Exploring embodied academic identity: Creative and embodied research methods

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Embodiment can be thought of as the fundamental connection between the body and mind, however this is contested (Sheets-Johnstone, 2015)

“Movement is the unifying bond between the mind and body, sensations are the substance of that bond” (Johan, 1987)
Research questions

- How do participants make sense of their embodied identity in relation to their academic identity?
- Does an embodied practice impact on academic practice? If so, how?
- Does an embodied practice lead to a sense of personal wellbeing?
“I start and I’m really aware of the tension in my body and my face and my face screws up I can feel my shoulders rise and my face and my chest constricted and I’m breathing, I’m aware of my breath and feeling quite constrained and tense and then holding and I bring my hands up together and I touch my forehead with my thumbs and my palms are together. I can’t remember if I go straight from there to reaching up with my arms or if I bring my arms down again, it felt like a very long five minutes! When I reach my arms up I have this image of wanting to reach out and wanting to be free and feeling like an eagle, wanting to break free and not quite managing it, wanting to stretch my arms and feeling this image of being kind of held prisoner and kind of straining from the prison. I think I folded forward a bit before that, I can’t remember now and kind of feeling my belly was empty. And after I’ve reached my hands and I bring my arms up again and my head is bowed and my chin was touching my chest, and I can feel my heart beating really hard in my chest, I’m really aware of the feeling of my heart beating and the stretch in my neck and my shoulders and feeling all the tension and carrying weight and carrying expectations, that’s what I was thinking. And in those moments, also being aware that I need to talk and I need to remember what I need to do and I need to be authentic and all of those pressures… and I bring my hands together and I can feel my heart beating against my hands and I can feel my breath… And I kind of rock a little bit backwards and forwards and earlier I was trying to find myself in my belly and my spine and I’m not accessing it at all and wanting it to be there and in the end, coming back to that and feeling my heart beating and I press my right hand onto my heart and my left hand feeling the pulse right up in my neck, with all my heart beating and folding forward and putting my head on the floor, feeling small but not necessarily wanting to be small”

“I see all those moments you’re describing and I feel really like, respectful towards you, and I see your face again, the tissues of my own face are interested in what you’re feeling and then see your arms gather in and then I see them expand and they’re so like long and they’re like in this behind space and I’m like ‘wow’ and then I see you gather in and move down and I really want to join you actually in that kind of position and I’m like that looks really… I imagine you feeling cozy and supported like I do when I go into that sort of shape. Yeah I feel really kind of cautious and like wow this is really intimate stuff I hope it’s okay for her she’s going to dive into a deep pool and it’s fine but I think that adds a feel to the conversations we’ve just been having and the intensity and the passion there. It’s sort of percolating with me and.. I feel very respectful”

“I felt safe knowing where you’ve come from and knowing you’ve been through the same training made me feel very safe. There was a moment of… and like no it’s okay it’s fine. And it’s been a long time since I’ve done any authentic movement”
“I cry every time I talk about this. I’ve put so much energy into not just the work that I’ve done, but trying to work it out. Work out why I’m doing it. Whether I should be doing it”
Art
- Meaning
- Emotions
- Impact
- Exhibitions
- Creativity

Research
- Ethics
- Supervision
- Support
- Training
- Space

Therapy
- Positionality
- Holding
- Burnout
- Transference
- Vulnerability
- Honesty
- Intention

REF
- Outputs
- Publications
- Materials
- Intention
- Time
- Practice