

**Research Evaluation Report: The Confidence Project, Untold Dance Theatre, Bristol**

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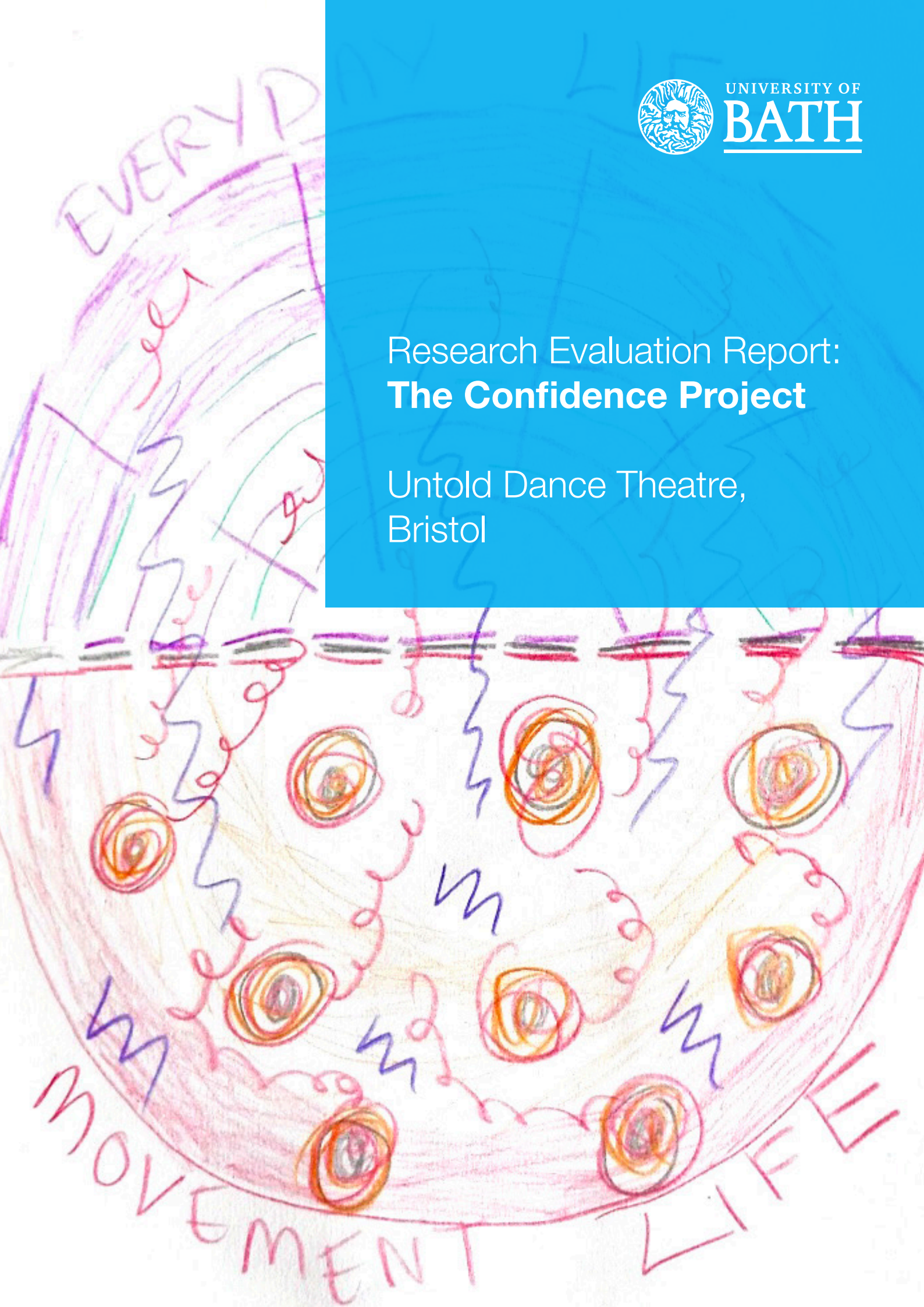
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Research Evaluation Report:  
**The Confidence Project**

Untold Dance Theatre,  
Bristol



# Research Evaluation Report: **The Confidence Project** Untold Dance Theatre, Bristol

<https://untolddancetheatre.com/outreach/>

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## Summary

*I actually felt really quite powerful in my own right. I think that something that has changed within me. I feel bigger, I feel taller... And I think I articulate more confidently and with more authority. That's how I feel. It contrasts from how I was feeling yesterday - that sense of extreme vulnerability - and how that can be transformed by movement.*  
(Rachel, aged 67, post-workshop comment)

This report outlines the research evaluation process that was undertaken to explore the experiences of women participants who engaged in somatic movement workshops as part of 'The Confidence Project' - led by Victoria Hearne, Untold Dance Theatre, Bristol, and Karin Rugman, Bath Spa University (funded by the Arts Council England). Using arts-based qualitative methods (body mapping, interviews, reflective journals) the evaluation was developed collaboratively as part of the somatic workshop design (pre, post and follow up), while being conducted and analysed independently. The body mapping methodology was informed by a feminist approach to the creation of knowledge through embodied movement and generated shared insights about the gendered contours of 'confidence'. The report documents how the experience of movement is gendered in ways that constrain and enable women's confidence to move through the world. Second, how somatic practices enabled 'shifts' in women's embodied knowledge and confidence to 'take up space' and move more 'comfortably' in the world (reduced pain, anxieties, tension and increased self-belief, expression and connection). Finally, how women experienced the care-full ethos of the workshop organization and facilitation both individually and collectively.

## 1. Background - The Confidence Project (TCP)

TCP originally sought to develop a community based dance/movement based intervention for women experiencing low confidence, self-esteem and common mental health issues (eg., depression, anxiety, disordered eating, body disaffection) as an outreach activity of the Women Wise performance (Untold Dance Theatre production). Informed by the somatic work of Ruth Way, Karin Rugman and Sondra Fraleigh (2015) amongst other movement practitioners, the free two day workshop (April 2018) aimed to create an intergenerational, collective space for women to explore somatic practices (involving sound, touch, sight, rhythm) to develop greater embodied confidence. Twelve women participated in the process of experimenting with movement, habits and capacities, they ranged in age (21 to 69) and dance experience.

Somatic movement focuses on the embodied experience of movement rather than movement or dance created for the visual experience of others. The workshop created a space for women to experience their body's capacity for moving-learning, as a contrast with public spaces where women's bodies are often objects of a patriarchal gaze (feminized beauty norms, body image norms, sexualized, etc). Vicki and Karin created a sequence of movement practices that involved visualization, sensory engagement, specific movement elements, mindfulness, empathy, trust and self-reflection to explore body and thought restrictions, release, confidence and trust. The workshop developed incrementally from individually focused practices into a powerful collective improvised movement practice created through group interactions.

Movement practices were choreographed to creatively engage the senses and bring attention to new possibilities for moving and relating (as individual and collective bodies) beyond restrictive habits and thoughts (and gendered patterns). In contrast to behaviour change interventions that proscribe and promote 'physical activity for (mental) health', the somatic movement practices were designed as an invitation for women to 'play with' mind-body, self-other, self-world connections in learning to embody confidence together (on playfulness as a counter-depressant see Fullagar, 2008). The pedagogic ethos of the workshop was less concerned with instruction on technique, and more concerned with enabling experimental, playful and 'care-full' movement. This implicitly feminist ethos recognises how embodied movement is gendered in particular ways that limit, as well as open up new freedoms. Women's embodied histories are shaped by everyday power relations (gender, age, race, class, sexuality, disability, illness etc) in their work, leisure and home lives. Hence, somatic experiences are shaped by the complex effects of sexism, violence and trauma, as well as pleasure, joy and desire. Rather than assume bodies are genderless entities (like much physical activity promotion does), feminist practices carefully consider an embodied ethics that opens up 'to new connections and intensities, new flows of movement, new possibilities, feelings, ideas, and actions' (Borovica, 2019, p.27). Women were invited to explore the gender related contexts and relations that affected their embodied confidence and movement through the arts-based method of body mapping.

The integration of the body mapping research method into TCP workshop created the material process for reflection on the gendered context of embodied histories and movement practices, in turn this informed women's experiences of the somatic practices to varying degrees (Lu & Yuen, 2012; Sweet & Ortiz Escalante, 2016). We describe this research design as an 'assemblage model' that recognizes the interrelationships between the workshop and evaluation methods that are productive of different ways of knowing (Borovica, 2019; Atkinson & Scott, 2015). While the evaluation process recognized the therapeutic value of body mapping (Kalucy et al., 2018; Crawford, 2010), our use of this method was more oriented around women's individual and shared experiences within a community based somatic movement workshop. The use of arts-based inquiry enables complex thoughts and feelings to be elicited, hence the process can contribute to deeper understandings of gendered movement as well as the visual communication of embodied meanings as qualitative 'evidence' (Kalucy et al., 2018; Boydell et al., 2016).

## 2. The Research Process

Twelve participants (21 to 69 years of age) were recruited as part of the workshop organization by Untold Dance Theatre, most were white British or European and two participants had Asian-British heritage. The women had a wide range of movement experience (none, dance classes, community dance company, formal dance training and choreography backgrounds). Ethical approval was granted by the University of Bath and all participants provided consent for their images and text to be included in the study. All names have been changed to preserve anonymity in published material. Given the ethical sensitivities involved in body mapping we involved a qualified Social Worker in case participants wished to talk confidentially about any issues that arose for them during the process (Orchard, 2017). Both the researcher and Social Worker were present for the body mapping processes at the beginning and end, however, they did not remain for the entire workshop as this would have disrupted the group process.

### 2.1 Body mapping pre and post-workshop

After the initial workshop introductions and a warm up movement practice, the first body mapping session took place using life size pieces of paper upon which participants drew an outline around each other's bodies (with assistance from the researcher and facilitators). Body mapping is a participatory social research method that incorporates art (drawing), reflection and narrative that provides a means of creatively exploring the embodied interrelationship of personal and social worlds (Kalucy et al., 2018; Orchard, 2017; de Jager et al., 2016; Lu & Yuen, 2012). Participants were invited to creatively respond to open questions about,

- how they experienced both confidence, and a lack of confidence, through their bodies in everyday life and
- when they are engaged in bodily movement (walking, swimming etc) and
- how they thought gender norms influenced their own and more broadly women's movement and confidence in our society.

Once the body outline was completed women added colour, symbols, shapes and words to articulate their thoughts and feelings about their embodied selves in the social and material world. Participants were then encouraged to share their reflections on the map with another person. The researcher moved around the room to observe, talk with participants and record seven interviews about what the body mapping had produced. Vicky and Karin also engaged with participants about the body mapping process.



Body mapping at the start and finish of the workshop in a carpeted room and dance studio

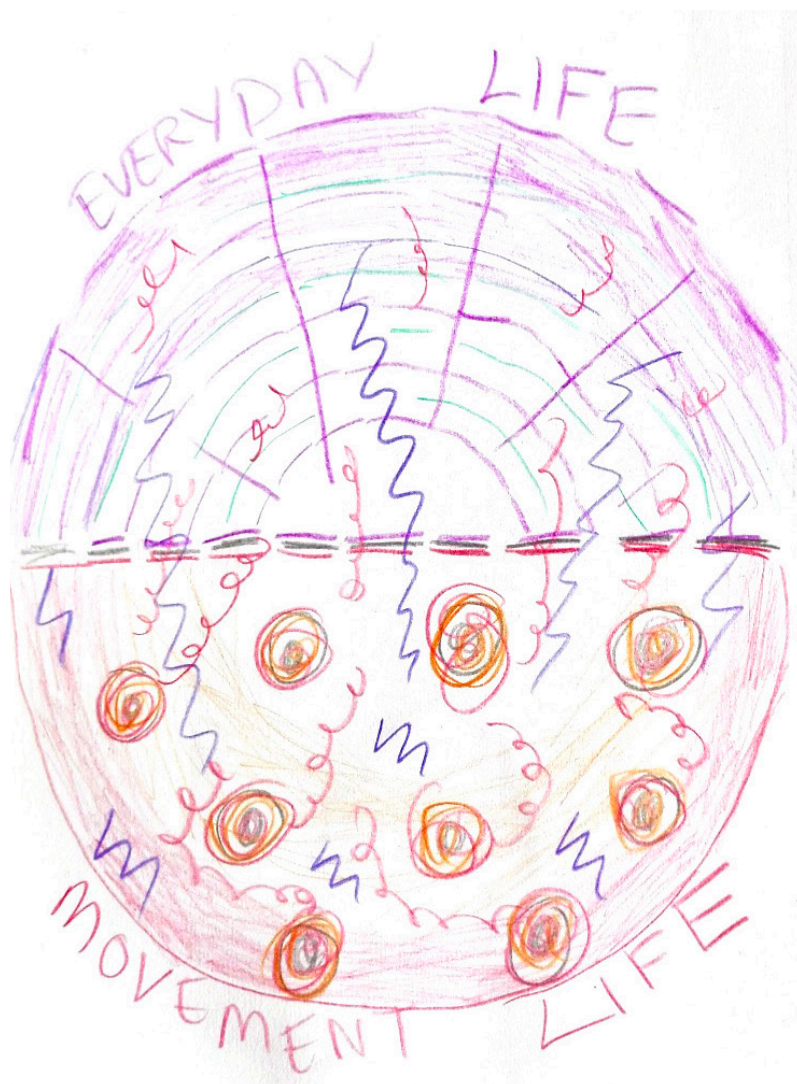
The body mapping process was repeated on day two at the end of the workshop with eleven participants (one was unable to return on day 2). This time women were invited to draw their body outlines in whatever way they felt captured their movement experiences. Several women drew deconstructed or more permeable bodies, rather than a conventionally bounded body outline. Prompt questions were provided to encourage participants to 'notice' differences,

- shifts or changes in embodied confidence (what feels different),
- which somatic practices they found engaging or difficult,
- the effects produced (enjoyment, discomfort, etc.) and
- responses about embodied experience and gender expectations (how women 'should' act, be or move).

Upon completion of their individual maps, participants were invited to share their insights about their maps and connect with other maps/comments in a whole group discussion facilitated by the researcher (with Vicky, Karin and the Social Worker present). Ten out of eleven participants offered comments in the group, these were recorded and transcribed.

## 2.2 Post-workshop follow up

All participants were emailed photos of their body maps and given a journal with which they could continue drawing or write their reflections (workshop questions were included). Three months after the workshop follow up interviews were conducted with two participants (due to time limitations of the project) and three others emailed their written reflections. One participant (Jenny) who was interviewed used the journal to write about her experiences of movement in everyday life with some drawing. Some participants said they were too busy to use the journal, already used journals for other therapeutic purposes, were not used to writing about their experiences or were familiar with somatic practices so did not feel the need to. An interview was also conducted with Vicky to explore her reflections on how the workshop design and somatic practices enabled women to explore embodied confidence individually and collectively.



Jenny wrote and drew connections between the workshop and movement in her life.

'I realise while writing this that I still think of movement/dance and everyday life as separate. Although with a porous interface. So it would be an interesting inquiry to look at blending these different worlds into each other...

I'm sure I would not be gathering together these strands, thoughts and impressions if I had not done the workshop, it really has provided a focus for what I have seen as disparate movement activities, and I realise I have a movement life which is tied in to everyday life, although rather tenuously at the moment. And also connected with spiritual life (possibly the same thing?).

Also I would not be writing about movement at all if not given this book'

### 3. Participant Experiences

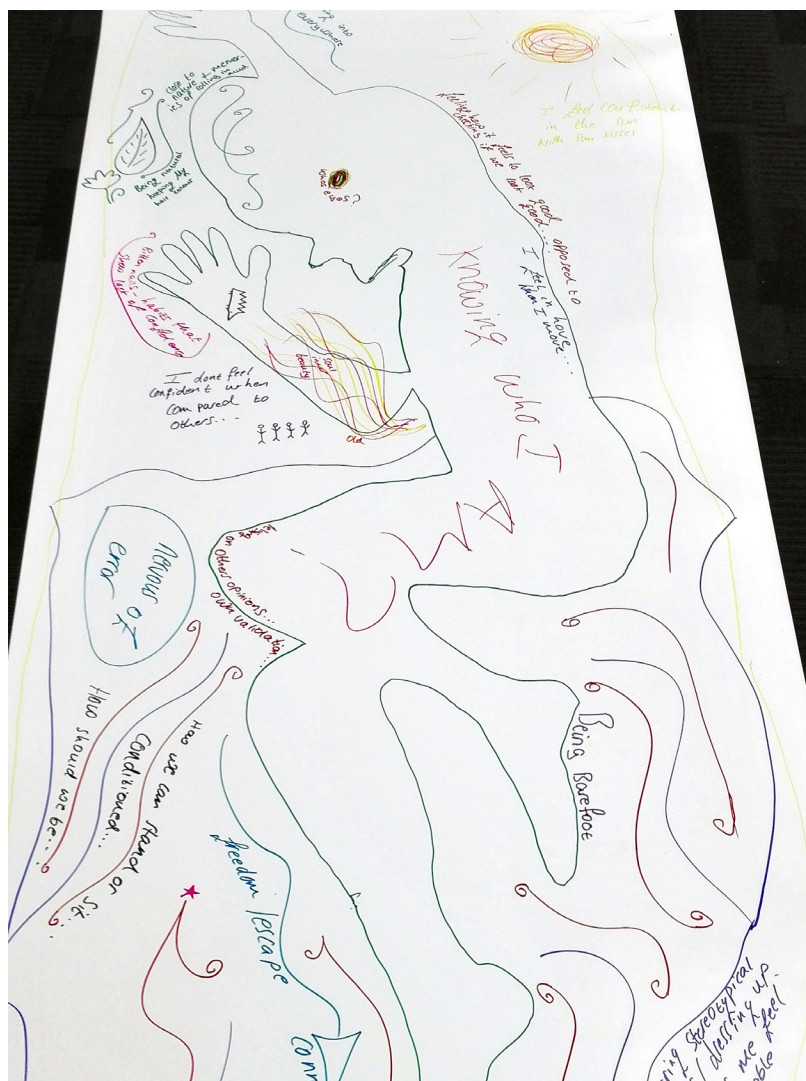
In this section we present the findings and analysis of the research in terms of three main themes or threads that run across the interviews, maps and written responses. First, we explore how the experience of movement is gendered in ways that constrain and enable women's confidence to move through the world. Second, we consider how the somatic practices shifted participants ways of experiencing embodied movement individually and collectively. Finally, we document how women experienced the care-full ethos of the workshop.

#### 3.1 Mapping the gendered contours of women's embodied movement

The body maps generated insights as women traced the social and personal gender expectations that affected their bodies - thoughts, feelings and movement habits in the world. These maps produced a complex mix of negative and positive movement experiences in the context of their gendered life histories. In different ways women mapped the negative effects of gender power relations (intersecting with age, ethnicity and sexuality) on their bodies and visualized how embodied movement often felt constrained rather than free.

Body maps visualised fear, anger, sadness, shame and self-consciousness about appearance-based judgements, impacts of violence, feeling unconfident moving in the world, the demands of sedentary work and care roles. These gendered meanings also mapped across various somatic issues such as tension, inability to relax, restricted breathing, hunched posture, pain from injury and stiffness. Drawing provided a creative way of expressing difficult to articulate feelings and memories that were implicated in ways of moving and movement habits that develop over time (intertwined bio-psycho-social processes).

Katie (aged 21, dance student) talked about how being outside in the environment alone and away from the judgements of others, is where she felt most confident in everyday life. She identified how movement is conditioned through 'rules' that are 'put on' women as they grow up, such as the external pressure to be 'attractive' to others. Katie mapped the constraining and enabling aspects of gendered movement through a central question running through her body - 'knowing who I am?'



#### Katie interview comments

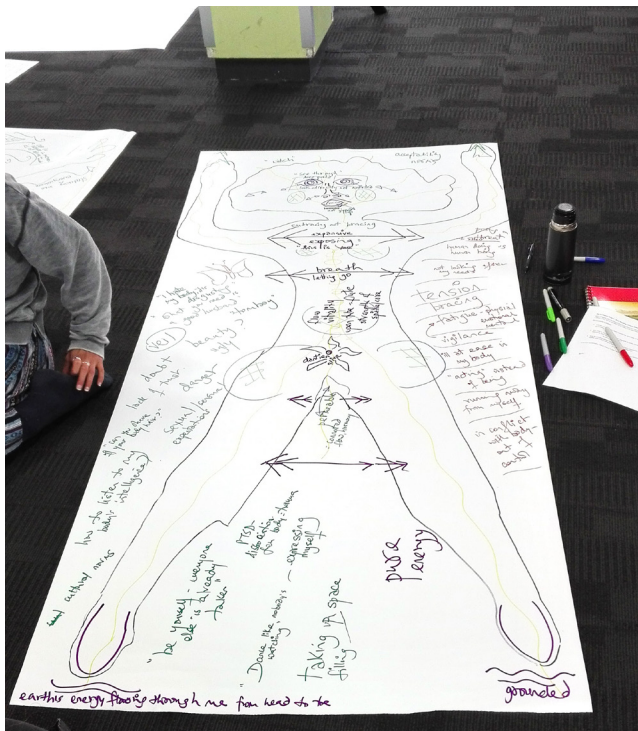
I feel most confident in my inner beauty inside of me as opposed to externally. I think I realized that when compared to other people or in situations where I have to stand or to sit, or move a certain way, I feel less confident...if you were bought up where if you have all these sort of rules or ways you should be, you become that way...when I dance, I feel like, I feel like my arms are way longer than they are and they can go on forever. I feel connected but free at same time, like I can escape.

#### Body map inscriptions

I don't feel confident when compared to others. Wearing of stereotypical dress/dressing up makes me feel vulnerable. Nervous of error. How should we be. Bitten nails, habits that show lack of confidence.

I feel in love when I move. Freedom, escape, connection. Stretching into everywhere.

Madra (aged 56, community dance experience) talked about how her map (below) surfaced many ambivalent feelings about her body that she was currently working through (post-traumatic stress) in her desire to learn to care for herself and move more freely with less tension. Middle aged and older women drew maps that were layered histories of their gendered bodies showing how embodied confidence in the present is shaped by past experiences.



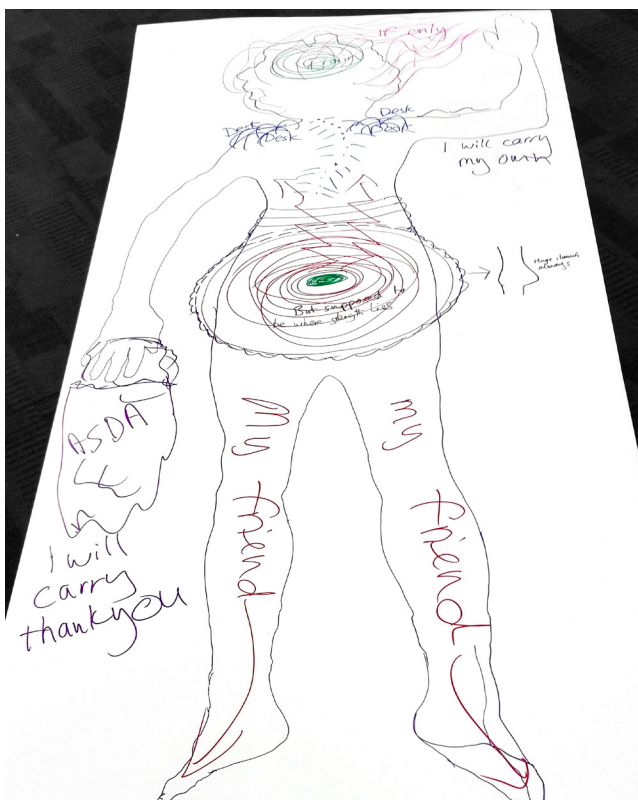
### Madra interview comments

As a girl I was kind of disgusted by my body, I was terrified of my body, it was just completely out of control, my hips were expanding and . people said I was going to become like my fat aunts who judged me. I hated it. I have lived with tension all my life [racism, sexism, domestic violence, trauma] I didn't realise it actually, feeling bad about yourself creates tension... All that tension means that I am not at ease with my surroundings, with people, with my own body, creates the tension that affects the movement. How do you get that out of your system? How do you love and nurture your body?

### Body map inscriptions

Expansive-exposing this is me. Ill at ease with my body. "Witch", "tomboy", "what you need is a good husband". Embracing not bracing. Breath letting go. Flow and vitality. Permeability. Dance like nobody is watching

While not being a trained dancer, Jenny (age 69, retired) had much experience with somatic movement and was very involved in a community dance organisation for older people. She talked about feeling self-conscious of how her body is perceived as frail - she desires to carry her own shopping bags (her legs are her 'friends') - and also of her stomach from when she was a young girl. She has a lasting image of her childhood self being a 'beige coloured blob. A blobby person who isn't moving very much, static, formless and shapeless'.

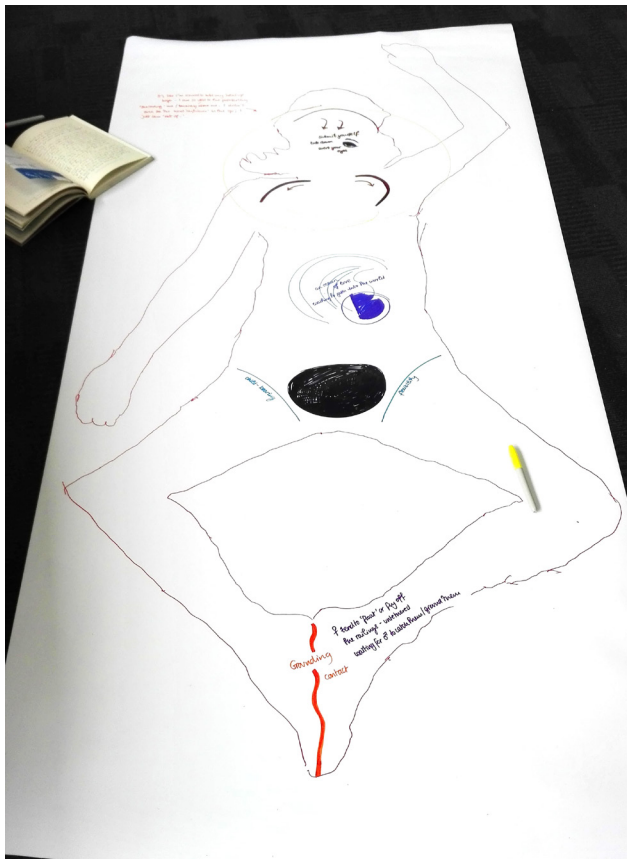


Jenny also identifies her stomach as a 'centre' of 'strength' like some movement practices infer and then wonders why she feels ambivalent about her 'huge stomach'.

She says, 'so it seems a bit crazy trying to get rid of something that's where your centre is... I never feel like that when I'm moving, never...moving is key to evaporating that kind of feeling. It is just a left-over from childhood kind of thing...keeping moving as I get older is quite important. Continuing to occupy space in a sort of outgoing way, is also important to me'.

She wants to reduce pain and stiffness in her shoulders and back (connected to her former desk based job) and takes pride in her ability to get around as older woman. She values her brain and intelligence, while wistfully drawing long hair 'if only'.

On Skye's (age 28, no dance experience) body map she traced the complex effects of sexual assault on her confidence, as well as her desire to move into the world through engaging in the workshop



**Skye's interview comments**

I have this big body of love there (heart), like an ocean. I just love water, it connects me with something and it flows. But it is trapped there. I think that is to do with the next part, which is up into the upper body. You breathe out all the tension. I always see like little fragments of black dust as I am breathing out...there is a big gaping black hole...is it a hole?.. perhaps dirt that I am yet to breathe out. That is going to take years...

it is like, society kind of stops us from talking. I am used to being oppressed, so now I want to release love and passion into the world and it needs to travel up through my voice box and come out. Pull my shoulders back and look high and say to the world how I am I feeling.

**Body map inscriptions**

Women tend to float or fly off the railings, untethered, waiting for men to catch them, ground them. Grounding contact (feet).

Sian (aged 24, dance experience) talked about her desire to try things that she normally wouldn't try so as not to limit imagined capacities. She thinks she comes across confidently to others but doesn't always feel that way. She likes being on the floor (yoga and movement practices) as it keeps her feeling 'grounded' as she feels 'exposed' standing up, except when dancing. Sian has drawn a big stop hand to illustrate how she allows part of her self to be known by others, but doesn't like to show a 'weak side'



**Sian interview comments**

If you keep stuff to yourself, if you're always thinking about others or your family, you are trying, so you repress your own emotions. Then it all gets stuck up here [in the mind].

I feel like when I am moving I don't have to put a word on emotion, or even a colour. What I feel is... I don't really know how to explain but when I'm moving I feel really like connected to my own body. I feel like strong in myself.

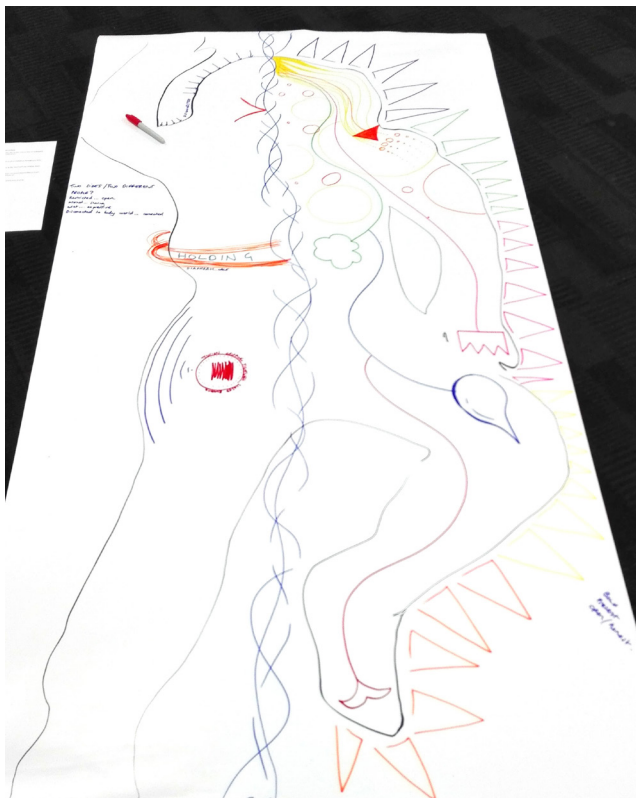
**Body map inscriptions**

Stop. Cannot do. Energy flow. Mind. Body. Freedom. Grounded.

We have not included all the preworkshop maps due to space limitations, however, the following participants (many with dance experience) mapped or spoke about their desire to engage in the workshop as they felt confidence 'through' movement (often contrasted with being still and looked at/judged). Georgie (aged 23, dance experience) commented on her body map 'YES I can. Unapologetically, broadly uniquely you'. Reena (aged 37, experienced dancer, Asian-British heritage) had inscribed on her body map comments about 'the cultural pressure about the way you look and dress' from her country of origin and 'feeling nervous of error'. Her embodied confidence was generally high, 'I never or hardly ever compare myself to others. I am happy the way I am, the way I look'. She connected her sense of femininity to freedom, body and mind through movement.

Pam was also an experienced dancer in her 60's who said that she joined the workshop not because of a lack of confidence but in order to learn more about somatic practices. She did, however, inscribe her body map with comments indicating ambivalence 'strong, stable, happy, anxious' that was connected to a 'weakness' through her left leg and accumulated stress from 'society and work' on her shoulders. Trisha (aged 62) drew around the theme of 'split' and 'whole' on her body map as she traced out issues with her feet and negotiating different aspects of self, 'trouser/skirt, ground/air, good/bad, me/not me'. Rachel (aged 67, dance experience) talked about how 'moods' (feeling low, worries) dictated how she often felt about herself and her confidence. In contrast with a sense of tiredness that made drawing her map difficult, Rachel said she looked forward to the workshop as movement was like water, energising, 'I feel beautiful, I feel wonderful. I feel like a real woman. It colours how I feel about myself when I lead dance as well. It sort of stays with me. Then it will fade and something else will come up'.

Debra (31, experienced dancer) initially struggled with the body mapping as she found movement to be her preferred form of communication, rather than words or drawing. However, once she started to think 'through' movement as embodied communication the mapping unfolded to produce what she called two 'extremes' of herself at that moment. One side of her map is filled with fluid swirls that create a permeable, energetic body as 'the more colourful side of me, bolder, more vibrant'. On the other side her body is more clearly bounded in response to how 'things are just attacking'.



Debra talked about the drawing bodily boundaries to protect herself and bringing attention to areas that feel tight when she is anxious. She relates this to gender and life stage expectations,

'Yeah, I think that is a part of it, isn't it? Like expectations of who I should be and at this point of my life as well, and yeah. Yeah, as a woman....there is a whole minefield of stuff there'.

#### **Body map inscriptions**

Two sides, two different people?  
 Restricted...open  
 Internal...sharing  
 Quiet...expressive  
 Disconnected to body world...connected  
 (mind) disconnected  
 (hip) tension, gripping, tightness, closed. Holding diaphragm  
 Bold, present, open, honest

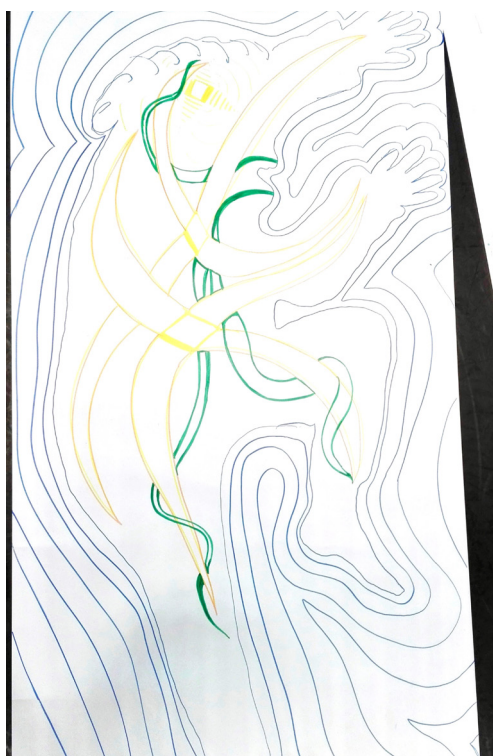
As a research method the body maps make visible the gender norms, expectations and inequities (judgment, sexism, violence) that shape women's different embodied histories and movement in everyday life. These findings point to the importance of understanding women's confidence as far more than a psychological state of mind. Given that the gendered dimensions of women's embodied movement are often ignored in physical activity and confidence building programmes, this workshop provided a unique space for women to move with and against these enabling and constraining forces. When read together the body maps provide a rich account of how women collectively negotiate various gendered forces (also connected with ageism, racism, heteronormativity etc) in their desire to move with greater freedom and pleasure.

### 3.2 Mapping the 'shifts' in embodied confidence

During the post-workshop mapping, focus group and follow up interviews participants identified the 'shifts' (of different magnitude) in their confidence related to body-world connection, flexibility and pain, fluid movement, learning awareness and feeling positive about their embodied selves. These micro movements of self were produced through the entangled relations of multiple bodies and somatic practices with choreographed movement (led by Vicky and Karin), music, imagery, touch and spaces (carpeted room and dance studio) etc. Somatic practices effectively 'moved' women both physically and emotionally in different ways during and often for some time after the workshop. The selected body maps that we include below also crystalize how women began to think about their embodied experience in different ways that resisted containment within familiar gender norms and boundedness from the world. We encouraged participants to engage in body mapping 'through' their sense of movement and many produced more abstract, deconstructed representations of self. They evoke a more fluid, permeable sense of embodied movement that Manning (2014, p.162) speaks of when she writes, 'there is never a body as such: what we know are edgings and contourings, forces and intensities: a body is it's movement'.

Debra (aged 31) continued her earlier focus on movement as a mode of expression that eased her sense of social unease, 'I love to move with people and find I can have a conversation that is easier than talking, it made me feel at ease to move with everyone through the different tasks'. Her body map evoked 'the feeling of like a bit more fluidity of the outside going to the inside.... Like a lot of the time I feel very separate from the outside. The more I can open up and look at those things in my self, the more I can be open to accepting other things and more open to giving'.

Katie (aged 21) talked about her map, 'I'm really overwhelmed. I haven't drawn a "body" because I felt, after the clearing practice this morning, like it is not really important. I've drawn like in comic books where someone punches - "shazam". Referring to her initial sense of 'nervousness' about doing the workshop - 'getting things wrong and other people's opinions', she said 'there is a lot of pressure on women to be so many things at once. Whether that is being strong, being vulnerable, being typically feminine or not typically feminine. There is so much pressure all at once. Actually, doing some of the exercises has made me realise that it doesn't matter what other people are thinking. You can trust strangers, and through that your own validation is enough'.



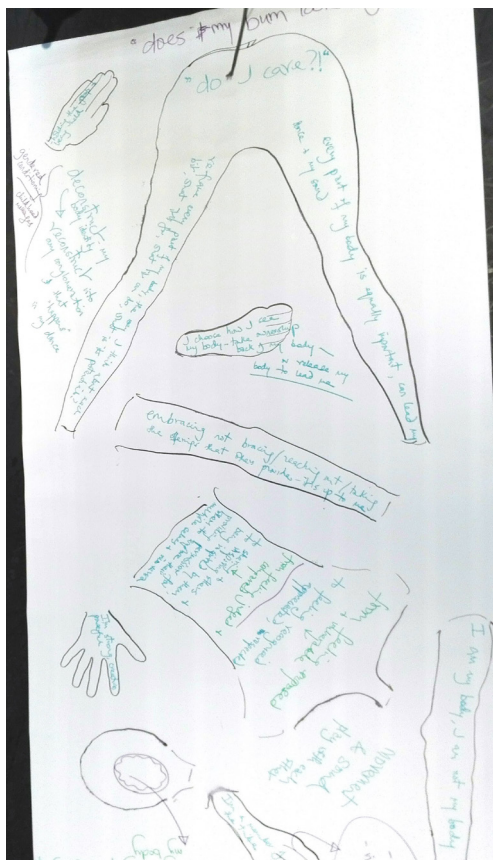
For Debra (left) movement is communication without words.

Katie (right) 'Open body, where does the body even end? Think outside of society's box. Less critical of myself, want to care for myself. Challenge myself, use others as examples, not comparison. Release energy, fire in the belly'.



Madra (aged 56) talked about how her second map was very different from the first day when she drew a more 'fixed' body outline, 'Today, I didn't do that, I put all my body parts separately and they are all scattered around, dismembered. [Laughing]. And the idea behind that is that I think this weekend has got me to think about my body in a different way...A lot of my ideas around the body up to this weekend were kind of gendered. You know, you think your body fits in a particular way...what I think about my body, and what I think other people think about my body was also kind of fixed.... I kind of thought the dance, my dance and my movement can come from anywhere... I can forget all those gender norms...It was quite freeing actually because I could put it back together in whatever configuration I want, depending on what I feel like. That means I can get rid of all this societal stuff and all my stories from the past, you know, which said things should be in a particular way.' Madra spoke extensively about how the workshop connected with other somatic practices and community based networks that informed her care oriented ethos.

Sian (aged 24) mapped out her sense of struggle as a young feminist as she felt she had to be 'strong' in ways that discouraged the expression of vulnerability. She said 'I never ask my male friends to help me move furniture because I want to do by myself...today I was actually turning it around and saying, you know, it's ok to be like a girly, girl sometimes... when I was moving I realized like I move in a quite a feminine way. Or I'm quite like a caring, mothering person, or stuff like that...I never really do cry in front of people, and one of my friends said one day, it's ok to cry actually. It is really good for you to let it out when we move and then after that we've got space for more'. Movement practices unsettled certain gendered assumptions that were implicated in feelings of confidence - strength, vulnerability, independence as well as pain and tension for younger and older women.

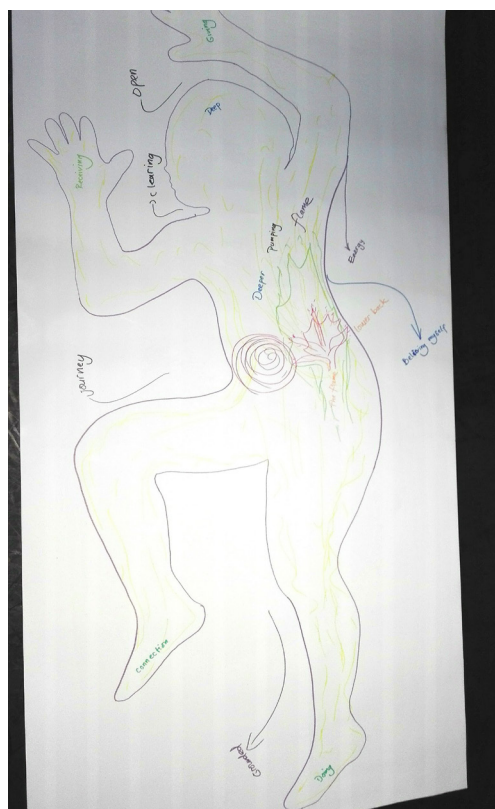


Madra (left) 'Does my bum look big in this? Do I care?!'  
 Every part of my body is equally important. Deconstruct my body identity. Reconstruct into any conglomeration that happens in my dance'.  
  
 Sian (right)  
 'Strong. Listen to yourself. It is ok to cry. It is ok to be a woman. Stronger together. Dance. Inspiration. Love. Moving & being moved. Thank you (feet) for taking me



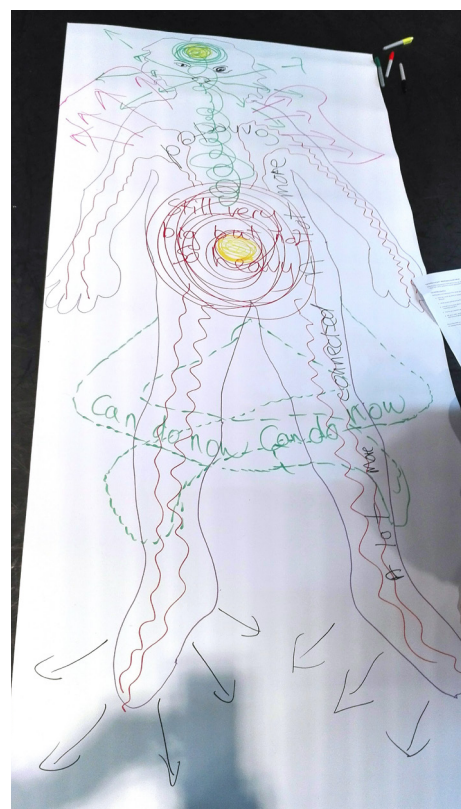
Reena (aged 37) spoke about the visceral experience of the flame turning into fire practice that reduced her experience of pain, 'wow magical because the energy that I felt is like travelling all over my body... And I can really feel my heart like pumping, beating and pumping, but in a kind of really strong but nice way, and my blood and everything. What the most kind of surprised me most is my lower back, because I had long-term lower back pain and it's just always there. It's always there, it makes me miserable, annoying me, all these feelings that are so unpleasant. But that flame was just somehow, I don't know how to explain it, but it's just made it go away. That does not even happen when I do my improvisation when I am dancing. Almost first time in my life since my injury it feels so free'. Pam also mentioned this practice, 'I loved the candle flame image growing into a fire through and expanding outwards and then bringing in the vocal freedom.'

The experience of pain reduction was mentioned by other participants, such as Jenny (aged 69), 'I haven't been able to sit like this for a long, long time, because there is some kind of joint pain and actually now, I can. Although Jenny's childhood concerns about her stomach still featured on her second body map 'still very big but not so heavy', she expressed more confidence in what her body 'can do now'. Several months after the workshop Jenny also talked about her ongoing thinking about her 'movement life', 'I notice that if I walk in a loose dancing way as I move around town, my back feels easier and I enjoy the movement more (I don't drive so I walk everywhere).' However, in her journal Jenny also wrote about how confidence oscillates with her ongoing 'struggle with getting up in the morning – possibly because I feel low and anxious... even though I know that moving can dispel this. Or maybe it's to do with lack of space to move and fear of other people seeing me ... maybe if I see it as a movement issue, moving through feelings about this, it would be a good way to get over it? Maybe translating problems into movement is an interesting way to proceed, to feel the bodily, to move my body through them, not get tied up by thought reactions'



Reena (*left*)  
 'Open, clearing,  
 deeper, flame, lower  
 back, believing  
 myself, energy, giving,  
 receiving, doing  
 connection, pumping,  
 doing, grounded,  
 journey'.

Jenny (*right*)  
 'A lot more connected,  
 a lot more contented'.



In her follow up interview Madra commented on how she continued to experiment with learning to release embodied tension, 'After the workshop I was beginning to think about how some of those ideas matched or are similar to what I am doing so it is easier to integrate them. A lot of that is about freeing up tension in your body... especially your eyes. In my body my eyes are the areas of my body which is the most difficult for me to get a feeling of. I have a very strong sense of my internal body now but my eyes. It is all about working with your ocular muscles which we often strain'.

For some participants the workshop was less about 'change' and more about enjoying the experience of learning somatic practices that affirmed who they 'are'. Pam had mapped out 'I am as I thought, vulnerable, less rigid, weak (legs), can opt out' but 'I don't feel like I changed, perhaps I should have done... It's just been an enjoyable time... It has taken me a lifetime to learn [laughing], with lots of mistakes on the way'.

### 3.3 Creating a care-full space to embody confidence through movement

Through the various research methods used in the project participants identified the importance of having a safe, pleasurable space to learn to move more freely, undo gendered habits and trust others. Confidence was articulated as a mode of embodiment that was practiced and was shaped over time in relation to women's embodied histories (especially in relation to violence, trauma and self-doubt). The body maps also traced shifts in confidence that were articulated through a gendered spatial metaphor - 'taking up space' in the world, feeling able to experiment with movement as the 'doing' of confidence. In this section we connect this spatial sense of embodied movement to a feminist ethos of care that was created through the assemblage of the human and non-human dimensions of the workshop.

Madra described what we have called an ethos of care-full movement that informed the workshop practices, enabling a 'fluidity and permeability' based on connections with others and community building as a group that was not 'masculine, exploitative colonising power. It is the power that comes with being connected with your environment'... I have heard people say that they have only known each other for two days and it didn't take long to feel like we have known each other for a long time... We talked about the tribe and like everybody had an equal place, but you could be yourself and then touch each other. It was always flowing, and everything was ok. You could be held and hold, you are sharing yourself... it gives permission to other people to explore themselves. So, in fact we are all helping each other to fulfil our potential and grow... and I have to say that I've got deeper connections with people in this room than some of my friends whom I've known for twenty years'.

One somatic practice was particularly significant for a number of participants who found the collective experience of moving together very powerful. As Pam said, 'When we became one large group moving with each other by feel, eyes closed, we were as one. Our thoughts were in the action of relating sympathetically with each other without any obstacle. It felt creative and pleasurable'. Sian talked about the power she felt through the improvisation practice that morning, 'I felt we really complimented one another. And it felt really good to be in our bodies again, really doing it for ourselves but doing it with others as well at the same time. Yeah, just it makes me realize how much I need to get back into my body and do more things like this, because coming out of it I feel a lot more confident. Yeah, a lot more in touch.'

Reena focused on the significance of touch immediately after the workshop, 'You were a stranger but suddenly you are not a stranger anymore. Just the power of touch. Like hands, and when we close our eyes, and we just trust each other, it felt really nourishing and something that is quite rare to find in everyday life'. It was the caring touch that reverberated for Madra, 'what really struck me...was the tenderness. I grew up with a lot of harshness and learnt to treat myself harshly...through the workshop, the tenderness I felt from other people...as I was exploring my body I began to feel incredibly tender about my body. I feel like I am gonna look after it better'. Madra had responded to her own question from the first day about how do women learn to care for themselves when they have been subject to violence and a lack of care?

Several months later, Debra commented on how touch was an affective force that connected her with other women in ways that made her feel 'stronger', 'I think one of the main things that stuck with me is realising how important touch or physical contact with people is. It helps us connect with the people around us on a different level. Maybe as I find it hard to verbalise myself, I find it even more significant to share in a different way. I had a strong feeling of connection to the group and the supportive atmosphere...I have reflected on my feelings in different situations more since the workshop. Especially as a woman I feel I am expected to just get on with things and be emotionally 'quiet' / nice, and I have been considering this recently, and perhaps be less apologetic about my feelings'.

The group discussion of the body maps at the end of the workshop opened up questions about gender and experimenting with ways of becoming-learning-moving. Jenny commented, 'It has made me think. If you remove all cultural images of what a woman is and all the actions for those, what exactly is it then that being a woman is like? I find it quite difficult to answer these questions about gender and 'has it changed'?...It leaves me thinking, well what is it about? I know that I'm a woman, is that just like biological or what is it? ...If you take all the conditioning away, like I'm a woman because I quite like pink frilly things, or you know. Because I move in a particular way? Katie emphasised choosing beyond 'labels' and Madra responded by opening up the historical context of gender norms, 'What I'm saying is that beneath that, we can see, there is massive diversity (across genders). I liked what you said (Jenny). How do you go about finding out.... No, I was going to say who you are, but that isn't right, that is very static. More how do you go about experimenting in your life?... I am so different to what I was fifteen years ago and I don't want to be the same in ten years' time...I think what the dance has done has helped me get in touch with something that isn't...classed as woman, female, man. It just feels like an energy... a vitality perhaps. I think this weekend has helped me get in touch with some life force'.

The workshop provided an experimental movement space, as Jenny said 'I think that by providing the kind of spaces we had to talk about our experiences, it helps the dance process to strip away some of those (gender expectations), in ourselves really'. Madra also commented on the importance of the collective process, 'I think the sharing circle was really important in terms of confidence because when you are experimenting with something, you know playing with something it is useful to get a bit of feedback, affirmation'.

The affective relations between the women were also connected with the learning context of the workshop as participants ranged in age and dance or somatic experience. Many spoke of learning with and from each other about independence and care relations. Sian said 'I think it is really important to take time for yourself and do things by yourself. And actually, once you learn about yourself then you can give to others, but if you're not quite confident in yourself or not able to go places by yourself or dance by yourself (you lose independence).' Jenny enjoyed learning that she was more flexible than she had thought as she could move with younger or more experienced dancers. Rachel spoke of 'rediscovering' her body and how 'age doesn't matter. It doesn't seem to matter when I dance. Yes, the tactile stuff. It's just like we are all women. We are all human. I think the gender thing, for me, as someone who is older is that the older I get the easier it is to discard the so called norms. The easier it is and the more confident I am, in being me'.

This desire to inhabit and move through public space with more ease and confidence was a thread running through the body maps and interviews. Jenny commented on how somatic practices have, 'made me really conscious of not walking so stiffly like this and not taking up any space. So I think it is helpful in terms of occupying space and putting yourself out into the space'. Rachel spoke of the immediate effects of the workshop on day two after not feeling confident the first day, 'I actually felt really quite powerful, in my own right, and I think that something that has changed within me. I feel bigger, I feel taller [hesitation]. And I think I articulate more confidently and with more authority'. Madra commented on how men have an 'entitlement of space. Space, space, space and space...so if you are being encouraged to dance then take up space, try movements that you have not done before. What I am interested in is that it doesn't just stay with your body, it is your whole attitude in relationship to other people'.

The workshop design and facilitation provided by Vicky and Karin was highlighted by a number of participants when speaking about what we have called a 'care-full ethos'. Participants felt they were invited to learn through movement, to experiment, feel their way and listen to their own and others' bodies, rather than feel 'pressure' about 'right or wrong' ways to move. Debra commented on this 'I think because we have had the permission to... investigate ourselves in a supported way'. Others commented on how this ethos helped them overcome their initial 'nervousness' about getting the movements 'wrong' or 'not knowing' what to do. The importance of an ethos of care and support was highlighted by Madra who reflected back on the workshop some months later, 'I felt the space was very safe...for me it was quite an overwhelming weekend. I took a lot of risks...it is releasing the tension and the emotion is coming out... I am allowing myself to feel. It can also be a scary place but what I also noticed is that if I go through it, you can end up in a joyous place...I have noticed people saying, oh you are different, there is a different energy about you... (the workshop) increased my confidence hugely. I was amazed, astonished at what I did compared to the limits I put on myself...In order to be truly confident you need to be comfortable with vulnerability, out of which comes a strength'.

Finally, like a number of participants Jenny talked about how 'sound and movement go together' in highlighting the human and non-human forces, surfaces and senses that shaped the process of learning awareness through somatic practices. The importance of the dance space was also connected to the 'free' provision of workshop in a central location with transport options that enabled women from different socio-economic backgrounds to participate.

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