



Exploring the Concept of Social Reconciliation Through the Experience of a Dance/Movement Therapy Group of Migrant Women in Spain

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Abstract

This paper explores the potential of Dance/Movement Therapy (DMT) as a means of contributing to social reconciliation processes. The study, conducted through a group process with migrant women living in Spain, suggests that the relationships developed between participants in the DMT group reflect some of the key elements underpinning theories of social reconciliation. The elements of trust, empathy, and a willingness to coexist with others can be understood as the return to a sense of community and belonging. Furthermore, working with migrant women appeared as an opportunity to explore the concept of social reconciliation beyond national borders as an initial step to understanding this phenomenon through DMT. In summary, it is proposed that Dance Movement Therapy, oriented towards the configuration of new forms of relationship, has the potential to contribute to the modification of polarization frameworks in group and community relationships, particularly in areas affected by conflict or social marginalization experienced by migrants and refugees.

Keywords Dance Movement Therapy · Migration · Social Reconciliation · Artistic Research

Introduction

As human beings, we are in an ongoing relationship with our environment. We construct our subjective reality, but we also influence and are influenced by that reality which transcends our corporeality. It is in the human relationship that cultural codes,

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and socio-political practices are defined. However, in contexts of violence, there is a violation of human rights that can paralyse and cause suffering, undermine communities' beliefs and ways of life, and generate mistrust, isolation, and low self-esteem (Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica, 2014). Furthermore, a loss of power calls into question human agency. In these scenarios, healing wounds and rebuilding the social network becomes necessary.

In response to this need, social reconciliation is aimed at promoting and improving social relations (Rettberg & Ugarriza, 2016). Reconciliation, conceptualised as a collective process of deep transformation, implies a voluntary rapprochement of the parties previously in conflict, who seek to connect again (Bloomfield et al., 2015), re-establishing their social ties and maintaining stability in the territory (Alzate & Dono, 2017). However, having an approach to this concept through a dance/movement therapy (DMT) group process with migrant women raised the question of how we can understand a reconciliation process between people who have never or no longer share the same territory and were unknown to each other prior to joining the group.

It could be said that reconciliation within migrant populations poses a two-way challenge. On the one hand, the necessity to heal wounds with a social reality from which they have migrated, and on the other hand, keeping in mind the experience of arriving at a different place with little or no knowledge of the culture and no strong or even pre-existing relationship. This situation involves the role of host societies and the importance of their perceptions of migrants. It requires meaningful interaction between migrants and the receiving society in a two-way process, in which it will not only change the migrant's perspective and way of life, but also effect structural change in the receiving society (Rudiger & Spencer, 2003).

This project focuses on the experience of a Latin-American group of women in Spain, who have migrated primarily for economic or personal reasons. Upon arrival, they faced the difficulties of relating to a different culture, where they may be mistrusted and stigmatised, resulting in experiences of uprootedness and not-belonging. Working with them was an opportunity to explore the intersections between DMT and social reconciliation, considering this research as an initial step in developing an approach to understanding the concept of social reconciliation through dance/movement therapy.

Social Reconciliation: An Overview

Etymologically, reconciliation means to become part of a relationship again, and to return to being a community (Cano et al., 2022). In broad terms, social reconciliation is understood as a deep dimension of peacebuilding, related to ending processes of violence and restoring relationships (Fernández, 2015), so that they can negotiate the realities and commitments of a new shared socio-political reality (Bloomfield et al., 2015).

In transitional contexts, reconciliation is a term that is used to encompass a broad range of peacebuilding. However, according to Rettberg and Ugarriza (2016), certain incentives and public discourses emphasising the need to involve all members

of society in building sustainable peace have resulted in a marked tendency to label all sorts of activities as synonymous with or conducive to reconciliation thus depriving the term of any stable meaning or shared definition. Appropriation has resulted in the term being used diffusely, ranging from narrow and subjective to more expansive definitions and approaches.

The findings of this small pilot study are based on the understanding of reconciliation as a psychological and political process, which involves a change of individual and collective attitudes. Examples of this outcome are shifts from denial and resentment to acceptance and trust, enabling communities to re-establish the social fabric, non-violent daily relationships and the ability to work together (Cano et al., 2020). Reconciliation is thus conceived as an integrative process that involves multiple interdependent layers of interaction, from the individual and personal to the interpersonal through to the collective level, which encompasses social norms and representations.

This research focuses on the interpersonal dimension of reconciliation, oriented towards constructing and transforming human relationships. At the interpersonal level, this involves “deep transitions of personal interaction that focus on emotions, acknowledgement, apologies, forgiveness, healing, and the creation of shared personal bonds” (Bloomfield, 2015, p. 23). According to Huyse (2003), there are three stages to making a reconciliation scenario possible. The first is non-violent coexistence, the second is trust building, and the third is mobilisation towards empathy.

Coexistence is seen as the possibility of peaceful connivance between antagonistic individuals and groups (Huyse, 2003). A model based on coexistence emphasises interpersonal similarities and cultural commonalities, as well as supporting notions of unity and cooperation (Silbaq & Belinky, 2020). Coexisting implies the right of each group to exist (Worchel & Coutant, 2008).

Trust can be defined as a psychological mechanism that aims to overcome uncertain social situations through benign assumptions about the behaviour of others (Kollock, 1994). Thus, the basis of mutual trust lies in believing that humanity is present in each person (Huyse, 2003). This element facilitates the modification of polarisation frameworks in interpersonal and group relationships and is a recurring variable in various works on constructive conflict transformation (Alzate et al., 2015). Polarisation can be described as the presence of separated groups in society with opposing attitudes (Jung et al., 2019). As Albada et al. (2021) point out, individual characteristics and group affiliations are key factors in attitudinal polarisation. “How people perceive their position and that of their in-group in society can influence how accepting they are of out-groups, especially refugees and migrants” (p. 629).

Empathy allows a person to take another’s viewpoint to understand the intentions behind their actions more fully; in other words, ‘feeling what they feel’ (McGarry & Russo, 2011). It is the attempt to experience another person’s inner life and resonate with what they are experiencing, living, and feeling; to have information about their situation and act accordingly (Fischman, 2013).

These three concepts are also key principles in a DMT process. That is why they are taken as central axis for the research, to enable a dialogue between the concept of social reconciliation and DMT as a discipline.

The Relevance of Dance/Movement Therapy

One way of promoting change and repairing damage is through the expression of the body in movement (Maralia, 2007) because the body reflects the most intimate part of the person. Working with the body connects us with an emotional and symbolic level that makes it possible to give voice and express that which cannot be expressed through words (Rodríguez & Dueso, 2016). It also allows reinterpreting and deconstructing symbols, giving new readings, and transforming meanings. Therefore, increasingly, the focus has turned to listening to and understanding bodies as channels for self-expression, places of recognition and connection between thought and emotion (Rodríguez, 2011).

Defined as the 'psychotherapeutic use of movement to promote the emotional, social, cognitive and physical integration of the individual, with the purpose of improving their health and well-being' (American Dance Therapy Association, n.d.), Dance/movement therapy becomes a psychotherapeutic technique that is based on creative processes using the body, its non-verbal expressions, and dance (Rodríguez, 2009). Its objectives revolve around allowing the exploration of new ways of relating, promoting greater integration of the self, increasing awareness, and enhancing the development of social skills that can lead, through movement, to changes in the psyche, thus promoting well-being and personal growth (Rodríguez & Dueso, 2016).

One of the main purposes of DMT is to strengthen people's mental health. The World Health Organization (WHO) conceptualizes mental health as a 'state of well-being in which the individual realizes their own capabilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to their community' (World Health Organization, n.d.). It is a concept that encompasses all dimensions of human nature and is the basis for the well-being and effective functioning of individuals and societies that favour dignified living conditions and humanization (Cano et al., 2020).

Therefore, mental health requires not only material factors such as employment, housing, or road infrastructure but also immaterial aspects such as equity, security, hope, respect for difference, and strengthened social capital, such as peaceful possibilities for coexistence and social solidarity (Mukashema & Mullet, 2013). Consequently, the daily dynamics of violence can have grave consequences on mental health, as they can generate suffering, trauma, depression, anxiety, breaks in social bonds, destroy action of life projects, also sowing hopelessness, mistrust, indifference, and isolation (Cano et al., 2020). Promoting reconciliation, as 'working through' these issues in DMT, is a way to heal wounds and improve the mental health of those who have experienced multiple forms of violence. Especially when the need of social reconciliation goes beyond conflict-affected societies and includes different forms of violence reflected on daily lives. Political as well as other chronic forms of violence undermine social relations, contributing to societal divisions and grievances, adversely affecting people's well-being, and the ability to share social space (Oettler & Rettberg, 2019).

Migration: I'm (Not) Here, and I'm (Not) There

Migration is understood as the movement of a person or a group of people from one place of residence to another, either within a country or across an international border, temporarily or permanently (International Organization for Migration & United Nations, n.d.). It is a complex and multifaceted phenomenon that encompasses economic, political, psychological, social, and cultural factors. It involves migrants and the receiving society (Cano et al., 2020) since it implies a change of culture and, therefore, a change in social codes and ways of interacting with the environment.

While it is an opportunity to exchange cultural values, learn new habits and lose the fear of the unknown and difference; migration is experienced as a traumatic process that highlights our vulnerability and challenges our mental health (Cano et al., 2020). Migration implies an identity crisis due to the loss of home, family, and friends on the one hand, and the loss of how one's existence had been configured up to that point on the other hand (Romero, 2020). Even by assuming the body as the home of identity, one could speak of a third loss in cases of dissociation, when there is a disconnection and an uprooting from one's body.

Wars, poverty, and political conflicts are some of the most important causes that push millions worldwide to leave their country (Garcia, 2018). In doing so, migrants face arriving in a society with different norms, values, rhythms, and relationships. This constitutes an attack on one's own cultural identity and will only cease to represent a problem to the extent which people integrate the new set of meanings (Garcia, 2018). However, according to the conference 'The Economic and Social aspects of Migration' organised by The European Commission and the OECD in 2003, in the European Union many migrants suffer economic and social disadvantages, even some after decades of settlement. As a result, they are excluded from civic and political participation and face discrimination, racism, and xenophobia (Rudiger & Spencer, 2003). Their marginalisation makes them easy targets for scapegoating by far-right parties, which have gained increasing support throughout Europe by exploiting fears and inciting resentment (Rudiger & Spencer, 2003). Based on a report published by the European Council on Foreign Relations in 2019, there is evidence that electoral support in Spain for anti-immigration policies has grown lately even when the country has some of the fastest-growing immigration numbers globally (Fine & Torreblanca, 2019). Attitudes are not the same towards every migrant. Nationality, ethnicity, and other visible characteristics influence the local neighbourhood response. In Spain, there may be differences between the reception that people arriving the Global South receive from that extended to those arriving from Northern countries. Therefore, it is not taken for granted that the *invasion anxiety* felt in host societies, often prompted by the media, evokes images of flimsy boats crowded with determined irregular migrants making their way towards Spanish shores or by large-scale jumps at the border-crossings at Ceuta and Melilla (Fine & Torreblanca, 2019).

Public attitudes tend to turn against migrants, especially when social welfare provisions are rolled back, and exclusion emerges as a real threat for many. The

ensuing polarisation of some groups of the population signals a process of social fragmentation. In the context of economic, social, and even physical insecurities, appreciating diversity and learning to manage differences appear particularly challenging (Rudiger & Spencer, 2003).

When people move from one place to another, they need to establish new relationships with those who were there before them, they need to negotiate their place (Celestina, 2015). In this process of recognising and integrating new practices and meanings, social reconciliation means restoring divisions between migrants and the communities in which they arrive. In such contexts, Dance Movement Therapy can provide a temporary home -a safe space- which facilitates recovery and integration (Dieterich-Hartwell & Koch, 2018), improving the relationship of migrants with their unfamiliar environment and providing tools to face new challenges (Romero, 2020).

Artistic Research as a Methodology

Working with migrants implies a scenario characterised by low regularity of attendance and complex, changing, and uncertain life situations. In response to this, the methodology must be highly reflexive, sensitive, and flexible enough to follow and elaborate on different themes as they emerge (Hills de Zárate, 2012).

Artistic research can contribute to knowledge generation by using artistic methods in collecting, analysing data, and presenting results (Mateos, 2011). This research process is characterized by an inductive approach in which the researcher has an open mind, allowing the theory to emerge from the data and, thus, a dialectical and integral path is proposed to understand human beings in their complexity (Wall, 2018). This methodology makes it possible to discover our inner landscape, making room for lived experiences, and validating emotions as sources of information and knowledge of a process that is weaving itself (Rojas, 2016).

In a DMT context, the objectives and methodology used in the psychotherapeutic process must be differentiated from the questions and methodology applied for the research; even more so when they fall on the same person, therapist and researcher. The therapeutic results takes priority over the research objectives (Mateos, 2011). Consequently, the DMT group process' objectives were the priority. In contrast, the research process focused on an open and reflective approach, collecting data and information from diverse sources, including participants' experiences.

Design and Participants:

As García (2018) points out, the framing that is built in the therapeutic relationship of DMT, especially in group sessions, can offer migrants a safe space to explore new referents and meanings. In addition, group sessions provide cohesion, promote trust, and help reduce prejudice. Thus, a group of participants was defined who voluntarily undertook a DMT psychotherapeutic process of 19 sessions, each of 90 min. In the beginning, there were five women. After several sessions, two more women

joined the group. However, in the middle of the process, three decided to withdraw for various reasons. Ultimately, the DMT sessions culminated with four women, although not all of them participated in the first session.

Participant	age	Nationality	Year of migration	Participation ratio	Reason for leaving (If applicable)
1-G	63	Ecuador	2000	13/19	NA
2-M	34	Ecuador	2002	11/19	NA
3-CA	26	Perú	2016	4/19	Found a job
4-A	24	Perú	2019	9/19	Unspecified
5-P	64	Ecuador	2003	10/19	Translated to a shelter for security reasons
6-S	32	Brazil	2018	7/19	NA
7-ML	38	Venezuela	2005	7/19	NA

Data Collection:

To develop a comprehensive understanding of the phenomena and to test validity, it was decided to converge information from multiple data sources. Mixed qualitative data collection methods allowed for and facilitated the expression of different perspectives that may have been overlooked (Carter et al., 2014). Information was collected through:

1. An initial semi-structured interview conducted before commencing the DMT sessions to collect information about each participant's background, migration experience and expectations of the research process.
2. The researcher's reflexive diary.
3. Movement videos of the researcher/therapist recorded after each session, based on her bodily experience of the session.
4. Participants' drawings and writings which recorded what they had worked on during the sessions.
5. A final semi-structured interview, which sought to delve more deeply into what was experienced during the research process and gather participants' final reflections.

Triangulation

Method triangulation promotes using several data collection methods and is frequently used in qualitative studies. The study also draws upon theory triangulation which encourages several theoretical schemes to enable the interpretation of phenomenon (Carter et al., 2014).

Reflexivity and Positionality

Reflexivity in research refers to the thoughtful, self-aware analysis of the inter-subjective dynamics between the researcher and the researched (Finlay & Gough, 2003). Practising reflexivity requires an ongoing critical self-reflection of how the researcher's social background can impact the research process, particularly the collection and analysis of the data (Wall, 2018). In addition, it requires openness and an acceptance that the researcher is part of the research (Finlay, 1998; Finlay & Gough, 2003). It has also been proposed that “reflexivity is a helpful conceptual tool for understanding both the nature of ethics in qualitative research and how ethical practice can be achieved” (Guillemin & Gillam, 2004, p. 262–263). With these considerations in mind, the researcher kept a reflexive diary, from which extracts are interspersed at key points in the account of the research process.

Positionality is related to reflexivity and describes one's worldview and the position one adopts about research and its social and political content (Holmes, 2020). Qualitative researchers consider the positionality of the researcher and the researched as core aspects of inquiry in understanding how knowledge and experience are situated, co-constructed, and socio-historically located. “This methodological expectation for reflexivity does not just allow for richer data, but also requires researchers to consider power within and around the research process to employ an ethic of care for their subjects and for the overall work of qualitative research” (Reich, 2021, p. 575).

The Researcher's Positionality

The research represents a shared space shaped by both researcher and participants. The identities of the researchers and participants impact the research process and come into play via our perceptions of others and how we expect others to perceive us (Bourke, 2014). In this case, the therapist-researcher who carried out the fieldwork, shared many feelings with these women. Castellanos-Montenegro, as a migrant woman from Latin America, became aware of her identification in this context.

I was genuinely excited to carry out this research in an organisation that a group of Colombian women created. I felt recognised and welcomed from the first day because my cultural and historical background connected me to this familiar place. I was seen as an equal, and this implied that I had to assume a reflexive position to be seen as a migrant woman without this affecting my role in the group as a dance-movement therapist. It was fundamental to cultivate my therapeutic presence even before the therapeutic process began to be able to perceive what was internal or external to me as a researcher-therapist.
(Extract Researcher's Reflective Diary, 10/09/2021)

Therapeutic presence combines two types of disposition: the readiness to adapt our approach in the encounter with the participant while avoiding the risk of fusion, thanks to the maintenance of a constant relationship with the capacity to think

(Robbins, 1998). To achieve this, it was necessary to promote the maintenance of a lucid internal observer of our own experiences, which also allowed us to think and elaborate hypotheses about the therapeutic process (García, 2007).

The Research Process

Before starting the group process, a four months' observation process was carried out in the organisation where we did the research. During that time, Castellanos-Montenegro observed recurrent bodily expressions with closed postures in the women who arrived at this institution. Not only did they have a small kinesphere¹ reflected in their gaze on the floor, their legs and arms crossed, and a soft, almost inaudible voice. They also appeared nervous, touching their fingers or with stereotypical leg movements, slow and hesitant or sudden and heavy movements. They verbalised feelings of helplessness, indignation, frustration, and anger.

These bodily expressions reflect how the migration experience is embodied in their daily lives. These experiences include not being recognized as citizens, not having the same rights as EU nationals, not feeling in a safe place, and being at constant risk of exclusion, of carrying the system's weight on their shoulders, and trying to survive in an asymmetrical reality of power in which they lose out.

Migrants often have higher levels of stress, anxiety, mistrust, irritability, depression, isolation, poor concentration, or a deterioration of the immune system than non-migrants (García & Panhofer, 2019). To be a migrant is to live daily with significant vulnerability and uncertainty about the present and the future. There is a sense of anguish connected to the lack of a sense of belonging, of not finding a home anywhere, feeling disconnected from both the past and the present, and not knowing what will become of the future (Aranda et al., 2020). Therefore, migrants often accept precarious jobs and are willing to take risks to fit into the new social reality. According to a report on the social integration of the immigrant population in Spain in 2020, 73 out of every 100 employed migrants fall outside the Social Employment Standard (ESS). Moreover, migrant women suffer more intensely than men from job insecurity and devaluation. This greater precariousness is related to asymmetrical gender patterns that have a decisive influence on the institutional organisation of the labour market in Spain, producing worse working conditions for women in general, and for migrant women, in particular (Iglesias et al., 2020).

¹ The kinesphere is the imaginary bubble that surrounds our body and our movements. It is the space used around the body by the limbs, whether standing still or moving (Ros, 2008). Is the sum of all the points and forms a volumetric area inside which the body moves (Queyquep, 2013).

The Dance/Movement Therapy Sessions

First Approach

As a general characterization of the seven women who participated in the DMT group, three had left their country for economic reasons, two to reunite with family, and the youngest two, to change their lives. Currently, most of them live with a relative (daughter, sister, mother); the two youngest live in shared flats, and another in a foundation for non-profit organization for women.

As migrants, they commented that the greatest difficulties they face are finding a job that meets their basic needs, especially for those who do not have a resident permit. They also mentioned racism as a problem that increases the difficulties of living together in a community with a different culture. During the DMT process, there was also evidence of the grief and a sense of being uprooted, reflected in the drawings made by participants in which they represented themselves without feet, with light and almost imperceptible strokes. Emigrating involves the elaboration of mourning, migratory mourning, understood as the process of reorganisation of the personality that occurs when something significant for the subject is lost: their origin (Aranda et al., 2020).

Thus, the issue of identity appears, expressed as belonging to more than one place or not fitting into any of them. Despite this, participants have identified resources to cope with their difficulties. There are support networks and other tools that help them to be more resilient. Resilience is oriented to overcome difficulties and continue, connecting to those motivations that give meaning to their existence and keep hope alive (Wengrower, 2015).

Group Process

Group members moved within small kinesphere during sessions, inhabiting the middle level, which means that participants' feet were on the ground, their knees were extended, and their gaze was forward. The participants hesitantly explored the limits of space and their bodies and preferred not to close their eyes. Their expressions were shy and superficial, with contained flow and reduced movements. There was stillness and difficulty in expressing themselves both in words and movement. A sense of restraint predominated, related to the previously mentioned closed-body expressions. In the somatic countertransference, this translates into a feeling of insecurity that presses on my body and contains energy that wants to get out but cannot find its way.

I felt a contained flow very present (...) this restricted flow, with these limits/ weights/enclosures that suffocate, that immobilise, that do not allow the free exploration of the emotion and the visceral, of the most animal thing that we carry with us. Even in me, many times, compressed air in my sternum does not push the diaphragm that does not reach my centre. (Extract Researcher's Reflective Diary, 24/03/2022).

We refer here to the framework of flow efforts as outlined by Laban (1984), who defines efforts as the inner impulses that are the origin of movement. These efforts are the external expression of the dancer's inner vital energy, which can inspire the moods that accompany the movement, which is fundamental in the experience and expression of emotions. For example, a bounded flow often corresponds to inhibition, discontinuity, and danger-related emotions. In contrast, free flow corresponds to impulse facilitation, continuity and emotions which are usually related to a sense of freedom and safety (Loman & Sossin, 2013).

Furthermore, there was an instability in attendance, and three participants dropped out of the group process. This uncertain dynamic made it difficult to consolidate the group and sustain each session.² As the process progressed, participants' explicit needs emerged, such as strengthening their support networks, relating to other women, changing routines, moving, and expressing emotions, being cared for, and feeling affection. In their non-verbal expressions, it was also perceived a need to heal and soothe, be listened to, be held, have safe spaces to release their flow, and allow themselves to open and let go.

In response to this, the group worked each session with a Chace structure: warm-up, theme development and closure (Levy, 1988), creating a routine that allowed for greater trust in the space. After each session, they expressed feelings of well-being and, above all, felt listened to, welcomed and able to share in a safe environment. In other words, they felt recognised as who they were, making possible the creation of a shared scenario based on unity and cooperation.

Over the sessions, Castellanos-Montenegro perceived changes in their range of movement as the group became more open, and they made new proposals to expand their bodies in different directions. There was also greater autonomy in the relationship and moments of integration of the experience. For example, one participant who used to draw her body as incomplete started to paint a full and more organic body. The relationship between participants was also strengthened. The role of social interaction was crucial in the process of integration. It is through social contacts and the climate created by the possibility of such contacts that people develop a sense of belonging in a particular social space (Rudiger & Spencer, 2003).

Towards the end of the process, the participants described the experience as positive. They concluded that they learned to relax, to be more open, to get to know each other and themselves better, to cooperate and realised that it is possible to learn and grow in a group, in a supportive environment. They also recognised how, through movement, it is easier to process and integrate emotions. We could also witness how they released the flow, allowing them to trust and relate to each other safely.

² The difficulty to consolidate a DMT group with migrant people is common, due to the struggles for creating routines, having a structure, holding, and feeling rooted. See more in: Romero, 2020; García & Panhofer, 2019; Aranda et al., 2020.

The Experience of Coexistence, Trust, and Empathy

As the participants interacted with each other, relationships based on complicity, respect and affection were created. They also did constant teamwork during the proposals, being aware of their differences and accepting them. They defined coexistence as the possibility of living together, knowing that everything is linked and that they are part of the same diverse unit.

Regarding trust, participants associated it with a feeling of security. For them, trust is a feeling of confidence in themselves and all the people around them. It is the conviction that everything is as it should be, being certain that there will be respect and confidentiality in human relations. In the group, trust was achieved through constant interaction and getting to know each other increasingly. Repeating the structure, creating routines, and proposing games in which the women felt they could trust each other. This trust-building was also made possible by establishing a safe place to express themselves and share their experiences with people in similar circumstances. Thus, participating in this DMT process enabled them, through movement, drawing and speaking, to establish a secure basis of trust (Hills de Zárate, 2012) from which a respectful and caring bonding process could take place.

As for empathy, the participants see it as the ability to put oneself through what another person is going through. It is seeing the other person as part of us and trying to feel what the other person feels. In that way, it also offers comfort and trust.

When asked about their experience regarding these three concepts, the participants agreed that they felt both trust and empathy and therefore felt that they were in a safe place where they could live with each other. In their words, they empathised with each other, got along well, were together, and created the group. They shared pleasant moments, knew their limitations, and yet motivated each other. They did what they could and expressed their feelings through music, dance, play and walking with different people.

Trust, empathy, and coexistence have been part of the group since day one. There has been, or rather, a space created and maintained where we can share what we want because we feel trust. The way we interact is empathetic (we listen, we smile), and we have been coexisting every day of the meeting. (Interview 7.2 MA).

Discussion

Reconciliation is a key element in creating societies with better mental health (Alzate & Dono, 2017), just as Dance/Movement Therapy is presented as a useful working tool to promote human well-being among migrants, prioritising mental health by reducing symptoms such as depression, isolation, and anxiety (García & Panhofer, 2019). Furthermore, working from DMT with people and communities whose ties have been disrupted by some circumstance implies restoring relationships and promoting a process of reconciliation both internally and interpersonally.

The key aspects of social reconciliation, which are mutual recognition, acceptance and the development of peaceful relationships, trust, empathic experience, sensitivity and respect for the needs and interests of the other party (Alzate et al., 2015), are at the same time the basic principles of a DMT process, in which the emphasis is on the interpersonal and subjective connotations of emotions; sharing the objective of removing the barriers that block the way to rebuild a community.

This possible contribution of DMT to social reconciliation could be evidenced, among other things, in the participants' liberation of the flow effort. This hypothesis arises from what was experienced during the DMT group process, where the contained flow of the participants reflected a restricted, controlled, restrained and tense image of movement. According to Rudolph Laban, there are four motion factors -efforts- common in each movement: Space, Time, Weight, and Flow. This last one is connected to continuity, emotions, control, and breathing (Laban, 1987); so, we could say that this effort of contained flow is the bodily expression of the participant's emotional state and how the migration phenomenon is embedded in their realities. Therefore, releasing the flow was possible as we worked on the consolidation of a safe space, trusting relationships, empathic communication, and respect. In other words, the movement and presence of the participants were more fluid and lighter when working on the aspects of a reconciliation process. This phenomenon raises new questions and research interests around the premise that a free/released flow effort becomes possible when people feel reconciled with themselves, the space, and the people around them. Furthermore, this hypothesis arises from the observation of bodies and non-verbal language supported with the videos recorded. Once the process finished, the videos showed a systematic oscillation between expressions of a body with bound flow, close shape, heavy weight, hesitation, and slowness on one hand, and the need of opening the gaze and the movements, of expanding, growing, shaping, resting, and liberating on the other hand. In fact, it is during one of these moments when the researcher-therapist had an insight around the flow, remembering a past bodily memory:

The image that I worked in theatre (me on the water, keeping my balance while practicing windsurfing), I was not letting it flow because I was contained, tight, in tension, and that is not the feeling of really being on the waves out in the sea. There is a grounding work that implies firmness, direction, and focus, but this does not have to translate into containment (...) Free flow is also (perhaps, and above all it is) internal. The pleasant sensation I remember from windsurfing, rather than firm weight, direct space, and sustained time, is free flow. Feeling the rippling of the water inside me, fluidly coursing through my veins, driving my movement. (Extract Researcher's Reflective Diary, 24/03/2022).

The videos gave the researcher-therapist a record of her own movement, which testified to her process of tuning in with the bodily expression of participants while connecting, from her own experience, with their feelings, states, and dispositions. The above ratifies the importance of facilitating expression through alternative languages that stimulate the different senses because when the body participates in the process,

the narrative is complemented and enriched, giving rise to new dimensions of the experience (Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica & Fundación Prolongar, 2017).

A link between reconciliation principles and Yalom's' therapeutic factors was also seen. This DMT group experience was a psychotherapeutic process in which Group Cohesiveness, Universality, Catharsis, Self-Understanding, Interpersonal Learning Inputs and Outputs, among others were developed (Yalom, 2005). These factors imply the creation of relationships based on co-existence, trust, and empathy. This reinforces the purpose of developing DMT interventions oriented to social reconciliation processes, with a practical but also theoretical basis about linkages between these concepts.

Another reflection is the necessity to build our work with an intersectional perspective. Likewise, migration cannot be defined as a monolithic phenomenon. Factors like class, citizenship, ability, age, race, sexual orientation, gender, religion, among others, affect the way we see and interpret the world around us, but also how the world sees and interprets us (Jacobson & Mustafa, 2019). Therefore, migration -as other social phenomenon- is based on complexity of political, cultural, economic, and historical contexts. Working with women from Latin-American countries is different from working with women from Spain, or any other region. There are substantial differences between a 24-year-old woman who came here looking for better life options and a 64-year-old woman who migrated to take care of her grandchildren. So, even when there are rich gains in a female gender multi-aged experience, there is also a responsibility to have a differential framework that recognises each reality and allows an accompaniment without causing damage, re-victimisation, or invisibility with our actions.

Finally, we want to make visible the figure of the *space* that arises from the participants' non-attendance at the sessions.

I ask them how they feel with so many empty chairs. We talk about the emptiness that produces sadness but also understanding because, at some point, they have been the ones to leave the chairs empty ... one of the women comments how in breathing exercises, it is more difficult for her the act of holding when she is without air and empty- than when she has air and full. (Extract Researcher's Reflective Diary, 12/05/2022).

What emerges with this image is the conclusion reached by the participants. Holding a group and engaging is more difficult when there are empty chairs, and the absence is more tangible than when people are present. Holding 'emptiness' is more difficult than holding 'fullness.' In other words, it is in the power of the group that community is built and, therefore, being in community makes possible the creation of conditions and social agreements based on human dignity and peaceful relationships.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Following Lederach's invitation, we want to assume the construction of peace as the opening of spaces to recompose human relationships (Lederach, 1997). This, added to the potentially transformative capacity of the body, leads to a work proposal in

which one's own embodied experiences can be communicated and become known through creative processes and psychosocial accompaniment as offered by dance/movement therapy. Therefore, once the experience of the group process is over, the present research reaffirms DMT as a constructive approach in the support of migrants and, in a more general way, this exploration underscores the potential applicability of DMT in various social reconciliation and peacebuilding processes, due to it being intimately connected with the constant revision and construction of our relational intersubjective reality.

Hence, integrating dance/movement therapy into existing structures and institutional frameworks for migrants, including psychosocial support programs and first reception processes, appears not only fitting but also potentially impactful. This approach could yield valuable outcomes, as DMT is a proposal for the configuration of a form of citizenship based on trust, empathy, and human coexistence, that contributes to the creation of presents and futures where life becomes possible, which is the main purpose of social reconciliation.

Limitations

This research took place in Barcelona with migrant women who were participants of the host organization. They did not know each other prior to joining the group, so they did not share any type of previous experiences together. In this sense, it is not possible to say that they reconstructed their social relationships broken by violent conflicts, or they reconciled with each other after a shared disruptive experience. Nevertheless, the results of the DMT process shows how it was possible to work around the key factors of a social reconciliation process, according to the literature review. Furthermore, this research posed new questions on social reconciliation theories and how they could be understood in the context of people who have migrated. Regarding this experience, it is revealed the need of talking about the role of host communities and the need of also having a *conciliation* process, oriented to build new scenarios that did not exist before. Future research would focus on further broadening the concept of social reconciliation beyond national borders, and on proposing dance/movement therapy experiences with heterogeneous groups that include migrants and host communities. As well as in contexts of chronic violence between antagonist parts who are in conflict, to explore how trust, empathy, and coexistence processes could be built and extended as a contribution to social reconciliation processes which are priority in some socio-political and communitarian scenarios.

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Informed Consent A model for informed consent and data protection, and a risk assessment protocol were designed, explained, and signed by all participants, the witness, and the researcher-therapist.

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