

Allow Your Creativity to Dance: Dance/Movement Therapy

Kyung Soon Ko*

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I. Introduction

This literature-based study explores how creativity is related to human life and why creativity is needed in Dance/Movement Therapy (DMT). Humans begins have always been creative; this has set them apart from other animals and served as a crucial survival mechanism. However, the value of creativity has been and continues to be underestimated due to the lack of understanding of what it comprises, as well as limited thinking that creativity only belongs to art, a field which has not traditionally been valued in Korean education. Only in recent years has the value of creativity been explored in Korea. To delve into the multi-dimensional nature of creativity, the present paper reviews existing literature on creativity in the fields of culture, education, and DMT, taking the perspective that “creativity is [...] a vital form of human capital.”¹⁾

Runco (2007) defines creativity as “divergent thinking” and sees evidence of creativity in everyday life in basic skills such as “problem solving, adaptation, learning, [and] coping.”²⁾ Runco’s theory of creativity has opened a new dimension of thinking around what creativity is, because it asserts that creativity does not just belong to artists, musicians, dancers, expressive arts therapists, or others who make a living through their artistic talents. Runco’s ideas about creativity have broken down some of

* Adjacent Faculty, Seoul Women’s University, dmt.edu.korea@gmail.com

1) M. A. Runco(2007), *Creativity therapies and themes: Research, development, and practice*(CA: Elsevier), p.ix.

2) Ibid., p.x.

the biases about what creativity is, broadly applying this quality to the inventiveness and flexible thinking that we all need to adjust to their changing lives. In describing creativity, Runco (2012) choose words such as “originality” and “effectiveness.”³⁾ From this perspective, creativity is not limited to how it may be currently used, but considered as an essential quality for moving humanity forward. It is important to review how both the world of education and Korean culture at large perceive creativity. Next, one should consider how play enhances creativity. If the creativity improves problem-solving skills as Runco believes, how important might it be in DMT, which requires a creative process for psychological, mental, and emotional well-being.

II. Creativity in Culture, Education, and Play

1. Creativity in Culture

Our Korean community is strongly based on Confucianism, an ethical and philosophical system that serves as the foundation for education in East Asia (Chuang, 2012).⁴⁾ The long-standing tradition and influence of this philosophy has created major differences between Eastern and Western educational ideologies and systems (Chuang, 2012;⁵⁾ Kim 2009;⁶⁾ Oyserman, Coon, & Markus, 2002;⁷⁾ Lee, 2001⁸⁾). Key components of Confucianism include the value of hierarchical relationships and group harmony, as expressed through the activities of one’s daily life. These ways of thinking affect individuals’ decisions, actions, and judgments in educational settings (Kim, 2009).⁹⁾ Those raised with Confucian values may fear things that are different and unusual because routines and patterns make them feel safer. Such values may also affect how open individuals are to new possibilities and divergent thinking and ideas: the core essence of creativity.

Kim (2009)¹⁰⁾ studied the impact of Confucianism on creativity by comparing the Confucianism (Eastern–Western Perspective Scale)¹¹⁾ scores with the creativity scores (Torrance Tests of Creative

3) M. A. Runco & G. J. Jaeger(2012), The standard definition of creativity, *Creativity Research Journal* 24(1), pp.92-96.

4) S. F. Chuang(2012), Different instructional preferences between Western and Far East Asian adult learners: A case study of graduate students in the USA, *Instructional Science: An International Journal of the Learning Sciences* 40(3), pp.477-492.

5) Ibid.

6) K. H. Kim(2009), Cultural influence on creativity: The relationship between Asian culture and creativity among Korean educators, *Journal of Creative Behavior* 43, pp.73-93.

7) D. Oyserman, H. Coon, & M. Kimmelmeier(2002), Rethinking individualism and collectivism: Evaluation of theoretical assumptions and meta-analyses, *Psychological Bulletin* 128, pp.3-72.

8) J. K. Lee(2001), Impact of Confucian concepts of feelings on organizational culture in Korean higher education, *Radical Pedagogy* 3(1), pp.1-21.

9) K. H. Kim(2009).

10) Ibid., p.75.

Thinking-Figural)¹²⁾ of 184 Korean educators. It was demonstrated that “Confucianism is negatively related to creativity. Specifically, some elements of Confucianism—Unconditional Obedience, Gender Inequality, Gender Role Expectations, and Suppression of Expression—may present cultural blocks to creativity.”¹³⁾

A study by Kim, Lee, Chae, Anderson, and Laurence (2011) used a sample of 227 Americans and 352 Koreans to research the relationship between creativity and Confucianism and its impact on the respective populations. The results indicated that “Koreans have strikingly more Confucian ideals than Americans, whereas Americans have more creative strength” and that “higher level(s) of Confucianism [are] related to lower level(s) of creativity and suppression of expression.”¹⁴⁾ There are major negative connotations regarding creative people in Korea. Such people are accused of a predilection for independence and deviance,¹⁵⁾ and considered to lack the kind of social responsibility cherished in the local culture.¹⁶⁾ This social responsibility meshes with the philosophical background of Confucianism, which values obedience and devotion to collective familial norms and does not encourage the needs of the individual or the focus on individuality.¹⁷⁾

Together, the afore-mentioned studies demonstrate that levels of creativity and expression are influenced by one’s cultural background. From a Western psychological perspective—which honors the strength of individualism and self-actualization—if a culture devalues creative growth and self-expression, an individual will have difficulty flourishing.

2. Creativity in Education

Creativity is a common subject in education; however, it seems to be considered differently in the West than in the East. Runco (1991) emphasized three ways that educators and related professionals can support students in developing creativity: providing opportunities to practice creative thinking, valuing and appreciating students’ efforts at creativity, and modeling creative behaviors. These aspects require openness and may be promoted during times of play or recreation.

Nachmanovitch (1990) distinguished play from more structured games, stating that “play is

11) Ibid., p.92.

12) E. P. Torrance(2008), *The Torrance tests of Creative thinking norms—technical manual figural (Streamlined) Forms A and B*(Bensenville, IL: Scholastic Testing Services).

13) K. H. Kim(2009), p.73.

14) K. H. Kim, H. E. Lee, K. B. Chae, L. Anderson, & C. Laurence(2011), Creativity and Confucianism among American and Korean, *Creativity Research Journal* 23(4), p.357.

15) D. W. Chan, and L. Chan(1999), Implicit theories of creativity: Teachers’ perception of student characteristics in Hong Kong, *Creativity Research Journal* 12, pp,185-195.

16) W. Lim, and J. A. Plucker(2001), Creativity through a lens of social responsibility: Implicit theories of creativity with Korean samples, *Journal of Creative Behaviors* 35, pp,115-130.

17) I. S. Choe(1995), *Motivation, subjective experience, family and academic achievement in talented Korean high school students*(Unpublished doctoral dissertation), University of Chicago.

different from a game; play is the free spirit of exploration, doing and being for its own pure joy. [A] game is an activity defined by a set of rules, like baseball, sonnet, symphony, diplomacy.”¹⁸⁾

Suh’s (2017) study showed how a therapeutic drumming intervention effectively helped a sample of 65 middle school students in Korea to prevent school violence. A school music teacher and a music therapist collaboratively designed and implemented a 10-week program that mainly used dyadic, synchronized, and improvisational drumming based on the Social Emotional Learning core competencies. Results drew on “somatic responses to drumming, emotional processing, group cohesion, empathy, relationship with peers, self-esteem, and self-regulation.”¹⁹⁾

The above studies emphasize how creative play and the arts promote emotional support and mental health in students, helping to prevent destructive behaviors such as school violence, bullying, and suicide. Indeed, Runco (2007) states that “creative efforts can contribute to positive health. Creativity can help the individual maintain both psychological and physical health.”²⁰⁾ Creative expression like this can be promoted through simple practices like art class.

In the expressive arts therapy field, creativity is a fundamental element. The question is then how the traditional education system can borrow from this field to support the nourishment of creativity. Nachmanovitch (1990) worries that the conventional education system discourages creativity, with creativity fading as students advance within the traditional fixed, knowledge-based system. Nachmanovitch advocates for mobilizing the right brain (traditionally associated with creativity), which has been devalued in modern education.²¹⁾

Nachmanovitch (1990) emphasizes the importance of flexibility and the creative mind in education because the instructor’s careful plans will never fully capture what may happen in real life. As no one can know what will be happen in the future, every moment is a creative improvisation, following the flow of a given situation.

You cannot plan these things. You have to teach each person, each class, and each moment as a particular case that calls out for particular handling. Planning an agenda of learning without knowing who is going to be there, what their strengths and weakness are, how they interact, prevents surprises and prevents learning. The teacher’s art is to connect, in real time, the living bodies of the students with the living body of the knowledge.²²⁾

18) S. Nachmanovitch(1990), *Free play: Improvisation in life and art*(New York: Penguin Putnam), p.43.

19) Eun. Sil Suh(2017), The use of group drumming With Korean middle school students in school violence prevention, 『인간행동과 음악연구』 14(1), p.85.

20) M. A. Runco(2007), p.116.

21) S. Nachmanovitch(1990), *Free play: Improvisation in life and art*(New York: Penguin Putnam), p.20.

22) Ibid., p.20.

This statement echoes the training and preparation that therapists go through to conduct psychotherapy sessions, and begs the question of why educators tend to run from creative energy, mind, and soul. One possible reason might be because improvisation carries uncertainty and a lack of control, which makes people fearful.

3. Creativity in Play

A lack of play can lead to depression. In terms of Laban Movement Analysis (LMA), it can be described as even phrasing effort qualities: there is no flow of effort modulation, which can be observed in all living creatures. Nachmanovitch (1990) says that creativity can be enhanced by play, which represents the beginning of creation and is a fundamental resource in human life. Play develops and changes through the innate creativity within each person. Nachmanovitch feels that when human beings move away from real play, they cut themselves off from the power of their creative thinking. To move past the current challenges that face humanity, a creative attitude and space for play are essential.²³⁾

Carl Jung (1923) stated that “the creation of something new is not accomplished by the intellect but by the play instinct acting from inner necessity. The creative mind plays with the objects it loves.”²⁴⁾ Likewise, Nachmanovitch (1990) describes play—based on his experience as an improvisational artist—as a fundamental creative inspiration in various areas of human life ranging from art to philosophy to religion. His rich personal essay-style book *Free Play* is interwoven with statements from artists and psychologists such as Carl Jung, Martha Graham, and William Blake.²⁵⁾ Graham states:

There is vitality, a life force, an energy, a quickening, that is translated through into action, and because there is only one of you in all time, this expression is unique and if you block it, it will never exist through any other medium and will be lost.²⁶⁾

As Nachmanovitch (1990) reminds readers about what the arts can do for humanity, the question arises as to what would happen to students if creativity, play, and art were devalued and minimized in the educational system. There is serious concern that such students might have a decreased ability to overcome challenges and find beauty in life’s difficult times.²⁷⁾ Nachmanovitch (1990) describes how a child learns how to interact with humans, animals, and his or her own imagination through play. Play provides opportunities to learn flexibility in one’s cognition and behaviors, blending physical shapes,

23) Ibid.

24) Carl Jung(1974), *Psychological types*. In H Read, G. Alder, & W. McGuire(Eds.), *Collected Works of C. G. Jung*(Vol, 6)(Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press), p.123

25) S. Nachmanovitch(1990), p.42.

26) Agnes de Mille(1991), *The Life and Work of Martha Graham*(Random House), p.264.

27) S. Nachmanovitch(1990), p.42.

inner mental structures, inner images, and rules. In this way play naturally increases the ability to improvise, a competency at the heart of developing and refining the coping skills needed to move with the continuous changes taking place in society.²⁸⁾ Nachmanovitch describes how he surrenders to uncertainty, emphasizing how life exists in every moment of improvisation:

Improvisation is acceptance, in a single breath, of both transience and eternity. We know what might happen in the next day or minute, but we cannot know what will happen, we lock in the future and insulate ourselves against those essential surprises. Surrender means cultivating a comfortable attitude toward not-knowing, being nurtured by the mystery of moments that are dependably surprising, ever fresh.²⁹⁾

III. Creativity in Dance/Movement Therapy

While DMT may hold great promise for promoting creativity in Eastern cultures like that of Korea, there are important elements to the Western cultural history of DMT that may help to explain why this practice has been slow to be accepted. Bartenieff (1975) found that DMT emerged from Western dance “with certain key notions: spontaneity, authenticity of individual expression, awareness of the body, themes that stressed a whole range of feelings and relationships.”³⁰⁾ Dance/movement therapists capture this nonjudgmental attitude toward personal preferences in movement and expression through uninterrupted improvisation.

Creativity has long been valued in both psychology and artistic performance (Arieti, 1978;³¹⁾ Arnheim, 1974,³²⁾ 1972³³⁾). The dance movement therapist, Levy (2005) emphasized the importance of creativity in the practice, learning, and teaching of DMT. As DMT uses full body expression to promote healing, creativity is a necessary and inherent element in all sessions for teachers, students, and clients.³⁴⁾ Hammond-Meiers (1992) posits that engagement in this full body expressive approach can support clients in moving away from the obsessive thinking patterns that characterize personality disorders: The creative interventions used in DMT promote changes in body movement patterns, which may then affect thinking patterns.³⁵⁾

28) Ibid.

29) Ibid., pp.21-22.

30) I. Bartenieff(1975), *Dance therapy: A new profession or rediscovery of an ancient role of dance*, In H. Chaiklin(Ed.), *Marian Chace: Her paper*(Maryland, DC: American Dance Therapy Association), p.246.

31) S. Arieti(1978), *On schizophrenia, phobias, depression, psychotherapy, and the farther shores of psychiatry* (New York, NY: Brunner/Mazel), p.1.

32) R. Arnheim, R.(1974), *Art and visual perception*(Rev. Ed.)(Berkeley, CA: University of California Press), p.21.

33) R. Arnheim, R.(1972), *Toward a psychology of art*(Berkeley, CA: University of California Press), p.51.

34) F. Levy(2005), *Dance/movement therapy: A healing art*,(Reston, VA: National Dance Association and American Alliance for Health, Physical, Education, Recreation and Dance), p.2.

The value placed on creativity in the Western practice of DMT may be another cultural barrier to acknowledge in the importation of DMT to Eastern cultures. Niu (2013) stated Confucian-heritage societies are, overall, collectively oriented, emphasizing the individual's relatedness with others, promoting social conformity, and valuing maintaining harmony rather than seeking independence or individualization.³⁶⁾ To acknowledge the costs of supporting such values and behaviors, Confucian values may also encourage submissive, introverted, and close-minded societies that do not promote creative personalities (Gough, 1979).³⁷⁾

Among DMT pioneers, Blanche Evan emphasized individual creative dance and her approach was developed based on Adlerian's Self Psychology. Evan described her work as "creative dance as therapy."³⁸⁾ She used creative approaches, such as being an animal, expressing color, sensing texture in movement as a projective techniques for psychotherapy purpose.³⁹⁾ The creative imagination promoted through an open-studio style of experiential art practice has similar underlying concepts to authentic movement training, as both are based on Jung's theory of active imagination. Chodorow (1997) stated that "sometimes active imagination takes places mainly inside the mind. Other times, the imagination is given form through painting, drawing, sculpting, dancing, writing, or in other ways."⁴⁰⁾ In authentic movement training, participants are given enough time to explore their creativity, following their active imagination in a safe environment in which a range of arts supplies are offered. At its core, authentic movement is not about moving, per se, but about being moved by following and listening to one's inner impulse, as opposed to waiting passively for outside direction. Originality and new ways of thinking come from one's own inner conversation. Through this practice, creativity is unlocked by breaking down the rigid structures that block the flow of one's mind and inner needs and get in the way of listening to and following one's own creative impulses.

Runco (2007) defined creativity as a kind of divergent thinking that plays a role in everyday life, promoting a better quality of life through "problem solving, adaptation, learning, [and] coping."⁴¹⁾ Similarly, Nachmanovitch (1990) believed play to be the beginning of creativity and a fundamental resource in human life.⁴²⁾ In this same way, DMT uses creative ideas, processes, and interventions to promote a healthier and happier body and mind.

35) J. A. Hammond-Meiers(1992), *A phenomenological investigation of the experience of dance/movement Therapy*(Unpublished doctoral dissertation), University of Alberta.

36) W. Niu(2013), Confucian ideology and creativity, *The Journal of Creative Behavior* 46(4), pp.274–284.

37) H. G. Gough(1979), A creative personality scale for the Adjective Check List, *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 37, pp.1398–1405.

38) F. J. Levy(2005), *Dance/movement therapy: A healing art*. Reston, VA(National Dance Association and American Alliance for Health, Physical, Education, Recreation and Dance), p.29

39) Blanche Evan(1964), The child's world: Its relation to dance pedagogy(a collection of out of print article, New York: Self Published), p.20.

40) J. Chodorow(1997), *Jung on active imagination*(Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press), p.7.

41) M. A. Runco(2007), p.x.

42) S. Nachmanovitch(1990), *Free play: Improvisation in life and art*(New York: Penguin Putnam), p.43.

IV. Creative Implications for the Creative Process

McNiff (2012) says that “art offers different and complementary ways of knowing”⁴³⁾ emphasizing how, in arts-based supervision, “opening to uncertainty and unexpected outcomes in artistic enquiry requires courage and the use of aesthetic sensitivity as [the] primary guide.”⁴⁴⁾ McNiff feels that the research community is biased against recognizing the importance of creativity, as researchers tend to be conservative and wait for new ideas to be validated in another field. McNiff urges expressive arts therapists to not be afraid of the new knowledge and wisdom that is available, and to not waste time due to fear of the unknown or a new approach to discovering knowledge.

McNiff (2012) promotes the benefits of using creativity as a tool in clinical supervision, a space and process that provides mutual growth for both the supervisor and the supervisee. McNiff also emphasizes the importance of arts-based research “like the chemist in the lab, the art-based researcher conducts direct experimentation with the materials of expression and imagination in creative writing, dance, dramatic improvisation, drawing, paintings, performance, playing musical instruments, singing and working with photography, video, digital technology and other media.”⁴⁵⁾ McNiff believes that “as art-based research establish[es] itself, the use of artistic intelligences by applied arts professions to solve problems and understand experience makes complete sense and suggests endless possibilities.”⁴⁶⁾

Hervey (2000) emphasized the importance of artistic inquiry in DMT research, encouraging and valuing creative practices like drawing, dancing, and singing to better know and understand both one’s self and one’s data as a researcher. This author personally experienced the power of embracing such practices in growing as a researcher, therapist, and student.⁴⁷⁾

Ko (2015) found integrating nonverbal expressive tools in clinical supervision very helpful in deepening reflection and authentic expression in Korean DMT students. For example, Ko shared visual artistic data for movement-based supervision. Starting with drawing inner images of current clinical challenges, students would then transfer these inner images to bodily movement. After one participant was able to shift from a tightened, tangled use of space to creating open space between people during her movement practice, she was able to uncover “different perceptions of boundaries, that her family members were not as tightly tangled as she had thought, and that she needed to maintain her personal boundaries to have freedom in her family.”⁴⁸⁾ This creative process helped her

43) S. McNiff(2012), Special issue on art-based research: Opportunities and challenges, *Journal of Applied Arts and Health* 3(1), p.9.

44) Ibid., p.11.

45) Ibid., p.8.

46) Ibid., p.6.

47) L. W. Hervey(2000), *Artistic inquiry in dance/movement therapy*(Charles C. Thomas, Springfield, IL), p.4.

to see something profound and meaningful that she had not been able to see or process before.

Rogers (1993) saw value in using the expressive arts, arguing that practices like movement, singing, drawing, and writing bring creativity: He asserted, “By moving from art form to art form, we release the layers of inhibition that have covered your originality, discovering your uniqueness and special beauty.”⁴⁹⁾ On the subject of the creative process in Authentic movement, Chodorow (1997) stated that:

the advantage of this method [active imagination] is that bring a mass of unconscious material to light. Drawing, painting, and modeling can used to the same end. Once a visual series has become dramatic, it can easily pass over into auditive or linguistic sphere and give rise to dialogues and the like.⁵⁰⁾

In sum, creativity in Korea has been deeply influenced by Confucianism, which strongly promotes harmony, community, and hierarchy. If change is inevitable, then creativity must be embraced as the key to a door which has not yet been opened. Creativity is fuel for the divergent thinking of problem solving, a core skill in navigating difficulties from one’s personal life to those of one’s larger society. In exploring the power and potential of creativity in settings such as the classroom, a DMT session, and one’s personal inner space, educators and healers must ask themselves if they are truly making space for imagination and creativity, or if they are afraid of attempting new things. If educators or therapists find that they are unwilling to try new creative approaches, they should explore what the source of this reluctance is.

V. Conclusion

This literature review highlights a number of important aspects about how and why to bring creativity into Korea’s cultural communities, classrooms, and psychotherapy sessions. Creativity is not only reserved for artists, but everyone is born with an innate capacity to develop this quality. Unfortunately, a majority of the literature indicated that Korean cultural elements do not fully nourish creative thinking, behaviors, and mind. Creativity can be enhanced through creative arts activities and play. Artists, educators, and therapists should value and promote creativity to offer the highest quality educational and clinical services, and should make continual efforts to promote creativity in the live of

48) Kyung Soon Ko(2016), Using bodily movement in supervision for expressive arts therapy students: A case study, *The Arts in Psychotherapy* 48, p.15.

49) Natalie Rogers(1993), *The creative connection: Expressive arts as healing*(Palo Alto, CA: Science and Behavior Books), p.43.

50) Joan. Chodorow(1997), *Jung on active imagination*(Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press), pp.154-155.

others. Therefore, dance/movement therapists need to stay in touch with the core value of creativity, because we meets people with problems who need to use creative problem-solving skills to break away from patterns of problem thinks. They should continuously practice and remember this truth again and again. Art is where creativity dances, and the profession of DMT is uniquely grounded in this value. So, dance movement therapists should use their creativity to dance, so that others may do so, too!

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Ko, Kyung Soon

Seoul Women's University

To understand what creativity is and why creativity is needed in Dance/Movement Therapy, this literature-review based study explores how creativity is related to human life, with a focus on the cultural influences of Confucianism, as well as on education in Korea. In Korea, creativity has been underestimated due to a lack of understanding of the full nature of its quality, and has been seen as the exclusive purview of artists. A review of the literature has uncovered many benefits of the creative arts process in both psychotherapy and clinical supervision. As the creative arts process can offer a solution for personal or societal difficulties, cultural sensitivity, openness, and self-reflection around creativity are crucial qualities for educators, therapists, and supervisors. These qualities are therefore essential for providing excellent educational or clinical services, and professionals in these fields should continuously seek to dance with this space of creativity.

Keywords: Creativity (창조성), Dance/Movement Therapy (무용/동작치료), Confucianism (유교사상), Cultural Difference (문화적 차이), Creative Play (창조적 놀이)