Body, Movement and Dance in Psychotherapy

Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:
http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/tbmd20

The body-mind experiences of eight midlife women elicited through the holistic practice of Neuromuscular Integrative Action (NIA)

Lynn Switzman a, Sylvia Barton b & Corinne Koehn c

a Counselling Department, Prince George Secondary School, Prince George, BC, Canada
b Faculty of Nursing, University of Alberta, Edmonton, Canada
c Counselling Specialization, School of Education, University of Northern British Columbia, Prince George, BC, Canada

Available online: 1 January 2011

To cite this article: Lynn Switzman, Sylvia Barton & Corinne Koehn (2011): The body-mind experiences of eight midlife women elicited through the holistic practice of Neuromuscular Integrative Action (NIA), Body, Movement and Dance in Psychotherapy, DOI:10.1080/17432979.2011.577995

To link to this article: http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/17432979.2011.577995
RESEARCH ARTICLE

The body-mind experiences of eight midlife women elicited through the holistic practice of Neuromuscular Integrative Action (NIA)

Lynn Switzman\textsuperscript{a*}, Sylvia Barton\textsuperscript{b} and Corinne Koehn\textsuperscript{c}

\textsuperscript{a}Counselling Department, Prince George Secondary School, Prince George, BC, Canada; \textsuperscript{b}Faculty of Nursing, University of Alberta, Edmonton, Canada; \textsuperscript{c}Counselling Specialization, School of Education, University of Northern British Columbia, Prince George, BC, Canada

(Final version received 1 April 2011)

This study explored the body-mind experiences of eight midlife women who had integrated the movement of NIA (Neuromuscular Integrative Action) into their lives. NIA is a holistic fitness programme that combines the physicality of movement with an inner focus of awareness that is ever-present, self-monitoring, and nonjudgmental. A hermeneutic phenomenological methodology guided the research and conversational interviews were used to retrieve a narrative view of experience. The findings focus on the women’s descriptions and explanations of the reflexive nature of NIA, which support interpretations of its possible uses within psychotherapy. Due to a reflexive cycle present in the practice itself and a feedback process that occurred during the study, understanding of NIA’s overall effects on the participants’ lives were revealed as discovering the wisdom of the body and becoming aware of the body’s movement. The practice of NIA offers midlife women an opportunity to reconstruct notions of the self and to give voice to reflective interpretations that could result in deeper self-discovery and healing.

Keywords: body-mind experiences; midlife women; neuromuscular integrative action; NIA; qualitative research; holistic fitness programme

Midlife is a time when many women encounter life changes. Body-mind exercise programmes have increased in popularity as a way to manage stress and enhance well-being. Traditionally, Eastern forms of physical activity such as Aikido, Tae Kwan Do, and Yoga have been referred to as body-mind exercises. Alexander Technique and the Feldenkrais Method, both originating in the West, are also known as body-mind approaches. Over the past 20 years, a new form of holistic exercise called NIA (Neuromuscular Integrative Action; Rosas & Rosas, 2004) has been added to the body-mind paradigm.

*Corresponding author. Email: lswitzman@sd57.bc.ca
The practice of NIA encourages personal creativity and self-expression and includes cardiovascular activities that support a healthy body and mind. Since its inception in 1983, NIA has grown as a popular form of fitness, integrating dance, martial arts, and body awareness techniques (La Forge, 2005).

This paper presents a qualitative study that explored the body-mind experiences of eight midlife women elicited through the holistic practice of NIA. It focuses on the reflexive cycle present in the practice itself and a feedback process that occurred during the study. The overall effects of NIA on the participants’ lives revealed as moments of deep self-discovery and healing are demonstrated through thick descriptions and explanations. The reflexive nature of NIA as a mind and body movement form offers midlife women a holistic practice by which to reconstruct notions of themselves and the world around them. As an adjunctive therapeutic means within psychotherapy, the reflexive nature of NIA offers a holistic practice for counsellors to consider and discuss during their professional relationships with midlife women.

The NIA technique is based on a process termed ‘the body’s way’ (Rosas & Rosas, 2004, p. 30) and focuses on using body movement in a manner that honours its structures and functions. Instead of viewing the body idealistically or wanting it to conform, the technique encourages moving with ease and balance by using a holistic approach. A holistic approach is based on the philosophy of holism, in that the parts are inseparable from the whole. A mind and body movement approach connects movement, breath, emotions, and the ability to be inwardly directed toward self-mastery and self-awareness without judgment (La Forge, 2005). Therefore, fitness programmes that are geared to enhancing both mental and physical aspects while incorporating an inner focus would fall under the holistic, mind and body paradigm.

NIA is based on the philosophy that ‘fitness must address the human being, not just the body’ (Rosas & Rosas, 2004, p. 17) and what is experienced while participating in NIA becomes internalised and incorporated into life. Nine basic movement forms, 13 principles, and 52 basic moves provide the foundation of NIA. The nine movement forms are derived from martial arts, dance arts, and the healing arts of Alexander Technique, Feldenkrais Method, and Yoga (Rosas & Rosas, 2004). The 13 principles specify areas related to fitness, personal growth, and lifestyle. Centred on the joy of movement, they focus on, for example, being sensitive to personal rhythms, making the correct movement choices, and experiencing positive changes in daily life. The 52 moves of NIA are designed to engage all body areas, improve fitness, and facilitate self-healing. Rosas and Rosas (2004) suggest the practice of the 52 movements fulfils therapeutic needs, such as managing developmental disabilities, respiratory ailments, arthritic conditions, and heart disease. It may also assist with cancer recovery and drug rehabilitation, as well as overcoming self-defeating behaviours; by moving the body, the potential to know oneself on a deeper level is unleashed.

There is a growing recognition of the value of exercise for physical and mental well-being (Brehm & Iannotta, 1998; Dubbert, 2002). Research has demonstrated the benefits of physical activity on depression, anxiety, mood, self-esteem, and stress reactivity (Gauvin, Rejeski, & Reboussin, 2000; Scully,
Kremer, Meade, Graham, & Dudgeon, 1998). Although there is limited research exploring body-mind exercise approaches on well-being, studies suggest that improved mood and a reduction in stress can result with the practice of Yoga (Danhuauer et al., 2008; Shapiro, Cook, Davydov, Ottaviani, Leuchter, & Abrams, 2007) and T’ai Chi (Sandlund & Norlander, 2000; Taylor-Piliae, Haskell, Waters, & Froelicher, 2006). Further, dance and movement therapy have been effective modalities in reducing depression and increasing vitality (Koch, Morlinghaus, & Fuchs, 2007), increasing psychological and physical function for women managing with fibromyalgia (Bojner-Horwitz, 2004), and facilitating healing for women who experienced childhood sexual abuse (Mills & Daniluk, 2002).

Research indicates that women participate less in physical activity across all ages compared to men, and the degree of activity decreases as women age (Statistics Canada, 2005). Moreover, there exists a need to target physical activity in women during midlife, in order to abate ill health, increase quality of life, and promote well-being in preparation for later life (Villaverde-Gutierrez, Araujo, Cruz, Roa, Barbosa, & Ruiz-Villaverde, 2006). This caused the first author to reflect on turning the age of 45, to consider midlife experiences in comparison to others, and to question the practice of NIA and positive changes in her life. Through an advanced education in counselling and in dance and movement therapy, she sought to better understand midlife women’s experiences of the practice of NIA, possible influences of NIA on well-being, and its possible uses in psychotherapy.

Method

The study used a hermeneutic phenomenological approach based on Gadamerian philosophy and grounded in van Manen (1997) inquiry. Phenomenological inquiry is concerned with how one ‘experiences the world’ (van Manen, 1997, p. 5). The aim is to construct a text that describes ‘human actions, behaviours, intentions, and experiences as we meet them in the lifeworld’ (van Manen, 1997, p. 19). As a research methodology, hermeneutic phenomenology does not ascribe to Cartesian dualism that separates the body and mind, viewing the self and the world as disengaged from each other (Koch, 1995). In contrast, hermeneutic phenomenology assumes engagement is paramount, whereby the self and the world are interpreted through the lived experience of a phenomenon in an exhaustive manner. Hermeneutic phenomenology guides a process to fully understand the experience of being in the world (van Manen, 1997), while simultaneously clarifying and elucidating the conditions in which understanding takes place (Gadamer, 1977).

Recruitment and participants

Upon receiving university Research Ethics Board approval, participants were recruited from a women’s fitness centre located in British Columbia, Canada.
The eight women who participated were 47 to 64 years of age, Caucasian, married, and all parents, except for one. One woman had a graduate degree, four held undergraduate degrees, and three had completed high school. Five women were self-employed, one woman was employed full-time, one was employed part-time, and one was a homemaker. Participants had been practicing NIA for at least once a week from one year and eight months to over five years.

**Data collection**

The women submitted journal entries that reflected their experiences of incorporating NIA into their daily lives. They either wrote freely or followed journal guide questions that focused on feelings before and after NIA, and thoughts of how NIA influenced well-being. Journals were submitted prior to the first interview and at least once again during the study. Participants engaged in three face-to-face conversational interviews which were audiotaped. Second and third interviews helped to further elucidate and verify emerging themes. Interview questions focused mainly on women’s experiences of NIA, midlife, and NIA’s influence on midlife.

**Feedback process**

During the first follow-up interview, the researcher presented the women with a written summary of their transcripts. During the second follow-up interview, a composite diagram of the initial findings from the data analysis was given, with an invitation to provide feedback and suggestions. In both follow-up interviews, time was spent clarifying and conversing further on the experience of the phenomenon being studied. Finally, after the data collection, analysis, and initial writing of the findings were completed, the researcher presented each participant with the findings as a research text. All of the participants provided verbal feedback, with one participant requiring a minor change. The intent of the feedback process was to inquire into whether we were truly speaking the same language by understanding and interpreting a shared meaning; a necessary component in the hermeneutic circle (Fleming, Gaidys, & Robb, 2003). It was also to provide for further inquiry into the reflexive cycle present in the practice of NIA itself, illuminating an even deeper understanding of NIA’s overall effects on participants and their particular revelations of self-discovery and healing. Such insights for the women occurred nonverbally and in the movement itself prior to the study, giving voice to reflective interpretations within the existential dimension of body during the study.

**Data analysis**

Interviews were transcribed, journal entries were photocopied, and data analyses proceeded as follows: (1) the text was read in its entirety several times
while listening to the audio tape, in order to gather an understanding of the overall meaning; (2) each sentence was attended to, revealing categories of meaning made up of events, happenings, or instances relative to the phenomenon (Strauss & Corbin, 1990); (3) emerging sub-themes were identified that pertained to the unitive meaning (Creswell, 2005); (4) sub-themes were merged into broad themes to reduce redundancy (Creswell, 2005); (5) emerging themes were re-checked for relevance to the parts as well as the meaning of the whole text, and feedback occurred with participants to facilitate a shared meaning; and (6) a representation of the shared meanings between the journal entries, transcripts, and the researcher’s understandings were formulated and presented to participants for further verbal feedback.

During data collection and analysis, a journal was kept by the researcher who documented reflections and decisions that were made throughout the study. A personal journal was also kept, recording the experiences, behaviours, pre-understandings, and interpretations of the researcher as they emerged to ensure objectivity and openness to the phenomenon as it was presented (Fleming et al., 2001). Through a creative process of writing and re-writing, lived experiences of the midlife women and the holistic practice of NIA were transformed into written expressions that contained both the apparent and hidden elements of the phenomenon (van Manen, 1997).

Findings

The findings presented are part of a larger set of descriptions and explanations from the women’s voices across the four existential dimensions of time, body, relationship, and space. The focus of this paper is on the existential dimension of body as revealed through the participants’ narratives and their understandings of discovering the wisdom of the body and becoming aware of the body’s movement. Due to a reflexive cycle present in the practice of NIA itself and a feedback process that occurred during the study, demonstration of these two themes elucidate some of the effects the practice had on the participants’ lives.

Discovering the wisdom of the body

Through being in the body the women spoke about re-awakening, revealing how a deep connection with the body could be made by becoming more attuned with the body. Merleau-Ponty (1962) noted that the body carries its history, along with a set of possibilities; the realisation that not all can yet be known. Clair explained:

NIA is helping me to really understand the body and the way I am in this body... I began to understand what it was to have hands, arms, and legs... being in my body and feeling it. It was like a whole new adventure.
The women also revealed that by listening to the body, they were simultaneously becoming more mindful of its wholeness, such as becoming aware of personal breathing patterns. Cassandra expressed:

Whenever I am stressed I'm not breathing deeply anymore. I'm literally working from my fifth chakra up [from the neck up], and I realise I have no connection with here [indicates the body]. I have to close my eyes and breathe…once I'm operating from my core…then breathing changes, energy changes, what I see and hear changes.

Upon reflecting on their bodies with greater attention, the women described how they experienced their bodies more fully and connected this to how they could manage life circumstances with more clarity and positive regard. Pat stated:

I feel like a being when I'm at NIA…I'm not just thinking, I'm not just doing, I'm being. So that feels wonderful…a clear sense of who I am, where I'm going, what I'm doing…I feel more comfortable with who I am.

For the women, self-healing was expressed as taking place in response to imbalances in the body as they listened and attended to their body’s wisdom. Stories focused on healing aches and pains, de-stressing from the day, and cleansing the mind of negative emotions. Cassandra revealed:

I've really learned that the body knows way before my head. There’s body wisdom and I’m just learning to unlock its communication system…It’s also how we heal. I believe that the body is the first to know if something is not right in life. If you’re in your body listening, you don’t let those little things with your body [creep up]…pain, tension headache…it’s amazing.

Not only did the women speak of learning ways they could control their physical discomforts, they were also de-stressing through their NIA workout. Katie explained:

I think it helps me to be a better person. If you’re having a bad day or you’re in a bad mood you work that through and out of you through movement…my belief is everything that happens in our lives, every trauma is in our memory, in our muscles, our cells. I think through movement we can awaken them and move them out…moving the body, your body’s way, not the way somebody tells you to move it.

Pat spoke about an experience in her life when she was quite stressed due to work constraints and how ‘things were unraveling.’ She recalled her first NIA experience:

The first night I went home, I mean how perfect because I’d been more stressed than I thought but the teacher kept saying, ‘Yes! [Shows her arm going into the air in an upward fashion and shouting] Yes!’ and now she said, ‘you’ve had enough’ and somehow we were doing, ‘No! No!’ and then we did, ‘Yes!’ and I thought, ‘Yes!!!’ It was just yes! It was like a release [said with conviction] and it was connected right through, 100% right through my body…The teacher would say ‘enough’ and my arms would go in a certain direction, the release was so powerful…I smiled all the way home, throughout the hour and for weeks after that…it was powerful.

The women described how they were integrating a sense of wholeness into themselves in relation to body, mind, and emotions. Pat reflected: ‘NIA’s more
holistic than playing ball. I play ball and its fun, social and physical, but NIA makes me think more about my emotional and physical health, and the connection between the two.’ Similarly, Rose stated: ‘I’m really focusing on what I’m doing and what it’s doing to my body. I’m not making any decisions. I’m just trying to learn to be more in tune with my body.’

Cassandra spoke about coming to know the emotional self through movement. She explained: ‘What I like about NIA is that it always brings me back to the present moment, because I get caught up in planning… and I get stressed…it just reminds me, “oh right, now is where I’m living” and then I’m assured of my well-being. It’s probably been one of the most valuable things for me.’

Becoming aware of the body’s movement

The body’s movement was an aspect that deepened the women’s exploration of who they are in their bodies, and was revealed as the interplay between music and movement used in the practice of NIA. Frannie stated:

I like the free dance sections, the music… There are no limits and it brings a sense of joy and freedom… because you can move free or you can move in a controlled way…it’s not aerobics. It’s a beautiful blend of techniques from other fields.

All participants expressed how reaching, swaying, swooping, turning, lunging, jumping, and stretching their bodies in different directions, ranges, and heights opened into their own dance experience. Carla explained: ‘It’s doing something physical and enjoying it, liking it, and not forcing myself to do it. It was the joy of movement. I truly felt that.’

The integration of music and movement is embodied in NIA routines and Katie revealed a comparison between her first NIA experience and past aerobic experience:

The music was so different than an aerobics class. It was softer, it resonated in my body, it was like, ‘wow, I love this.’ I’m not working hard, I’m dancing.’ Then we came to parts of the routine that were very primal…I could feel energy moving in my body that I’d never felt before… sensations and emotions were coming up and I was like, ‘what is this about?’ I was more focused on my breath…and it felt really good to stomp my feet or act like a goddess. By the time I was done, I was almost crying it just felt so good. It was so freeing, like I had ‘come home’.

The emotional expressions of the women were revealed as corporal experiences. Carla explained how one of her beloved birds suffered a traumatic experience, and despite doing everything possible to save its life, the bird died. A few days later Carla attended a NIA class and recalled:

When I heard the music, I had envisioned big columns and floating blossoms, and everything light and gossamer… little doves flying. It was just this vision that I got in my head, and the moves were levitation and then down to the earth. We were doing this routine and right in the middle my bird was flying towards me in slow motion…I started crying and crying… it was such a release. That was purely a NIA moment.
Cassandra shared an associated piece of music with the days when her sister had been ill, and the emotional connection she felt after attending the funeral. She recalled: ‘I found [NIA] very comforting after my sister had died, especially the music. Here I am moving, I’m alive, music is playing. I’m not alone; my sister’s here moving with me.’

The women revealed during the feedback process, which consisted of three interviews and journal writing, the reflexive nature of NIA and how meaningful the practice was in their lives. Pat reflected: ‘It’s a time for me to think about where I am in my life and how I feel. Am I happy or is there something I could do differently so that things would be better? Reworking old perspectives into new ones, Cassandra explained:

I have this insatiable need to understand why. I’m learning as I get older that sometimes there isn’t a why, it just is… Be curious and the answer will rise up. It’s the same in NIA. It will be a discussion I’ve had a week before and suddenly ‘I’ll get it’ and it shifts me… something that happened last week is suddenly here and gets opened up in a different way and I move on. I’m now a different person and it was just about being here at NIA today.

The women also spoke of experiences of NIA as a therapeutic movement that was described as being shared over time with other women in a common social context. This was translated into a deeper awareness of the capacity to age gracefully and the power to externalise a new self-image. Before beginning NIA, Lily had attempted suicide, was battling depression, and felt isolated. Providing a new direction in her life that led to teaching NIA, Lily stated:

Another thing that got me on that first day was the range of age in the class. There was 20 something [year olds] and then the oldest lady in the class was 73 years old. Some of those ladies in my class are 50, 60, years old. I think that’s what inspired me to go, to keep going, was the older ladies. ‘Wow, I want to be there at 70!’

As Clair described becoming inspired by the mature women in her NIA class, she explained a view of herself as a role model for younger women:

I was actually feeling dismayed about getting older and now I’m not… It’s very exciting as we get older. Actually, in fact you get better. I feel better now in my body than I did when I was 30… When people are relating to me they’re drawn to me. I’m an attractor for people to see what health looks like at this stage of life, getting older is great, it’s wonderful, you get to have wisdom now, you get to use all of what has come before.

Discussion

Self-identity, body, and wellness

Identity formation is fluid and evolves over a lifetime as a person changes, shifts, and matures through social contexts (Ryan & Deci, 2003). In today’s society, many women begin to shift during midlife into an autonomous personality as they release themselves from external perspectives of knowing.
to a subjective understanding that embraces their own inner resources (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, & Tarule, 1986). Some women strip away social definitions and own their self-identity much later than is expected by popular developmental theorists. Could it be that some women are laden with expectations and outside influences that re-present an identity struggle during midlife similar to adolescence?

Rubin (1979) states that identity formation occurs by internalising what we view as important in the external. In her research with midlife women, being a powerful woman was internalised as a characteristic that was to be avoided, based on a socially constructed concept that women with power are caustic, dangerous, and devouring. Similarly, Greenspan (1993) revealed that women equate feeling good with feeling powerful. Yet feeling powerful means not feeling womanly, which Greenspan suggests becomes a threat to a woman’s identity. Josselson (1996), however, maintains that: ‘Identity in women cannot be simply named, for it resides in the pattern that emerges as a woman stitches together an array of aspects of herself and her investments in others’ (p. 9).

The women’s experiences of the reflexive nature of NIA support the notion that a revision of self-identity can certainly occur during midlife. The body-mind experiences of these eight midlife women elicited through the movement of NIA revealed reflections that embraced personal explorations as they moved their bodies and contemplated what was significant in their lives. By discovering the wisdom of the body and becoming aware of the body’s movement through the holistic practice of NIA, these women reconstructed self notions related to connectedness, authenticity, and context. Through the feedback process of the research itself, further opportunities were provided for these women to experience healing, release emotions related to grief and loss, respond better to life stresses, sooth bodily discomforts, and rework self doubt into personal assuredness. Clandinin and Connelly (1991) speak of reflection as the method ‘by which one’s life and the stories of it, are restoried for purposes of reliving’ (p. 264).

During the holistic practice of NIA, the women explored sequenced movement patterns and moved their bodies to the rhythms of free dance. Dance movement therapist Chodorow (1991) discusses the relationship between play, imagination, and affect; she explains how play emerges from joy and that it is through play that emotional distress is transformed. The women in this study recognised that the physicality of movement could be combined with an inner focus on awareness that resulted in reflective interpretations beneficial for deep self-discovery and healing. Rose (1999) proposes that women create a new cultural identity that is constructed from their way of being and way of expressing their embodiment. In their narratives, the women spoke about the reflexive nature of NIA and the reconstruction of self-identities as they moved, expressed, and related differently in the world and uncovered new understandings of midlife. As Josselson (1996) notes: ‘identity…is not just a private, individual matter…it is a complex negotiation between the person and a society’ (p. 31).
**Reflexivity and the researcher**

The researcher as first author listened intently and deeply to the women’s voices and was touched by the words they shared. There were times when elements of their stories overlapped with stories she had lived, eliciting memories as well as contemplations of her present life. This speaks to Gadamer’s (1960/1994) understanding of reflexivity and the researcher, whereby merging one’s reflections with the research may be valuable to the study itself. Through the reflective analytic process, the first author became acutely aware of her participants, as well as her own, constructed self notions of connectedness and authenticity within the context of midlife. As a result of the relational nature of the research process through conversational interviews, she became better positioned to reflect on the importance of connectedness within people’s lives as she discovered new aspects of herself that have extended beyond the study. Thus, through a review of the literature, personal reflections, and listening to participants’ transitional stories, she began to understand midlife as self-defined and celebratory, not an anomaly to be avoided or hidden.

**Limitations**

The research was specific to midlife female participants and was not representative of the experiences of women who fall outside those parameters. The purpose of the study was exploratory and theoretical, designed to provide an interpretative rather than inferential body of data. The findings are not generalisable to a population but rather emphasise the fittingness of the results to similar contexts or situations. It is incumbent on the reader to decide if the results are transferable to other women in similar circumstances. Data collection and analysis procedures involved gathering thick descriptions of lived experiences and then collaborating on the interpretations with participants. Thus represented were narratives of articulate Caucasian women who were advocates of the practice of NIA and willing to engage in conversational interviews and journal writing.

**Informing psychotherapy**

Due to the reflexive cycle present in the practice itself, NIA as a body-mind movement form offers therapists an adjunctive therapeutic option to consider with clients seeking happiness, life satisfaction, and a greater sense of well-being. This may include midlife women who feel a loss after a change in roles and responsibilities, or those who may have put aside careers, special interests, or artistic endeavours in order to meet familial responsibilities. It may also include midlife women who find it difficult to express themselves with family, at work, or in daily interactions, as well as those who have found movement difficult in the past, due to other physical programmes being regimented rather than free flowing and expressive.
In addition, personal challenges revealed in therapy might be worked through alongside the holistic movement of NIA, revealing shifts in perspective that may provide further clarity, relief, or resolution within the mind’s consciousness. The reflexive nature of NIA lends itself to the use of journaling; psychotherapists may want to suggest that clients keep a journal of psychological experiences elicited through NIA that could be discussed during the therapeutic process. Other research has found that dance and movement therapy have reduced symptoms in depressed patients and facilitated healing in women who experienced childhood abuse (Koch et al., 2007; Mills & Daniluk, 2002). Mills and Daniluk (2002) suggest that therapists need to be aware of the ways in which women embody experiences and find ways to include the body in their clinical work with women.

Conclusion
This paper focused on the body-mind experiences of eight midlife women who had integrated the movement of NIA into their lives, using conversational interviews and a feedback process that occurred during the study itself. Reflective interpretations within the existential dimension of body revealed understanding related to discovering the wisdom of the body and becoming aware of the body’s movement. These findings suggest that psychotherapists could consider recommending the reflexive nature of NIA as a mind and body movement form to midlife women. The opportunity could offer women a holistic practice by which to reconstruct notions of the self related to connectedness, authenticity, and context; as well as to give voice to reflective interpretations that may result in deeper self-discovery and healing.

Notes on contributors
Lynn Switzman is a graduate of the MEd program, Counselling Specialization, at the University of Northern British Columbia, Canada. She completed her course work in dance movement therapy through the Wesley Institute in Calgary. Her research interests include a deeper understanding of women’s experiences through holistic movement approaches. As a NIA practitioner and yoga teacher, she regards meaningful expressive movement practices as transformational experiences that enhance lifestyle wellness. Professionally, she is a high school counsellor working within a diverse population integrating both psychotherapy and movement therapy.

Sylvia Barton is an Associate Professor in the Faculty of Nursing at the University of Alberta. Her program of research in the area of community and Aboriginal health is focused on critical, social, economic, and cultural influences that shape experiences of health, illness, and well-being in rural and urban settings. As a narrative inquirer sensitive to equity and social justice, she elicits from at-risk groups their perceived health needs embedded in life experiences guided by community-based, co-participatory, qualitative, and quantitative research methodologies.

Corinne Koehn is a psychologist and an Associate Professor in the Counselling Specialization, School of Education at the University of Northern British Columbia, Canada. Her research focus includes women’s issues and women’s wellness. She has a part-time private practice and is particularly interested in experiential psychotherapies.
References


