

To: Lisa Ullmann Travelling Scholarship Fund

4th European Congress on Psychomotricity 'Crossing Borders' Amsterdam May 21-23 2008

Dear LUTSF

Please find my report following the award of a Lisa Ullmann Travel Scholarship. I am very grateful for this support.

One of the European colleagues I met at the congress, Graca Santos from Portugal, became a particularly important part of my time in Amsterdam. I attended her workshop as well as her paper, and she has invited me to develop an Erasmus (European) exchange between our two universities (mine is University of Leeds, hers is University of Évora). This is particularly exciting, as I found her research very useful and I look forward to developing further the opportunities for us to work together. We were both presenting about work with aggressive children, and had similar results following DMP in terms of the reduction of aggressive behaviours as rated by teachers and the development of empathy.

In my application for funding, I defined a successful outcome as:

- Having made at least one new contact that I can follow up in terms of shared research interests.
- Coming home feeling stimulated and renewed.
- Having learned some new information and / or practical approaches that will enhance my teaching.

I am looking forward to following up on the first of these. I certainly came home feeling stimulated and renewed, and have loads of new information and ideas on which I can build for both teaching and research.

I intend to submit my report to the professional newsletter *e-motion ADMP Quarterly*.

Yours sincerely,

Bonnie Meekums

Report on 4th European Congress on Psychomotricity 'Crossing Borders' Amsterdam May 21-23 2008

Bonnie Meekums, PhD, SrDMT, Hon Fellow ADMP UK

I applied to go to this conference because it has been some time since I was able to attend a conference that would expand my horizons in movement and dance. I wanted to find out what psychomotricity is, and what its relationship is to Dance Movement Psychotherapy (DMP). The title of the conference seemed apt.

The profession of psychomotricity dates back to the 1930s and now exists throughout Europe except the UK, with 15 members of the European Forum of Psychomotricity (EFP). The EFP was formed in 1996, the same year as registration of DMP practitioners became available in the UK for the first time through the then named Association for Dance Movement Therapy (ADMT, now ADMP to reflect the psychotherapy focus of the profession).

Psychomotricity is practised both in therapy and education, and has a strong evidence base. On their website

(http://www.psychomot.org/european_forum_psychomotricity.htm)^[i], the EFP state that: 'Based on a holistic view of the human being, on the unity of body and mind, psychomotricity integrates the cognitive, emotional, symbolical and physical interactions in the individual's capacity to be and to act in a psychosocial context'. DMP, on the other hand as defined by ADMP

(<http://www.admt.org.uk/whatis.html>)^[ii], is: 'the psychotherapeutic use of movement and dance through which a person can engage creatively in a process to further their emotional, cognitive, physical and social integration.' The ADMP website goes on to say that the profession is 'founded on the principle that movement reflects an individual's patterns of thinking and feeling.' So, the goals are very similar but DMP places a very clear emphasis on two things: the creative process and psychotherapy.



The Friday closure speech

Photo courtesy of EFP accessed 1.7.08 at

<http://picasaweb.google.com/efp2008workshops/FridayClosure/photo#5205831079620598338>

I went in part to present some of my own research, but more importantly I wanted to meet people from other countries and engage in dialogue with them. The project began well. On arrival at my hotel I was thrown together with someone else who was not in fact booked into my conference, but was a Spanish chap working for an NGO. We were both waiting for our rooms to be ready. I had been travelling since half way through the night, and he had had no sleep at all having come from Israel. He gallantly nevertheless insisted that I take the first room available. We fell into easy conversation, having both been volunteers abroad in our youth. I wished I could have met up with him again but it was like one of those golden moments for which we should be grateful, that come and go like feathers on the wind.

Even more chance was the fact that despite the fact that we had made our own choices about hotels and paid for them, the only other two presenters in the little forum to which I presented were both booked into the same hotel. One was a Russian, the other Portuguese, and all of us are dance movement (psycho)therapists. We got to hang out together a fair bit, and welcomed into our gang a trainee in psychomotricity, a Filipina who now lives in Germany. So, one of my boxes was well and truly ticked; a truly international bunch.

One of these European colleagues, Graca Santos from Portugal, became a particularly important part of my time in Amsterdam. I attended her workshop as well as her paper, and she has invited me to develop an Erasmus (European) exchange between our two universities (mine is University of Leeds, hers is University of Évora). This is particularly exciting, as I found her research very useful and I look forward to developing further the opportunities for us to work together. We were both presenting about work with aggressive children, and had similar results following DMP in terms of the reduction of aggressive behaviours as rated by teachers and the development of empathy ^[iii].

By far the most inspiring speaker for me was the German Dance Movement Psychotherapist and psychologist Sabine Koch. Like all psychologists, she has a talent for designing simple and elegant experiments that explore *how*DMP works. Her keynote speech was entitled 'Embodiment: the influence of movement qualities on affect, attitudes and cognition'. Her research has shown for example that sharp movements produce more negative emotions than smooth movements. What is more, if people move in an approach mode, they evaluate a neutral visual stimulus more positively than when asked to move in an avoidance mode.



Sabine Koch at the conference

Photo courtesy of EFP accessed 1.7.08 on

<http://picasaweb.google.com/efp2008thursday/ThursdayMorningKeynoteLectures9001030/photo#5205887709766436194>

The conference has some really good entertainment, including gymnastics displays, a canal cruise and a party. There was also a good balance between sitting down and listening and being active in workshops as far ranging as DMP on the one hand and learning how to balance on equipment like very large balls, spin plates and do martial arts moves.

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Report compiled 4.7.08

Acknowledgement: the travel cost of this project was supported by the Lisa Ullmann Travelling Scholarship Fund.

[i] Web information accessed 1.7.08.

[ii] Web information accessed 1.7.08.

[iii] A report of my research can be found at: Meekums, B. 2008. Developing emotional literacy through individual Dance Movement Therapy: a pilot study. *Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties*, 13 (2): 95-110.