

**A Conceptualization of the Body in Psychodynamic and Body- Based Psychotherapies –  
Areas of Overlap and Possibilities for Integration**

**Abstract**

This dissertation contributes to a conversation between two related but distinct fields in psychology: psychodynamic psychotherapy and body-based psychotherapies (i.e. dance/movement therapy). Drawing from professional experiences both as a trained dance/movement therapist and a clinical psychologist, the writer identifies points of tension and commonality between a psychodynamic conceptualization of the body and the ways in which the body is conceived in dance/movement therapy and other psychotherapies that focus more specifically on embodiment. The point is not to prioritize or compare, but rather to treat both disciplines with respect and look at ways in which they could inform one another (Bloom, 2006). The focus of this work is thus on possible ways of integrating practices from body-based psychotherapies (i.e. mirroring, bodily attunement, nonverbal reparative experience) with a primarily verbal psychotherapy, to show the opportunity to extend the scope of clinical interventions to serve patients better.

The distinction between verbal and nonverbal psychotherapies is clearly visible in theory and clinical practice. Moreover, this duality of approaches promotes a split between the body and the mind, defining them as separate from each other. This dissertation aims to help bridge the divide between the literature in body-based therapies and verbally-based psychotherapy by (i) exploring the conceptual frame used to understand the body in psychodynamic therapy (ii) identifying the areas of overlap between psychodynamic theory and theories that underlie body-

based psychotherapies, and (iii) proposing ways in which psychodynamic and body-based theories can inform one another.