

# **The Interweaving of the Personal and Professional *Dances<sup>i</sup>* with Immigrants and Refugees<sup>ii</sup>**

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“The future of cultural psychiatry lies in advancing a broad perspective that: (a) is inherently multidisciplinary...” (Kirmayer 2006, p.126)

## **Synopsis**

This paper has two purposes. The first purpose has an epistemological character. It elucidates the interweaving of the personal, the academic and the professional aspects of the theoretical construction of immigrants as mainly negative figures. One of the consequences of this exposition is a call for a reflective critique about theoretical and professional conceptions of migrants. After introducing the readers to aspects of the biography of the author, it shares the process that led to the devotion of many years of working and teaching on issues related to the social-cultural integration of immigrants.

The second purpose, thus, is to introduce aspects of the development of a culturally sensitive approach for students of dance movement therapy that can be implemented in education and training in the arts therapies in general. Movement and drama experiences, their sharing in a group with the trainer and their subsequent discussion are the main tools used for this matter. The paper adopts a social-constructivist, multidisciplinary epistemological perspective. It integrates theory, principles of training and examples from practice.

The main conclusion is that therapists and students have to engage in self-exploration in order to be aware of how the ingraining of their cultures is a founding aspect of their identity and self. It is not enough to reflect on personal biography from an individualistic perspective. Social-cultural

aspects also define the person and determine attitudes towards the other as embodied in the immigrants.

**Keywords:** Immigration, social integration of immigrants, culturally sensitive education of therapists.

### **Sinopsis**

Este artículo tiene dos propósitos. El primero, de carácter epistemológico, dilucida el entretendido de las biografías personales de las investigadoras o las profesionales y sus perspectivas en la construcción teórica de los inmigrantes. El segundo propósito es introducir aspectos de una educación de los estudiantes y profesionales de danza-movimiento terapia y artes-terapias en general que sea sensible a la multiculturalidad y la diversidad. Finalmente ambos propósitos se entrelazan. Se recomienda que cada estudiante y profesional se involucre en la exploración de los aspectos culturales que hacen a su identidad: la introspección personal que no se relaciona con estos aspectos es incompleta. Se integra teoría, principios teóricos y ejemplos prácticos. La autora se basa en la epistemología socio-constructivista y adopta un enfoque multidisciplinario. Este texto se dirige a hombres y mujeres.

### תקציר

שני מוקדים עיקריים למאמר זה. הראשון מתחקה אחרי הקשר בין סיפור חיים אישי ובחירות עיוניות-מקצועיות של נשות המקצוע או החוקרות בענייני מהגרים. המוקד השני מציג עקרונות ודוגמאות בהכשרה רגישת תרבות של מטפלות בתנועה ומחול ומטפלות באמנויות בכלל. בסוף, שני המוקדים נשזרים. המאמר מתבסס על הפרדיגמה של ההבניה החברתית ונוקט גישה רב-תחומית. טקסט זה פונה לנשים וגברים כאחד.

### **From personal to professional**

ECArTE's call for papers for the conference in Palermo in 2015 - on the theme *Cultural Landscapes in the Arts Therapies* - was very appealing to me. Otherness, syncretism, different languages, inner-family landscapes that differ from an outer scenery equally buoyant and rich in life, have been part of me since my birth in Argentina to Jewish immigrants from Eastern Europe

(my father immigrated with his family at the age of eight and my mother immigrated as a very young woman after WWII).

Since childhood I have enjoyed my motherland's culture, which is an integration of native South American, African and European, particularly of a Mediterranean flavour stemming from Spanish colonization and Italian immigration. I was also nourished with the well of Biblical stories, music, values and traditions. My move from a small suburb to a capital city at the age of twelve was my first migration, my first cultural shock, but not the last. Therefore, it is very understandable why I consider culture and history as key determinants in the development of human beings. As the poet Saul Tchernichovsky (1937) wrote: "The person is the pattern of the landscape of his motherland." I left Argentina six months after a military dictatorship took over power and emigrated to Israel.

At the beginning of the 1990s, as Israel began to deal with mass immigration from the former USSR, I was working with primary school children, running action-research movement-drama groups. My aim was to explore the children's images of the Palestinians and their images of war and peace. Surprisingly, it was a drama-story about the arrival in the class of an immigrant girl that led to an unexpected revelation: for these children, the 'other' was not the Palestinian, it was the Jewish immigrants from the former USSR who were experienced in this way. The immigrant girl was an 'other', an 'alien, whose presence aroused curiosity and frustration, feelings of strangeness and mistrust. During the only time the children used props to enact a character, the girl, embodying her immigrant peer, disguised herself in a way that showed weirdness, thus accentuating the children's perception of her otherness. This surprising scene brought up the immediacy of an unexpected 'other'. It showed how immigrants come to embody this concept at all levels of society, including the classroom.

Some months later, I was invited by the Department of Education of Jerusalem's Municipality to create an intervention programme to deal with the unrest manifested by children in schools regarding the ongoing inclusion of immigrant children. To prepare myself, I carried out a bibliographic search about the social integration of immigrants, which revealed that they were depicted as people with multiple needs and resourceless, creating a challenge to society. While

constructed by the social scientists, these characteristics overlapped with the aspects emphasized by public discourse. Being an immigrant myself, I felt discomfort with what I considered the distorted image constructed by social scientists, including those in the discipline of psychology. From this search, I reached several conclusions concerning the creation of the figure of the immigrant and the aspects that contribute(d) to its configuration, which I shall share in the next sections.

### **The making of stigma at the level of researchers and practitioners**

“The answers you get depend on the questions you ask.” (T. Kuhn, 1970)

The definitions and concepts professionals in mental health, education and social welfare bring to their practice influence the thoughts, feelings and perceptions they have of their clients. As part of their society, professionals can produce and re-produce stigmatized figures (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992). Bourdieu (1989) also made us aware of the power of science to create ‘realities’ by means of classifications, questioning some issues and taking others for granted.

Anthropologist D. Provencal analysed the studies carried out in Spain regarding extra-communitarian immigration and concluded they can be organized into three categories (Provencal 1997 & 2002). These categories are relevant to research brought about in other countries receiving migration:

- Registers as sociodemographic descriptions, geographical location of the immigrants or their distribution in the labour market. These studies give important information regarding policy planning or organizational measures in matters relevant to us such as public health or education. They rarely adopt a critical perspective that observes the interactional influences between host society and newcomers, although these reciprocal processes are more present in today’s literature. As an example, Berry et al (1987) wrote about acculturative stress focusing only on immigrants’ characteristics. Ten years later, the context of the host society and its attitudes were included when studying the same process (Berry 1997).
- Applied research, that, despite having an ethical background and aims at improving the immigrants’ circumstances, turns them into ‘lesser figures’ because it stresses their

neediness. It is much less usual to find papers of this type after the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The academic critique against presenting immigrants solely as a social sector that only exerts a burden on society has influenced the researchers' perspective. This is not the same in media like newspapers. The Spanish group Acoge (accepting, embracing) published its report 'Inmigracionalismo' (immigration + sensationalism). In this document, they analyse and denounce the negative role of the mass media criminalising immigrants and refugees and creating alarm in society (Red Acoge, 2016). However, I would like to remind the reader of Santamaría's statement: "...there is no complete impermeability between social imagining and science, on the contrary, there is a continuous feedback between these realms" (Santamaría, 2005).

- Studies with a critical perspective that interrogate the processes of the social construction of identity, the influence of social discourse, social structure and social agents as the media (Delgado, 1998; Santamaría 2005; Stets and Burke, 2000). For example, Delgado (1998) considers that defining immigrants as different is a strategy to hamper their inclusion in society. People perceive in them the qualities they had ascribed to them.
- I propose a fourth category that refers to interpretative studies imbued in the psychoanalytic tradition (Grinberg and Grinberg 2004, Kristeva 1991, Zyggouris, 1998) and in the critique of language and culture (Imbert 1993, Moscovici, 2000). This rich literature offers understandings unavailable through other disciplinary-theoretical perspectives. These are essays that base their analysis and interpretations of the hostility observed towards immigrants on concepts such as unconscious, repression, projection, narcissism of minor difference, anxiety or fear of the unknown. For example, in their comprehensive book about psychoanalytic perspectives on migration and exile, Grinberg and Grinberg (1989/2004) consider that one factor intervening in the integration of immigrants is related to unconscious anxieties undergone by the host society and use Bion's theories about the rejection of new ideas to explain them. Not only does the immigrant go through processes that affect his identity, but also his presence implies possible changes in society's structure and a menace to the host culture is felt. Migrants are rejected because they are experienced as threatening identity. Their stigmatisation is a way of keeping them excluded from access to social resources. One of the strategies of the host society's members is to emphasise differences between them and the locals.

This section has presented epistemological and methodological questions to be borne in mind by the professional, the trainer and the student when considering their conceptions about immigrants. It also has also contributed with criteria for the assessment of research on related issues. As stated above, Provensal's classification of scientific works published in Spain (1980-2000) is a relevant guide for the assessment proposed.

### **The 'subjugated' knowledge of the immigrant researcher or practitioner**

My enquiry into the theoretical construction of the ill-depicted immigrant led to an unsurprising conclusion: the researchers who pioneered drawing a more complete image, including assets as well as needs, have themselves been migrants. They lived the experience and could also reach the conclusion that social-integration is a dynamic process involving the host society at several levels. Their migrations took place in different periods of time unmentioned in their writings. It was my intrigued search and my partial knowledge of some of them that led to a hypothesis that was finally confirmed. I shall share some names and include between brackets the publication year of their writings.

Some examples are: Leon and Rebeca Grinberg (2004) who emigrated from Argentina to Spain; Sara and Jose Itzigsohn (1988), from Argentina to Israel; Krau, from Rumania to Israel (1991); Kim (2000) from Korea to the USA; Julia Kristeva (1991) from Hungary to France; Carlos Sluzki (2008) from Argentina to the USA. Enrique Santamaría (1997) made an internal migration in Spain.

These author examples are what Kincheloe called 'subjugated knowledge,' the knowledge gained through an outsider's experience, which he personally learned by being a disadvantaged pupil in school (Kincheloe and Steinberg, 1997). Another instance in the discipline of sociology is Pierre Bourdieu, whose internal migration to a school of the French bourgeois enabled him to become aware of the unspoken rules and practices that delineate 'distinction' and 'cultural capital' as forms of social identity and power.

Postmodern critique into the myth of the objective, unbiased social scientist, has revealed the true social and often privileged perception of the researcher which ultimately affected theoretical constructions and resultant conclusions (Bourdieu, 1989). Following this exposition, one conclusion for our practice and research would be to reflect on our situatedness regarding refugees and immigrants. Actually, self-reflection and self-awareness regarding culture and social class are considered very basic milestones when working with a culture-sensitive approach (Sue, 2003). More than this, in the light of the previous epigraph from T. Kuhn, I propose that the non-conscious images held by researchers and theoreticians have an impact in shaping the questions they pose.

As Delgado (1998) mentioned before, and Provensal (1997 & 2002) states, the characteristics of the stigma created by the host society are interiorised by its members and thus taken for granted by them. Kristeva (1991) gives an interesting explanation of this phenomenon that actually turns the term of interiorisation into projection. She states that the image of the newcomer is constructed upon denigrated and repressed aspects in the host society. Provensal affirms that these characteristics might also be accepted as part of the identity of the members of the disenfranchised groups and might be taken by them as their own responsibility, as a negative consequence of their diversity (Provensal, 1997, pp. 91-92). This means that if practitioners approach their immigrant or refugee clients with a perspective that, although well intentioned, only addresses their needs, lack of resources and their 'difference', it might have iatrogenic <sup>iii</sup> effects. It is parallel to being blind to the healthy aspects of the person and forgetting that, although the newcomer cannot manage with the language and culture of the host society, he has his own language and culture. As the Assistant Director-General of UNESCO for Communication and Information stated, “We should not see migrants as victims, or much less as a threat. Migrants are people with an identity and rights like anyone else” (UNESCO, 2016).

To synthesise, therapists’ awareness of the biases in research and theories and of their own situatedness are crucial.

### **Contributions from Dance Movement Therapy**

Dance movement therapists who have studied in depth the subject of practising with patients of different cultural backgrounds have learned that therapists have to be aware of their own cultural

makeup, or as sociologist Bourdieu would state it, our dispositions and habitus. With this term, he referred to "an embodied and encompassing, unconscious and unavailable to linear thinking, mind and body prototype that is instilled preverbally" (Chang, 2016, p. 320-321). The habitus is closely related to professions that create their own cultures, and habitus is also related to cultures themselves. Nonverbal expression is a habitus and many studies have proven its cultural relatedness (Kendon and Sigman 1996, Elfbein and Ambady 2002). More than this, there is research about impact, clashes and misunderstandings in movement observation-analysis and therapeutic rapport due to different habitus or differences in cultural background. The therapist's aesthetic preferences are also culturally informed and should be considered as dispositions of which to be aware (Boas 2004, Chang, 2016).

Prospective and practising therapists are acquainted with the importance of personal therapy that might broaden one's self-awareness and prevent the unconscious evading of issues that may be felt as threatening or unclear. The same scrutiny is recommended for issues regarding social identity such as gender, ethnic, social class and cultural background. Arts are a very promising means for getting in contact with these aspects and for becoming aware of how they colour our way of seeing, feeling, understanding, judging.

### **Recognition of one's own situatedness, habitus and dispositions**

First of all, I'd like to remind the reader that neuro-scientific and early developmental research have brought about the dissolution or the questioning of the nature-culture divide: "evolution has resulted in our biological preparedness to acquire culture through various forms of learning" (Kirmayer 2006, p. 130). That said, some ideas shared by dance movement therapists in order to facilitate the recognition of students' and therapists' cultural ingrainedness will be presented here.

Dance movement therapist Boas (2004) suggests that all arts therapists take time to explore creatively different artistic media, as well as inner images regarding persons, places and experiences that have shaped oneself culturally.

The Dance of Ancestors: the members of the group are invited to "imagine and physically recreate emblematic movements of their own ancestors (known or imagined). Embodied identification can

be in the form of a typical ethnic folkdance, a personally constructed memory of an elder, by physically animating a photograph or any other of a number of creative directives" (Chang 2016, p. 326). These dance/movement studies uncover aspects of predecessors that are materialized in rhythm, space and effort. They offer the possibility of meeting parts of one's cultural makeup and confronting one's ignorance regarding this. Chang proposes a perspective that integrates personal history with the social-cultural milieu, thus breaking the dichotomy of personal-social. She also recommends the exploration of prejudices and beliefs that might be barriers to communication and empathy with patients.

Chang's statement can be connected with the concept of 'pre-transference' (Lennox 2000). Pre-transference is the fusion of the phantasies, ideas and appraisals the therapist holds of the ethnic or national group of a prospective patient. Lennox affirms that people can have a feeling they know a person even before actually meeting him, so they rapidly construct an image based on stereotypes and pieces of stories they have heard. His concept adds more weight to Chang's suggestion to reflect upon beliefs and prejudices.

For the same purpose of recognising one's cultural roots, I found some of the following ideas very fruitful: to explore through a movement improvisation the image of 'me-culture' (or 'I am culture'); to ask students of dance movement therapy to share games they played as children - the same songs and dances, to tell each other stories and/or memories related to their grandparents. When performing one of these games or sharing their stories, participants would connect with their cultural constitution.

For example, in one group of students, one participant moved with the image 'me-culture.' When starting, she imagined roots that bound her to the ground and allowed her to grow safely upwards. Afterwards, images of wholeness fragmenting into many seeds brought up for her the experience when unity was dismembered as her parents divorced and left the place where she grew up. From a stable movement she is taken to instability and she tries to recover the firmness she experienced at the beginning. The situation of trying to recover rootedness brings up the memory of her grandparents, born in Central Europe, who suffered the horrors of WWII. Almost simultaneously, she is also taken to images of classical aesthetics and dances in a classical ballet style. While

experiencing order, perfection and structure she makes a transition to belly dancing, which she feels as free, improvisational and without restrictions. Then she senses she finds her own created style, her 'home', integrated by these two mentioned styles and developed over the years.

The student's experience brings up a fact we tend to forget: we are multicultural persons, diachronically and synchronically exposed and imprinted by different cultures, changing ourselves, adapting and influencing our contexts. We also experience different roles, all these, when we are aware of them, allow us to practise a multi-cultural perspective and find meeting points with others.

A complementary step, when preparing to meet patients, will be to get some familiarity with their culture and to be able to discuss openly with them the possible differences and sources of misunderstandings, as well as to state the commonalities we share as human beings. Many of our needs are similar; we probably fulfil them differently.

Concerning the continuum of similar-different, I witnessed the following situation in one group of DMT students. The class divided in small groups shared songs and dances of their childhood. One of these small groups was formed by participants belonging to the dominant culture, with one student coming from a minority group. When some group members noted the silence of their colleague, they asked her to share her examples. They felt fascinated and enriched by the difference, by her difficulty in being able to explain herself verbally and by the similarities expressed in rhythms and the games' characters. Some games had a different name but the same rules. In this way the students realised that, in spite of cultural differences, there are overlapping connections.

This experience allowed them to learn that they could propose to participants in a multicultural group that they might share childhood stories, songs and dances and examples about gender roles and look for commonalities and variations. After some weeks, one student told us that during her internship a girl from Ethiopia asked her to teach her the most popular card game in school in order to be able to participate. This opened the opportunity to ask the girl about the games in her country of origin. Through this request, the student acknowledged the girl's cultural capital (Bourdieu,

1989), thus reassuring her self-image as somebody who also knows children's games and facilitating an exploration of cultural similarities and commonalities with her new country.

### **Being myself-being the other**

Therapists might not only be blind to their own cultural makeup, but they might also be unaware of the processes immigrants go through. One way of facilitating processes of empathy is to embody a newcomer to a group that is already moving or acting together. Participants experience the anxieties and uncertainty about how they will be received -will they be included, rejected, and how these alternatives will be manifested? They may be ambivalent towards establishing new connections which they may feel as threatening their known identity. Participants embodying the members of the host group can feel anxieties related to meeting a stranger, the concern about keeping one's space, one's relationships and status in the group; their demands of the newcomer to give up difference and to assimilate.

A group of students chose to explore the situation as a group of vines and the newcomer as a cyclamen. M., a student that belongs to a big minority group in Israel who chose to be part of the vines, "that take care of themselves", perceived they overwhelmed the cyclamen. Being a climbing plant, she expected that the newcomer, as a minority, would arrive with "a positive attitude" in order to be accepted and to adapt to them, the group. M. reflected that this was her own expectation of herself, developed in a Middle Eastern culture with collectivistic values. However, she experienced the cyclamen held an individualistic self-defensive attitude, without: "...a disposition neither to give nor to sacrifice herself for the collective." M. felt angry and immediately got in touch with her envy about this ability that was unreachable for her. This insight led her to move away and accept the cyclamen's attitude. Another 'vine' saw that the cyclamen felt uncomfortable and evasive, she appraised it could take care of itself and could run away whenever it wanted. This caused her to increase her climbing in a more expanded movement. Although M. wanted to protect the cyclamen, she did not succeed and felt alone in her cohort.

M. understood this as the dominance of her collectivistic values and reflected on her difficulties with what she considered the individualistic values of the majority. In the years of working with

the metaphor of the newcomer, I have seen how almost always the individuals that have a caring attitude towards the newcomer had some experience of belonging to a minority group.

The example brought here shows a number of the possibilities for uncovering and reflexivity that this kind of experience allows for:

M.'s expectation that the cyclamen would come with a 'positive attitude' and adapt to the majority, the host group, does not only stem from her collectivistic values but also from a common demand in many societies regarding immigrants. The researcher previously mentioned, Kim (2000), analyses the existing approaches to cross-cultural adaptation and their underlying values of assimilation or pluralism and the gamut of variations between these polarities. The student's expectation was probably determined by assimilationist as well as collectivistic values, which complement each other. Grinberg and Grinberg's (2004) psychoanalytical interpretation about the psychodynamics in the host society (cited above in the section about the 'subjugated knowledge' of the researcher or practitioner) manifested in the rejection of the 'new ideas' strengthen this understanding.

Another 'vine' construed the 'cyclamen's' movement differently. She perceived it as stressed and avoiding contact, with the possibility, however, of running away as a solution. She could not tell if this was her wishful thinking and/or her lack of caring. Actually, she stretched herself more, protecting her space against the newcomer.

### **Issues of misunderstanding. Body and communication**

Transcultural psychiatrists and psychologists have researched the issues that might be sources for misunderstandings when clients and professionals are from different cultures. Giel (1995) distilled three main topics that are very relevant to DMT: how the body and its functions are understood, processes and modes of communication, and definition and implementation of gender roles. I shall refer to body and communication, adding aspects that are significant to our field.

#### **Body**

Not only individuals but also cultures may differ in the conscious concepts and attitudes towards the body, unconscious fantasies about it and meanings attached to different body parts. Is the body

accepted or is it considered shameful? What is socially acceptable to express and show; how does it function and what are the concepts of health and illness?

In many Western countries, when people in a session sit on the floor, it is very usual to see the legs extending to the centre of the circle or in front of the partner. Conversely, in Thailand this posture would be regarded as ungracious, the feet are seen as the dirtiest body part and it is rude to point with them towards somebody or to expose them to the circle centre. They are always kept under the thighs while sitting on the floor. In addition, in Thailand the head is a sacred body part and it is forbidden to touch it, whereas in the West the head does not have the same meaning and adults touch children's heads in a benevolent gesture.

Therapists should be aware of these nuances when working with immigrants. This awareness has to be active while leading a warm up, when observing the patient's movement and interacting with him/her. Is the therapist attentive to the possibilities of transcultural misunderstandings when evaluating movement qualities and the use of body parts and space? For example, movement of the waist and pelvic area may be experienced as playful for a person of Caribbean origin, while it might seem sexually provocative for a European (Gill, 2013), thus producing an unnecessary clash in the therapeutic relation or bewilderment in the therapist.

As part of the professional's preparation for an encounter with immigrants, the study and exploration of these aspects is highly relevant. For dance movement therapists, Boas's (2004) and Chang's (2016) recommendations to explore one's aesthetics habitus and predilections in movement and dance are pertinent for this issue, since they are closely related to the cultural construction of the body.

### Communication

Therapists should be aware of communication's explicit and implicit modes. Giel (1995) describes communication as taking place in three complementary levels. The technical level: how and what people describe and say about their discomfort or suffering. On the informal level, the professional observes social-cultural nuances in the interaction, including the use of interpersonal space, what is said and what is kept silent. The third level, the formal is non-conscious (but not unconscious). It is considered almost as an ultimate truth, acquired very early in life, therefore not easily

verbalised and non-rational. Matters related to gender and ethnic identity are included in this level. Much of the information and values immersed in interpersonal communication is what Giel calls the formal level. Each culture considers some aspects as universal truths that do not correspond to the aspects considered to be truth in other cultures.

The images held about figures of authority, professionals in our case, the told and untold normatives, and how to relate to them, and the level of acceptance or rejection of hierarchies are what Hofstede (1991) coined as 'power distance' that is different in each culture. Misunderstanding this aspect can lead to cultural incongruence and it is manifested in various ways. As a mainly group methodology, the Chace approach in DMT (Chaiklin and Schmaiss, 1993) emphasizes the circle as a spatial organization and many therapists see eye contact as an important way of interpersonal communication. However, in some cultures, to look at the eyes of a figure of authority, such as the therapist, can be considered rude. On the other hand, it might be interpreted negatively by the therapist in psychological terms when a patient avoids establishing this eye contact if s/he is not aware of this characteristic.

Lack of knowledge of the patient's culture may lead to more than one misunderstanding. This is another reason to recommend getting information about it and bringing up honestly the subject of lack of information.

There is information about cultural meanings that develops while being in closer contact, such as engaging in the study of aspects of the culture like ethnic dances. As dance is communication, this is another opportunity to state in this paper that people of the Middle East, Latin America (like Brazil or Colombia), the Caribbean and some areas in Spain will much more easily move their pelvic area while dancing than people from other cultures. These groups find it much more effortless and natural to express themselves and play with romantic-emotional music than people from other cultures. Societies vary in the way movement of various body parts is stressed or controlled; cultures tend to Apollonian or Dionysian dances. Very briefly, in the first type, the body centre is held restrained and the vertical axis prevails. In the latter, the body centre is very much modulated and movement flows in many directions. The movement of the torso and pelvis is evident. Chang (2016) advises an exploration of the meanings of genres of music and dance with

clients. The same genre might be experienced differently by people from different countries, even if they share the same language and have geographical proximity as in Latin America or the Middle East.

When bringing here these issues, I do not talk only about dance and music; people differ in how they communicate their emotional states, their forms of vitality (Stern, 2010): what and how they experience and convey it. Since communication is a reciprocal feeding process, the culturally sensitive therapist will be alert to her experience of the other's verbal and nonverbal communication as much as to the possible ways the immigrant might experience hers.

### **'Drawing the threads together'**

Migration is a complex phenomenon involving many factors and so demands a multidisciplinary approach to analysis. This author has resorted to sociology, anthropology, transcultural psychiatry, social psychology and to texts about culturally sensitive dance movement therapy. However, the genesis of this approach lies in my personal experience of multiculturalism and migrations to countries characterised by the affluence of migrants (Argentina and later Israel), as lived by my parents and me myself. This personal 'dance' sets the first thread for the interweaving with the professional movements when partnering with immigrants. The second thread is the epistemological reflection on the construction of the immigrant as a social figure characterised by lack of resources and scarcity. The exploration of the authors' biographies which have contributed to changing this stigma revealed that they themselves were migrants, thus strengthening the idea of the interconnections between personal and professional and constituting an example of the socio-constructivist critique of the social scientist as neutral and detached. 'Subjugated knowledge', developed through the experience of being an outsider, was one factor allowing innovation in knowledge (Kincheloe and Steinberg, 1997). This thread integrates with the idea of situatedness, which leads to the exploration of the therapist's embodied position regarding immigrants. The contributions of DMTs Boas (2004) and Chang (2016) constitute another thread that suggests ways for the therapist's self-observation. The author's work in training students of DMT, with the aim of planting the seeds of culturally sensitive therapy, brings in another thread. Finally, the body and modes of communication in interlacing the therapeutic relationship tie up the weaving.

Issues that have not been included are some aspects that contribute to the antagonism towards immigrants as persons embodying otherness: the development of the concept of nation-state in Western countries and the dynamics of the building of individual identity. Spanish speaking readers willing to get more information about these issues can see Wengrower (2001, 2014).

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<sup>i</sup> *Dance* in the title as a metaphor for life. Life is dance.

<sup>ii</sup> In this paper the term immigrants will also be used to refer to refugees. I will not relate to the specificities of work with refugees. Nowadays it is a legal denomination and many issues for both categories are similar.

<sup>iii</sup> Iatrogenic: harm induced inadvertently by a physician or surgeon or by medical treatment or diagnostic procedures (Merriam-Webster dictionary, [www.merriam-webster.com](http://www.merriam-webster.com)).