

# Dance Therapy in Germany

From the very practical dance therapy in action perspective, we turn now to research perspectives as presented this year by dance therapists in Germany.



<http://www.dancetherapy.de/index.html>

## Report from the German Research Panel and Poster Session "Research in Dance/Movement Therapy 2002" Sabine C. Koch

*The first poster podium on "Research in Dance/Movement Therapy" was held within the membership assembly of the BTDD (Berufsverband der Tanztherapeutinnen Deutschlands), the German professional organization of dance/movement therapists, on February 16<sup>th</sup> in Hannover. Seven German researchers, currently working on research projects in three countries, had gathered in order to present their ongoing research. About 50 dance/movement therapists came to the assembly, some having especially travelled in for the poster podium. . The podium was organized so that researchers first had 10 minutes each to present on their current project. A brief question time followed each of the presentations and in the last 20 minutes each researcher stood next to her poster to answer specific questions about her project.*

The podium was organized by Iris Braeuninger and Sabine Koch. In an inspiring introduction Iris Braeuninger pointed out the historical moment for the German professional community -for the first time DMT researchers were presenting their projects to an exclusively professional DMT audience.

Clinical projects were presented first, starting with the quality of life and stress reduction study by Iris Braeuninger (doctoral dissertation at the University of Tübingen, supported by a grant from the Marian Chace Foundation), a controlled outcome study with eleven DMT groups (n=96) and nine control groups (n=64) nationwide and across specific DMT approaches in order to investigate the increase in quality of life DMT can provide for "normal



neurotics" dealing with subjective stress. Data of intervention checklists and of semi-structured interviews with all dance/ movement therapists will provide information on the efficacy of applied interventions and on individual therapists' experiences and methods. This is one of the evaluation studies the field needs so desperately in order to be better recognized and accepted within the community of mental health practitioners. Results of the study can be expected at the end of the year.

**Iris Braeuninger's** presentation was followed by another controlled outcome study project by Elana Mannheim (research grant at the University Hospital Freiburg), who just received a grant from the "Klinikeigene Fördergesellschaft der Klinik für Tumorbologie" of her organization in order to further investigate the therapeutic treatment factors (Wirkfaktoren) of DMT in a psycho-oncological treatment setting. In addition to questionnaire measures, she will be working with movement observation from videotapes in a pretest-posttest design. This will allow her to become even more specific with regard to observed changes. A similar project with a chronically mentally ill population is planned at the University of Emden by Dieter Röh and Claire Moore-Schmeil (research grant application at a health insurance company and at the Fachhochschule Emden, Gesundheitswissenschaften).

The next presenter was **Henriette Dluzak-Boysen** (Diplomarbeit at the University of Hamburg), who did her thesis in psychology on "Finding the way to oneself – Dance/ Movement Therapy in the perception of psychiatric day-clinic patients". She used the qualitative method of Prof. Inghard Langer (Universität Hamburg) „The personal talk“ consisting of deep reaching client-centered interviews based on Carl Rodger's client-centered technique. She presented on main themes that came up for the clients in DMT, like self-perception and perception of others, the expression of emotions, the perception of one's own body, and one's own limits, interaction with authorities, the discovery of one's own personal resources. She presented convincing excerpts of interview transcripts, showing impressively how DMT changed her clients' perceptions and contributed to the healing process.

**Hannelore Lier-Schehl** continued with a more developmental perspective (doctoral dissertation at the University of Dortmund), the dance of mother and child on a closed psychiatric ward. The author assessed and treated four mother child dyads in a clinical setting over a period of the first year of the infants' life using one of the most widespread assessment instruments in dance/movement therapy: the Kestenberg Movement Profile (KMP). The project setting is a newly established mother-infant ward in the Psychiatric Hospital of Dortmund, Germany. Mothers are suffering from birth psychosis or postpartum depression, the project has the intention to minimize the separation of mother and child in this early attachment phase. Results are in pro-

cess.

**Dr. Hedda Lausberg**, currently guest researcher in the Gesture Project at the Max Planck Institute (MPI) for Psycholinguistics presented her DMT research on eating disorder patients. She emphasized that, thus far, no movement feature had been identified that was indicative of a specific psychosomatic or psychiatric diagnosis. Instead, movement patterns seem to distinguish different diagnosis groups. The study was published in the American Journal of Dance Therapy (Vol. 20/2, Winter 1998). Dr. Lausberg added a short summary on methods in DMT research, in which she pointed out the strengths and weaknesses of our methodological instruments. Her present research on split-brain patients investigates hemispheric specialization in non-verbal behavior.

**Silvia Birklein**, who was not able to come to Hannover, nevertheless sent in an abstract on her project: "After the catastrophe of New York City – diagnosis and treatment of PTSD-children with the Kestenberg Movement Profile (KMP)". Nonverbal Indices of Stress and Trauma related to the WTC Disaster are symptoms of hyper-vigilance, reenactment, nightmares, anxiety and behavioural problems. The study aims to investigate the effects of the September 11th, 2001 World Trade Center disaster upon parents and their young children. It will investigate the correspondence between non-verbal indices of event related stress and PTSD symptoms to signifiers from self-attributional reporting. The Kestenberg Movement Profile (KMP) will be used to assess the non-verbal expression of these symptoms. The attributed stress and PTSD symptoms indicated in the scales will then be correlated with features of the movement indices found in children and parent's interaction.

The last two presentations were related to gender research projects: **Sabine Koch** (doctoral dissertation at the University of Heidelberg) presented on her work within the German Science Foundation (DFG)-project "The communicative construction of gender in professional settings". She basically looks at nonverbal communication between men and women in the professional world (in working teams and their meetings). Separating out nonverbal behavior due to status and due to gender, one pattern seems to be striking: In mixed-sex dyads or groups men usually tend to behave more like the superior interlocutor (displaying more expansiveness, relaxation, a superior gaze pattern, etc.), whereas most women tend to behave more like the inferior interlocutor (displaying more accommodation, more smiles, an inferior gaze pattern, etc.).

At the same time women have a higher nonverbal sensitivity (Hall, 1978, 1984), which means that they can read non-verbal signals better than men. The research of this interdisciplinary group (psychologists and linguists) tries to answer two questions: why are still such few women getting and staying in managerial/leadership positions. And, have



communication patterns changed over the last several years in the direction of a more equal interaction between men and women.

Similar questions are also relevant in the project of **Anja Pennemann** (independent doctoral dissertation, presently small research grant for six months). She is interested in gender-specific movement patterns and their development from kindergarten age on. Her main thesis is that gendered education keeps us from reaching our full potential as men and women in terms of movement synthesis and greater choices. Her approach is related to the gender mainstreaming movement that is just starting to be applied in Germany.

All presentations were received well. Many types of questions, especially concerning the application aspects of the research, were asked during discussion time. People came up to the posters to ask more specific questions and give literature hints.

Discussion continued after the sessions were over: Is qualitative research just as valid as quantitative research? What are the differences? Can behavior of women and men (girls and boys) be measured with the same methods? How does the mother-infant interaction of psychotic mothers differ from that of healthy mothers? Is it OK to leave the infants with the psychotic mothers in a hospital environment?, etc.

Many colleagues expressed enthusiasm about having been able to talk about DMT contents and themes during the BTDA membership assembly, and encouraged repeating such an inspiring event in future assemblies. Finally, we would like to encourage the DMT professional associations of the world to undertake similar endeavors like the BTDA as they can provide an invaluable boost to the networking among DMT researchers nationwide and internationally. Contact email for comments: [sabine.koch@urz.uni-heidelberg.de](mailto:sabine.koch@urz.uni-heidelberg.de) and [iris.braeuninger@student.uni-tuebingen.de](mailto:iris.braeuninger@student.uni-tuebingen.de).

#### **About Sabine:**

*Sabine C. Koch, Psychologist, M.S.W., M.A., DTR, studied psychology at the University of Heidelberg and Madrid and dance/movement therapy at Hahnemann University in Philadelphia, PA. Therapy experiences with multiple personality disorder patients, autistic children and geriatric patients (depression, anxiety, schizophrenia and bipolar). Presently she works on her PhD in a national research project at the University of Heidelberg with verbal and nonverbal analyses of gendered communication in work teams.*

#### **Ed. Note:**

*1) The Dance Therapy Association of Australia has a copy available of an earlier thesis of Sabine's, called "The Kestenberg Movement Profile (KMP) – "Reliability of Novice Raters."*

*2) As a contrast to the methodologies employed above, it is worth reading American dance therapist, Lenore Hervey's PhD thesis, published by Charles C. Thomas: "Artistic Inquiry in Dance/Movement Therapy: Creative Alternatives for Research."*

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