

UNIVERSITÉ DU QUÉBEC À MONTRÉAL

A PHENOMENOLOGICAL EXPLORATION OF MAMADANCES AS A RELATIONAL
ART: THE VOICES OF THE MOTHERS DANCING WITH THEIR BABIES

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PAR

ERYN DACE TRUDELL

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to the Canadian collective conscience in solidarity with mothers who were denied the right or who were unable to provide loving care to their children.

To my own mother, Barbara and her 53 years in the service of loving care of the mentally ill, addicted, and homeless.

To my daughters Chelsea and Yoko, who remind me that joy lies there hidden in plain sight waiting for my surrender to the moment.

To all mothers who want to mother better and more completely but are foiled by time, and the relentlessness of capitalistic value systems.

To mother earth, the only pure witness.

To breath.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ABM	Anat Baniel Method
ADTA	American Dance Therapy Association
ASC	Art for Social Change
CI	Contact Improvisation
CBWS	Center for Babywearing Studies
DfH	Dance for Health
DMT	Dance Movement Therapy
DTRC	Dancers Transition Resource Centre
IADMS	The International Association for Dance Medicine & Science
ICASC	International Centre of Art for Social Change
INPE	Institute National du Portage des Enfants
JMP	Judith Marcuse Projects
KMP	Kestenberg Movement Profile
MPACT	Moving Parents and Children Together
PANAS	Positive and Negative Affect Schedule
RES	Regroupement pour l'éducation somatique
RQD	Regroupement québécois de la danse
SEA	Socially Engaged Art
SME	Somatic Movement Education
SRT	Skinner Releasing Technique
UQAM	Université du Québec à Montréal

RÉSUMÉ

Cette étude qualitative exploratoire en danse vise à décrire et à comprendre l'expérience vécue de huit dyades mère-bébé qui ont participé aux ateliers de huit semaines d'un art relationnel (Bourriaud, 1998/2002) intitulé *MamanDanse*.

MamanDanse a été développé par l'étudiante-chercheuse, qui est aussi une artiste de la danse et mère, et dont les choix structurels dans la construction de ces ateliers étaient basés sur sa propre expérience en danse avant son étude de maîtrise.

La méthode de production et d'analyse des données, d'inspiration phénoménologique, choisie pour conduire cette étude repose sur les voix des mères qui ont fait l'expérience de l'atelier de danse pour mères et bébés. Ceci, pour comprendre la nature de l'expérience vécue des mères dans *MamanDanse*, les valeurs qu'elles y perçoivent, et les éléments compositionnels qui soutiennent ces valeurs. L'analyse des expériences des mères, a été réalisé à partir de données produites par le biais de questionnaires, de journaux et d'entretiens. La démarche s'inspire des travaux de Giorgi (1985), Moustakas (1994) et van Manen (1990).

Les rares publications sur la danse de la mère et du bébé se trouvent principalement dans les domaines de la psychologie et de la thérapie par la danse. Elles mettent en lumière l'importance de la communication non verbale précoce entre un bébé et son principal fournisseur de soins. Toutefois, très peu d'informations sont fournies sur la manière dont cette forme de communication peut être développée ou améliorée. Le mot "danse" et les termes connexes sont souvent utilisés métaphoriquement dans la littérature, sans en décrire l'essence. Par conséquent, cette recherche étudie la danse non pas comme une métaphore, mais comme un art relationnel choisi consciemment, et s'inscrivant dans un paradigme du mouvement (LaMothe, 2015), pour les mères et leurs bébés.

L'expérience vécue des mères dévoile le potentiel de *MamanDanse* pour son développement, sa diffusion et sa démocratisation futurs pour les dyades mères-bébés. En l'occurrence *MamanDanse*, affecte les qualités relationnelles entre les mères dans le groupe, entre les mères et leurs bébés, ainsi qu'entre les mères et elles-mêmes. Cette étude contribue à enrichir la littérature sur la danse, en démontrant comment la danse peut inspirer le bien-être dans les dyades mère-bébé grâce aux qualités relationnelles de la présence, de l'interconnexion et du lien dans un interstice de soins. Il propose que la "danse" devienne plus importante dans l'exploration de l'intersubjectivité et du lien mères-bébés, tout en les mettant au premier plan de la cette recherche en danse.

Mots clés : activité de danse mère-nourrisson, sensibilité maternelle, intersubjectivité mère-nourrisson, danse mère-bébé, éducation au mouvement somatique, art relationnel, Technique Skinner Releasing, Contact Improvisation, matrescence, lien affectif mère-nourrisson.

ABSTRACT

This exploratory qualitative study in dance aims to describe and understand the lived experience of eight mother-infant dyads who participated in an eight-week workshop of a relational art (Bourriaud, 1998/2002) entitled *MamaDances*, which was developed by the student-researcher, who is also a dance artist and a mother and whose structural choices in building it were based on her own experience in dance prior to her master's study. The chosen phenomenologically inspired data production and analysis method of this study are based on the voices of mothers who have experienced the Mother and Baby Dance Workshop in order to comprehend the nature of the lived experience of *MamaDances* and its values for them, and to identify the compositional elements that support those values.

The analysis of the mother's experiences, investigating data collected through questionnaires, journals, and interviews, is inspired by Giorgi (1985), Moustakas (1994), and van Manen (1990). The scant literature on mother and baby dance is mostly found in the fields of psychology and dance therapy, and it sheds light on the significance of early non-verbal communication between a baby and its primary caregiver. Very little suggests how this form of communication may be developed or enhanced. The word "dance" and its related terms are often used metaphorically in the literature without describing its essence. Therefore, this research investigates dance not as a metaphor, but as a consciously chosen relational art, set in a movement paradigm (Lamothe, 2015), for mothers and their babies.

The responses of the mothers indicate the potential of *MamaDances* for future development, dissemination, and democratization for mother-baby dyads. *MamaDances* affects relational qualities among mothers in the group, and between mothers and their babies and mothers and themselves. This study contributes to the dance literature, demonstrating how dance can inspire well-being in mother-baby dyads through the relational qualities of presence, interconnectedness, and bonding within an interstice of caring. It proposes that "dance" could become more prominent to explore mother-infant intersubjectivity and bonding, while bringing these to the forefront of dance research.

Keywords: mother-infant dance activity, maternal sensitivity, infant-mother intersubjectivity, mother and baby dance, somatic movement education, relational art, Skinner Releasing Technique, Contact Improvisation, matrescence, infant-mother bonding

INTRODUCTION

This research is the culmination of a professional and personal journey, an intersectionality between two aspects of my identity – dance artist and mother – that led me to create the setting and conditions for mothers to come together to dance with their babies. This research is a reflection of, and an investigation into how *MamaDances* may be a relational art in the lives of mothers and their babies, by gathering information about the experiences of eight participants and extracting meaning from them. It questions the mother participants, on the vital role that art, and specifically dance, plays, and their answers help to direct my role as an artist in the world today.

I will begin by sharing my story as a dance artist, mother, and researcher in this first chapter, introducing the research problem and the aims and objectives of the research. I will share how *MamaDances* evolved, and the literature reviewed that involves mothers and babies dancing together, both in dance and in other related fields of research, and the resulting objectives, research question and sub-questions. The second chapter presents key concepts in dance and related fields of research that are significant to understanding the components of *MamaDances* conceived as a relational art. The third chapter describes my methodology, including data collection, analysis, and ethical considerations. The fourth chapter provides the results of the data and describes how the essence of the experience was synthesized into the themes discussed in Chapter 5. The final chapter looks again at infant-mother intersubjectivity and discusses the qualities of presence, interconnectedness and bonding that evolved from the dancing. I discuss the concept of an interstice of caring as the principal compositional element of *MamaDances*. I discuss the influences of Bourriault and LaMothe that help me to interweave the concepts of matrescence and relational art, to finally arrive at some personal reflections and suggestions for the future. It is my hope that *MamaDances* becomes the activity of choice for anyone looking for ways to nourish the infant-mother bond or maternal sensitivity, or for those who intend to create or enhance a program supporting young families within their community.

CHAPTER 1

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

In this Chapter I begin by sharing my story as a dance artist, mother, and researcher. I share how the idea of *MamaDances* evolved, the development of the workshop, and then I provide a detailed description of it. I then share the reviewed literature, in dance and in other related fields of research which involves mothers and babies dancing together. Finally, I introduce the research problem and the aims and objectives of this research, research question and sub-questions.

1.1 Motivations to Conduct this Study with Other Mothers

My motivations to conduct this research with other mothers derives from my background as mother and artist. Since embarking on the development of *MamaDances* workshops for the public, I have felt a very subtle discord between my recent practice of bringing dance to young families and the perception of my past work as professional artist, and my identities within (Duval, 2019). I am grateful for my life in a peaceful, democratic country, with an abundance of resources and opportunities and the freedom to be an artist. At the same time, I am stressed by my parental responsibilities, particularly in being the sole provider for my children, in the face of the desensitizing and dehumanizing onslaught of bad news, the demands of a fast-moving technological capitalist society and my resistance to negotiating within it. I am a dance artist of three decades, living in an era where “choosing a calling over lucrative employment is less admired than it once was” (Dissanayake, 2015). Inspired by the writing of Alan Watts (1951), I ask myself “How are we to find security and peace of mind in the world whose very nature is insecurity, impermanence, and unceasing change?” (p. 75). I believe the answer lies somewhere in the pleasure of movement and the acceptance of change as the only certainty.

My professional and personal life was taut with the effort and intensity of living in balance with the values of both of my identities: mother and artist. *MamaDances* was a strategy to relieve this identity tension, to find security and peace of mind for both. After 15 years of guiding *MamaDances* workshops, it was time for me to describe its reception by the participants and understand it more deeply and completely. *MamaDances* then, is the object of the research to be investigated.

I have always felt a sense of social responsibility to create art that suggests alternative ways of being that might offer a catalyst for social change. Dance has been my way of reconciling the issues of the greater world. By high school graduation I had choreographed two full-length pieces. One of my dances took on the theme of evolution and environmental destruction, while the other addressed the ethical questions of capital punishment.

After high school, I attended The Juilliard School in New York City and graduated with a BFA. During my years there, I acquired a solid technical background, but it was difficult on my self-esteem.

After four years of ballet and modern dance training, just before moving back home to Toronto I discovered *Contact Improvisation* (CI) at *P.S.122*, a performance studio in the Lower East Side of Manhattan, founded by a group of artists, focusing on the avant-garde, now known as *Performance Space New York*. CI is an improvised dance form based on two or more dancers exploring the sharing of weight through points of physical contact, and it will be discussed in more detail later in this document. Later in Toronto, I discovered *Skinner Releasing Technique* (SRT) when Joan Skinner¹ was brought from Seattle to teach a workshop there at *Damn Straight*² in 1992.

SRT is a dance technique developed by Joan Skinner (1924 -2021), where dance technique is taught using improvisations facilitated by poetic imagery. It will be defined and discussed in detail later in this document. These two dance forms, CI and SRT, revitalized my practice and initiated a therapeutic healing process within me. My own healing is based on self-confidence coupled with continued research to find my voice, my authenticity and consciousness in relation to the world in which I live. This process is continual. Having wrestled through years of pointe and pas de deux

¹ Joan Skinner (1924-2021) is the founder of Skinner Releasing Technique

² Damn Straight Performance Studio (1992-1998) was a performance studio I co-founded with stage manager Sharon DiGenova. It provided choreographers with a much-needed rehearsal and public performance space in Toronto. This space provided an alternative venue for public presentation of new choreography, which relieved some of the pressure on the few established presenters. It also circumvented some of the politics of curation and presentation of contemporary dance, which required being invited or accepted according to the cultural mandates of the producing organizations. In those early years in Toronto, from 1992-2004, much of my work was dedicated to concert choreography that celebrated diversity, including queer content (Trudell, 1997, 1998, 2001; Trudell & Lee, 1998), other-abled performers (Trudell, 2004; Trudell & Lachance, 2001), and feminist perspectives (Trudell, 1994, 1996). I am the *only* female choreographer represented in *Rocking the Boat*, an exhibition by *Dance Collection Danse* celebrating queer content in Canadian Concert Dance (Grundy, 2014).

technique, feeling heavy and cumbersome in my efforts to fit into the ballet-body image ideals, discovering CI and SRT was wonderful for me. They suited my body type and ignited my spirit. They felt free of gender roles and stereotypes. I loved the egalitarianism and communality values they professed. They are artforms that teach through practice about issues of social justice, freedom, empathy, and equality.

SRT was my first experience with a codified dance technique³ that honoured the technical and creative skills of the dancer-choreographer equally, and where hands-on bodywork facilitated learning between peers. It was a relief to find this kind of trust and connection. I have since come to understand both CI and SRT as being within the family of Somatic Movement Education (Eddy, 2016), which brings together a number of approaches to movement that focus on somatic experience, and which will be discussed in more detail later in this thesis.

As I became more involved with CI and SRT, diversity became an important issue for me, because I felt the institutionalized systems in place within the professional dance milieu were limiting. I lost interest in the conventional career path of auditioning for and dancing with established companies. Instead, I worked as an independent dance artist. I danced in the works of my peers, choreographed commissioned works, and self-produced performances.

After thirteen years of choreographing, dancing, producing and presenting dance in Toronto, rents were rising, and space was becoming scarce. I felt more possibilities would be available in Quebec. Rents were lower and the dance scene seemed healthier; strong female role models such as Margie Gillis, Marie Chouinard, Louise Lecavalier and Ginette Laurin made it seem less dominated by sexism, and the dance community has had the strong representation of *Regroupement Québécois de la danse* (RQD). With the intention of spending what I saw to be the last ten years of my career focusing on dancing rather than producing dance, I moved to Montreal. However, my plans changed dramatically: I became a mother in 2005. In retrospect it seems that I instinctively chose Montreal for my maternal ambitions. With its subsidized daycare and affordable good quality of

³ Joan Skinner intended SRT as a dance “technique”. Within the field of Somatic Movement Education, the term used is “approach”. Joan Skinner developed SRT before the field of SME was named as a field of practice, and therefore, to remain consistent with her vision, and as a protegee of her teaching and also to recognize the evolution of the field of SME, I will use the words “technique” and “approach” interchangeably when referring to SRT.

life for young families, Montreal has allowed me the privilege of merging my artistic practice with motherhood in a way that I suspect would not have been possible in Toronto.

Childbirth was the most powerful and transformational experience of my life. I was lucky to birth my daughter at *La Maison de Naissance* with a midwife, without medical intervention or complications. However, following the birth, I partially herniated a lumbar disc and became completely dependent upon my child's father for a period. The conjugal relationship collapsed and left me feeling psychologically, financially, emotionally and physically defeated. I felt alone. I had no family support or help caring for my child in Montreal, so I could not work outside the home. I was abandoned by friends who could not understand what I was going through and the person I had become. With my child custody agreement, I felt forced to stay in a place where the dominant culture and language were not my own. This experience affected my self-identity profoundly. However, dance, and particularly CI, continued to be a place where I found community and solace.

The CI community, my continuation of somatic dance practices and *La Petite Maison de la miséricorde*, a daycare for children being raised by single mothers, helped me get through the next years. Today I am the mother of two girls. I love being a mother and I love my children more than anything. They are the focus of my life. They remind me continually to appreciate the small and beautiful things, and to look for the humour and light that life produces in abundance. Providing and caring for children requires energy, perseverance, and social support. For me, mothering is a relentless balancing act of optimism and realism, staying connected to dreams and beauty, possibility and synchronicity while remaining realistic, intentional, protective, and productive. From these values *MamaDances* was borne. It was, for me, a necessity, a means to continue my career as a professional dance artist while also being a mother and staying healthy in that role despite the challenges posed by uncertainty and unrest in the world and my personal life.

1.1.1 The Evolution of MamaDances

In 2006, in my new role as a mother, I became discouraged by what I was seeing on the contemporary dance stages in Montreal. I felt the work was cold and conceptual, involving excessive nudity, technology, sensationalism, sex, and aggression. I lost my desire to pursue my

career as a professional dancer in this aesthetic. I was inspired to create something I was not seeing in performances: visibility and representation of the maternal body, and caring.

Thus, I developed *MamaDances* intuitively. The original idea came from witnessing a “happy accident” (Ehrenzweig, 1974). “Happy accident” is described as a creative process where the artist makes best use of things going in unplanned and uncontrollable directions. In this case, a skilled CI dancer in an informal performance setting was presenting a work in progress. What had been planned as a duet between two adult dancers became an improvised, authentically frustrating, yet playful duet unfolding between the mother/dancer and her toddler. The toddler had a temper tantrum that could only be resolved by his mother bringing him on stage, at which point he became very animated. He stole the show by attempting to climb out of a window; she caught him just in the nick of time and performed the rest of the choreography carrying him on her hip. The performance was riveting.

Inspired by this performance and with my own baby on my hip, I choreographed the cite-specific *Maman danse!: Milles Mains* (Trudell 2006), which premiered at *Festival Quartier Danse* (then called *Festival Danse Transatlantique*). It involved a group of professional dancers dancing with their babies at *The Museum of Chateau Dufresne* in Montreal. Breastfeeding was a consideration that was built into the choreographic score, and one room in the performance was dedicated to it. *Radio-Canada* covered the event, and later I was told it was the first breastfeeding to have been televised in Canada. Soon after, I began to offer *MamaDances* workshops to the public at *Centre Lajeunesse de Villeray*, and then at *Centre Communautaire de Loisirs du Cote-des-Neiges*, also in Montreal. Six years later, I began the process of transmitting the approach to other facilitators. *MamaDances* workshops are now offered to a paying public out of community centres, yoga studios, dance facilities, churches, and resource centres⁴. A facilitators training program has been developed for each program.⁵ Accepting an invitation to choreograph for performance again in

⁴ Between 2007 and 2020, over 3,000 families have participated, and approximately 100 new families take part each season. Now there are two types of workshops: Parent Child Dance for parents (guardians) with children from one to four years old; and Mom and Baby Dance for mothers (fathers/primary caregivers) with babies from two to 12 months of age. A Facilitators’ Training Programs have been developed for each type.

⁵ In 2015 a facilitators training was presented in Florianopolis, at The University of Santa Katarina in Brazil. The first Facilitators Training Program in Montreal was held in 2017. Now the facilitators training programs for both the Parent Child and the Mother and Baby Dance programs are accessible online.

2018, I created a new work titled *MOMentum*, a 30-minute choreography danced by 22 mothers carrying their babies in baby carriers, continuing my choreographic practice in the discourse of the maternal body in public space and performance.

This research study focuses on the *MamaDances* Mom and Baby dance workshops, and it is a continuation of my desire to honour the qualities of caring and the maternal in dance.

1.1.2 Development of the workshops as Relational Art

The Mom and Baby Dance Workshops were constructed intuitively, based on my personal experience as a dance artist. When I began, my main interest was in the mothers' well-being. I wanted to make something to brought mothers together, with their babies, in dance. I was unaware of any precedent, so I began with what I knew. My formal training is first in modern dance, and then in contemporary dance. Contemporary dance consolidates many different systems, styles and codified dance techniques (Foster, 2008; Roche, 2015). The movement approaches that have been most influential to me in building *MamaDances* are: embodiment practices (Johnson, 1995), somatic movement education (Hanna, 1976) and mindful movement (Eddy, 2016). These include predominantly SRT (Emslie, 2009), Feldenkrais (Fortin, Long, & Lord, 2002), Pilates (Pilates, Miller, Robbins, & Van Heuit-Robbins, 2012), Yoga (Eddy, 2016, p. 86), and Contact Improvisation (Pallant, 2006). In addition to those somatic approaches are more tradition-based forms, including Modern Dance (Cohen, 1998, p. 437), Sacred/Circle Dancing (Watts, 2006), and Social Dance (Harris & Harris, 2000).

The experience that *MamaDances* proposes to mothers and their babies adapts to the heterogeneity of their needs and the resulting challenges:

1. Heterogeneity of motivation. Not everyone wants, needs nor sees the purpose in dancing with their baby.
2. Heterogeneity in physical ability:
 - a. There are numerous variations in the physical capacities of the mothers, including in body type, flexibility, coordination, alignment, rhythm, memory, and self-confidence. Although the childbirth experience is not addressed formally in the

workshop, there is often informal discussion about it. Certainly, it has influenced the mothers' psychophysiology.

- b. Every infant/mother dyad dynamic is unique and poses unique challenges. For example, a woman with a small physical frame carrying a large baby faces different challenges than a woman with a larger frame and a smaller baby. An enthusiastic mother with dance experience who has a colicky baby faces different challenges than a shy mother with no dance experience and a calm and contented baby.
3. Heterogeneity in social dynamics. Each group is different, depending on the social nature of the individual personalities and the average age of the babies.
4. Heterogeneity in perceptions of dance. There are many different forms of dance and ways of practicing them. Some forms of dance are based on sensation, and others on demonstration/reproduction (Harbonnier-Topin & Ferri, 2007). Participants come together because they want to dance with their babies, but in any given group, expectations of the function of dance can be very different. Some participants need to have very specific and set movement sequences. Others prefer the freedom and exploration that is found in improvisation scores. Some consider dance to be art, others physical conditioning, social entertainment, a therapeutic tool, or a form of developing creativity (Fortin, 2018);
5. Heterogeneity in attendance. Consistent attendance is rare, due to the unpredictability of daily life with a baby. There are many variables that interfere with attendance, including fatigue, illness, and family obligations that could cause absences.
6. Heterogeneity in economic status. To date, participants must pay to participate in *MamaDances*. Those that want and need it most may not be able to afford it.⁶

I took these needs and challenges into account when developing *MamaDances*, but my choices were not made based in any literature or documented practice. I was responding instinctively to what was possible, safe, and fun and that could be interesting for all levels of experience. Here I am making the effort to describe *MamaDances* for its understanding by a wider audience.

I am inspired by dance researchers who, with their work, find words to describe what so often

⁶ For example, I received a request from La Maison Bleu, an organization that supports victims of domestic violence. Unfortunately, they did not have the budget to bring *MamaDances* to their clients.

seems ineffable. Dr Adrienne Sansom (2009), Senior Lecturer at the University of Auckland, New Zealand writes about the role of the arts as critical pedagogy for the purposes of social democracy, social justice, and social change:

Dance is an embodied understanding of ourselves that can connect to a moral and ethical pedagogy that not only honors the life of the child but also makes possible a new way to envisage being human. This visceral knowledge is indispensable to the way we live our lives and begin to care about the lives of others. (p. 161)

This articulation of the relation between art and caring is inspiring, as are ideas, that relate dance pedagogy and feminism. Sherry B. Shapiro (1998) has been a professor of dance education at Meredith College in Raleigh, North Carolina. She describes the power of dance in transformation and becoming:

Feminist approaches to dance pedagogy develop power that is no longer bound to stage, the canvas, or stone, but as powers that are released into the world as expressions of who we are and what we want to become (p. 11).

My passion for dance lies in the intrinsically relational; in the way it sensitizes us to ourselves, others, and the environment. In my opinion, it helps to nurture human qualities of presence, compassion, empathy, and creativity, enhancing physical, emotional, and psychological wellness. Accordingly, my interest in dance, especially in *MamaDances* is less about how it looks, and more about how it feels: the kinesthetic sensations of freedom, joy, and connection. Therefore, it is a release of, and an alternative to, the stress of a mother's daily life and the human condition. It is a form of accessing an intuitive knowing that may be deeply buried within the body (embodied). It is a ritualistic practice that demands that we listen to and communicate with others with our whole selves. Anne Cowlyn (2002) describes how movement rituals in social settings, and dance in particular, are an important aspect of women's health:

Dance is a ritualized movement art that can be used to celebrate phenomena or subjective values such as beauty, truth, joy or authenticity. At its core dance arises from pulse and breath, from the rhythm of work and sex, from feelings of joy and pain, from the physical condition of being human [...] Ceremony, festivity and creativity are beneficial but underused conduits for bringing girls and women into the fitness realm. (p. 11)

Consequently, the development of *MamaDances* workshops was a consolidation of many years of

dance experience in different techniques and approaches and inspired by the needs of the mothers I encountered over the years. The next section is dedicated to its description.

1.1.3 Description of a *MamaDances* Mom and Baby Workshop

MamaDances workshops are held in a room set up in a circle orientation, with mats placed lengthwise from centre to circumference. It consists of a three-part structure.

Part One, *Ways to begin and Floorwork*, is composed of exercises and studies from somatic practices including SRT, Feldenkrais, Pilates, Yoga and CI, adapted to music. It integrates face to face, and tactile interaction with the babies. It is playful and social, involving sound and rhythm. During floorwork, the babies are on the floor, sometimes on their mothers' bodies, on the mats or exploring the space, depending on their phase of development.

The second part comprises *Studies in Circle* and *Travelling Studies*, where the mothers dance on their feet, carrying their babies in their arms in various spatial formations and orientations. Sacred/circle Dancing (Watts, 2006) is a gentle and healing way for dance to bring mind, body and spirit together. It relieves stress, releases creative energy, and helps the dancer feel centred and connected. The feeling of moving rhythmically is both relaxing and energizing at the same time. Like folk, circle, and sacred dance, *MamaDances* does not require any previous dance experience, as the steps are simple and carefully facilitated.

The mothers then take a 10- to 15-minute pause to socialize and secure their babies into frontally worn baby carriers. The mats are cleared from the center of the space.

The third part of the workshop, *Dancing with the Babies in the Baby Carriers*, done with the babies in the front carriers, focuses on choreographic sequences performed in unison as a group or with a partner. A choreography is repeated and developed gradually over the course of the 8-week workshop. The workshop finishes, sometimes with an improvisation based on an image, sometimes with a close contact circle of swaying, and sometimes with an informal "performance" of the choreography. The choreography shares the simplicity of steps of circle dance; it is rhythmic and flowing, integrating changes of direction and group patterning. Movement is focused on weight shifts, integrating the coordination of footwork and the centre of weight in the pelvis. The

use of the arms is minimal, and it is often related to the baby. Music is played continuously throughout the workshop. Stopping for verbal instruction is rare. Direction is given while in motion, similar to line dance or other forms of traditional dance.

Having described the workshops here, and my own perception of dance, I am interested to learn about the mothers' experience from inside it. The goal is for *MamaDances* to emerge as an accessible artform and art practice of choice for individuals, facilities, organizations, and institutions that wish to introduce a safe, effective, state-of-the-art postnatal dance practice into their communities. I will now state the problem, which will lead to the research question that has evolved from this interest.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

After fifteen years as founder and artist-facilitator of *MamaDances*, I began to question its integrity and its cohesion with my experience and values. My professional experience is based in dance, and not in early child development, in parenting, or in postnatal health. In those fifteen years, there was little time or resources for reflection on professional development, systematic development, or artistic aesthetic discourse. I was feeling isolated, knowing no other people doing similar work. Worst of all, I had little time to play and dance with my own daughters. I realized I needed to exercise my values more consciously and consistently to connect with the communal experience, by understanding what and how *MamaDances* contributes to the lives of the participants.

Poised for global expansion due to the online *MamaDances* facilitators' training program, *MamaDances* needed a more solid academic foundation that would allow like-minded practitioners and researchers to benefit from its development thus far. Described on the website⁷ as a "family dance program dedicated to promoting the holistic health of parents, children, families and communities through music and movement," *MamaDances* claims that it "enhances parent-child bonding and forges social connections through an active playful celebratory experience." In my mind, it required a more in-depth description based in the experience of the participants.

⁷ <https://www.mamadances.com/>

This systematic and scientific documentation of the lived experiences of the mothers intends to strengthen this description and understand its claim of enhancing parent-child bonding and forging social connection. It aims to discover what aesthetic and artistic value *MamaDances* may contribute to matrescence and the mother-baby relationship, both for dance and for other related disciplines interested in mother-infant intersubjectivity, health, and humanity. Prior to this research study, the benefits to *MamaDances* participants had only been documented by participant testimonials, and not by academic research. I wanted to find the coherence between *MamaDances* and my previous artistic career and practices, yet I found no scientific documentation that could help explain it, or inspire me to have confidence in what I was doing: I needed to know how it was contributing to the lives of the participants in a way that was grounded in scientific research from the perspective of an artistic practice. Discovery of the concept of Relational Art (Bourriault, 1998/2002) provided me with a new perspective on what I was sensing was happening in *MamaDances*. Its focus on human relation and its social context, and the need to identify itself outside of the traditional institutionalized aesthetics of fine art, spoke to me.

Then, what I found in the literature review was helpful to understand part of what the mothers may experience with their babies, but it does not describe the experience from the perspective of the mothers or from the perspective of dance as a relational art, as *MamaDances* proposes it to be.

1.3 Literature Review

Mother-and-baby dance is an emerging practice in Canada and around the world. Nevertheless, there is very little written about it. Using the search engines Virtuose and Google Scholar, I combed databases including ERIC, Taylor and Francis, CAIRN, and PsycINFO with these keywords: infant, mother, baby, dance, *mère*, and *bébé et danse*. Research that focuses on the mother's experience dancing with her baby, done with healthy mother and baby dyads in their first postnatal year, remains unpursued in the field of dance. Therefore, my research on this topic involves theories from the fields of Dance Movement Therapy (DMT), Philosophy, Music and Psychotherapy, Developmental Psychology, Early Child Education, and Anthropology. The literature review was narrowed down to research that clearly links mother-baby relation to dance, either using the word dance, or rhythmic movement, or through my perception of the researchers dance experience and sensibility towards art. It is limited to research involving elements that may

inform this research, such as rhythm, touch, attunement, musicality, and the age of the babies. My search revealed only one article written by a choreographer, dance artist which investigates the mother and baby dance artistically.

This review presents first, the findings of research projects that involve healthy mom and baby dyads and dance, written by dance researchers. Then the *Kestenberg Movement Profile* is included because it is pioneering research in mother and baby dyadic movement. The work of Mietta & Hatch (1991) is included because it addresses quality of touch and timing. *Music Studies of the Dyadic Movement* addresses research in sound, rhythm, movement and facial expressions between mother and baby. In *Clinical Interventions Integrating Dance*, research projects using dance as a means of working with families at risk and educating adolescent mothers, are presented. *Therapeutic Practices* mentions the work of Anat Baniel (2012) and Suzy Tortora (2005) who are specialists in working with children in movement, and the field of DMT. In *Psychology and Mother and Baby Dance* I share research which focuses on the benefits of carrying the babies in back carriers while dancing. At the end I provide some examples of literature that discuss the benefits of dance in general. This collection of research from different fields, mostly psychology and child development, when brought together, begins to provide insight into the areas that *MamaDances* may concern.

1.3.1 Healthy Dyads and Dance

Dancer, choreographer, pedagogue, and Feldenkrais practitioner Lydia Karsenty (2005) has written about her experience in animating dance workshops involving mothers, fathers, and their babies from an artistic perspective. The described experience includes parents together with their babies in workshops exploring the child's movement using, African rhythms, among other techniques, as a point of departure. These workshops did not involve the use of baby carriers or choreographed sequences of movement. The observations made focus on the babies' movement and how that movement effected the parents:

En règle générale, le bébé et son parent entrent en résonance. Il y a une sorte de pulsation commune, un dialogue harmonieux souvent initié par le bébé. Le bébé s'éveille et se fait l'éveilleur de son parent. La pulsation du bébé appelle celle de ce dernier. « Ça appelle » ce qui fait silence chez lui. La fluidité de la danse du bébé

résonne sur celle de son parent. Elle réactive chez lui une mémoire corporelle oubliée.
(p.180) ⁸

This article was the only one found, written with a dance aesthetic, by a dance professional.

Otherwise, a mixed-method study conducted by Doonan & Bräuninger (2015) explores the enhancement of mother–infant attachment through DMT. It involved 20 healthy mother-infant dyads in two groups. Quantitative data was collated using the Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS), and qualitative data of the mother’s perceptions of their infants’ responses to the sessions, the process, and the perceived benefits of the programme were collected with questionnaires. In the PANAS scales the mothers rated themselves by answering questions. This was used to calculate positive and negative effects. The findings demonstrated that DMT sessions improved mothers’ affect significantly, and DMT can be seen as facilitating Ainsworth’s (1967) “quality of mutual delight” (Doonan & Bräuninger, 2015, p. 229). The quality of mutual delight will be defined in 2.3.3.

Psychodynamic theory, developmental psychology, DMT and phenomenology constitute the theoretical framework of Doonan & Bräuninger’s (2015) study, which investigates how DMT addresses this issue of space within the mother-infant dyad. The study concluded that “the DMT session effectively ‘makes space’ for both mother and baby and in so doing, enhances mother-infant interaction and experience through shared, reciprocal, and pleasurable movement experiences.” (ibid., p. 240) According to the description, a session lasted 45 minutes and included a hello and goodbye ritual, a check-in, a warm-up, sound-making and massaging, object investigation, and mirroring. At some point, the space was cleared, music was provided and an opportunity to move and dance freely was given:

The facilitator let the group lead insofar as possible, identifying and using mother and baby moves and preferences as the driving creative force for group movement and

⁸ As a rule, the baby and its parent enter into resonance. There is a kind of common pulse, a harmonious dialogue often initiated by the baby. The baby awakens and becomes the awakener of its parent. The baby’s pulse calls the parent’s pulse. It “calls” what is silent in him. The fluidity of the baby’s dance resonates with that of its parent. It reactivates a forgotten bodily memory in him.

giving direction or ideas for moving only when the group seemed at risk of grinding to a halt. (ibid., p. 231)

The dance element was unlike the dance content in *MamaDances* in that it was a very brief activity amongst others. However, the result showed that “More than half of the mothers (9/15) cited the ‘move and dance’ element of the session as the most enjoyable for mum and baby” (ibid. p 235). The study makes use of concepts of physical, social and relational space, drawing upon theories of “potential space” (Winnicott, 1971) and “holding environments” (Winnicott, 1960).

1.3.2 The Kestenberg Movement Profile

My research in the databases indicates that I cannot discuss dance and the infant-mother relationship without mentioning the work of Judith Kestenberg (1975). In the fields of psychology and DMT, Janet Kestenberg Amighi has, in association with her colleagues Susan Loman and K. Mark Sossin, created a huge body of research based on her mother’s work. The Kestenberg Movement Profile (KMP) can be found in the recent edition of her book, originally published in 1999, *The Meaning of Movement* (Amighi, Loman, & Sossin, 2018). Janet’s mother, Judith Kestenberg, was a child psychiatrist and psychoanalyst with a background in neurology. She initiated research on the role and meaning of movement in child development to help guide parents, researchers and therapists working with children and families. KMP offers a system of notation, classification, analysis, and interpretation of movement to understand individuals through non-verbal behaviour. This work has many clinical applications in psychology, psychoanalysis, child development, dance movement therapy, and social work. KMP focuses on the way movement patterns develop, from the fetal stage to six years of age. It also helps one become more aware of their own movement repertoire and how it affects relationships, both personally and professionally. For this study, it is important to note that guiding parents in movement to be attuned with their children was a primary interest of Judith Kestenberg (1975), and that KMP would be an excellent system to use in future studies as a means to analyse the movement between mothers and babies.

1.3.3 Behavioural Cybernetics, Kinesics and Babies

In the field of pre-natal and perinatal psychology, the work of Dr. Frank Hatch and Dr. Lenny Maietta (1991), co-directors of *Maietta-Hatch Kinaesthetics* and *Touch In Parenting Services*, a program for teaching infant-handling skills, highlights the importance of “kinesthetic bonding.”

Hatch is also a dance teacher and choreographer, thus an interest in dance movement animates their work, which acknowledges the importance of bonding (Bowlby, 1969, 1973, 1980). It also recognizes the research done by Condon & Sandor (1974) and Trevarthen (1977) on the importance of timing and synchronization. This paper focuses on the influence of the kinesthetic sense on parent-infant bonding, and the aspects of movement that have been studied include handling and timing:

The mother and baby have a quality of being that allows them to synchronize their behaviour to become “one” together. This quality of “oneness” may be, in large part, due to their way of moving with each other. (Hatch & Maietta, 1991, p. 254)

The foundations of this work lie in *behavioural cybernetics* and *kinesics*, which are based on the understanding that every level of physiological, developmental, and social function of infants and their parents are interrelated by means of “mutually shared motion-generated sensory experience”. Babies follow the movements of their mothers, and, in turn, mothers follow the movements of their babies. This movement experience creates their mutual reality. This is known as “kinesthetic bonding.” Hatch and Maietta link dance professions and the heightened states of awareness and sensitivity or kinesthesia achieved by careful attention to movement, with descriptions of the “sensitive period” of new parents. Behavioral cybernetics shows that learning between individuals is greatest when there is mutual interaction, which according to Hatch and Maietta (1991) is the simplest kind of exchange. Both the mother and the baby are simultaneously engaging in the same task, using each other's sensory input to control what they do, relative to the task. For example, nursing is a mutual interaction between a mother and baby. Mothers and infants are highly sensitized to each other's movement. According to Hatch and Maietta (1991), this mutual sensitivity is the single most important resource for making sure they maintain a relationship that assures the infant's survival. The authors refer to the state of kinesthesia that mothers and perinatal infants achieve through their mutual motion tracking as “kinesthetic bonding.” This research is significant to my study in suggestion of kinesics (the study of motion in human communication), to show how bonding may be accomplished through certain qualities of mother-infant interaction that are deemed so significant to bonding, yet are not, thus far, very well understood.

1.3.4 Music Studies of the Dyadic Movement

Within the field of early child development and care, a two-part study conducted by Vlismas et al. (2013) involved researching the effect of music and movement on dyadic reciprocity and post-natal attachment between healthy first-time mothers and their babies two to six months of age, over a five-month period. Vlismas has worked in early childhood education and is a parent advisor. She has developed an online program called *Bond with Baby*. As for the other two researchers, Mullach worked extensively with Trevarthen and co-developed *Communicative Musicality*, while Burnham is the Director of MARCS Institute and Professor of Psychology at the University of Western Sydney. He has specific expertise in infant speech perception and language development. The music and movement content of the study included lullabies that incorporated rocking/swaying and the gentle use of touch, up-tempo rhymes, and play-songs for playful gestural interactions (such as tickling and hand actions), rhythmical movement, and music conducive to slow-tempo dancing and relaxation. This study refers to the research of Hodges (1996), Koester, Papoušek & Papoušek (1989), Longhi (2008), Hatch & Maietta (1991), and Trevarthen & Malloch (2002) to show how:

rhythmical movement per se appears to constitute a large proportion of the observed interactions mothers are motivated to express when communicating with their infants [...] and that a mother's touch and rhythmical movements that are co-created with her infant during musical interactions are central to the infant's feelings of pleasure and are intrinsic to the relationship. (Vlismas et al., 2013, p. 1670)

The study concluded that music and movement increase mothers' interactions with and attachment to their infants, and that they have a positive influence on dyadic reciprocity. Movements such as swaying, rocking, and bouncing are mentioned, but they are much less significant to the study than the movement of sound and music-making. The word "dance" is mentioned only once and is not discussed, whereas here, in my research, dance is at the centre of the experience.

1.3.5 Clinical Interventions Integrating Dance

Studies focusing on movement-based parent/child/baby clinical interventions for adolescent mothers (Proulx, 2009; Sadler & Cowlin, 2003), families at risk, and children with special needs (Baniel, 2012; Chaiklin & Wengrower, 2016; Hill & Ng, 2017; Tortora, 2005; Warburton, Reedy, & Ng, 2014) all show positive effects of movement on parent-child dyads.

Moving into Parenthood (Sadler & Cowlin, 2003) is a program for adolescent mothers developed by Lois S. Sadler PhD, RN CS PNP, Associate Professor of Nursing, and Anne Colwyn, MA, CSM, CCE and Assistant Clinical Professor at Yale University School of Nursing. The program combines parent education with creative physical activity. This program was developed at the Polly T. McCabe Center in New Haven, CT, which opened in 1966 as part of the public school system. The creative physical activity described in this program includes techniques borrowed from creative dance which turn abstract concepts based on aesthetic perceptions of space, time, and energy into practical skills. The classes may be taught by registered dance therapists, creative movement instructors, physical education teachers, certified fitness instructors, or personal trainers, all of whom need some specialized training in pre/postnatal fitness. The program was evaluated through longitudinal case-control studies of 102 student mothers enrolled in the program in the 1979-80 school year. These rigorous studies demonstrate both short- and longer-term positive outcomes for teen mothers and their children. The program has been cited as one of the more effective interventions for teen parents (Apfel & Seitz, 1996). This activity does not mention the inclusion of babies dancing with their mothers.

Research undertaken by Proulx (2009) addressed attachment and maternal sensitivity in three mother-baby dyads, two with adolescent mothers. The use of dance as an intervention tool had a positive impact on the mothers' knowledge of infant development, but the results about maternal sensitivity were not significant. According to the literature, the facilitator of the intervention was a student of psychoeducation, not experienced in dance. The intervention was an amalgamation of different programs, including *Moving into Parenthood* (Sadler & Cowlin, 2003). The dance element was one among many, including arts and crafts, motor skill stimulation, and education on good parenting habits. Compared with *MamaDances*, it seems that dance played a minor role, and although it was meant to encourage contact, the fact that it was video-recorded and used as a retroactive observation and analysis tool brings up questions of whether the mothers felt comfortable, and whether this exploration was, effectively, dance.

A three-year action-research mixed-methodology study conducted by Hill & Ng (2017) and Warburton et al. (2014) on *Moving Parents and Children Together* (MPACT), a relation-based dance program begun in 2001, addressed disadvantaged families and children with special needs

in California, particularly those involved in the child-welfare system. The focus of the research study was the effect of the dance program on the “relational engagement” of the participants. All the researchers involved in this study are professional dance artists or teachers. Edward C. Warburton is Professor of Dance at the University of California, Santa Cruz. His interdisciplinary interests in dance cognition, creativity, and technology stem from graduate work at Harvard University, where he completed a doctorate in human development and psychology. Patricia Reedy is the founder and co-executive director of Luna Dance Institute. Since 1992, she has been designing all the program’s components and written curricula and directing Luna’s evaluation, assessment, and research. Nancy Ng is Co-executive Director of Luna Dance Institute, the Director of Community Engagement, Manager of Early Childhood Education, and co-developer of MPACT. Family community dance classes have been part of Luna’s program since its inception. The findings of their research suggest that dancing together requires the kind of inter-subjectivity – the shared cognitions and felt emotions between people – that can build interpersonal trust and understanding. They argue that relationship-based dance programs like MPACT develop an “ethic of care” in participants. They promote an immediacy of experience that, over time, can create and sustain engagement and connection between parents and children. I understand from my reading that MPACT involves dance structures appropriate for older children, rather than mother-baby dyads. Luna Dance Institute provides a wealth of professional exchange and programming that is family-centered and bolstered by academic research. It provides inspiration for my work and my hopes for the dissemination and democratization of *MamaDances*.

Another study (Van Puyvelde et al. 2014) which describes using music, singing, and moving to establish maternal–infant intersubjectivity, conducted in a residential mother–baby unit for mothers with postnatal depression and their infants, over a 5-week period, introduces the concept of a mother–infant group therapy. It measured maternal–infant intersubjectivity of four dyads. The results are discussed in relation to the musical characteristics of mother–infant dyads, music improvisation techniques, group processes, and intersubjective development. The first author is a professional musician, clinical psychologist, academic researcher, and certified family therapist. The second author is a professional musician, academic researcher, professor of music psychology, and the artistic director of “Companhia de Música Teatral” in Portugal. The sessions were

inspired, on a macrolevel, by the *Bebe'Baba' project* (Rodrigues et al., 2010; Rodrigues et al., 2008). Here, again, the word “dance” is used as a metaphor in the title of the study:

Using the dance analogy, we think that the use of music in a group context possesses the capability to convince mothers and infants of their dancing talent and to encourage them to continue their opening dance of life.” (Van Puyvelde et al. 2014 p. 231)

There is no mention of dance in the description of the intervention. It is a study of music.

1.3.6 Therapeutic Practices

There is significant body of literature written by practitioners involved in developing the use of dance, dance therapy, and somatic education for healing and intervention with families and young children with special needs. Most of the researchers intentionally using dance in their work with mothers and babies are Dance Movement Therapists (DMT). *The Art and Science of Dance/Movement Therapy* (Chaiklin & Wengrower, 2016) gives both a broad understanding and an in-depth view of how and where dance therapy can be used to produce change in families. The work offers theoretical perspectives and case studies that emphasize techniques used in various settings. Several different theoretical points of view are presented, illuminating the different paths through which dance can be approached in therapy. Significant concepts include therapeutic relationships, kinesthetic empathy, embodiment, and enaction. *MamaDances* is not DMT but some studies of DMT help to understand aspects of *MamaDances*.

Anat Baniel’s (2012) work, the *Anat Baniel Method* (ABM), is based on the *Feldenkrais Method* and implements nine Neuromovement Essentials for brain change. Baniel is a trained clinical psychologist, dancer and is a close associate of Moshe Feldenkrais. Suzy Tortora (2005) Ed. D. ADTR, CMA, has a clinical dance movement psychotherapy practice in New York. Her work, *The Ways of Seeing Technique*, is designed for use with children of zero to seven years, helping caregivers develop awareness of children’s non-verbal cues, expanding the children’s abilities in developmental areas with movement, dance, music, and play; strengthening social and emotional bonds; and helping caregivers, educators, and mental health professionals use non-verbal interactions to connect with children and stimulate their development.

In an exploratory research study combining DMT with Psychotherapy in treatment of troubled mother and baby relationships, Coulter & Loughlan (1999) concluded that dance movement gives the mother and her baby an opportunity to experience joyful and enriching moments with one another, and that the power of that is often overlooked in its capacity to help mothers play:

Play is crucial for the well-being of a mother-infant relationship. A mother coming for treatment with her baby may have lost the capacity for play and joy with her infant or may never have had it. The pair is often in an emotional desert where affectionate, playful togetherness has been replaced by a management routine devoid of emotional meaning. (ibid., p. 72)

The study involved a therapeutic program developed at the Infant Clinic, Clinical Psychology Department, Austin Rehabilitation Medical Centre, Melbourne, Australia, which incorporated a dance therapy group where communications between mother and baby found expression in movement-play and dance. It is interesting to note the positive results and consider that this kind of activity could also be helpful to healthy mother-baby dyads, as in *MamaDances*.

1.3.7 Psychology and Mother and Baby Dance

A recent research study (Brosseau, 2019) conducted within the field of psychology investigates the lived experience of mothers in an afro-contemporary dance workshop within a cultural mediation project framework in Montréal. The research overlaps with the time of data-production of this study, although the activity experienced focuses on learning to carry their babies in back carriers. The data show five significant and relevant themes. They include: “Une expérience sensorielle, une expérience d’accordage, expérience de liberté, expérience de validation, et une expérience de retour à soi”⁹ (Brosseau, 2019, p. 129). The theoretical insights surrounding babywearing and the different cultural points of view regarding babywearing that are discussed in this paper, as well as the links between babywearing and the psychodynamic approach in psychology, are significant for my research. For example:

Le bercement, favorisé par la proximité entre l'adulte et l'enfant, semble donc jouer un rôle important dans le bon fonctionnement du système vestibulaire, soit le premier système à devenir fonctionnel au cours de la vie fœtale, à partir du quatrième mois de

⁹ A sensory experience, a tuning experience, a freedom experience, a validation experience, and a coming home experience

gestation. De même, le rôle du mouvement et du bercement ressort d'une étude en biologie portant sur le besoin de proximité propre aux nourrissons dans la relation mère-enfant.¹⁰ (p. 21)

Brosseau discusses how the upright position of a baby in a carrier expands the visual field and enhances the development of tonicity in the back and neck. Thus, the amount of time babies spend in carriers affects their physical development. Brosseau mentions the concept of “emotional-tonic-dialogue” (Bachollet & Marcelli, 2010), which refers to the transmission of feelings between parents and baby. This concept can be used to describe the continuity or discontinuity of in-utero sensation after birth. Brosseau (2019) also discusses Western society’s medicalization of childbirth and the dominant distal approach to maternity, all of which is relevant to my own work, and perhaps to anyone working in perinatal care.

1.3.8 Benefits of Dance

The benefits of dance in different settings are becoming more clearly articulated by research. In a keynote address delivered to the 44th American Dance Therapy Association conference, some therapeutic aspects of dance were articulated by Sheets-Johnstone (2010). She stated that Movement is at the core of life, it is life proclaiming, that movement validates and gives expression to an agential self, that movement accentuates the integral relationship between affective and tactile kinaesthetic feelings, that movement awakens attention to the kinaesthesia of space-time force dynamics, which introduces both the challenge of verbalizing experiences as well as the language for attempting to do so, that movement brings awareness to qualitative diamond dynamics of kinaesthetic experience, potentially shedding light on how thinking in movement is at the core of our sense-making lives, that movement is a counterpoint to thinking and language that deny our active, feeling dynamic experiences, as well as the cultural ideas that deny our common creaturehood.

Pica (2004) writes about how dancing can help improve physical fitness by cultivating “a physical state of well-being that allows people to 1. Perform daily activities with vigour. 2. Reduce their

¹⁰ The proximity between the adult and the child allows for the rocking to play an important role in the proper functioning of the vestibular system, the first system to become functional during foetal life, from the fourth month of gestation. A study in biology shows the need for movement and rocking in developing the closeness of the mother-infant relationship.

risk of health problems relative to lack of exercise, 3. Establish a fitness base for participation in a variety of physical activities” (p. 6). However, the literature indicates that the benefits of dance as an art go beyond physical fitness. Strides are more often being made in many fields that demonstrate this through mixed-method, qualitative, and quantitative studies of dance interventions conducted to the standards of scientific research (Barnstaple, 2016; Beaudry, Fortin, & Rochette, 2019; Bräuninger, 2014; Fortin, 2018). The International Association for Dance Medicine & Science (IADMS) has now established Dance for Health (DfH) to augment our knowledge of the relationship between health and well-being in dance by cultivating medical, scientific, and educational excellence. New ways of engaging and building communities are being developed by artists for social action and artists in the community, and in the practice of cultural mediation. New fields of research are necessarily evolving from the convergence of dance and wellness and dance and health (Barnstaple, Fortin, & Beaudry, 2019).

The research in the field of DfH that has been conducted on mother and baby dance and dance-related activities within psychology, psychotherapy and child development combined with the growing knowledge that dance is beneficial to health and wellness, indicates that *MamaDances* mother and baby dance may provide benefits to the health and wellness of infant-mother relational engagement, and by consequence the mothers’ matrescence, the babies’ development, and their mutual bonding.

What is remarkable is the abundance of research about mother and baby pre-verbal and non-verbal interaction in the field of psychology described as dance/movement/rhythm/ synchrony/vitality within dyadic intersubjectivity, as opposed to so little interest from the field of dance. This, “despite the significant role of the body in the primary relationship” (Tortora 2011), and the “nonverbal dynamics” (Tortora, 2011) of the communication between mother and baby . Since psychology and therapy are not my areas of expertise, the literature review took me into unfamiliar territory. The sum of new references and studies to cover brought me to frequently cite secondary sources. The review of the literature shows a need to collaborate and consolidate the knowledge from the field of psychology and therapy with knowledge in dance (Fortin et al., 2021). To summarize, this literature review has enabled me to direct and motivate the aims and objectives of this research study, as presented in the next section.

1.4 Aims and Objectives

The objectives of this research study are to describe and understand the mother participants' experiences in the *MamaDances* Mother and Baby Dance Program. Discovering how the compositional choices and the relational artistic approach are experienced by the participants will help to describe and understand *MamaDances*. Examining the lived experience of the participants, through their own voices, will help articulate its values. What transpires, and how the baby, the mother, or the relationship between them are affected will become evident in the process. A better understanding of this experience will contribute to the literature on dance and perhaps help bridge the gap between dance and research in infant-mother intersubjectivity and well-being

This research aims to:

- describe, using the mothers' words, the compositional elements of *MamaDances*,
- reveal and articulate the values of *MamaDances*,
- discover how *MamaDances* is experienced by the participants and how it relates to/affects their matrescence,
- identify how *MamaDances* resonates with relational art, and
- contribute to dance innovation by advancing current efforts in dance studies.

1.5 Research Question and Sub-questions

Considering the objectives indicated, the research question being investigated is:

- What is the lived experience of the mother participants in a *MamaDances* Mother and Baby Dance Session?

The research sub-questions are:

- What are the compositional elements of *MamaDances* as an artform and as a relational art?
- What intrinsic values are perceived by the mothers and guide the action within *MamaDances*?
- How does *MamaDances* influence the participants' experience of matrescence?

1.6 Pertinence of the Research Study

With this research I am contributing to the pursuit of knowledge while acknowledging the benefits of dance practices for many aspects of life, particularly in fostering relationship and wellness. Here, my dance work and research address mothers and babies. I hope it brings more awareness to the richness that dance brings to our society today by contributing to the growing body of evidence of academic research in dance. Insight gained into how *MamaDances* serves its participants/mothers and their babies, and their daily lives, will help direct research in the field and its future development. Identifying and understanding their lived experiences and the perceived values of the compositional elements of *MamaDances* and then relating them to key academic concepts will contribute to its scientific integrity. The mothers' experiences may reveal relations between *MamaDances* and established knowledge from fields of research concerned with the care of mothers and babies, and this may strengthen the understanding of them. In that way, this research will also help me, as founder and facilitator, as well as other facilitators, to find cohesion and direction in our artistic practices. By articulating *MamaDances* in detail through the knowledge gained by the lived experience of the participants, the results of this research can be documented for future dissemination and perhaps the democratization of *MamaDances* as a relational art.

This inquiry may lead to a discovery of the contributions it may be making to the lives of its participants, how it affects both their experience of matrescence and the development of their babies.

The surge in activities for infant-caregiver dyads, including dance, suggests that a new field of research is evolving. I believe that *MamaDances* as a relational art is innovative and a catalyst, and thus, documenting its existence is significant. This research may eventually be used to complement psychology and child development and bolstering DMT and other artistic movement activities for health and well-being.

All descriptions of the babies' experiences will come from observation by the mothers. Therefore, data collection and analysis will consist of several layers of observation and interpretation of the results, as well as my own discussion and reflections in the final chapter. Since I am the creator-

artist of *MamaDances*, and the facilitator of the workshops and the student research, the results will inevitably be subjective, despite my efforts to attain a position of *epoché*, a concept that will be discussed in the next chapter.

1.7 Research Structure

This qualitative research study conducted within an interpretive paradigm engages an exploratory strategy with phenomenological-inspired data collection and analysis methods. I investigated the lived experience of a group of eight mother-baby dyads (the babies were aged between two and twelve months) who participated in an 8-week *MamaDances* Mother and Baby dance session.

In the second chapter I will define and expose the key concepts helping to understand compositional aspects of *MamaDances* as a relational art.

CHAPTER 2

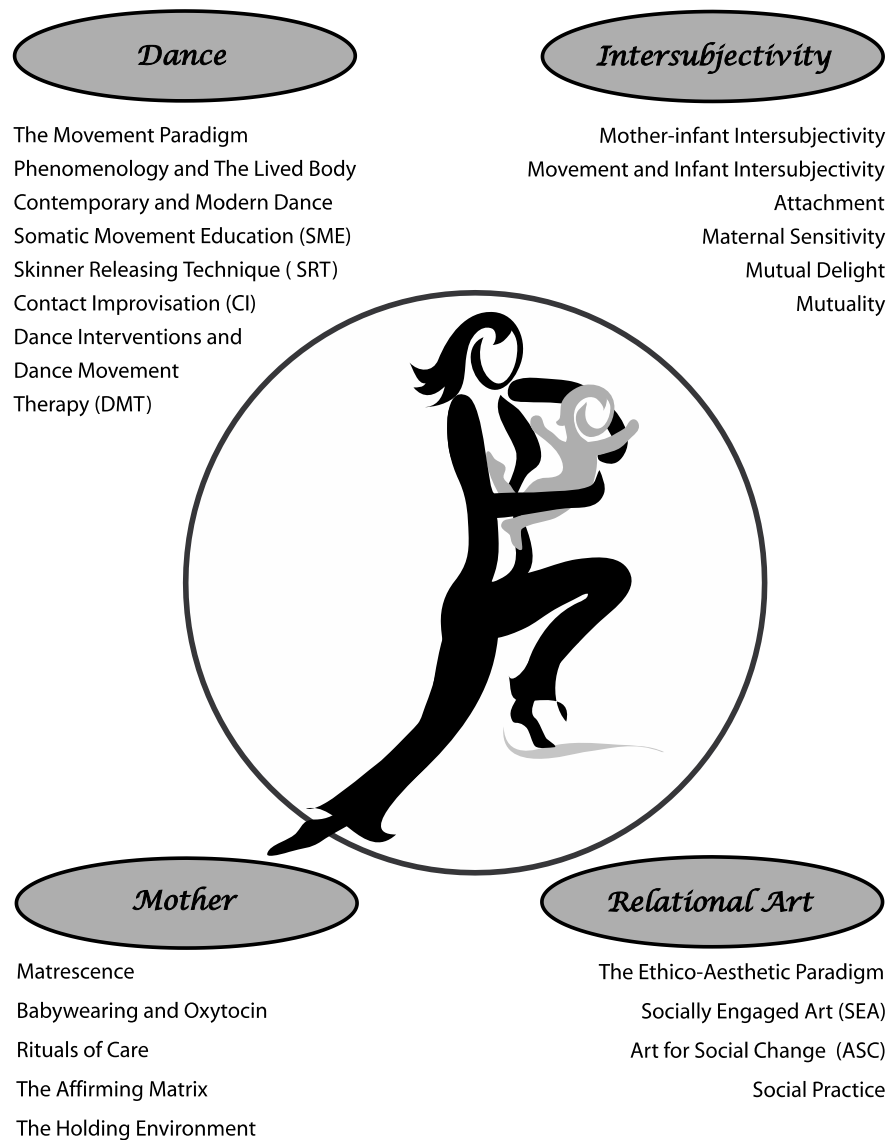
KEY CONCEPTS

According to the findings in the literature review, although *MamaDances* was developed intuitively, certain concepts from the literature are integrated into its compositional structure. The key concepts have been divided into four categories, based on the literature:

1. Concepts related to dance philosophy, including The Movement Paradigm, Phenomenology and the Lived Body, Contemporary and Modern Dance, and Somatic Movement Education (SME), specifically Contact Improvisation (CI), Skinner Releasing Technique (SRT), Dance Interventions, and Dance Movement Therapy (DMT).
2. Concepts related to “mother”, including Matrescence, Babywearing and Oxytocin, Rituals of Care, The Affirming Matrix, and The Holding Environment.
3. The concept of Relational Art, including The Ethico-Aesthetic Paradigm, Socially Engaged Art (SEA), Art for Social Change (ASC), and Social Practice.
4. The concept of Intersubjectivity, including Mother-Infant Intersubjectivity, Movement and Infant Intersubjectivity, Attachment, Maternal Sensitivity, Mutual Delight and Mutuality.

Within *MamaDances*, theoretical foundations of dance and mother are bolstered by the concepts of relational art and intersubjectivity as shown in the next figure, representing the related concepts that will be defined and exposed in the chapter.

Figure 2.1 Key Concepts



2.1 Concepts in Dance Philosophy and Practices

My study and practice of Skinner Releasing Technique (SRT) and Contact Improvisation (CI) have, throughout my career, given me an opportunity to perceive the world and all its movement, and life itself, as a form of dance. Modern dance choreographer Martha Graham (1894-1991) said, “Dance is knowledge.” Dancer, writer and chair of the Department of Dance at the State University of New York, Brockport, Sandra Horton Fraleigh (1996) elaborates: “It is, however, knowledge of a particular kind, one not rendered through mental processes but experienced more directly

through the body as a feeling, thinking, mysterious whole.” I believe that the knowledge that the practice of dance can provide enhances our relation to ourselves, others, and the world around us.

Why We Dance: A Philosophy of Bodily Becoming, written by dancer, philosopher and scholar of religion Kimerer Lamothe (2015), resonates strongly with my own perceptions. It describes dance as a vital art, vital for the health and well-being of our physical selves as well as our emotional, intellectual and spiritual selves, for our families, our communities, and our relationships with the earth. Lamothe (2015) calls for a paradigm shift. The thought that dominates Western culture is that of a “materialist paradigm,” which she describes as:

an edifice of values built upon the idea that matter is real [...] and that sustains most theories and practices of contemporary art, science, religion, politics and economics, permeating all levels and in all dimensions our relationships to ourselves, others, and the natural world and social worlds in which we live. (p. 11)

According to LaMothe (2015) The materialist paradigm is a result of Cartesian dualism: mind over matter, “I think therefore I am.” This philosophical concept originated in the ancient world and became central to the thought of Rene Descartes in the 17th century. At that time:

the binding together of the cosmos, society and the self, shifted from living organism to machine. In this mechanical model, nature, once imagined as animate and enspirited, is now perceived as passive and inert— a mindless submissive body. (Merchant, 1980 p. 190 cited by LaMothe, 2015 p. 11)

Over the course of her book, an alternative vision is unveiled: a “movement paradigm” (p.13) as a return to the wisdom of the body, to dance to matter, to know, to evolve, to be born, to connect, to heal, and to love. To dance, she explains:

is to exercise the capacity of a human bodily self to create and become patterns of sensation and response [...] to participate in a rhythm of bodily becoming in ways that cultivate a sensory awareness of our participation in it. (ibid., p 5)

For Lamothe, as we become new patterns of sensation and response, our movements gather in us not only as habit and ability, but also as forms of emerging self-consciousness.

In the movement paradigm that she envisions, there is no distinction between dance as a codified form and dance as an action. Therefore, the act of mothering as a collection of patterns of sensation and response that cultivate a sensory awareness of emerging self-consciousness can be perceived as dancing. In this movement paradigm the movement of mothering may be considered dancing when enacted with consciousness toward becoming.

2.1.1 Phenomenology and the Lived Body in Dance

Phenomenology is a concept with its early roots in the 18th century. It is closely associated with the European philosophy of the early 1900s, most notably with Edmond Husserl (1913, 1970) and Martin Heidegger (1996) in Germany and Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1945) in France. Phenomenologists were critical of the natural sciences, which assumed an objective reality independent of individual consciousness. Thus, dancers and dance researchers concerned with individual consciousness have found phenomenology useful for understanding their work. Connections between dance practice and phenomenology are being made by many dance researchers. Among them are Albright (2011), Fraleigh (1996), Leduc (2007), Sheets-Johnstone (2015), and Warburton (2011) in supporting the adoption of this perspective in the inquiry of the lived experience of the mothers in *MamaDances*.

For Anne Cooper Albright (2011), professor and chair of the Department of Dance at Oberlin College, phenomenology is a multifaceted tool for analysing everything from discussions of posture to issues of ethical behaviour to the ways our bodies shape and are shaped by our life experiences. According to her,

Phenomenology is the study of how the world is perceived, rather than the study of the essence of things as objects or images of our consciousness. It is a way of describing the world as we live in it—a philosophical approach that positions the body as a central aspect of that lived experience. (Albright, 2011, p. 8)

Phenomenology seeks to account for the structures of our situated “being-in-the-world”¹¹ as it focuses on the body-based somatic and perceptual senses, including space and touch.

In *Dance and the Lived Body*, Fraleigh (1996) identifies existential phenomenology as being particularly relevant to dance research. Fraleigh explains that the concept of the *lived body* derives from combining existential concerns with phenomenological methods. She describes *existential phenomenology* as the fusion of a theory of conduct (existentialism) with a theory of knowledge and meaning (phenomenology), resulting in a humanistic philosophy that includes investigation into art, which is particularly applicable to dance research. “There are connections between existential thought, the body, dance and art in general since they are all founded in lived and experiential values” (ibid. p. 3).

Fraleigh (1996) explains:

We dance to assure our bodily lived freedom. [...] As we express our embodiment in dancing, we create it aesthetically and experience it more freely. Dance frees us from the constraints of our practical lives and utilitarian movement. In short, we experience a sheer freedom in dance as we move free of any practical outcome. (p.19)

In her study, Diane Leduc (2007) Tenured Professor of The Faculty of Science Education in the Department of Didactics, UQAM, identifies and describes, through phenomenological inquiry in her thesis, the state of authenticity as being perhaps the most significant aspect of the artistry of a professional contemporary dancer, and that which makes an essential contribution to the value of the dance for both the dancer and the audience.

Sur le plan épistémologique, la phénoménologie et plus spécifiquement la méthodologie de recherche développée par Giorgi, ont changé notre perception du monde et surtout notre manière d’être en contact avec lui. Le regard que nous portons maintenant sur l’acte d’interprétation en danse est renouvelé et porteur d’un respect encore plus grand pour celui qui fait de la danse son métier. Le bonheur de s’imprégner d’une attitude phénoménologique s’est manifesté, au cours de cette démarche, dans

¹¹ See Martin Heidegger’s writings, especially *Being and Time*, as well as his essays in *Poetry, Language, Thought* (New York: Harper and Row, 1971). See Edmond Husserl’s *Phenomenology and the crisis of Philosophy* (New York: Harper and Row, 1971), as well as the collection *Husserl at the Limits of Phenomenology*, edited by Leonard Lawler and Bettina Bergo (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2002)

l'acceptation d'être à la fois si proche de saisir le phénomène et à la fois si sûr qu'il est inépuisable.¹² (Leduc, 2007, p. 216)

Warburton (2011) explores the relationship between phenomenology and cognitive science considering dancing. Concepts of embodiment and enaction as well as background information about dance and phenomenology are well explained.

Dance is situated in a larger discussion of causes, contents, concepts, and constructs to understand how the experience of dancing emerges from “a continuous stream of evolving affect, conceptual processing, physical sensation and psychomotor skill all bound together to create connections between individuals and ideas.” (ibid. p. 76)

The philosophy of the movement paradigm and phenomenological research and discourse in dance is unified in the epistemology of kinesthetic perception: the wisdom of the body prioritizing the first-person lived experience over objective Cartesian dualism.

2.1.2 Contemporary Dance

Some of the choreographic choices made in *MamaDances* were informed by my formal training at Juilliard in Modern and Contemporary Dance. An explanation of the history and development of modern and contemporary dance is beyond the breadth of this study, and is well-documented elsewhere (McDonagh, 1976). Where modern dance ends and contemporary dance begins is, unclear. In America, early Contemporary Dance¹³ is represented by the work of Merce Cunningham, Twyla Tharp, and Trisha Brown, to name only a few. Modern Dance, its forebearer, is represented by the work of Ruth St Denis, Isadora Duncan, Doris Humphrey, Martha Graham, José Limon and Lester Horton, among others. Both developed within American culture and its concepts of freedom. Inspiration for contemporary dance often comes from inner sources rather than established techniques. The late Randy Martin (1957-2015), dance scholar and professor of

¹² On the epistemological level, phenomenology, and more specifically the research method developed by Giorgi, has changed our perception of the world and above all our way of being in contact with it. The look we now have on the act of interpretation in dance is renewed and carries an even greater respect for those who make dance their profession. The joy of imbibing a phenomenological attitude has manifested itself, in the course of this process, in the acceptance of being both so close to grasping the phenomenon and at the same time so sure that it is inexhaustible. (Leduc, 2007, p 216). Translated by DeepL

¹³ From the perspective of the American history of dance in the 20th century.

Art and Policy at New York University's Tisch School of the Arts, social activist and dancer, explains how in contemporary dance:

...the movement is abstract, not symbolic. [...] the movement communicates through its kinetic effects. Kinetic effects, the stimulation of the senses or sentience, are feelings expressed directly from one body to another and amongst a group of bodies. (Martin, 1985, p. 55)

Recent efforts in decolonialization recognize that most modern dance is rooted in colonialization. The pioneers of modern dance often attribute their influences to Oriental and African dance traditions, although many contemporary modern dance aesthetics became very conceptual, separated from what was common in traditional dance, such as the synchronicity of music with dance, the significance of dance in community, and the intergenerational learning exchange within indigenous cultures. An academic letter about this subject was written by Egil Bakka (2021).

2.1.3 Somatic Movement Education

Somatic Movement Education (SME) (Eddy, 2016) is a discipline that brings together a number of approaches to movement that focus on somatic experience. The *Regroupement pour l'éducation somatique* (RES) (2014) defines SME as the learning of awareness of the living body (the soma) through movement in its environment. The term "soma" refers to the body experienced from within. In somatic education the mind is perceived as existing throughout the body through connections of the nervous system (Bainbridge Cohen, 2012; Juhan, 1987). According to SME, by paying attention to the body one is paying attention to the mind. The essential tools of this awareness include kinesthesia and proprioception. Kinesthesia is the perception of one's own movement, proprioception is the perception of one's own body (Eddy, 2016, p. 6). Somatic awareness brings "mindfulness" to movement and teaches balance between external experience and body sensations with the goal of enhancing one's quality of life. The mind and body, as Varela et al. (1974) claim, are part of a single system that can organize, adapt, and transform itself. Basically, the body is perceived as a subject (Beaudry, 2015).

Thomas Hanna (1976) brought the word “somatic” into use in the mid-1970s. It derives from the Greek term “soma”, which refers to the “the living body in its wholeness,” distinguishing the “living body” from the “body.” Somatic education insists on the difference between first-person lived experience and third person outside observation, and therefore relates to phenomenology and certain aspects of dance. The principal of somatic education is a continual process of cultivating and practicing self-awareness, which develops the ability to be present to and aware of others and the environment. Hackney (2000) explains :

“La relation d’un être et de son milieu passe par l’établissement de connexions à l’intérieur de soi d’abord, par le mouvement. L’établissement de connexions corporelles passe par les muscles, les os, les fascias et la respiration”¹⁴ (Hackney, 2000 as cited in Tremblay, 2011).

“Se sentir bien connecté permet de mieux se connecter à l’environnement et aux autres¹⁵” (Tremblay, 2011, p. 5). According to Fortin (2018), somatic practice is useful as it is based on each person’s internal sensation rather than on learning specific dance steps. “Whether explicit outcomes are anticipated or not, the process of sensing is important: Perceiving differences in bodily states enacts changes” (p. 157).

Among the many somatic movement approaches, Skinner Releasing Technique (SRT) (Buckwalter, 2012; Emslie, 2021, 2009; Nehring, 2009; Skinner, 2005; Skura, 2006) and Contact Improvisation (Novack, 1990; Pallant, 2006; Stark Smith, Buckwater, & Nelson, 1975) are the most influential to me as an artist and thus to *MamaDances*.

SRT is a dance technique founded by Joan Skinner based on the use of imagery, without imitation of dance steps. Stephanie Skura (2006) describes SRT as:

a somatic practice that enhances dance technique and catalyzes healing. Through the use of imagery, voice, language, and music, the SRT teacher guides the participant in a way that leads to a self-propelling process. Developed by dancer/choreographer Joan

¹⁴ The relationship of a being and her environment goes through the establishment of connections within oneself first, through movement. Body connections are made through muscles, bones, fasciae and breathing.

¹⁵ Feeling well-connected to oneself allows one to better connect to the environment and to others.

Skinner in the 1960's SRT aims to free students of excess tension and expand movement possibilities. It engages the creative process while honing technique. (p. 30)

Only partner work is demonstrated and expected to be reproduced exactly. Within SRT, the human organism is seen as a network of energies. The SRT process involves *letting go* of muscular tension to allow new movement to emerge. A release of psychophysical energy, ingrained perceptions, preconceived ideas, and psychophysical habits, all of which inhibit freedom, is experienced. This may give the practitioner the sense of a more harmonious way of being with themselves, others, and the environment; in the technique this is termed as “multi-dimensional alignment.”

Although SRT inspired facets of *MamaDances*, many aspects cannot be experienced in the latter. For example, class 2 of the SRT introductory pedagogy uses the image of the breath as a constant and loyal companion which supports and accompanies continuous movement. As the class progresses, the *image action* of breath as *white mist* travelling through and around the bones is provided by the facilitator and the participants dance within this imagery. In the context of *MamaDances*, deep exploration of image activity like white mist is not possible, as it requires the dancers to enter a deeply internal or sub-conscious state (often with eyes closed), and in *MamaDances* we must always remain fully conscious of the babies. Still, dancing with the image of the breath as a constant and loyal companion can be empowering for mothers. SRT is a transformational practice (Emslie, 2021) that includes focusing on the first-person experience, slowing down to cultivate and integrate inner and outer awareness, paying attention, fostering connections with the psychophysical self and nurturing compassion and empathy.

Contact Improvisation (CI) is a form of movement research where the subject is the body's response to gravity and touch. The journal *Contact Quarterly* is dedicated to it. The main technical principle of CI (Novack, 1990; Pallant, 2006; Stark Smith et al., 1975) is the sharing of weight between a point of contact between two or more dancers. Although the principle of sharing weight between two adults does not apply to *MamaDances*, the humanistic values and conscious touch nurtured in CI is relevant. For example, CI is associated with community-building, accessibility, inclusivity, equality, empowerment, non-judgement, non-competitiveness, playfulness, sensuousness, and physical activity. Babies and children are generally welcome in spaces where CI is practiced. One could say that practicing CI requires a state of naivety and curiosity that is

natural in children. Some practitioners include children more intentionally. For example, *Contact Kids*, developed by Itay Yatuv, and *BabyContact* (Zotova, 2011). Many of CI's qualities of presence are incorporated into the *MamaDances* workshops, such as availability, spontaneity, collaboration, awareness, and attunement.

2.1.4 Dance Interventions and Dance Movement Therapy

The literature supporting the benefits of dance is growing, as mentioned in Chapter 1. Several professional associations are working to promote this knowledge, including International Association for Dance Medicine & Science (IADMS) and The American Dance Therapy Association (ADTA). A few of the research studies discussed in Chapter 1 involved Dance Movement Therapy (DMT). The ADTA defines DMT as “the psychotherapeutic use of movement and dance to support intellectual, emotional and motor functions of the body.”¹⁶ This profession is informed by psychiatry, psychology, and psychotherapy. Though it has evolved over the past 70 years, in Canada this field is in its infancy as compared to the other creative art therapy disciplines (Fortin, 2018, 2019), and it has faced many challenges in gaining recognition. Lately, however, scientific research has begun to provide measurable evidence, validating what practitioners already know: that dance and DMT is a powerful intervention for improving health and well-being (Stuckey & Nobel, 2010).

One of the core concepts in DMT literature, and implemented in practice, is kinesthetic empathy (Fischman, 2016). Empathy is the ability of one person to understand another; it is one person's attempt to experience another's experience, and implies knowing what the other feels, having information about the other's situation, and acting accordingly. Kinesthetic empathy synthesizes an approach to the dynamics of the therapeutic relationship, which includes nonverbal communication, bodily movement, dancing, and verbal expression. In DMT, the dance therapist is empathetically involved in an intersubjective experience rooted in the body, as the therapist reflects the client's experience through their own movements. Kinaesthetic empathy is a useful

¹⁶ <https://www.adta.org/>

concept for *MamaDances* in that the mother may reflect, through her own movement, the *child's* experience, and vice versa.

Another concept in the DMT literature that may be pertinent to *MamaDances* is attunement. Attunement is achieved through “sharing muscle tension rhythms, which produce feelings of *mutuality* and responsiveness to needs and feelings, as expressed through muscular tension flow” (Kestenberg, Amighi et al., 1999 as cited by Loman, 2016 p. 226). The concept of infant-mother attunement is particularly considered in the work of Kestenberg (1975) and Stern (1991). Kestenberg (1975) wrote “complete attunement is based on mutual empathy [...] a sameness of needs and responses, but also a synchronization in rhythms” (Kestenberg, 1975 p. 161). Doonan & Bräuninger (2015) also discuss attunement: “Attunement to the baby’s rhythms, actions and body fosters kinesthetic empathy and bonding in the interactive mother/baby dyad” (ibid, p. 228). In the film *The Moving Child* (Kemea Kemble, 2016), many experts in developmental movement, psychology, physiotherapy, occupational therapy, neurology, psychiatry, DMT, and cognitive science come together to speak of the importance of movement for child development. In the film, Kalila Homann (DMT) describes attunement as connectivity: a responsiveness between people, a process within a relationship of keeping the other in mind, of thoughtfully and consciously being aware of one’s impact on that other being. According to Lauffburger (2003), who cites Stolorow et al. (2014), “attunement assists in the integration of affect into the organization of ones experience of their Self.” (Ibid p. 66)

Recent studies in fields ranging from neuroscience to psychology, aging, and medicine indicate the myriad of benefits of dance for our health—cognitive, physical, spiritual and emotional (Barnstaple et al., 2019; Batson, 2014; L. Beaudry, 2020; Fortin, 2018). Advances in neuroscience allow the positive effects of dance to be detected in measurable forms (Barnstaple, 2016).

In *MamaDances*, the concepts of attunement, kinesthetic empathy and mutuality may all be at play in the mother-infant relationship as it is cultivated through movement. At the core of *MamaDances* and this research is the woman and her relation to herself becoming a mother, and the concepts mobilized in her experience of matrescence.

2.2 Mother/The Maternal Body

As *MamaDances* merges dance and mothering, and therefore the maternal body, the next section addresses the theme of the mother and focuses on these concepts: matrescence, babywearing and oxytocin, rituals of care, the affirming matrix, and the holding environment, which may be concepts relevant to the mothers' own words.

2.2.1 Matrescence

Matrescence is defined as “the process of becoming a mother.”¹⁷ It is a term coined by medical anthropologist Dana Raphael (1973) in her book *The Tender Gift: Breastfeeding* (1973) to describe the period of transition in a woman's life when she becomes a mother. It emphasizes her state of “becoming”. The quality of this becoming, and thus, the baby's becoming, is affected by the environment in which they move. Within the concept of matrescence, childbirth brings changes to a mother's physical being, her emotional life, her status within the group, and her female identity. In other words, the process of becoming a mother is a combination of the psychobiology of the mother interacting with the baby and their surrounding support within the psycho-physical environment and their cultural context.

According to Dr Alexandra Sacks (2019) the term “matrescence” is not well known. However, she has brought new attention to it, as she explains that it is a human process caused by hormonal changes affecting emotional and physical states. The medical community's, and society's ignorance of matrescence is causing women to be misdiagnosed with post-partum depression when what they are experiencing are the normal effects of matrescence. According to Van Puyvelde et al. (2014)

postnatal depression is a childbirth-related mental health condition that affects approximately 10 to 15% of new mothers (Beck, 2002b) and carries severe risk factors for the well-being of the mother (Kendall-Tackett, 2005), the infant (Grace, Evindar, & Stewart, 2003; Murray, Fiori-Cowley, Hooper, & Cooper, 1996), and the family system (Knudson-Martin & Silverstein, 2009). A mother with severe postnatal depression tends to express herself with flattened and un-coordinated affect (M. Papoušek, 2007; Weinberg & Tronick, 1997) influencing the non-verbal communication between mother and baby. This may carry the risk of developing into

¹⁷ <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/matrescence>

a cycle of negative reciprocities that may block the intuitive competencies and feelings of self-efficacy in both mother and infant, ultimately creating a discordant dynamic between them. (2014, p.222)

According to The Government of Canada website, a Canadian Maternity Experiences Survey conducted by The Canadian Public Health Agency reported in 2014 that 7.5% of women experience depression during the postpartum period.¹⁸ 2018/19 statistics on maternal mental health in Canada shows 23% of women experience depression during the postpartum period.¹⁹ The postpartum period is also referred to as the 4th trimester. Mid-wife and consultant in perinatal health and breastfeeding, Ingrid Bayot (2018) writes about it:

Peu d'épisodes de la vie humaine concentrent autant d'intensité et de paradoxes, et ce, sur la durée. Et souvent, malheureusement, en étant exposée à l'isolement ou aux commentaires critiques, ou les deux. La maternité est un processus riche et complexe qui s'enracine au plus profond de l'être, biologique et psychique, conscient et non conscient, ainsi que dans l'implicite des différents bails culturels et des attentes sociétales : des enracinements multiples, rarement simples à gérer d'ailleurs. L'histoire des mères n'est pas vraiment un long fleuve tranquille... ²⁰ (2018, p. 9)

MamaDances caters to mothers with babies 2 to 12 months of age, and therefore targets them at this very vulnerable period where post-partum depression and the challenges that coincide with matrescence may surface.

2.2.2 Babywearing and Oxytocin

The links between rituals of maternal care and healthy human development are foundational to the theory and culture of babywearing. This knowledge is taught in educational conferences and workshops for babywearing consultants, such as those held by Center for Babywearing Studies (CBWS) and Institute National du Portage des Enfants (INPE). Babywearing is integrated into

¹⁸ <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/publications/healthy-living/pregnancy-women-mental-health-canada.html>)

¹⁹ <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/190624/dq190624b-eng.htm>

²⁰ Few episodes in human life concentrate so much intensity and paradoxes, over a duration of time. And often, unfortunately, while being exposed to isolation, critical comments, or both. Motherhood is a rich and complex process that is rooted in the deepest part of our being, biological and psychic, conscious and unconscious, as well as in the implicit cultural and societal expectations: multiple roots, rarely simple to manage. The history of mothers is not really a long quiet river... (Translated with www.DeepL.com/Translator)

MamaDances and it gives the mothers an opportunity to practice. Babywearing is the practice of carrying a baby close to the body using a sling, *mei tai*, wrap, or preformed carrier with buckles and/or straps. It is a traditional practice in many cultures and is used today as an alternative to a stroller or push chair, but it has advantages beyond use as transport. One most obvious advantage of using a baby carrier is that it frees the arms and hands, allowing the wearer to attend to other tasks and actions. It gives the caregiver more freedom to travel over uneven terrain or in crowded spaces. When babywearing is done correctly, the physical closeness of the mother and baby gives both a sense of calm, safety, and peace, often causing the baby to sleep. The values promoted by babywearing advocates are supported by current research on the oxytocin hormone and its impact on stress. Moberg (2003) sheds light on the neglect of scientific research on our biochemical system of calm and connection, where oxytocin plays a dominant role, maintaining that oxytocin is the main hormone involved in pregnancy, childbirth, and breastfeeding. It can be released by pleasant, warm, and rhythmic touch and regulated by movement. The effects of oxytocin are receptivity, a feeling of closeness, openness to relationship, and the giving of nurturing and nourishment. Oxytocin's effects create a pattern of reciprocal connection. Oxytocin is an integral component of the "calm and connection system," the counterpart to the adrenalin and vasopressin hormones that contribute to the "fight or flight" mechanism (Moberg, 2003, p. 25). These terms are related to the parasympathetic and sympathetic nervous systems. The sense of connection induced by babywearing is thought to be related to the generation of oxytocin. Babywearing is believed to enhance the babies' learning and sense perception, since the movement of the baby-wearer can be experienced kinesthetically, the heartbeat, voice and breath can be heard and felt, and facial expressions can be shared (Kirkilionis, 2014). A research study (Anisfeld, Casper, Nozyce, & Cunningham, 1990) on the effect of the use of baby carriers on "infant attachment"²¹ found that 83 percent of the infants that were routinely worn in carriers close to their caregivers' bodies were "securely attached"²² after one year, as opposed to a control group that was given plastic baby seats, of whom only 38 percent were "securely attached". Babywearing can enrich the lives of both the parent and the child, as it reduces the stress of everyday family life. In

²¹ Infant-attachment is a concept from Attachment theory (Bowlby, 1969, 1973, 1980) which will be very briefly discussed in 2.3.3. However, this topic is beyond the scope of this thesis.

²² Secure attachment is a concept from Attachment theory will be very briefly discussed in 2.3.3. However, this topic is beyond the scope of this thesis.

MamaDances the mothers have an opportunity to become more comfortable with babywearing and they may discuss other rituals of care that are of concern, before the workshop, after the workshop, and during the pauses provided in workshops.²³

2.2.3 Rituals of Care

“Care” is both a verb and a noun. The Cambridge Dictionary defines it as “the process of protecting someone or something and providing what that person or thing needs”.²⁴ The word also is defined as a state of incertitude, apprehension, worry or responsibility, and as watchful attention, and supervision. As a verb it is defined as an affective state: “to have liking or fondness”.²⁵

Joan Tronto, professor of political science at the University of Minnesota, has dedicated her career to studying political theory of care. She defines care as “every- thing that we do to maintain, continue, and repair our 'world' so that we can live in it as well as possible.”²⁶ According to Tronto (1989), care is generally an invisible activity in our society. In her essay *Women and Caring* (1989), she explains how the attentiveness, commitment and time required to respond to the concrete, physical, spiritual, intellectual, psychic, and emotional needs of others is a state of selflessness that is incompatible with the paradigmatic relationship of exchange in modern society (Harstock cited by Tronto, 1989). In other words, Tronto affirms that our society is too selfish to care well. She claims that thinking of the social world in terms of caring for others radically differs from our present way of conceiving it (Tronto 1989). Today she refers to the current system of care as “wealth-care” (Tronto 2021). She states that because caring emphasizes concrete connection with others and because it evokes so much of the daily stuff of women’s lives, it is worthy of the serious

²³ Other subjects of discourse and advocacy within the babywearing community include breastfeeding, breastsleeping (McKenna, 2016), co-sleeping and the doula profession. Doulas accompany a mother before, during, and after birth, but are not considered necessary by Western medicine, and therefore are an additional personal expense. Dana Raphael (1973) popularized the term doula and emphasized the importance of breastfeeding.

²⁴ <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/primary-care>

²⁵ <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/care>

²⁶ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H-utAjZ_obc

attention of feminist theorists (1989), and with this research I offer that it is also worthy of the serious attention of artists.

The mother-baby dyad as it is in *MamaDances* is a single psychobiological organism (Phillips, 2016). The mother carries, births, nourishes, envelops, and cares for a baby. She is often the primary caregiver, responsible for all aspects of infant care in the first year of life and the healthy development of the infant. Pediatrician and psychoanalyst Donald Winnicott made an extensive study of the first year of care, which he refers to as the “holding” stage (Winnicott, 1960, p. 589). In his concept of “holding,” the physical holding of the infant is a form of loving.²⁷ Psychotherapist Sue Gerhardt (2004) discusses isolation and lack of preparation as an increasing problem in our society: Mothers “have rarely participated in the child-rearing process until they have their own children” (Gerhardt, 2004, p. 208). Gerhardt goes on to ask whether we can afford to leave early parenting in the realm of the private and personal.

Zadoroznyj et al. (2012) explain that cultural norms surrounding the need for post-birth care have shifted substantially in recent decades. The idea of taking time to recover, to be cared for, and to learn to care for a new baby has been replaced with new expectations of self-sufficiency and rapid recovery. These often include the presumption that new mothers will swiftly resume their former roles and responsibilities, including paid employment (McGovern, 2007), pre-pregnant body weight and shape (Diedrichs, Huxley & Miller, 2009), and the capacity to independently manage and care for themselves and their infants (Hedley-Ward, 2009). Under these conditions, new mothers may experience a “care deficit,” a state when the demand for care exceeds the supply. Care deficits are caused by structural shifts in work and family: women’s increased participation in the labour force, aging populations, the stalled gender revolution, and fiscal policies that cut the supply of publicly-provided care (Zadoroznyj et al., 2012).²⁸

²⁷ Winnicott (1960) says that mothers who have it in them to provide “good enough”²⁷ care are enabled to do better by being cared for themselves in a way that acknowledges the essential nature of their task, whereas “mothers who do not have it in them to provide ‘good enough’ care cannot be made ‘good enough’ by mere instruction” (Winnicott 1960 p. 592)

²⁸ Care is often considered a domestic task and as mentioned in Zadoroznyj et al. (2012) reliant on family members. When it comes to the division of labour of domestic tasks, Canada fares better than some other countries, with men here doing an average of 2.4 hours of unpaid labour per day, while women do around 3.75. Worldwide, however, an enormous divide remains (Wezerek & Ghodsee, 2020). In the article, “childcare” is counted as part of this unpaid

All these issues contribute to a mother's experience of matrescence. In *MamaDances* both the care of the mother and the mother's care for her baby are at play, and as a relational art, the private maternal space is bridged to a more communal social space to give the rituals of maternal care more awareness, visibility, support, and acknowledgement.

2.2.4 Affirming Matrix and The Holding Environment

As mentioned in the presentation of the concept of matrescence, the “becoming” of a mother is a process that brings about changes that require support. *The Birth of The Mother* (Stern & Bruschweiler-Stern, 1998) explains how a mother feels a need for the psychological support of other women immediately after giving birth: New mothers need validation, encouragement, witnessing, and support, specifically from another woman who is more experienced in mothering. According to Stern & Bruschweiler-Stern (1998), motherhood is like a craft, and all beginning mothers need to apprentice with a model or guide—a sort of master craftswoman—who has already been there and can surround the mother with a psychological environment in which she can feel secure and trustworthy, and encouraged to explore her parental capacities. This is part of the concept of an “affirming matrix”: “Mothers have a profound need, whether conscious or not, for psychological support that expresses itself in the urge to swap information and observe other mothers in action” (ibid., p. 131). Other clinicians see it as synonymous with the “holding environment” of Winnicott mentioned in the study of Doonan & Bräuninger (2014). In *MamaDances* the shared time, space and facilitation seems to be an opportunity for mothers and babies to learn from each other and witness each other.

2.3 Intersubjectivity

Intersubjectivity is a term used in philosophy, psychology, sociology, and anthropology to describe the psychological relations between people, the sharing of subjective states by two or more individuals. As described by Van Puyvelde (2014) it has become a key concept in research on human development and refers to the interpersonal processes of mutual engagement and

domestic labour. The article only talks about the number of hours of worked; it does not consider the physical, emotional, and intellectual exhaustion resulting from work. The American scholar and teacher of the Marxist feminist tradition, Silvia Federici (1975) (1975), describes housework as the role that women have been “confined to in capitalist society.” The value of women's unpaid domestic labour to the world economy is enormous.

relatedness (e.g., Beebe et al., 2005; Stern, 2004; Trevarthen, 2001; Trevarthen & Aitken, 2001; Zlatev et al., 2008). Stern (2004) introduced the concept of the intersubjective matrix to refer to the continuous interpersonal dialogue in which interacting minds are co-created from birth on. In the literature, intersubjectivity has been described as a state of mind rather than as an observational behavior. For instance, authors have been referring to intersubjectivity as mutual awareness of shared attention (Baldwin, 1995; Wells, 1981), shared experience (Raver & Leadbeater, 1995; Stern, 1985), “shared minds” (Zlatev et al., 2008), and a sense of togetherness (Ninio & Snow, 1996).

Rosemarie Samaritter is a registered senior Dance Movement Therapist who works with children with autism and shows how shared movement interventions offer new perspectives on psychotherapeutic interventions. Helen Payne is a Professor of Psychotherapy specializing in Dance Movement Psychotherapy. They explain that phenomenologists use the term “intersubjectivity” when investigating the nature of a subject’s experiences of being in the world with others (Samaritter & Payne, 2013). The phenomenologist Husserl (1952) maintains that to feel in congruence with another, one must shape one’s body according to visual information one has about the other body. From Merleau-Ponty’s (1945) perspective, coherence emerges from a shared intentionality toward a shared object. Intersubjectivity is

bound to our embodied presence and self-other relatedness [...] concepts taken from dance as a healing art, combined with concepts from phenomenology, can contribute to a body-informed perspective on intersubjectivity that reaches into the roots of interpersonal interaction in early development. (Samaritter & Payne, 2013 p143).

This definition of intersubjectivity explains that dance is an intersubjective practice, and that movement is our primary, and most elementary and direct, form of interaction with others in our environment. The experiential quality of moving and being moved is at the heart of dance as an artform. Fraleigh (1996) claims that dance is not completed as art until it enters an intersubjective field. “It involves the self in a world of others—a communal and cultural context. As a performed art, dance is not a display of self, a show, or a showing: it is simply given. In this the self is given over to the other.” (p. 23)

Eduard Warburton (2014), professor of dance at The University of California, along with Patricia Reedy founder of Luna Dance Institute, and co-director Nancy Ng, write:

A growing number of dance activists and educators believe that dance is a powerful vehicle for growing and nurturing relationships. Dancing together requires the kind of inter-subjectivity – the shared cognitions and felt emotions between people – that can build interpersonal trust and understanding. Relationship-based dance instruction can develop an ethic of care in teachers and learners. (Warburton et al., 2014, p. 2)

Kinesthetic intersubjectivity, along with kinesthetic empathy, are the fundamental concepts in DMT. Practitioners describe it as a somato-sensory encounter between patient and therapist. They use dance structures to encourage the kinesthetic, non-verbal characteristics of interpersonal attunement. These dance structures create a situation that supports the patient's engagement in corporeal, shared, improvised movement experiences. Kinesthetic intersubjectivity, empathy, somato-sensory encounters, and interpersonal attunement may be useful words in describing the nature of the phenomena experienced among the participants in the *MamaDances* workshops.

2.3.1 Mother-infant Intersubjectivity

Mother-infant intersubjectivity is defined as “a state of shared involvement during which mother and infant are responsive to one another in addressing a same topic, activity, or meaning” (Loots et al., 2005 as cited by Van Puyvelde, 2014 p 228). It has been studied extensively, and as mentioned earlier when discussing care, it has been, fairly or not, attributed to the healthy development of infants. Until Bowlby (1969), the perception of most philosophers, psychologists and medical scientists was that a baby is born without conscious intentions, thoughts, or emotions, and is unable to express itself with the mind of a person who can relate to other persons in productive, imaginative, and pleasurable dialogue or work. This position is now obsolete. A closer look at manifestations of intimate and imitative companionship between very young infants and affectionate parents has made it clear that babies are born communicative. They are eager to engage in relationships and to bond with their carer, and their first relational experiences are body-related experiences (Stern, 2010). Dance writer Sheets-Johnstone (2011) has written at length about this developmental epistemological chronology in *The Primacy of Movement*.

2.3.2 Movement and Infant Intersubjectivity

Child Psychologist and Psychobiologist Colwyn Trevarthen is celebrated for his work on infant intersubjectivity and has done extensive research on movement, music, and rhythm within infant-mother relationships (Trevarthen, 2009; Trevarthen & Fresquez, 2015; Trevarthen & Aitken, 2001). Trevarthen's work explores and reinforces the notion of a social psychobiology of movement, observing readiness to engage from birth in meaning-making activities to make cooperative sense of what the world may hold (Trevarthen & Fresquez, 2015). Movement is essential for an infant's developing sense of proprioception, social engagement, and language development (Delafield-Butt & Trevarthen, 2015). The rhythmic and tonal qualities (musicality) of infant-mother interactions, which are described as "protoconversations" possessing the parameters of inventive "musicality" and "narration", show how movement tests feeling in polyrhythmic, melodious, and poetic ways (Trevarthen & Malloch, 2002; Trevarthen & Malloch, 2000).

Fuchs and De Jaegher describe this intersubjective exchange as reciprocal and mutual incorporation, "in which each lived body reaches out to embody the other" (Fuchs & De Jaegher, 2009, p. 474).

The transfer of intentions, interests, and feelings in conversations of rhythmic motor activity which are learned in infancy within a creative learning process nurtured by infant-mother intersubjective relations, and motivated by an innate human talent for companionship in experience, is crucial to culture (Trevarthen, 2009). Tortora (2011) summarizes the work of Gallese, (2009) and Travarthan (1979, 1980, 2009) with this description of intersubjectivity:

Intersubjectivity is defined as the motivational system present at birth, compelling infants to create a joint social consciousness and identification with self and other. Again, the sensory-motor system is highlighted as the mechanism that enables this coordination and sharing of psychological states occurring through reciprocal nonverbal communications. This exchange occurs as two individuals match and compliment the feeling and tone of their affects. The embodied "shared neural mapping" aspect of intersubjectivity is underscored by the term "intercorporeity" defined as "the mutual resonance of intentionally meaningful sensory-motor behaviors—as the main source of knowledge we directly gather about others (Tortora, 2011p. 10).

This intercorporeity explains the intersubjectivity and the knowledge to be gained within *MamaDances*.

2.3.3 Attachment, Maternal Sensitivity, Mutual Delight and Mutuality

Within the discourse of infant-mother intersubjectivity is the concept/theme of “attachment.” Bowlby’s (1969, 1973, 1980, 1988) theory of attachment “focuses on the relationship between child and primary caregiver and the way in which the child uses the available, sensitive and responsive caregiver as a secure base from which to explore the world” (Bowlby, 1988 as cited by Doonan & Bräuninger, 2015 p. 228).

Two notions that surface often in defining attachment in this way are maternal sensitivity and mutual delight (Ainsworth, 1967). First, maternal sensitivity refers to the way the mother perceives, interprets and responds to her baby’s need, distress, and social signals. Mary Ainsworth’s extensive research on maternal sensitivity influenced, and was influenced by, Bowlby. She was concerned with the quality of mother-infant attachment, emphasizing that the dyadic relation involved a process of sensitivity and responsiveness to the baby’s signals, and this includes playfulness, timing, rhythm, synchrony, and harmony, as well as attunement. These are all terms used to describe quality of movement. Ainsworth called this an “interacting spiral” (Bell & Ainsworth, 1972 as cited in Bretherton, 2013, p. 463). According to Ainsworth’s research (1970), high maternal sensitivity is the result of an emotional—not intellectual—capacity. It is a form of empathy.

Second, mutual delight acknowledges that the quality of the care between mother and baby beyond primary needs may bring them both great pleasure. Ainsworth (1967) considered mutual delight to be an important aspect of sensitivity. This delight can be tender and gentle, and not necessarily intense. Delight may be present in some mothers from the beginning, but in others it may develop gradually. Whatever the activity, the mutual enjoyment of it by mother and baby together allows for mutual delight.

Dissanayake (2015) furthers the idea that aesthetic quality of the movement and musicality of mother-infant intersubjectivity is a kind of artfulness. Rhythmically patterned vocalizations and

exaggerated face and body movements between mother and infant are rhythms and sensory modes. Through these rhythms and sensory modes, mutuality is developed.

This brings us to a third notion related to intersubjectivity and attachment: Mutuality. According to Dissanayake (2015) mutuality is a key to human connection. Dissanayake uses the word mutuality as another word for love. Mutuality evolves from rhythmic-modal capacities and sensitivities.

Mutuality describes the originary source of subsequent affectional, affiliative bonds—many of which we call “love” between individuals as pairs or members of groups. It is the same rhythmic model capacities and sensitivities that evolved to make mother-infant mutuality possible that also create and sustain other ties and of intimacy. (Dissanayake, 2015, p. 2)

To conclude this third section on intersubjectivity, the concepts and terms used to investigate and describe mother-infant intersubjectivity (in psychology) involving movement are numerous²⁹, but the words dance, movement and kinesthetic are largely absent. Dance is mainly used in studies as a metaphor to describe infant-mother kinesthetic communication, as Daniel Stern refers to mother-infant interaction as a duet and a dance. As another example Condon & Sander (1974) talks of the orchestration and choreography of communicative behavior. Colwyn Trevarthen and Stephen Malloch (2000) have dedicated their research to the “communicative musicality” of gestures, sounds and expressions between mothers and infants, titling this research article “The Dance of Wellbeing”. Dissanayake (2015) calls the interaction the mother-infant “tango that takes off into free improvisation”. As well, “synchrony” is used by Gratier & Magnier (2012) to describe the musicality of infant-mother sounding and the movement connection. None of the literature describes dance as central to the research with mothers and babies, as this study aims to do.

2.4 Relational Art

Relational art is firstly, art. Arlene Goldbard (2013) describes art’s essence as:

²⁹ : mutuality, sensitivity, attunement, synchrony, harmony, gaze-following, empathy, kinesthetic bonding, kinesthetic intersubjectivity, dyadic regulation, interactive regulation, somata-sensory perception, dyadic rhythmicity, tactile sensory perception, tonic dialogue, emotional tonic dialogue, mutual interaction, empathetic resonance, embodied responsiveness, and behavioral interactions.

its ability to engage us fully in body, emotions, mind, and spirit, to create beauty and meaning, to cultivate imaginative empathy, to disturb the peace, to enable grief in the face of loss and hope in the face of grief. (p.167)

The literature on relational art, overlaps and intertwines with newer terms, such as “Social Practice” for art that has social or relational intentions. As the field is evolving, relational art is difficult to define because “people on the ground don’t use terms, they just do the work” (Suzanne Lacy, cited by Frasz & Sidford, 2015 p. 13).

It is curator Nicolas Bourriaud that introduced the term “relational art” in 1996 to investigate work that could not be contained or described by traditional studio art categories such as painting, sculpture or dance. According to Bourriaud (1998/2002), “Relational art is a set of artistic practices which take as their theoretical and practical point of departure the whole of human relations and their social context, rather than an independent and private space” (p. 113). Whatever the medium of the artwork, the results affect human social interaction.

The newer term of socially engaged art (SEA), covers artistic or creative practice that aims to improve conditions in a particular community or in the world at large (Frasz & Sidford, 2015, p. 4). According to Mosley, “social practice” is the most all-encompassing term in current use (Mosley, 2017) to define forms of art-making that focus on the social process of exchange. Frasz & Sidford (2015) claim the roots of SEA are mainly in visual art.³⁰ Socially engaged art-making crosses disciplines as it tries to influence the public sphere.

[It] places emphasis on process and commitment, over a single end-product; collaboration over the artist as the sole maker; engagement especially with new audiences often under-represented in the art world; re-introduces a sense of functionality to artwork, which traditionally has rejected utilitarian goals; [and] considers setting as fundamental to the work. (Mosley, 2017)

Socially engaged artists believe in the agency and responsibility of art and artists to affect social change or influence the world, using forms and materials beyond those used in studio art, and it operates outside of conventional presentation settings (Frasz & Sidford, 2015, p. 11). In Canada,

³⁰ I wonder if Relational Art is less known in Anglophone communities because of language barrier

The International Centre of Art for Social Change (ICASC)³¹ was founded by dance artist Judith Marcuse, who champions Art for Social Change (ASC).

Until I learned about the concept of relational aesthetics, *MamaDances* did not appear to align with any genre of art that I was aware of. According to Bourriaud, “Relational aesthetics is an aesthetic theory consisting in judging artworks on the basis of the inter-human relations which they represent, produce or prompt” (1998/2002, p. 112). The art that is practiced within this aesthetic is relational art.

Relational art does not conform to traditional categorization of form such as music, dance, theatre and visual art, and relational aesthetics provides a context within the discourse of contemporary art where this non-conforming art can be appreciated. Relational art seems to be the predecessor of social practice. Other artforms which can be placed in the same family include SEA, cultural mediation, *art engagé*, and community art, collaborative art, participatory art, dialogic art, public and civic art. Bourriaud (1998/2002) explains that artists who work in these areas are inventing models of sociability and responding to a demand for social interactions outside of the commodified sphere, creating “micro-utopias” of “summoned audiences”:

It is no longer possible to regard contemporary art as a space to be walked through. It is henceforth presented as a period of time to be lived through, like an opening to unlimited discussion. Being together is the central theme, the encounter being beholder and picture and the collective elaboration of meaning. (p.15)

The roots of relational art and its offshoots SEA and ASC can be found in the ethico-aesthetic paradigm conceptualized by activist and psychoanalyst Guattari (1995). According to Speigal (2016), the ethico-aesthetic practice is “a practice that embeds and diffuses a way of seeing and relating through the rituals of embodiment that it invites participants to rehearse” (p 65).

³¹ In 2007, [Judith Marcuse Projects \(JMP\)](#) created the International Centre of Art for Social Change (ICASC). Though initially a collaboration with Simon Fraser University (2008-2020), ICASC is now exclusively an initiative of JMP. JMP/ICASC has led and completed [a six-year \(2013-2019\) national research study of community-engaged art \(CEA\)/art for social change \(ASC\)](#), involving six universities and 50 researchers, and created extensive film, video, and text resources, most of them available on this large website, which is a major global resource for the sector. Other activities include creation and delivery of post-secondary undergraduate courses and a two-year graduate program in art for social change, plus summer institutes, webinars, and guest lectures/dialogues. ICASC’s goal is to support CEA/ASC communities.

This means providing opportunities for art practices and processes that are accessible to the public, and not reserved for the elite. Art organizations are now more frequently offering something intimate, interactive, and engaged with their audiences and communities as a result. This new form of artistic practice engaged in social change has been taking on many names as it begins to take root in our cultural repertoire of artistic practices. It is a form whereby artists contribute to or initiate projects for social well-being, social justice and global change. LaMothe (2015) asks two key questions: “How do infants and caregivers attach to one another in mutually life-enabling ways? What cultural moves can we make to support that process?” (p 115). Here, the bold suggestion is that *MamaDances* may provide possibilities. *MamaDances* as relational art may affect the social well-being of the mothers and babies through a relational aesthetic where a social interaction is the dominant preoccupation.

2.5 Conclusion of Key Concepts

To support this research, I have defined and exposed concepts related to:

1. Dance, including the movement paradigm, phenomenology, contemporary and modern dance, somatic movement education, and dance movement therapy.
2. Mothers, including matrescence, babywearing and oxytocin, rituals of care, the affirming matrix, and the holding environment.
3. Intersubjectivity, including mother-infant intersubjectivity, movement and infant intersubjectivity, attachment, maternal sensitivity, mutual delight, and mutuality.
4. Relational art and its offspring, social practice, socially engaged art, and art for social change, which offer artists and participants greater intimacy, social interaction and interhuman connection, and its precedent, ethico-aesthetic practice.

An in-depth exploration of each one of these concepts is beyond the breadth of this study because it is not an interdisciplinary study. It is a study in dance. However, intertwined they make up a solid overview of all the facets at play in *MamaDances*. The connection between dance, mothers, intersubjectivity and relational art is emergent and has not been given much academic attention. What binds them together becomes a fascinating exploration of intercorporeality that motivates this research. How may dance as relational art influence the experience of matrescence? After the

data are collected and the results provide insight, these concepts will be mobilized in the discussion where pertinent and revelatory.

In the following chapter, I will present the methodology of my research study.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

In this chapter, the methodology applied in investigating the question “What is the lived experience of the mother participants in a *MamaDances* Mom and Baby Dance Workshop?” will be described. In the beginning, the qualitative research and my epistemological stance will be considered. Then phenomenology, exploration and reflection will be presented as the research strategy, and the methods of data collection and analysis will follow, finishing with a discussion of the ethical aspects of the triple posture of the researcher, and finally, an introduction of the profiles of the participants.

The goal of this research project is to describe and understand the mother participants’ experience in a *MamaDances* Mother and Baby Dance Session, within the context of professional development.

The *MamaDances* Mom and Baby session³² and each workshop within it was developed intuitively based on my experience as a mother and a dance artist, and it specializes in mothers dancing with their babies aged 2-12 months. Ultimately, with this study, I hope to strengthen the viability and quality of this work by investigating the lived experiences of the mother participants with a phenomenology-inspired research design.

3.1 Epistemology and Paradigm

From my perspective as a dance artist specializing in SRT and CI who has dedicated her professional life to dance and somatic movement education, my awakening to the division between qualitative and quantitative research, and the dominant mind/body duality, has been a major aspect of my learning. According to my practice, my dance communities promoted and provided alternatives to this dualistic imagination. Within these practices and communities

³² For clarity, the word “workshop” will be used to indicate the 90-minute period spent together in the studio each week. The word “session” will apply to the series of eight workshops as a whole.

phenomenological and qualitative values are dominant. Thus, here, I have embarked on a scientifically conscious and strategic process to find a way to articulate, communicate and describe something I have lived intuitively throughout my 30-year dance career.

Through this research I value the lived experience of the mothers to enunciate the values and experiences of mothers dancing with their babies that also live within me, and to begin to define the philosophy intrinsic to my practice as facilitator, researcher, mother, and dance artist, and therefore the contribution of my art to society.

I created the Mom and Baby Dance workshops and am now looking to describe its “being in the world” from the experience of the group participants, while acknowledging that reflexive interpretation, in relation to the literature review and key concepts, is also part of this process. This research is, therefore, also a self-examination and self-reflection of my own understanding of the mothers’ perceptions of their experiences. This type of social inquiry is a distinctive praxis, an activity (like teaching) that in the doing transforms theories. Engaging in the practical activities of generating and interpreting data to answer questions about the phenomenon of *MamaDances* and then transform that understanding into public knowledge, I am inspired by Schwandt: “In sum, acting and thinking, practice and theory, are linked in a continuous process of critical reflection and transformation” (Schwandt, 1997, p. 296).

3.2 Qualitative Research

This is qualitative research. This type of research is generally a search for meaning in experience, and its data tend to be descriptive rather than numeric. In qualitative research, it is understood that the role of the researcher is enormously significant; there can be no truly viable “objective” research, as is believed in the positivist paradigm of mainstream social science. In qualitative work, the researcher is the research instrument (Janesick, 1999). The word “qualitative” implies an emphasis on the qualities of entities, processes, and meanings. They are not experimentally examined or measured in terms of quantity, amount, intensity, or frequency.

Qualitative researchers stress the socially constructed nature of reality, the intimate relationship between the researcher and what is studied, and the situational constraints

that shape inquiry. They seek answers to questions that stress *how* social experience is created and given meaning. (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p. 8)

This qualitative research is conducted within an interpretive paradigm. An interpretive paradigm is concerned with understanding the world as it is from subjective experiences of individuals. Hesse-Biber & Leavy, (2011) explain that this approach is based on the belief that the social world is constantly being constructed through interactions and that social reality can be understood via the perspectives of social actors enmeshed in meaning making activities.

According to Denzin & Lincoln (2000):

Qualitative research involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach to the world. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or to interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them. (p. 3)

To approach this type of research, the method I chose to proceed to produce data and to answer my research question is phenomenological.

3.3 Phenomenological Method

My method to investigate the perceptions of the mother participants of *MamaDances* is inspired by the work of Amedeo Giorgi (1985) , Clark Moustakas (1994) and Max van Manen (2016). According to Morse (1994), in a phenomenological study the first source of data comes from comprehending or having in-depth knowledge of a phenomenon or setting and reflecting on one's own experiences. Further data are collected through dialogue with others, and the process of *synthesizing* begins. Synthesizing is merging data to conduct thematic analysis. Analysis is done by identifying *common structures* in experiences, which provide the researcher with “our understanding of the world” (van Manen 1990 as cited in Morse 1994).

Giorgi (1985) outlines two descriptive levels of the empirical phenomenological approach: “Level 1: the original data is comprised of naïve descriptions obtained through open-ended questions and dialogue. Level 2: the researcher describes the structures of the experience based on reflective analysis and interpretation of the research participant's account or story” (ibid., p 69).

The aim of the analysis is to determine what an experience means for the person who has had it and is able to provide a comprehensive description of it. It is an inductive process. From the individual descriptions, general or universal meanings are derived, in other words, the essences or structures of the experience. In the case of examining the experience of mothers in the *MamaDances* workshop, an interesting perspective is suggested by Albright's engaged corporeal phenomenology, although I was unable to find further information about this approach, other than the following:

A field of inquiry is grounded in the interconnections between individual responsiveness and communal resonance and mobilized by thinking deeply about other people's bodies through the intermediary of one's own body. (Albright, 2011, p. 17)

A scientific phenomenological investigation "is valid when the knowledge sought is derived through descriptions that make possible an understanding of the *meanings* and *essences* of experience" (Moustakas, 1994, p. p.84). The descriptions must be free of presupposition. To name this type of posture, Husserl created the concept of *epoché*. In a state of *epoché*, we set aside our prejudgements, biases, and preconceived ideas about things. *Epoché* is preparation for deriving new knowledge, but also an experience, a process of setting aside predilections, prejudices, and predispositions, and allowing things, events, and people to enter anew into consciousness, to look and see them again, as if for the first time. *Epoché* is a way of looking and being, a kind of purified consciousness. The challenge of *epoché* is to be transparent to ourselves, to allow whatever is before us in consciousness to disclose itself so that we may see with new eyes in a naïve and completely open manner. According to Moustakas (1994), *epoché* is rarely perfectly achieved, yet the energy, attention, and work involved in reflection and self-dialogue, the intention that underlies the process, and the attitude and frame of reference, significantly reduce the influence of preconceived thoughts, judgements and biases. In my commitment to the validity of this research, I strove to attain the state of *epoché* in this process. Some provisions have also been taken, to this end, which I will discuss later.

3.4 Research Strategy

According to my objectives in pursuing the perspectives of the mother participants, this research engages an exploratory strategy, with phenomenology-inspired data collection and analysis methods.

The data were generated by pre-session questionnaires, mid-session participant journaling using LimeSurvey, and post-session interviews conducted by a research collaborator. Analysis was *inductive* and the system for coding and categorizing the data was inspired by the method described by Amedeo Giorgi (1985) using the NVivo 12 platform. My qualitative research led me to an understanding of the meaning of the experience of *MamaDances* from the descriptive data garnered from the mother participants. Once the study had been summarized, the findings were related to the literature review and to social meanings.

3.5 Research Tools and Steps Taken

Table 3.1 shows the timeline of the data production and the dates they were conducted.

Table 3.1 Research Study Timeline

Data Production	Oct. 1-9, 2018	Oct. 12-Dec. 6, 2018	Nov. 27-Dec. 14, 2018	Jan.-Mar, 2019	Mar. 2019-Mar. 2020
Recruitment (and questionnaire)	8 mothers				
In-studio exploration		<u>8 weeks</u>			
Journal writing		3 entries			
Interviews with assistant			8		
Transcriptions				8	
Analysis of Data					NVivo training, translation, coding, theme grouping, chart production

3.5.1 Methodological Tools for Data Production

To conduct this study from the mothers' perspectives, I had to carefully gather and imagine tools that would enable the mothers to produce usable descriptive data about their experiences in the workshop. I used three data collection tools: a pre-session questionnaire, a participant's journal, and a semi-structured interview to complete triangulation. In addition, having an outside research collaborator implement these tools was indispensable for preventing any possible conflicts of interest, as mentioned.

The different tools were adapted to the mothers with their babies. Some mothers were more able and forthcoming in the interviews, while others were more so in the journal writing.

3.5.1.1 Socio-demographic and Semi-directed Questionnaire

The first data source tool I used was a questionnaire given to the participants online using LimeSurvey during the week before the exploratory phase of the research. Here, participants were asked to create a pseudonym. The purpose of the questionnaire was to learn about the participants' *expectations* for their experience, and their reasons for participating in the research study. There were questions about the role of dance, art, and culture in their lives, and how they perceived their relationships with their babies and with themselves as mothers. It asked how they felt in general, physically, emotionally, intellectually, and spiritually. The questionnaire attempted to discover whether the mothers had enrolled in the workshop for their own benefit, for that of their babies, or for both equally. I also hoped to get a sense of their support networks (See Appendix 1). This source is coded and referred to in the verbatim as (PQ)

3.5.1.2 Participant Journal

During the session, participants were asked to keep a reflexive journal, also provided in LimeSurvey, to record their own and their babies' responses to the phenomena in the workshop. They were given some questions to help guide them but were also encouraged to write openly, without self-censorship, about their everyday lives, beliefs, hopes and dreams. Participants were asked to do their journaling at least three times during the session (beginning, middle and end). Some of the suggestions for journaling were to examine how they felt physically and emotionally before, during and after the workshop. The journal was intended to inspire participants to reflect

on how the dance affected their day-to-day lives and their interactions with their babies. It asked them to notice how they and/or their babies responded to the facilitator, the group, the movement, the music, and each other. The reflexive journal was also intended to provide the mothers with memory landmarks, to make recall easier during the interviews because the postnatal period is known to challenge normal cognitive memory processes. Postnatal forgetfulness (Wigmore, B. 2008) or “mumnesia” caused by fatigue, hormonal changes and the subconscious readjustments being made to care for a baby is commonly experienced during matrescence. Scientific research (Brizendine, 2006) has been dedicated to this medical condition. “Participants in qualitative studies may also use journals to refine ideas, beliefs, and their own responses to the research in progress” (Janesick, 1999, p.1). Therefore, the journal will also be used as a methodological and communicative tool which may influence the facilitation of the program.

(see Appendix 2) These sources are coded and referred to in the verbatim as (J1, J2, J3)

3.5.1.3 Semi-structured Interview

To complete the data triangulation, my assistant conducted semi-structured interviews in the two weeks that followed the last workshop. The interview was guided by a set of questions. Semi-structured interviews allow individual respondents latitude and freedom to talk about what is of interest or importance to them. Thus, while the assistant asked each participant the same set of questions, the conversation was also allowed to flow naturally and wander in unexpected directions.

Interviewees often have information or knowledge that may not have been thought of in advance by the researcher. When such knowledge emerges, a researcher using a semi-structured design is likely to allow the conversation to develop, exploring new topics that are relevant to the interviewee. (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011, p. 118)

(See Appendix 3) for Post-Session Interview Questions. This source is coded and referred to in the verbatim as (I)

3.6 Ethical Concerns

The main ethical concern is my triple posture as student researcher, facilitator of the exploratory research procedure, and the founder of *MamaDances*. To ensure impartiality and separation of my

different postures, to avoid contact with the participants outside the workshop, an outside collaborator was engaged for some steps of the research (See Appendix 4). The collaborator selected the participants, hosted an information session, and presented the consent form (See Appendix 8: Consent Form in English and French). The collaborator also communicated with the participants and scheduled and conducted the interviews and assembled the data from LimeSurvey for analysis. The participation of the collaborator was made possible thanks to the Department of Dance at UQAM.

As a researcher, I am responsible for the authenticity and viability of the research. My intention was to be open to what the data indicated without making presumptions, to recognize and set aside any biases, and to allow the actual phenomenon to be revealed, understood, and analyzed.

Training in Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans Course on Research Ethics was completed for this research study. (See Appendix 5). In addition, A *Certificat d'approbation éthique* was obtained from the *Comité d'éthique de la recherche avec des êtres humains*. (See Appendix 6)

3.7 Recruitment of Participants

This study began with the recruitment of eight mother-baby dyad participants. They were recruited from the public at large who saw the call for participation (in English and French) on social media (including Social.mom and Facebook) (see Appendix 7) or received notice from the mailing lists of organizations that agreed to help disseminate it, including the Dance Department of the University of Quebec in Montreal (UQAM). Those interested in participating were required to fill out a questionnaire on the LimeSurvey platform. The questionnaire allowed for a selection of participants who met certain requirements. The selection was designed to assemble a group that was diverse in (1) baby's age; (2) mother's level of experience in dance; (3) cultural background; (4) occupation; and (5) education. No candidate with a personal or professional connection to the researcher was eligible. This was necessary to eliminate any conflicts of interest. Each participant chose a pseudonym to represent themselves in the data collection and analysis. *MamaDances* group size typically ranges from 6-15 mother-baby dyads. For a group to be socially and energetically dynamic and sustainable, there must be at least four mother-baby dyads participating.

Eight participants were chosen for this study to maintain a group of at least four over the course of the workshop even in the case of 50% attrition. (See Appendix 7)

3.7.1 Profiles of Selected Participants

These profiles introduce the participants selected using information gleaned from the selection questionnaire, the pre-session questionnaire, the three journal entries, and the interview. Included are their expectations; how they learned about the research project; their birth stories; their occupations and education; their matrix of support; their feelings, physical and emotional; some information about their experience as mothers so far; whether they have artistic experience and/or prior dance experience; and the importance of cultural activities in their family lives. Also included is the number as workshops they attended out of the eight scheduled, and the reasons for their absences. In the profile, the participant is identified first by her pseudonym followed by the pseudonym of her baby.

Language was a much greater challenge than initially recognized. Six of the eight participants were francophone, and their interviews were conducted in French. Two were conducted in English. Where the original language of the data is French, the French citations were used. English translation is provided in footnotes. This gives the voices more authenticity and makes my translation process more transparent.

3.7.1.1 Bee and Bug (5 months old)

Bee's motivation for participating in the *MamaDances* workshop was to strengthen her bond with her new baby, Bug, by having one-on-one quality time with her away from her older child, a toddler. Both of Bee's babies were born by unplanned C-section. Bee has a university degree and prior to her paid maternity leave she worked as a hotel manager. Both her and her husbands' families are close by. She has many friends with kids and has joined a number of mothers' groups. Bee feels good physically, but wants to lose the "baby-weight," so she also participates in a more fitness-oriented activity with Bug. She loves being a mom, spending time with her kids, and watching their development. She believes she was meant to be a mom. Motherhood has made her more conscious of the environment. Bee's experience in dance includes recreational swing, hip hop and belly dancing when she was young. She does not consider herself very good at dancing,

and she only dances with her kids. She does not call herself an artistic person, although she likes to knit. She believes culture is important to family life, and her mother is a visual artist. Due to illness and the weather, she was only able to attend four of the eight sessions. Bee is anglophone.

3.7.1.2 Couzi and Petit Coco (6 months old)

Couzi had always wanted to dance but had not done so before the research project because she believed that dancing required a partner, which she did not have. Couzi felt the research project would be a great opportunity not only to finally satisfy her interest in dance, but also to be more active for the well-being of herself and her baby. Her expectations in participating in the *MamaDances* workshop were to have a pleasurable group experience, meet new people, spend quality time with her baby, and discover new and stimulating ways of being with him. Couzi's birth experience was very difficult. After 36 hours in labour, Petit Coco was born by cesarian section. Couzi has maternity leave benefits from her employment as a clerk in a store. Her education includes a post-secondary diploma. She and her husband have large families close by who help a lot, and she enjoys her new social life, meeting up with moms from the socialmom.com application. Physically, Couzi likes her appearance, though she feels she is overweight. Emotionally, Couzi has suffered from depression in the past, but becoming a mother has empowered her and made her very happy. Her relationship with Petit Coco is "La plus belle chose du monde"³³ (PSQ_C). Motherhood has given her life more depth and meaning. "J'essaie parfois de me souvenir de ce que je faisais avant mon bébé et j'ai de la difficulté à m'en rappeler et ma vie d'avant me semble tellement vide aujourd'hui."³⁴ (PSQ_C). Artistically, Couzi is interested in interior decor and design. She believes culture is important to family life, and she and her husband often go to see comedians. She is exuberant about her experience in the *MamaDances* workshop and feels it gave her the entry into dance that she was hoping for. She discovered the pleasure of dance and movement for herself, her baby, and as a source of ideas for entertaining and connecting with him in a physical and creative way. She looked forward to it each week. Couzi attended six

³³ The most beautiful thing in the world.

³⁴ I have difficulty when I try to remember what I did before my baby and it seems my life was very empty.

of the eight workshops, with illness and a surprise birthday present the reasons for her two absences. Couzi is francophone.

3.7.1.3 Emi and CN (4 months old)

Emi wanted to participate in the research project to have a close sensorial experience with her baby, CN, to spend quality time with her and have fun. Her expectations included the enhancement of her bond with CN through softness, sharing and play. She describes her birth experience as quick and natural. Emi has a university degree and works as a media relations consultant. She feels supported and has access to many resources and organizations in her neighbourhood. Emi describes herself as a very active person. She feels well, physically, and emotionally. Motherhood has been a natural life transition for her, not causing any major changes. Her relationship with CN is close and cooperative and she is taking it one step at a time. Emi does not consider herself an artistic person and her experience in dance amounts to recreational group classes in a gym. She believes that culture is important in family life. Emi participated in five of the eight workshops. Her absences were due to medical appointments and travel plans. Emi is francophone.

3.7.1.4 Jennifer and Angelika (6 months old)

Jennifer was motivated to participate in the project because she wanted to get out of the house, have fun, and discover new ways to interact with her baby, Angelika: “plus me rapprocher d’elle” (PQ-J).³⁵ She hoped to meet new people, learn to dance with Angelika and get some exercise. Jennifer’s birth experience was traumatic and very painful. Angelika came early and no family members were present. Jennifer’s labour was accompanied only by ambulance attendants. It was extremely painful, and she said she would never do it again. Jennifer has a university education, is a student and has maternity leave benefits. She is a single mother, but her own mother, father and sister are close by and helpful. Physically, Jennifer feels good, but she would like to lose some weight. Motherhood has given her a stronger direction in life and has empowered her. She feels she is more sociable and empathetic now. Becoming a mother has made her feel more complete and that she has finally begun to live. Jennifer considers culture important to family life. She goes to libraries and restaurants and participates in activities with Angelika. She is looking forward to

³⁵ to get closer to her (daughter Angelika).

taking Angelika to the theatre when she is older. Jennifer considers herself a non-professional artist, “une écrivaine dans l’âme” (PQ-J)³⁶ Dance has never been a significant part of her life, although she took some classes when she was a teenager and has let loose on the dance floor in social settings. Jennifer is francophone and attended all eight workshops.

3.7.1.5 Kim-Ahn and Lily-Ahn (5 months old)

Kim-Ahn was interested in the project because she wanted to explore a new mother-and-baby activity that would provide her and her baby, Lily-Ahn, with some exercise, while being with other mothers. Kim-Ahn had a vaginal birth in the hospital and felt secure amongst the medical professionals. Kim-Ahn is a pediatrician. She and her partner have a lot of support from their families. Kim-Ahn has discovered that being a mother is much more difficult than she imagined. She has recuperated physically from the pregnancy but carries muscular tension. She notices that Lily-Ahn’s needs always come before her own, and that she has much less time for herself. She wonders how that will be sustainable over the long term. On maternity leave, she lacks the intellectual stimulation she is used to in her professional life; she is slowly regaining the energy to read scientific articles. She has found motherhood to be exhausting intellectually, physically, and emotionally, but she is beginning to appreciate spending time with her baby more now that she is less tired and more recuperated. Culture is important to her family life, and she often goes to restaurants and museums. Although she plays piano, her work prevents her from tapping into her artistic side, so she hopes to do that with Lily-Ahn. Dance has never been part of her life and she has no previous experience.

She missed only the first workshop due to vacation plans. Kim-Ahn is allophone. Her journal and interview were in French.

3.7.1.6 Maman Poulpe and Bébé Poussin (4 months old)

Maman Poulpe found the call for participants on socialmom.com. She wanted to have the pleasure of dancing with her baby, Bébé Poussin. She also wanted to get out of the house and away from the daily routine, meet and socialize with other moms, move, and learn some dance. She hoped

³⁶ a writer at heart.

her baby would enjoy the music and the sensation of being danced with. She expected the research aspect to provide an opportunity for introspection, and that the movement would be adapted and appropriate for the post-natal physical condition. Bébé Poussin was Maman Poulpe's third birth experience and it was quick, yet painful. Her doctor and her husband were present, and it took six hours.

Maman Poulpe is a cytologist and is glad to take a break from her intellectually demanding work. She does not see her friends often, but knows they are there when she needs them. She describes her husband as considerate and says that her family is accessible. and is active in a Facebook group for moms. This has been a difficult time for Maman Poulpe emotionally because of two recent deaths in her family: an interrupted pregnancy due to a medical condition, and the loss of her father to cancer. The grieving process has caused her great sadness, melancholy, anger, and vexation, but she is finding her way out of it: "Je trouve précieuse cette chance que j'ai de vivre à nouveau toutes ces émotions positives, légères et agréables de joie, de paix, d'amour, de confiance et d'émerveillement" (PQ_MP)³⁷.

She receives social services for her grieving process from the *Centre Intégré universitaire de sante et des services sociaux*.

Physically, Maman Poulpe is rehabilitating from diastasis recti and pelvic floor weakness. She is slightly frustrated with her post-natal physical condition because she was athletic before and enjoyed running and Crossfit. Maman Poulpe's experience as a mother has made her realize that getting through the "to do list" is less important than caring for herself. It brings her great joy to care for Bébé Poussin and she finds it marvelous to watch how he develops and changes each day.

Maman Poulpe is a non-professional visual artist and writer, and for her, art is a form of self-expression, an opportunity to find meaning and humour in life. and a way to "me défouler" (PQ_MP)³⁸. Lately she has not had time to engage in her solo artistic practices and hopes to find

³⁷ I find it precious this chance that I have to live again all these positive emotions, light and happy with joy, peace, love, confidence and amazement.

³⁸ Let go, or loosen up.

more regularity by registering for group activities: *MamaDances* and a jazz dance class at a local studio. Culture is important to her family, and she has attended a few performances recently with her seven-year-old daughter. Maman Poulpe has some recreational dance experience.

Maman Poulpe with Bébé Poussin missed one workshop because she was not feeling well. She is francophone.

3.7.1.7 MM and CC (5 months old)

MM believed that participating in the project would provide some quality time for her with her daughter, CC, to relax into the moment with her, and to strengthen their connection. She believed that the music and dance would have a positive impact on CC's development. CC was born, contrary to MM's wishes, by planned C-section. MM is a nutritionist and has maternity leave benefits. She feels well-supported by her friends, and her family lives five minutes away. MM feels good physically but lacks exercise. Emotionally she is not feeling so well. During the session, MM's mother had a heart attack which caused her a lot of stress and anxiety. Fatigue has made her very sensitive, and she is not feeling in-tune with herself. MM feels complete after four years of waiting to enlarge her family. Becoming a mother is the best thing that has ever happened to her, and she takes the work of motherhood to heart: "La meilleure chose qui m'est arrivée. Le plus beau travail du monde et je le prends à cœur." (PQ-MM)³⁹ Motherhood changed her perception of regular time, and her priorities. Culture is important to her family life, and they go often to restaurants and have picnics in nature spots. She feels she is missing an artistic practice in her life, dance in particular. Though she has no experience in it, she knows it makes her feel good.

She missed one of eight workshops because her daughter had a fever. She is francophone.

3.7.1.8 Rieta and Sunshine (9 months old)

In joining the research project, Rieta expected to have an enjoyable time with her baby, Sunshine.

³⁹ It's the most beautiful work in the world and I take it to heart.

Rieta's labour was induced because her water broke earlier than expected, but the birth was natural and without intervention. She was attended by her doula, her husband and the medical staff. She believes her prenatal yoga training helped her a lot. Rieta is a stay-at-home mom. Three times a year she travels with her family to Barcelona to see her extended family, and during those times their lives are very intense. When she is back in Montreal things are more relaxed and she and her husband have begun to build a community of friends.

Physically and emotionally, she feels good. She has practiced yoga for many years and feels that it has helped her to be where she wants to be in life and in relationships. Her effort to live in the present moment helps her to be well. She feels empowered by motherhood. The overwhelming moments are compensated with beautiful feelings. She tries to follow her instincts, to live by setting good examples and adding love, and when motherhood overwhelms her, her husband provides the balance they need. Intellectually, she has no time to nourish herself because she struggles with the language in Montreal. Her native language is Catalan, and so she finds it difficult to express herself. In reference to daily life, including weather and the other challenges of being a foreigner in Montreal, she says, "It's Montreal and every day is hard."

Rieta loves doing activities with Sunshine. She feels dance is particularly good for them and helps with their connection. Dance has always been an important part of her life. Rieta believes music, dancing and art are essential aspects of life and she could not understand a world without it. In Spanish they say, "*Quien baila sus males espanta*."⁴⁰ (I_R)

She loves going to museums, libraries, and restaurants. She attended all eight workshops. Rieta is allophone and her interview and journal writing were in English (to the best of her ability).

To conclude these profiles, all eight dyads participated to the end of the session, and no-one abandoned the data-collection process.

3.7.2 In-studio Exploration

Once participants were selected and ethical consent was given, the participants were brought into

⁴⁰ Dancing scares evil away.

an exploratory research design where they participated in a *MamaDances* Mom and Baby Dance Session. The session consisted of a workshop once per week on Fridays from 10 am until 12 noon, for eight weeks. Each workshop was 90 minutes long with an extra 15 minutes before and after for arrival and departure. Participants began by sitting in a circle on mats on the floor with their babies lying, sitting, or crawling in close proximity. There was a brief discussion of how the workshop would proceed, and then the first exercise was introduced. After 45 minutes of movement with the babies on the floor or in their mothers' arms, there was a 15-minute pause for diaper changing, feeding and chatting. Then the mothers positioned their babies in carriers. The remaining 30 minutes of the class consisted of learning a dance choreography while carrying the babies in the carriers. For more details refer to the description of a workshop (1.1.3).

3.7.3 Location

Participants were required to meet at Studio K3220 at the Dance Pavillion of UQAM. This location was centrally located and convenient for public transportation. It was clean, bright, accessible, private, well-ventilated, and safe. It had exercise mats and a good sound system. Meditation chairs and breastfeeding pillows were donated by *MAM autours de la maternité* and were brought in for each workshop.

3.8 Data Analysis

The research collaborator, Caroline Apotheloz, gathered, prepared, and transferred the data from LimeSurvey, along with recordings of the interviews, onto a USB key. Under the pseudonyms, I transcribed the interviews myself, and then I was able to do my first reading of all the data.

I proceeded with an *inductive* analysis, meaning synthesizing the themes, and identifying common structures that came from the data. A system for coding and categorizing the data, inspired by the method described by Amedeo Giorgi (1985) and adapted by Diane Leduc (2007) combined with elements of standard thematic analysis (Paillé & Mucchielli, 2016) was developed.

I searched for themes that led me to an understanding of the essence of the experience of *MamaDances* by categorizing the meaning units provided by the mother participants into themes and nodes with manual coding and software-generated exploration. I used NVivo 12 software to

assist in this organization. The anonymized data were imported and a “case” was created for each participant (dyad). I created the attributes, with the pseudonyms and ages of the babies and number of workshops attended. I began using word counts and cloud query tools in NVivo to find recurring words, but this was ineffective given the bilingualism of the data.

The process of analysis involved four steps:

1. Reading of descriptions to get a general sense of the whole statement.
2. Discrimination of “meaning units” based on the phenomenon being researched.
3. Translation and Expression of the insights contained in the meaning units.
4. Synthesis of transformed meaning units into essential themes regarding the subject’s experience.

Sheets-Johnstone has many years of experience in dance research and explains:

The phenomenologist's attitude toward the phenomenon is neither objective nor subjective, but rather an attitude of being present to the phenomenon, fully and wholly, to intuit it as it appears, without preshaping it in any way by prior interpretations or beliefs. He is thus led to describe the "lived experience" of the phenomenon, the essential relationship between consciousness and its world. (Sheets-Johnstone, 1980, p. 12)

The process of sorting, categorizing, and coding the data was done one file at a time, beginning with the interviews, assigning “nodes” to the meaning units. The node creation was an accumulative process that arose from the mothers’ voices. For example, Bee spoke about her increased use of her baby carrier after the workshop, compared to before the workshop, so I created a node called “babywearing”. Another example is when she spoke about how her baby enjoyed the finger and hand movements in the workshop and said that she had begun doing this more often at home. This inspired me to create a category called “pleasure, or enjoyment,” and another called

“activities transferred to home.” After these first steps of coding, and analyzing the interviews, I had a very long and unwieldy list of nodes. I noticed the number of references and citations for each node. In consultation with my supervisor, I developed relational themes/agents to help organize the meaning units in a way that would help answer the research questions. The themes were:

1. Baby: these included meaning units where the mother talked about her baby’s response to the workshop as she perceived it.
2. Mother: these included meaning units where the mothers talked about the perceived effect of the workshop on herself.
3. Group: these included meaning units where the mothers talked about their perceptions of being in the group.
4. Transference: these included meaning units where the mother talked about aspects of the workshop that were transferred to her home or daily life.
5. Mother-infant: these included meaning units where the mother talked about the effect of the workshop on her and her baby together.
6. Compositional Elements: these included meaning units that concerned compositional elements of the workshop, which included the music, the space, the movement, and the facilitation.

The coding was then reviewed and distributed where possible into the themes, and my original “nodes” became “child nodes” within those themes. For example, the child nodes of “Baby” are where the mother talked about 1. Development, 2. Stimulation and Enjoyment, 3. Sleep, Calm, Relaxation, 4. Fussing and Crying, 5. Socialization, 6. Smiling, and 7. Vocalization. Thus, if a mother talked about her baby sleeping, during the workshop or at home, the meaning unit was entered into 3: Sleep, Calm, Relaxation. Some of the meaning units were entered into several child nodes. Once the coding was completed, I reflected upon the insights gained by the contents of the child nodes and discussed them with my supervisor.

I developed further synthesis by looking across the data to find patterns amongst the cases and extracting essential themes.

The following Table shows the template for the coding charts identifying all the columns

A chart was made for each relational agent theme (mother-self, baby, group, infant-mother) as well as the compositional elements of music and facilitation, and finally transference to home. Seven charts were made which amounted to around 120 pages of charts.

Table 3.2 Template of Coding Chart

Participant/Case Pseudonym	Reference Code	Exact citation of meaning unit (1 st person)	Translation and interpretation (3 rd person) Expression of Insight	Coding Themes Node/child node	Synthesis of Essential concept/Cultural Meaning

They contain:

1. Case/participant pseudonym
2. Reference code
3. Exact citation of meaning unit
4. Translation and interpretation (Expression of Insight)
5. Themes-Nodes and Child Node
6. Synthesis of Essential Concepts and Qualities

In the charts the reference is coded by data source: I = interview, J1 = Journal Entry 1, J2 = Journal Entry 2, J3 = Journal entry 3, PQ = Pre-session Questionnaire. This is followed by pseudonym initials: Maman Poulpe = MP, Kim-Ahn = KA, Rieta = R, Jennifer = J, Emi = E, Couzi = C, Bee = B.

For example, see Appendix 9: Coding Charts

At this point, I began writing up my results. This task was complicated by the fact that I had underestimated the additional layer of complexity caused by translation from English to French

and French to English. Since the data of six of the eight participants were in French and I write in English, I made charts to track the translations to be sure that the interpretation correctly represented the meaning unit. I was unable to find a way to do this with NVivo.

Later, I completed a second training in NVivo because I wanted to learn to use the query, explore, mind map, and chart tools. I was able to use some of these tools, but at a very basic level given the limits of my time and expertise. In hindsight, I believe I would have been able to produce more precise visuals of the results with the NVivo 12 tools if I had better knowledge of the software from the beginning.

Once summarized, the findings were related to the literature review, to personal outcomes, to professional outcomes and to social meanings, and a discussion about possible future research was presented.

3.9 Postures and Analysis of the Results

Since I am so close to this work, my attitude toward the data analysis was tempered by “confessionalism,” (Van Maanen 1988, cited by Alveesson & Skoldberg, 2000) in which my concerns are central, and by means of self-examination I made the effort to expel distortions or subjectivity to relate freely to the phenomenon of the lived experience of the mothers. “Confessionalism replaces an object with the modest, unassuming style of one struggling to piece together something reasonably coherent out of displays of initial disorder, doubt and difficulty” (ibid. p. 75). By learning about the experience of the participants, I can construct meanings and essences of those meanings for MamaDances that can be translated into words that can help make sense of its being in the world and thus, my role as an artist in society.

Interpretation implies that there are no self-evident, simple, or unambiguous rules or procedures, and that the crucial ingredients are the researcher’s judgment, intuition, and ability to see and point something out. Van Maanen (1990), as cited by Starks & Brown-Trinidad (2007), write that phenomenological analysis is primarily a writing exercise, as the researcher distills meaning through the process of writing and rewriting. Analysts use writing to compose a story that captures the important elements of the lived experience. By the end of the story the reader should feel that

she has vicariously experienced the phenomenon under study and should be able to envision herself (or someone else who has been through the experience) coming to similar conclusions about what it means.

That is the posture that I adopted to construct Chapter 4, presenting the results and answering the research question, with the mothers' voices describing their experiences with their babies in MamaDances.

After the experimentation of this research design, I reconsider the choice of having an assistant conduct the interviews to avoid social desirability. It might have deprived the data of the intersubjectivity between me, as researcher, and the participants. Because of that, "epoche" could not be fully experienced. As a result of the style of the interviewer conducting the interviews, the data were less descriptive of the participants' experiences in the phenomenological sense than I had wished. Some of the questions in the interview might have directed the answers towards confirmations rather than allowing the phenomenon to emerge. However, the richness of their answer was preserved and provided excellent material to analyze.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

Analysis of the mother participants' interviews and journals has led to results that describe their lived experience of *MamaDances*. The results were coded and themed to synthesize the essence of the meaning of the phenomenon, to describe and understand the answer to the research question: What is the lived experience of the mother participants, with their babies, in a *MamaDances* Mom and Baby Dance Session? The same was done to address my sub-questions: What are the perceived compositional elements of *MamaDances* as a relational art? What intrinsic values are perceived by the mothers to guide the action within *MamaDances*? How does *MamaDances* influence the participants' experience of matrescence?

This chapter will begin by identifying the compositional elements, presenting: 1. the mothers' descriptions of the session overall and share what they identified as the primary intrinsic values, 2. the mothers' preferences and challenges, and those of their babies (according to the mothers), 3. the mothers' perceptions of the experience for themselves, their babies, and within the group, and 4. what the mothers took away from the experience, which aspects of the experience transferred to their daily lives and homelife.

4.1 Identifying the Perceived Compositional Elements

4.1.1 Short Descriptions and Perceived Values

The following section will present the compositional elements of the workshop as seen by the mothers, first by sharing how they would describe the workshop overall to other mothers, and then their comments on individual parts, including the music, the space, and the facilitation.

In the interviews, each mother was asked how they would describe the activity to another mother, and what they perceived as the intrinsic value of the experience.

Bee would tell her friends that it is a good chance to just dance and move, and that it was not a hard workout. For Bee, the principal intrinsic value of the workshop was infant-mother bonding.

It's a babywearing dance class where you do motions that are very 'flowy,' not stressful. You are kind of floating around and holding your baby. It's different from a very organized class, not that there are too many organized classes with babies, but it's more like free motion. You can breastfeed and change their diaper in front of everyone. It's very open. (I_B)

Couzi said that it would be very difficult to describe in words. She would recommend that her friends go, even if they had no experience in dance. She would explain that she herself had had very little dance experience, yet she found *MamaDances* to be “une belle ambiance”⁴¹ and “un beau party.”⁴² C'est quelque chose que je recommande vraiment très, très, très chaudement. [...] c'est quelque chose de merveilleux” (I_C). Couzi perceived self-confidence to be the principal intrinsic value of the experience.

Emi would describe *MamaDances* as very diversified, and she said that participation does not require previous dance experience. She described it as an uncomplicated mix of different movement influences, like Flamenco and Indian. She explained that there are small movements with the hands and fingers that the babies enjoy, and then later, more ample and undulating movement with the babies in carriers. She explained how there was a progression:

Être au sol avec bébé et s'étirer et prendre conscience un peu de son corps et après faire des petits jeux en musique et connecter avec le reste des mamans et après de vraiment danser en portage, sans avoir trop le regard des autres et aussi lâcher prise et faire des mouvements à la fois chorégraphiés et à la fois plus amples.⁴³ (I_E)

Emi perceived stress reduction to be the principal intrinsic value of her experience. She described it using the words détente⁴⁴, and lâcher prise⁴⁵.

⁴¹ a beautiful atmosphere

⁴² a beautiful party

⁴³ You can stretch and become more aware of your body, while the baby is on the floor. With music and play there is connection with other mothers. Afterwards the movement is fuller, without too much concern for others, letting go, dancing in pairs, taking the space, sometimes with choreographed steps and at other times moving more freely in space, with the babies in arms or carriers.

⁴⁴ relax

⁴⁵ letting go or release

Jennifer would describe *MamaDances* as a dance class for getting out and having fun with your baby, and she would add that you need a baby carrier because you do a choreography with your baby. She would say that it would change your thoughts and help you, physically and mentally, to get closer to your baby, especially if you are having a difficult time. She would also say to another mother that it is good for your baby physically, and it feels good to move:

Si elle a envie de sortir et de faire une activité le fun, il y a MamanDance, c'est un cours de danse, c'est avec ton enfant, t'as besoin d'un porte-bébé, parce que tu fais la chorégraphie avec ton bébé sur toi, et ça va te changer les idées, ça va t'aider à te rapprocher avec ton bébé. Surtout si la mère vit un moment difficile, ça va l'aider mentalement, physiquement à se rapprocher avec son bébé. Ça va aussi lui faire du bien au corps, physiquement, bouger ça fait toujours du bien. (I_J)⁴⁶

Jennifer perceived self-confidence and awareness to be the principal intrinsic values of the experience.

Kim-Ahn would describe *MamaDances* as complete and well-rounded, that it allowed her to go further into her relationship with her baby and that, at the same time, there was exchange between the mothers. Kim-Ahn said that she would recommend the activity. She appreciated that it was two hours long and took into consideration that the participants are less open in the beginning, having little to no artistic experience. She found aspects that were focused more on physical well-being: stretching, releasing, and pelvic floor strengthening, and then aspects of dancing that gradually allowed for more ease in self-expression. She also mentioned that it is great for the babies because it tires them without being too physically difficult.

Kim-Ahn perceived harmony with her baby, cooperation between mothers and artistic expression to be the principal intrinsic values of the experience.

⁴⁶ If she wants to go out and do something fun, there's MamaDances, it's a dance class, it's with your child, you need a baby carrier, because you do the choreography with your baby on you, and it's going to take your mind off it, it's going to help you bond with your baby. Especially if the mother is going through a difficult time, it will help her mentally, physically to get closer to her baby. It will also do her body good, physically, moving is always good.

Maman Poulpe would describe the first part as yoga and movement on a mat, and then some dancing on the feet with the babies in arms, and then with babies in carriers. The movement was integrated into a choreography at the end.

Maman Poulpe perceived emotional and physical wellness as the principal intrinsic values of the experience.

To describe *MamaDances*, MM said that it starts with sharing with each other; names, and what happened during the week. Then there are some exercises on the mats with babies, and later dancing more freely. Then, a break, and afterwards working on a choreography with the babies in baby carriers. MM would insist on participation, explaining it as a time-sensitive and important experience:

Je dirais you must, you have to go. C'est une classe à faire, c'est un temps vraiment spécial, ça arrive juste une fois, ou deux ou trois ou quatre fois dans ta vie d'avoir cette classe avec ton enfant et que c'est très important de l'introduire, de le faire, de s'enrôler pour ça. (I_MM)⁴⁷

MM perceived the mother-infant connection, the connection among mothers, and physical fitness to be the principal intrinsic values of the experience.

Rieta would describe the *MamaDances* as:

an activity that you do with your baby that helps you connect, that is quiet and good for your health. It is a mix of dance and yoga. You work on yourself, your abdominals and pelvic floor, while dancing with your baby, rather than going to a gym and lifting weights. It was a perfect activity to recover myself and to share my time with my baby. It is natural and instinctive, not superficial. (I_R)

Rieta perceived infant-mother connection and the fact that it was mutually beneficial for her and her baby at the same time, to be the principal intrinsic values of the experience.

⁴⁷ I would say, you must go. It's a class to do that is a very special time and it happens only once, twice, three or four times in a lifetime. You have to enroll. It's important to introduce your child to this class.

To summarize the answer to the first sub-question, a table was created which lists the pseudonyms of the participants, indicates the number of workshops attended out of eight, summarizes the expectations at the beginning, summarizes the perceived intrinsic value of the experience for each participant, gives an interpretation of that value, and summarizes each mother's description of the session.

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Table 4.1 Mother's Expectations, Perceived Values, Interpretations, and their Descriptions of MamaDances

Mother & Baby's pseudonyms	Attendance out of 8 workshops	Expectations	Perceived intrinsic value in words of participant	Interpretation	Description of the workshop
Bee & Bug	4	Increase her bond with Bug. Quality time with Bug	Infant-mother bonding	Connection with her baby	Open, flowy, free motion, a chance to just move, just dance.
Couzi & Petit Coco	6	Begin to dance Have a pleasurable group experience, meet new people, spend quality time with Petit Coco Discover new stimulating ways of being with Petit Coco	Self-confidence	Empowerment	Accessible without previous dance experience. <i>Belle ambiance, beau party</i> , no pressure, no judgement, no stress. Just go!
Emi & CN	5	A close sensorial experience with CM Quality time with CM To have fun Enhancement of her bond with CM through softness, sharing and play	"Letting go" (<i>Lacher prise</i>)	Release of stress: Physical and emotional wellness	Diversified, mix of different styles, progression without complication, accessible without dance experience.
Jennifer & Angelika	8	Get out of the house Have fun Discover new ways to interact with her baby Learn to dance Meet new people	Self-confidence Awareness	Empowerment	Pleasurable activity including choreography while babywearing, which has benefits to physical and emotional health.
Kim-Ahn & Lily-Ahn	7	Exercise for herself and her baby Being with other mothers	Harmony with baby Cooperation between mothers The importance of artistic expression	Connection with her baby Community Artistic expression	Recommended, complete and well-rounded activity for moms and babies, improving relationship with baby, physical and emotional health, allowing exchange between mothers, and self-expression.

Mother & Baby's pseudonyms	Attendance out of 8 workshops	Expectations	Perceived intrinsic value in words of participant	Interpretation	Description of the workshop
Maman Poulpe & Bébé Poussin	7	Pleasure of dancing with Bébé Poussin, in this context Get out of the house and the daily routine Meet and socialize with other moms Move, learn some dance - Bébé Poussin's enjoyment Opportunity for introspection Movement adapted for her post-natal physical condition	Well- being (feeling better emotionally and physically)	Physical conditioning Physical and emotional wellness	Yoga, dance, choreography with babies in carriers.
MM & CC	7	Quality time with CC Relax into the moment, strengthen their connection Positive impact on CC's development	Connection with baby Connection with a community of mothers Physical fitness	Connection with her baby Community Physical and emotional wellness	Social time, physical conditioning, free dance and choreography with babies in carriers. Must go!
Rieta & Sunshine	8	Enjoyable time with Sunshine	Connection with baby Mutually beneficial for both mother and baby	Connection with her baby Mutually beneficial activity(empowerment)	A natural and instinctive, yoga, dance, activity to connect, rehabilitate, postnatal physical condition while sharing time with baby.

The results of the mothers' descriptions show that they perceived each workshop to be composed of three parts, with a circle at the end. The following is how the mothers described these different parts and their experience of them.

4.1.2 Ways to Begin and Floorwork

Ways to Begin and Floorwork is most often described by the mothers as “floor exercises,” “stretches on the mat,” or “yoga which incorporates interaction with the baby”. Across participant data, this part was appreciated by all eight mother participants. They described the experience in four different ways: They spoke about 1. improving their postnatal fitness condition, 2. improving body awareness, 3. reducing stress, and 4. gently warming up to prepare for more ample movement. Jennifer, Kim-Ahn, Rieta and Maman Poulpe said they benefitted from the exercises for reconditioning the pelvic floor and abdominals. Both Rieta and Emi appreciated that it was a way to warm up gradually before entering movement that was more expansive in space and before beginning the choreography. Emi and Kim-Ahn appreciated the state of relaxation they achieved during this part of the workshop. Rieta has a yoga practice and enjoyed that the “*salutation du soleil*” was adapted to the baby. Jennifer mentioned that this part gave her baby space to explore and move freely on her own. The freedom given to the babies to move and explore was also observed and appreciated by Emi.

4.1.3 Studies in Circle and Travelling

The Studies in Circle and Travelling Studies that comprised the second structural part of the workshop were often described by the mothers as “free dance” (*danse libre*) or “free styling” where they moved around the mats and though the space with their babies in their arms. According to the mothers, the movement turned and travelled in all dimensions and directions and permitted them to carry their babies facing different ways in a variety of orientations and positions. “You are kind of floating around and holding your baby” (I_B). Some of the mothers said that this kind of dancing allowed for spontaneous interaction with their own babies, with each other in the group, and with the space, and allowed them to move in response to their babies' reactions to the different stimuli. The “guided improvisation” aspect of this part was described by the mothers as “parties improvises”, “free movement”, or “libre-cr ation.”

4.1.4 Dancing with the Babies in the Carriers and Choreography

Dancing with the Babies in the Carriers and Choreography was often referred to by the mothers as such (the choreography which was danced with the baby in a baby carrier). The importance of this part of the workshop varied widely among the mothers. Jennifer and Couzi really appreciated the challenge of learning the steps and showed an interest in possibly performing the choreography for an audience, with a little more practice. Although Rieta did not find the choreography very difficult, she said it was good practice for her mind. Maman Poulpe and Bee mentioned that it was difficult, but they eventually “got it”. For Emi, the choreography was difficult, but she appreciated moving in synchrony with the other mothers. Kim-Ahn felt that the choreography was difficult because of her lack of sleep:

Je trouvais ça bien, mais avec un cerveau de maman qui dort pas beaucoup, je trouvais ça un peu difficile, mais c’est bien qu’elle le fasse, parce que c’est pas si difficile que ça. Cette partie-là était moins agréable. (I_KA)

4.1.5 The Closing Circle

One of the most memorable moments for Jennifer, Maman Poulpe and MM was the closing circle at the end of the workshop. Jennifer said she felt the energetic connection of all the mothers and all the babies together, holding each other and moving together. Maman Poulpe wrote in her journal, “Le moment à la fin où l’on se prend par les épaules et l’on se berce est très émouvant pour moi.”⁴⁸ (J1_MP)

4.1.6 Music

According to the mothers, the music chosen for the workshop is important. They described the music as being both supportive and stimulating. They said the music induced a state of calm and serenity and gave a feeling of pleasure, describing it as peaceful, soft, and rhythmic. They also remarked it brought a positive sensation and vibration into the body and into the day. For Rieta in particular, who is Catalan, the music was emotionally moving and spiritually uplifting. She said

⁴⁸ The moment at the end where we held each other shoulder to shoulder and rocked each other was very emotionally moving for me.

that it connected her to her cultural roots. Her most memorable moment from the workshop experience was when the music reminded her of the film *La Vie est Belle* and its message.

I try every day to have the same attitude, that life is good, knowing that it is not that good, but that we must always try to be positive. That movie is unbelievable, and that music touched something inside me. (I_R)

According to MM, the choice of music was extraordinary. For her, it is what makes the activity different from what she might do at home. For Jennifer, the music was fun and rhythmic, and helped facilitate ease in movement and supported the dancing. “*C’était de la musique entraînante et qui favorise la danse justement*”⁴⁹ (I_J). For Maman Poulpe, the movement and music felt good. Hearing new music in the workshop gave her a sensation of travelling elsewhere and being carried by the rhythm. It inspired her movement and allowed her a different form of self-expression.

La musique et le mouvement me font du bien. D’écouter ces nouvelles chansons me donne l’impression de voyager un instant, d’être ailleurs et me motive à bouger sur le rythme. Par le mouvement, je sens que je peux m’exprimer d’une certaine manière différente. 50 (J2_MP)

Most of the mothers mentioned how much they enjoyed the music and that it was a prevalent element in the space.

4.1.7 Space

Rieta found the space perfect for many reasons. “Welcoming” was the word she used to describe it. First, it was very close to where she lived, so she could walk there. She found the temperature comfortable, and the guard at the door was kind. She appreciated the breastfeeding chairs and pillows that were provided. Jennifer felt that the large size of the studio gave Angelika space to travel, explore and discover, and was therefore a contributing factor to Angelika’s gross motor skill development. Also, because the space felt safe to Jennifer, she was confident in supporting Angelika’s developing sense of agency.

⁴⁹ The rhythm of the music supported the dance.

⁵⁰ The music and movement feel good.

Other mothers described the psycho-social quality of the space. For example, Bee said, “Great open space to connect with other moms and babies,” which was reiterated by Kim-Ahn who said it was a great open space for interaction. Couzi described it as “un espace de compréhension, vu qu’on était toutes des mamans là-bas, personne ne jugeait personne”⁵¹ (I_C).

4.1.8 Facilitation

All the participants commented favorably on the way the workshop was guided by the facilitator. Couzi was engaged by the way the facilitator transferred her knowledge, by explaining the exercises in a way that was interesting, accessible, and applicable to Couzi’s daily life. If she had simply been told what to do, Couzi felt she would not have been as interested and would not have been aware of how the exercises could be integrated into her daily life. Emi found that the facilitation was very important for guiding the participants into a movement ambiance without too much thinking. “Je trouve que l’enseignement est super important parce que sans forcément trop réfléchir on arrive après à faire les mouvements et se mettre dans l’ambiance”⁵² (I_E). According to the mothers, the facilitator presented things in a way that put them at ease and focused on having a good time rather than on perfection of movement. The facilitation cultivated an atmosphere of non-judgement: “aucune pression aucune comparaison pas besoin d’être parfait”⁵³ (J2_C).

MM and Bee remarked that the facilitator offered to carry the babies when she saw that the mothers were tired from the weight of them.

C’était juste des fois dans la danse libre où ma petite était assez pesante, donc des fois je sentais que j’étais un peu fatiguée, mais la facilitatrice était toujours là. Elle nous observait et si elle voyait qu’il y en avait une qui se sentait fatiguée, elle s’offrait de prendre notre enfant et ça c’était le fun aussi alors je dirais que c’était peut-être ce

⁵¹ Considering everyone there was a mother, it was a space of understanding, where no one judged each other.

⁵² I find the teacher to be very important because without thinking too much we succeed in the movement and are immersed in the environment.

⁵³ No pressure, no judgement, no need-to-be-perfect attitude.

moment-là, mais c'était tout de suite remédié par la facilitatrice, donc elle était sensible à ça.⁵⁴ (I_MM)

Jennifer attributed a large part of her enjoyment of the workshop to the way it was facilitated; she said the facilitation motivated her to come back every week. She made a comparison with the instructor of a swimming class she takes with Angelika, describing that instructor as *ordinaire*, and so she attended swim class out of a sense of obligation, rather than the enjoyment that coming to *MamaDances* gave her. Jennifer described the facilitator as very kind, soft, and understanding, and said her explanations were clear. Jennifer felt that Angelika liked her, too: “Chaque fois qu’elle lui parlait elle (Angelika) avait le gros sourire sur le visage”⁵⁵ (J2_J).

Maman Poulpe described the facilitator as having a soothing voice and a warm, welcoming attitude. Kim-Ahn felt that the facilitator’s passion inspired and nurtured her own artistic side: “Je trouve que la facilitatrice est capable d’aller chercher notre côté artistique et de nous épanouir au travers des séances. Grâce à cela, je me sens mieux avec mon bébé”⁵⁶ (J3_KA). Rieta described the facilitator’s quality as flow: “My experience with the facilitator, is that she is very good with the flow, that I love. I like it a lot. Going with the flow” (I_R). This relates also to Bee’s description of the quality of the movement in the workshop as “flowy.” Jennifer felt that the facilitator often made connections with nature : “Elle nous disait, ‘on met nos pieds sur le sol’ -notre contact avec la nature, je trouve qu’elle en parlait souvent, quand même”⁵⁷ (I_J).

4.2 The Mothers’ Preferences and Challenges

4.2.1 The Mothers’ Favorite Parts

The following are the mothers’ preferences of the compositional parts.

⁵⁴ Once in the free dance I was feeling tired and CC was feeling very heavy. Eryn was always there, she observed and if she saw that there was fatigue, she offered to hold the babies, these moments of fatigue were always relieved. She was very sensitive.

⁵⁵ Every time the facilitator spoke, it brought a big smile to Angelika’s face.

⁵⁶ I feel that Eryn was capable of gradually bringing out and nourishing our artistic side over the course of the session. Thanks to that, I feel better with my baby.

⁵⁷ She told us “we put our feet on the ground.” She spoke often about our contact with nature.

Emi and Rieta enjoyed most what they referred to as the “first” and the “third” parts: *Ways to Begin and Floorwork* and *Dancing with Babies in Carriers*. Emi explained that she enjoyed gently warming up with small movements, waking up her body with softness while maintaining eye contact with her baby. Rieta said she particularly loved when the first part involved some aspects of yoga. Both noticed and appreciated that each beginning was slightly different. Maman Poulpe (and her Béb  Poussin) particularly enjoyed the “Ta Tunga” song at the beginning. Kim-Ahn enjoyed the beginning most because it gave her permission to do something that was good for her. She really appreciated the stretching and the pelvic floor rehabilitation exercises. Jennifer and Couzi enjoyed the challenge of the choreography most, and they took pride in dancing it.

Rieta enjoyed the choreography because it exercised her brain and it pleased Sunshine to be danced in a carrier. Emi also enjoyed the sensation of moving with the baby in the carrier during the “last part,” but was less excited about learning choreography. Bee and MM’s favorite parts were the “second part”, *Studies in Circle and Travelling Studies*. MM said that watching and being together with other mothers and their babies created something magical. Kim-Ahn also enjoyed the “second part,” and appreciated how it had developed gradually over time.

4.2.2 Baby’s Favorite Parts

The following are the mothers’ perceptions of the compositional parts of the workshop that their babies preferred.

In the eyes of their mothers, some of the babies preferred the same parts as their moms, and others preferred different parts. MM felt that, like her, CC enjoyed the *Travelling Studies* and the *Studies in Circle* because of the possibilities for eye contact and the variations in the way she could be held. She felt that CC enjoyed seeing the other babies, and they made her laugh. Rieta perceived that Sunshine also enjoyed *Travelling Studies* and the *Studies in Circle*, for similar reasons. Couzi also felt this was the best part for Petit Coco. She said he loved when she turned with him in her arms. Kim-Ahn thought that Lily-Ahn enjoyed the *Circle* and *Travelling Studies*, but also really enjoyed the “3/4 rhythm exercise” at the beginning of the final workshop. For Bug, the best part of the class was the beginning because, according to Bee, she liked the movement of the hands. Angelika also enjoyed the first part of the workshop, but for different reasons: Jennifer found that

Angelika liked the opportunity to travel and visit the other mothers and babies on their mats. Bébé Poussin, like his mom, preferred the “Ta Tunga” song at the beginning of the seventh workshop.

4.2.3 Difficulties for the mothers

The following are the compositional elements that the mothers felt were the most difficult.

Bee had some difficulty at the beginning of the session because she was not yet comfortable wearing her baby in a carrier. Several of the mothers, including Emi, Rieta and MM found carrying their babies in their arms during the *Circle* and *Travelling Studies* difficult because of the weight of their babies. Rieta observed, “The most tiring part for me might be the most fun part for my baby.” Emi and Ki-Ahn found the *Choreography with Babies in Carriers* at the end a little difficult: “Je suis pas une grande danseuse, ça veut pas dire que j’ai pas apprécié, mais j’ai une petite préférence de pouvoir m’échauffer tranquillement”⁵⁸ (I_E).

Kim-Ahn found the very first activity, *brise-glace: 4/4 rhythm with names*, difficult because she was required to remember names. Jennifer only found it difficult when she needed to go to the bathroom but did not want to miss anything. Bee found it difficult to learn the *Choreography with the Babies in the Carriers* after having missed four workshops. For Rieta, the only difficulty was getting to class when the weather started to grow cold after fall.

Emi had expected to use the baby carrier during the whole workshop, and she had difficulty, at first, dancing while carrying her baby in her arms. In her journal she wrote that the first workshop made her feel uncomfortable. Eventually she came to appreciate the design of each workshop and the session progression. She felt that reciprocity was built between her and her baby through the variety of stages in the workshop.

4.2.4 Difficulties for The Baby

The following are descriptions of the mothers’ perceptions of the compositional parts of the workshop that were difficult for their babies.

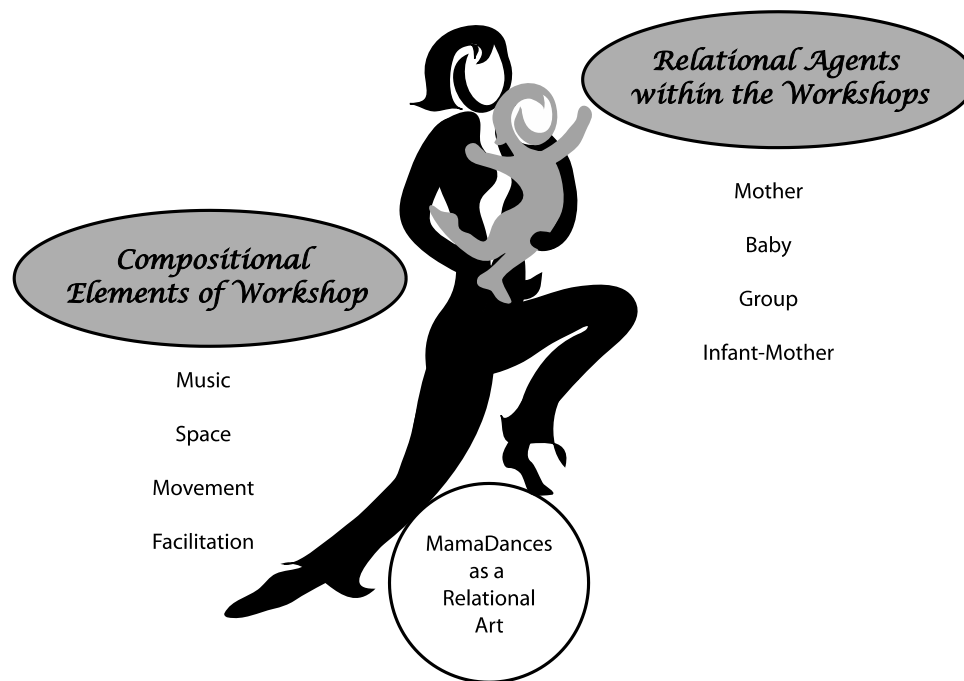
⁵⁸ I am not a great dancer, it doesn’t mean I don’t appreciate it, but I have a preference for the gently warming-up.

Because Béb  Poussin was teething, he cried for most of the first workshop before falling asleep in the carrier. The beginning of the session was thus awkward for Maman Poulpe, as she was worried that his crying might be disturbing to the workshop.

Both Rieta and Bee felt that Bug’s and Sunshine’s difficulties were related to their advancing development and agency. Rieta found that sometimes *Ways to Begin* and *Floorwork* was difficult for Sunshine because Sunshine preferred to “do her own thing.” Sunshine wanted to be around Rieta, but not on her, in a way that made it impossible for Rieta to do some of the exercises. Bee said that she felt Bug enjoyed the workshop more at the beginning of the session, and as she got older something changed. Bug either became bored, or it began to conflict with her nap time, and so she was tired. Kim-Ahn said she thought the least favorite part for Lily-Ahn was when she first placed her in the carrier, but she eventually got used to it.

The following figure shows the compositional elements of music, space, movement, and facilitation, as well as the relational agents of mother, baby, group and infant-mother that make up the MamaDances workshop as a relational art.

Figure 4.1 Compositional Elements and Relational Agents



4.3 Babies' Perceived Responses

The following results show how the babies responded to the workshop, according to their mothers. I have categorized them into three themes: 1. Transformation Responses, 2. Calm Responses, 3. Enjoyment Responses. “Transformation Responses” is the theme synthesized from the meaning units where the mother talked about the social, physical, or cognitive development of her baby. Each baby was in a different phase of development ranging in age from three months to 11 months. All mothers mentioned an aspect of her child’s development that was enhanced by their participation. “Calm Responses” synthesises all the meaning units where the mother talked about her baby’s state being calm, sleeping, or relaxed and peaceful. “Enjoyment Responses” synthesizes

all the meaning units where the mother talked about her baby being stimulated, engaged or happy, smiling or laughing.

4.3.1 Transformation Responses

Seven out of eight of the mothers spoke of some transformation in their child's development in response to their participation in the workshop.

Bee feels that the socialization with other babies helped Bug's development. She observed that Bug was very vocal when Bee was moving. Couzi noticed that stimulating her baby with movement, making a connection with him, makes him more centered and concentrated and she is able to hold his attention, "On dirait qu'il est plus concentré. Il n'est plus partout tout en même temps, on dirait que j'arrive à le centraliser"⁵⁹ (I_C). Jennifer felt that having the space to discover was significant for Angelika's development. Angelika was very curious and rarely stayed in place. She began crawling, and so she discovered an enriching new world. Jennifer said that Angelika spoke loudly and felt secure and well supported. Jennifer observed that Angelika was very socially engaged:

Chaque fois qu'elle voyait le petit bébé, elle souriait et je voyais qu'elle la reconnaissait et qu'elle voulait aller la voir, et j'ai remarqué à quel point mon enfant est réveillée, en la mélangeant avec d'autre monde, pas juste avec la famille. On dirait qu'elle est capable de se souvenir c'est qui qu'elle aime bien. ⁶⁰(I_J)

During the *3/4 rhythm exploration*, Kim-Ahn had the impression that Lily-Ahn was fully participating in the exercise by sounding and clapping her hands. After his difficult teething experience at the beginning of the session, Bébé Poussin's participation evolved gradually, and he became more and more interested. He seemed to vocalize toward the facilitator, show curiosity for the other babies, and smile. MamanPoulpe feels the workshop helped Bébé Poussin in his development, to feel the space around him (as suggested by her physiotherapist, she said). MM is certain that participation in the workshop had a huge and positive impact on CC's development.

⁵⁹ You could say he is more concentrated, less all over the place. You could say that I have helped to centre him.

⁶⁰ Every time she saw the little baby she smiled, and I could see that she recognised her and wanted to go and see her, and I noticed how awake my child is, mixing with other worlds, not just the family. She seems to be able to remember who she likes.

She believes that the age covered by the workshop is a significant window for a baby to develop their comprehension of movement, musical ear, and rhythm. MM believes that CC is advanced for her age thanks to the stimulation of the workshops. Rieta also felt certain that participation enhanced her baby's development. During this time period her baby was 9-11 months old, and she began to crawl. Rieta believes that the ample and conducive space, along with the presence of the other babies, was positively influential. Rieta also believes that Sunshine began communicating more clearly with her and that a better understanding developed between them.

4.3.2 Enjoyment Responses

The mothers were unanimous in asserting their babies' enjoyment of the workshop: "MamaDances is an easy way to get a smile." (J2_B)

Bug loved movement, loved watching Bee move her arms, and loved playing with Bee's hair and face. "My baby seems to enjoy the workshop; she hasn't cried during any of the sessions yet (knock on wood)" (JI_B). Petit Coco loved *MamaDances*; Couzi observed that he loves music, movement, and dancing. He loves to be shaken up a little, to be moved in a playfully rough manner. It made him so happy to be danced by Couzi that he laughed often during the workshop. "Il est trop petit pour se rendre compte que ce sont les cours les vendredis, mais il était heureux quand nous étions là-bas"⁶¹ (I_C). Emi noticed that CN smiled often and was in a good mood at the workshops. She noticed CN particularly enjoyed the flamenco-type movement with the arms, hands, and fingers. She also enjoyed being danced in the carrier. Kim-Ahn wrote:

Lily-Ahn réagit très bien à moi pendant le cours. Elle a bien aimé la séance de libre-crédation avec la musique. Elle réagit très bien aussi aux autres bédés. Lorsque les gens tapent dans leurs mains, elle adore ça.⁶² (J3_KA)

MM observed that CC was very pleased, and that the class tired her without being physically difficult. She said that CC would "see the other babies and she would smile and sometimes laugh. She would move her legs with excitement, and she started to applaud. CC was very stimulated"

⁶¹ He is too young to actually know that the workshops were on Fridays, but he was happy when he was there.

⁶² Lily-Ahn seems very calm and in a good mood during the workshops. She responds very well to me and to the other babies. She adores it when people clap their hands and enjoys the interactions with the music.

(I_MM). Maman Poulpe said that Baby Poussin liked when she placed him on her body during some of the floor exercises. He gradually became more open to the yoga movements and found it humorous to participate in the different positions. By the fourth workshop, he was very attentive and amused by the hand movements. Rieta found that Sunshine smiled a lot when she was facing toward the other babies, in her arms and dancing. “She is heavy but she is happy” (I_R). Jennifer had the sense that Angelika really liked the workshop. She was captivated by the music and she had a lot of energy, “je trouve qu'elle se sent en sécurité et bien entourée”⁶³ (I_J).

4.3.3 Calm Responses

According to the mothers, the movement had a calming effect on all the babies.

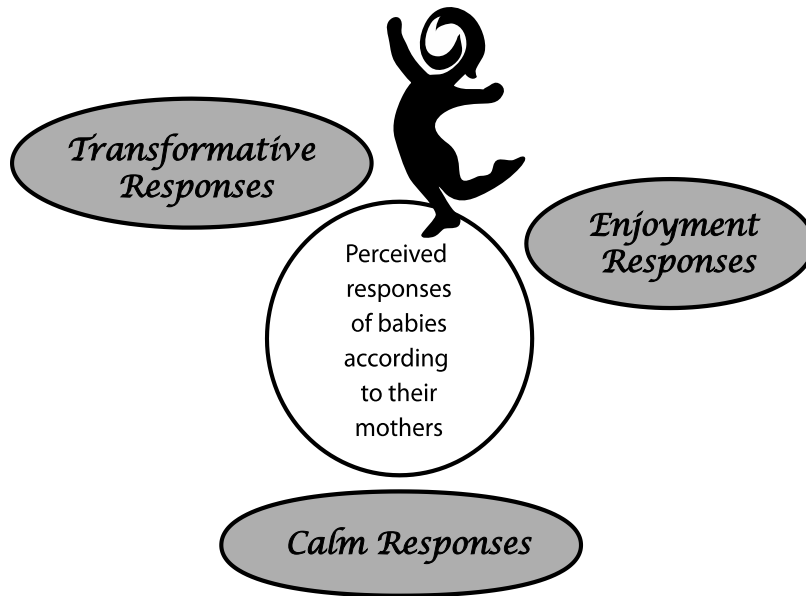
The mothers said that the stimulation followed by dancing with the babies in the baby carriers had a calming effect on them, and they all fell asleep at the end. The carriers allow the babies to be held close, rocked in movement, and lulled to sleep. MamanPoulpe, MM, Bee, Jennifer and Rieta all commented on the sleep-inducing effect of dancing with the babies in the carriers. The stimulation of the first and second parts tire the baby, and once in the carriers, they fall asleep almost immediately. Sometimes Angelika would fall asleep *before* the part in the carriers, in Jennifer’s arms. Rieta said that the vibration and steps of the choreography are relaxing for her baby, and she found that the movement helped with Sunshine’s morning nap. Kim-Ahn said that the length of the workshop was neither too long nor too short for the baby to become tired, but not over-tired. She also mentioned that by the end of the session her baby was sleeping much better in general.

According to the mothers, the workshop was enjoyable for the babies, as it was calming and enhanced their development. The babies were happy and engaged and then calmed by the movement, and they were lulled into sleep by the end of each workshop.

According to analysis, these three responses surfaced recurrently: Transformative, Enjoyment, and Calm, as presented in the figure below:

⁶³ I find that she feels secure and well-surrounded.

Figure 4.2 The Babies' Responses



4.4 Sensations Experienced by the mothers

According to the data gained from the mothers' comments, they all somehow experienced positive sensations from their participation in the workshop. These sensations have been synthesized into seven categories: 1. Joy, 2. Relaxation, 3. Energy, 4. Presence, 5. Physical wellness, 6. Self-Expressivity, 7. Self-confidence. The sensations of *enjoyment*, *relaxation* and *energy* were experienced by all. The increased sensation of *presence* was experienced by six out of eight mothers. The sensation of enhanced *physical wellness* was expressed by five of eight, and an increased *expressivity* was experienced by half of the group. The sensation of improved *self-confidence* was expressed by two of the eight participants.

Table 4.2 Table of Sensations Experienced by Each Participant

Sensations Experienced by the mothers	Bee	Couzi	Emi	Jennifer	KA	MamanP	MM	Rieta
Joy	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Letting go	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Presence	x	x	x	x	x		x	
Energy	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Physical Wellness		x		x	x	x	x	
Self-Confidence		x		x				
Expressivity	x	x		x	x		x	

4.4.1 Sensation of Joy

This sensation was synthesized from meaning units where the mothers expressed enjoyment of the workshop using the English words *fun*, *enjoyable*, *happy*, *love*, *like*, and *grateful*, and the French words *plaisir*, *heureuse*, *heureux*, *aimer*, *adorer*, *fête*, *bonne humeur*, *rire*, and *souriante*.

The mothers all declared the workshop to be enjoyable and fun. It made them happy. Taking the time for themselves, together with their babies, to engage in an artistic experience, to focus on their child and have the time to notice their reactions and their curiosities without distraction was pleasurable. In their own words, each of the mothers expressed some form of joy in having participated in the workshop. Couzi said, “On riait beaucoup”⁶⁴ (I_C). MM said, “Cela me rend heureuse”⁶⁵ (J3_MM). Jennifer said, “Ça fait du bien au cœur”⁶⁶ (J1_J). Rieta said, “I am very grateful for this experience. It was perfect” (I_R). Bee said, “Just making my baby laugh is always extremely pleasurable” (I_B), and MM said: “Que j’avais mon temps avec elle, j’aimais bouger, j’aimais entendre la musique, j’aimais partager avec les autres mamans... pour plusieurs raisons. J’avais hâte à mon vendredi” (J3_MM).

⁶⁴ We laughed a lot.

⁶⁵ It makes me happy.

⁶⁶ It’s heart-warming.

4.4.2 Sensation of Letting Go

This category was synthesized from the collection of meaning units where the mothers used these words to describe their feelings in English: *calm*, *relaxed*, and *grounded*, and in French: *tranquille*, *respire*, *relaxer*, *oublier*, *décrocher*, *lâcher prise*, *laisser aller*, *détendre*, *défourerent*, *delier*, *à l'aise*, *apaiser*, *calmer*, *pas de stress*, *en paix*, and *zen*. These words describe the sensation of tension release. Emi felt that letting go allowed her to become more available to her baby: “la détente et puis aussi d’écouter, apprendre à s’écouter, écouter son corps, et être à l’écoute avec le bébé”⁶⁷ (I_E). Maman Poulpe, Jennifer and Couzi mentioned the relief it brought them to get out of the house and forget (let go of) their worries and obligations at home. Couzi said, “Je décrochais complètement, quand j’étais là-bas, je pensais plus du tout au ménage, au lavage, il faut faire l’épicerie...” (I_C). Jennifer said, “C’était très relaxant pour le corps et pour le moral”⁶⁸ (I_J). Kim-Ahn said, “Pendant la séance, je me suis sentie détendue et l’effet de détente a été conservé par la suite”⁶⁹ (J2_KA). Emi also observed that “letting go” of her expectations let her allow her baby to experience his own agency. “Ça vient un peu avec le lâcher prise, ça m’a appris aussi à pas forcément trop anticiper les choses et laisser l’enfant réagir aussi par lui-même”⁷⁰ (I_E). Kim-Ahn mentioned that the workshop relaxed her and she felt “en unisson avec ma fille.”⁷¹ It also allowed her expressivity to flow more freely.

4.4.3 Sensation of Presence

This category was synthesized from the collection of meaning units where the mother describes a sensation of being in a state of availability or awareness. Some of the words that were used to describe this state were: *à l’écoute*, *s’écouter*, *ressentir*, *rendre compte.*, *entendre*, *m’ouvrir*, *réfléchir*, *focuser*, *moment présent*, and *temps privilégié*. It includes meaning units where the mother said that she noticed something or learned something about herself. Often the things she noticed were about her baby or the way she responded to her baby, and so this category overlaps

⁶⁷ Relaxing and also listening, learning to listen to yourself, listening to your body, and listening to your baby.

⁶⁸ It was very relaxing for the body and morale.

⁶⁹ During the workshop I felt relaxed, and this feeling stayed with me afterwards.

⁷⁰ With the letting go, I learned to not anticipate too much and let the baby respond in her own way.

⁷¹ In harmony with my daughter.

with the category of *quality time* and/or *attunement* under the theme of *What the mothers said about their infant-mother relation* (section 4.8).

Jennifer said that she experienced becoming more aware of, and feeling more, what is around and inside her: “J’ai appris, à vraiment [...] écouter notre corps [...] ressentir tout ce que je peux ressentir à l’extérieur de moi, qui m’entoure. M’ouvrir aux autres, m’ouvrir à ma fille”⁷² (I_J).

Emi explained this state of awareness differently. She said that the state of relaxation allowed her to have a privileged moment with her baby. When she was dancing on her feet, the surroundings became an abstraction, in support of an experience of being present to the moment. For MM, the most important aspect of the workshop was the sensation of being present in the moment for the benefit of the child: “C’était vraiment une expérience merveilleuse, je sens c’était un moment privilégié que j’avais avec ma petite” (I_MM). Maman Poulpe felt that the music and movement allowed her to feel present in the moment and to practice body awareness: “La musique me donne envie de danser et de participer. Les mouvements me permettent de me sentir dans l’instant présent et de prendre conscience de mon corps” (J3_MP). Rieta’s experience with yoga has given her an awareness practice already, but not being a native English or French speaker, she required additional presence to follow the directions of the facilitation.

4.4.4 Sensation of Energy

Another sensation the mothers frequently cited was the sensation of having more energy, and they mentioned two types of energy. One was the energy that anticipation of the workshop gave them. It was a motivational kind of energy, as mentioned by both Couzi and Rieta. As Couzi said:

Le vendredi, ça donne de l’énergie, c’est quelque chose que t’as hâte, des fois le vendredi ah ça ne me tentait pas à matin, je suis allée, j’étais un peu fatiguée, je suis ressortie de là, j’étais super de bonne humeur, pleine d’énergie, on continue la journée. C’est quelque chose de vraiment positif, autant physiquement ça fait bouger, autant

⁷² I learned to really [...] listen to our body [...] to feel everything that I can feel outside of me, around me. Open up to others, open up to my daughter.

mentalement, ça fait du bien, parce que ce que je dis des fois ça te tente moins, mais ça te donne un boost, ça te donne de l'énergie.⁷³ (I_C)

The other type of energy was the increased energy levels the mothers felt during and after the workshop. Bee mentioned in her journal that she felt her energy levels going up during the workshop. MM said that during and afterwards she felt energized and her comment about feeling more “grounded” by the workshop implies a connection to the earth’s energy. For MM, the descriptive word she used was “regenerée.” Jennifer said, “La séance m'a redonnée de l'énergie,”⁷⁴ and Maman Poulpe said she returned home “revitalisée”⁷⁵. All of the mothers spoke of feeling energized in some form by the workshop, and motivated to attend.

4.4.5 Sensation of Physical Wellness

This category was synthesized from the collection of meaning units where the mother describes feeling better physically as a result of the workshop. This sensation would also overlap with the sensation of increased energy.

The mothers spoke of the exercises for the abdominals and pelvic floor as being beneficial and rehabilitative. Kim-Ahn and Jennifer felt their muscular tension and soreness relieved. The workshop helped appease Jennifer’s painful knees, shoulders, and lower back. She found that the floorwork helped her feel better: C’était vraiment quelque chose de miraculeux⁷⁶ (I_J). Maman Poulpe, who considers herself an athletic person by nature, felt that just getting to the studio helped her physically, and the movement in the workshop made her feel more fit and awake. For Maman Poulpe, physical rehabilitation was important :

Je pense que ça nous aidait à être mieux dans notre corps, parce qu’il y avait aussi un côté qui était plus réadaptation par rapport au plancher pelvien et aussi l’abdomen, la diastase des grands droits pour refermer la ceinture abdominale. C’étaient les exercices

⁷³Friday, it gives me energy, I look forward to it. Even if, in the morning I’m tired and tempted not to go, I leave feeling in a good mood, full of energy for the rest of my day. It’s very positive physically and mentally. It’s a boost of energy.

⁷⁴ The workshop gave me energy.

⁷⁵ Revitalized.

⁷⁶ It was really miraculous.

au sol. Aussi de bouger un peu, de s'exprimer par la danse, on se sentait mieux dans notre corps. C'est quand même avec l'accouchement et la grossesse, des fois ça change! C'est plus pareil que c'était. Ça permet de réapprivoiser un peu.⁷⁷ (I_MP)

4.4.6 Sensation of Self-Confidence

The mothers commented that participation in the workshop helped them feel more confidence in their abilities to comfort, play with, connect with, carry, and care for their babies, as well as dance with them. Jennifer and Couzi felt that self-confidence was an intrinsic value of *MamaDances*.

La confiance en soi, la confiance que j'avais avec mon bébé, aussi voir d'autres mamans avec leur bébé, je ne veux pas dire que je me comparais, mais ça m'aidait à voir les complicités entre bébés et mamans, pas juste entre moi et ma fille. (I_J)⁷⁸

Jennifer said that her attentiveness, smiles, and commitment gave Angelika the security to allow her to socialize and develop agency. Couzi learned that she had the ability to capture her baby's attention in ways she had not imagined before. MM gained confidence in her intuition and ability to express herself in movement. Learning the choreography gave Couzi and Jennifer a feeling of accomplishment: "On persévère on va y arriver"⁷⁹ (I-C). "C'est un beau défi à réussir"⁸⁰ (J3_C).

Improved self-confidence was mentioned by two of the participants as a dominant value: "C'est pas juste un cours de danse, c'est vraiment un cours de tout! C'est pour le moral, c'est pour le physique, c'est vraiment le fun"⁸¹ (I_J).

⁷⁷ I think it helped us to be better in our bodies, because there was also a side that was more rehabilitative in relation to the pelvic floor and also the abdomen, the diastasis of the *rectus abdominis* to close the abdominal wall. It was the floor exercises. Also, to move a little, to express ourselves through dance, feels good in the body. Childbirth and pregnancy cause changes! Now, it's more the same as it used to be. It allows you to gain control a little.

⁷⁸ The self-confidence, the confidence I had with my baby, also seeing other moms with their babies, I don't want to say that I was comparing myself, but it helped me to see the rapport between babies and moms, not just between me and my daughter. I realize that we are all kind of the same, mothers and babies, we all do a good job, we are all good moms. It gave me confidence as a mother.

⁷⁹ If we persevere, we will succeed.

⁸⁰ It's a beautiful challenge to surmount.

⁸¹ It's not just a dance class. It's really an everything class. It boosts morale, it's physical, it's really fun!

4.4.7 Sensation of Expressivity

The workshop provided some mothers with an outlet for artistic self-discovery, self-expression, and creativity. Under this category, I assigned all comments that spoke of an artistic side, creativity, spontaneity, intuition, and new ideas. This aspect of *MamaDances* was significant for MM and Kim-Ahn in particular. Kim-Ahn experienced an evolution. As the session progressed, she found herself becoming more expressive and spontaneous. She felt she had tapped into a part of herself that the constraints of her professional life had made dormant. The freedom of expression she experienced in the movement unleashed the artistic side of herself. This allowed her to become more available to her baby. She felt that her development as a mother was thus aided, allowing her to be more aware of her baby's reactions and responses, rather than responding only to Lily-Ahn's primary needs. This allowed their relationship to deepen and for Kim-Ahn to enjoy mothering more. When asked in her interview how the workshop affected her development as a mother, Kim-Ahn replied:

Je pense que c'est beaucoup l'expression de soi, que je ne faisais pas avant, peut-être un peu plus spontanée, à l'écoute de ses réponses, par rapport à ses besoins. Je parle de ses besoins moins primaires.⁸² (I_KA)

MM's discovery arose from with trusting her intuition and her ability to improvise in movement and acknowledging the wisdom in her body. She found a dormant desire to dance because dancing feels good. The workshop affirmed the knowledge she had within: that she needed to dance.

Several of the mothers spoke of difficulties in their lives, and that participating in *MamaDances* relieved their anxiety. Jennifer, who mentioned in her pre-session questionnaire that she had been struggling emotionally and was working through a healing process, said:

⁸² I think it's a lot of self-expression, which I wasn't doing before, maybe a little more spontaneous, listening to her responses, in relation to her needs. I'm talking about her less primary needs

Les avantages c'est de faire une activité pour sortir de la maison, de se changer les idées, parce que quand t'es là, [...] tu penses pas à tous les petits problèmes que t'as, tu penses pas à ta vie quotidienne, tu fais juste danser, et tes idées s'envolent.⁸³ (I_J)

For Maman Poulpe, who had been grieving the death of her father and an interrupted pregnancy, “Ça faisait du bien dans le sens que quand on dansait ben ça me faisait un peu oublier... je pensais juste à ça et ça faisait du bien”⁸⁴ (I_MP). MM found that participating helped calm her nerves, which were stressed during the time of the workshop, as her mother had gone into cardiac arrest. “Ça apaise vraiment l'anxiété, on se sent plus connectée avec nous-mêmes et avec notre bébé, tout simplement”⁸⁵ (I_MM). The calming effect allowed her to connect more with herself and her baby. Couzi found the class fun, and it made her happy, “Ça fait un excellent antidépresseur”⁸⁶ (I_C).

The next figure shows the sensations the mothers experienced within.

⁸³ The benefit is doing an activity to get out of the house, to change your mind, because when you are there, in the course, you do not think of all the little problems that you have, you do not think of your everyday life, you just dance, and your ideas fly away.

⁸⁴ It felt good in the sense that when we danced, well, it made me forget a little... I was just thinking about that and it felt good.

⁸⁵ It calms the anxiety and we simply feel more connected with ourselves and our babies.

⁸⁶ It's an excellent anti-depressant.

Figure 4.3 Sensations Experienced by the Mothers in Relation to Self



4.5 Awareness of the Mothers in Relation to the Group

In *MamaDances*, mothers who do not necessarily know each other come together to form a group and dance. Their life experiences, socio-economic status, and cultural and religious beliefs may be disparate, or they may not speak the same language, but they are unified by their interest in dancing with their babies. They become aware of their unity and commonality.

4.5.1 Awareness of Unity

The mothers felt a sense of togetherness by moving in synchrony, by seeing and sharing with each other and their babies and by being in the company of other mothers. Kim-Ahn described “*harmonie du groupe*” as one of the principal values of the workshop:

Harmonie du groupe. [...] on travaille beaucoup avec le groupe au total, on va faire des chorégraphies avec tout le groupe, ce n'est pas juste toi, c'est toi, dans un

ensemble. À la fin on faisait beaucoup d'affaires spontanées, on faisait une espèce de jam avec des mouvements, chacun faisait des mouvements, puis là, ça s'agençait. Quelqu'un partait puis tout le monde faisait le même mouvement, après là une personne commençait et faisait un autre mouvement. C'est comme un groupe d'ensemble, dans le fond tout le monde danse ensemble.⁸⁷ (I_KA)

Emi described a spirit of togetherness: "Il y a un esprit d'être toutes ensemble, on est toutes regroupées, on est tous avec nos bébés pour qu'ils se voient ensemble" (I_E).

Being in the company of other mothers made the mothers feel better. It gave them confidence, knowing that they were not alone, and it satisfied a need to be social. "Je regarde les autres mamans et apprécie le moment"⁸⁸ (J2_MM). "Ça me mets de bonne humeur pour plusieurs jours de sortir et voir d'autres mamans"⁸⁹ (J1_MP).

For Jennifer, it was a rewarding challenge to be more open to others. For Maman Poulpe, seeing other mothers and their babies helped her emotional state, especially on grey days:

On se sent moins seule à vivre la même étape [...] j'ai senti beaucoup d'amitié, étrangeté, même si on n'a pas beaucoup parlé. On était amicales ensemble. On se sourit. Il y avait comme de la bienveillance entre nous.⁹⁰ (I_MP)

4.5.2 Awareness of Commonality

According to the mothers, the experience of being with other mothers who were living similar things imparted a sense of equality. "*C'est le fun de le faire aussi avec d'autres personnes qui sont à la même étape que nous, qui vivent les mêmes choses à peu près au même temps*" (I_MP). Couzi and Emi both found humour in learning to dance in unison with others. Emi said that trying to be

⁸⁷ Group harmony [...] There is a lot of groupwork. The choreography is in group. It isn't just you, it's you within the ensemble. At the end we did a lot of improvisation, like a kind of musical jam with movement, where each added movement. One did a movement and then they all did it, then another did another movement and they all did it. Like an ensemble. In the end everyone dances all together.

⁸⁸ I watch the other mothers and appreciate the moment.

⁸⁹ It puts me in a good mood for several days to see the other mothers.

⁹⁰ I felt a lot of friendship, strangely, even though we didn't talk much. We were friendly together. We smile. There was kindness between us.

in unison, following each other in twos in the same rhythm, was funny. It brought about moments of affinity.

On essayait de s'aligner, d'être les deux à la même cadence et de suivre deux par deux par deux par deux, c'est-à-dire toutes les filles on se suivait. Et je me souviens de ce petit passage où il fallait qu'on soit un peu synchronisées, donc c'était marrant[...] Donc des moments de complicité, finalement, d'être tous ensemble, en regroupement.⁹¹ (I_E)

Couzi described the feeling amongst the mothers as a space of understanding, where there was respect and non-judgement. Movement became a social equalizer: "*J'adore danser en groupe. Je ne suis pas la meilleure mais je me rends compte que c'est tellement pas important*"⁹² (J3_C). "*C'est qu'on était toutes au même niveau, à égalité [...] c'était pas la perfection du mouvement mais d'être dans un moment ensemble*"⁹³ (I_E). Although there was not a lot of talking amongst the mothers, a spirit of togetherness, understanding, collaboration and friendship developed.

As previously mentioned, being in the company of other mothers helped Jennifer with her self-confidence, and that she attributed to a sense of commonality:

Ça m'aidait à voir les autres mamans avec leur bébé, pas juste entre moi et ma fille. Je me rends compte qu'on est toutes pareilles, les mères et les bébés, on fait toutes une bonne job, on est toutes des bonnes mamans. Ça m'a donné de la confiance en tant qu'être mère. (I_J)

For Jennifer, Maman Poulpe and MM, the closing circle was a powerful experience of connection through movement and touch: Le fait d'être avec les autres mamans, en dernier, avec les cercles qu'on faisait, on se tenait toutes les épaules ensemble et puis je trouvais que c'était des beaux moments. (I_MM)

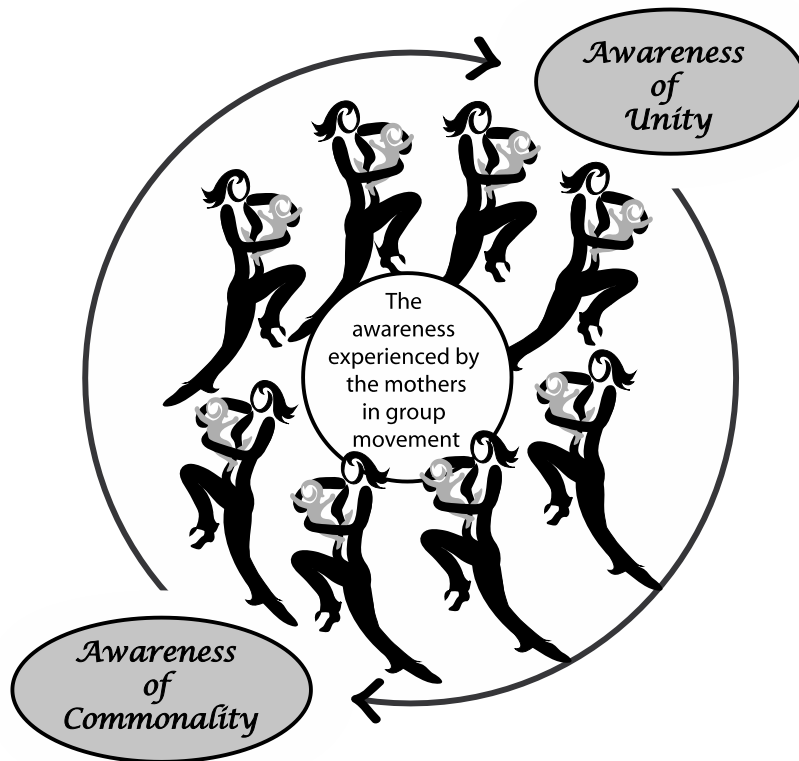
⁹¹ Trying to be together, following each other in twos in the same rhythm, was funny. It brought moments of complicity, togetherness, and cooperation.

⁹² I am not the best, but I came to understand it doesn't matter.

⁹³ It's that we were all on the same level, equal, it was not about the perfection of the movement but rather being in the moment together.

The following figure shows how an awareness of unity and commonality is brought about by the mothers moving together in synchrony and in a circle and seeing themselves in each other.

Figure 4.4 Awareness Experienced by Mothers in the Group



4.6 The Effects of *MamaDances* on the Infant-Mother Relationship

All participants divulged a feeling of a stronger and deeper bond being built between them and their babies. Their comments about how the workshop made them feel were often followed by comments about how it helped them connect with their babies. This theme was synthesized from all meaning units where the mother talked about how participation affected their relationships.

I have extracted two main themes: Bonding and Time.

4.6.1 Bonding

Various words used by the mothers expressed that their connection with their babies was enhanced or further developed by their participation in *MamaDances*: attachment, bonding, closeness, in unison, connection, flourishing. This was supported by words that describe a quality of “listening” that was cultivated. Couzi said that *MamaDances* creates a strong connection between mother and baby because it addresses mother and baby together:

MamanDanse s’adresse au bébé, mais ça s’adresse à la maman aussi, c’est une activité qu’on fait ensemble et qui rejoint les deux. Alors je crois pas qu’il y ait quelque chose qui rejoint autant, qui crée un lien aussi fort. (I_C)

Kim-Ahn felt that *MamaDances* allowed her to deepen her connection with her baby by teaching her to engage with needs beyond the primary ones. In Kim-Ahn’s words: “ C’est une activité, qui nous permet d’aller chercher un plus, chez le bébé, dans la relation de soi avec le bébé.”⁹⁴ Jennifer felt that the emotional and physical benefits of the workshop enabled her to become closer to her baby. Her advice to other mothers is, “Ça va t’aider [...] mentalement, physiquement à te rapprocher avec ton bébé ” (I_J). Bee, Kim-Ahn, MM and Rieta all felt that bonding or connection with their babies was one of the main values of the *MamaDances* workshop. The freedom of expressivity allowed Kim-Ahn to be more attentive to Lily-Ahn. This helped to deepen their connection. “Grâce à cela, je me sens mieux avec mon bébé”⁹⁵ (J3_KA). The ideas offered in the workshops to stimulate, captivate, and play with their babies helped some of the mothers to build their confidence, which strengthened their connection. Couzi found this aspect particularly helpful when engaging with Petite Coco on the floor level. Emi felt that CN was very observant of movement and the other participants. She said that she felt the workshop allowed CN to learn more about her own body and her mothers’ body. MM noticed that during the workshop she and her baby watched each other and connected through eye contact.

⁹⁴ I would say this is an activity that is very complementary, I think it allows us to look more into the baby and into our relationship with our baby.

⁹⁵ Thanks to this I feel better with my baby.

4.6.2 Time

The mothers often mentioned time, in phrases such as “un moment privilégié⁹⁶”, “des moments d’intimité⁹⁷”, and “le moment présent.”⁹⁸ The opportunity for dedicated one-on-one time, quality time, without the usual distractions and demands of regular daily life, was appreciated. Despite always being with their babies, they savoured the quality of *this* time. They acknowledged that it was different from the mother observing her baby doing something, or her doing one thing while her baby does another. This form of togetherness, co-creation and attunement gives the mothers and babies an experience of pleasure in time. “Donc, prendre un moment de plaisir ensemble, vivre une activité à deux”⁹⁹ (I_E). *MamaDances* is pleasurable for both mom and baby. Bee said: “So far this has been a very positive experience for myself and my baby” (I_B).

This pleasurable time together allows mother and baby to discover each other through movement and listening, to feel and see each other. Both Kim-Ahn and Emi described a state of listening (*à l’écoute*). “Le côté d’être à l’écoute de l’enfant, ça j’ai appris ça”¹⁰⁰ (I_KA). She became aware of the importance of taking time to connect with her baby, especially during times of difficulty, to avoid missing the important milestones. Emi said that one of her most memorable moments from the workshop was when CN rolled over from her stomach to her back for the first time.

Figure 4.5 below illustrates how the combination of bonding and time together creates a circle of bonding time for the mother and baby.

⁹⁶ Quality time

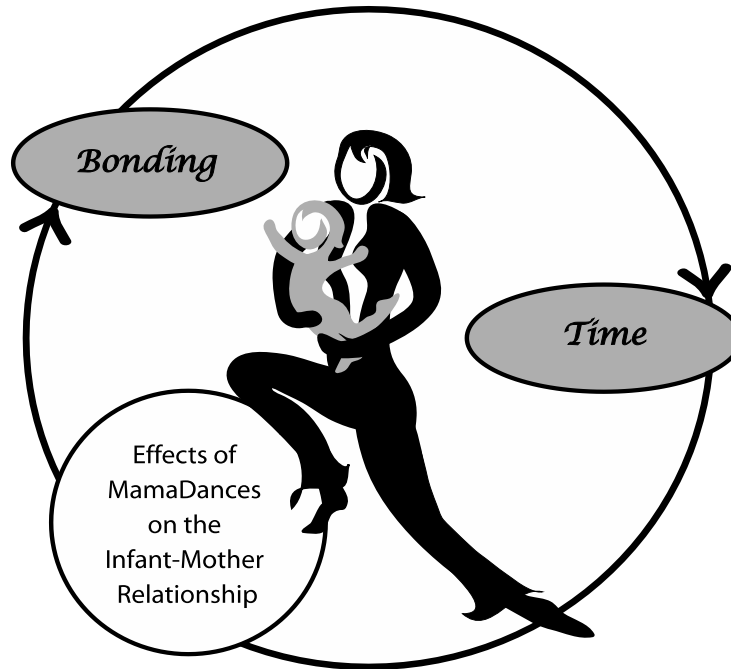
⁹⁷ Intimate moments

⁹⁸ The present moment

⁹⁹ So, taking a moment, to experience an activity of pleasure together.

¹⁰⁰ I learned to listen better and to be more attentive.

Figure 4.5 Effect of MamaDances on the Infant-Mother Relationship



4.7 Mutual Benefits Compared to other Mom and Baby Activities

The mothers helped articulate what makes *MamaDances* unique. It emerged as a distinction between the feeling of doing an activity with a baby and sharing in an experience that mutually benefitted each at the same time. Jennifer explained: Tu sais, on était ensemble dans cette activité-là, et ce n'était pas juste ensemble, mère-fille, c'était vraiment ensemble, en train de faire quelque chose commun.¹⁰¹ (I_J)

¹⁰¹ You know, we were together in this activity, and it was not just together, mother daughter, it was really together, in a process of making something collaboratively.

Bee compared the workshop to her fitness class with moms and babies, where the babies were often off to the side, either in a carrier or on the floor playing with each other. That activity did not involve the babies. It was for the moms to get back into shape.

Fitness is not a bonding experience with your baby. If she (Bug) is crying I might pick her up and do some of the workout with the baby, but that's not the purpose. Whereas *MamaDances* is very much for your baby and you. (I_B)

Emi's comparison to a gym or Cardio Poussette was similar. She mentioned that babies are not really integrated in those activities, but in *MamaDances*, “vraiment on connecte avec les bébés, donc c'est ça qui est intéressant dans ce cours”¹⁰² (I_E).

Couzi described the difference between *MamaDances* and a moms' playgroup activity. She explained that the moms are present with their babies in a playgroup, but at the same time not present. They may have a coffee or a supper together while their babies play, but in the *MamaDances* workshop, the mother and the baby are doing something together. Emi underlined the fact that *MamaDances* is an activity designed for both the mother and the baby.

De le faire sans le bébé de A à Z, ça n'aurait pas trop de sens [...] vraiment elle (la facilitatrice) l'a conçu pour que ce soit à deux, on peut faire des petites parties si le bébé est en train de dormir ou quoi, mais je trouve que ça a moins de sens parce que je suppose qu'elle a pensé les mouvements pour qu'on bouge avec. On tient compte de la charge du bébé, la manière dont on évolue dans l'espace, alors ça n'aurait pas beaucoup de sens de le faire sans le bébé.¹⁰³ (I_E)

For Kim-Ahn, who said she did a lot of activities with Lily-Ahn, *MamaDances* was the first where the focus was not solely on the baby. She said that it gave her permission to do something that felt good and allowed her to focus on herself, as well. Rieta's comment reiterates this: “This activity

¹⁰² We really connect with our babies and that's what makes it interesting.

¹⁰³ To do the lesson without the baby from A to Z, would not make too much sense [...] She (the facilitator) really designed it so that it was for two. We can do small bits if the baby is asleep, but I it makes little sense because I guess she created the movements so that we would move with the babies ... In the way we evolve in space, we take into account the care of the baby, so it wouldn't make much sense to do it without the baby

for me is special because we are both involved. The other activities focus more on the baby. This one is good because I feel I am feeling good, and my baby is feeling good” (I_R).

4.8 Summary: Expectations versus the Lived Experience

To conclude this chapter, the results reveal some answers to the main research question and sub-questions. Despite the singularity of each participant’s expectations at the outset, they all finished with a sense of gratitude and satisfaction for their experience in relation to those expectations. Bee had wanted quality time with Bug to improve their connection, and at the end she said that infant-mother bonding and babywearing were the primary benefits for her. Couzi was looking for a way into dance and for new ways to be with Petit Coco; she also hoped to have a fun time meeting new people. At the end she felt self-confidence was the main benefit, and she came away with a sense of empowerment and more ideas about how to engage with her baby. Emi had wanted a sensorial experience with CN that would enhance their connection and finally, “letting go” (*lâcher prise*) was the main benefit she had derived. Jennifer wanted to get out of the house, meet new people, have fun, learn to dance, and discover new ways to interact with Angelika. Self-confidence and awareness were the main benefits for Jennifer. Kim-Ahn wanted to get some exercise in the company of other moms. At the end she recognized the importance of an artistic practice to be in harmony with her baby, and she benefitted from a feeling of cooperation with other mothers. Maman Poulpe wanted to learn to dance in a way that was geared to the postnatal condition, an opportunity for introspection, to get out of the house and meet other mothers, and for Bébé Poussin to have an enjoyable time. At the end, for Maman Poulpe, *MamaDances* was therapeutic. MM wanted to spend quality time with CC to strengthen their connection and to relax into the moment, anticipating it would have a positive effect on CC’s development. At the end for MM, there were ultimately three main benefits of the experience: connection with her baby, connection with a community of mothers, and her own physical fitness. Rieta simply expected to have an enjoyable time with her baby, and in the end was delighted by how beneficial it was for her and her baby to have a mutually gratifying experience.

Except for the first part of the workshop, which all the mothers appreciated, the variation of preferences and difficulties for the different parts demonstrates that they are all beneficial, according to the mothers. The diversity of *MamaDances* choreographic content allowed each

mother to benefit differently, according to her own needs and interests. The mothers found that *Ways to Begin* and *Floorwork* allowed them to interact face to face with their babies. They enjoyed the slow warm-up, and they found it enhanced their physical well-being and body awareness. The circle dance and travelling structures and improvisation scores allowed the mothers to dance with heightened spontaneity and intuition in relation to their babies and the other participants in the group. This provided opportunity to play and respond intuitively to their babies in the moment, for mother and baby to see and move in relation to the group, and for the mothers to develop their creativity and expressivity. The *choreography* brought the mothers into synchronized movement, dancing in unison with their babies in the carriers. The babies were rocked to sleep by the choreography. The closing circle allowed emotions to swell as the mothers touched and swayed with each other.

Emi said:

Oui moi je trouve intéressant quand il y a une diversité [...] parce que ça peut convenir à un plus grand nombre de personnes et même pour nous, si on n'aime pas un aspect, par exemple si l'aspect chorégraphie était trop présent, je ne sais pas si j'aurais apprécié autant. Donc si ça avait été la chorégraphie du début à la fin ça aurait été un peu compliqué mais là c'est sûr que c'est intéressant parce qu'on peut compenser un peu les éléments où on est moins à l'aise.¹⁰⁴ (I_E)

Kim-Ahn described the session as “very complete”: “Je trouve que c’est une activité qui est well-rounded, c’est très complet comme activité.”

It seems that all the participating mothers felt that the activity was equally fun and beneficial to the dyad. They said most of the other activities offered for this demographic either focus on the mothers’ physical condition or the babies’ development, whereas *MamaDances* provided them with fun and time to connect with their babies. The data results show that the compositional elements of the *MamaDances* workshop, which include movement, music, space, and facilitation, create a dance experience where mothers feel secure, welcome, accepted, understood, motivated,

¹⁰⁴ I found the diversity in the class interesting because it can satisfy a large number of people. If there is a part you don’t like, like us, for example, if the choreography was too present, I don’t know if I would have appreciated it. If the workshop was just based on choreography from beginning to end it would have been a bit difficult, but it’s interesting because other things compensate for the parts that are less comfortable.

and inspired. In this group context, the mothers experienced phenomena that were unique to themselves and their babies, as well as phenomena that were shared across most participants. They perceived intrinsic values that were shared and singular.

All the participants said *MamaDances* helped them feel more connection with their babies. They all felt sensations of joy, relaxation, and energy. Most felt a heightened state of presence and improvement in their physical and emotional well-being. Half of the group experienced enhanced self-expression. The mothers expressed how the facilitator, the music, the space, and the proposed movement all cultivated an environment of passion, caring, accessibility and non-judgement, one that inspires, stimulates, and motivates. The mothers perceived the workshop as having a calming, enjoyable and transformative effect on their babies. In the group the mothers became aware of their unity and commonality. The results revealed the meaning of the activity for:

1. Mother's sensations in relations to the self,
2. Babies' response in relation to the activity and environment,
3. Mothers' awareness in relation to the group, and
4. The infant-mother connection.

The following chapter will discuss how these results answer the research questions and articulate the cultural meaning of dancing with ones' baby in a *MamaDances* Mom and Baby Session, having now heard from the mothers. True to qualitative research, reflexions from my stance as artist-researcher will influence the discussion and will also be nourished by inspirational concepts of relational art (Bourriauld 1998/2002) and the movement paradigm (LaMothe 2015) and brought into perspective in relation to the concepts of matrescence and intersubjectivity unveiled in Chapter 2.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION OF THE RESULTS

In this chapter, the results of the exploration by the mothers participating in *MamaDances* as a relational art, will be discussed according to the insights gained from the mothers, in answering the research question “What is the lived experience of the mother participants during an eight-week session of *MamaDances* Mother and Baby Dance workshops?”

Considering these results, I will begin by discussing 5.1 Infant-mother intersubjectivity and the relational qualities cultivated between the social agents of *MamaDances* as a relational art; 5.1.1 Presence of the mother to herself; 5.1.2. Group interconnectedness; and 5.1.3 Mother-infant bonding. Subsequently, 5.2. the essential compositional elements of *MamaDances* as relational art will be discussed under the aspect of caring. Then 5.3 Dancing matrescence of *MamaDances* and its transference to home will be discussed. The contributions of Bourriault and LaMothe will nourish the discussion of dance and art, leading to future research and future action for mother and baby dyads.

5.1 Movement Qualities of Infant-Mother Intersubjectivity

The review of the literature revealed multiple studies mobilizing concepts exposed in Chapter 2, describing the actions that transpire within infant-mother intersubjectivity. The importance of the quality of infant-mother intersubjectivity to human development is rich in the sense that developmental psychology and anthropology research shows that maternal sensitivity, mutual delight, and mutuality are significant qualities discussed in relation to secure attachment of a baby to a primary caregiver. Having time to cultivate positive sensations while performing rituals of care of a baby may precipitate mutual delight and therefore enhance maternal sensitivity (Ainsworth, 1967), but this may not be innately available to every mother (Gerhardt, 2004; Stern & Bruschweiler-Stern, 1998). It may be something that needs to be acquired through a structure of support such as an “affirming matrix” (Stern & Bruschweiler-Stern, 1998), and by cultivating a conducive “holding environment” (Winnicott, 1971) and, according to Dissanayake (2015), with an artistic intention.

Despite a search of the databases, very little research, investigated dance or movement of the mothers in a pragmatic way. In my opinion, this absence requires consideration because movement and the timing of that movement is at the root of many of the mobilized concepts around infant-mother intersubjectivity. Some of the concepts include musical rhythmic communication, synchrony, gaze-following, dyadic rhythmicity, tactile sensory perception, protoconversations, tonic dialogue, and behavioral interactions, to name only a few of the terms used to describe infant-mother intersubjectivity within the first year of birth.

Let us now look at how *MamaDances* can affect some relational qualities of intersubjectivity.

5.1.1 Presence: The Relational Quality Cultivated by Mothers with Themselves in *MamaDances*

The results of the phenomenological inquiry revealed how participation in *MamaDances* as a relational art affected the mothers' selves. It shows how many positive sensations were manifested among participants, a sense of wellness. They were manifested not just by dancing, but by dancing with their babies within a social group environment. Participation in the workshops brought about sensations of joy, relaxation, and increased energy. Most felt improved physical and emotional well-being, and some also experienced increased expressivity and self-confidence. They mentioned an enhanced sense of presence. Eckhart Tolle (1999) describes the concept of presence:

[where] all your attention is in the Now. There is none left for daydreaming, thinking, remembering, anticipating. There is no tension in it, no fear, just alert presence. You are present with your whole being, with every cell of your body. [...] In fact, you are more fully yourself than you ever were before, or rather it is only now that you are truly yourself. (p. 95)

Tolle (1991) makes a link here between presence and tension. He explains that when there is presence, there is no tension or fear.

In addition to presence, the mother's comments about time (quality time, focused time, privileged moments, moments of intimacy) and their observations about how their babies responded to different aspects of the workshop (enjoyment, calm, transformational) imply an attunement enabled by presence that is given time, or time that is given presence in *MamaDances*. In this

context, presence is a way of caring that allows for the slowing down of mental activity and a decrease in worrying about what needs to happen so one can be in the flow of life in the present moment, without reflection about the past or worries about the future. There is a relationship between presence, time, and care in *MamaDances*. Tronto (1989) talked about care needing time and that kind of time not fitting into the market exchange value system.

Dance is a means of enabling/activating this state of presence and according to the mothers in *MamaDances*, one becomes more available to the movement, the music, oneself, one's baby, and one another through dancing in shared time. Fraleigh (1996) echoes how the state of presence in dancing changes the way time is experienced/felt:

Dance is an art of present time—the now in the movement is the time of forever, a fully lived present, an eternal present.[...] In dance, the present moment of eternal time and the circular shape of it coalesce in various ways. (Fraleigh, 1996, p. 196)

In this way, dance allows the mothers to let go of the stress imposed by regular time and to delve into a more embodied sensation of time, as invited by presence.

In addition to this relational quality of time, the mothers experienced a sensation they described as “letting go”. Their comments imply that there was some form of tension they had been holding on to, and the workshop allowed them to begin to “let go” of it. Emi summarizes this when she says : C’est un certain lâcher prise de focusser vraiment avec notre bébé sur le moment présent.¹⁰⁵ (I_E). Referred to as “releasing” in SRT, this “letting go” is practiced actively and consciously. My professional observations and experience as a facilitator of SRT has given me an understanding that tensions may occur subconsciously, and this hinder freedom of movement physically, emotionally, and psychologically. These tensions could be the cause of unhealthy movement patterns in the body. Therefore, the releasing process involves the letting go of fears, judgements, and expectations kinaesthetically, and it may extend to relationships.

I propose that releasing is the catalyst for the sense of presence the mothers frequently spoke about, and that presence enables the other sensations: enjoyment, energy, wellness, self-confidence, and

¹⁰⁵ It's a kind of letting go to really focus on the baby in the present moment.

self-expressivity. In SRT, “releasing” is synonymous with “allowing,” and is an alternative to “trying” or “working,” which imply effort. In that sense, releasing means letting things happen rather than making things happen, letting go of limiting thoughts about what is possible, and letting go of the need to control (Skura in email exchange, 2020). By providing the somatic groundwork for releasing tension through dance, presence is enabled. Jennifer mentioned that she recalled the facilitator often mentioning our connection to nature and she felt herself developing more awareness of her surroundings. She also came to realize that she enjoyed dancing. Sometimes presence is needed to become more aware and appreciative of our surroundings and interests. “Presence is needed to become aware of the beauty, the majesty, the sacredness of nature” (Tolle, 1999 p. 96).

As an experienced facilitator of dance and a dancer myself, I have come to understand that dance is a practice of presence. Presence is a state of being which is necessary for becoming more aware and attuned. This attunement and awareness cultivate states of openness and availability to the moment which allow for sensations of joy, and the energy of connection and expression, to emerge and empower that which is experienced in *MamaDances*.

5.1.2 Interconnectedness: The Relational Quality of Mothers Dancing in a Group with their Babies

“Interconnectedness” is defined by the Cambridge Dictionary as “the state of having different parts or things connected or related to each other”¹⁰⁶. And the Oxford Language dictionary on Google online defines it as “the state of being connected with each other”¹⁰⁷. It is like reciprocity. The sense of isolation or insecurity often felt by mothers can be alleviated by experiences that bring them into connection with other mothers and in common with other mothers. *MamaDances*, as a relational art, may provide that opportunity.

The literature review has revealed that the research has paid scant attention to mothers and babies dancing together. It is not a common practice in Western culture, and if mother and baby dancing

¹⁰⁶ <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/interconnectedness>

¹⁰⁷ https://www.google.com/search?q=interconnectedness+definition&rlz=1C5CHFA_enCA948CA948&oq=interconnectedness&aqs=chrome.1.69i57j35i39l2j0i51213j69i60j69i61.5365j0j7&sourceid=chrome&ie=UTF-8

happens, it is usually in the privacy of the home. Variations of bouncing, rocking, cradling, and swaying are a typical vocabulary of movement for mothers to soothe their babies, although doing these movements together with other mothers in a social space, the rhythmic movement becomes a link to a shared commonality and togetherness, despite differences in language, cultural background, socio-economic status, and education.

As shown by the results of the analysis of the data, *MamaDances* as a relational art provides a social structure which bridges the gaps between public and private, infant and mother, and mother-baby dyads. This intersection of mothering and dancing invites a convergence of art and life, public and private. This convergence may relieve the tensions that feelings of separation and isolation can cause during matrescence. In this case, the coordination of moving in soothing musical patterns may give them a feeling of being “in harmony”, as Kim-Ahn experienced it, or “in synchrony”, as expressed by Emi. In this regard, “temporal coordination of gesture and sound represent the basis of human communication, shared emotion and culture” (Gratier & Magnier, 2012, p. 47).

To establish this type of communication in *MamaDances*, within each workshop there are movement propositions such as rhythm exercises, name games, and dances that play with spatial patterns and awareness, peripheral vision, and group attunement. There are sequences of steps which are learned and practiced in duet formations and then in group unison. In that temporal coordination of gesture and sound, there is also a small amount of physical contact in the circle at the end. Therefore, unlike other moms’ social groups and activities, the sharing in *MamaDances* is kinesthetic and sensory, not verbal. Indeed, both Maman Poulpe and Kim-Ahn mentioned in their interviews that the values of the experience were not stated explicitly but were felt. Simply seeing other mothers with their babies, as Jennifer, Maman Poulpe and CC mentioned, was enjoyable and gave them a feeling of confidence.

The mothers also perceived a sense of synchrony. Comparing infant-mother communication and musical improvisation, Gratier & Magnier (2012) describe synchrony as a kind of kinesthetic resonance or togetherness that allows each individual to become involved with the others, each contributing and blurring the boundaries between self and other, situating knowledge in a shared space. These authors also explain that a participatory sense-making occurs where there is a link between interpersonal coordination and the production of meaning. The meaning produced is

created through the social domain and cannot be available to the individual on her own (De Jaegher & Di Paolo, as cited in Gratier & Magnier, 2012). There is an establishment of mutual understanding and of common ground. In *MamaDances* the dance creates a kinesthetic resonance and reciprocity that enables the mothers to interact. The interaction is transformative, and their common ground is empowered. In that sense it echoes the writing of Fraleigh (1996) about entering a common project with others:

Dancing with others presents us the possibility of entering the same lived form of reference. When we are committed together toward the dance, we are focused in the here and now, on a common project. Then the dance is no longer my dance; it is our dance. (p. 193)

In other words, transposed to *MamaDances*, the mothers rehearsing of movement in rhythmic unison with each other while interacting with their babies becomes a kind of ritual of solidarity. The kinetic dynamics of the group unison work resonate affectively. This interaction produces shared knowledge and meaning, creating a sense of interconnectedness. In *MamaDances* this interconnectedness is empowering and can be transferred into daily life. As LaMothe (2015) explains, dance has always been beneficial in bringing people together physical and emotionally:

Scholars not only assert that dancing is one of the earliest forms of culture, but they also often argue that it evolved precisely to ensure the coherence and stability of social relations. Dance is social cement. That ‘cement’ functions as a result of physiological changes induced by the experience of communal bodily movement, resulting in an “expanded emotional solidarity. (p. 115)

By bringing mothers and their babies into this form of artistic practice, *MamaDances* resonates with the values of relational art in striving “to achieve modest connections, open up obstructed passages and connect levels of reality kept apart from one another” (Bourriaud 1998/2002, p.8). In *MamaDances* interconnectedness is achieved, caring becomes the common ground, and empowerment results through dancing.

5.1.3 Bonding: The Relational Quality of Mother and Baby Dancing Together

The mothers found *MamaDances* to be mutually satisfying for both their baby and themselves, and most felt a strengthening of their connection with their babies as a result. Many of the mothers

used the word “listening” to describe what transpired between them and their babies during *MamaDances*. This state of listening can be attributed to the freeing of holding patterns through somatic movement approaches (Green, 2002), as previously discussed: it is a form of awareness through presence. For a mother and baby, the listening to each other and engaging with each other is a state of attunement (Ainsworth, 1967; Amighi et al., 2018; Baniel, 2012; Kemea Kemble, 2016; Stern & Bruschweiler-Stern, 1998; Tortora, 2005), one that allows for strengthening the infant-mother bond. In *MamaDances* this is cultivated through movement and environment kinaesthetically.

As mentioned earlier in this thesis, despite the abundance of research on the topic of infant-mother intersubjectivity and the concern with the effects of early infant-caregiver communication and connection, and the metaphorical references to dance, there is very little to suggest how these may be improved through movement or dance, such as in *MamaDances*. Dissanayake (2015) discusses the necessity to take arts seriously in order to effect mutuality. Mutuality, she explains, is the prototype for intimacy or love:

The biological phenomenon of love is originally manifested—expressed and exchanged—by means of emotionally meaningful rhythms and modes that are jointly created and sustained by mothers and their infants in ritualized, evolved interactions. (Dissanayake, 2015, p. 2).

Rieta said that she felt a deepening of love bought on by the phenomenon in *MamaDances*. I offer that dancing informed by somatic practices in relational art nurtures a mother’s self-acceptance, which is a key to mutuality. In the first year of a baby’s life, the baby is completely dependent, but it is also asking the caregiver, through its own agency and innate abilities to communicate, to love and be present. The mother’s self-acceptance can alleviate the stress of the expectations placed upon them by the mothers themselves, as well as society at large. In *MamaDances*, dancing with a baby in a way that is infused with principals of somatic education may allow self-acceptance of the state of her becoming. I offer that the more the mothers participate in activities that incite sensations like those the mothers experienced in *MamaDances* – the sensations of enjoyment, presence, letting go, physical well-being, expressivity, and self-confidence – the more comfortable they become in matrescence and therefore more available to and delighted by the babies.

Dance is intrinsically relational, and, as LaMothe (2015) explains in a chapter entitled “To dance is to connect” attachment theory exists within the psychological science of the materialist paradigm, and it presumes the infant and caregiver to be two separate individuals who attach to one another through trust-building, and that is how they learn mutuality¹⁰⁸. From the movement paradigm perspective, the secure attachment between infant and caregiver is determined by their ability to dance together. It is movement-making that connects them and allows them to cultivate relational qualities that bring them pleasure. From this perspective, in *MamaDances* the infant and caregiver are not “attached” like two material objects coming together, “rather they are two sources of movement making, each funded by the ongoing rhythm of their mutually entwined bodily becoming.” (ibid., p. 124) She adds, “Infants teach us to dance again; they keep the dance alive in us. They do so by moving spontaneously, freely and fiercely in ways that stir in us a desire and a willingness to find ways to move with them” (ibid., p. 125) and that through movement we learn to cultivate life-enabling bonds that teach us the power of our own agency.

I return to the issue of the metaphorical use of the word dance and its related terms movement and kinesthetic in the discourse and literature about infant-mother intersubjectivity and bonding. Based on the insight provided by LaMothe (2015), I offer that the “quality” of infant-mother intersubjective relations is determined by the “quality” of their movement together. Infant-mother intersubjectivity is a story of movement, and as Sheets-Johnstone (1999a, 2011) famously declared: “Infants are not *prelinguistic*, language is *post-kinetic*”. (p.50) The infant-mother movement enables, or does not enable, connection, bonding, and secure attachment. These weaken or strengthen the mother-infant kinesthetic relation. Within *MamaDances* as a relational art the mothers experience a strengthening of their relationship with their babies, to themselves and to other mothers, by shared, ritualized, rhythmical movement. LaMothe (2015) discusses the power of movement in creating bonds with others:

Humans who dance know a power and pleasure that comes with the action of moving their bodily selves in rhythmic patterns. Humans who dance know a power and pleasure that comes with moving as a part of a group. And these two sources of power and pleasure are linked in a spiral of increasing intensity- an intensity that manifest in the creation of bonds that enable and support individuals in becoming bodily selves

¹⁰⁸ Mutuality is a synonym of love according to Dissanayake (2015)

who realize their potential to give what they have to give to those who enable them to be. (p. 134)

These relational qualities of presence, interconnectedness and bonding that are manifested in *MamaDances* are a result of an immersion into a movement paradigm via a relational art. Let's now see about the essential composition elements of this relational art, the portal into the movement paradigm.; the interstice of time and space that embrace the relational agents in a mantle of caring.

5.2 The Essential Compositional Elements of *MamaDances* as a Relational Art

MamaDances brings mothers together with their babies to dance. It is an intuitively interwoven relational art composed of temporality, spatiality, relationality and corporeality. Considering the mothers' perceptions, it offers a kinesthetic experience that provides a pause from the daily routine of tasks, allowing a calming of stress posed by the challenges of matrescence in modern Western culture through the facilitation of a dance activity which integrates principals of SME. The essential element is a space and time that is carved out from the normal routine of quotidian living, called an interstice. In the next section, I will define what I have named, the interstice of caring, as it relates to *MamaDances*.

5.2.1 Interstice of Caring

An interstice is a space that intervenes between things; a gap or break in something which is generally continuous. Bourriaud (1998/2002) speaks of interstice as "a space in human relations which fits more or less harmoniously and openly into the overall system, but suggests other trading possibilities than those in effect within this system" (p. 16).

However, "caring" has multiple meanings. It is both a noun and a verb and can mean both a love of something or someone and/or a concern for the well-being of something or someone. Caring provides for needs. It may be protective. Tronto (1989) explained that caring takes the kind of time that modern society does not easily afford, nor does it really see and acknowledge.

When making the *MamaDances* space and time comfortable and secure to meet the needs of the participants, there are many elements to consider. It needs to be sizable and clear of distractions, providing the comforts and security of a studio dedicated to movement exploration, including temperature, light, privacy, and cleanliness. It should be stroller accessible and storage friendly. It must be safe and free of any dangers or obstacles, so the mothers feel free and confident to allow their babies to explore. Meditation chairs add comfort and support for breastfeeding. Within the space itself there is open acknowledgement and integration of the real physical tasks and concerns of caring for a baby, such as feeding and changing, normally performed discreetly in social settings.

The physical space is enhanced by music, and the facilitation of movement. The mothers found the choreographic content and music used in *MamaDances* to be diverse and well-rounded. The diversity in movement and music allows the mothers to benefit according to their own needs and interests, regardless of their initial expectations, previous dance experience, or physical condition. Emi expressed this well, saying the class offered something for everyone. She might not have appreciated the workshop as much if it had only been focused on learning choreography. Many of the mothers stated that the second part, Studies in Circle and Travelling studies, was one of their and their babies' favorites. Thus, the different use of spatial orientation is important.

The facilitation was mentioned frequently by the mothers, and it surfaces as an integral component of what gives the space its quality. The facilitation sets a tone for the social interaction within the shared spatial-temporal configuration. In alignment with the principals of SME, the facilitator is a skilled professional who embodies a state of caring attunement, influencing the space and the interaction between participants.

The facilitator guides the main action with fluidity and inspiration using her knowledge and passion for movement, including a soft, clear, and confident vocal tone. Jennifer explains her experience of the facilitator's qualities:

La facilitatrice n'amenait pas de stress avec ça, on est en retard, mais ce n'est pas grave, c'est correct, on va prendre ça relax quand même. C'est juste ce qui se ressort de sa personne, je pense que tout le monde peut se mettre facilement à l'aise avec elle.
(I_J)

The facilitator offers to carry the babies when she sees the mothers tired or struggling, and orients herself spatially as needed, smiling and engaging with the babies. This quality is reflected by the participants, and it allows the mothers to be immersed/drawn into the movement without judgement. The facilitator in *MamaDances* is not authoritarian, and the space becomes non-hierarchical.

The facilitator in *MamaDances* as a relational art provides support, where difficulties can be acknowledged, addressed, and remedied, either by the facilitator herself, or through the cultivation of openness and sharing in the space/group.

The period of time experienced in *MamaDances* by the mothers also allows for them to be attuned to the developmental progress and agency of their babies. This is indicated by the mothers' observations of the transformative, enjoyable, and calming effects the workshop had on their babies' responses. Therefore, presence gives time a quality of care.

Stern & Bruschweiler-Stern (1998), Gerhardt (2010), Thomas (2001), and Dissanayake (2015) all claim that mothers need an environment that supports their matrescence. They acknowledge that modern mothers may not have had any experience in mothering prior to becoming one. That concern can be addressed by mothers being welcomed or invited into a space that supports their matrescence. *MamaDances* provides mothers and babies a period of rest from the tensions of the daily routines of modern society, an opportunity to engage in an artistic aesthetic experience and to connect kinaesthetically. The “affirming matrix” (Stern & Bruschweiler-Stern, 1998), and “holding space” (Winnicott, 1960) are transformed into relational art by *MamaDances*. The diversity of movement and music, the physical space, the quality of time, and the facilitation are crafted to create an “interstice of caring” as essential compositional elements of *MamaDances* whereby matrescence is acknowledged, supported, and celebrated through dancing.

5.3 Dancing Matrescence

Based on the mothers' voices expressed in this study, *MamaDances* is a relational art in which mothers, dancing with their babies, nurtures presence with the self, social interconnectedness, and infant-mother bonding, within an interstice of caring. The mothers experienced sensations of joy,

energy, letting go, self-confidence, expressivity and presence manifested through dancing together with their babies. Considering this can be a difficult period for many mothers, dancing, like it is proposed in *MamaDances*, could be beneficial to matrescence. The values of SME are interesting when applied to matrescence. “Instead of striving to perform the ‘right’ or ‘correct’ movement, the dancer learns to move from an embodied source – fully receptive and responsive to the moment of movement. Such training is designed to free the dancer from rigid holding patterns or other constraints that bind thought, feeling, and action” (Batson, 2014, p. 4).

In another field, reproductive psychiatrist Alexandra Sacks (2019), whose mission is to make the term “matrescence” more commonly understood, often hears women describe their feelings: “I love my baby but I don’t have the right maternal instincts”, “I’m not enjoying this, mostly I feel tired”, and “I feel so guilty because I wanted a baby more than anything, but sometimes I find myself feeling bored and even resentful.” As traditional infrastructures of continuity such as family and social circles become less reliable and more technologically mediated, the care deficit rises, and the demand for fast recovery and return to economic “productivity” becomes more relentless, new social structures are required for mothers to survive and to thrive during matrescence. Trudelle Thomas (2001), Associate Professor of English at Xavier University in Cincinnati, Ohio, writes:

How well a woman adapts to (or shapes) her new role is critical not just to her own well-being but also to the future of her child; her adjustment will also influence her future roles, relationships, and ethical choices. Depending on the quality of her matrescence, a woman may be greatly enlarged or diminished, for during this time, she is both vulnerable and powerful. There is much to say about a new mother’s need for good social support and health care during this transition. (2001, p. 99)

In that regard, *MamaDances* as a relational art may provide opportunities for a mothers process of becoming, to be supported by an interstice of caring. Bourriaud (1998/2002) writes:

These days, utopia is being lived on a subjective, everyday basis, in the real time of concrete and intentionally fragmentary experiments. The artwork is presented as a social interstice within which these experiments and the new “life possibilities” appear to be possible. (p. 45)

Research in psychology shows that maternal sensitivity affects attachment, and therefore all social functioning later in life. For Winnicott (1964), Sears (2001), Gerhardt (2004), and Dissanayake

(2015) among others, the way to build a better world ultimately begins by addressing conditions which affect parental sensitivity. Maternal sensitivity is supposed to be intuitive, but, what if, as Gerhardt suggests, that is no longer true? What if mothers need practice and support to become sensitive, to love (care for, and accept) themselves, their babies, and others? If mutual delight positively enhances maternal sensitivity, it is surely helpful to mothers to have support in accessing this sensation. Perhaps it is a mother's ability to access qualities of mutual delight can be enabled by dancing. That allows her not only to meet the primary needs of her baby, but to go much deeper into discovering ways to do so, while also attending to her own.

Within the imaginative and aesthetic qualities of dance and movement, very positive feelings are generally experienced, brought about by intense, joyful moments of pleasure and surprise. Often a powerful upsurge of love is stirred up in the mother through experiencing an active, rewarding interaction with her infant and also with others in the group. (Coulter & Loughlin, 1999, p. 60)

Dissynayake (2015) explains how love and art are inherently related: "The biological phenomenon of love is originally manifested, expressed and exchanged by means of emotionally meaningful 'rhythms and modes' that are jointly created and sustained by mothers and their infants in ritualized, evolved interactions" (p. 2). When we consider these "meaningful rhythms and modes" side by side with LaMothe's definition of dance: "patterns of sensation and response [...] to participate in a rhythm of bodily becoming in ways that cultivate a sensory awareness of our participation in it." (2015, p. 5) the benefits of *MamaDances* begin to shimmer.

When asked what they thought were the primary benefits of *MamaDances*, the mothers offered different responses. These variations are in keeping with SRT, other somatic approaches, SEA, and ASC, in all of which the emphasis is on the individual creative process, rather than any final preconceived ideal. "La pratique permet (à l'élève) de prendre conscience de ses possibilités, de son potentiel"¹⁰⁹ (Jay, 2014, p. 106).

The voices of mothers expressed in the results presented in Chapter 4 articulate how *MamaDances* enhances matrescence, and how the effects are transferable to home and daily life. The participants

¹⁰⁹ The practice permits the student to become aware of his/her own potential and possibilities.

reported feeling more connection with their babies, sensations of well-being within themselves, and positive responses towards the group. They also said that the experience was equally beneficial and enjoyable for their babies.

5.3.1 Matrescent Wellness Transferred to Home

The results show that most of the mothers felt improvement in their physical condition. Dance is often pursued as a means of “getting in shape”, and physical fitness is a well-known benefit of dance practice. However, the emphasis of *MamaDances* Mom and Baby workshop has never been on physical fitness. The potential for mothers to feel better in their physical condition is collateral. Simple dance exercises for cultivating awareness and strength that can transform daily life are offered. The workshop includes very “flowing”, as Bee described it, and diverse forms of movement from beginning to end. The interaction with their babies is integrated throughout. The physical wellness benefits are not obvious to the participants because it does not seem strenuous. There is an intentional progression toward more cardio-vascular movement as the session continues, but the physical conditioning is gentle and accumulative to the point of feeling fun and effortless. The mothers described the first part as having time for themselves to warm up gently, to rehabilitate, to stretch and to relax, all while connecting with their babies.

Jennifer began to do some of the exercises from *MamaDances* at home regularly. Maman Poulpe did as well, and she said that it helped her feel more in shape. Suggestions made by the facilitator in the workshop stayed with Couzi and she began to apply them at home. *MamaDances* provided opportunities for Maman Poulpe to integrate some of the recommendations her physiotherapist had made for Petit Poussin:

“Elle me disait [...] de lui faire sentir différents... l’espace, de le prendre dans nos bras et de jouer avec, que c’était bon pour l’aider. Parce qu’il a un peu de misère... il suit pas tout à fait où il devrait être rendu dans la motricité.”¹¹⁰ (I_MP)

In that way *MamaDances* inspires integration of dance and movement into daily chores. According to the mothers, the experience of *MamaDances* inspired more movement, dancing, and physical

¹¹⁰ She was telling me [...] to make him feel different ... to take him in our arms and play with him in the space, that it was good to help him. Because he has a little difficulty ... he isn’t quite where he should be in motor skills.

play at home. A benefit for Bee was practicing and learning to use her baby carrier, which she began to use more often at home. She had not used one with her first child. She said she moved more often at home, dancing with Bug in the carrier and using movement instead of toys to entertain her, or to change her mood when she was fussy. She shared things she had learned with her husband, who started to do them, as well. Emi also discovered new ideas to incorporate into playtime at home. Before the workshop, Couzi said she did not know what to do with Petit Coco when she was on the floor with him. The workshop gave her lots of ideas, and she began to spend more time with him. She played music more often and danced while making dinner. Rieta showed her husband the dances from class and sometimes they would do them together. Maman Poulpe found that dancing was a break from her routine that gave her more motivation to tackle her domestic chores afterward:

Je me sentais plus légère et moins de stress par les tâches et le désordre qui m'attendaient à la maison et duquel ça faisait du bien de prendre congé. Après, je suis revenue à la maison avec plus d'énergie, d'enthousiasme et de bonne humeur qu'avant d'en partir. J'y repensais et ça me faisait sourire.¹¹¹ (J2_MP)

Couzi was delighted by the many creative ideas that were offered for her to use to play and engage with Petit Coco. Recognizing the creativity of *MamaDances*, she called it “une mine d’idées.”¹¹² (I_C) and “un éclair de génie et quelque chose de merveilleux.”¹¹³ (I_C). Couzi also said that she began to put on music and think of *MamaDances* while she made dinner. It took longer, she said, because she was half making dinner and half dancing. Kim-Ahn felt that the workshop helped her in general, finding a little more pleasure in her role as a mother.

When matrescence is experienced as a process of bodily becoming, a creative process, and we become attuned to the sensations and responses that are being rehearsed, and thus, the future world being creating, we open to the extraordinary.

¹¹¹ I felt lighter and less stressed from the chores and mess that awaited me at home and how good it felt to take time off. Afterwards, I came home with more energy, enthusiasm and in better humour than before leaving. I thought about it and it made me smile.

¹¹² A mine of ideas. (I_C)

¹¹³ A stroke of genius. It’s something marvelous. (I_C)

An extraordinary idea that inspired the creation of *MamaDances*, and has perpetuated its continuity, is the idea that matrescence itself is a dance to behold.

5.4 Becoming as a Relational Dance

In creating *MamaDances*, I was responding, as a contemporary dance choreographer, to a lack of representation of the maternal body in the field of contemporary dance. I was responding, to my own feelings of isolation and fear, pleasure and awe as both mother and artist combined. As a primary caregiver, I was confronted by my choice to be a dance artist over more lucrative employment, and my challenges as a mother in our society. As artist and researcher, learning about the *MamaDances* experience through the perspective of the mothers has not only helped me to answer the questions I had, but it has also taken me on a journey into a scientific phenomenological approach. To this end two authors enriched the understanding of the lived experience and inspired me in the process of extracting the essential meaning of my work: Bourriault and LaMothe.

In relational aesthetics (Bourriault, 1998/2002) contemporary artists propose social collaborations. They are focused on the sphere of human relations. Intersubjectivity represents the social setting for the reception of art and also becomes the essential meaning of the artistic practice. Thus, I am assured I am an artist and *MamaDances* is relational art by the voices of the mothers.

According to the values of a movement paradigm (LaMothe, 2015) dance supports us through life's challenges and as we move into the future.

To dance is to attend consciously to the sensations that our movements are making – of pain, pleasure, and possibility – and allow our bodily selves to find ways to move in response that align our health and well-being with the challenges of the moment.
(Lamothe 2015, p. 6)

I am thus now assured that relational dance matters and that *MamaDances* is a wonderful opportunity for the mother and baby to dance together, with no distractions from the outside world. They explore their connections through sensations incited by their movement. It allows a pause, to be present and to nurture the bond becoming them. *MamaDances* is a relief from the quotidian rhythm, the daily grind of modern life. It is an interstice of caring. An affirming matrix. A holding

space. A maternal dancing place. A “tiny revolution” (Bourriault, 2002, p. 18). Something different. Something fun and energizing, uplifting and welcoming. Inspired by Bourriault, “where the substrate [of the artform] is formed by intersubjectivity, and which takes being together as a central theme, the encounter being beholder and picture, and the collective elaboration of meaning” (2002, p. 15), *MamaDances* is a relational art of intersubjective becoming. In *MamaDances*, the mother and the baby are each beheld and beholder of the other: art and artist, dancer and audience.

In the movement paradigm (LaMothe, 2015) we dance to connect, and caregivers:

must be able and willing to live the ethical paradox of being inseparably entwined and irreducibly singular by allowing the challenge of caring for young to serve as a catalyst in the unfolding of their own movement-making potential. (p. 127)

In the context of this study, an inquiry to better understand *MamaDances*, in combining of the concepts of relational art (Bourriault) with the movement paradigm (LaMothe), I see coherence in my artistic practice. Given these perspectives about the value of art and all that we have gained from the mothers’ voices on their experiences within *MamaDances*, we might begin to see dance not merely as a metaphor of infant mother intersubjectivity, but to seriously consider dance as a vital art in the development of matrescence. As mentioned by Dissanayake (2015) mother-infant mutuality makes possible the creation and sustaining of other ties and of intimacy. “We are born to love as the enabling condition of our best bodily becoming. Dancing is the art, the action and the practice that teaches us how.” (LaMothe, 2015, p. 201)

5.5 Steps for Future Research

Considering the results of this study, *MamaDances* supports the affirmation of the RQD that “Dance is known as an accessible artform that brings people together and effects change”.¹¹⁴

This study is an invitation to see the value of dance in our culture, from the perspective of mothers with their babies. It is my effort to connect with other researchers and like-minded practitioners to

¹¹⁴ Quebec message for International Dance Day by Aïcha Bastien-N’Diaye. Retrieved from <https://www.quebecdanse.org/en/2021/04/29/quebec-message-for-international-dance-day-2021/>

share knowledge and promote the field of dance for well-being, and specifically during matrescence.

One aim of this research was to describe and understand the effects of *MamaDances* as a relational art, from the perspective of the mother participants, to determine whether it has the potential to serve the public in a more targeted and democratic way. Could it be used in clinical interventions, for example? Could it be offered in government-subsidized social programs? Could *MamaDances*, as relational art, be made more accessible out of resource centres or public institutions for easier access to those who really need it?

Over fifteen years ago, the creation of *MamaDances* addressed the lack of artistic and choreographic inclusion of the post-natal demographic. Today, the situation has changed and the number of activities available to mothers and babies has increased. An international interdisciplinary conference that would connect the founders of different mother and baby programs which may or may not integrate relational art and dance would help to decrease the isolation of each and strengthen the work more globally.

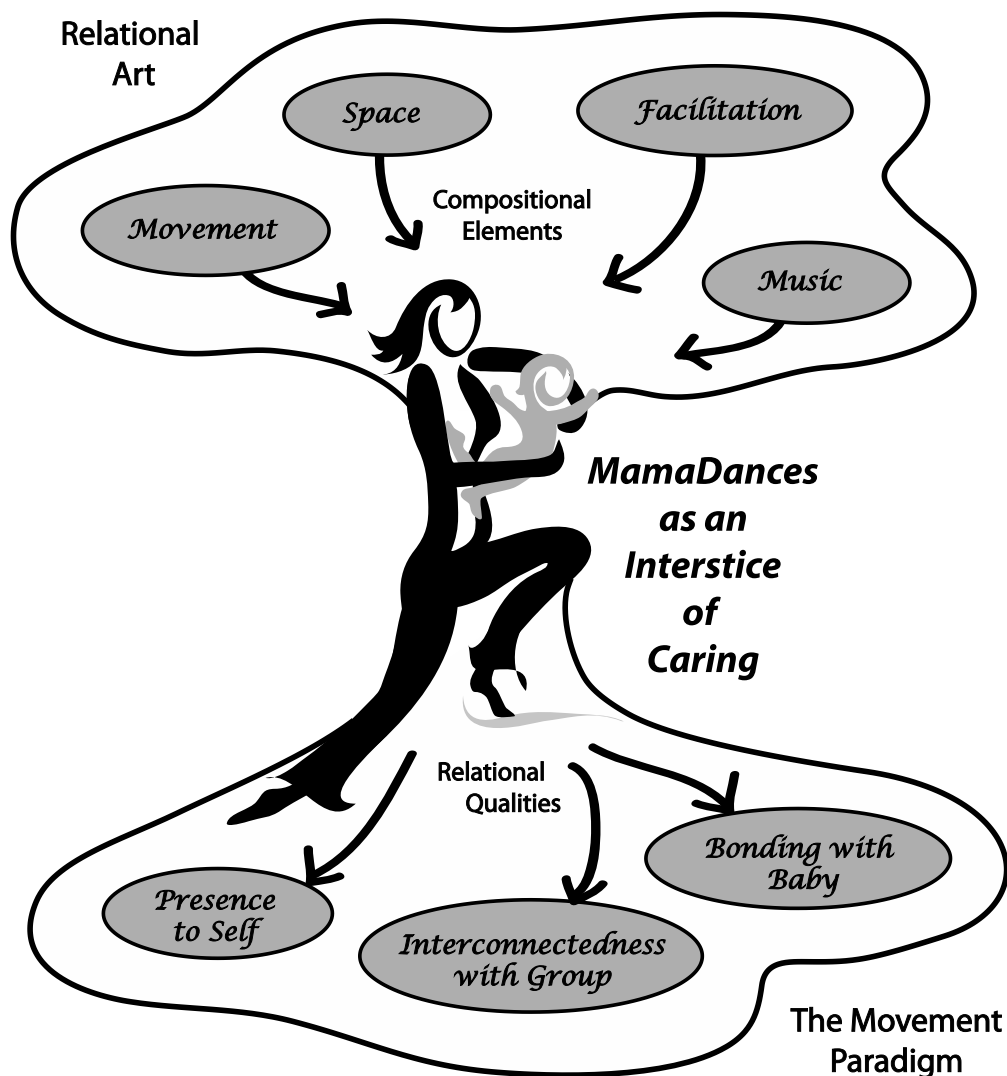
Mixed-method, quantitative and qualitative research was beyond what my current resources allowed. However, work of this kind would serve as a valuable complement to my study, and as a fruitful avenue for future researchers. Quantitative data could be produced from measurement tools of positive effects of dancing on the psychological and behavioural changes in the mother, or baby, using electroencephalography (EEG) to show their “internal states” before and after dancing.

Another worthwhile direction in research would be a longitudinal study that focuses on the effects of mother-baby dance on the child over time.

I recommend that *MamaDances* be made available and accessible to a larger demographic and that more dance artists find the means to learn to facilitate it. I recommend that more opportunities to participate are made available to more dyads, and that it expands to include fathers and more family members and ages.

To summarize the results of this exploratory qualitative research in dance with eight mother-infant dyads who participated in an eight-week *MamaDances* session has given me a greater understanding of its values, its compositional elements, and its effect on the relational qualities of the participants and their matrescence. With movement, space, facilitation and time, an interstice of caring is created, and the results are a shift towards a movement paradigm of presence, interconnectedness and bonding between mothers and their babies being embraced, held, rocked and carried by dance as relational art. Figure 5.1 is a summary of these results.

Figure 5.1 Summary of Results



5.6 Personal Reflections

The transformation of my artistic practice from a performance form to a participatory form was an evolutionary process, from the symbolic representation of the maternal body and the portrayal of the physical realities of being a mother within the contemporary dance performance framework to a participatory practice of guiding mothers in dancing with their babies. Reflecting on the mothers' experiences and my own interests as an artist, I have come to realize my transition from performance to a more relational or socially engaged practice arose from a desire to share the sensations and insights that dancing, guided by somatic influences, induces. In this process I have realized that, even though many of the participants have very little or no background in dance, my posture/role is not one of a teacher directing the participants to improve their dance technique through imitation and repetition, as I was taught in the early years of my dance training, but rather a facilitator of a relational art. This is not at all the way I was taught at the beginning of my own dance education.

My hope is that this research will find its way into the hands of like-minded practitioners who have similar interests in communication and relationship-building through movement and dance.

I am the founder of *MamaDances* and the student researcher. I began this thesis presenting myself as a mother and an artist. I began this degree out of concern for the integrity of my professional practice and its coherence between my identity as artist and mother. My interpretation of the data assures me of its coherence, and that *MamaDances* is a relational art which has value in our culture. Dance has transformative power. I believe in the ways movement can create a world of presence, interconnectedness, and bonding, where an investment in caring relationships fits easily into the paradigm or system.

In my desire to understand the experience from the participants' perspective, I was also attempting to orient the future direction of my artistic contributions. This objective echoes with the reflexive methodology that Alvesson & Skoldberg (2000) suggest in the following description:

Less focus on what the empirical matter can tell us about how things 'really are' and more about other virtues—creative ideas, for instance—that are not subject to the

empirical norm which shackles us to the ‘data.’ Less concentration on the collection and processing of data and more on interpretation and reflection—in relation not only to the object of study but also to the researchers themselves and their political, ideological, meta-theoretical and linguistic content—appears to be a reasonable and fruitful path for qualitative research to follow. (p. 241)

In the last 15 years I have created at the busy intersection between mothering and dancing, building a professional trajectory from a personal journey. *MamaDances* may seem insignificant from the outside. It could be easily mistaken for a post-natal fitness activity like stroller aerobics. However, the creation of *MamaDances* was both a personal and political act. The essential meaning extracted from this exploration: presence, bonding, and interconnectedness, and the cultivation of an interstice of caring are for me guiding lights.

Our day and age are certainly not short of political projects, but it is awaiting forms capable of embodying it, and thus of enabling it to become material. For form produces and shapes sense, steers it, and passes it on into day-to-day life.
(Bourriauld, 1998/2002, p. 83)

For those who value them, artists and their imaginative products “have become a repository for what remains of human spiritual longing and emotional expression in a nonreligious world founded on technological and rational solutions to human problems” (Dissanayaka p. 6 of Chapter 6). In this case, dance helps the mothers to feel what is happening inside, through and around them in a visceral and embodied way. Sensation is necessary to affect change, “to mobilize ourselves along factors that strengthen our hope, our faith, and our vulnerability to love” (LaMothe, 2015 p.76).

As a mother, I am worried about the world I am offering my children. As an artist, I work to effect change in that world, to create tiny revolutions that move towards the creation of life-enabling relationships within it,

I will conclude with this sentence as a credo: When we dance, we feel (better). When we feel (better) we love (better). When we love (better) we mother (better)

CONCLUSION

At the onset of this research, I did not know what the mothers were experiencing in the *MamaDances* workshops, and I was concerned by feelings of doubt and insecurity. I was unable to find any phenomenologically inspired studies conducted by dance researchers, or any other type of research, that spoke from the mother's perspective of dancing with her baby (2-12 months old) in a similarly structured social-art context that might give me confidence in what I had developed with *MamaDances*.

Based on the insight gained through the mothers' voices in this research study, I offer that *MamaDances* is a relational art that provides a dance experience during matrescence, and particularly during the very significant first year of her baby's development, which enhances the mother's relationship with herself through presence, her relationship with her baby through bonding, and her social relationships with others through interconnectedness, in her new role as a mother. It is composed of an interstice of caring, skillfully crafted with space, music, movement, and facilitation into a structure that is welcoming and accessible regardless of one's level of experience in dance or any other potential impediments. Within this interstice, dance is practiced as a form of participating in "a rhythm of bodily becoming in ways that cultivate a sensory awareness of our participation in it" (LaMothe, 2010 p. 5). It is a means of "practicing and rehearsing life-enabling sensations and responses" (*Ibid*, p. 5) , including pleasure/enjoyment, letting go, increased energy, self-confidence, expressivity, and physical wellness, all of which can enhance the experience of matrescence.

The results of this research have given me a new perspective on my role as a dance artist in our collective responsibility towards emotional, psychological, and physical well-being. The knowledge gained of the potential of *MamaDances* to enhance wellbeing, both for mother-baby dyads and as a relational art, is welcomed. And now, after the insight gained from the mother participants of this project, who had little to no dance training, I return to the memory of the very first inspiration: that "happy accident" of witnessing a seasoned dance artist in performance,

negotiating kinaesthetically with her child and intervening with perfectly fostered maternal timing before he attempted to climb out of an open window, it becomes very clear how the infant-mother connection, and thus a mother's pleasure and confidence in herself as a mother, may be enhanced through dancing.

From my perspective as a dance researcher, consideration of the body and dance are lacking in the discourse about intersubjectivity in the fields of infant development. The separation of mind and body and the hegemonic dominance of the mind over body within psychology and health care has prevented artistic and “psychophysical” (Emslie 2021 p 11) practices like SRT and DMT to gain traction. *MamaDances* may provide the kind of social support identified as significant in lessening the risk of post-partum depression as identified by Beck (2002).

We are currently facing global issues of separateness, division, difference, displacement, and terror. Many movement and dance practices are therapeutic and provide antithesis of these global issues and ways of being. Mediums of movement and dancing foster togetherness, integration, unity, wholeness, belonging, empathy, and compassion (Emslie, 2021). The cartesian dominance of mind over body and the frequent use of the word “dance” as “metaphore” or “allegory” might undermine the true potential that dance and the wisdom that skilled corporeal awareness and practice brings to intersubjectivity. This research sheds light on the potential benefits that a collaborative relation between dance and mother and baby dyadic intersubjectivity could offer.

This research sheds light on the contribution of *MamaDances* mother and baby dance to the development of the field of relational art, documenting a form of dance which is both artistic and social. It is unique in that it focuses on describing the experiences of mothers who dance with their babies, giving them a voice as a way of acknowledging their efforts, valuing their intimate experience, and sharing it with a wider audience. In doing so it also provides a better understanding of the complex realities of motherhood. It has allowed me to put my intuitions into words, that the movement experience and perceptions of the *MamaDances* artist/facilitator can be beneficial for mothers and their babies. This study allows for the intimate experience of motherhood to be understood as and to explain how mother and baby dance is a relational art of intercorporeality. Dance, which focuses on nurturing one's relationship to self, other and the world is a developing area of research and the contribution of this thesis to the advancement of knowledge will depend

on the follow-up. The follow up will include the dissemination of *MamaDances* by sharing the knowledge gained by this thesis, by mentoring facilitators, and by developing partnerships with organizations to offer more opportunities, so that as many mothers as possible (and, in turn, fathers) can benefit from them.

The relational art of *MamaDances* honours dance as a practice of presence, interconnectedness and bonding giving mothers a tangible social and physical expression to the intersubjective experience of matrescence.

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APPENDIX A : Pre-session Questionnaire

Pre-session Questionnaire – English Version

Expectations about this activity

Why are you interested in participating in this research project?

What do you hope to experience for yourself and your baby by participating?

What are your expectations about this activity?

Your relationship to artistic practice:

How does art manifest in your personal life? For example: Are you a professional artist? Are you a non-professional artist? What types of artistic activities do you participate in or practice? Please describe

Is dance important in your life? If yes, please describe.

Is art and culture present in your family life? For example, when you have the time do you attend live performances, participate in workshops and events, visit museums and galleries, dine in restaurants or participate in nature activities?

If yes, please give examples of some recent outings or events.

If no, please describe.

Self-perception:

How do you feel about yourself :

Physically

Emotionally

Intellectually

Spiritually

How is the way you feel about yourself now, different from before giving birth?

Have you noticed any differences in your perceptions since becoming a mother?

Relationship with your baby and others:

Describe your birth experience.

Describe your relationship with your baby.

Describe your experience in being a mother.

Describe your support by friends, family, and community.

Questionnaire pre-séance – French Version

Attentes par rapport à cette activité :

Pourquoi êtes-vous intéressée à participer à ce projet de recherche ?
Qu'est-ce que vous espérez expérimenter, vous et votre bébé, en participant ?
Quelles sont vos attentes par rapport à cette activité ?

Votre relation à la pratique artistique :

Comment l'art se manifeste-t-il dans votre vie personnelle ? Par exemple : êtes-vous une artiste professionnelle ? Etes-vous une artiste non-professionnelle ?
Quels types d'activités artistiques pratiquez-vous, ou à quels types d'activités artistiques participez-vous ? Veuillez les décrire.
La danse est-elle importante dans votre vie ? Si oui, veuillez décrire comment.
L'art et la culture sont-ils importants dans votre vie de famille ? Par exemple, quand vous avez du temps, participez-vous à des performances live, à des ateliers et événements, visitez-vous des musées et des galeries, dînez-vous dans des restaurants ou participez-vous à des activités nature ?
Si oui, veuillez donner des exemples de sorties ou d'événements récents.
Si non, veuillez donner une description.

Perception de soi :

Que ressentez-vous à propos de vous-même :
Physiquement
Emotionnellement
Intellectuellement
Spirituellement
Quel est votre ressenti par rapport à vous-même aujourd'hui : est-il différent qu'avant l'accouchement ?
Avez-vous remarqué des différences dans vos perceptions après être devenue mère ?

Relation à votre bébé et aux autres :

Décrivez l'expérience de votre accouchement.
Décrivez l'expérience de votre relation avec bébé.
Décrivez votre expérience d'être maman.
Décrivez le support que vous obtenez de vos amis, de votre famille et de votre communauté.

APPENDIX B: Journal

Your Journal – English Version

Please share your reflections about the workshop three times during the session via voice recording or email, or on the electronic platform, as is convenient for you.

Some thoughts might be:

Physically today before the workshop I felt...
Physically today during the workshop I felt..
Physically today after the workshop I felt..
Emotionally today before the workshop I felt...
Emotionally today during the workshop I felt...
Emotionally today after the workshop I felt...

Things I noticed about the way my baby responds within the workshop:

1. to me
2. to the group: other babies and mothers
3. to the music and movement
4. to the facilitator

Things I noticed about how I respond within the workshop to

1. my baby
2. the group: and the other babies and mothers
3. the music and movement
4. the facilitator

Challenging moments for me were/are...
Pleasurable moments for me were/are...
Something I would like to share is...
Memorable moments from today are...
This experience is having an influence on my daily life because...
I dance with my baby because...

Votre Journal de Réflexions – French Version

Nous vous invitons à partager vos réflexions sur l'atelier trois fois pendant la séance par enregistrement vocal, par mail ou dans la plateforme électronique, selon vos préférences.

Quelques exemples de pensées :

Physiquement, aujourd'hui, avant la séance, je me sentais...

Physiquement, aujourd'hui, pendant la séance, je me sentais...

Physiquement, aujourd'hui, après la séance, je me sentais...

Emotionnellement, aujourd'hui, avant la séance, je me sentais...

Emotionnellement, aujourd'hui, pendant la séance, je me sentais...

Emotionnellement, aujourd'hui, après la séance, je me sentais...

Mes remarques sur la façon dont mon bébé répond au cours de la séance :

1.à moi

2.au groupe : autres bébés et mamans

3.à la musique et au mouvement

4.à l'animatrice

Mes remarques sur la façon dont je réponds au cours de la séance :

1.à mon bébé

2.au groupe : autres mamans et bébés

3.à la musique et au mouvement

4.à l'animatrice

Des moments qui pour moi ont été/sont difficiles...

Des moments qui pour moi ont été/sont agréables...

Quelque chose que je voudrais partager est...

Aujourd'hui, des moments mémorables sont...

Cette expérience a une influence sur ma vie quotidienne parce que...

Je danse avec mon bébé parce que...

APPENDIX C: Post Session Questions

English Version

Post Session Questions for Interview – Open ended (semi-structured) interview questions:

Please share something about your experience of MamaDances.

Based on your experience in the workshop what do you perceive as being the principal values of MamaDances?

How were these values actualized/communicated in the workshop?

How do you feel about dance? About MamaDances?

Did you learn anything as a result of this experience?

Describe your relationship with your baby.

Has there been any change in the way you feel in general since the beginning of the session? For example: your body, your mood, your body image, your relationship to your baby, your perception of yourself.

Describe for me a particularly memorable moment from the session.

What were the things (if any) about MamaDances that motivated you to keep coming back?

Can you describe a positive factor in your development as a mother as a result of this experience?

Can you describe a positive factor in your child's development as a result of this experience?

What were the most enjoyable parts of the session for you?

What were, the most enjoyable parts of the session for your child?

What were the most difficult or uncomfortable moments for you?

What were the most difficult or uncomfortable moments for your child?

How would you describe MamaDances to another mother?

What do you perceive are the benefits of this experience?

What specifically did you notice about your child within or as a result of the workshop?

Describe if there have been moments in your daily life where you are reminded of your experiences from the workshop.

Describe if there were moments in the workshop that reminded you of moments in your life outside of the workshop.

Questions pour Entretien Après-Session – French Version

Questions entretien ouvertes (semi-structurées) :

Veillez partager avec nous quelques aspects de votre expérience MamaDances.

Sur la base de votre expérience lors de l’atelier, quelles sont à votre avis les valeurs principales de MamaDances ?

Comment ces valeurs étaient concrétisées et communiquées lors de l’atelier ?

Que ressentez-vous par rapport à la danse ? Et par rapport à MamaDances ?

Avez-vous appris quelque chose grâce à cette expérience ?

Décrivez votre relation à votre bébé.

Y a-t-il eu de changements dans la façon dont vous vous sentez en général depuis le début de la séance ?

Par exemple : votre corps, votre humeur, l’image que vous avez de votre corps, votre relation à votre bébé, votre perception de vous-même.

Décrivez un moment particulièrement mémorable de la séance.

Quelles étaient les choses (s’il y en a eu) par rapport à MamaDances qui vous motivaient à revenir ?

Pouvez-vous décrire un facteur positif dans *votre développement* en tant que mère suite à cette expérience ?

Pouvez-vous décrire un facteur positif dans *le développement de votre enfant* suite à cette expérience ?

Quelles étaient les parties de la séance les plus agréables pour *vous* ?

Quelles étaient les parties de la séance les plus agréables pour *votre enfant* ?

Quels étaient les moments les plus difficiles ou inconfortables pour *vous* ?

Quels étaient les moments les plus difficiles ou inconfortables pour *votre enfant* ?

Comment décrieriez-vous MamaDances à une autre mère ?

Quels sont, à votre avis, les avantages de cette expérience ?

Qu’avez-vous remarqué de spécial chez votre enfant pendant l’atelier ou en conséquence de celui-ci ?

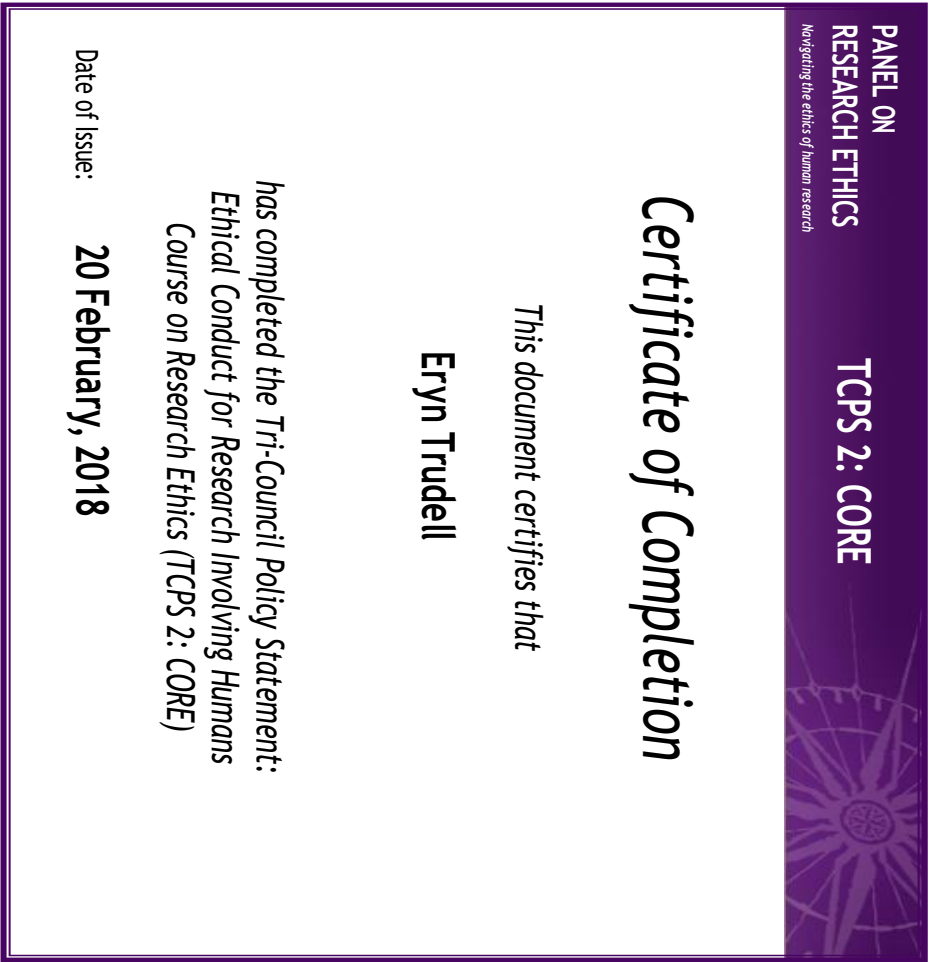
Décrivez s’il y a eu dans votre vie de tous les jours de moments où vous avez pensé à votre expérience dans le cadre de l’atelier.

Décrivez s’il y a eu au cours de l’atelier de moments où vous avez pensé à des moments de votre vie en dehors de l’atelier.

APPENDIX D: Research Collaborators Schedule

24 septembre	Lecture de l'ensemble du dossier de recherche	30 min
24 septembre	Rencontre et explications	1h
8 octobre	Rencontre et choix des participantes	1h30
9 octobre	Signatures des formulaires de consentement avec les participantes	2h
Sur deux semaines	Appel et courriel pour Lime Survey	30 min
Sept-décembre	Courriels, lime survey et doodle	3h
14 novembre 12 décembre	Appel et gestion des journaux non complétés des participantes	45 min
27 novembre	Entrevue Emi	1h15 (45 minutes d'enregistrement + préparation, présentation à Émi + remerciements+ admin)
3 et 5 décembre	Entrevue Rieta	1h25 (55 minutes d'enregistrement + préparation, présentation à Rieta + remerciements+ admin)
10 décembre	Entrevues : MamanPuolpe, Jennifer, Bee (Kim-Ahn annulé)	De 10h à 14h30. (1h40 d'enregistrement + accueil et remerciements + admin)
13 décembre	Entrevues : Couzi et Kim Ahn	1h40 (1h05 d'enregistrement + accueil et remerciements + admin)
14 décembre	Entrevues : MM	40 min (20 minutes d'enregistrement + accueil et remerciements + admin)
17 décembre	Vérification, finalisation et envoi des dossiers	2h30
Total		21h15

APPENDIX E: Certificate of Completion



APPENDIX F: Approbation éthique

CERTIFICAT D'APPROBATION ÉTHIQUE RENOUVELLEMENT

Le Comité d'éthique de la recherche pour les projets étudiants impliquant des êtres humains (CERPE plurifacultaire) a examiné le projet de recherche suivant et le juge conforme aux pratiques habituelles ainsi qu'aux normes établies par la *Politique No 54 sur l'éthique de la recherche avec des êtres humains* (Janvier 2016) de l'UQAM.

Titre du projet:	Understanding the mother's experience in participation with their babies, in a MamaDances Mother and Baby Dance Session.
Nom de l'étudiant:	Eryn TRUDELL
Programme d'études:	Maîtrise en danse
Direction de recherche:	Hélène DUVAL

Modalités d'application

Toute modification au protocole de recherche en cours de même que tout événement ou renseignement pouvant affecter l'intégrité de la recherche doivent être communiqués rapidement au comité.

La suspension ou la cessation du protocole, temporaire ou définitive, doit être communiquée au comité dans les meilleurs délais.

Le présent certificat est valide pour une durée d'un an à partir de la date d'émission. Au terme de ce délai, un rapport d'avancement de projet doit être soumis au comité, en guise de rapport final si le projet est réalisé en moins d'un an, et en guise de rapport annuel pour le projet se poursuivant sur plus d'une année. Dans ce dernier cas, le rapport annuel permettra au comité de se prononcer sur le renouvellement du certificat d'approbation éthique.



Raoul Graf
Président du CERPE plurifacultaire
Professeur, Département de marketing

UQÀM | **Université du Québec
à Montréal**

If you wish to participate in this project, please click on the link to fill out the questionnaire. If your profile meets our criteria, we will contact you to invite you to an information session on October 9th (12-2pm) that will clarify our expectations and answer your questions.

French: <https://limesurvey.uqam.ca/index.php/892939?lang=fr>

English: <https://limesurvey.uqam.ca/index.php/892939?lang=en>

If you would like more information please contact us at:
mamadancesresearch@gmail.com

It will be a pleasure to collaborate with you.

Thank you for your interest.

Nous recherchons 8 **maman/bébé dyades volontaires** pour participer à un projet de recherche dans le contexte du Programme de Diplôme de Maîtrise de danse de l'Université du Québec à Montréal (UQAM)

Nous vous invitons à participer à une session de Danse Maman-Bébé dans le cadre d'un projet de recherche qui a pour objectif de décrire et comprendre le programme MamanDanse à travers l'étude de l'expérience de ses participantes.

Cette recherche est sous la supervision d'Hélène Duval et a été lancée par l'étudiante-chercheuse Eryn Dace Trudell (animatrice danse, fondatrice et directrice artistique de MamanDanse et candidate au diplôme de master)

La participation à ce projet est soumise à la participation à une session de Danse Maman-Bébé *MamanDanse*. Les ateliers auront lieu les vendredis de 11h à 13h durant 8 semaines, du 12 octobre au 7 décembre 2018 (sauf le 9 novembre). La participante complètera un questionnaire pre-atelier, un entretien post-séance et tiendra un journal pendant la session.

Le projet de recherche aura lieu à UQAM Département de danse, 840 Rue Cherrier, Montréal, QC H2L 1H4. Local K3220.

Nous recherchons des mamans avec un bébé âgé de 2 à 12 mois, qui souhaitent et sont capables de porter leur bébé dans les bras et dans un porte-bébé. Les participantes sont tenues à apporter un porte-bébé ou à en demander un.

Aucune expérience de danse n'est demandée.

Les participantes doivent être capables de parler et/ou écrire en français ou anglais.

La participation à cette recherche vous permet de participer gratuitement à une activité qui normalement prévoit des frais d'inscription.

Au cours de ce projet, vous allez profiter d'une expérience privilégiée de danse maman-bébé. □

Si vous souhaitez recevoir plus d'informations ou participer à ce projet, veuillez cliquer sur le lien vers notre formulaire d'inscription. Si votre profil correspond à nos critères, nous vous contacterons pour vous inviter à une séance d'information qui clarifiera nos attentes et répondra à vos questions.

MamaDancesResearch@gmail.com

Au plaisir de collaborer avec vous !

Questionnaire de recrutement

Je suis une proche ou une connaissance professionnelle d'Eryn Dace Trudell Oui/Non

L'âge de mon bébé est :

1. 2-3 mois
2. 4-5 mois
3. 6-8 mois
4. 9-10 mois
5. 10-12 mois

Mon niveau d'expérience de danse est :

1. Pas d'expérience
2. De l'expérience de danse récréative^{[1][2]}_{SÉP}
3. Beaucoup d'expérience
4. J'ai validé une formation formelle de danse
5. Je suis un professionnel de la danse

Si vous avez choisi les catégories 2-5, veuillez décrire votre expérience: _____

Mon niveau d'études (plus haut niveau validé):

- ☐ Lycée
- ☐ Collège
- ☐ Université
- ☐ Études supérieures^{[1][2]}_{SÉP}
- ☐ Aucun des niveaux ci-dessus
- ☐ Autre: Merci de préciser:

Mon occupation: _____

Je bénéficie pleinement des prestations de maternité. Oui^{[1][2]}_{SÉP} Non

Je souhaite participer parce que:

- ☐ J'aime danser^[L]_[SEP]
- ☐ J'aime les activités artistiques^[L]_[SEP]
- ☐ J'ai envie de sortir de chez moi^[L]_[SEP]
- ☐ Je veux rencontrer d'autres mamans^[L]_[SEP]
- ☐ Je veux m'amuser^[L]_[SEP]
- ☐ Je veux perdre du poids
- ☐ Je veux passer du temps de qualité avec mon bébé^[L]_[SEP]
- ☐ Je veux exposer mon bébé à la musique et au mouvement^[L]_[SEP]
- ☐ Je veux un lien plus étroit avec mon bébé^[L]_[SEP]
- ☐ J'aime bien profiter d'activités gratuites^[L]_[SEP]
- ☐ J'ai toujours été intéressée mais je n'en ai jamais eu la chance
- ☐ Autre:

J'ai des connaissances sur le portage de bébé ou sur l'utilisation d'un porte-bébé. Oui/Non

Je suis :

1. Francophone
2. Anglophone
3. Allophone
4. Aucune des options ci-dessus

Je parle ou j'écris en français ou anglais ? Oui/Non

Je suis capable de porter mon bébé dans les bras et dans un porte-bébé ? Oui/Non

Avez-vous accès à internet pour remplir un questionnaire ? Oui /Non

L'adresse courriel à laquelle nous pouvons vous joindre :

Merci pour votre temps. Nous prendrons contact avec vous.

APPENDIX H: Participant Consent Forms

English Version



Participant Consent Form

Title of Project: Understanding the mother's experience in participating with their babies, in a *MamaDances* (Mother and Baby Dance) Session.

Student Researcher: Eryn Dace Trudell,
Masters in Dance, Université de Québec à Montréal, Dance Department
514-585-8888,

Research Collaborator: Caroline Apotheloz PhD (abd), University of Ottawa
(438) 501-6163

Supervisor: Hélène Duval,
Professor, Université de Québec à Montréal,
(514) 987-3000, poste 0260
duval.helene@uqam.ca

Preamble

You are invited to participate in a research project that involves participation in a *MamaDances* mother and baby dance session with your baby. Before accepting to participate in this project, please take the time to understand and carefully consider the information that follows. This consent form explains the purpose of the study, the procedures, the benefits, the risks and disadvantages as well as the people to contact if necessary. The present form might include words that you may not understand. Please do not hesitate to ask the researcher any questions you may have.

Description and Objectives of the project

The objectives of the research project are to learn about, describe and understand the mother participant's experience in a *MamaDances* mother and baby dance session. This program, integrating various approaches to dance and movement, was developed over the last 12 years. It

specializes in mothers dancing with their babies aged 2-12 months. For this project a group of mothers will be invited to participate in an 8-week session with their babies, to investigate their experience of the program. With this research, we hope to gather data on the perceptions and challenges of the participants by investigating the phenomenon of what transpires within a session from their perspective. We hope to gain a solid understanding of the benefits of participation, as well as learning about what the participants (you) perceive as being the experience for (your baby) their babies.

Study Procedures:

You, and 7 other mothers with babies between the age of 2 and 12 months are invited to participate in a *MamaDances* Mom and Baby Dance Session. A session is composed of a workshop once per week for 8 weeks. Each workshop is 90 minutes in length. The session will be held at *UQAM Dance Department*, 840 Rue Cherrier, Montréal, QC H2L 1H4

The room is conducive for movement and comfortable for you and your baby. It is of a comfortable temperature, clean, spacious, and clear of distractions. It is calm and quiet, with natural light and well circulating air. It has a sound system. It is equipped with pillows, and meditation chairs for comfortably feeding a baby. You will be required to meet at the studio location. You will begin sitting in a circle on mats on the floor with your baby lying, sitting or crawling in close proximity. At first, there will be a brief discussion about how the session will proceed and then the first exercise will be introduced. The following is a brief summary of a workshop:

- 45 minutes of movement with your baby, alternating between moving freely on the floor or held in your arms.
- 15 minutes pause, to change the diapers and/or feed your baby, chat, and finally, position your baby in a baby carrier, which you have brought or which will be supplied.
- 30 minutes to learn choreography while carrying your baby in baby carrier.

Potential Risks: Participation in this research activity may contribute to the diminishing or augmentation of light psychological and physical discomfort, due to the general nature and singularity of the post birth period. It may be inconvenient for you at times to come to the workshop on time, as it does involve your baby and travelling to the location where the workshop will take place.

Potential Benefits: The potential benefits of participation for you and your baby is to participate at no cost, an activity that normally requires a registration fee. This is a physical, social post-natal activity for you to do with your baby, which may alleviate isolation. It will give you the opportunity to meet and share with other mothers who have babies of a similar age.

Compensation: There is no financial compensation for your participation.

Confidentiality: Your participation will be anonymous in the interviews and you will choose a pseudonym unless you choose otherwise and wish your identity to be known and credited.

Data Collection: Before, during and after the session your perceptions of the experience will be sought. This data will provide insight into the phenomenon that transpires. The results will be reinvested in the practice of *MamaDances* and help improve the experience of future participants' in the program.

The data will be collected by:

1. Questionnaire: This questionnaire will be accessible online and in paper format several days before the start of the session. If the participant prefers, a paper version will be sent by mail.
2. Journaling: The participant will have the option of writing this on paper, by audio recording, or by using the online Lime Survey platform, as is most convenient.
3. Phone or in person interview after the session is complete (time of your choice).

Privacy: The identifiable data that you provide will be kept secure, and uploaded to a password protected file on a computer, and coded with key that only the student researcher has. Anything you write on paper will be stored in the researchers locker until it is uploaded to the online storage platform and then it will be returned to you.

Audio recording:

Your participant journal may be in the form of audio recordings, handwritten on paper, or using the online LimeSurvey platform, as it is convenient to you. Your post –session interview will be audio recorded. All audio recordings will only be used by the researcher (and the project supervisor) and will not be disseminated to the public.

Access to the data collected will be available only to the student researcher and the researcher collaborator.

Voluntary participation and right to withdraw

Your participation in this project is entirely voluntary. You may refuse to participate or you may withdraw from the study at any time without the need to justify your decision. If you decide to withdraw from the study, you only need to verbally inform Eryn Dace Trudell (the student researcher); in this case, all data concerning you will be destroyed.

Questions about the project?

For any additional questions about the project, please contact either: H       Duval at (514) 987-3000, ext. 0260 or by email at duval.helene@uqam.ca or Eryn Dace Trudell at (514)-585-8888 or by email at trudell.eryn@courrier.uqam.ca.

The Research Ethics Committee for Student Projects Involving Human Beings (CERPE) has approved the research project in which you will participate. For information about the research

team's research ethics responsibilities in relation to human beings or to make a complaint, you can contact the CERPE coordinator: Caroline Vrignaud, vrignaud.caroline@uqam.ca, 514 987-3000, ext. 6188

Please sign below if you have read the above information and consent to participate in this study. Agreeing to participate in this study does not waive any of your rights or release the researchers from their responsibilities.

A copy of this consent form will be given to you and the researcher will keep a copy.

Participant's Name (First Name, Surname))

Participant's Signature

Date

Declaration by the researcher I, the undersigned, hereby declare that: (a) I have explained the terms of this form to the signatory; (b) I have answered the questions he has asked me in this regard; (c) I have clearly indicated to him that he is free to terminate his participation in the research project at any time, as described above; (d) I will give him a copy of this form, signed and dated.

Researcher's Name (First Name, Surname)

Signature

Date

Thank you. Your collaboration is essential to the realization of this project and the research team wishes to thank you for it.

French Version



Formulaire de consentement Participant

Titre du Projet: Comprendre l'expérience des mères à la participation, avec leurs bébés, à une Séance de *MamaDances* (Danse Maman-Bébé).

Etudiante-chercheuse: Eryn Dace Trudell,
Master en Dance, Université de Québec à Montréal, Département de Dance
514-585-8888,
trudell.eryn@courrier.uqam.ca

Chercheuse collaboratrices: Caroline Apotheloz PhD (abd), Université d'Ottawa
(438) 501-6163
apotheloz.c@gmail.com

Superviseur: Hélène Duval,
Professeure, Université de Québec à Montréal,
(514) 987-3000, poste 0260
duval.helene@uqam.ca

Préambule,

Nous vous demandons de participer à un projet de recherche qui implique [insérez ici la nature de la participation demandée]. Avant d'accepter de participer à ce projet de recherche, veuillez prendre le temps de comprendre et de considérer attentivement les renseignements qui suivent. Ce formulaire de consentement vous explique le but de cette étude, les procédures, les avantages, les risques et inconvénients, de même que les personnes avec qui communiquer au besoin. Le présent formulaire de consentement peut contenir des mots que vous ne comprenez pas. Nous vous invitons à poser toutes les questions que vous jugerez utiles.

Description et Objectifs du Projet

Le projet de recherche a l'objectif d'apprendre, décrire et comprendre l'expérience de la mère participant à une séance de danse maman-bébé *MamaDances*. Ce programme, intégrant des différentes approches à la danse et au mouvement, a été développé au cours des 12 dernières années. Il est spécialisé dans la danse des mères avec leurs bébés âgés de 2 à 12 mois. Pour réaliser ce projet, un groupe de mères avec leurs bébés

sera invité à participer à une séance de 8 semaines, afin d'en étudier l'expérience par rapport au programme. Avec cette recherche, nous espérons rassembler des données sur les perceptions des participantes et les points critiques qu'elles ont rencontrés, en étudiant le phénomène de ce qui transparait lors d'une séance, selon leur point de vue. Nous espérons obtenir une compréhension solide des bienfaits de la participation, ainsi qu'apprendre comment les participantes (vous) perçoivent l'expérience par rapport à leurs (vos) bébés.

Procédures d'Etude :

Vous et 7 autres mères avec vos bébés âgés de 2 à 12 mois êtes invitées à participer à une séance de Danse Maman-Bébé *MamaDances*. Une séance se compose d'un atelier, une fois par semaine pendant 8 semaines. Chaque atelier dure 90 minutes. La séance aura lieu chez *MAM autour de la maternité* (2060 Holmes, 2e étage, Saint-Hubert QC J4T 1R8).

La pièce est propice au mouvement et confortable pour vous et pour votre bébé. Elle a une température confortable, elle est propre, spacieuse et sans distractions. Elle est calme et silencieuse, avec de la lumière naturelle et une bonne circulation d'air. Elle est dotée d'une chaîne hi-fi. Elle est équipée de coussins et de chaises de méditation pour nourrir un bébé confortablement. On vous demandera de vous rendre sur place. Vous commencerez par vous asseoir en cercle sur des tapis de sol avec votre bébé allongé, assis ou rampant à proximité immédiate. Tout d'abord, il y aura une brève discussion sur le déroulement de la séance et le premier exercice sera présenté.

Voici un bref résumé d'un atelier:

- 45 minutes de mouvement avec votre bébé, en alternant le mouvement libre au sol et le portage dans vos bras.
- 15 minutes de pause, pour changer la couche et/ou nourrir votre bébé, discuter, et pour placer finalement votre bébé dans un porte-bébé, qui vous aurez apporté ou qui vous aura été fourni.
- 30 minutes d'apprentissage d'une chorégraphie, en portant votre bébé dans un porte-bébé.

Risques potentiels : La participation à cette activité de recherche pourrait contribuer à augmenter ou diminuer un léger inconfort psychologique ou physique, à cause de la nature générale et de la singularité de la période après l'accouchement. Parfois, il pourrait être gênant pour vous d'arriver à l'atelier à l'heure, puisque cela implique votre bébé et le fait de devoir vous déplacer jusqu'à l'endroit où l'atelier aura lieu.

Avantages potentiels : Les avantages potentiels de la participation par vous et votre bébé sont de pouvoir participer gratuitement à une activité qui prévoit normalement des frais d'inscription. Il s'agit d'une activité post-accouchement physique, sociale que vous pouvez faire avec votre bébé, ce qui peut pallier l'isolement. Vous aurez la possibilité de rencontrer d'autres mamans qui ont des bébés d'âges similaires, et discuter avec elles.

Compensation : Aucune compensation économique n'est prévue pour votre participation.

Confidentialité : Votre participation sera anonyme lors des entretiens et vous choisirez un pseudonyme sauf si vous en décidez autrement, et si vous souhaitez que votre identité soit connue et créditée.

Récolte des données : Avant, pendant et après la séance vous serez sollicitée par rapport à vos perceptions de l'expérience. Ces données fourniront une vision du phénomène qui en transparait. Les résultats seront réinvestis dans la pratique de *MamaDances* et contribueront à l'amélioration de l'expérience des futures participantes au programme.

Les données seront récoltées par :

4. Questionnaire : Ce questionnaire sera accessible en ligne et en format papier plusieurs jours avant le début de la séance. Si la participante le souhaite, une version papier sera envoyée par la poste.
5. Écriture d'un journal: La participante aura la possibilité de l'écrire sur papier, par enregistrement audio ou en utilisant la plateforme en ligne Lime Survey, selon ses préférences.
6. Entretien en face à face ou par téléphone après la fin de la séance (créneau de votre choix).

Vie privée: Les données identifiables que vous fournirez seront sécurisées et téléchargées dans un ordinateur, dans un fichier protégé par mot de passe, et codées avec une clé que qui est connue uniquement par l'étudiante chercheuse.

Tout ce que vous écrivez sur papier sera gardé dans le casier de la chercheuse avant d'être téléchargé dans la plateforme de stockage en ligne, et vous sera ensuite retourné.

Enregistrements vocaux

Votre journal participant peut être sous forme d'enregistrements audio, écrit à la main sur papier, ou soumis en utilisant la plateforme en ligne LimeSurvey, selon vos préférences. Votre entretien post-séance sera audio-enregistré.

Tous les enregistrements vocaux seront utilisés uniquement par la chercheuse (et le superviseur du projet) et ne seront pas distribués au public.

Participation volontaire et droit de retrait

Votre participation à ce projet est entièrement volontaire. Vous pouvez refuser d'y participer, ou vous pouvez vous retirez de l'étude à tout moment, sans avoir à justifier votre décision. Si vous décidez de vous retirer de l'étude, vous devrez seulement en informer verbalement Eryn Dace Trudell (l'étudiante-chercheuse) ; dans ce cas, toute donnée vous concernant sera détruite.

De questions sur le projet ?

Pour toute autre question sur le projet, veuillez contacter Hélène Duval au (514) 987-3000, ext. 0260 ou par mail à l'adresse duval.helene@uqam.ca, ou Eryn Dace Trudell au (514)-585-8888 ou par mail à l'adresse trudell.eryn@courrier.uqam.ca.

Le projet de recherche auquel vous allez participer a été approuvé par le **Research Ethics Committee for Student Projects Involving Human Beings (CERPE)**. Pour toute information au sujet des responsabilités

éthiques de recherche de l'équipe de recherche par rapport aux êtres humains, ou pour faire une réclamation, vous pouvez contacter la coordinatrice du CERPE, Caroline Vrignaud : vrignaud.caroline@uqam.ca, 514 987-3000, ext. 6188

Veillez signer ci-dessous si vous avez lu les informations ci-dessus et si vous acceptez de participer à cette étude. Votre accord ne vous prive d'aucun de vos droits et ne dégage pas les chercheurs de leurs responsabilités.

Une copie de ce formulaire de consentement vous sera remise et le chercheur en gardera une copie.

Nom du Participant (Prénom, Nom)

Signature du Participant

Date

Déclaration du chercheur: Je, soussigné, déclare que: (A) j'ai expliqué les termes de ce formulaire au signataire; (b) j'ai répondu aux questions qu'il m'a posées à ce sujet; (c) je lui ai indiqué clairement qu'il est libre de terminer sa participation au projet de recherche à tout moment, comme indiqué ci-dessus ; (d) je lui remettrai une copie de ce formulaire, signée et datée.

Nom du Chercheur (Prénom, Nom)

Signature

Date

Merci. Votre collaboration est essentielle à la réussite de ce projet et l'équipe de recherche souhaite vous en remercier.

APPENDIX I: Coding Chart

Example of Coding Chart

Participant	Code	Citation/Meaning Unit	Translation/Interpretation	Relational Theme-Node	agent-Node-Child	Synthesis of Essential Concept Cultural Meaning
MP	J1_MP	Je me sentais plus légère et moins stressé par les tâches et le désordre qui m'attendaient à la maison et duquel ça faisait du bien de prendre congé. Après, je suis revenue à la maison avec plus d'énergie, d'enthousiasme et de bonne humeur qu'avant d'en partir. J'y repensais et ça me faisait sourire.	I felt lighter and less stressed by the tasks and mess at home that awaited me and from which it felt good to take a break. After I returned home with more energy, enthusiasm et good mood then before and when I thought about it, it made me smile	Mother-self -letting go -lightness -good mood -wellness		Matrescence Transference to home Interstice
MP	J2_MP	je sentais un bienfait de devoir réfléchir totalement à ce que je faisais dans le moment présent et à me concentrer sur les mouvements à exécuter.	It felt good having to focus on what I was doing in the present moment and to concentrate on the execution of the movement.	Mother-self -wellness -presence -focus -concentration		Matrescence Presence
MM	J2_MM	Je regarde les autres mamans et apprécie le moment	I see the other mothers and I appreciate the moment	Mother-self Joy-appreciation Group		Interconnectedness Presence Time-interstice

Participant	Code	Citation/Meaning Unit	Translation/Interpretation	Relational Theme- Node-Child	Synthesis of Essential Concept Cultural Meaning
MM	I_MM	ça apaise vraiment l'anxiété, on se sent plus connectée avec nous-mêmes et avec notre bébé, tout simplement.	Simply said, it eases the anxiety and allows us to feel more connected to ourselves and with our babies	Mother-self -letting go of stress and anxiety -awareness of self-wellness Infant-mother -Connection	Letting go Bonding Presence Wellness
MM	J1_MM	à mon bébé on se regarde, je savoure chaque instant	I see my baby and savour every moment	Mother-self -joy-savour -see-awareness Infant-Mother Time	Presence Interstice Bonding
Rieta	I_R	I cannot take that time in my house. I have a lot of things to do around. I can do that exercise but it is hard to find the time at home. And MamaDances offers me the time to do that kind of exercise that I know is good for me.		Mother-self -wellness -time	Interstice Matrescence
Rieta	I_R	The facilitator played the music from "La vie est belle". That song touched something inside me. When she puts on		-Mother-Self- -joy -matrescence	Interstice Matresence

Participant	Code	Citation/Meaning Unit	Translation/Interpretation	Relational Theme- Node	agent- Node-Child	Synthesis of Essential Concept Cultural Meaning
		Spanish songs, it makes me happy. I can understand the message of the movie. I try everyday to have that attitude..., that life is good. I know that it is not that good but I try always to find the positive way.		-Expressivity -wellness -emotion		
Kim-Ahn	J1_KA	Après la séance, je me sentais davantage en unisson avec ma fille. Pendant la séance, j'étais plus en unisson avec mon bébé. cela me détend. Cela me permet d'être davantage en unisson avec elle.	After the workshop I felt in harmony with my daughter. During the workshop I was more in harmony with my baby. IT relaxed me and allowed me to be in harmony with her	Mother-self -relaxation Infant-mother In harmony		Letting go Bonding
KA	I_KA	Vers la fin j'ai beaucoup aimé tout ce qui était danse spontanée, j'ai appris à apprécier ce moment-là où tu es un peu plus à l'écoute de ton bébé.	By the end KA liked the improvisations and free dancing and appreciated that in those moments she was more available and attentive of her baby.	Mother-self -expressivity -freedom -improvisation -appreciation -moments Infant -mother -attentive -available		Letting go Time Bonding Presence
KA	I_KA	Je pense que c'est beaucoup l'expression de soi, que je faisais pas avant, peut-être être un peu plus spontanée, à l'écoute de	I think it's self-expression, that I wasn't experiencing before, perhaps now [I am] more spontaneous in	Mother-Self -expressivity Matrescence		Presence Matrescence Letting go

Participant	Code	Citation/Meaning Unit	Translation/Interpretation	Relational Theme- Node	agent- Node-Child	Synthesis of Essential Concept Cultural Meaning
		ses réponses, par rapport à ses besoins. Je parle de ses besoins moins primaires.	responding to her needs beyond the primary ones.	Infant-mother -availability -spontaneity -beyond primary needs		Bonding
Jennifer	I_J	ça mettait de la confiance en nous, parce qu'on n'avait aucune pression sur les épaules,	That gives us confidence because there is no pressure on our shoulders	Mother-self -confidence -no pressure		Letting go Matrescence
Jennifer	I_J	ça va t'aider à te rapprocher avec ton bébé. ...ça va l'aider mentalement, physiquement à se rapprocher avec son bébé.	Jennifer would recommend This activity to other mothers as an activity that helps to get closer to one's baby. Especially if the mother is going through a difficult time. It will help physically and mentally to get closer to her baby	Mother-self -matrescence -wellness- psychological and physical Infant-mother -closer connection		Bonding Matrescence
Jennifer	I_J	on était ensemble dans cette activité-là, et c'était pas juste ensemble, mère-fille, c'était vraiment ensemble, en train de faire quelque chose commun...	We were together in this activity but not just together, mother-daughter, it was <i>really</i> together doing something in common	Infant-Mother -attunement -together -mutuality		Bonding/Connection

Participant	Code	Citation/Meaning Unit	Translation/Interpretation	Relational Theme- Node	agent- Node-Child	Synthesis of Essential Concept Cultural Meaning
Emi	I_E	C'est un certain lâcher prise de focaliser vraiment avec notre bébé sur le moment présent.	It is a kind of "letting go" to really focused with our baby in the present moment....	Mother-self -letting go Infant-Mother Moment		Letting go Presence Interstice-Time
Emi	J3_E	Me permet de relaxer et d'avoir un moment privilégié avec mon bébé	The workshop allows Emi to relax and to have a privileged moment with her baby.	Mother-self -Relaxer Infant-Mother -privileged time		Letting go Time
Emi	I_E	Mais la détente et puis aussi d'écouter, apprendre à s'écouter, écouter son corps, et être à l'écoute avec le bébé.	Emi felt relaxed and then a kind of listening, learning to listen, to listen to her body and to be in a state of listening to her baby.	Mother-self -détente -Presence- Listening Infant-mother -Awareness -Availability -		Letting go Presence Bonding
Emi	I_E	ça vient un peu avec le lâcher prise, ça m'a appris aussi à pas forcément trop anticiper les choses et laisser l'enfant réagir aussi par lui-même. ... m'a aidé à encore plus laisser le bébé explorer par lui-même et vivre ses propres sensations tout seul.	"letting go" of expectations and anticipations and allow her baby to respond in his own way: to allow him to explore and experience his own sensations:	Infant -Mother -mutuality Mother Self -Confidence		Letting Go -expectations

Participant	Code	Citation/Meaning Unit	Translation/Interpretation	Relational Theme- Node	agent- Node-Child	Synthesis of Essential Concept Cultural Meaning
Couzi	J2_C	c'est vraiment génial je me sens bien quand je suis là bas aucune pression aucune comparaison pas besoin d'être parfaite	Its genius, I feel well when I am there. No pressure, no comparison, no need to be perfect	Mother-Self -Letting go -confidence -wellness -feeling good Group -commonality		Interconnectedness Letting go
Couzi	I_C	Mais ça a développé un lien vraiment fort, ça développe quelque chose avec ton bébé que tu n'as pas si tu fais pas ça.	Couzi found that MD provided her an opportunity to develop her connection with her baby in a way she would not have done , if she had not participated.	Infant-Mother Liens-Connection		Bonding
Couzi	I_C	C'est un moment avec toi et ton bébé que tu t'occupes exclusivement de lui, t'as pas le téléphone en même temps, la télé, il faut que tu fasses la vaisselle, tu fais le ménage, t'es exclusivement avec ton bébé, t'es là un peu pour toi mais beaucoup pour lui, pour l'amuser, fait que tu développes un gros lien avec.	Couzi felt that MD gave her time to have fun with her baby, by being exclusively with him, without doing other things at the same time, like talking on the phone, watching tv, or doing dishes That focused time creates a strong connection between them. Both enjoy it.	Mother-Infant Bonding Attention Atunement		Presence Bonding Time

Participant	Code	Citation/Meaning Unit	Translation/Interpretation	Relational Theme- Node	agent- Node-Child	Synthesis of Essential Concept Cultural Meaning
Bee	I_B	that made our relationship, not better but, helped develop our relationship. It might have made her more attached to me	Bee feels that MD helped to develop her relationship with her baby	Infant-Mother		Bonding Attachment
Bee	I_B	..bonding with your baby through movement and dancing. Mostly the bonding experience is what I think was the main purpose of MamaDances.	Bee felt that infant-mother bonding was the main purpose of MD	Infant Mother Mother-self Values		Bonding Joy
Bee	I_B	I quite enjoy that bonding time.	Bee enjoyed the time to bond with her baby. It's a pleasure to take the time to develop the emotional bonds, the affective relationship	Infant Mother Mother-self Time		Bonding Joy Interstice