their limiting perspectives (Knill, et al., 2005).

**Poiesis**

Understanding the human condition as immersed in uncertainty, Levine, (2019) explained that humans lack absolute knowledge. In contrast to philosophies grounded on theoretical reason, the artmaking process involves constant shaping and reshaping of experience as the art creator makes decisions, navigates, and negotiates in the art making process. Encountering uncertainty, Levine (2019) described a human capacity to “… engage creatively with what we are given in life and to shape it anew, remaking ourselves and our world in the process” (p.13). Levine explained that the artmaker expresses, and so does the artwork.

Art-making involves a process of discovery that introduces something new into the world. Therefore, we let the work and the acts of shaping it show themselves to us by themselves. In adopting what we can call a phenomenological attitude of paying careful attention to what has occurred, we can allow the work and the shaping process to speak for themselves and, in this way, teach us something we may not already know (Levine, 2019, p. 41).

The art maker continuously responds to what is emerging in the present moment as they create the artwork. It is the artmaker responding to what emerges that is significant. Opening to the emergent in the artmaking process, a changed perspective is linked to relinquishing control over the present. As the artmaker is both receptive and responsive to the emerging awareness, Levine (2019) explained that art does not simply reveal what is
in the artmakers subconscious, but art making produces new awareness. “Art making invites the artmaker to enter the world of the imagination, where anything can happen and where nothing is fixed or final” (p 102). “Psychological reductionism cannot explain this creative emergence” (p.41). As humans encounter the objective world, Poiesis describes a human capacity to engage creatively with what we are facing and to shape it anew, not-knowing how disparate elements will come together. “Poiesis necessarily includes a chaotic or unintegrated phase in which the imagination is given free play” (Levine, 2019, p. 21). The intermodal expressive arts process involves transferring from expressing in one modality to expressing in another. This brings constant shaping and reshaping the play experience, creates opportunity for new awareness to emerge.

**Intermodal Expressive Arts Process in Research**

A study that described the use of an intermodal expressive arts process (Davis, 2011) examined a supervision group that had been meeting weekly for approximately 10 weeks of a 15-week semester. The group sought to increase cohesion and trust to encourage group development. The supervision group was comprised of the group supervisor and six supervisees (5 female and 1 male) who were masters and doctoral-level supervisors supervising several counselors-in-training. The supervision group participated in a technique process called music-inspired poetic sharing. Each group member listened to music, then wrote on a small piece of paper a series of “one-word” feelings or thoughts elicited by listening to the music. Each group member then exchanged her or his own list of words with another group member. Then, each group member used the list of words of the other group member to create a poem using as many
words from the list as possible. Construction paper, colored pencils, and markers were used to create a card to hold the poem, then the card with the is returned to the partner.

Adhering to a tenant of intermodal expressive arts approach, a phenomenological perspective was embraced, not an interpretive one, where poems and images were treated as autonomous works of art with their own unique voice. Rather than interpreting the art, participants were encouraged to respond aesthetically to the art itself and to their own experience of engaging with the art. The facilitator attended to opportunities to transfer between expressive art forms, and carefully processed how it felt to give up words that were elicited by the musical selections. This study described the use of intermodal expressive arts therapy that included strategic transfer between modalities to amplify emotional experiencing. This study described the strategic use of transfers between expression in various art forms to decenter participants into alternative experiencing in order to evoke new emotion and awareness. Vulnerabilities and insights evoked through alternative experiencing were harvested and amplified as the group processed the experience. Supervisors were able to manage opportunities for strategic transfers between modality s, to create a safe holding container for sharing and responding, and to support members in working with vulnerabilities. Results suggested the intermodal expressive arts process increased a sense of trust, rapport, empathy, in participants. The process was also associated with expanding awareness in participants.

A reliance upon language as a primary source of knowledge and mode of communication has overlooked other forms and factors linked to embodied experiencing (Vacchelli, 2018). While theorists emphasize the value of preverbal and nonverbal expression to account for the multidimensionality of experiencing (McNiff, 2004; Levine
& Levine, 2019; Rogers, 1993; Snowber, 2016), there is very little research to support or challenge their theories. Contributing to the field of Expressive Therapies, the current study researched utilizing nonverbal art expression may add alternative information to a field of research dominated by verbal ways of knowing. Including perception as embodied awareness in research can more fully account for lived phenomena. Therefore, recognizing sensory experiencing as an ongoing, inclusive aspect of knowledge production, an intermodal art making three-part process utilized in the current study can amplify implicit or abstract knowing to address human experience in ways discursive communication alone cannot. (Estrella & Forinash, 2007; Gendlin, 1997; Panhofer, 2006; Tantia, 2014; Wu 2002; Zorn, 2011).

While the current qualitative and arts-based study adds to a field in need of clarification of the creative process and of what the senses offer as knowledge, this study uniquely explored the ways arts in three-part process enhance each other Strategically. A gap exists in the published literature on intermodal expressive arts therapy, and therefore this study is important because it points to the need to understand how the amplification of imagination through the process of creativity allows for the cultivation of awareness. The efficacy of this study and the contributions to the field of Expressive therapies will be elaborated upon in the Discussion section of this document.
Chapter 3

Method

This chapter will introduce and discuss the research methodology and method for this qualitative arts-based study. This study investigated the nonverbal lived experiences during and following intermodal art expression to explore and articulate tacit, felt sense knowledge elicited through participants’ engagement in the creative process. To address this, a qualitative and arts-based methodology was pertinent in the exploration of the interplay between implicit emerging awareness and explicit expression of language and pre-language or nonverbal awareness. The research questions were, “‘What are artists’ experiences of engagement in an intermodal expressive arts process?’” and “How does engagement in non-verbal intermodal arts (visual art, sound/music, and dance/movement) influence participants’ articulation of tacit, felt sense awareness associated with their creative process?” This section will describe the methodology, the study participants (including ethical considerations), procedures, and analysis methods.

Methodology

The methodology for the current study utilized two forms of inquiry: arts-based research and phenomenological inquiry. Exploring the creative process of artists, this study was an inquiry into ways that artistic expression invites awareness to emerge. This author chose an arts-based segment to tap into participants’ imaginative and contemplative sources of knowledge and insight. This study also explicated additional information than that which is conveyed through verbal language alone (McNiff, 2011). The arts-based segment was designed to include nonlinear, pre-conscious sensing (Leavy, 2009) and intuitive knowing in the investigation of participants experiences. For the
phenomenological segment, interviews were conducted after participants engaged in nonverbal art making.

Supported by theory that implicit awareness comes to semi-explicit awareness through nonverbal expression (Tantia, 2014), this study was done with interest in how art making processes evoked implicit awareness to potentially be translated into verbal articulation. The interview in this study provided an in-depth understanding of the meanings and experiences of the participants and the process rather than the outcome (Bruscia, 2005). As such, a qualitative method was appropriate for this study’s questions, which focused on insights gained through attention paid to felt sense knowing associated with participants engagement in their creative process. This study examined participants’ experiences and insights through semi-structured interviews. The researcher prepared structured questions to guide the interview (Appendix C); however, the researcher also asked probing questions and used active listening in order to have the participants expand their responses and to refocus participants’ description back to their embodied sensations when needed. Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis was used to analyze the semi-structured interviews, and themes were coded from the interview transcriptions (Creswell, 2012).

**Participants**

Participants (nmale = 4, nfemale = 1) who are over the age of 18, were purposefully chosen based upon their having expertise (sustained engagement for at least ten years) in one art modality. There was a lack of racial or ethnic diversity as participants were (1) Italian and South American, (2) Italian and Hungarian, (3) Irish American, (4) White, Unspecified, (5) White, Unspecified. Participants were professional artists experienced in
one modality but not in the others. As Knill et al., (2005) wrote that art expression is accessible to anyone, this study intended to look at the bigger frame of not only professional expressive arts therapists, but professional artists to utilize engagement in art making as a practice of inquiry and to employ “the imagination in a multi-sensory and multi-dimensional way” (p. 45). This study informs the field of Expressive Arts Therapies by researching a major tenet, referred to as “low skill high sensitivity, which values the process of creative engagement over the creation of a skillfully crafted product in order to increase insight through playful exploration (Knill et al., 2004). Professional artists were selected with the intent to situate participants as experts in their form of professional art practice, thereby empowering them, while also inviting participants into unfamiliar experiences, as participants negotiate alternative ways of expressing in less familiar modalities. Participants were professional artists and were not expressive arts therapists.

Participants (\(N = 5\)) identified as expert in the modality of visual art or music as the researcher failed to recruit a participant who identified as an expert in dance/movement. The researcher made great effort to interview an expert in this area, however as the global Covid 19 pandemic was intensifying at the time of recruitment, and the study was to take place in person, many participants who were scheduled to participate then cancelled. The timing was such that the researcher did not know if the pandemic was going to get better or worse and the researcher made the decision to proceed with the participants that the researcher was able to recruit, The researcher was diagnosed with Covid on January 2, 2021, a time when no vaccine was available and knowledge of the pandemic was not enough to determine if the crisis was leading to more
or less restrictions, or if the diagnosis of Covid was going to leave the researcher with long term effects of the illness. Therefore, the researcher decided to go forward with the study, despite cancellations of many participants, resulting in no representation of a dance/movement participant. The researcher chose to recruit participants who were available, resulting in 4 males/1 female, two of whom met the researcher outside and three of whom had their own private home studio spaces for maintenance of Covid-19 safety protocols as per Lesley University IRB COVID guidelines. The sample was limited to white or of European decent, in the age range of middle to late adulthood. Despite these limitations, each participant still met the conditions of being expert in one modality and each experienced expressing in unfamiliar art modalities.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Age/years of experience</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Racial Background</th>
<th>Specialization</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Owl</td>
<td>59/49</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Italian and South American</td>
<td>Painter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>River</td>
<td>36/24</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Italian and Hungarian</td>
<td>Musician</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turtle</td>
<td>49/25</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Irish American</td>
<td>Musician</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bear</td>
<td>63/40</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>White, unspecified</td>
<td>Potter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lion</td>
<td>57/40</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>White, unspecified</td>
<td>Musician</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Video recordings of the participants’ artmaking sessions were reviewed by the researcher to account for qualities of communication that evaded transcription of verbal interviews. This is important because an intermodal art making process employed deliberate use of ambiguity and disorientation by asking participants to explore in unfamiliar expressive modalities so participants could decenter from familiar experiencing. A verbal interview followed the artmaking session.

**Recruitment Procedure**

The researcher used purposive sampling to recruit individuals who identified as experts in one of the following modalities: visual art, music, or dance/movement. Emails were sent to individuals the researcher knew to be experts in their modalities, from which one musician participant was recruited. Emails were then sent to local dance studios, to Jacobs Pillow Dance School, and to Pilobolus dance company seeking participants. Four dancers responded and scheduled appointments, then canceled due to concerns related to Covid-19. The researcher attended various outdoor music events to recruit musicians. Many responded, then cancelled, and finally individual musicians were recruited. For the visual art recruitment, the researcher emailed art schools who posted flyers requesting participants, but the final two visual artists were ultimately recruited through a personal recommendation of a friend of the researcher. Criteria for the category of “expert” was defined as having 10 or more years of experience in one art modality.

**Participants’ Rights and Expectations of Privacy, Confidentiality**

The study proposal was submitted to Lesley University’s Institutional Review Board process and was approved. In order to protect the clients’ confidentiality, no identifying information will be disclosed. An email of a consent form (see Appendix A)
including consent to participate and consent to be videotaped were presented to the participants before beginning the study (see appendix A). The researcher conducted the art making and interview process in a place agreed upon by both the researcher and the participant. Names were changed to protect participants’ privacy. Data from the study will be kept private and will be stored with password protection on the researcher’s computer or external hard drive. Research records will be retained for 3 years after the completion of the research in accord with regulation of the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP) and then will be destroyed.

**Participant Safety Regarding the Pandemic:** Due to possible social distancing issues associated with the current global pandemic, individual participants were invited to a large space of their choice where each participant and the researcher remained masked and socially distant at 12 feet apart. Participants who chose to take their mask off during video recording did so at their own discretion and the researcher remained masked and distanced. Any materials used and any spaces shared were disinfected between participants. In the space chosen by the participant, each engaged in an intermodal process. Each participant was asked to create in the expressive art forms of visual art, sound/music, and dance/movement, in the order of their choosing, for 20 minutes in each art form.

**Procedure**

The directive was open ended to not influence participants’ creative processes and to invite individual creativity. In an unpublished pilot study (Mahar, 2019) that inspired the current study, a more structured directive was given (to follow their outline of their imagined autobiographical review), but the participants left the directive and instead
followed their own creative process. Therefore, this study did not include a structured directive but encouraged individuals to follow their own process of exploration in various art modalities regardless of the order in which each participant proceeded, two art forms were experienced that were less familiar to the participant to heighten sensitivity toward the discovery process and to invite complexity and creativity in the process as it unfolds (Knill, 1978). Inspired by the low skill/high sensitivity concept of prioritizing the engagement in the creative process over mastery in an art modality (Knill, Barba & Fuchs, 2004), “infusion of creativity from new and different sources” (McNiff, 2004, p. 147) was encouraged through engagement in an inter-modal expressive art making process as the integrated art experience invites “the free and full range of expression” (p.147).

**Art Making Three-Part Process and Materials**

The art modalities of visual art, sound/music, and dance (through movement and or gesture) were chosen for their nonverbal qualities. Materials were chosen that were accessible and not cost prohibitive. Colored markers and paper, a portable keyboard, various percussion instruments, and space was provided for movement as the study aimed to employ materials that were not considered too intimidating to play with in effort to offer 'autotelic' activities, enjoyed for their own sake (Csikszentmihalyi, 1996; Winnicott, 1971).

For the visual modality, colored pencils/markers and paper were offered to bring sensual, nonverbal expression. For the audio modality, a piano keyboard and percussion instruments for nonlanguaged sound production to offer expression of the aural sounds and rhythms connected to more internalized embodied vibrational awareness. For the
movement modality, participants were asked to express themselves in dance/movement or gestural expression which utilized no external tool, just one’s own body for expression, with the intent of deepening the embodied/somatic awareness.

Each participant engaged in the three-part intermodal sequence, done in the order the participant choose, of 20 minutes for each art modality. Rogers (1999) supported the idea that each participant may choose the order in which they expressed in each art form. Rogers (1999) called for a minimal amount of structure and a nonjudgmental environment stating, “The human being is basically a trustworthy organism, capable of evaluating the inner and outer situation, understanding herself in context, making constructive choices…” (p 120). Rogers believed in the individual’s inherent capacity for self-direction. The researcher gave each participant a verbal five-minute warning when the time for each art form should be coming to an end. The participants were instructed to pause briefly (about one minute) before engaging in the next art form.

**Interview**

A verbal interview followed the intermodal engagement, asking participants to describe their tacit and felt sense awareness elicited through the intermodal art process. (See Appendix C for list of interview questions). Each participant was asked the same questions and the researcher spoke only enough to keep participants’ focus on their embodied experience and on their exploration of the felt sense knowing in their creative process. Open-ended questions were designed to encourage expansive responses from participants. The researcher asked one question at a time, then listened to the participant’s response, interjecting only to focus participants on their sensory experiencing in the process of creative engagement. It was hoped that open-ended questions would encourage
participants to describe their experience, in their own words, without limitations of right or wrong responses and without researcher interference.

**Video Recording**

Both the art experience and interview were audio-video recorded. This researcher watched and re-watched to gain additional insight that memory alone may not have captured. The videos served as an additional vantage point for the researcher to reference. The data were recorded on the researcher’s iPhone camera. For the interview segment, interviews of participants’ description of their sensory/emotional and tacit experiencing associated with their creative process were also transcribed by the researcher.

**Data Analysis**

The researcher transcribed and reviewed participants’ interviews and coded the interviews for themes. Thematic analysis was done to analyze the data in search of common themes including ideas and patterns of meaning that came up repeatedly. The following paraphrases the six-step process was conducted as per Braun, Clarke, and Rance (2014):

1. Familiarization entailed reading through the text and taking initial notes, and generally looking through the data to get familiar with it.
2. Coding included highlighting words, phrases, or sentences in the text and collecting all the data into groups identified by code. The codes aimed to represent a condensed overview of the main points and common meanings that recur throughout the data.
3. Themes and patterns were identified from the codes and codes were combined into broader themes.
(4) Reviewing themes: themes were compared against the data seeking accurate representation of the data.

(5) Defining and naming themes: further definition of themes aimed to formulate a succinct and easily understandable name for each theme.

(6) Writing up the analysis of the data: the results were written up addressing each theme. As this study included nonverbal data, the researcher chose to take notes as data for nonverbal observations. These direct observations were concrete observations of body language, measurements of time, and pauses in speech, and will be elaborated upon in the findings and discussion section. Examples from the data are provided to highlight themes. A conclusion shows how the analysis has answered the research questions.

Recorded sessions were viewed by the researcher to account for qualities of communication that evaded verbal transcription. The video recording provided a holistic account of the participant’s experience, capturing body language, pauses, tone of voice, facial expressions, breathing, eye gaze, and other qualities that the transcriptions may have failed to capture. The recordings supported the researcher’s gathering of notes from observation of nonverbal phenomena.

**Triangulating Data**

Denzin (1978) described triangulation as a validation strategy in qualitative research. The current study used data triangulation from verbal interviews with data of video recording. As participants explored in each modality of visual art, music, and dance/movement, it was the directly observable information of participants’ body language, measurements of time, and pauses in speech that the researcher noted. Data
was gathered from observation of participants in their creative process, from observation of participants during their verbal interview. Data was also gathered from content of participants’ verbal interviews in which participants described their experience of creating in the three modalities. The researcher aimed to avoid personal biases and avoid subjective influence, so the researcher employed memo writing throughout the process as a reflective process. This was done with intent to keep the researcher’s thoughts separate from the thoughts of the participants, bracketing personal ideas and theory from the participants’ emerging data. To ensure that personal biases did not influence how the data was interpreted, only verbatim quotes from participants’ transcripts and only directly observable information was considered as data.
Chapter 4

Results

This chapter contains findings of the qualitative and arts-based study conducted to address the following questions, “What are artists’ experiences of engagement in an intermodal expressive arts process?” and “How does engagement in non-verbal intermodal arts (visual art, sound/music, and dance/movement) influence participants’ articulation of tacit, felt sense awareness associated with their creative process?” Findings from this study suggest new insight can come from an intermodal expressive art making practice as participant reported that suspension in a discovery space of play and unfamiliar experiencing heightened sensory experiencing. The researcher observed qualities of receptivity and responsiveness in participants as they explored in three modalities of artmaking. The researcher observed participants ability to tolerate ambiguity, to remain open without utilizing habitual strategies, and to pay attention to somatic experiencing in order to gain awareness of emerging awareness. The intermodal art making process in the current study was associated with invitation to fresh encounters with the self and environment for these participants.

Working one-on-one with the researcher, each adult participant ($N = 5$), completed an intermodal expressive art making three-part process of visual art, music, and movement, in the order of their choice. Following their engagement in art making, which included 20 minutes in each art form, each participant was interviewed about their creative process (See Appendix C for interview questions). Two sets of data were collected, recorded, and analyzed. The first data set describes participants’ words verbatim from the interviews. The second data set are derived from the researcher’s
observations of the actual participation of art-making. Differences between the participants’ experiences in their modality of familiarity verses their experience in their modality of least familiarity will be described.

**Themes from Participants’ Verbal Interviews**

(1) qualities of openness

(2) play

(3) heightened sensory experiencing

(4) embodied knowing

(5) a transformative process

(6) altered sense of self

These six themes were present for every participant. This suggests that engagement in the unfamiliar experiencing can aid in the creation of new insight.

Transferring from one to another modality of art expression was done with the intent to deliberately disorient participants by asking them to explore in unfamiliar experiencing. This decentering brought opportunity for the participants to gain fresh perspectives. As the familiar was relinquished, sensory experiencing was amplified for these participants and fresh encounters with self and the world emerged. Participants confronted their own resistance as well as their own agency as they persisted and relinquished control over their outcomes. Engagement in an intermodal expressive arts process evoked new insights in participants as intermodal transfers amplified and elucidated affective and embodied awareness. This reflects the writing of Langer (1953), who wrote that a unique experience is illuminated through art that is beyond what words alone can convey.
Participants in this study reported that the engagement in the intermodal art making process fostered openness, and conversations about emergent and emotional awareness.

**Theme One: Qualities of Openness**

Findings support the literature which associated with an intermodal arts process which prioritizes a participants’ artistic inquiry and responsiveness to the creative process over the mastery of a modality. This is echoed by thoughts of Rogers (1971) who noted a willingness in participants engaged in art making to meet stimuli from both the external world and the inner world without contorting them for self-protective reasons. The ability to receive conflicting information without forcing closure can precede the possibility of imagining freshly.

All participants in this study described qualities of openness associated with engagement in their creative process. Here is documentation of what one participant said in the interview that points to their qualities of openness:

_P1, Owl: “I was feeling the wind pick up; that got me excited about the wind, the paper, and the marker drawing together, and letting the atmosphere be a part of the drawing. It was like there was this invisible air participating and me responding to it. That became another layer where I almost didn’t know if I could stop anything. I became curious about other materials, and more curious, opening my heart to kind of dive in. It’s really about why and wonder in a curious way”._

Participants described an ability to trust the process, and to persist despite not knowing what was coming next. Here is an example of this:
P3, Turtle: “We want to see it, to trust it, but you can’t see it with your eyes. So, it’s about relying on the unknown. You can’t practice it or learn it; you need to open to it”

Qualities of openness were evidenced in participants’ description of encountering the unfamiliar with an attitude of curiosity, allowing themselves to be led by the unknown. Here is an exemplar of such a description:

P5, Lion: “It’s always leading me, without a doubt (and I don’t have any hesitations) away from what I know. Any situation, I think, why not, let’s see what’s going to happen.”

Theme Two: Play

Participants described their experience in unfamiliar modalities of expression as immersion into a play state that was different from their experience outside of their creative process. Here are examples of description of being in a different state while engaged in the artmaking process:

P1, Owl: “It was just like play, and a different level of flow came in. Everything including my brain, just softened. It just became experiments. In that process I discovered there was water, puddles, that was so exciting! Then, loving the sound, I was playing.”

Participants associated play with an element of surprise, delight in discovery, and an ability to respond spontaneously. Here is documentation of such a statement:

P2, River: “I’m trying to observe, what can I get out of this instrument, I’m playing, I’m discovering, I’m tinkering around. This is not my instrument; I’m not
trying to master it. So, this is a toy, it’s fun. What sounds can I get out of this? I’m wondering what the possibilities are.”

**Theme Three: Heightened Sensory Experiencing**

Participants in the current study associated heightened sensitivity with engagement in the creative artmaking process, especially when they expressed in modalities that were not their modalities of expertise.

*P1, Owl:* “I heard the water more, and, seeing light (very sensory), I was looking differently everything.”

Participants described awareness of sensory experiencing that they reported as difficult to describe. Participant 1 described an awareness that was perceived but not made fully conscious; an awareness that was being further formed through engagement in the creative process. Describing the tacit dimensions of experiencing, here is an example of how Participant 1 described an awareness that emerged as accessible yet vague sensations when expressing in one unfamiliar modality. This suggests that sensory awareness was directing the experience as opposed to muscle memory that would have directed actions in the familiar modality.

*P1, Owl:* “Somehow my body just knew where to start... I felt maybe my body was directing something.”

This finding aligns with theory that the body can be understood as a conduit between implicit knowledge and the explicit realization of that knowledge (Chodorow, 1991).
**Theme Four: Embodied Knowing**

Disorientation is a mechanism of intermodal expressive arts therapy as participants are decentered into unfamiliar experiencing (Knill, 2004, Levine, 2019). The transferring between expressive modalities in the current study brought participants to an altered state of attention. This initiated a change in participants’ mindsets, a change that heightened sensory experiencing, and increased participants’ attention to their felt, tacit awareness. Surprising insights came from exploration in the unfamiliar modalities for each participant. Letting go of habitual ways of conceptualizing, participants explored beyond their rote and developed ways of approaching a task. Vulnerability was increased as participants did not rely upon muscle memory or on their habitual strategies. Feelings of discomfort such as self-consciousness, reluctance, and awkwardness associated with expression in unfamiliar modalities freed participants from entrenched thinking as uncertainty opened participants to revised conceptualizations. Embodied and affective conceptualization was described by participants who recognized a wisdom of the body. Here are examples of a participants’ differentiation of a way of knowing in their senses, heart, gut, from logical ways of knowing:

*P1, Owl*: “It was a different knowing, chatter was coming from the senses. I knew what I was going to do with the objects without knowing what I was going to do with them. I felt thoughts, but I wasn’t in my head.”

*P3, Turtle*: “You’re not thinking about it...when it comes from the right place, you feel it. What feels right feels right in my heart.”

*P4, Bear*: “I’m not really thinking about what I’m doing; it’s just the feel. As a potter, it’s different in that the clay dictates to you what it wants to be. So, you
follow along the line where the clay is pushing. That’s a feel. You’ve got to be really loose and really mindless with it. A lot of time art decisions are felt in the gut.”

Participants described a connection and an act of responding which was different than predetermined knowing. Here is an example of a participants’ description of emerging awareness in their creative process that was different than predetermined thought:

P1, Owl: “If something goes down and I didn’t see it I respond to it when I see it, I respond instead of always knowing what I was doing.”

P2, River: “I’m just responding to the music; totally not thinking about it at all, just responding.”

P4, Bear: “You figure things out when not trying to think about it.”

P5, Lion: “It just happens. I don’t know why; you feel it.”

Theme Five: A Transformative Process

The creative process was described by participants as a transformative process in which participants remained open to experiencing, encountering emergent awareness through their art making process. Remaining open to what was happening in the moment, the art making process became a mode of inquiry and invited a continuous process of evolving awareness. In all three expressive modalities, participants described a process of sustained conscious engagement that was continuing:

P3, Turtle: “It’s continuing, it changes, because you are releasing, you’re giving yourself in; you’re letting yourself go wherever it takes you. Its dynamic; a transition from logical space.”
Participant 4 articulated a continuing awareness that was different than a describable, fixed fact:

\[P4, \text{Bear: } “I \text{ wouldn’t call it knowing, I call it happening, I can’t explain it.”}\]

Participant 2 and 5 described a persistence; a drive to see the process through:

\[P2, \text{River: } “I \text{ just got in the mode of doing it. I wanted to see it through, I wanted to make peace with it.”}\]

\[P5, \text{Lion: } “I \text{ just get the idea. When I get the idea, I have to write it down; I have to follow through with it. I won’t be able to rest until I do.”}\]

May (1975) described creativity as the encounter of the intensively conscious human being with his or her world. These quotes describe an intensity was amplified through engagement in the creative process. These participants described what Levine (2019) called entering an altered reality of the art making space. Participants appeared to be actively sense making and attuned to emergent awareness associated with inductive reasoning.

**Theme Six: Altered Sense of Self**

Participants described experiencing an altered sense of self. An observing self was identified as an altered sense of self looking back at themselves. This contrasts with the same participants description of heightened sensory experiencing and embodied knowing, describes a continuity of experiencing that transformed from heightened embodiment and became a sense of lifting out of the body. The following description was in reference to how this participant experienced self after some time; eventually getting to this point of transcendence of self.
P5, Lion: “You’re listening to yourself. You’re out of your body and you’re absolutely enjoying, like an audience member would.”

The second research question was “How does engagement in non-verbal intermodal arts (visual art, sound/music, and dance/movement) influence participants’ articulation of tacit, felt sense awareness associated with their creative process?” This report of feeling out of the body contrasts with the same participant’s report of heightened sensory experiencing while engaged in the creative process. Therefore, it suggests that the experience of embodiment while in the creative process is fluid. Another example of a participant describing an altered sense of self over time, is this description of initially, a sense of self arriving in the art making process, then later a sense of disappearing into the process.

P1, Owl: “At first there was nervousness. I was in my head, but then I felt myself self-arriving. Then, even knowing people were coming and going, I felt myself become one with what I was doing, and then I kind of disappeared; I could have been anywhere.”

**Researcher’s Observation Notes of Participants in Their Process**

The video recording was watched and re-watched by the researcher to enhance and deepen the researchers’ understanding of what was happening. The video recording captured qualities of communication that evaded verbal transcription as the video captured body movement, attention states, and energy or pauses in both speech and movement. Also, the video recording supported the researchers’ identification of themes from participants’ interviews. While the researcher could recall from memory the things the participants referred to in their verbal interview, the video recording enriched and
deepened the researchers’ memory of the experience. The researcher saw in the video imagery a fuller description of what participants tried to verbally report. The researcher was able to go back and forth between transcribed interviews and video recording to understand the phenomena described by participants from a languaged form of communication as well as from nonverbal communication in visual, audible, and kinesthetic form of expression. The transcriptions of verbal interviews plus the video of nonverbal experience combined for a holistic account of phenomena. In the following section the researcher will try to describe what was observed in the sessions as each participant engaged in a three-part process of art/sound/movement making.

**Data Analysis of Nonverbal Data**

Thematic analysis was done to analyze the non-verbal data in search of common themes including ideas and patterns of meaning that came up repeatedly. The following paraphrases the six-step process was repeated to analyze the nonverbal data, as per Braun, Clarke, and Rance (2014):

1. **Familiarization** entailed reviewing the video recording and the researcher’s observation notes to data to get familiar with the nonverbal data.
2. **Data was collected into groups and identified by code.** Coding included highlighting body gestures, changes in speech patterns, and experiencing of time as these represented commonalities that recurred throughout the data.
3. **Themes and patterns were identified from the codes and codes were combined into broader themes.**
4. **Reviewing themes:** themes were compared against the data seeking accurate representation of the data.
(5) Defining and naming themes: further definition of themes aimed to formulate a succinct and easily understandable name for each theme.

(6) The results were written up addressing each theme.

**Themes from the Researcher’s Observation**

(1) Degree of absorption

(2) Experience of time

(3) Animation of the body

(3) Pauses in speech

(4) Degree of hesitation

**Degree of Absorption**

Qualities of openness were observed by the researcher as participants were willing to try new things. The participants found objects and utilized them in novel ways to create sounds and to produce visual art marks. Participants reported awareness of sounds and of visual or tactile objects around them with which participants described as being inspired to improvise.

The image below (Figure 1), shows playful experimenting of Participant 4, “Bear,” who played the pottery, which was the artform of professional familiarity, with the drum mallets during the music making phase of the intermodal process, to see what sounds could be found.
Figure 1. Participant 4: Drumming on pottery

The images below (figures 2-5) show a transformation experienced by Participant 1. From the moment when participant reported awareness of increasing sensory awareness, hearing sounds, and seeing colors differently while engaged in the creative process, this participant described awareness of a physical change as “everything just softened, my brain included. I felt like one with what I was doing.”
Figure 2. Participant 1: Heightened sensory experiencing and continuing experiencing

The images below (Figures 3, 4, and 5) show the progression from Figure 2, the continuing experiencing that participant 1 associated with her report of an emerging awareness of natural objects around her. Finding puddles, stones, and sticks, she described these objects calling her, and described a knowing in her gut and in her heart that was different than knowing from the head. The participant described an ability to attune to the wind, then incorporate the wind, the water and the found objects into a receiving and responding relationship. This describes emerging awareness and continuity of experiencing, as well as an attitude of respect for images as messengers, as this participant described an ability to remain open to what was being encountered in the moment.
Figure 3 and 4. Participant 1: Transformative process.
The researcher observed persistent experimentation and a highly focused attention state in the participant who was unconcerned with people passing by, unconcerned about the weather changing, and able to dismiss a lawn mower circling. This participant associated engagement in the creative process with an awareness of herself softening, becoming one with what was happening in the artmaking. The participant reported that she may have been anywhere, as if her experience of self in time and space altered while engaged in the creative exploration.
Participant 1 reported that by the end of her time in the art modality of visual arts, her intention had changed from a playful experimenting to a desire to take care of the images. She described feeling a deep desire to care for the images by placing stones on the papers to hold them. She described in her verbal interview that the entire intermodal art making experience helped to process what was going on in her life over the previous six months, developing an awareness as she spoke, that she was realizing in the process of speaking after the artmaking that she had been feeling unsupported in her life for a while.

As they engaged in their creative art making process, participants were observed being able to focus on their creative process and not lose focus when external stimuli
arose. Direct physical engagement in a creative process appeared to amplify awareness of self in process, while desensitizing participants to external stimuli. This researcher’s observation fits with a statement by Participant 1:

\[ P1, Owl: \text{“I felt myself become one with what I was doing.”} \]

The researcher observed each participant upon arrival to the session navigated logistics of the situation. The researcher observed participants looking around, asking about instructions, surveying the surrounding situation, and finding their space to settle down. Subsequently, the researcher observed participants concentration alter while in their creative process as participants were neither concerned nor distracted from their creative process by surrounding activity. The researcher observed a highly focused attention state in each participant as each became absorbed when engaged in the creative process. Participants were not distracted from their creative process by surrounding activity.

**Experience of Time**

The participants each described a feeling of play associated with their engagement in the art modalities that were novel to them. The researcher’s observation notes regarding play recorded that each participant spent the most time with the art forms that they associated with play, which were the novel modalities. Each participant engaged in an art form that was unfamiliar to them but was not their least familiar modality. In this unfamiliar but not least familiar modality, each participant continued to explore even as the researcher told them time was up. Each participant described their experience in the unfamiliar but not least familiar modality as fun, and as an easy exploration, like play. Exploring in the modality of unfamiliarity but not least familiarity, the researcher had to repeat that time was up and each participant continued to explore anyway. As each
participant experienced an art form of least familiarity, each participant reported initial reluctance, then reported they were able to get beyond their initial reluctance to be absorbed into their exploration and experience an altered sense of time. In each participant and in every modality, the researcher noted the participants experienced time differently inside than outside of liminal space associated with their engagement in the creative process (Knill et al., 2005; Levine, 1999). Participants’ sense of time was different in their artmaking process than it was outside of their creative process. In the modality of familiarity, each participant appeared to unaware of the passage of time as the researcher had to tell participants when time was up. In contrast, while expressing in the modality of least familiarity, each participant was very aware of time and eager to be done with the segment as evidenced by their frequent asking of the research if time was up.

The two images below (Figure 6 and 7) show Participant 1, “Owl” moving without concern for people watching or for other external happenings. This participant reported being deep into the creative process while moving and while making visual art. The second image, however, was the same participant in the modality of least familiarity, music. To work in this modality the participant found a hidden corner, below the platform. This image shows the top of the head of participant 1, who privately explored with the modality of least familiarity. This participant reported being very aware of the time yet still able to get into the sound making playfully after about five minutes of exploration. This participant reported hearing sounds and seeing colors more vividly. This echoes the theme of heightened sensory experiencing. Participant 1 experimented and remained open to discovery despite reluctance.
This aligns with what Chodorow (1991) suggested, that art making is an experience of embodiment, which is a present-time experience. Participants appeared to
the researcher, to be experiencing a continuity of moment-to-moment processing (Whitehouse, 1956) in which they let go of their attention to the linear passing of time. Participants reported that they perceived time differently during the art making sessions. They described an awareness inside their creative process as not being distracted or concerned with things outside of their artmaking like the sounds of trains, or movement of other people. Questioning the human perception of the passage of time, this observation suggests perception of time is just the noticing of other things coming and going, beginning and ending, or the recollection of memories and anticipation of future events (Husserl et al., 2019). If we notice time through perception of other things, we do not perceive time as such, but changes or events in time, so we perceive events and their temporal relations (Husserl et al., 2019). This brings up the question of presence. Participants’ description of altered sense of time while absorbed into their task during the artmaking sequence supports participants description of awareness in their art making process as an extended present moment. Artmaking, then, is a practice of the perception of presence. Pockett (2003) explained an interval of time, experienced by an individual as the present moment, can be one in which an individual may distinguish what is earlier from what is later, while each are directly present and perceived as “now.” Questioning the connection between personal perception (made up of past memories and future anticipations) and temporality, participants in the current study reported awareness in their creative process as a unified whole of inseparable moments.

This experience of time during artmaking was explained by Csikszentmihalyi (1996) who described a flow state as a state of concentration in which a person gains a sense of transcendence of ordinary perception of surrounding stimuli. The findings of the
current study suggest the intermodal art making three-part process brought participants into a flow state in which challenging and progressing tasks invited the responding to emerging awareness in an amplified sense of experiencing the present moment. Participants in the current study associated the intermodal art making process with the ability to conceive a unity across a succession, as a synthesis or flow of experience, a phenomena explained by Husserl (2019) through a metaphor of listening to music in which one can comprehend a melody, while also being aware of individual tones. Increasing participants’ ability to see beyond a patchwork of individual events, participants broadened their perspective to comprehended larger wholes. This has applications for therapy as new meaning making can be made from an ability to conceptualize a whole, rather than limited focus on a singular event. This associates the intermodal art making processes within a practice of transcending limiting views.

**Animation of the Body**

During the interview, the researcher observed long pauses in the middle of participants’ sentences as they tried to describe their felt sense experience, which was listed above. It is listed here to note that along with the pause in speech, each participant’s body language altered as their speech pattern changed. Participants’ body language became more animated. As the words to describe their experience of knowing were difficult to find, hand gestures increased.

The researcher observed more animation in participants’ bodies during art making than during interviews. Participants’ entire body was involved as participants moved, adjusted, and leaned into their work. The process of creating art, in whichever modality, appeared to be a process of full body engagement. This contrasted with the verbal
interview segment in which participants’ bodies were less animated, according to the researcher’s observations.

Figure 8. Participant 3: Embodied knowing

This shows embodied knowing as Participant 3, “Turtle,” was drumming his body while walking for his movement phase. He said the drumming while walking was a way for him to think, that music is constantly going on in his head.

The images below (Figure 9 and 10) show Participant 5, “Lion,” who was very animated in his intermodal art making process. He worked outside and from his truck he moved from place to place as he played in the three modalities. He reported feeling eager to explore in each modality. The researcher observed his high level of animation while in his artmaking process.
Pauses in Speech: Emerging Awareness

Comparing modalities of familiarity with the modalities that were unfamiliar to participants, the researcher observed that participants seemed to arrive to the session with what they knew, then engaged in the creative process with what they didn’t know. Then, in an effort to bridge the previously known with the newly encountered experience,
participants seemed to be in relationship with an emerging awareness that was developing as the interview went along; a knowing that appeared to the researcher as emergent and evolving. Every participant arrived at a point in their verbal description of their sensory awareness associated with their creative process and then paused, then said they could not describe it. This was noted as participants’ arrival at a threshold between implicit and explicit awareness, between what the ego already knew and what new awareness was emerging and continuing. The researcher continued to ask participants to verbally describe the ineffable qualities that they experienced in their art making. The researcher noticed the dramatic pause occurring in each participant as each tried to find words for their experience in their creative process. Westland (2009) recognized that sounds, fragments of sentences, and long pauses emerged as individuals spoke from their perspective of embodied sensations. Westland (2009) wrote, “Individuals talking from the “movement of body sensations” are ‘rooted’ in their words. The client’s words have a direct connection with what is moving them physiologically, energetically, and emotionally, and are expressive of the person’s fundamental being” (Westland, 2009, p 123). This was similar to the finding of Tantia (2014) who researched how intuition arrives in consciousness through nonverbal communication.

**Experience of Self-Consciousness: Altered Sense of Self**

Participants’ confidence was observed by the research as more range of motion in participants while expressing in their modality of familiarity. This was compared to observation of participants’ hesitation, which appeared as smaller, more rigid motion in their modality of least familiarity. In the modality of familiarity, each participant described forgetting, or not caring that the researcher was present. In contrast, while...
expressing in the modality of least familiarity, each participant was eager to be done with the segment. In their modality of familiarity, each participant showed confidence by immediately dropping into a concentrated state of focus and quickly getting involved in the task. This contrasted with the researcher’s observation of hesitation in participants engaged in the modality of least familiarly. This observation was corroborated by participants’ description of being hesitant in the modality of least familiarity. One modality was neither the most, not the least familiar to each participant. This “neutral” modality was approached by each participant with an easy curiosity evidenced by participants report of having fun playing with this modality.

The images below (Figures 11 and 12) show Participant 2, “River.” Figure 11 shows a version of self that the participant described as being able to get lost in the playing of the music while also being able to see himself from the outside looking back, as a critic. Figure 12 shows a version of self the participant described as deeply connected to the music in is head as his body subtly swayed back and forth for his movement phase of the intermodal process. This described the theme of altered sense of self experienced throughout the intermodal process.
Figure 11. Participant 2: Getting lost in the music

Figure 12. Participant 2: Altered sense of self
Chapter 5

Discussion

In this section, themes from verbal interviews will be explained as they did or did not relate to the research questions, and so will themes from the researchers’ observation. The efficacy of this study will be described. Contributions to the field of expressive arts therapies and arts-based research will be noted and the gap in research will be highlighted.

The Efficacy of this Study

The research questions were, “What are artists’ experiences of engagement in an intermodal expressive arts process?” and “How does engagement in non-verbal intermodal arts (visual art, sound/music, and dance/movement) influence participants’ articulation of tacit, felt sense awareness associated with their creative process?”

Answering the first research question, the experience of an intermodal expressive arts process that was described by these participants as an encounter that circumvented habitual experiencing. Participants reported an interest in persisting with their explorations in various art modalities as encouraged by their awareness of an attitude of wonder through establishment of an experimental play space. A playful attitude expanded participants’ ability to imagine in new and fresh ways. Heightened sensory experiencing and embodied knowing were amplified and informed participants in their creative process, suggesting that the senses offer knowledge beyond logical reasoning. In a reciprocal relationship, it was a dynamic interaction between verbal and non-verbal expression that invited the co-construction of new insight. The creative art making process was linked to a change process as immersion in a liminal realm altered
participants’ sense of self. The possibility to transform and to experience in new ways of experiencing one’s sense of self supports the idea that an intermodal art making practice can address restrictive mindsets. Supporting this finding the experience of an intermodal process was described by these participants as a holistic experience that included preconscious, emotional, and sensory awareness, and included past memories, present emerging awareness and future projecting.

Answering the second research question: “How does engagement in non-verbal intermodal arts (visual art, sound/music, and dance/movement) influence participants’ articulation of tacit, felt sense awareness associated with their creative process?” a non-linear, pre-conscious way of knowing associated with engagement in the art-making process was differentiated from a discursive process. A bodily practice of sensing was differentiated from a verbal practice of talking about experience. When a participant talked about their experience, the participant reported being aware of arrival at a threshold where their verbal way of reporting about an experience met a different awareness which was an embodied way of knowing about the experience happened for which words could not be found. A difference was identified between the wordless experiencing and the spoken effort to describe the wordless experience. Challenged to speak of the wordless experience, participants and researcher noticed the participant body language shift, increasing animation, and pausing or pivoting from an initial speech pattern. It was noticed by participants and by the researcher that non-verbal communication is not easily conveyed in spoken words. Participants in the current study, and the researcher, noticed a difference between “bottom-up” processing (Gibson, 1966)
associated with embodied experiencing and a reporting about what was learned experientially.

Participants recognized that distinct awareness exists in a pre-languaged form and suggested the arts can express feeling that language cannot.

**Familiar verses Unfamiliar Modalities**


P2 River. Expertise = Music. Least Familiar Modality = Dance/Movement


In the modality of Least Familiarity, each participant reported new awareness emerging from their sustained engagement in novel experiencing. Sustained engagement allowed initial discomfort to transform into curiosity and play.

P1, “Owl”: “Music is my least comfortable modality. I love music, but I don’t feel I have a connection to playing it. I did the whole thing with eyes closed. I definitely heard sounds all around me felt comfortable hearing water and wind, the only way I could sink in was with my eyes closed, then I became curious about other materials that make sound with pebbles, then, more curious. I began loving the sound.”

This describes this participant’s ability to tolerate not-knowing, to remain open to experiencing without utilizing habitual strategies, and to allow emotions to arise and transform. Reporting feeling of self-consciousness with expression in music, and eager to finish expressing in the modality of music, this participant’s experience of time in the
least familiar modality was more urgent than it was in the other two modalities. The participant was not lost in time, as experienced in the other two modalities, but was very aware of time and asked the researcher often about how much time was left. The researcher observed the participant’s body movements and noted they were more deliberate than body movements had been in the other two modalities. The researcher observed this participant emerging from the experience in the least familiar modality and noted the participant had a look of calm surprise. This was not a look of one reporting about facts that had occurred but rather the look of one describing an emerging awareness that evaded predetermined conceptualization. This suggests that the modality of least familiarity allowed new experiencing to occur as it evoked self-consciousness and discomfort, which then transformed into new insight. Emerging awareness of somatically based experience has been described as “bottom-up” processing (Gibson, 1966), which was not the same as reporting anecdotes or cultivated responses. Participants associated their expressing in a modality of least familiarity with heightened awareness of sensation and emotion and described experiencing immediate and intuitive awareness. This finding aligns with Halperin (2011) who suggested that when expressing in a foreign modality, participants may find greater insights by not relying upon habitual defense mechanisms, bringing participants beyond their rote and developed ways of experiencing to new ways of experiencing.

The utilization of an intermodal art making process along with opportunities to discover through an experience of play, included the experiences that occur through the body to amplify pre-conscious ways of knowing. As Polanyi (1969) described tacit knowledge as preverbal and disconnected from the verbal-thinking self and emphasized
the importance of the feeling that provides access to the aspects of the tacit dimension of nonverbal thought, the modality of least familiarity brought heightened sensory experiencing. Nonverbal awareness was differentiated from discursive awareness. Gendlin (1981) explained that through awareness and attention to the body, implicit awareness can lead to explicit awareness. When asked in the interview to describe their experience in the modality of least familiarity, participants presented “words” that were less formed, that emerged as sounds, fragments of sentences, and long pauses. Westland (2009) wrote, “Individuals talking from the “movement of body sensations” are “rooted” in their words. The client’s words have a direct connection with what is moving them physiologically, energetically, and emotionally, and are expressive of the person’s fundamental being” (Westland, 2009, p 123). Here are examples of less formed expressions are:

P1, “Owl” : described “a whoooosh that I feel at that point of dropping into the zone”.

P3, “Turtle” : “You’re shutting your brain off and letting your spirit (pause), the universe’s spirit...(long pause), in your heart and in yourself (pause), you can’t be fake.

The engagement in the intermodal artmaking process seemed to amplify tacit awareness to inform participants’ efforts to verbally articulate emerging insight. This aligns with Gendlin’s (1981) reference to the attunement to the “felt sense” and is similar to what Polanyi (1969) wrote, that knowledge is rooted in tacit knowing. Each participant mentioned feeling their way through their creative process in all modalities, regardless of
their level of familiarity. Here is an example of a participant attuned to feeling to find the
nest right step in the creative process:

P4, “Bear” : “You figure things out when you’re not trying to think about it. In the
pottery realm (modality of expertise) trying to figure it out, all of a sudden it pops
up and you figure it out. A lot of times, as a potter, it’s different in that the clay
dictates to you what it wants to be so you follow along the line where the clay is
pushing. That’s a feel, you gotta be really loose and really mindless with it. You
just gotta let art flow over you. Things come out that you wouldn’t expect to come
out.

The artmaker’s description of being both receptive and responsive to the emerging
awareness, this is supported by Levine (2019) who explained that art does not simply
reveal what is in the artmaker’s subconscious, but art making produces new awareness.

Along with not-knowing comes the invitation to imagine freshly and to play. In
the modality of least familiarity (movement), here is an example of a participant
(expertise = music) encountering and navigating uncertainty:

P2, “River” : “Well I’m certainly not thinking when I’m moving, I’m imagining
the music and letting my body go with it, I’m just responding”.

Letting go of habitual ways of conceptualizing, this participant tolerated suspension in
unfamiliar space as the intermodal process allowed familiar ways of experiencing to be
juxtaposed against unfamiliar ways of experiencing. This reflects a tenet of intermodal
expressive arts therapy that explains that play and imagination affect change and
suspension in unfamiliar space, with an attitude of discovery and playful exploration,
serves to redirect an individual’s attention and focus away from restrictive mindsets
As has been already said, unfamiliar forms of art expression allowed space for play, or improvisation. All participants reported a delight in new discovery and reported feelings of discomfort such as self-consciousness, reluctance, and unease associated with awkwardness associated with expression in unfamiliar modalities. All participants persisted despite reluctance. The utilization of unfamiliar experiencing was with intent to heightened emotional and sensorial awareness. Persisting despite not-knowing accompanied an attitude of curiosity as this example shows:

P5, “Lion”: “It’s always leading me without a doubt, and I don’t have any hesitations, I’ve been thrown in to many uncomfortable situations, away from what I know, and I think let’s see what’s going to happen, I don’t have hang ups at all, it just happens I don’t know why.”

Opening to the emergent in the artmaking process, a changed perspective is linked to relinquishing control over the present. Recognizing the intermodal art making process as that which invites new awareness through a process of adaptation, exploration, and adjustment, an intermodal expressive arts process in this study accounted for facets of awareness such as unfinished processes (Lombard-Cook, 2016; Vacchelli, 2018) and recognized knowledge building as an embodied and evolving process. The current study was an exploration of an intermodal art making process to bring perception and experiential aspects of acquiring awareness into description of phenomena. Understanding knowledge as produced through somatic experiencing, the interplay between multiple forms of art expression in an intermodal art making process invited expression of complex layers of superimposed truths that make up lived experiences (Lombard-Cook, 2016). When questioning what is considered knowledge, where
knowledge comes from, and which forms of knowledge are deemed legitimate by whom, this study recognizes knowledge as awareness that is developing and is different than predetermined thought. This informs the Expressive Arts Therapy field as it supports the utilization of this process for expanding limiting conceptualization patterns and encouraging personal agency and discovery. Breaking with the habitual, opening to new possibility, engagement in the intermodal art making process immersed these participants in a different state of conscious awareness by offering opportunity to play and imagine in novel ways (Knill et al., 2005).

Findings that Surprised the Researcher

An attitude of play brought sustained engagement in the discovery process, even though play wasn’t all fun. Including both comfortable and uncomfortable experiencing, participants reported feelings of discomfort such as self-consciousness, reluctance, and unease associated with awkwardness expressing in modalities of least familiarity. While play can be ‘autotelic’ activities, enjoyed for their own sake (Winnicott, 1971), and a flow state is often associated with a blissful mindset (Csikszentmihalyi, 1996), four out of five participants reported feeling of discomfort that came with determination to see the process through. It was the intensity of determination in participants at play that surprised the researcher. The resoluteness was unexpected as participants were intent on finding their way through their process of experiencing in their least familiar modalities. Participants reported being more interested in seeing the process through than they were uncomfortable. Two participants would not stop even when the time was up:

P2 “River” : “I had to make peace with it.”
P5 “Lion: “When I get going I have to follow through with it, I can’t rest until I see it through.”

It was participants’ intense need for clarification that was surprising. A resoluteness to work through the challenge and a determination to discover brought a persistence that allowed emotions to transform. Participants reported that after about five -10 minutes exploring in their modalities of least familiarity, their awkwardness was overridden by their curiosity.

**Summary of Findings**

Participants in this study showed intense concentration on their task during art making, and this finding is reflected in literature that explains enhanced cognitive states can be elicited during the creative processes of artists (Getzel & Csikszentmihalyi, 1976). An enhanced state of attention can be dramatically increased for limited durations (Csikszentmihalyi 1990) as individuals achieve a “flow state.” Participants described an ability to drop into a state of concentration that differed from their attention state outside of their creative artmaking process. Csikszentmihalyi (1990) explained that when awareness is entirely focused on the activity, any distracting stimuli are ignored. Participants’ selective attention while in their creative process was described as an ability to dismiss all noises and activities surrounding them as they were dropped into their creative zone. Along with a highly focused attention state, participants in their artmaking process reported an altered awareness of self, and a distorted sense of time. These findings also reflect theory of Csikszentmihalyi (1975) who described a flow state and emphasized the need for the direct involvement in the activity and active engagement with the environment.
Another important condition for reaching an enhanced cognitive state is the state of arousal (Kozhevnikov et al., 2018). An aroused physiological and psychological state of being reactive to emerging stimuli was evident in participants’ reports. Participants described an increased emotional response associated with disorientation as they decentered from typical experiencing to novel experiencing in the intermodal artmaking process. As they created art, especially in modalities of least familiarity, an enhanced state of arousal allowed participants to be receptive and reactive to stimuli. This invited participants to encounter the experience of engaging in different art modalities with emergent awareness.

Remaining open to experiencing during their art making process, participants described their ability to relinquish control over their experience and with this came new ways of imagining. Outside of their typical experiencing, especially in the modalities of least familiarity, experiencing uncertainty brought opportunity to conceptualize beyond preconceived ideas. The artmakers each described a quality of curiosity associated with back-and-forth engagement between themselves and the artmaking process; at times participants felt they led and at times followed what was emerging in the process. The gut feeling informed participants in their modalities of familiarity as well as their modalities of unfamiliarity. This suggests that while muscle memory was associated with habitual practices in the participants modality of expertise, there remained an openness to new experiencing. Despite habitual experiencing in their art modality of expertise, the artmaking process led participants into an embodied attention state that attuned the artmakers to their felt sensations and heightened responsive to stimuli (Csikszentmihalyi, 1975; Kozhevnikov et al. 2018). As participants described the
challenge of finding words to describe their sensorial experiencing, the artmaking process, regardless of degrees of familiarly, offered ways for participants to stay with their wordless experiencing (Westland, 2009) and to attune to their felt-sense (Gendlin, 1981; Kossak, 2015). New knowledge was gained for these participants through attention paid to their nonverbal, intrapersonal communication. Embodied knowing was described by participants as their ability to follow their gut feelings was differentiated by participants from “thinking.”

Aligning with the researcher’s expectations of what happens when an artist is engaged in their familiar art form, participants reported feeling at ease and artists produced confidently in their modality of expertise. As felt sense intelligence provided new knowledge to these participants, the researcher was surprised to discover participants’ lack of resistance to expressing in unfamiliar modalities. All of the participants were willing to face the unknown and to persist even when describing and showing discomfort. Tolerating ambiguity and disorientation, participants described a shift in their feelings about their discovery process. Participants repeated described a quality of curiosity that motivated them to persist despite unfamiliarity.

The researcher was also surprised to observe the degree of change that occurred with participants’ arrival at a threshold where implicit and explicit awareness encountered and influenced each other. The conspicuous arrival at the threshold of what Panhofer (2006) described as a threshold at which the ‘thinking-observing self” experienced through verbal communication encountered the “I-who-feels” experienced through nonverbal conceptualization was marked by increased body gestures and change in eye gaze in participants. As they searched for words, lengths of pauses in speech
increased, as did truncated thoughts, and utterances of “Um” before claiming they could not describe it. The researcher noted that participants at this threshold oscillated between reporting about a memory of their experience and awakening to sensorial experiencing happening in the moment. This was interesting to the researcher because, although it was a verbal interview, when the researcher refocused participants to their sensorial experiencing during their art making, participants body language shifted to mimic the dropping into the zone observed as participants engaged in artmaking.

Implicit awareness elicited during engagement in their creative process was elicited again, and in the verbal interview process, met an explicit realization of the ineffable qualities of their embodied creative experiencing. Although participants could not describe the experience in words, their body language appeared to re-feel the experience of dropping in that they had experienced in the creative process. The researcher continued to refocus participants to their embodied experience in their creative process, which kept participants at the threshold of awareness that preverbal knowing was different than verbal knowing. A precipice was amplified that illuminated existence of awareness that evaded worded articulation. Participants were aware that knowing in their creative process included some thinking and some bodily, felt sensations. Participants were aware of ineffable qualities of knowing that were learned experientially. Supported by theorists who believed that intelligence is dynamic and interactive (Robinson, 2006; Tharp, 2003), a full account of experiencing for these participants was expressed through verbal and nonverbal expression.

Engagement in arts experience can encourage dialogue and new ways of thinking (Dewey, 1935). The intermodal artmaking process increased participants’ receptivity and
responsive by employing deliberate utilization of ambiguity and disorientation, encouraging the navigation of a transformation processes. The participants in this study paid attention to tacit awareness and made effort to integrate language communication (explicit) with sensorial (implicit) communication. In this way, this study utilized an intermodal art making process to posit that knowledge building is an embodied, emerging, and evolving process and recognized awareness as a transformative process which produced an altered sense of self. Wu (2002) explained, that while new awareness grows from embodied knowing through the senses, the division between things is ambiguous. Toward this point, the participants described their creative process as an integration of logic and sensory awareness. The ability to tune into authentic experiencing can also challenge socially constructed narratives (White & Epston, 1990). An intermodal expressive arts practice in this study honored subjective meaning making, and situated the feeling, sensing, experiencing individual as the authority of their experience. This study informs the field of Expressive Arts Therapies as it corroborates what the literature has been suggesting, which is that the intermodal art making process can be utilized as an intervention to facilitate change in perspectives, insights, challenge socially constructed narratives and find new ways of integrating embodied knowledge.

**Contributions to the Field of Expressive Arts Therapy**

The intermodal art making process was a way for new awareness to be formed as the participants encountered something other than their familiar world and new insight came from the encounter. For these participants, an intermodal expressive arts therapy practice was one of relinquishing control for new discovery and fresh perspective. Therapists can consider this when working with clients with restricted ideas of self and
situation. Knill (2005) explained that when the artmaker can expand beyond restrictive perspectives into imaginative reality there is the potential for healing through a renewed sense of possibility. Knill (2004) explained that engagement in the intermodal expressive arts making process inspired ongoing interpretation of evolving situational needs, which suggests that an intermodal art making process can be of therapeutic service as it is a practice of navigating changing circumstances. Likewise, Levine (2005) emphasized the importance of exploration in which “letting go of control leads to surprising results” (p. 11), suggesting that the artmaking process engages the creator in decision making. One navigates and negotiates in the art making process and encounters uncertainty. Not-knowing what will emerge, a chaotic or unintegrated phase invites the imagination to play. Jung (1960) suggested that encountering emerging awareness from an ongoing dialogue between the conscious and unconsciousness, a new awareness emerges, and described this phenomenon as a ‘Transcendent Function’ born from the confrontation of opposing forces in the psyche. Emerging awareness was observed by the researcher in this study as participants speech patterns and degree of animation changed in association with their effort to communicate what eluded verbal description. Participants ceased speaking in the middle of their sentences, and physically gestured ideas in effort to communicate what they said was difficult to verbally describe.

As was observed in this study an intermodal expressive art making process can bring alternative experiencing and altered perspective which can precede change making. In a psychotherapeutic context, this suggests an intermodal art making process can be incorporated to facilitate change.
A shift in awareness was also associated with decentering into the play space (Knill, 2005). Improvisation invited an interplay between implicit and explicit awareness and a tolerance for unintegrated experiences. Participants were able to explore in various art modalities so that pre-reflective and inarticulate awareness could become explicit as it found expression for itself. Participants reported new awareness that was not in their purview prior to their art making. Pertinent to the field of psychotherapy, an attitude of openness initiated through the art making process preceded a shift in perspective and a change in participants experience of themselves and their situation. In terms of meaning making, an intermodal expressive arts process can broaden the context of meaning by allowing participants to perceive alternative perspectives.

The intermodal artmaking process in this study was not static, but was a continuous, malleable, unfinished experiencing. Experiencing here was understood as a continuous process, where a quality of curiosity was maintained as engagement in the intermodal expressive arts making process inspired ongoing interpretation of evolving situational needs. New sense-making came as flexibility, play, spontaneity, and adaptability transformed participants perspectives.

Participants’ immersion in a liminal realm altered participants’ awareness. Participants at times led and at times followed something in themselves and something described as other than themselves, so participants were able to experience themselves differently throughout the artmaking process. Judgement could be suspended, habitual strategies could be overridden, and participants were able to receive and to respond in new ways. Participants reported that engagement in the intermodal art making process provided a sense of integration of their life events for new meaning making. The
utilization of an intermodal expressive arts process can encourage emergent encounters for fresh experiencing. In these ways this study adds to the conversation about consciousness and perceptual experience.

The current study resisted delineation of the creative process into steps (McNiff, 2013) to invite individual processes, subjective engagement with the process, personal meaning making, the avoidance of predetermined steps in the creative process encouraged participants to respond aesthetically to the art itself and to their own experience of engaging with the art. This is supported by Knill (2004) who explained that engagement in the intermodal expressive arts making process inspired ongoing interpretation of evolving situational needs.

Encountering the art images, movements, and sounds, the intermodal process invited interplay between body, emotion, and imagination (McNiff, 2004). As art images were shaped and re-shaped in creative exploration, the images, movements and sounds evolved, and both the art maker and the art expression were altered in the encounter. Levine (2019) explained that the artwork itself expresses as the artmaker receives and responds to situational events. As the art making process goes on, the artmaker is transformed along with the emerging imagery, sound, or movement. Eliminating constructed boundaries, intermodal expressive therapies include multiple perspectives of various art forms in which each inform can enhance the others. Participants’ ability to conceptualize in new ways is reflected in the ideas of Allen (1995), who suggested that "making images is a way of breaking boundaries, loosening outworn ideas, and making way for the new" (p. x). The intermodal artmaking process invited participants to
experience of decentering which brought tolerance of ambiguity and accounted for continuities which were amplified through the transferring between art modalities.

An intermodal art making process brought opportunity for the participants in this study to gain awareness of transforming, awareness. Participants’ comprehension of the phenomena was malleable and revisable as they adapted in ongoing negotiation with self and situation. This suggests that an intermodal art making process can be of therapeutic service as it is a practice of navigating changing circumstances.

Another area that emerged from this study was that language based in cognition alone is limited. Langer (1954) explained that language may be incapable of fully articulating felt sensation. Building on this thought of Langer, a philosophical tenet of narrative therapy is termed “absent but implicit” to describe a discernment between what is expressed and not expressed in a client’s story (White & Epston, 1990). That which is revealed in a person’s storytelling also reveals what the person is not saying. This applies to the current study as participants were able to indicate the existence of what could not be verbally articulated by saying they could not describe it. That they couldn’t describe their ineffable qualities of experience associated with knowing in their creative process indicated the existence of awareness that eluded language identification. In describing what was not there, participant evidenced the ineffable as that which was absent but implicit in their experience.

A “concept of closure” which describes the action of the human mind, when presented with parts, to conceive for whole (McCloud, 1994) describes a person’s ability to make meaning through comprehension of two seemingly unrelated parts as a single idea. Mentally filling in the gaps between what was previously known and what was
emerging, imagination was shown to be at work in participants as each made new meaning from their assimilation of implicit and explicit awareness. This finding contributes to the field of psychotherapy in which an ability to reach new insights addresses the therapeutic goal of expanding upon restrictive thought patterns. Engagement in an intermodal expressive arts process encouraged dialogue and new ways of thinking, and increased participants’ receptivity and responsiveness, addressing reluctance by encouraging persistent exploration of unfamiliar experiencing. Deliberate utilization of ambiguity and disorientation in the current study highlighted the importance of abstract thinking as a tool for fresh conceptualization in these participants, suggesting an intermodal expressive arts process can facilitate emergent awareness, new perspectives, and the navigation of a transformation processes.

**Contributions to Research**

Arts-based research is conducted with the understanding that aspects of art reveal new ways of knowing through sensory perceptions and emotion as well as intellectual responses (Leavy, 2009). The current study utilized art making to, evoke emotional, sensory, and cognitive responses in participants that created a particular type of data. It was the dynamic interaction between verbal and non-verbal expression that invited the co-construction of new insight. As the field of arts-based research evolves, findings from this study suggest an intermodal art making process can communicate what verbal communication alone cannot by including embodied as well as discursive ways of expressing in reciprocal relationship and counters the construction of false categories that separate cognitive from embodied awareness. The current study built upon previous studies that included perception and sensation as data (Tantia, 2014; Vacchelli 2017), and
differentiated a thinking-self from a feeling-self (Panhofer, 2006). The current study expanded these previous studies by specifically recognizing the intermodal art making process as that which could amplify the threshold between implicit and explicit awareness for an inclusive experience.

Themes of heightened sensory awareness and a transformative process revealed the participants’ ability to be receptive and responsive to the emerging awareness, responding and adjusting as implicit awareness encountered explicit awareness. The artmaking process along with the verbal interview brought attention to the new insights born of the process in which implicit or pre-reflective awareness became explicit and determinate as participants sought to express these new insights verbally or nonverbally.

This study also specifically identified the intermodal transfer for amplification of the concept of low skill/high sensitivity. Participants recognized an altered sense of self experienced as they described getting themselves out of the way so they could follow the process. Experiencing both familiarity and unfamiliarity in expressing, participants were able to recognize an experience of decentering. This differentiated the intermodal expressive art making process from other creative arts practices that offer participants a choice of modalities in which to express, but do not adhere to the specific tenets of the unique discipline. An intermodal expressive art making process was recognized as a way of operationalizing the process of arrival at new awareness through the utilization of strategically interrelated art expressions. The concept of low skill/high sensitivity was applied as unfamiliar experiencing brought experiences of play and improvisation.

Supporting alternative ways of knowing, Wittgenstein (1986) claimed that limits on our communication strategies limit our conceptualization, so it is important to utilize
practices that encourage fresh ways of imagining. Following Wittgenstein’s ideas, an intermodal art making process invited participants in this study to encounter the world in new ways, instead of through a limiting lens of preconceived ideas. This study utilized an intermodal art making three-part process as a way to bring participants to the edge of what their egos already know in order to encounter knowledge of which they were aware of but unable to articulate in words. Unlike philosophies grounded on theoretical reason, the current study accounted for embodied and emerging awareness to account for human experience as a process of not-knowing that includes a willingness to encounter the unknown.

More research is needed on the use of various expressive modalities in combination, specifically regarding their interrelatedness. More research on the interplay of art forms for expanded play and imagination (Knill, 2005) would inform the field of Expressive Arts Therapies. As Tantia (2021) elaborates upon, research methods that include body-based inquiries that operationalize embodied data in the research process, this study is part of the forward progress of embodied research.

Limitations of this Study

The researcher used purposive sampling to recruit individuals who identified as experts in one of the following modalities: visual art, music, or dance/movement. Criteria for the category of “expert” was defined as having 10 or more years of experience in one art modality. The sample represented in this study lacked diversity and over-represented individuals of European decent, males, and middle-aged individuals and the sample included no professional from the modality of dance/movement. However, the integrity of the study remained as each participant still experienced a combination of art forms in
the intermodal session, and each participant eventually experienced their art form of familiarity, along with two art forms that were less familiar to them. Despite these limitations, the study did point out significant results.

A professional dancer was not represented in the participant sample. The researcher made great effort to interview an expert dancer. Four expert dancers were scheduled then they cancelled due to complications associated with the global pandemic of Covid-19. The researcher chose to recruit participants who were available, resulting in overrepresentation of male musicians. Two participants met the researcher outside and three participants met the researcher in their own private home studio spaces for maintenance of Covid-19 safety protocols.

The sample of participants in this study was limited to a certain demographic as well, so voices outside of the limited demographic were not represented. Considering issues of representation, access, and legitimacy in the field of art, a recent study of the National Gallery of Art in Washington, DC found that more than 97 percent of artists included in the collection are white, while some 90 percent are male, with female artist being only 11% of the collection, and wealthy, white males have donated their collections to museums for tax write-offs (Topaz, et al, 2019). The socio-economic privilege is directly linked to access, representation, and legitimacy. Systems of exclusion deny access, ignore values, and silence non-dominant voices (Pavelicevic, 2005). Distortion from over representation of dominant culture results in the creation of space for only certain types of experience to be recognized, and restricted representation perpetuates systems of insider/outsider groups in which inequalities seemed justified (Andrews, 2003). Furthermore, during the Covid-19 pandemic it may be associated with
the fact that women, and women of color in particular, have less resources to withstand the economic shocks of the Covid-19 recession, therefore women in general may have had less available time to participate in a research study. As oppression is about issues of power, control and access, the lack of diversity in the sample in this study draws attention to questions of which groups have access, what economic realities restrict access, and who judges appropriateness or legitimacy of lived experiences (Cross, et al, 2010). As exclusive practices oversimplify and therefore distort perception of reality, this researcher emphasizes that findings from the sample which lacked diversity does not account for the experiences of individuals of ethnic, socio-economic, and cultural backgrounds that are not represented in the sample.

**Further Recommendations**

In a follow up study, this researcher would ask participants to keep an account of emerging awareness that may or may not have continued to present itself after the artmaking and interviews were over. Accounting for continuities of experiencing, this step would document details of new insights or behavior changes that may have continued evolving after the artmaking/interview session, noting duration and intensity of change, attitude, feeling, or behavior following the session. Data on continuity of the phenomenon would document expanding awareness over time.

Another modification to the method utilized in the current study would be the recruitment of a professional poet/participant. While this study compared discursive and nonlanguaged ways of knowing, findings showed that participants were aware of reaching a threshold at which the ‘thinking-observing self” experienced through verbal communication encountered the “I-who-feels” experienced through nonverbal
conceptualization (Panhofer, 2006). A future study could utilize the intermodal expressive arts three-part process to bring a participant/poet(s) to the threshold where implicit and explicit awareness engage and ask the participant/poets to apply their expertise with abstract conceptualization and language to address that which is expressible in art but difficult to describe in words. This idea is encouraged by theory (Knill et al., 2005) that suggests, “To finally crystalize to poetic activity allows images, acts, movement, rhythm or sounds to find a cognitive sense in poetic language. Poetry embodies the soul of new thought” (p. 126). Poetry may bridge the thinking verbal self with the feeling self. Poets may have the ability to describe abstract concepts. Integrating tacit and logic awareness may help learners and change makers to build visceral connection to their processes. Obtaining poetic vocabulary to describe the juncture at which the feeling-self encounters the verbal-thinking-self could be helpful for educators and therapists who aim to address the logical and embodied aspects of an individual’s experience, and from the integration of both, encourage new awareness of possibilities.

There is a need for more research on the use of an intermodal arts process. The present study found that utilization of an intermodal arts three-part process increased participants ability to leave preconceived ideas and open to experiencing things freshly. An intermodal art making process was linked to disarming limiting stances, thereby increasing participants abilities to perceive, receive, and respond in new ways. An intermodal expressive art making process was shown to be a practice of curiosity that can be applied to new conceptualization and meaning making.
Conclusion

The research questions were, What are artists’ experiences of engagement in an intermodal expressive arts process?” and “How does engagement in non-verbal intermodal arts (visual art, sound/music, and dance/movement) influence participants’ articulation of tacit, felt sense awareness associated with their creative process?” The current study uniquely clarified the specific discipline that is intermodal expressive arts therapy. This study examined the creative process without delineating the creative process into steps. It also added research to theory on the interrelatedness of the arts by connecting an intermodal art making process with the amplification of the threshold between implicit and explicit awareness. The usefulness of this study is that it utilized art making to account for the ineffable qualities of knowing in the creative process of artists. Inviting novel and original imagining, this study utilized an intermodal expressive process to account for experiencing over time which included adaptation, exploration, and adjustment. Including facets of awareness such as unfinished processes (Lombard-Cook, 2016; Vacchelli, 2018) and felt sense knowledge (Tantia, 2014; Panhofer, 2009), this study explored human experience as a process of not-knowing that includes a willingness to encounter the unknown. Specifically amplifying tenets of an intermodal art making process, a chaotic phase of decentering brought tolerance for unintegrated experiences in these participants. In this study, sensory experiencing associated with an intermodal art expression elicited new awareness that discursive communication alone did not account for, showing that the full complexity of perception is not reducible to purely cognitive measures (Merleau-Ponty, 2002). Allowing for expansive and unrestricted communication, this study challenged dominant epistemology of logic over
intuitive and embodied knowing (Foucault, 1972) and adds to explorations of consciousness and perceptual experience.

To account for an experience holistically, researchers need not assume a binary approach to methods, but a more inclusive approach that accounts for logic as well as felt sense and emerging awareness. The compartmentalization of either/or is an antiquated construct. Exploring ways by which participants arrived at understanding, this study linked nonverbal, emerging, felt sense awareness to amplification of imaginative possibilities and elicitation of new knowledge.
Appendix A

Consent Form for Research Participants

Purpose of this study: You are being asked to take part in a research study of participants’ experiences with sensory experiencing associated with your creative process. The researcher (MaryEllen Mahar) is an Expressive Arts Therapies Ph.D. candidate at Lesley University in Cambridge, MA. The present study fulfills academic requirements for the program and is being supervised by the researcher’s dissertation chair, Professor Mitchel Kossak, Ph.D. Please read this form carefully and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to take part in the study.

What you will be asked to do: If you agree to be in this study, you will explore your awareness of your sensory experiencing associated with engagement in your creative process. You will engage in art making in three modalities of visual art, sound/music and movement. An interview will follow your creative exploration in the three art modalities. During the interview, the researcher will ask you about your experience of sensory awareness associated with your creative process. The entire experience will take 1.5 – 2 hours to complete.

Risks and benefits: There are no anticipated risks to participants. Participants will be given an opportunity to explore in three art modalities and reflect on sensory awareness associated with their creative process.

Confidentiality: The researcher will show these results publicly as part of presenting to any research community and at any conferences or for academic purposes. Any reports on the results will not include any information that will make it possible to identify you. All audio-video recordings and transcriptions of interviews will be kept on a password
protected hard drive; only myself, my supervisor (Dr. Mitchel Kossak), and a professional transcriber who will sign confidentiality agreements will have access to the records.

Participation is voluntary. If you decide to take part, you are free to withdraw at any time. If you do withdraw, all information, artwork, and audio-visual recordings will be destroyed and will not be used in the study in any way. If you participate the researcher will invite you to a presentation of the results of the study.

Statement of Consent: I have read the above information and have received answers to any questions I asked. I consent to take part in the study. I also acknowledge that I have received a copy of this form.

Your Signature ______________________________ Date________________

Your Name (printed) ________________________________________________ In addition to agreeing to participate, I also consent to having my artwork photographed, and movement or sound production audio and video recorded. I consent to having my interview audio-recorded and transcribed for data analysis.

Your Signature ______________________________ Date________________

The principal investigator addressed all questions and concerns, including confidentiality, withdrawing from the study, and how to contact the principal investigator or his supervisor at any point after the study.

Researcher Signature ______________________________ Date________________

Researcher Name (printed) ________________________________________________

This consent form will be kept by the researcher for at least three years beyond the end of the study.
Appendix B

The Researcher’s Instruction to Each Participant

“There are materials here you to explore in three different art modalities. Please choose the order you like, then spend about 20 minutes creating or exploring with that art modality. I will inform you when time is running out. When the time comes to switch to another modality of expression, I will remind you to pause, take a deep breath, then proceed with exploration in the next modality. I will try to speak very little, and just speak to let you know of the time to switch modalities. When we are done with all three modalities, we will then have a verbal interview about your creative process. If you feel you want to ask me anything during the art making sequence, you may, but my goal is to make this about you and your process, and not to influence you at all.”
Appendix C

Participant Interview Questions

• How would you describe your experience?
• Did one art modality evoke more insight? If so, which one and how/why?
• What was your experience of moving from one art modality to the next?
• What, if any, knowledge and insight was gained during your creative process? How was this different from logical, or purely cognitive ways of knowing?
• Do you recall and can you describe your physical experience such as movement, posture, gesture, breathing, or even eye gaze associated with your process?
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