

THE *PAS DE TROIS* OF DISABILITY, DANCE, AND SOCIAL WORK.  
DANCE/MOVEMENT THERAPY AS POINT OF ACCESS FOR RECREATIONAL DANCE  
SPACES

by

Geneviève Elitha Margaret Roots, BSW, Carleton University, 2016

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## ABSTRACT

The *pas de trois* of Disability, Dance, and Social Work. Dance/Movement Therapy as Point of Access for Recreational Dance Spaces

Master of Social Work, 2017  
Geneviève Elitha Margaret Roots  
Program of Social Work,  
Ryerson University

Individuals with disabilities are left out of recreational programs at a much higher rate than individuals with no disabilities. Seeking to rid barriers created by inaccessible recreational dance spaces, dance/movement therapy (DMT) offers a potential solution. This research explores how DMT can inspire a model for accessible recreational dance spaces for individuals with varying abilities, how this therapeutic practice can translate into a recreational dance atmosphere, and the role of social workers herein. The research takes the form of a content analysis via hermeneutic phenomenology of a six-week DMT-inspired pilot program developed by the researcher, and is informed by critical disability and structural social work theories. Findings highlight the parallels between DMT and recreational dance, making possible their fusion to create a space for ‘everyone and anyone’, and emphasize a social work presence. A logic model resulted, guiding how accessible recreational dance programs may be designed, based on DMT.

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## DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my family, who made this all possible.

To my incredibly talented and hilarious sister, who sparked my passion in this topic, this has always been inspired by you. This is for you.

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## CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

Individuals with disabilities are left out of recreational programs and activities at a much higher rate than individuals with no disabilities, and the undesirable impacts of this on their health are well documented (Anderson, 2010; D'Eloia & Sibthorp, 2014; Heah, Case, McGuire, & Law, 2006; King, Law, King, Hurley, Hanna, Kertoy, & Rosenbaum, 2007; Tonkin, Ogilvie, Greenwood, Law, & Anaby, 2014). Seeking to rid the multitude of barriers created by inaccessible recreational dance spaces in particular, a shift in focus to the practice of dance/movement therapy (DMT) offers a potential solution. This MRP explores the relationship between DMT and recreational dance, and how these two entities may come together to spark the creation of a new space where all bodies have the opportunity to dance. As recreational dance programs are often inaccessible to individuals with disabilities, and there is an absence of disabled presence in the dance world overall, I believe that DMT may be a point of access for individuals with disabilities into the accessible recreational dance realm. Furthermore, I strongly believe that critical social workers are needed in such spaces and have key roles to play in this process. This *pas de trois* of disability, dance, and social work is central to this study.

I am interested in the ways that DMT can inspire a model for accessible recreational dance spaces for individuals with varying abilities, and how social workers can be involved in the translation of this therapeutic practice into a recreational dance atmosphere. This point is crucial. Although the basis of this research reflects a type of therapy, my desired outcome, critical lens, and thought process lie far from therapeutics. I am exploring the ways that DMT can translate into a recreational dance space, but in no way are my attempts directed towards developing any sort of therapy practice or method. I have certain reservations about this word



therapy’, and so I return to this point in my analysis, as I do not want this study to be read or interpreted as a pathologizing of individuals with disabilities.

To my knowledge, this research is unique and the first of its kind. It holds great potential to creatively enhance anti-oppressive social work practice, breaking from traditional ways of practice that lack creativity and may not always be appropriate or possible when engaging with the disability community. Having conducted numerous searches of the literature available surrounding this topic, it appears that the worlds of recreation and social work, specifically recreational dance, or dance in general, and social work, have not come together as completely as I believe that they should and are capable of. In the simplest of words, anti-oppressive social work belongs in the recreational dance world because this world is inherently ableist and thus oppressive to non-normative bodies. Anti-oppressive social work is needed herein to enhance an awareness of inaccessible recreational spaces, and to work towards education and positive, substantive change that increases the visibility of bodies that have been ‘othered’ by this system.

DMT is a practice that borrows from a diverse group of thoughts including psychotherapy, neuroscience, and movement analysis (Dance Movement Therapy Association in Canada [DMTAC], 2017; McGarry & Russo, 2011), and is also one of the types of creative arts therapies (Zubala & Karkou, 2015). The body and its range of movements are the medium through which DMT operates, in its aim to promote healing, self-expression, growth, and development with individuals of varying abilities. DMT recognizes, emphasizes, and works within the distinct relationship between the mind and the body. It is a malleable practice that formulates entirely per participants’ physical, mental, and spiritual selves (Association of Dance Movement Psychotherapy UK [ADMP UK], 2013; American Dance Therapy Association [ADTA], 2016; DMTAC, 2017). DMT is not about teaching individuals ‘how’ to dance, and is

not meant to be exclusive to those who ‘can’ dance. It is about working with individuals to communicate, express, and develop via their bodies and movements, in a universal language (Sharoun, Reinders, Bryden, & Fletcher, 2014). The DMTAC (2017) frames DMT as helping individuals to find ways to understand all that is going on inside of them, how this affects what is outside of them, and provides the opportunity to practice appropriate responding/coping behaviours in a safe, supportive atmosphere. This process of sharing and exchanging is understood as a dialogue, and it is in this way that therapists and clients achieve mutual understanding and common ground (Chaiklin & Wengrower, 2009).

DMT is firmly grounded within the United States (US), as dance pioneers sparked this therapeutic practice in the 1940’s and ‘legitimized’ it with the founding of the ADTA in 1966 (ADTA, 2016; Levy, 1988). Within the United Kingdom (UK), DMT, or dance movement psychotherapy (DMP) as they call it, developed during the 1960’s and 1970’s, and the ADMP UK was founded in 1982 (ADMP UK, 2013). Remarkably, DMT has only just recently begun to develop in Canada (DMTAC, 2017), with the DMTAC being founded in June of 2011 (SeriousOtters, 2015). Canada was entertaining the notion of dance as a creative form of self-expression and healing around the same time as the US and the UK. Contrarily, it proved much harder for DMT to find its Canadian roots (Barker, 2009). In the early 1980’s, the Dance/Movement Therapy Association of Ontario (DMTAO) was established, though it only lasted into the early 1990’s before closing its doors (Barker, 2009). Canadians’ attempts at legitimizing DMT training and practice within the country were met with countless barriers and resistance, including from the government (Barker, 2009). Very little information exists detailing the path that DMT travelled in Canada in the years following the closure of the DMTAO.

Les Grands Ballets Canadiens de Montréal initiated the National Centre for Dance Therapy (NCDT) in late 2013, and hosts the main area of integration and development for DMT training in Canada (NCDT, 2016). DMT training occurs at the Master's level and is offered at universities approved by DMT associations. Such programs do not yet exist in Canada and although the DMTAC has been established, there are no Canadian accreditation standards yet (DMTAC, 2017). As such, the American standards from the ADTA are upheld in Canada via 'alternate route programs' (ADTA, 2016; Barker, 2009; DMTAC, 2017). The NCDT is tasked with providing sufficient evidence that DMT is in fact a beneficial form of therapy, is needed within Canada, and to support the efforts for a legitimate training program within Canadian universities, based on Canadian standards – not American standards (Lee, 2013; NCDT, 2016). Their first alternate route program officially began in July 2014 (NCDT, 2016).

My interest in this topic is largely shaped by my family, as social work, disability, and dance have always been a part of my life. Within my immediate family of six, more than half of my family members have various disabilities. As an able-bodied person, my family's experiences heightened my awareness of the societal process of inclusion and exclusion based on ability, and led me to question this process from a young age. I have always been passionate about dance and have always wanted to share this passion with others, especially with individuals who have not had the same opportunities as I have for any number of reasons. My close relationship with my younger sister, who has Down syndrome, led me to critique the dance world early in my life.

Growing up, my sister and I wanted to take dance classes together, but while I was able to participate in dance programs, she was not. There were no appropriate dance programs available to her. Dance programs that did exist for individuals with disabilities were not focused on dance, but on essentially babysitting, or were designed in a way that did not facilitate easy

access, were 'boring' in the words of my sister, did not have trained staff or instructors, and as my sister reached her teen years, programs began to range from ages 12-65 years. To this day, my sister at age 21, still has not participated in a dance program that she enjoyed. Let me be clear, my intention is not to cast a dark light on existing programs for children and youth with disabilities, as progressive work in this area is being implemented and carried out around the world. Perhaps in my family's case, this is an issue of geography and of financial assets, or maybe we just always chose the 'wrong' program. Whatever the case, when I was seven years old and I saw the inequality that my sister was facing, I made it my mission to break down these barriers so that anyone who wanted to dance, regardless of ability, could do so without exception. The inspiration for this study is not just my family, but my sister.

In the following chapter, I discuss the theoretical framework that guides and informs this study, consisting of critical disability theory and structural social work theory. A critical literature review will then be presented, illustrating the significant gaps that exist in this area and how my research intends to fill these gaps via two research questions. Three themes from the literature will be identified and will form the foundation of this section. The next chapter covers the methodology, that which gives shape to this study, consisting of a qualitative content analysis of a six-week DMT-inspired pilot program I have developed, via hermeneutic phenomenology. The findings and discussion chapter follows, presented under three themes that speak to the compatibility of DMT and recreational dance. Findings led to the creation of a logic model, presented in the implications and conclusion chapter that comes next, and outlines how accessible recreational dance spaces may be designed and implemented, based on DMT. This chapter stresses the need for a social work presence in this process, and for disability, dance, and social work to come together in a critical, productive manner.

## CHAPTER 2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

My theoretical framework centers on critical disability theory, while also pulling from structural social work theory. These theories are believed to be quite complimentary, as the focus of my study is the dismantling of the structures of recreational spaces, and the ableist nature of the recreation institution/infrastructure. Critical disability theory positions disability at the core of analyses to challenge and counter ableism (Meekosha & Shuttleworth, 2009). Ableism is understood by Titchkosky (2011) as that which conceives of disability in opposition to ‘normalcy’, in the sense that ableism is a ‘taken-for-granted’ mindset or lens that sees ‘able-bodiedness’ as ‘natural’ and the default (Titchkosky, 2011). Disability is thus conceived as a deviation from what is ‘normal’. Dominant discourses of dance are able-minded, and the widespread invisibility of disability in this realm can be understood as the deviation from the norms of the dance world that disability presents.

Pothier and Devlin (2006) explain that critical disability theory understands disability to be “a question of politics and power(lessness), power over, and power to” (p. 2). Critical disability theory informs my understanding of the lesser participation of individuals with disabilities in its complicating of the social model of disability (Meekosha & Shuttleworth, 2009). The social model understands disability as a social construction, in the sense that disability is perceived not as something an individual is born with or can acquire, but rather society, in its able-bodied design and construction, is what creates disability. An individual may be born with or may acquire an impairment, but society disables them from full participation when, for example, not all signs are written in larger print or in braille (Meekosha & Shuttleworth, 2009). Critical disability theory pushes this conceptualization further and moves understandings of disability beyond that of a binary. It sees disability as fluid and contextual, and

whether or not a person has a disability is entirely dependent upon where they find themselves (Pothier & Devlin, 2006).

Pothier and Devlin (2006) ask, “what is society’s response to a particular person’s circumstances?” (p. 5). This response, and often the lack of a response, is how I view the recreational dance world and its relation to disability. Accessibility is defined in relation to the process of inclusion and exclusion, in that access is only needed when the exclusion of certain bodies is made known (Titchkosky, 2011). Additionally, access is something that is a taken-for-granted privilege by some and a discriminatory ground for others (Titchkosky, 2011). My interpretation of access is that it is understood by society as static and non-transferable. Space is recognized as being *taken up* by non-normative bodies, and involves extra thought, cost, and efforts. The presence of these bodies in spaces is questionable, easily forgotten, and believed to be measurable (Titchkosky, 2011). Participation is dependent on accessibility and space, in that the accessibility of the space may encourage or discourage participation, or may even render participation near impossible for some (Titchkosky, 2011).

Choice of language is important to discuss when working from a critical disability lens (Pothier & Devlin, 2006; Titchkosky, 2011; Turner, 2006). Pothier and Devlin (2006) discuss the various terms that are often employed in relation to disability. They state, “that the range of descriptors is a reflection of a significant level of discomfort with what the English language seems to be able to offer as the available options” (Pothier & Devlin, 2006, p. 3). They, as well as Titchkosky (2011), explain how language is a highly-contested issue within the field of disability studies, stating that there is no ‘final answer’ on which terms are ‘better’ or ‘should’ be used over others. These theorists, in their work, illustrate this quite perfectly. Pothier and Devlin (2006) reference the earlier work of Titchkosky (2001) as they describe how ‘person first

language' is interpreted by some as 'apolitical', as taking the disability away from the individual, and as neglecting an individual's disability identity. In Titchkosky's (2011) later work, that which I make frequent reference to, they reiterate this belief and their language varies from 'the disabled' and 'individuals/persons with disabilities'. However, Pothier and Devlin (2006) do in fact utilize person first language. They explain their choice in saying that their work is,

part of the project of trying to rid the term 'disability' of its pejorative and exclusionary origins. For our purposes, we have chosen to use the descriptor 'persons with disabilities', as we believe that currently it is the least worst option. (p. 4)

My choice to use person first language is longstanding. Having read through the work of Pothier and Devlin (2006) and Titchkosky (2011), I am in agreement with both when it comes to the critiques of using the term 'individuals/persons with disabilities'. Nonetheless, I do see this term as the 'least worst option' and I work from the stance that sees person first language as recognizing an individual *as an individual*. This is not to say that their identity with disability is pushed aside or made to be less significant. In referring to the disability community as individuals with disabilities, there is an acknowledgment of and respect given towards both the person and their disability identity. The individual and their disability have a separate yet united and respectful emphasis. Growing up in a family where more than half of my family members have a disability, I adopted person first language from a young age. At this time, classmates often did not understand my family makeup and 'disability' was interpreted by them as a negative word, as something 'bad'. I started to hear the word 'disabled' being used in a condescending fashion with ableist language interwoven all throughout, with no regards to the individuals implicated by such harsh words. Person first language allowed my family and I to

stand up against this violence. I continue to work from this position in my advocacy and in my efforts to emphasize the ‘personness’ of disability.

Structural social work emphasizes the societal structures and institutions that impact individuals’ lives (Carniol, 1992; Lundy, 2004). An individual’s adverse experiences are as such understood as being influenced by their actions, as well as by structural forces (Carniol, 1992; Lundy, 2004). Structures are what privilege certain individuals over others, such as the ‘able-bodied’ over the ‘dis-abled’, and can render individuals as either invisible or visible depending on their social location and identity (Carniol, 1992; Lundy, 2004). Empowerment is the finding of inner power and voice to challenge imposing structures like ableist myths, and to take action against them. This is closely linked to collectivity, the gaining of an awareness of the role of the structures in shaping one’s predicament, realizing that an issue is not individual but collective (Carniol, 1992; Lundy, 2004). Acquiring a collective consciousness can instill a sense of empowerment and drive to challenge these structures. This frames my understanding of how dancers with disabilities counter dominant discourses of what it means to dance and to be a dancer, and how being in this space as a non-able-bodied person unravels.

This attention to the structures and associated inequalities is pertinent to this study, as it is the structural formation of the dance world and of dance programs that can allow access to these spaces or deny it. Ableist myths prevail in the dance world as disability and dance are not believed to be compatible by many. If this mentality acts as the foundation for a recreational dance program, the program’s design, evaluation, implementation, and promotion will have these ableist beliefs built into them. This structure will deny access to those who do not resemble the ‘targeted able-bodied participant’. Critical disability theory and structural social work theory are so well-suited because they offer a critical insight on this issue that may not be noticeable



otherwise. Disability defies the norm, and is rendered invisible through its constant forgotten presence. It has long been forgotten and/or ignored in the dance world, which has caused many program developers to forget about disability. As Titchkosky (2011) says, the presence of disability is questionable. When disability is not brought into the equation, oppressive, exclusive, inaccessible structures are reinforced and reproduced.

A structural and critical disability lens extends beyond the inner workings of a program to focus equally as much on that which exists outside of the program. The accessibility of the facility itself for example, and whether the accessible program is rendered inaccessible because of where it takes place. Structural social work recognizes that structural inequality is what (re)produces unequal power relations. Moreover, it emphasizes the intersectionality of oppression. Carniol (1992) writes that “just as oppressions are interwoven, so are their structural roots” (p. 4). The issue of accessible recreational dance programs cannot be resolved by focusing solely on attempts to eradicate barriers to varying abilities. Gender, race, and class for example, are all factors that must be taken into consideration alongside disability. As my review of the literature demonstrates, the presence of disability in recreational (dance) programs is affected by these elements, most obviously through the cost of a program and access to transportation. The use of a structural lens in conjunction with a critical disability lens places this “interweaving of oppression” (Carniol, 1992, p. 4) at the forefront of my analysis.

This next chapter presents a critical literature review, wherein scholarship pertinent to my study has been explored in depth. The many knowledge gaps that are identified stress the need for a study such as this, and emphasize the uniqueness of my interest and intentions, as well as my social work perspective.

### CHAPTER 3: LITERATURE REVIEW

The available literature on DMT and accessible recreational programming was reviewed, in addition to literature focusing on accessible dance programming and dance groups. Empirical studies were primarily used, but studies such as systematic and scoping reviews were also referenced. This literature was gathered from the following databases: ProQuest, ResearchGate, SAGE Journals, Scholars Portal Journals, ScienceDirect, SearchEverything, and Springer Link, using the yearly period of 2005-2017. Additionally, hand searches were conducted within the following journals with the same parameters: American Journal of Dance Therapy, Journal of Dance Education, Research in Dance Education, The Arts in Psychotherapy, and Therapeutic Recreation Journal.

Three themes emerged. The first theme was the emphasis on DMT working within, and to enhance, the relation/connection that exists between the mind and the body. This focus can lead to improvement and development on physical, social, emotional, and cognitive levels within individuals. The second theme was that personal and environmental factors greatly contribute to the participation of people with disabilities in recreational programs/activities, contributing to their decreased level of participation as compared to people with no disabilities. The third theme was the attention given to *full* accessibility and inclusion that fosters a learning environment wherein a sense of ‘fit’ and ‘relatedness’ can develop appropriately. The latter is recognized as an overarching theme that speaks to the connection between DMT and accessible recreation. Many knowledge gaps exist within this literature and as such, act as reinforcements for the relevance and need for research studies such as my own.

## **DMT and the Relation/Connection between the Mind and the Body**

Salgado and de Paula Vasconcelos (2010) and Lachance, Poncet, Proulx Goulet, Durand, Messier, Mckinley, and Swaine (2013) studied the impact of DMT on a woman with Multiple Sclerosis (MS) in Brazil and adults with mobility limitations in Canada, respectively. In both studies, participants experienced physical and neurological benefits, and improvements to their emotional and overall health (Lachance et al., 2013; Salgado & de Paula Vasconcelos, 2010). The case study of Salgado and de Paula Vasconcelos (2010) was with a woman, aged 45, living with MS, and the study's purpose was to explore the impact that dance, in a therapeutic manner, may have on her internal neurological processes. The study took place over the course of five months and 40 DMT sessions; sessions were held for one hour and 40 minutes, twice a week (Salgado & de Paula Vasconcelos, 2010). There were two phases that made up the study. Phase one was during the first month and was much like self-discovery for the participant, as this phase focused on fostering an environment wherein the participant could both freely explore and improve control of her 'body movement' (Salgado & de Paula Vasconcelos, 2010). Phase two took place during the remaining four months and built on phase one, seeking to enhance motor control and range of movements (Salgado & de Paula Vasconcelos, 2010). Key findings of this study include improvements in motor control, specifically with the participant's balance, and her neurological processes overall, as well as significant enhancements in her mental/emotional health, such as a more positive sense of self (Salgado & de Paula Vasconcelos, 2010).

Salgado and de Paula Vasconcelos (2010) describe how "[d]ance can provide adaptation and change realities, including physical limits...by emphasizing...that mind and body are inseparable" (Salgado & de Paula Vasconcelos, 2010, p. 59). This is furthered in their understandings of how dance holds the potential to increase individuals' awareness of the space in which they/their bodies occupy, and the diversified ways they can exert their bodies herein

(Salgado & de Paula Vasconcelos, 2010). This is also seen within the work of Lachance et al. (2013), who state that participants in their study gained a greater awareness of the range of movement available to their bodies. Similar studies present complimentary findings with individuals living with fibromyalgia (Bojner Horwitz, Kowalski, Theorell, & Anderberg, 2006), depression (Koch, Morlinghaus, & Fuchs, 2007), Parkinson's disease, and other health conditions such as diabetes, breast cancer, and heart failure (Haney, Messiah, Arheart, Hanson, Diego, Kardys, Kirwin, Nottage, Ramirez, Somarriba, & Binhack, 2014; Kiepe, Stöckigt, & Keil, 2012).

Scharoun, Reinders, Bryden, and Fletcher (2014), a largely American study, and McGarry and Russo (2011), an international study, note the physical, emotional, and cognitive benefits that DMT has had with children on the continuum of Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). Baudino's (2010) American case study of a young girl who adopted autistic-like behaviours as protection from her experiences of trauma and abuse, which led to a misdiagnosis of ASD, does similarly. The development of empathy, emotion-recognition, and physical awareness within these children are emphasized as affirming DMT's transformative power. These studies emphasize how dance and movement can be instrumental when working with individuals with ASD, because it encourages communication in both non-verbal and verbal forms (Baudino, 2010; Scharoun et al., 2014). Baudino (2010) states that "[e]very internally experienced emotion is expressed externally through one's body" (p. 126). As many children with ASD may be non-verbal or may have difficulties expressing themselves 'effectively' with words, dance and movement, or more specifically the body, can act as the medium for communication (Baudino, 2010; McGarry & Russo, 2011; Scharoun et al., 2014).

Each of these studies, and particularly the study of McGarry and Russo (2011), reflect the process of ‘mirroring’ that dance/movement therapists engage in. Mirroring is the imitation of an individual’s movements with the aim of increasing their emotional awareness and understanding (Berrol, 2006; McGarry & Russo, 2011; Scharoun et al., 2014). McGarry and Russo (2011) examined the mirror neuron system (MNS) that is believed to be activated by mirroring, resulting in this promotion of empathy development (Berrol, 2006). They propose that this connection is ‘valid’ and may in fact work to enhance empathy in individuals, but state that further research is needed to be more conclusive (Berrol, 2006; McGarry & Russo, 2011).

This theme and the scholarship reflected within it is highly relevant for my study, as it presents the many benefits that have been found to result from DMT and in using dance and movement as the basis for enhancing individuals’ lives physically, mentally, and emotionally. These attributes of DMT are what I want to bring into an accessible recreational dance program, as these should set the foundation for an inclusive space where any and every individual is welcome. It is important to note the lack of social work presence in the scholarship under this theme, as well as the blatant geographical gap in that only two studies (Lachance et al., 2013; McGarry & Russo, 2011) are located in Canada. Remembering the history of DMT and its slow ‘legitimate’ emergence in Canada, this geographical gap is not unprecedented.

### **Personal and Environmental Factors: Influence on Participation (and the Lack Thereof)**

Heah et al. (2007) and Tonkin et al. (2014) engaged in studies within the Canadian context, while Mayer and Anderson (2014) focused on the American context, and Bedell, Coster, Law, Liljenquist, Kao, Teplicky, Anaby, and Khetani (2013) examined both Canada and the US. These studies emphasize that personal factors (individuals and their families), and environmental factors (program location, accessibility, and supports) can work for or against recreational

participation of individuals with disabilities (Bedell et al., 2013; Heah et al., 2007; Tonkin et al., 2014). Heah et al. (2007), a phenomenological study, worked with a group of eight children ages five to 16 years with physical disabilities and their parents, with the goal of understanding what participation in out-of-school activities meant to them, and the barriers they face in this area. Nine themes were pulled from their results, with four falling under the category ‘meaning of successful participation’, four under ‘environmental supports and barriers’, and one under ‘personal supports and barriers’ (Heah et al., 2007). In order, these themes were: ‘having fun’, ‘feeling successful’, ‘doing and being with others’, ‘doing things myself’, ‘community program design’, ‘parent values and preferences’, ‘parent vigilance’, ‘social and physical support’, and ‘keeping up with the other kids’ (Heah et al., 2007, p. 41-43).

Their findings, resounding with the studies of Tonkin et al. (2014) and Bedell et al. (2013), place an emphasis on the lack of appropriate, meaningful recreational programs for this population. They found that when children enjoy what they are doing, are engaged in an activity with another person who is close to them or with a group, and/or are able to maintain a sense of independence throughout activities, they are more likely to want to continue participating in the activity and to have a better relationship with being active (Heah et al., 2007). Their findings also stress the need to create programs as accessible in their development, rather than creating programs with little or no thought towards access and later trying to ‘fit’ disabilities in (Heah et al., 2007). This reflects the “lack of fit” (Tonkin et al., 2014, p. 227) described in Tonkin et al.’s (2014) study that occurs when programs are developed inaccessibly, preventing the involvement of anyone with a disability. This was echoed throughout the literature, signifying when the environment becomes “more disabling than [an individual’s] condition itself” (Tonkin et al., 2014, p. 232; Bedell et al., 2013; Heah et al., 2007). These three studies contribute significantly

to this area of research in their inclusion of youth with disabilities, with age ranges of two to 18 years (Tonkin et al., 2014), five to 16 years (Heah et al., 2007), and five to 17 years (Bedell et al., 2013). The literature clearly states that as an individual with a disability ages, their recreational participation decreases significantly (Heah et al., 2007; Tonkin et al., 2014), highlighting the tremendous need to include this population in studies, and to increase the age range that classifies youth with disabilities.

Mayer and Anderson (2014) contribute an alternative perspective, having explored the reasoning underlying participation in segregated versus inclusive recreation. Nonetheless, similar themes were found as social support and program structure were experienced as instrumental factors in this decision (Mayer & Anderson, 2014). Segregated programs were preferred by participants because of their focus on enjoyment, learning, and collaboration, and promoting a sense of fair competition within their community (Mayer & Anderson, 2014). However, parents expressed wanting their children to participate in inclusive programs to gain exposure to, and to learn about ‘social norms and expectations’ of able-bodied society (Mayer & Anderson, 2014). Mayer and Anderson (2014), much like Heah et al. (2007), speak to the imperative need to design recreational programs as accessible from their roots onwards. Knowing that individuals with disabilities and their parents select programs largely based on their structure illuminates this crucial factor to participation. To further this finding, the inclusion of financial resources could have taken this discussion one step further, as segregated and inclusive programs may vary in cost, thus influencing the decision to participate.

The importance of this theme and the associated scholarship for my study is immense, as it outlines and pinpoints key factors that impede and facilitate the participation of individuals with disabilities in recreational activities. Program structure and design for example, which are

often developed without accessibility in mind, or programs that are meant to be inclusive but are in turn, not engaging or meaningful. This theme is critical for my study, as it is these barriers and facilitators that need to be taken into consideration when theorizing and outlining how an accessible recreational dance program could look. My goal is to eliminate these barriers as much as possible by weaving the facilitators of participation into the formation and essence of the program itself. Once again, one must note the lack of social work presence in this literature, though Canada is well represented in this theme.

### **The Connection Between DMT and Accessible Recreation**

Resounding in the literature are the many positive impacts that meaningful, accessible recreation programs have on individuals of all ages with disabilities in a range of areas, including health, social skills, physical/mental development, as well as motivation to be active (Anderson, 2010; Fragala-Pinkham, O'Neil, & Haley, 2010; Haney et al., 2014; King et al., 2005; Wilhite & Shank, 2009;). The relationship between DMT and accessible recreation are eloquently illustrated through the studies of Fragala-Pinkham et al. (2010) and D'Eloia and Sibthorp (2014) in the US, as well as Reinders, Bryden, and Fletcher (2015) in Canada. Fragala-Pinkham et al. (2010) describe 'physical accessibility' as referring to the accessibility of a facility wherein programs are offered. What may be an inclusive program can be rendered inaccessible or less accessible by a lack of wide entrances or signs written in braille, for example (Fragala-Pinkham et al., 2010). D'Eloia and Sibthorp (2014) offer a critical perspective on increasing accessibility in recreation from the design onward, much like Mayer and Anderson (2014) and Heah et al. (2007), and their proposing this via the concept of relatedness is excellent. D'Eloia and Sibthorp (2014) define relatedness as feeling valued by, and 'fitting in' with a group, and they developed and tested a model for recreation programs accordingly. Relatedness was found to help youth



with disabilities build a collective voice, which positively impacted their development, self-confidence, and sense of pride (D'Eloia & Sibthorp, 2014). The youth were seen to experience more positive interactions with role models in this setting than otherwise. Additionally, they were exposed to far greater levels of socialization than in their everyday, which was found to greatly enhance their participation (D'Eloia & Sibthorp, 2014).

These findings resonate with Reinders et al.'s (2015) phenomenological case study of a 21-year old man with Down syndrome, 'Luke', who participated in a 6-week dance program for individuals with varying disabilities. The study's intent was to see if dancing would impact Luke in any way, done through an examination of the perspectives and experiences of Luke, as well as those of his parents and dance instructor (Reinders et al., 2015). Four themes resulted from this study, being 'Luke at dance', 'Luke at home', 'Dance! Dance! Dance!', and 'becoming a dancer', though this article focused solely on the first theme (Reinders et al., 2015). 'Luke at dance' had four subthemes, which were psychological, physical, and social benefits, and how experiences were influenced by music (Reinders et al., 2015). At the end of the program, Luke demonstrated heightened "self-confidence, body awareness, self-esteem, and encouragement to dance" (Reinders et al., 2015, p. 303), and increased engagement and enjoyment of socialization. Being able to participate in this program allowed Luke social opportunities and interactions that perhaps may not have been available to him otherwise (Reinders et al., 2015).

There were many limitations to this study that Reinders et al. (2015) note, including that this dance program ranged from ages 8-24 years and that Luke was the only participant of his age. A wide age range in a recreational (dance) program can have a positive or negative impact on participants' enjoyment and engagement, as addressed earlier by studies like that of Bedell et al. (2013) and Tonkin et al. (2014). Luke may have experienced this program differently if there

were other 21-year old participants. Luke was also the only male-identified participant, which may have impacted his experiences, be it positively or negatively. Regardless, Luke's parents and dance instructor perceived him to have gained a new skillset, to have benefitted physically such as in coordination and balance, and to have greatly enjoyed himself in this program (Reinders et al., 2015). However, his parents felt that benefits could have been further enhanced if the program was longer than six weeks, offered more than once a week, and/or the length of each class was increased.

The cost of the program itself was also taken into consideration by Reinders et al. (2015), in terms of how many individuals with disabilities could afford this program and others similar to it. They state similarly to Fragala-Pinkham et al. (2010) in that parents of children with disabilities may not be able to afford programs such as this, due to the high cost of necessary expenses like medications and 'specialized transportation' (Reinders et al., 2015). Reinders et al. (2015) note that changes could be made to this program if it received additional funding, allowing for the cost of the program to be lowered and/or for class times to be lengthened. As such, not only does this case study offer a wealth of information on the potential benefits of dance with an individual with Down syndrome in a recreational environment. It also underlines the overarching issue of the lack of financial support and funding for appropriate, accessible, and enjoyable programs, which has been highlighted in multiple studies (Fragala-Pinkham et al., 2010; Herman & Chatfield, 2010; Irving & Giles, 2011; Reinders et al., 2015).

Examining further work around inclusion taking place in the dance world, Irving and Giles (2011) conducted an ethnographic study of a Canadian 'integrated dance' company's performance company, 'The Crew'. The Crew was made up of dancers with varying abilities. Irving and Giles (2011) describe the ways in which the dancers use performance to attempt to

counter and reframe the dominant ideologies of dance, the dancer's body, and what non-abled dancers are capable of (Irving & Giles, 2011). Dancers felt their creativity and excitement to dance nurtured by this company and its inclusive, accepting design, and felt as though their bodies, differences, and identities as dancers were celebrated (Irving & Giles, 2011). This study, among others, highlights an extremely prominent fact that integrated/inclusive/accepting dance programs are faced with daily. Regardless of their structure or values, they nonetheless exist within and in relation to a largely inaccessible, 'aesthetically pleasing' dance world (Irving & Giles, 2011; Whatley, 2007). The co-founders of The Crew expressed struggling to resist conforming to the dominant discourses of the dance world, while simultaneously wanting to be accepted as legitimate and 'professional' in the eyes of this world (Irving & Giles, 2011). The dancers' agency is central to these studies, as they describe their resistance to dominant discourses and ideologies enforced by the able dance world. Furthermore, the centering of individual talent, ability, and potential, and how these can translate into dance and movement is emphasized all throughout (Cheesman, 2011; Herman & Chatfield, 2010; Irving & Giles, 2011; Whatley, 2007).

There is an explicitness in the importance and relevance of this theme from the literature to my study. This scholarship presents the tremendous amount of work being done to improve recreational programs and spaces by critically engaging with disability and accessibility, as well as the waves that have begun to ripple out in the dance world, pushing for greater inclusion and visibility. Moreover, work being done in Canada is visible under this theme (Irving & Giles, 2011; Reinders et al., 2015), though limited it may be. Social workers remain outside of and uninvolved in this work, according to this body of literature. What is equally as striking, is that the programs found within these studies are seemingly not influenced by DMT. These studies

demonstrate that the potential link between recreational dance and disability and accessibility, via the bridge of DMT, has not been taken up in any way. From this literature review, one can see that DMT has not been incorporated in any shape or form into the recreational dance world. Hence, the uniqueness of my study and the need to examine the issue of accessible recreational dance spaces with this lens is amplified.

### **Gaps within the Literature & Research Questions**

Efforts were made throughout this critical literature review to incorporate Canadian research as best as possible, specifically with regards to DMT. However, the ongoing conception of DMT within Canada means a lack of Canadian research and presence. Canadian DMT literature is also predominantly published in American journals, raising questions of who and where the target population is. The research referenced throughout this review provides a solid understanding of the current state of accessible recreational spaces in Canada as well as the US, the use of DMT with individuals with varying abilities, and the diversified presence of disability in dance throughout the world. Many knowledge gaps were identified, specifically within the disconnect between social work, recreation, and dance, and the need for greater Canadian presence in this field, highlighting the need for a research study to address this void.

There is no evidence to suggest that DMT is being used in a recreational way to promote accessibility. Herein lies my proposed research questions, which ask: From a critical disability lens, how can DMT inspire a model for accessible recreational dance spaces and what might this recreational space look like? What is the role of social workers in implementing this model in community-based organizations? The issue of accessible recreational dance spaces is one in need of further, critical research and may no longer be swept aside. It is hoped that research questions such as the above-proposed will foster a greater understanding of this issue, and will instigate

structural change within both the dance and recreational worlds. Moreover, this study aims for a better realization of the place and role of anti-oppressive social work within these two worlds.

The ensuing chapter presents the methodology that informs my study, and describes my methods in terms of data collection and data analysis. Both my theoretical framework and the foundation of scholarship I have built in this chapter are incorporated into this methodology, as I strive for transparency in the analysis to come of my own work.

## CHAPTER 4: METHODOLOGY

My research took shape as a qualitative content analysis following hermeneutic phenomenology. This methodology was chosen so that substantive action for increasing accessible recreational dance spaces may take place. My interest in disability, dance, and social work led to my development of a six-week DMT-inspired pilot program in my final year of undergraduate studies, entitled “Roots for Expression”. It is this program that I have analysed. It is important to note that this program was not grounded in any theoretical framework at the time, but was simply created to see how DMT could inform a recreational dance program. It was also created over the course of just under three months. This study allowed me the opportunity to return to my work and to view this program in light of critical disability theory and structural social work theory, and to make it more obviously applicable and relevant to the field of social work, among other disciplines that this study will contribute to.

A content analysis is the methodical analysis of a document wherein conceptual themes surface (Wilson, 2016). This content analysis is a relational analysis, as I have engaged with my program in a way that allowed me to explore the relationships that exist between underlying concepts and themes within “Roots for Expression” (Wilson, 2016). White and Marsh (2006) describe this type of content analysis as “creating a picture of a given phenomenon that is always embedded within a particular context, not [as] describing reality objectively” (p. 38). It is in this way that I have picked apart my program in an attempt to understand how my theoretical framework is reflected within it, where the place of theory is in this program, and whether this program may be seen as feasible for future implementation.

The concepts that I outlined in my theoretical framework; disability, ableism, accessibility, participation, structures, empowerment, and collectivity; all came into play in this

relational analysis, as I have deconstructed “Roots for Expression” in search of the ways that these concepts may be embedded within the program design and structure. In understanding how these concepts were or were not present, I was able to better recognize how critical disability theory and structural social work theory can inform and enhance this program and future similar programs.

Critical reflexivity was imperative to this methodology and analysis. It was important to be able to see and understand how my biases infiltrated my program design, and how the same could happen with theoretical assumptions, as both of these could limit the capacity of such programming to be accessible to any and all individuals, regardless of ability. Heron (2005) discusses the importance of being critically self-aware and self-reflexive to understand how privilege and power for example, can filter into interactions with service users. Heron (2005) presents numerous guiding questions to deconstruct social worker/service user interactions to better understand the intersectionality of experiences of oppression faced by service users.

In relation to the population my study centers on, I am privileged as an able-bodied individual. Although I have witnessed and experienced side effects of ableist discrimination and oppression experienced by family members, I have not had such behaviours acted against me and my body. I knew it to be entirely possible that my able-bodied privilege played a part in the development of my program, and that without even realizing it ableist beliefs and taken-for-granted ‘things’ were seamlessly weaved in and out of the program structure. It was important for me to be able to recognize these upon analysis, and to question and work through them in a constructive way so that my logic model would not reproduce these same assumptions. This coincides with van Manen (2016) and Sloan and Bowe’s (2014) explanation of how hermeneutic phenomenology is quite reflexive and requires the researcher to pull from their previous

knowledge and experiences when interpreting relationships and meanings. Doing so in an empathetic way can foster a critically reflexive understanding of the phenomena being studied.

### **Data Collection**

My data collection consisted of the materials used in the creation of my program, including reflections, brainstorming notes, my design notes, and the final program brochure that I created (please see Appendix A for document selection guide and Appendix B for a detailed list of documents). As this program was created for a class, I had to develop a learning contract before diving in. In this document, I listed my objectives, the tasks I would undergo to achieve these objectives, and any issues I thought I might encounter while carrying out these tasks. This was incorporated into my analysis as it was the very start of my development process, and I referred to it throughout. My main focus was on my final program brochure to see how my brainstorming, thought processes, and learning contract all led to this final version of the pilot program. Confidentiality and anonymity of my peers, friends, and professor have been ensured, as I have not stated which class this program was developed for, nor are any names mentioned at any point. All descriptors such as names, pictures, and course codes on documents have been blacked out.

### **Data Analysis**

Data analysis consisted of hermeneutic phenomenology, which is an interpretive phenomenology (Sloan & Bowe, 2014). Phenomenology aims to understand the meanings of individuals' experiences via an analysis of spoken or written language. Hermeneutic phenomenology centers itself on an analysis, interpretation, and understanding of 'the parts to the whole' (Sloan & Bowe, 2014). It does so by "interpret[ing] the meanings found in relation to phenomena" (Sloan & Bowe, 2014, p. 1295). With respect to my research, accessible



recreational dance programming is the phenomena being analysed and explored. Sloan and Bowe (2014) as well as van Manen (2016) explain the ‘hermeneutic circle’, which is the examining of a part of a text in relation to the whole (the phenomena) to deepen the understanding of the whole and its relation to the parts, and vice versa. It is a circle of interpretation and “meaning-giving inquiry” (p. 28), as van Manen (2016) puts it. The ‘extraction’ and interpretation of themes in relation to the overall theme or phenomena is understood as the core of this hermeneutic circle (Sloan & Bowe, 2014).

Analysis of my program took place in the following way: I began with the vision and beliefs of the program, as this is the overarching theme (the whole) that guides each week. It was examined to see where and how my theoretical framework fit in. Several questions guided this analysis (please see Appendix C) in exploring how the program vision and beliefs were connected to the phenomena of accessible recreational dance programming. Each week of the program was analysed in the same way, and in their relation to one another and to the whole. This was how the analysis of the relationship of the parts to each other and of the parts to the whole took place, for all six weeks of the program. The hermeneutic circle was prevalent throughout this entire analysis, as it attempted to uncover the cyclical relationships between all aspects of the program.

Van Manen (2016) states that hermeneutic phenomenology has more to do with questioning and reflective questioning than it does with providing answers. Prior to beginning this analysis, I knew that many more questions than answers would arise. I prepared myself to analyse something that was not grounded within any theory whatsoever, but was merely based on DMT and my own thoughts around what accessible recreational dance could look like. My timeline for the creation of this project was also quite short. I knew this analysis would lead to

the development of numerous questions, and that there was a strong chance I would not be able to find any answers, but may just be struck with even more questions. This was not perceived as problematic. In fact, I believed this to allow me the opportunity to delve deeper into this issue of accessibility and dance, and to begin to think about how accessible recreational dance, informed by a DMT model, may look.

Following this analysis, I had the information needed to create a logic model. This logic model demonstrates how to go from theory to accomplishing goals, meaning how theory can inform an accessible recreational dance program in a way that will enable it to have a successful outcome (Morestin & Castonquay, 2013). It also notes how to go about defining ‘success’ for such a space. The logic model may be conceptualized as an expanded mind map, and it is intended to act as a guide for how accessible recreational dance spaces may be designed and implemented, based on DMT. This model continues in the fashion of the hermeneutic circle to understand how each element of the program relates to one another, and to the program’s main vision/goals/beliefs (Morestin & Castonquay, 2013; National Network of Libraries *of* Medicine [NN/LM], n. d.). Main features of the program are outlined, as well as the presence of social workers, the place of theory, and the DMT influence. The model is not rigid, in that it is not meant to represent the ‘right’ way to create accessible recreational programs. Instead, it is flexible just like DMT, and is intended to guide such program development in a way that is rooted within critical disability and structural social work theories. It is through this process that DMT has inspired a model that may inform accessible recreational dance spaces, via a critical disability and structural lens, with pivotal social work involvement.

The following chapter presents my findings and associated discussion, and does so via three themes that were drawn from this analysis of my documents. I make clear my efforts to be

transparent throughout this process, as I delve into a critical unearthing of the work that went into the creation of my program. My theoretical lens, the foundation of literature I examined, and the philosophies of my methodology maintain their presence in this chapter that aims to shine the spotlight on the pairing of disability, dance, and social work.

## **CHAPTER 5. FINDINGS & DISCUSSION**

The process of this analysis is one that I have come to think of as a way of revisiting my work with a new lens. Bringing together two critical lenses like critical disability theory and structural social work theory and applying them to a project that I did not intentionally create with any theoretical foundation, was intimidating. Fortunately, I found myself able to easily engage with my work in this way. I have made efforts to be transparent throughout my analysis, as I fully recognize the impact that my closeness to the data may have on my critical lens. As van Manen (2016) and Sloan and Bowe (2014) define hermeneutic phenomenology as a reflexive method, I have been engaged in a reflexive process from the start of this endeavour. Prior to the analysis as well as during, I have attempted to be open to ableist underpinnings, missteps, and gaps within my work through critical internal dialogue. I have questioned what is missing in my work and why. I believe this reflexive positioning, along with the year-long separation from the data I had, has allowed me a new perspective.

Findings from my analysis are inspiring and practical. Not only do they further what was a passionate, though short-lived, undergraduate initiative by revealing its potential to be taken up by community-based, community-led organizations. They also highlight its potential to bring about transformative change. These findings are presented in three thematic areas, each one speaking directly to my research questions. An analysis is offered for each of these themes, followed by a discussion that ties in my theoretical lenses and the literature examined. Findings led to the creation of a logic model that forms a guide for how accessible recreational dance spaces may be designed and implemented, as inspired by DMT. This will be discussed in my implications chapter. Many more questions than answers have risen from this analysis, as was anticipated in my methodology chapter. I hope that it has given life to important thoughts and

guidance around how it is that social workers can be involved in the creation of accessible recreational dance spaces for individuals with disabilities. It is also my hope that this will be the first step in bringing social work and dance together in a critical, inclusive, and significant way.

**What might an accessible recreational dance space look like when based on DMT? What is the role of social workers?**

The first theme that arose from my data addresses how this accessible recreational dance space might look when created from a DMT-inspired model, and speaks to how social workers can and should be involved. This theme tells us that an accessible recreational dance space is one that is for “everyone and anyone” (Program Brochure, 2015); its design understands the multiple layers of accessibility and of accessing inclusive programming. This theme reflects the inner and outer pieces involved in creating appropriate spaces for individuals with disabilities.

The outline of my program begins with its values and beliefs, which discuss its centering on a celebration of the uniqueness of every individual. It states that,

Everyone deserves, and is able, to dance and to move their bodies in creative, new ways;  
Everyone deserves to feel confidence and pride in themselves; Everyone deserves their  
own form of self-expression and communication; With support, everyone can accomplish  
their goals (Program Brochure, 2015)

Following the hermeneutic circle (Sloan & Bowe, 2016; van Manen, 2016), this is the ‘whole’, or the phenomenon, that each ‘part’ must be analysed in relation to, and vice versa, to understand the essence of the phenomena that is accessible recreational dance spaces.

DMT sessions are largely informed by participants, as facilitators meet them at their starting point and follow their lead (ADTA, 2016; DMTAC, 2017). This brought my program to begin with goal setting each week, apart from the final week where goals are returned to

participants to allow for a reflection on their experiences. Participants' strengths are valued, and goals are meant to help shape classes in ways that empower participants to reach their goals. Returning them in the final week is meant to reinforce all that it is hoped individuals will have experienced throughout the program. I interpret this as a meaningful way to strengthen participants' accomplishments and to encourage them to continue to dance and to move. A guided warm-up, a technique class, group or solo improvisation, and a cool-down then follow. The excerpt below comes from the weekly breakdown and emphasizes the inclusive thinking guiding this program.

All warm-ups, stretches, and cool-downs are set in consideration to varying needs and abilities. Our instructors are trained to adapt any and all movements to be inclusive of all participants, as part of our program vision for full inclusion and accessibility. (Program Brochure, 2015)

In addition to accessibility and inclusion, learning through collaboration is well-reflected throughout the program. While increasing participants' sense of community and belonging is not mentioned, these present as two of the innermost elements of this space. The program intends to create an environment where individuals may be empowered through their processes of creative exploration, both independently and with each other. Confidence, among other attributes, is being grounded as individuals enter this space. Collaborative learning is central in the first two weeks. Participants, through discovering their range of motion, are developing a new kind of vocabulary as they begin to increase their bodily awareness. This program emphasizes the power of individual strengths and their potential to be used creatively to bring about self-change. The program values and beliefs, in this manner, drive the program from its start.

Within the third week, the role of instructors shifts from one of leading movements to one of offering “structure and guidance” (Program Brochure, 2015), and participants begin to take the lead. Individuals are supported not just in furthering their movement vocabulary, but in taking ownership of their bodies and all that they can do. Independence, inspiration, and empowerment are key elements in this week as participants begin to take up space. This is the first ripple in what will become a dynamic wave in the realm of dance by the end of the program. There is a notable relation between each of these first three weeks and their relation to the whole. As each week is a progression from the last, there is a relational feeling to the program overall that is well-suited to the hermeneutic circle and way of understanding this phenomena.

In the second half of the program, participants continue to build their confidence, expand their movements, and command space as they prepare for their performance in week six. Key components such as space, the chance to dance, and all abilities are further highlighted, elements that speak to the overall aims of the program but are made most evident in this second phase. My notes are quite clear in outlining that having the chance to dance includes having the opportunity to perform (Program Outline, 2015; Program Outline 2, 2015). Dancing on stage is an experience that is often solely privy to the able-bodied dancer, the dancer whom society expects to see on stage. This program creates space for dancers with disabilities not just in the studio itself, but in the dance world more broadly through performance. As this program aims to increase self-confidence and pride, self-expression, and opportunities for everyone and anyone to dance, the inclusion of choreography and performance is essential. This may be critiqued though, for it fails to describe if and how support is ensured while performing. This is addressed in my discussion.

Turning to the more administrative aspect, the program fee was regarded as a large factor in the development, and affordability was held with high importance. The decision to charge

\$120 for the entire program was reached after I considered the average cost of a recreational dance program and what kind of funding I could potentially receive. My notes make clear how I struggled with this, and even upon deciding on \$120 I was not satisfied (Peer Notes, 2015).

Could it not cost less to be made more affordable and financially accessible? As will be taken up in my discussion, the cost of accessible programming is a large factor in individuals' abilities to participate. Particularly when attention is given to expenses such as medications, which my notes indicate was done, additional costs are not always possible (Fragala-Pinkham et al., 2010). This intentional process demonstrates how an accessible program is one that is such in more than simply its design and implementation. Working back to the phenomena of accessible recreational dance spaces, such a program cannot support and uphold individuals' strengths or encourage their self-expression and creativity if they view accessibility as one-levelled. If individuals cannot afford to attend the program, then the program is not acting according to its set values and beliefs, but working against them. Directly related to cost is the location of the program, which I make no mention of in my work. This will be furthered in my discussion.

Age is an important piece both within this program and for future similar programs.

Classes are structured according to age, each class following the same curriculum (Program Brochure, 2015):

<b>12 – 15 years</b>
<b>16 – 19 years</b>
<b>20 – 25 years</b>

As quoted above, the age range for the program was set as 12-25 years with classes broken into three groups by age, and I state that the program hopes to expand to dancers of all ages following its first year (Program Brochure, 2015). My notes concerning this piece are sparse, and consist mostly of “youth? Or all?” (Program Outline 2, 2015), though I know that I was thinking about the experiences of my sister as a youth. As mentioned in the literature review, youth with



disabilities are all too often left out of initiatives, or are lumped by programs into inappropriate age groups. 12-25 years is a large range, and breaking participants into smaller groupings eliminates this ‘lumping’. While these groupings are a good start, participants could be further broken up into four or five groups as 12-14 years, 15-17 years, 18-20 years, 20-22 years, and 23-25 years. The number of classes would need to be aligned with the number of instructors and available support, and so it is important that programs take great care with this structuring. As discussed in the literature, age is a critical piece that poses many questions in such a process. These questions are rooted in deep, critical reflection though, and from them come meaningful and inspired thoughts (Sloan & Bowe, 2014; van Manen, 2016).

As often as my notes mention the relevance and compatibility of social work, dance, and DMT, and the need for a critical social work presence in dance (Learning Contract, 2015), I offer no suggestions around how this can happen. This is also true for the support that I so frequently bring up. Recognizing and reflecting on this has led me to suggest the following. Social workers can provide support for participants and instructors via crisis management, conflict-resolution, active listening, support with learning movements, communication, etc. They can work with families and instructors to ensure that individuals’ needs are effectively understood, recognized, and met, that necessary support is provided in an appropriate manner, and can communicate with families around issues or concerns. There are countless ways for social workers to be involved. None of this was discussed in my work on this program, but the absence of this information in the presence of so much else makes what were multiple questions and uncertainties last year now a blatantly obvious response. This will be continued in my discussion.

## **How can DMT inspire a model for accessible recreational dance programming?**

The second theme that emerged speaks to the ways that DMT, a therapeutic practice, can translate into a recreational atmosphere, and is the first half in this discussion that continues in the third theme. This theme demonstrates that the use of dance and movement as the basis for creative transformation and growth within DMT translates into the recreational space through its centeredness in a universal form of expression. This theme is where I attempt to make clear how a therapeutic practice can inspire a recreational environment, not another type of therapy, and where the parallels between DMT and recreational dance are highlighted.

I believe that everyone, regardless of ability, has a wealth of potential and strength inside of them, and that when given the appropriate support and opportunities, they can excel in all ways (Program Brochure, 2015)

This analysis is grounded within DMT, as to understand this theme and how it transpires in my program, one must understand what is meant by DMT ‘inspiring and influencing’ a recreational space. DMT incorporates the central elements of dance and movement, such as rhythm and expression, and uses them as a vehicle for the development of empathy, self-understanding, and communication within individuals (ADMP UK, 2013; DMTAC, 2017; Scharoun et al., 2014). The body can communicate and project more than words, and it is in this way that dance and movement are considered universal forms of expression (Scharoun et al., 2014). These elements are incorporated in my program and demonstrate how DMT can inspire a recreational dance space. As social workers, we want to work from where the client is at, just as DMT does. We want to support individuals in their journeys and to help them to empower themselves. All of this resonates with DMT and in my mind, both in my development of this program and in this present moment, resonates with a recreational dance space.

‘Therapy’ is a word that I do not particularly enjoy and one that I avoid using, as it has many negative connotations. The word implies that something is wrong and needs fixing. To apply this word in the context of disability is, in my mind, to take a drastic step backwards and return to the medical model, which views disability as a problem within an individual that must be fixed and made ‘better’ (Pothier & Devlin, 2006). My notes reflect how I never thought of DMT as a therapy, even though its name quite literally is this (Learning Contract Brainstorming, 2015; YouTube Video Reflection, 2015). DMT for me was always more about developing awareness and understanding through the body, and finding a form of expression that is both helpful and recognizable. This mindset is what allowed, and still allows, me to see a therapeutic practice as a recreational tool, and as a social work environment.

DMT is a versatile practice that adapts to the individuals partaking in it (ADTA, 2016; DMTAC, 2017; Scharoun et al., 2014), and an accessible recreational dance space should do the same. Participants should not need to work around the program or feel as though they must make changes to participate. The responsibility of ensuring the space is inclusive and adaptable rests with the program itself, not the participants. The notion of individuals with disabilities needing to try to ‘fit into’ a program is not a reality of my program, as it is designed to be as flexible as DMT. To try to make someone ‘fit into’ a program implies that the design neglected this individual, their presence having been questioned and deemed measurable (Titchkosky, 2011; Tonkin et al., 2014). As DMT works with individuals to meet their needs, so does this program and so should accessible recreational dance programs in general. This analysis begins to demonstrate the parallels between DMT and accessible recreational dance, making easier the task of understanding how DMT can inspire a recreational space. The whole of this program

consists of DMT, and its tenets are interwoven through every part and in the ways that they have a circular and meaningful relationship to one another, and to the whole.

Hermeneutic phenomenology emphasizes the importance and relevance of the researcher reflecting on their own experiences in relation to the phenomena they are studying to further their interpretation of their data (Sloan & Bowe, 2014). My experiences in teaching dance with children with and without disabilities in a recreational environment were very much at the forefront of my mind throughout the development of this program.

...the changes in an individual that you see when they become more familiar with and aware of their body is phenomenal and so inspiring... (Program Outline 2, 2015)

I am now seeing this retelling, quoted above, and the memories I have of these experiences as the creative transformation of the self that DMT discusses. Here is another exemplary connection between the recreational dance world and DMT. As I worked with these children, several who had developmental disabilities, I strived to meet them where they were most comfortable and to follow their lead, rather than placing them in the position of trying to catch up to me. I saw my students and myself as collaborators learning together, and this is what I tried to infuse into my program. This philosophy is what DMT encourages and works from.

My experience teaching recreationally, which this analysis interprets as being very DMT-like, had a strong influence on the development of this DMT-inspired recreational program. This program emphasizes its aims to increase individuals' self-awareness, ability to express their emotions and thoughts, and to provide them with the chance to dance in an inclusive space (Program Outline 2, 2015). This program is founded in the power of the body to spark inner change via the wealth of potential within every individual. Should a recreational dance program not encourage creative growth and development? Should it not enhance one's self- and body

awareness? Should it not tap into what lies inside its participants and teach them how to use their skills to achieve their goals? Should dance and movement not foster new forms of self-expression and communication? My experiences in teaching dance recreationally answer ‘yes’ to these questions, as does my program, as does my understanding of DMT.

Quite frequently in my notes and in my final program brochure, I refer to the benefits of DMT and of my program, as well as success. The work that went into developing this program reflects widespread beliefs that question the use of dance and movement as the basis for fostering healing and growth within individuals (YouTube Video Reflection, 2015). I wonder now if my desire or need to include benefits and success so frequently in this project were influenced by this knowledge, and if not, what my intentions were in these inclusions. DMT does have a strong focus on benefits and success, particularly when discussed in the Canadian context due to its near-invisible presence. The model and programs that DMT inspires may make mention of benefits and success, but it is important to define these and perhaps even state why they are being included. These must be well-thought, as it is important that the model and programs that DMT inspires are not driven by benefits or success, but by the programs’ visions and beliefs. While benefits and success are mentioned several times in my work, the focus of my program remains on the process of using dance and movement in new ways and the growth that can come from this. Similarly to DMT, benefits and success are by-products of the process, but they must not blur the intentions of the program.

### **How can DMT inspire a model for accessible recreational dance programming and how this space might look (continued)**

The third and final theme that came about through my data continues the discussion of how accessible recreational dance spaces can be inspired and influenced by DMT, and adds to

thoughts around how this space could look. It states that dance and movement provide a medium for individuals to have fun, build relationships, form connections, and learn independently and with others, all through the body – whether in DMT or recreationally. It is hoped that a firm understanding of the compatibility of this therapeutic practice and a recreational environment may be gained, as this third part of the analysis attempts to solidify this relationship.

My notes highlight the relationship between the mind and the body that DMT and dance and movement emphasize and work within to promote growth and development (Program Outline, 2015; YouTube Video Reflection, 2015). This is most visible within the second half of my program. Learning how to move one's body in ways that express inner thoughts and processes, and then to do so in a performance capacity brings together some of the key underpinnings of DMT and of an accessible recreational dance space. My program has taken the core beliefs and practices of DMT and applied them to a recreational dance environment. It stays close to the main attributes of both entities, while creating something new. DMT is not about learning 'how' to dance or learning choreography, and its sessions do not take shape as a dance class. Participants take the lead, as facilitators shape their sessions according to participants' needs (ADTA, 2016; DMTAC, 2017; Scharoun et al., 2014). Recreational dance classes typically have a goal of teaching 'how' to dance a certain way and are working towards an end result, such as a performance. This space is most often led by the instructor while students follow, and there is not much room, if any, for students' voices to be heard. There are of course exceptions, as myself and my colleagues did not teach in this way. For the purposes of this analysis, I am referring to the recreational dance world in general, which is based on my knowledge and experiences.

The development of my program, in light of these distinct differences, saw similarities between DMT and recreational dance that could enable a fusion of these spaces. Both DMT and recreational dance center themselves on body awareness, connections through movement, and self-expression through the body. My understanding of an accessible recreational dance space, both last year and in this present moment, sees these as core elements to an accessible dance program. Although having fun may not be explicitly stated in the goals of DMT or recreational dance, it is inevitably a product of both these spaces and practices. Following suit, my program does not explicitly state that a goal is for participants to enjoy themselves. However, there is frequent mention of connections, sharing, encouragement, groups, togetherness, and celebration (Program Brochure, 2015; Program Outline 2, 2015). With the program's vision and beliefs in mind, I interpret these as promoting fun and enjoyment.

I think everyone should have the chance to dance and to shine (Program Outline, 2015)

The compilation of my notes and final program brochure sum up to the following analysis. When the body is your method, individuals will surprise you with what they can discover and what they do with that discovery. I have seen this in my teaching experience and researchers have seen this in their studies. This can happen in either a DMT or a recreational setting. I see this as being what draws these two entities together and what makes them so compatible. From DMT, comes a welcoming space for everyone and anyone; rooted in both DMT and recreational dance is an opportunity to form new relationships and connections with your body and with others, in new and creative ways; again, from both entities is learning to use the body to relate to and to learn with others, and to learn independently; and to share this experience with others in classes, everyday life, or in a performance also stems from both sites.

These are the ways that DMT has inspired and influenced the design of my program, and how it can guide the development of future accessible recreational dance programs.

My program stays very close to DMT in its strong focus on energies and emotions, two areas that are quite pertinent to DMT's work, and it homes in on these so that participants may learn how their dancing and movements can be influenced by their inner processes. This lays the basis for the entire program, though the focus on energies and emotions becomes less explicit as the program steps into its second half. Thinking critically about how DMT can inspire a model for accessible recreational dance spaces, I do not believe this kind of structure to be the only possibility. Energies and emotions can still be a part of the foundation, but perhaps they do not need such a strong emphasis. If dance and movement are already about self-expression and a way of both communicating and releasing different energies and emotions, is it necessary to place these at the forefront of the program? The parameters that I was working within required me to provide a weekly breakdown, which is where the emphasis on energies and emotions lies. Most recreational programs do not do this, but offer an overview of the program instead. My program is also quite ambitious, in that classes are only once a week for six weeks, with the sixth week having a performance. This design is as a pilot project though, to see how the program could run, and so should not dictate a timeframe for future programs, nor for the presentation of program information for participants and families.

There are many ways that an accessible recreational dance program could take shape based on DMT, given that its DMT influence would encourage it to allow participants more of a leading role. It is important to have input from participants and their families, as this program should be one that works with them. The role of participants herein cannot be forgotten or neglected, as to do so would be to venture away from the DMT influence. I did not do this in the



development of my program, given my short timeframe and the scope of the project, but this is an important piece that could take place in the creation of the program and/or as the program were running. Providing an opportunity for ongoing feedback is critical to ensuring that the program is providing an enjoyable space, and that appropriate changes can be made when necessary. This will be elaborated on in the discussion section.

Prior to moving into a discussion of the data analysed in relation to theory and the literature, one should note that the fashion of the hermeneutic circle is not lost throughout this analysis. Thematic areas analysed are in direct relation to one another and to the whole that is this study, and its intent to understand the phenomenon of accessible recreational dance programming and the associated place of social work. The discussion continues in this form.

## **Discussion**

As previously discussed, Titchkosky (2011) writes that accessibility is defined in relation to the process of inclusion and exclusion, and that the presence of non-normative bodies in spaces is questionable and believed measurable. With my program being designed and meant for everyone and anyone, it attempts to create a space where the way of thinking is inclusive. Its capacity as a program for individuals with varying disabilities, and its commitment to creating space within the recreational dance world specifically for bodies that are often excluded are emphasized. ‘Access’ and ‘accessibility’ are words that are present in my notes, but do not make an appearance in my final program brochure. I mention that all exercises and movements can be adapted to be inclusive of all participants, but I do not refer to accessibility. Why? As Titchkosky (2011) states that accessibility is something that arises from a realization that certain bodies are excluded in a given space, my program offers a space where this exclusion should not happen. With accessibility and varying bodies and abilities in mind from the beginning and all throughout

the design, these entities were embraced as the norm and so were interwoven in this program. As was highlighted by Mayer and Anderson (2014) and Heah et al. (2007), for programs to be effectively inclusive they need to be designed as such in their roots.

The first theme that was analysed highlighted how an accessible recreational dance space is one whose design understands the multiple layers of accessibility and of accessing inclusive programming. As stated earlier, a structural and critical disability lens pays close attention not only to the goings-on of a program, but to the many factors that are at work externally. It is not enough for the program itself to be accessible in its design and facilitation. The space external to the program's space, meaning the facility in which it is run, must also be accessible. What may appear to be an accessible program internally may in fact be inaccessible due to the facility in which it is located not having wide entrances, railings along the walls for stability, or signs with large print, for example. These are factors that could make participation no longer possible for some (Carniol, 1992; Fragala-Pinkham et al., 2010; Titchkosky, 2011). The scope of my notes and my program give no information about the facility where the program takes place. For the purposes of this work at the time, this was not seen as necessary nor as within the required parameters for the project. This is something that cannot be neglected moving forward.

Financial considerations are highly important when working with individuals with disabilities and their families. The literature demonstrates how the frequent high costs of accessible programming impacts participation. Fragala-Pinkham et al. (2010) make it clear that many families cannot afford such programming when specialized transportation, medications, and assistive devices for example, have high costs associated with them. Resounding in the literature is the notable lack of financial support and funding for accessible programs (Fragala-Pinkham et al., 2010; Herman & Chatfield, 2010; Irving & Giles, 2011; Reinders et al., 2015).

Looking back to Reinders et al.'s (2015) case study with Luke, greater funding could have allowed for the program to be offered more frequently, for classes to be longer, and could have further enhanced Luke's benefits and experiences. In my efforts to set the cost of this program as low as possible, I noted that it was receiving funding from the Ministry of Community and Social Services, as this seemed a way to mitigate the program cost. Sufficient funding is imperative in allowing this program to be meaningful and supportive of participants and their families. I do believe it possible for this program and others like it to be low-cost, and perhaps even free. Moving forward, this piece needs to be further developed through an exploration of grants and funding opportunities, as this could allow for participants' experiences to be amplified, as Luke's parents said so eloquently (Reinders et al., 2015).

Not only did I not give insight into where this program would be housed, I also gave no information about where it would be geographically located. As mentioned, specialized transportation is one cost among many others that may be a factor for individuals with disabilities and their families (Fragala-Pinkham et al., 2010; Reinders et al., 2015). The location of a program must be well-thought out in relation to such variables. This would be a difficult decision when first implementing this program, as it may be the only one of its kind and as such, could not reach all who could benefit from it with only one location. As Bedell et al (2013), Heah et al. (2007), Mayer and Anderson (2014), and Tonkin et al. (2014) emphasize program location as an environmental factor that promotes or hinders participation, the need to think critically about where this program is placed cannot be stressed enough. This has been, and continues to be a great hindrance to my sister's ability to participate in many programs. Where a program is placed in relation to intended participants significantly impacts who of this population can access the space. Consequently, location cannot be swept aside.

Continuing into my second and third themes that spoke to the interrelatedness of DMT and recreational dance, part of my program's beliefs centers on support. How support is offered, specifically with class activities like goal setting and the final performance, is not made clear. My social location as an able-bodied dancer seems to have taken over in this area, as my notes show no detailed reflection on how participants would be supported. My program needs more critical thought around the support that both participants and instructors may need to ensure an inclusive program design (D'Eloia & Sibthorp, 2014). This may take shape through social workers, family members acting as support workers, assistant instructors, and/or interpreters. Reflecting on Whatley's (2007) study where dancers with disabilities expressed frustrations and feeling as though they had to 'keep up' with their fellow able-bodied dancers, actions must be taken so that this program does not produce such an environment. This is directly related to Irving and Giles' (2011) work with The Crew, an integrated performance company, and I see my program and process of development as reflected within these studies.

In its efforts to create a new and unique space for dancers with disabilities, my program still exists in relation to the able-bodied, able-minded dance world (Irving & Giles, 2011) that continues in many cases to reproduce a cookie cutter image of a 'dancer'. How do you resist conforming to the ideologies of the traditional and mainstream dance world, while still wanting your program to be recognized as legitimate (Irving & Giles, 2011)? How do I ensure this when I myself present as such a dancer? These questions formulate in my mind when I look at this performance piece. Irving and Giles (2011) described the experiences of their participants when expected to learn and remember choreography for performances, something that was not well-received as it was not always possible for all the dancers. Performance however, was a medium that allowed them to counter and reframe dominant dance ideologies (Irving & Giles, 2011). This

is a very real challenge that dancers and groups face in the realm of accessible dance, and one that I see my program facing and/or presenting.

Memorization of choreography can be an ableist expectation and assumption, though my notes say nothing about the choreography needing to be memorized, nor if participants are alone on stage. By leaving out this information, I have created the ableist assumption that participants are alone on stage, performing from memory. If this piece of the program is to remain in line with a framework of accessibility and inclusion, then, as Pothier and Devlin (2006) state, it must respond to the needs of every participant. The performance should be designed and run in a way that ensures the inclusion of all participants, so that feelings of empowerment and community that have developed throughout the program do not dissipate (Carniol, 1992). This program cannot claim to be specifically for individuals who are often excluded from this environment when the chances of being sidelined and left out of this experience appear so great. Much like *The Crew*, this performance allows a space for dancers with disabilities to resist and counter the norms of the dance world (Carniol, 1992; Irving & Giles, 2011; Whatley, 2007), but this can only happen when the program makes known how the performance will run and how support can be provided.

Titchkosky (2011) writes that disability should be understood not in an individualistic way, but as a “collective action or exploration” (p. 12). DMT shares this same lens, specifically with regards to how sessions unfold. As previously stated, DMT sessions are inspired and guided by the individual while facilitators follow their lead. The second and third themes in my analysis highlighted how DMT can inspire recreational dance spaces and the role DMT played in the development of my program. Here lies a striking gap. My program, in its creation, has not reached out in any way to dancers with disabilities or to individuals with disabilities interested in

dance. While the program encourages and focuses strongly on participants' strengths and leadership, the program is grounded in my own thoughts and experiences of recreational dance settings, the dance world in general, my sister's experiences, and my experiences working with individuals with disabilities. This is perhaps the biggest flaw in my program; that an able-bodied dancer has designed it without consulting the community it hopes to work with.

As I have critiqued various works in the past for not including the voices of individuals with disabilities, I critique myself in this same way. Much of this is a result of the scope of the project and the timeline I was working within, but I could have made a note of the importance of doing so in the future. The program and participants would benefit from such a consultation in the development stage. This could take shape as a community chat or an online forum, or the program could have a trial run, free and open to all, and from this a feedback process and evaluation could be derived. Individuals with disabilities should be involved in initiatives concerning them so that ableist assumptions and missteps do not become embedded in their foundation. This is critical in working to rid my program and future similar programs of these faults.

The question of whether and how my theoretical framework informed my program is one I had set out to answer in this study. This analysis has demonstrated that a structural and critical disability lens is very much embedded in this work, and that there is a place and necessity for these theories within it. I did not incorporate theory while developing this program, but it feels as though a purposeful space for critical disability theory was made. Having been raised closely to disability via my family, I have grown up thinking critically about disability, inclusion, and exclusion. It is evident that my innate passion for everyone to be included and my longstanding belief that programs should be designed inclusively, guided this process. I am not neglecting the

ableist flaws within my work. I fully recognize these, and am grateful for undertaking this process that has brought to light these issues. I do believe though, that I have made a decent step forward. This study has allowed me to see where I went awry and how I can change this, and has led me to believe that this is an endeavour with potential.

It remains surprising to me that social work has not ventured into the worlds of dance or of recreation, as far as I am aware, when the benefits of having critical social workers in these environments could be plentiful. With a model for accessible recreational dance programming inspired by DMT, social workers can be at the frontline working to implement this at the community level, striving for social justice in this environment. Social workers can assess the accessibility of the facility internally and externally, and advocate for action on necessary changes. They can be involved in the planning process of the program to ensure that this model is being used efficiently, and can play a key part in consulting with the community to ensure voices are heard, respected, and incorporated. Social workers can connect with local disability- and accessibility-related services to extend the program's reach. If a trial run is offered, they can be involved in gaining feedback. Finally, as described earlier, social workers have the role of working with participating individuals and families to ensure that their needs are being met, and that the program is running as it should. The role of social workers in implementing this model is no different than how a social worker might be involved in program development and implementation, and family and individual support in any other setting. The only difference rests with this work transpiring in uncharted ground for the field of social work.

This discussion of the place of social workers within this niche area I have carved out will be continued in the implications and conclusion chapter that follows. This chapter brings together all that has been unveiled through this study and outlines how social workers are

implicated. The logic model is presented, acting as a guide for how accessible recreational dance spaces may be designed, based on DMT. As can be inferred, there are many ways in which social work, and other fields, can benefit and advance from the findings presented in this study.



## CHAPTER 6. IMPLICATIONS & CONCLUSION

As stated in the previous chapter, this study brings social work to uncharted grounds. I strongly believe that the fields of disability, dance, and social work are waiting in the wings, waiting to begin their *pas de trois*, but the individuals who are most implicated in and affected by this dance can wait no longer. Through a critical disability theory and structural social work theory lens, the issue of the lack of accessibility within the dance world and thus, the absence of space for dancers with disabilities herein was examined. The presence of individuals with disabilities in the recreational dance world was understood via Titchkosky (2011) as questionable and measurable; and causing a general unresponsiveness to disability (Pothier & Devlin, 2006). Various studies explored in the literature review discussed the failure of recreational programming to make accessibility a part of their roots in the design process (Heah et al., 2007; Mayer & Anderson, 2014). This resulted in programs being unable to effectively meet individuals' needs and to provide an enjoyable and stimulating environment. This widespread 'lack of fit' in programming was described by Tonkin et al. (2014) as a situation where the environment is 'more disabling' than the individual's impairments themselves. Frequent reference to this notion of 'fit' was made throughout this study, as it places an emphasis on the need for the presence of individuals with disabilities to be expected in spaces, and for spaces to be designed accordingly.

DMT presents an opportunity to open up recreational dance spaces and to increase their accessibility for individuals with disabilities. The fusion of DMT and recreational dance that this study has analysed and discussed incorporates key attributes of both spaces to form something new. Findings demonstrate that an accessible recreational dance space is for everyone and anyone, and does so through an understanding of accessibility that is not one-levelled. The

therapeutic practice of DMT can translate into a tool for the recreational environment through the numerous parallels that exist between DMT and recreational dance. Findings led to the creation of a logic model, which is discussed in this chapter. This model takes shape as a guide for how accessible recreational dance spaces may be designed and implemented with a DMT influence. The role of social workers in implementing this model at the community level, and the place of social work in this endeavour were highlighted as no different from any traditional social work environment. This role would unfold as program development and implementation, and family and individual support. It is imperative that social workers take the step into this field, and the logic model aims to center a critical social work presence in this space.

The logic model (please see appendix D) follows the hermeneutic circle in its design, as all pieces are connected to and influence one another, and it is influenced by DMT itself in its flexibility. The model is meant to act as a guide, and so its purpose is not to dictate the structure of programs' themes, activities, etc. but rather, to provide guidelines for how these spaces may be created and unfold. On the outmost regions lie the role of social workers, the place of theory, and the influence of DMT. The middle layer represents all that should happen prior to the program starting to ensure it is designed as accessible and inclusive in its foundation. Finally, the inner circle details all that goes on 'inside' the program that must be thought about critically at all stages. The model also speaks to 'benefits and success', in that these should be defined in relation to participants. It is hoped that this model will help to prevent ableist assumptions and missteps from being embedded in future accessible recreational dance programs. It has taken such faults that were realized in my own program and turned them into statements of what needs to happen differently. For example, there is an entire quarter of the inner circle dedicated to support for participants on stage, as this is something that was not mentioned in my own work.

What does this model mean for social workers? Throughout this study, I have attempted to make clear the reasoning for critical social workers to be present and active in the dance realm, and particularly in the creation and facilitation of this new space I propose. This model is not only intended to assist in the development of appropriately accessible spaces for dancers with disabilities. It is also created with the intentions of making obvious why and where social workers are needed in accessible dance, to inform those in the recreational (dance) space and the dance world that a social work presence is needed, and to act as a visual for where each of these three major components – disability, dance, and social work – come into play. This model is the *pas de trois* taking center stage.

Hermeneutic phenomenology emphasizes the ‘wonder’ (van Manen, 2014) and the flow of reflexive questioning to interpret phenomenon, rather than finding answers and explanations (Sloan & Bowe, 2014; van Manen, 2016). I believe that the process of resolving this issue of accessible recreational dance spaces for individuals with disabilities has just begun with this study. While my analysis brought about many more questions than when I first started this work, the critical reflection that arose has guided me into a position of being able to say that this model and my findings can bring about real change in recreational dance. This study begins to resolve this issue by proposing the creation of a new space. An attempt to ‘fix’ existing recreational dance spaces could simultaneously be seen as an attempt to ‘fit’ individuals with disabilities into inaccessible spaces. My study takes the stance of starting fresh. For accessibility and inclusion to be appropriately incorporated in programs and for them to avoid a lack of fit (Tonkin et al., 2014), they must be accessible and inclusive in their design. The model this study presents is meant to assist in this task. A strong focus of this study is that accessibility is not one-levelled. An accessible program is made accessible by taking into consideration internal and external, or

structural, factors. In this regard, accessibility is proactive, not reactionary. From its DMT influence, this space is adaptable as it expects the presence of all bodies, and while there is a structure to it, participants largely are in leadership positions. The structure is as such, versatile.

While this model is only the beginning, and variations may develop with future work, it outlines key players to be involved in resolving and preventing this issue. From an alternative lens, it also indicates what may very well continue to happen if this model is not taken up. In the simplest of terms, ‘accessible recreational dance’ will remain as ‘recreational dance’, inaccessibly so. If social workers do not take action and this *pas de trois* remains hidden backstage, opportunities for individuals with disabilities to dance and to grow through the creative power their bodies possess may be lost. Bodies will continue to be excluded, intentionally or not, structural factors like finance and transportation will go on forgotten, the recreational dance space will not be perceived as a site of collaboration, and the structure of these programs will carry on rigidly as opposed to flexibly. While there are existing programs that attempt to address this issue, as Reinders et al. (2015) demonstrate, they are few and far between, and none of them see accessible recreational dance through the lens of DMT. I ask again, why has the curtain not yet been raised?

This study implicates not only social work, but critical disability studies, dance education, therapeutic recreation, and potentially other fields that I am not yet aware of. The greatest implication for social workers is to enter this niche area I have imagined. Following this, it is about taking this model and acting upon it. In terms of implications for research, I see this as taking place following the implementation of the model as a way to better it and the spaces it produces. This is a unique study, and one whose findings I feel would be best understood through practice. Once this begins, evaluation, improvement, and dissemination of such

processes and outcomes are of high importance. My hope is for this study to initiate transformative change, and while it could happen in solo form, the power of an entire corps may speak volumes. As mentioned in the previous chapter, having one sole location for this program would not reach all who may want to participate and who could benefit from it. Many may interpret the nonexistence of such a program, or the small presence of accessible recreational dance programs in general, as a sign that there is no demand for the likes. Such an interpretation is precisely what Titchkosky (2011) and Pothier and Devlin (2006) discuss as the ableist assumption that these bodies do not want to be or cannot be in these spaces. Programs this model may inspire are widely needed. The sharing of this model, programs that are created from it, how they are received, necessary changes, and collaboration with community organizations interested in this work, must happen for this model and for this study to have the impact they desire.

I feel that this study also holds implications for education in social work, dance, disability, and recreation, as the interrelatedness between these fields is not being explored as in-depth or as creatively as I believe it could be. In social work education especially, it is taught that this discipline is broad and so has a wide reach, but the potential for its reach to extend into the arts and recreation is not frequently discussed. This study pushes the understanding of social work in ways that surpass traditional methods of working with others for social change, and this type of social work practice should have greater recognition, support, and visibility.

Lingering questions reflect a discussion of which community organizations will be eager to bring this model to life, how the process of social workers entering and practicing in this space will unravel, how this model will work in practice, and how consistent, sufficient funding will be secured to ensure the desired impact. These are questions that are hoped to be answered through practice and future research.

## Conclusion

The issue of inaccessible recreational dance spaces is multifaceted, and it makes sense for efforts to resolve this issue to be so too. This study has not tried to make the solution to this issue appear easy or simple. In fact, it has not claimed to have found the solution, only that what it has discovered and created is the start of the process to resolving this issue. Perhaps one of the most interesting, dynamic, and unique elements of this study and the findings it has put forward, is its conceptualization of the issue at hand as one in need of an interdisciplinary group to allow it not only to cease as an issue, but to transform into a bountiful entity.

The dance metaphors that I have intertwined in this study are useful in many ways, not just to help illustrate the issue or to bring in dance terminology for creative purposes. The partnering of disability, dance, and social work, or their *pas de trois*, signifies the creation of a relationship between each of these fields and how this relationship is formed. When dancing with one or more partners, there is a particular and necessary emphasis on trust, communication, openness, and receptiveness. Far from being individualistic, this is a partnership wherein each individual has a part to play both individually and in relation to their partners, though the connection within the partnership is never lost. This is how disability, dance, and social work take the spotlight to address the issue of inaccessible recreational dance spaces. They must support each other as they use their strengths to create something purposeful. They have a part to play individually, such as family support or facilitating classes, and in relation to one another, which is the entirety of the space. This interdisciplinary dance, or partnership, can spark great change in the realm of accessible recreational dance, as well as in each of their respective fields.

A major hope of this study is that the similarities between the environments and philosophies of DMT and recreational dance, and the relationship that can grow between them

will have been realized and understood. Another is that accessible recreational dance spaces can flourish and grow stronger, and can have a greater impact on individuals with disabilities and their families when the disciplines of anti-oppressive social work, critical disability, and dance come together. As separate areas, they achieve tremendous feats and contribute greatly to society. Such a partnership could hold endless possibilities, and have a multidisciplinary impact on a range of communities.

To leave you with one final dance metaphor, this study has come to be imagined in my mind as act one of many. The curtain is lowering but sure enough, it will be lifted once again and disability, dance, and social work will reassume their places. If disability is a shared exploration (Titchkosky, 2011) and accessibility is a response to exclusion and unresponsiveness (Pothier & Devlin, 2006; Titchkosky, 2011), then as social workers let us explore and let us respond. Through a process of creating space and doing so in a way that welcomes and includes everyone, let us respond to individuals' unique abilities and strengths (Pothier & Devlin, 2006). By learning how to create structure as infused with adaptability and versatility, let us explore disability. In a combination of these actions, in partnership with others, and in a quest to provide an environment where opportunities for individuals with disabilities are plenty, let us respond and take collective action to eradicate inaccessible recreational dance spaces, while creating something entirely new.

Let us explore, respond, and take collective action.









Let us do so now.

## APPENDICES

### APPENDIX A

#### **Guidelines for Document Selection**

The following indicates a criterion for which documents are to be included in the content analysis:

-  The document presents the thought process involved in the design of the program in the form of a mind map, brainstorming, arbitrary ideas, etc.
-  Notes concerning the program structure such as themes for each week, activities and exercises, etc.
-  The document presents questions that arose and were attempted to be answered
-  Signs of inspiration for the program development such as images, words, quotes, etc. that speak to accessible recreational (dance) spaces, disability and dance, accessible dance, accessible recreation, and the like
-  Self-reflection on the development of the program
-  Feedback from peers, friends, or professors
-  The document presents a reflection on resources explored on dance/movement therapy in practice
-  The learning contract wherein tasks, goals, potential challenges, and perspective on the issue are outlined



## APPENDIX B

### Selected Documents

The following are the documents that were analysed in this study:

- ✚ Roots, G. (2015). *Learning contract brainstorming*. Unpublished document, Faculty of Social Work, Carleton University, Ottawa, Canada.
  - Notes and ideas on how I would explore the topic of DMT and elements of DMT that stood out for me
- ✚ Roots, G. (2015). *Learning contract*. Unpublished document, Faculty of Social Work, Carleton University, Ottawa, Canada.
  - Detailed outline of the objectives and tasks I would undertake to learn about DMT and how this would influence the creation of my program
  - Reflection on why DMT is of interest to me, and the connection I saw between disability, dance, and social work is expressed
- ✚ Roots, G. (2015). *Peer notes*. Unpublished document, Faculty of Social Work, Carleton University, Ottawa, Canada.
  - Notes that I made on feedback from my peers during the process of the course and the creation of my program
- ✚ Roots, G. (2015). *Program brochure*. Unpublished document, Faculty of Social Work, Carleton University, Ottawa, Canada.
  - The brochure I created for my program, outlining the program's vision and beliefs, information on DMT, weekly breakdown, and my inspiration for this program
- ✚ Roots, G. (2015). *Program outline*. Unpublished document, Faculty of Social Work, Carleton University, Ottawa, Canada.
  - The breakdown of my program, week by week, with notes on possible activities, themes, and more ideas for how this space could look
- ✚ Roots, G. (2015). *Program outline 2*. Unpublished document, Faculty of Social Work, Carleton University, Ottawa, Canada.
  - The breakdown of my program in more detail, with a greater reflection on why this space was important to me; personal experiences were tied in here
- ✚ Roots, G. (2015). *YouTube video reflection*. Unpublished document, Faculty of Social Work, Carleton University, Ottawa, Canada.

- Notes and a reflection on various YouTube videos I watched on DMT that were posted by dance/movement therapists, as well as by the ADTA
- Spoke to my interpretation of DMT

## APPENDIX C

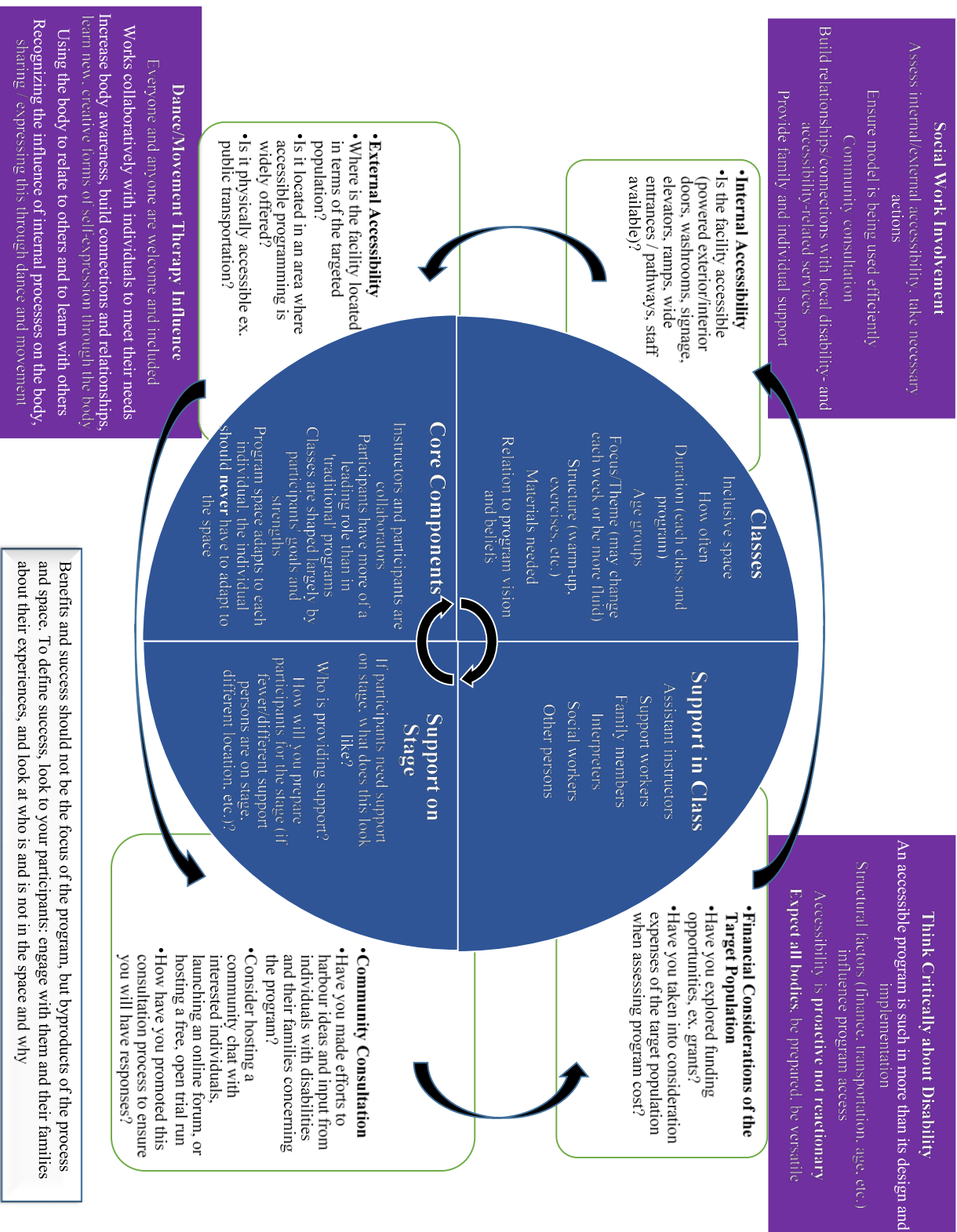
### **Analysis Guide**

The following questions guided my analysis and helped to maintain transparency throughout this study:

- ✚ Have I fallen into ableist narratives and tropes in the program design?
- ✚ Does this program set itself up to accomplish my goal of accessible recreational dance programming, or does it reproduce the ‘othering’ and exclusion of certain bodies?
- ✚ Did my ‘good intentions’ reproduce any forms of marginalization?
- ✚ Who is included and who is excluded?
- ✚ Who did I envision in this space during the development stage? Who do I now envision in this space?

# APPENDIX D

## Logic Model



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