INFORMATION TO USERS

This manuscript has been reproduced from the microfilm master. UMI films the text directly from the original or copy submitted. Thus, some thesis and dissertation copies are in typewriter face, while others may be from any type of computer printer.

The quality of this reproduction is dependent upon the quality of the copy submitted. Broken or indistinct print, colored or poor quality illustrations and photographs, print bleedthrough, substandard margins, and improper alignment can adversely affect reproduction.

In the unlikely event that the author did not send UMI a complete manuscript and there are missing pages, these will be noted. Also, if unauthorized copyright material had to be removed, a note will indicate the deletion.

Oversize materials (e.g., maps, drawings, charts) are reproduced by sectioning the original, beginning at the upper left-hand corner and continuing from left to right in equal sections with small overlaps.

Photographs included in the original manuscript have been reproduced xerographically in this copy. Higher quality 6" x 9" black and white photographic prints are available for any photographs or illustrations appearing in this copy for an additional charge. Contact UMI directly to order.

ProQuest Information and Learning
300 North Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106-1346 USA
800-521-0600

UMI
EXPLORING THE ROLE OF SOMATIC EDUCATION IN EXPERIENTIAL WELL-BEING

DISSERTATION

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree Doctor of Philosophy in the
Graduate School of The Ohio State University

By
Darcy Lynne Lord, M.S.

The Ohio State University
2002

Dissertation Committee:
Professor Seymour Kleinman, Adviser
Professor William Taylor
Professor Fiona Travis

Approved by

Seymour Kleinman
Adviser

College of Education

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
Copyright by

Darcy Lynne Lord

2002
ABSTRACT

This inquiry indicates that Experiential Well-Being can be positively impacted through embodiment practices. It was argued that many in the U.S. are experiencing a lack of well-being, and that the field of psychology has addressed the concept of well-being but with two limitations: 1) the studies have been correlational and have not focused upon increasing the experience of well-being, and 2) the concept well-being has been viewed as solely a cognitive/emotional construct. The field of somatics, which highlights theory and practice of the mind-body-spirit connection, holds the potential for addressing well-being while moving beyond these two limitations.

Utilizing the theoretical assumptions of somatics, a more integrated approach to well-being was proposed. This holistic perspective of well-being was called Experiential Well-Being (EWB) and was defined as the personal experience, or perceived sense of wholeness or wellness, satisfaction and contentment in the areas of mind, body, and spirit. It was hypothesized that Somatic Education, a four week embodiment practice that combined elements of hatha yoga, qigong, and stress-reduction, could positively impact participant EWB.
Based upon participant observation, interviews, and evaluative surveys it was concluded that participant concepts of well-being were holistic in nature, expanding beyond the mental domain to include physical and spiritual aspects as well. Thus, participant perspectives of well-being paralleled the newly introduced concept Experiential Well-Being.

It was also concluded that Somatic Education did play a role in increasing participant well-being particularly in terms of their perceived sense of relaxation, stress-reduction, mental clarity, and increased energy or vitality. Another important participant experience was an almost ineffable feeling of being lengthened, less constricted, or more free. Though participants viewed Somatic Education as positively affecting their well-being, the effects of the classes were short-term, lasting a few hours to one week. Thus, a main conclusion of the study was the need for ongoing practice as well as education of the general public to create a common language/experience in order for somatic practices to impact EWB on a larger scale.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I could not have completed this project without the love and support of many individuals. I am grateful for you all.

I would like to thank my advisor Sy Kleinman for introducing me to these amazing, life-affirming philosophies and practices. I thank you for your gentleness of spirit and for your wonderful wisdom. You are a gift to us all.

I want to thank Bill Taylor and Fiona Travis, my other committee members for the wisdom I received through their ideas and classes, and especially for trusting me enough to allow me the freedom and creativity to pursue topics of study that not only matter to me, but make my heart sing.

I literally could not have completed this dissertation without the love, friendship, support, encouragement, laughter, and feedback I received from my dear friends and wise colleagues, Maryanna Klatt and Jennifer Strickland. I think we are the definition of a successful writing group. I love you guys and am indebted in so many ways. Thank you both.

I also wish to thank my wonderful mom, Betty Lapp, who has always seen me larger than life, and my amazing sister, Denise Lord for always being there with answers to my questions. They have known from the beginning that I could
successfully finish this task. As you both know, your knowingness literally helped create my successful path. You two have been my spiritual support without which this process would not have been the joyful, God-guided adventure that it was. I love and thank you both beyond words.

And lastly, to my dear husband and sweet love, Jeff Loudenslager. I thank you for your loving and generous spirit, for supporting and loving me beyond what I could dream possible, for always believing I could do this, and for your eternal patience in my process. You are my rock and my best friend and I completed this in great part because of your faith in me. My love and gratitude for you is beyond words. I love you and thank you from the bottom of my very full heart.
VITA

December 15, 1965.........................Born - Columbus, Ohio

1990........................................B.S. Psychology, The Ohio State University

1996........................................M.S. Counselor Education, University of Dayton

1997 - 2001..................................Graduate Teaching Associate,
                                      The Ohio State University
                                      
FIELDS OF STUDY

Major Field: College of Education
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract ................................................................................................................................. ii

Acknowledgments.................................................................................................................. iv

Vita........................................................................................................................................ v

Chapters:

1. **Introduction** .................................................................................................................. 1
   
   1.1 Well-being crisis ........................................................................................................... 1
   1.2 Chapter overview .......................................................................................................... 2
   1.3 Well-being - psychological perspectives ..................................................................... 3
   1.3.1 Limitations of psychological perspectives ............................................................. 4
   1.3.2 Dualism: Philosophical underpinnings .................................................................... 5
   1.3.3 Well-being and the mind-body split ......................................................................... 6
   1.4 Somatics ....................................................................................................................... 7
   1.4.1 Somatics and phenomenology ............................................................................... 8
   1.4.2 Pragmatism and somatics ....................................................................................... 10
   1.4.3 Basic assumptions .................................................................................................... 11
   1.5 Expanded definitions of well-being ............................................................................. 28
   1.5.1 Experiential Well-being ......................................................................................... 28
   1.5.2 Well-being - somatic perspectives ......................................................................... 29
   1.6 Objectives .................................................................................................................... 31
   1.7 Limitations ................................................................................................................... 32
   1.8 Overview of chapters .................................................................................................... 33

2. **Review of literature** ....................................................................................................... 35
   
   2.1 Well-being - psychological perspectives ..................................................................... 35
   2.1.1 Correlates of well-being ......................................................................................... 36
   2.1.2 Limitations of psychological perspectives ............................................................. 42
   2.2 Spiritual well-being ..................................................................................................... 44
   2.3 Intersections of somatics and spirituality .................................................................... 46
   2.4 Somatic or Experiential Well-Being .......................................................................... 56
2.4.1 Qigong
2.4.2 Hatha yoga
2.4.3 Stress-reduction

2.5 Common practices
2.5.1 Mindfulness or awareness
2.5.2 Movement
2.5.3 Breathing

2.6 Limitations of somatic perspectives

3. Design and methods

3.1 A grounded theory approach
3.2 The process: Somatic Education
3.3 Research site and participants
3.4 Action research
3.5 Pilot study
3.6 Semi-structured interviews
3.7 Evaluative surveys
3.8 Trustworthiness
3.9 Summary

4. Data results and analysis

4.1 Research objective 1) Experiences with Somatic Education
4.1.1 Relaxation and stress-reduction
4.1.2 Ineffable quality of experience
4.1.3 Breathing as stress-reducer or gauge
4.1.4 Different than "exercise" - emphasizes mental focus
4.1.5 Importance of bringing focus to self

4.2 Research objective 2) Participant concepts of well-being
4.2.1 Holistic components of well-being
4.2.2 Stretching and age concerns
4.2.3 Concepts of spirituality
4.2.4 What participants "should" do

4.3 Research objective 3) The role of Somatic Education in the experience of well-being
4.3.1 Need to educate the masses
4.3.2 Becoming aware
4.3.3 Long-term possibilities - short-term experiences
4.3.4 Importance of group - social component

4.4 Researcher bias
4.5 Discrepencies between definitions and experiences
4.6 Summary of conclusions drawn from data results and analysis

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
5. Conclusions and recommendations

5.1 Experiential Well-Being revisited

5.2 Research objectives revisited

5.2.1 Importance of ongoing practice

5.2.2 Somatic Education, relaxation, and well-being

5.2.3 Need for long-term implementation

5.3 Future research recommendations

5.4 On the discrepancies of relaxation and well-being

5.4.1 No common cultural language for somatic relaxation

5.4.2 Cultural disapproval of relaxation

5.5 Need to inform general public - "universalize" experience

5.6 The gap between knowing and doing

5.6.1 Bridging the gap

5.6.2 Importance of group environment

5.7 Somatic practitioners' responsibility

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A Somatic Education weekly class outline

APPENDIX B Somatic Education handouts

APPENDIX C Pilot study survey forms

APPENDIX D Semi-structured interview protocol

LIST OF REFERENCES
CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION: A LACK OF WELL-BEING

The United States is in the midst of a crisis. That crisis is an alarming lack of well-being, as experienced by many Americans. Well-being is also called happiness or quality of life (Argyle, 1996; Chopra, 1991; Diener, Suh, Lucas & Smith, 1999). Areas that have typically been included in well-being research and discourse are positive and negative emotional states, and general satisfaction with life. According to Blanchflower and Oswald (2000), self-reported levels of well-being, or happiness, have declined in the U.S. in the period from the early 1970s to 1999. This is exemplified in several areas. Perceived stress levels continue to climb in the general population, as do numbers of individuals suffering from chronic, stress-related illnesses including cancer, heart disease, ulcers, and hypertension (Ballentine, 1999; Cooper, 1997; Davis, Eshelman, & McKay 1995; Domar & Dreher, 1996; Hoffman, 1997). It can also be seen in mounting numbers of people dissatisfied with their jobs, growing suicide and divorce rates, increasing prevalence of mental and emotional illnesses such as anxiety.

---

1 These and other well-being areas will be discussed more fully in chapter two.
disorders and depression, escalating violence at home and in schools, and a general sense of dis-ease or unrest experienced by many in the U.S. (Buchannen, 1999; Williamson, 1997).

Clearly there is a need to address the area of well-being in research and discussion. The fields of psychology and somatics have begun to do that, yet more work is necessary in order to increase the general experience of well-being in the United States.

1.2 Chapter Overview

Chapter one begins with a discussion of well-being, its current definitions and perspectives, much of which have come from the field of psychology. Two limitations of psychological views of well-being, the limited research methodology and the separation of mind and body, are then introduced. After ascertaining the philosophical underpinnings of dualism, still prevalent in much well-being research and discourse, the discussion turns to an avenue that allows for growth and expansion of current perspectives: the field of somatics. The researcher outlines the basic assumptions of the field and suggests that these foundational elements of somatics contribute to a broader understanding of well-being which holds an holistic view of individuals. This more integrated approach is called Experiential Well-Being (EWB) and is thus introduced. The chapter concludes with a description of the research goals and objectives of the study which focus upon one particular somatic practice, Somatic Education, and its role in the experience of somatic well-being or EWB.
1.3 Well-being - psychological perspectives

Much of the literature on well-being has come from the field of psychology, which utilizes the term subjective well-being. The term "subjective" has been used to distinguish between external circumstances on the one hand, and individuals' interactions with, and interpretations of those circumstances on the other hand. External or objective measurements, such as demographic variables, number of hospital stays, and social indicators alone are not enough to determine someone's quality of life or happiness (Diener, 1984). Because people evaluate and react to circumstances differently, depending in part upon their expectations, past experiences, and unique belief systems, the subjective element in the study of well-being is essential (Diener & Suh, 1997).

For this reason researchers in the psychology field have coined the term subjective well-being (SWB), and much of the research has consisted of individuals' self-reports of their perceived states of happiness or well-being (Argyle, 1996; Diener, 1984). The inquiries have focused upon the correlation of self-report scores with either external life conditions such as age, education, and economic status, or internal variables such as personality traits, goals and aspirations. The typical components of happiness or well-being studied by psychologists have been the emotive components of pleasant and unpleasant affect, and the cognitive component of life satisfaction² (Argyle, 1996; Diener, Suh, Lucas & Smith, 1999).

²Though not an aspect of the current project, others researching quality of life have focused predominantly on financial or economic aspects (Blanchflower & Oswald, 2000; Bliss, 1996; Stewart, 1996).
1.3.1 Limitations to psychological perspectives of well-being

Though important findings on happiness or well-being have come from the psychology field, two limitations can be noted. The first is that this research has relied primarily upon correlational inquiries as the main methodological process. Correlational research is done to determine relationships among two or more variables, and without any attempt to influence those variables (Frenkel & Wallen, 1996). Being based on relational data, it has had its strength in explanation and prediction of happiness or quality of life. Rarely do these discussions emphasize and stress the importance of increasing the experience of happiness. There is a need to focus upon processes that can facilitate the restoration of well-being in our culture. It is time that we move away from the mere prediction of who experiences a sense of well-being, and toward a greater achievement of that state.

The second limitation of psychological perspectives is that they have separated mind from body, having to a great extent excluded inquiries into and discussion of the somatic/body experience as a component of happiness or well-being. The current discussions rely solely upon cognitive and affective domains to evaluate well-being, often ignoring the body experience altogether and equating well-being with mental health. This reveals the extent to which the dualistic perception of the nature of persons still prevails in the culture.
1.3.2 Dualism: Philosophical underpinnings of the mind-body separation

Dualism, or the separation of mind and body, continues to predominate throughout Western culture in the areas of health and well-being. This stems from a long-standing Western philosophical tradition which has dominated thought and action.

The 17th century French philosopher and mathematician Rene Descartes (1596-1650), known as the “Father of Modern philosophy” (Potter, 1993, p. 20) is generally credited with not only the theory of universal mechanism, but also with paving the way for Western adherence to dualism, the perspective of mind and body as separate (Check, 1990; Durant & Durant, 1961; Rozemond, 1998; Stratham, 1996; Williams & Bendelow, 1998).

For Descartes only mind, or thought, was known directly, and true knowledge and understanding could come only through the reasoning mind and not from the body (Robinson & Groves, 1998; Stratham, 1996). His theory was that the world is constituted of two disparate parts, “material objects, including the human body, extended in space and immaterial minds characterized by their capacity to think” (Smythies & Beloff, 1989, p. 82). This, of course, meant that our incorporeal mind was lodged in a mechanistic body (Stratham, 1996).

With his adherence to reason, Descartes viewed the whole universe, except God and the "rational soul," as mechanical, and proposed that we should be able to reduce all the operations of life, except reason itself, to mechanical laws (Durant, 1961). To a
great extent Western perspectives in health and well-being stem from 18th century Enlightenment, which found rich roots in Descartes’ mechanism and trust in reason alone (Rozemond, 1998; Smith, 1997).

Today, Western systems of health and well-being are still based, to a great extent, upon Descartes’ dualistic mechanical model (Check, 1990; Weil, 1995; Williams & Bendelow, 1998), leaving little room for trust in the body itself. Describing this dualistic approach, Weil (1995) explains:

The picture drawn by Descartes...was (and is) very appealing. It demystified much of reality, putting distance between the modern, scientific world and a superstitious past in which people lived in fear of supernatural forces and unpredictable deities. Also, it worked very well, conferring a high degree of ability to describe, predict, and control the observable world....Then, as now, mind was an ultimate mystery. Keeping it strictly separate from matter must have seemed desirable. As faith in science mounted in the Western world, its defenders made that separation an article of their faith and laxity about maintaining it grounds for expulsion from the scientific community (pp. 260 & 265).

1.3.3 Well-being and dualism

In terms of traditional views of well-being this problematic dichotomy can be seen in two areas. The first is the fact that in current well-being research, only cognitive/affective components are used to define and categorize happiness or quality of life. Authors associate well-being only with the mental health domain as in the Warr (1990) article titled: The measurement of well-being and other aspects of mental health.

Another example of the mind-body split in this area is the oft repeated phrase "health and well-being." In this expression health is equated with the physical structures of the body, and well-being is associated with the mind, or cognitive
structures. In the "health and well-being" dichotomy "health" generally means a lack of disease or illness in the physical body, while "well-being" typically refers to mental health.

Clearly there is an opportunity for growth and expansion in our research and discourse on the mind-body continuum as well as on the subject of well-being. The somatic field, offering somatic practices, or what has also been referred to as embodiment or mind-body practices (Knaster, 1996; Myers, 1991), creates such an opportunity. Somatics has been described as "experiencing the body from within" (Hanna, 1970) and is an umbrella term for the theory and practice of the mind-body connection. Based upon twelve years as a consultant and teacher using somatic or mind-body practices, as well as experience as a budding scholar in the area of somatic studies, it is this researcher's assertion that the somatic field can be a powerful integrating force for awareness and practice of the mind-body connection, and for the experience of well-being.

Before ascertaining those possibilities, however, it is necessary to turn first to the field of somatics itself, exploring its underlying foundations and dimensions.

1.4 Somatics

What is somatics? What are the basic assumptions or theoretical underpinnings of the field? This discussion begins with an introduction to the work and life of Thomas Hanna, who is considered the father of somatics, and continues with an exploration of the basic assumptions or concepts of the field.
Thomas Hanna defined somatics as, "the art and science of the inter-relational process between awareness, biological function and environment, all three factors being understood as a synergistic whole" (1983, p. 1). Hanna is credited for coining the term somatics even though he points out that the term itself originated at least four centuries ago during the late 16th century. According to Hanna the study of "man" was seen divided between the sciences of psychology and somatology. As a study of the properties of living bodies, "somatology continued as an envisioned new science until the positivism of the late 19th century broke it asunder by subdividing somatology into anatomy and physiology. The holistic intention of somatology was thus abandoned..." (1994, p. 4).

Hanna was born in Waco, Texas in 1928. He was Chairman of the Department of Philosophy at the University of Florida from 1965-1970. From that point forward, his writings indicate a move from philosopher to somatic practitioner and educator. That move seems to have been affected in great part by the ideas presented in phenomenology and pragmatism.

1.4.1 Somatics and Phenomenology

Phenomenology's focus upon nonduality, consciousness, and lived experience play a great part in Hanna's somatic work. In fact he reads and interprets Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological work as "obviously" somatic stating:

"to say that Merleau-Ponty was a somatic thinker is a bit obvious. Once he equated consciousness with perception we are abruptly within the somatic world of authentic human experience as each of us actually experiences himself and his world. Left behind are the notions of a 'mind' superimposed somehow on a 'body'; instead, 'mind' and 'body' are part of the same function in relating man constantly to his environment: the function of perception" (1970, p. 198).
Lived experience is another idea that Hanna takes with him into his somatic work. He highlights the importance of becoming aware of what is being experienced in the body-self right now, in the present moment (Hanna, 1970, 1976, 1986a, 1988). This lived (or living) experience is similar to the phenomenological idea of ‘bracketing’ - becoming aware of or reflecting upon the everyday, taken for granted life world.

According to van Manen, phenomenology investigates lived experience. It studies the life world as it is “immediately experienced, presumably before we conceptualize it” (quoted in Pinar et al, p.407).

This brings up another similarity between phenomenological and somatic understanding. For both, experience and its conceptualization are distinguishable modalities. Experience is first, hence the term “preconceptual experience”; thought and language follow. Hanna talks about the bodily experience as “beneath the level of words” and in a passage that details his work with a young man says, “So I addressed myself to his sensorimotor functions, a realm where words could have no effect and where sensation of movement is the only language spoken” (1980, p. 25).

Other authors too have compared views of phenomenology with somatically based perspectives (Fraleigh, 1996; Greene, 1995; Kleinman, 1979, 1990; Schrag, 1979). According to Fraleigh (1996) the two perspectives share many common factors including a nondualistic philosophy of the body, the importance of immediate awareness of our bodies at rest and in motion as “lived whole-body consciousness” (p. 14), an understanding that the “body is minded” (p. 15), and the view of the body as “a subject, not an object” (p. 15). Also, Kleinman clearly purports, “phenomenology
and pragmatism provide us not only with access to philosophical alternatives but also serve as guides to the world of somatic experience” (1990, p.6). This suggestion leads us into an investigation of pragmatism as it might relate to Hanna’s work.

1.4.2 Pragmatism and Somatics

Along with Hanna’s understanding of phenomenological perspectives, his somatic work also has roots in pragmatism. According to Greene (1995), Hanna suggested that somatics is closely aligned with the philosophy of Dewey and William James who considered, “human adaptability as primary in the development of their pragmatic philosophies” (p. 89). Pragmatism, like phenomenology and somatics, is nondualistic, rejecting the traditional Cartesian position of separation and instead having an experiential orientation toward mind-body unity (Kleinman, 1990).

For Hanna pragmatism is a philosophy concerned with “how to clarify and understand one’s own somatic functions and, more, how to control and improve them” (quoted in Greene, 1995, p. 89). Greene also links somatics and pragmatism with a description of both as uniting theory and practice. She states of pragmatism that it “is both personally practical and theoretically elegant. Thus, it provided the impetus for a comprehensive somatic philosophy and paved the way for theoretic legitimization of somatic practices” (p. 90).

Even William James, when describing elements of pragmatism, included the importance of senses and experience, which rings of the somatic focus upon bodily experience. He explains:

Pragmatism is willing to take anything, to follow either logic or the senses and to count the humblest and most personal experiences.... Her only test of
probable truth is what works best in the way of leading us, what fits every part of life best and combines with the collectivity of experiences's demands, nothing being omitted” (James, 1914, p. 80 emphasis added).

He also speaks in somatic metaphors as he states that pragmatism “unstiffens all our theories, limbers them up” (p. 53).

1.4.3 Somatics: Basic Assumptions

Sprinkled throughout the literature are several definitions of somatics, some focusing only upon Hanna’s work, some highlighting specific somatic techniques, some concentrating on the philosophical elements of the field, some dealing with it as a more general educational process, and some who combine more than one of these approaches.

What exactly is somatics?

As yet, there seems not to be a universal, concise definition of somatics. Fraleigh (1996) addresses this challenge as she recounts, “Recently a student asked me what the universals of somatics are. I hesitated and stammered. I don’t know if there are universals, unless we think of them as common links between the various somatic movement education and therapeutic philosophies, disciplines, methods, and techniques” (p. 18).

In search of a comprehensive perspective of the field, this researcher has come to experience and understand somatics as involving these common links or elements: 1) continually returning to awareness; 2) understanding the human as a synergistic connected process or soma; 3) privileging first-person perception; 4) highlighting body wisdom, inner authority, and personal responsibility; 5) focusing upon mind-body
integration; 6) bringing focus to the interconnectedness of life; 7) tolerating ambiguity -
being able to hold opposing tensions simultaneously. It is to these common links or
assumptions that we now turn.

Awareness. Greene, borrowing ideas from Kleinman (1986) and Hanna (1994),
defines awareness as, “the sensory-motor perceptual ability to receive and integrate
sensation, thought, or other stimuli; the capacity for simultaneous sensing and acting;
the ability - unique to somas - simultaneously to receive the world into ourselves and

The field of somatics emphasizes the overarching importance of awareness. In
one of Hanna’s articles he spells out the “goal” of any somatic education or therapy as
seeking “to change a person’s life for the better” and that it is “through re-gaining
awareness of the self that these changes can occur” (1977, p. 50). Specifically, gaining
control through awareness of one’s bodily self is a general theme of the somatic
educators (Knaster, 1996; Hanna, 1977, 1988; Feldenkrais, 1985; Bertherat &
Bernstein, 1977; Johnson, 1983; Claire, 1995; Ruhnke & Wurzburger, 1995). For these
somatic practitioners, conscious awareness of what was previously unconscious is the
gateway to change.

Awareness can be referred to as listening to the body or sensing the subtle
experiences of the body. For Kleinman (1986), awareness demonstrates a unity of
knowing and doing. Many of the specific somatic techniques use the cultivation of
awareness as a primary step or goal in their process. Though a description and review
of specific somatic methods or techniques is beyond the scope of this essay, some of the

12

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
somatic or mind-body modalities that utilize awareness as an integral part of their work include Alexander Technique, Hanna Somatics, Feldenkrais' Awareness through Movement, Swiegard’s Ideokinesis, Trager, and Body-Mind Centering among others. All of these modalities have used instructions similar to or including ‘becoming aware of the body,’ ‘listening to the body,’ ‘noticing what is going on,’ ‘paying attention,’ or ‘experiencing the body from within.’

Knaster (1996) suggests that the goal of somatic awareness is simply to experience whatever processes are going on in the body/mind in the present moment. There is a shift away from the realm of cognitive concepts, ideology, habit, and running commentaries, and toward the realm of fully experiencing the physical truths of the body (Knaster, 1996). In a summary of the work of “somatic pioneers,” instead of focusing upon specific content or techniques, Johnson instead highlighted the common process of awareness in which they all engaged. He refers to it as “their shared recovery of sensual authority” (1983, p. 156). Johnson then recounts that a woman with whom he worked who had back pain for years, finally encountered relief when she gained back her own sensual authority - in other words when she learned to utilize self-awareness instead of trying to engage in activities the “right way” (Johnson, 1983, chapter 8).

Hanna also speaks specifically about the importance of awareness, and in this rather passionate excerpt he links a lack of awareness with both mental and physical illnesses:

“This lack of self-awareness is not a minor matter. It is a major catastrophe for our modern technological society. Lack of self-awareness is not simply a
moral problem, it is the major public health problem of contemporary society. Our cultural program is a program of human diminution and destruction, but because culture is as invisible to the acculturated human being as is water to the fish, we cannot see that these breakdowns are not the normal and inevitable results of aging but are the abnormal and preventable results of cultural conditioning. Stated simply, the typical mental and physical diseases of our society are learned (1980, p. xiii, emphasis in original).

Human beings seen as holistic connected process or ‘soma.’ Somatics is an umbrella term that has gone by many names including body-mind disciplines, movement education, body therapies, movement awareness, embodiment practices, somatic therapy, bodywork, mind-body integration, and certainly others (Eddy, 1991). One shared idea among these areas, regardless of the chosen name or label, is the underlying importance of understanding and working with the entire system, the “soma,” which reveals a holistic view of a person. For Hanna (1976) each individual or soma is “an integral and ordered process of embodied elements which cannot be separated either from their evolved past or their adaptive future” (1976, p. 31). In this way the human/soma is understood in its wholeness as an embodied living organism (Greene, 1997).

In somatics, the soma, which can be partly described as “the living body in its wholeness” (Hanna 1980, pp. 5-6), or “the body as experienced from within” (Hanna 1994, p. 7), is seen as an embodied process of internal awareness and change, instead of an object (Hanna 1986a) - a living and dynamic verb instead of a static and unchanging noun so to speak. In Hanna’s definition he differentiates between body and soma:

’Soma’ does not mean ‘body’; it means ‘Me, the bodily being.’ ‘Body’ has, for me, the connotation of a piece of meat - a slab of flesh laid out on the butcher’s block or the physiologist’s work table, drained of life and ready to be worked upon and used. Soma is living; it is expanding and contracting.
Soma is pulsing, flowing, squeezing and relaxing—flowing and alternating... Somas are unique things which are yearning, hoping,...doubting, despairing. Somas are the kind of living, organic being which you are at this moment, in this place where you are. Soma is everything that is you...” (1970, p. 35 emphasis in original).

Other writers too have depicted similar viewpoints in discussing the need to differentiate between the body as personally lived versus the body as objectively or externally known (Eddy, 199; Fortin, 1995; Kleinman, 1966, 1979, 1990; Menkin, 1996; Merleau-Ponty, 1962; Rabil, 1967; Ruhnke & Wurzburger, 1995; Schrag, 1979; Van Den Berg, 1952).

Closely correlated with understanding human lives as somas, is that life itself is a continual process of dynamic movement, instead of something “stuck or static or stale” (Hay, 1987, p. 6). Hanna suggested that we need to ask different questions if we are to understand the life process at all. For Hanna we cannot understand life by asking what it is. Instead we must ask, what does it do? Then we will find out it is not a thing that has a process, but instead that it is a process. Hanna states, “life is not a ‘what’ but a ‘how.’ To understand the soma and its process is to understand the how of life” (1980, p.8).

Indeed, there is nothing static about life. As Hanna emphasizes in the quote above, this is one of the language problems with the word “body.” It seems to imply something drained of life, closed, finished. On the other hand, life as a process implies continual growth and movement. Specifically, rhythmic movement. At one point he describes all somatic process as taking place in “rhythmic, cyclical patterns of alternating internal movement. Diastole/systole, expansion/contraction.
tension/relaxation, extensor/flexor, turning outward/turning inward, wakefulness/dormancy” (1976, p.32). This living rhythmicity is a corollary of understanding human beings as somas and life as continual process.

First-person privilege. In relation to knowing and experiencing the self as “soma” instead of “body” is the importance in the somatic discipline of privileging first-person versus third-person perception. Hanna explicates:

Somatics is the field which studies the soma: namely the body as perceived from within by first-person perception. When a human being is observed from the outside - i.e., from a third-person viewpoint - the phenomenon of a human body is perceived. But, when this same human being is observed from the first-person viewpoint of his own proprioceptive senses, a categorically different phenomenon is perceived: the human soma (1986a, p.4).

Somatics, though understanding that both first- and third-person views have their place, privileges first-person awareness which allows one to perceive oneself from the inside, focusing upon subtle sensations, inner feelings, internal movement, and other proprioceptive processes. This is in contrast to the third-person perspective where the human body is viewed as an object that may be observed, measured, and analyzed from the outside world. Hanna goes so far as to claim that, “first-person human lived experience must be considered of equal scientific and medical importance as outside, third-person observation” (1988, p. xiv).

First person perception, somatics argues, is where true knowledge of the body/self comes, as opposed to the external observation or “objective” analysis which is

---

3Proprioception which actually means “own reception” describes the system through which various inner senses provide information about and to ourselves from within, as opposed to sights, sounds, and other stimulus that come from the external environment. Kaaster (1996) reports that it is “our internal or visceral organs that feed us the information - for example, we sense fullness, hollowness, stretching, contraction, pressure” (p. 57). Greene defines it as “the process of perceiving the myriad stimuli going on inside the soma; awareness of internal sensations (1997, p.51).
still the dominant paradigm. In this light Kleinman states, “Knowing one’s body is not revealed by scientific analysis or observation. We just do not come to know our bodies in this way” (1979, p. 178). Greene (1997) concurs in her position that the inner workings of “somatic dynamism” are invisible from the third-person perception of viewing an objectified body.

Privileging first-person perception means giving validity and importance to an individual’s internal, subtle experiences. Ruhnke and Wurzburger (1995) encourage readers to know and experience their bodies/selves from within, using first-person perception instead of the eye of an outsider. They affirm that the body is “tremendously beautiful, tremendously complex. There is no other thing so complex, so subtle as the body. However,” they continue, “you don’t know anything about it. You have only looked at it in the mirror. You have never looked at it from the within” (1995, p.13). Their admonition leads to a new way of understanding and experiencing the body/self as something of beauty, something of wisdom - indeed, an inner authority.

**Body Wisdom, Inner Authority, and Personal Responsibility.** A fourth assumption of somatic work is that our human bodies are a source of great knowing or wisdom (Borysenko, 1987; Claire, 1995; Feldenkrais, 1977, 1985; Johnson, 1983, 1995; Hanna, 1970, 1994; Knaster, 1996; Lidell & Thomas, 1987; Lowen, 1990; Lyon, 1981; Menkin, 1996; Miller, 1997). Far from assuming the “body-as-machine” metaphor that still dominates much of Western culture, somaticists honor the body as its own source of intelligence (Chopra, 1993; Domar & Dreher, 1996; Hay, 1987; Bertherat & Bernstein, 1977; Fraleigh, 1996) rather than view it as a container that simply houses
the ever more important mind. Johnson (1995) labels this the “wisdom and creativity of the body” (p. ix) as well as the “quieter intelligence of flesh” (p. xiii). Fraleigh asserts, “somatic movement education and therapeutic bodywork hope to elicit (or go back to) the natural intelligence of the body, its (momentarily hidden) self-healing and self-regulating core” (1996, p. 18).

This intelligence or wisdom of the body, however, is a subtler, quieter source of wisdom than is the rational intelligence of the intellect (Johnson, 1983; Knaster, 1996), and it is more easily ignored (Northrup, 1994). In a culture which has taught systematically, even if implicitly, not to honor our bodies/selves as important aspects of knowledge and understanding, it is little wonder that our body wisdom has oft been neglected and even rejected.

Kabat-Zinn, founder and past director of the Stress Reduction Clinic at the University of Massachusetts Medical Center and Associate Professor of Medicine in the Division of Preventive and Behavioral Medicine at the University of Massachusetts Medical School, addresses this in terms of experiencing symptoms or pain in the body. He advocates remembering first to, “honor your body and listen to the messages it is trying to give you” (1990, p. 228). He explicates how usually the body will try desperately to get its messages through, “despite the bad connection with conscious awareness” (1990, p. 282). Kabat-Zinn describes how a client, after having been practicing meditation for a few weeks, could see that his body had been trying to get him to “slow down his fast-paced, Type-A life-style by giving him headaches at work. But he didn’t listen even though the headaches got worse. So his body gave him an
ulcer. But still he didn’t listen. Finally it sent him a mild heart attack, which scared him so much that he started to listen” (1990, p. 282). The somatic perspective can teach individuals to listen to and honor their bodies before they experience those distressing and sometimes familiar symptoms.

The perspective of the body as a source of wisdom has implications not only for our experience of health, but also for our experience of authority. Traditionally we have experienced authority as coming primarily from the external world - parents, teachers, bosses, religious leaders, physicians, etc. If, however, we rediscover that our body/selves are intricately infused with intelligence and wisdom, and if we begin to come back to the body and listen for that wisdom in our inner world of feelings, intuition, and proprioceptive experiences, as well as using our brilliant and important cognitive processes, might we not be more likely to honor our own internal authority?

Knaster writes:

Becoming aware of and befriending your body entitles you to discover its wisdom. When you’re alienated from your own body, you become a stranger to yourself. You’re not aware of the resources you have available for making judgments and decisions; instead, you rely on recognized authorities to tell you what to think, believe, and do. Once you have stopped treating your body as an enemy and start to appreciate it as an endless source of knowledge, you can choose over and over on your own. You know and accept what is right for you and reject what doesn’t fit (1996, p. xxi).

This inner authority is different from the self-determining individual that modernism suggests we strive for through reason and intellect, and that other paradigms believe is only a dream, a tool for oppression, or a “technology of the self” used to

4It is interesting to note, however, that many of the pioneers of somatic practices came to discover their specific techniques through some personal illness or bodily discomfort (Johnson, 1983).
regulate and normalize (Foucault cited in Usher & Edwards, 1994, pp. 44-45). It is this traditional primacy of focus on mental processes that has lead to the cultural neglect of the wisdom of the body (Knaster 1996). Thus, achieving an enlightened state of rational thought, moving toward some capital T “Truth” is not the focus of coming back to our own internal authority.

The authority within is different precisely because it ceases to focus on language and reason, and instead creates a space where internal sensing is a valid way of knowing. Instead of finding our personal authority through the cognitive processes of linear thought, rationalistic reasoning and their correlate, language, inner authority can be experienced through the place of silence within each individual. This place is found between the thoughts, in the spaces between the words where we are not bound by educational, cultural, or linguistic learning.

The experience of our own inner authority is not accomplished or even understood through reason. It is the process of connecting to the unchanging essence of our being (Chopra, 1997; Dyer, 1991; Holmes, 1938) which is the part of each individual that was “I am” at age four years and that is still “I am” as an adult of any age. It is from this internal place, not from some external material source or scientific finding, where authentic wisdom is found. It is in this experience that authentic power and authority reside, not power based upon oppression, or authority based on control, for those come from the external. As Gadon expresses, “Empowerment comes only from within, from the connection to the silent life force” (quoted in Knaster, 1996, p. 21).
The convergence of the authority within with the conscious awareness of the body has been called gut feelings, intuition, or resonance. Christiane Northrup calls “the still, small, wise intuitive voice” within each of us “that voice of our own body that we have been forced to ignore through our culture’s illness, misinformation, and dysfunction” (quoted in Knaster, 1996, p. 110). Usher and Edwards (1994) also describe this coming together of the body with a certain sense of knowing. They named it resonance:

The qualities of familiarity that doubles with strangeness, of recognition with obscurity, light within dark, originality and repetition, the seeing and the yet to be seen, are some of the characteristics of resonance. Nothing has been ‘proved’ yet we feel the touch of truth. We are provided with a new set of conceptual resources and a different set of vivifying metaphors from which perhaps even momentarily we can escape from the power-knowledge discourses of epistemologically grounded and scientifically validated ‘truth’, from the logocentrism, as Derrida would put it, of our ways of thinking and speaking (Usher & Edwards, 1994, p. 124, emphasis added).

Johnson, too, speaks of the importance of developing a personal authority and suggests that the way to cultivate this authority is through inner somatic awareness or, using his term, the “technology of authenticity” which “encourages people to develop their own sense of authority, their peculiar genius” (1983, p. 80). According to Johnson we usually experience the opposite which he labels the “technology of alienation.” This alienation accustoms individuals to feel disconnected from themselves and from each other which, he elaborates, is why we have required outside authorities or experts who can tell us what to do (1983). “On the other hand” he writes, “authenticity requires us to take authority over our lives. The authentic person is the one who is aware that his or her worldly behavior is indeed his or hers...The fundamental shift from alienation to
authenticity is deceptively simple: it requires diverting our awareness from the opinions of those outside us toward our own perceptions and feelings” (Johnson, 1983, p. 154).

Johnson’s “simple” suggestion above is easier said than done, however. Holding the theoretical viewpoint that the body is wise and intelligent, and engaging in somatic practices which may lead to an awareness or rediscovery of one’s own authority, both require a great deal of personal responsibility and commitment. In describing the somatic practice of mindfulness meditation Kabat-Zinn explains, “Mindfulness doesn’t just come about by itself because you have decided that it is a good idea to be more aware of things. A strong commitment to working on yourself and enough self-discipline to persevere in the process are essential” (1990, p. 41). He further asserts that it is difficult to understand “how much of an effort it takes to work with the energies of one’s own mind and body” (1990, p. 41) until you have experienced it. Indeed, might it not be easier to simply accept external authorities? In an article discussing the importance of experiencing the body as the center of one’s power and existence, Jourard (1995) asserts, “It is difficult to resist such a powerful, even seductive invitation to view oneself as helpless, with no power within one’s body” (p. 50).

Perhaps even more illuminating in the discussion of body wisdom, authority, and personal responsibility is Bertherat’s declaration:

By giving up our autonomy we abdicate our individual sovereignty. We belong to the powers, to the individuals who have claimed us. If we demand our liberty so emphatically, it’s because we feel we are slaves; and
the most lucid of us acknowledge that we are slave-accomplices. But how could we be anything else since we aren’t even masters of our first house, the house of our body? (1977, p. x).

Indeed.

Holism. Another assumption that is important to the somatic field is the nondualistic view of mind and body as inextricably connected, or the idea of “holism.” Greene (1995), in her discussion of somatic theory, tells us that holism is “a conceptualization of phenomena in their multi-dimensional entirety, not isolating or segmenting into discrete parts what comprises a continuous whole” (p. 150). For Hanna (1970), holism meant that bodily structure and living function, or body and mind, are inexorably intertwined. Indeed they are two polar aspects of the same living being/soma. Hanna wrote much on Charles Darwin and took liberties to re-name him one of the first and most influential somatic scientists (1970). One of the reasons Hanna labeled Darwinian ideas as somatically oriented is because of the importance that the evolutionist put on structure and function continually working together as an inseparable whole:

The Darwinian invitation was to explore the field of somatics. to construct a science of life that is founded on the model of life itself, to discover how the functions and structures of all living beings have emerged in this universe with a meaningful order that is their own and which cannot be reduced to lesser components (1976, p. 30).

Hanna decreed that the theoretical limitation that has blocked the vision of this “life science” is something “annoyingly” familiar: the unresolved metaphysical dualism of Western philosophy and science that continues to separate living organisms into structure and function, mind and body, spirit and flesh (Hanna, 1970, 1976). For Hanna,
structure and function is another way of saying body and mind, and he often used them interchangeably. He made a wonderful comparison as he related the confluence or nexus of mind and body with that of energy and matter, arguing that one is neither more nor less clear than the other. Instead, they are both “graduated, ambiguous differences always beyond our threshold of conscious recognition” (1976, p.32).

Schrag also writes about mind and body as traditionally formulated and suggests that they “are reified and objectivized distinctions, foreign to man’s experience as it is immediately lived” (1979, p. 156). Bertherat discusses the issue of nonduality and believes that through awareness of the body we can gain access to our entire holistic being. She states that “body and spirit, mental and physical, and even strength and weakness, represent not our duality but our unity” (1977, p. xi).

Interconnectedness of life. The somatic ontological view of holism, however, is not limited to the body-mind connection within individuals. Contrary to some criticisms of somatics which fear the somatic path will lead to a selfish, egoistic turn away from the community and environment only to dwell in an excessive self-indulgence of “turning within,” another basic assumption of somatics is the importance of the interconnectedness of life. From a somatic view there is a “simultaneous recognition of man, his body, and the ultimate reality of all existence as, essentially, one” (Hanna, 1970, p. 162). Hanna called this the “soma-environment exchange” (1970). According to Hanna, somas as living organisms survive only by differentiating and choosing between options. This brings about continual change and adaptation which never comes about through the solitary experience of an individual soma. On the
contrary, there is an interminable soma-environment exchange in which each influences the other (1970). From the somatic perspective, saying the soma is separate from its environment, or the individual from community, is as incongruous as saying the mind can be separated from the body.

For Hanna, life is seen as a somatic ecology where the soma tends toward autonomy and independence of its environment while simultaneously tending toward “an appetite for” and dependence upon its environment - social and physical. (Hanna, 1980, 1988). Throughout his work, Hanna places a great deal of importance on the incessant interchange between individual (internal) and environment (external), and sees human consciousness as evolving out of this soma-environment exchange. Hanna also speaks of the interconnectedness of life in a more humanistic and personal tone stating, “not only are all men our brothers but all animals are our uncles and cousins, deserving of our understanding and love because we are all of the same wondrous family” (1970, p. 11).

Schrag’s phenomenological essay (1979) sounds reminiscent of Hanna’s soma-environment exchange as he states:

The lived body is not an isolated phenomenon. It is intentionally related to a world...A most fundamental region of concern in one’s premordial experience of being in the world is the region of interacting and interdependent selves. I apprehend my body in a communal context....The engagements of the lived body always proceed within a self-other correlation (1979, p. 158).

Reflecting this inextricable connection between bodily self and other Norman Brown, in Love’s Body states that, “personalities and egos are masks, spectres,
concealing our unity as body. For it is as one biological species that mankind is one..., so
that to become conscious of ourselves as body is to become conscious of mankind as
one” (1968 p. 82).

Thus, especially when working in the theoretical context of somatics, individuals
are aware of the importance of the “other” or of community. Far from becoming overly
self-indulgent there is instead a renewed sensitivity to one’s surrounding environment,
and that which could be viewed as a dichotomous polarity - self versus other - now
merges into a holistic unity. Greene explains, “What are typically understood as
‘internal’ processes - human awareness and biological function - are conceptualized as
synergistically merged with what is typically understood as an ‘external’ environment.
Internal and external constitute one singular whole process” (1995, p. 122). Thus,
according to Greene, there is an interest in the interrelationship among self and others,

Ambiguity - holding simultaneously opposing tensions. The last somatic
assumption to be discussed is ambiguity, and it is linked closely with the assumption of
interconnectedness - that life consists of infinite connections. Webster defines
ambiguity as “the quality or state of being capable of being understood in two or more
possible senses.” Ambiguity flies in the face of more traditional “either-or” thinking.

Throughout Hanna’s work can be seen phrases such as “holistic ambiguity of
somas”, “both/and ambiguity of the somatic process”, and “ambiguous nature of somas
and their living process.” He has even said that the “secret” of the somatic process is an
ongoing and unresolvable ambiguity (1976). This tendency has made somatic ideas
uncomfortable and yet alluring at the same time. Kleinman (1999) states, “If there is somatic knowledge, we will never fully understand it through the convenient and the conventional” (p. 106). Ambiguity involves what Hanna (1970) considers a factual polarity and what could also be called a dynamic paradox: all somas simultaneously tend toward homeostasis and balance while also tending toward change and imbalance. This is how life is a stability within an unstable process (Hanna 1980). For Hanna it is certain that life occurs, not despite these contradictory tendencies, but rather because of them (1970, 1976).

This somatic foundation breaks down rigid categories and allows for growth and renewal. Somatic perspectives bridge ambiguous and opposing tendencies by engaging in an holistic process of “both-and” instead of “either-or.” Because of this, the field of somatics not only tolerates dichotomies, but understands that the dynamic processes of life occur because of the interconnectedness of those polarities. Therefore, it is in the realm of somatic theory and practice to expand perspectives of well-being by tolerating and integrating opposing tensions as a way toward higher, more sophisticated knowledge, understanding, and growth. As Kleinman (1999) elegantly suggests:

the Somatic Moment [is], where sound merges with silence, where word becomes image and the prosaic becomes mystical, where the visible meets the invisible, where public becomes private, where the ordinary is transformed into the extraordinary, where thought and sensation are transcended, and where mundane occurrence becomes an act of creation (p. 11).
1.5 Expanding definitions of well-being

This brings us back full circle to the possibility of moving beyond the perspectives of well-being that continue to separate mind from body, and toward a more integrated approach. Chaline (2001) concurs stating:

[Previously] a book about well-being might have taken as its theme a number of different topics. If the author were a specialist in health and fitness, for example, he or she might focus on the physical aspects of well-being; alternatively, a psychologist or psychotherapist might concentrate on mental issues. Today, a book claiming to deal with well-being must embrace matters of both the mind and the body, as the two are now understood to be the inextricably connected parts of a single whole (p. 7).

1.5.1 Experiential Well-Being

In contrast to the dualistic ontology of the psychological perspectives is the multidimensional view held by more holistic approaches to well-being. In these somatic approaches, many of which come from ancient Eastern philosophies, instead of seeing the world as a collection of isolated parts, the world is understood as a unified whole in which all phenomena are intimately connected (Monte, 1993).

In generalizing about differences between traditional Eastern and conventional Western approaches to health and well-being, Budilovsky & Adamson suggest that the concept of body and mind as connected is an easy concept for the Easterner. The physical body should be well cared for because it houses the spirit. And because it houses the spirit, the body/mind is not to be abused. It is viewed as a sacred vehicle for the expression of spirit, leading eventually to enlightenment (Budilovsky & Adamson, 1998). They continue with an amusing interpretation of the Western outlook:

On the other side of the spectrum is the Westerner. Traditionally, the Westerner sees one part of the self at a time. The body is the body.
Healthy food keeps it running, and exercise keeps it strong. End of story. Then there is the mind. The mind is the source of intelligence and thought. Activities that stimulate the mind, from philosophical conversations to crossword puzzles, keep the mind active. End of story. Then there is the spirit. The spirit might be nurtured and maintained by going to church or by a personal philosophy or spirituality. In many, the spirit is ignored. End of story (Budilovsky & Adamson, 1998, p. 29).

Staying true to the realm of somatic perspectives, which holds an holistic view of individuals and processes, this inquiry will begin to integrate the mind, body and spirit to create a more accurate picture of these three aspects working inextricably together.

To differentiate from the “subjective well-being” of the psychological perspectives, as well as the well-being of the “health and well-being” dichotomy, both of which view well-being as a dimension only of mental health, in this inquiry the multidimensional concept of somatic well-being or Experiential Well-Being is addressed. Experiential Well-Being (EWB) is the personal experience of, or perceived sense of, wholeness or wellness, satisfaction and contentment in the domains of mind, body, and spirit.

1.5.2 Well-being – somatic perspectives

The field of somatics includes diverse embodiment or mind-body practices initiated both in the East such as yoga, tai chi, and qigong, and in the West such as Alexander technique, Rolfing, stress-reduction. With its basic underlying assumptions, its respect for the triumverate of mind, body, and spirit, and its focus upon both theory and practice, somatics is able to address the holistic concept of Experiential Well-Being.
Somatic educators and practitioners have for years boasted of increased physical comfort, peace of mind, body efficiency, and overall well-being with the utilization of their somatic procedures. Mind-body practices have continued to proliferate throughout much of the U.S., along with a growing body of literature to expound upon the benefits of these processes.

An understanding of somatic theory, familiarity with the literature of somatic practitioners, and experience as an educator in the field all lead this researcher to the hypothesis that the field of somatics is promising in its ability to positively impact the experience of well-being. Somatic writers and practitioners would agree that they have been fully engaged in the art of Experiential Well-Being for years. They have claimed to increase well-being with many somatic practices, positively impacting mind, body, and spirit.

However, currently little of the literature involving somatic practice is based upon research findings. Most assertions have not been based on systematic inquiry. Few authors show data supporting their claims that the practice of somatic techniques increases the experience of happiness or well-being. It is interesting to note that actual studies involving somatic practices have thus far focused not upon the holistic notion of experiential well-being, but only upon specific physiological aspects of health such as flexibility, balance, blood pressure, heart rate, and respiration rates (Barnes, Treiber, & Davis, 2001; Li, Harmer, McAuley, & Duncan, 2001; Li, Hong, & Chan, 2001; Mayer,
1999; Murray, 1997; Ornish, 1990; Sancier, 1999; Wang, Lan, & Wong 2001). Scant research has been done on if, and how, somatic practices have impacted well-being generally. Inquiry into such processes is needed.

Somatic theory and practice holds promise of not only expanding definitions of well-being, but also of positively impacting its experience. Quality research is necessary, however, before the somatic field can responsibly, persuasively claim a place in the achievement of Experiential Well-Being. This project begins the systematic inquiry necessary in exploring the role of one somatic practice, Somatic Education, in the experience of well-being.

1.6 Research Objectives

This study involves employees of a large mid-western university who engaged in classes sponsored by their staff wellness program. As part of a Complementary Health Initiative, the wellness program offered a series of Somatic Education classes opened to faculty and staff of the university. Somatic Education is an embodiment or mind-body practice and will be outlined in detail in chapter three.

The Somatic Education classes combined elements of three specific somatic practices: hatha yoga, qigong, and mindfulness based stress-reduction. The purpose of combining three somatic forms was to create a more generalized experience of the somatic process.

Specific practices of the classes included exploration into awareness, breathing, stretching and strengthening postures, gentle movements, visualization, energy work, spiritual/inner dimensions, and relaxation. More than the specific techniques used, it
was a utilization of the underlying somatic principles discussed previously that was the basis for the creation of the Somatic Education classes.

The goal of this study was to begin to explore and understand the role of Somatic Education in the experience of well-being. The objectives of this project were threefold:

1. To understand participants' experiences in the Somatic Education classes. According to each individual, what were the classes about? What were some of their own experiences? Were there any seeming effects outside of class?

2. To ascertain participants' ideas and definitions of well-being. What is well-being? What are the components of well-being? How is it experienced?

3. To explore the role that Somatic Education plays in the experience of well-being. Is there a connection between engaging in Somatic Education and experiencing a sense of well-being? Is Somatic Education a possible tool for positively impacting well-being?

1.7 Limitations of the study

Most of the participants in this study were college educated women, over the age of forty, who were staff members at a large mid-western university. A few faculty members were present for some of the Somatic Education classes, but none volunteered to be interviewed. Only one male, a staff member over the age of forty, agreed to be interviewed.

Information about the two data collection processes, evaluative surveys and semi-structured interviews, was given out at the last two classes. At the fourth and final
class the surveys were given out and the participants were able to sign up for the interviews. Therefore, only individuals who came to the final two classes were able to fill out the surveys and/or sign up for an interview.

It is possible that only individuals who had positive experiences in the classes continued throughout the entire four class series, and also agreed to be interviewed. I know of at least one participant who felt sick after the first class and never returned for the other three classes. To get a full picture of the role Somatic Education plays in well-being there is a need to include an exploration into the processes of those who did not have a positive experience.

By introducing these limitations at the beginning of this project, I hope to encourage readers to critically explore this inquiry and begin to propose creative ways to address these areas in future research.

1.8 Overview of chapters

Chapter two is a review of literature begins with an overview of subjective well-being (SWB), or psychological perspectives of well-being and happiness. SWB has focused primarily upon correlational data in explaining and predicting self-reports of happiness. This section outlines the current findings in regard to those relational studies. After a brief look at the limitations of SWB views, the chapter addresses somatic perspectives of well-being, or Experiential Well-Being (EWB). From an exploration into the general trends of somatic educators and their views and practices, the chapter moves to the theoretical underpinnings of three somatic practices: qigong, yoga, and stress-reduction. Chapter two continues with a look at some common links or
processes of somatic work that purportedly increase feelings or experiences of well-being. The chapter concludes with limitations of somatic work, outlining the need for more research in the area of EWB.

Chapter three discusses design and research methods. It begins with a description of Somatic Education, the mind-body process utilized in the study and asserted to increase feelings of well-being. The chapter then moves to methods of inquiry focusing upon action research, grounded theory, participant interviews, and evaluative surveys.

Chapter four is the data results and analysis section. It discusses findings in relation to the three research objectives which include participant experiences of relaxation, stress-reduction, increased energy, and a lengthening or releasing in the body during the Somatic Education classes, participant concepts of well-being which were holistic in nature, and the role of Somatic Education in increasing participant well-being.

Chapter five is the conclusion. In this chapter the researcher turns to discussion and implications of the findings outlined in chapter four. Important points in the concluding chapter include the need for ongoing practice as well as educating the general public about somatic practices and possibilities. There is a discussion on the necessity to close the gap between knowing something is good for us on the one hand, and doing the thing itself on the other hand. Another section is devoted to future research recommendations. Lastly, the researcher outlines responsibilities of somatic practitioners and educators in order to impact our culture's Experiential Well-Being.
CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.1 Well-Being - psychological perspectives

The study of well-being came in part as a reaction against the prominent focus in psychology on negative states of being (Diener, 1984). Staying loyal to their field, psychologists view well-being as a primarily cognitive/emotional structure, and utilize the terms well-being and subjective well-being (SWB) interchangeably. The subjective element is essential in the study of well-being because people evaluate and react to circumstances differently depending in part on their past experiences, expectations, and belief systems (Diener & Suh, 1997).

Diener, Suh, Lucas, & Smith (1999), who conducted a lengthy review of well-being literature from three decades, conclude that subjective well-being is "a broad category of phenomenon that includes people's emotional responses, domain satisfactions, and global judgments of life satisfaction" (p. 277). In the psychology of well-being literature, that "broad category of phenomenon" has been condensed to three primary categories: pleasant affect, unpleasant affect, and life satisfaction. Affect is another term for moods and emotions, which represent the evaluations people make.
regarding life events. Examples of pleasant affect, include feelings of joy, contentment, and happiness, while unpleasant affect includes feelings of depression, anxiety, guilt, anger, and jealousy among others.

In addition to these affective dimensions, subjective well-being researchers are also interested in the cognitive dimensions of life satisfaction. Life satisfaction includes evaluations of one's current life, past experiences, possible future, and significant others' view of one's life. Life satisfaction also takes into account satisfaction with specific domains of life including work, family, finances and health. Life satisfaction is a more global term than affect, and is measured by the Satisfaction with Life Scale (Pavot & Diener, 1993).

Most of the studies in the field have been relationship inquiries focusing upon the correlates of well-being. Two of the main goals of correlational research are explanation and prediction of factors (Fraenkel & Wallen, 1996). In this case researchers have been interested in explaining differences in SWB and also in predicting SWB.

2.1.1 Correlates of well-being

The first thirty years of well-being research, following Wilson's premier study on happiness in 1967, focused upon the correlation of reported levels of well-being and demographic variables. Those variables have been termed external or "bottom-up" variables (Diener, 1984) and include age, income, education, job satisfaction, marriage, religion, gender, and health.
Age. The correlate "age" has seen some changes since the first studies on well-being. Early studies reported that "young" individuals were happier people (Campbell, 1981; Wilson, 1967). However, since the 1980's that conclusion has been challenged. Some researchers have found that when other variables such as income are controlled, the relationship between age and well-being is eliminated (Shmotkin, 1990).

Other researchers have found that older ages have correlated with only one of the components of subjective well-being: pleasant affect. These authors have reported an inverse relationship, meaning that as individuals grow older they report fewer pleasant emotions (Diener, Sandvik, & Larsen, 1985; Diener & Suh, 1998). Even those conclusions are not accepted as unquestionable, however. Diener et. al. (1999) challenge this reported phenomena by explaining that, "One limitation of these studies is that researchers primarily assessed aroused types of pleasant emotions such as 'feeling on top of the world' and 'energetic.' Emotional intensity declines with age so that both pleasant and unpleasant affect decline over the life span" (p. 291). Because of this the authors conclude that decrease in mood may be due to the sampling of high emotional arousal states in the past studies, and not due to a decrease in overall positive affect.

Perhaps more important to note are recent studies that have actually overturned the early empirical findings that youth is a consistent predictor of happiness. Recent inquiries have found that overall life satisfaction often increases, or at least does not decrease with age (Herzog & Rodgers, 1981; Horley & Lavery, 1995).

Income. The next variable to be reviewed is income. Researchers have examined the relation between income and subjective well-being in terms of personal

37
income and also in terms of individuals who experienced increases or decreases in income. In studies of personal income it has not been surprising to find a positive correlation between money and reported levels of happiness or well-being. What may be surprising, however, is the fact that though the correlations have generally shown significant relationships, they have also shown to be very small correlations of less than .2 (Diener, Sandvik, Seidlitz, & Diener 1993; Haring, Stock, & Okun, 1984).

One reason that the (positive) correlations are not found to be higher may be due to the fact that effects of increases in income are not always positive. Thoits and Hannan (1979) found that increased income often leads to increased levels of distress. Diener, Suh, Lucas, & Smith, in their 1999 review of subjective well-being concur, stating "Thus, even positive changes in income may result in more stress, mitigating the positive effects of wealth on well-being" (p. 288).

**Education.** A third correlate of subjective well-being is education. As with income, researchers have found small but significant correlations between education and reports of well-being. A median effect size has been reported as .13 (Diener et al., 1999). Campbell (1981) found that education seems to be more highly associated with well-being for individuals with lower incomes. Some studies indicate that those small associations become insignificant when the effects of income are taken into account (Witter, Okun, Stock, & Haring, 1984).

**Job satisfaction.** Job satisfaction is another variable that correlates with reported well-being. In a meta-analysis of thirty-four studies Tait, Padget, & Baldwin (1989) found an average correlation of .44 between job satisfaction and life satisfaction.
This is a rather large correlation when compared to the other bottom-up variables that have thus far been discussed. Several reasons have been hypothesized for why work is related to well-being. Possible reasons are that jobs may provide pleasurable stimulation, a sense of meaning and identity, positive social relationships, and intrinsic rewards (Argyle, 1996; George & Jones, 1996; Henderson, 2000; Michalos, 1986).

Interestingly, it appears that a person’s satisfaction with her or his job is not as important as if the person has a job at all. Unemployed individuals report lower life satisfaction, have higher stress levels, and higher suicide rates than employed persons (Oswald, 1997).

**Marriage.** Marriage is a fifth possible correlate of subjective well-being. As with income, studies have consistently replicated the positive relation between marriage and subjective well-being (Brown, 2000; Marks & Lambert, 1998; Ryan, Hughes, & Hawdon, 1998). Marriage and well-being correlate significantly even when other variables, such as age and income, are taken into account (Gove, Hughes, & Style, 1983). However, also mirroring the income correlate of well-being is the fact that the average correlation is rather low as shown by an average reported statistic of .14 (Diener et al., 1999).

Partnership can provide both economic and social rewards. Though researchers have revealed that married people report greater happiness than those who are single, divorced, separated, or widowed (Glenn, 1975; Gove & Shin, 1989), it has also been shown in the United States that among the non-married adults, those people who live with a partner are significantly happier than those who live alone (Mastekaasa, 1995).
Religion. Another possible predictor of happiness or quality of life investigated by SWB researchers is religion. Religion may be able to impact well-being by providing psychological, spiritual, and social benefits. Pollner (1989) suggests that religious experiences may provide individuals with a sense of meaning and purpose in daily life.

Research has shown that religion is positively associated with well-being, though again the effect sizes are not large. Evidence suggests that the relation is more apparent when religious practice, such as going to church, is measured instead of religious attitudes (Gartner, Larson, & Allen, 1991). According to Diener et al. (1999), a number of studies have shown that well-being correlates significantly with religious attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors even after other demographic variables have been controlled.

Gender. Gender has also been investigated as a variable of quality of life. Studies have been unable to show consistent significant gender differences and have reported discrepant outcomes. Haring, Stock, & Okun (1984) claim that men are slightly happier than women, though the mean difference is quite small ($r = .04$). However, according to Argyle (1996) a meta-analysis of several gender studies indicates that women are slightly happier overall. Paradoxically, that same analysis also shows that women are twice as likely to be depressed. In response to these contradictory outcomes Fujita, Diener, & Sandvik (1991) put forth the explanation that women experience both positive and negative emotions more intensely, and that women are more willing to admit depression.
Health. The final variable to be discussed as a correlate of well-being is health. In the first comprehensive review of well-being, Wilson (1967) concluded that health is strongly related to subjective well-being. However, the variable 'health' has been challenging because of its complexity. It seems that the strong positive association holds only for self-reported measures of health, versus objective views of physical wellness (Okun, Stock, Haring, & Witter, 1984). The correlation weakens when objective measures are examined (Brief, Butcher, George, & Link, 1993). Diener et al. concludes that "perceptions of health rather appear to be more important than objective health in their effects on SWB" (1999, p. 287).

Another ambiguous situation in the relation of health and quality of life is the evidence that shows contradictory views: As could be expected, when individuals were asked to rate the importance of several life domains, "good health" was reported as one of the most important domains of subjective well-being (Campbell, Converse & Rodgers, 1976). However, research also shows that the self-reports of global life satisfaction differ only slightly between severely ill patients and non-patients (Breetvelt & van Dam, 1991). Diener et al. addresses these complications by stating, "In sum, the impact of one's health depends on the individual's perception of the situation" (1999, p. 287).

Internal or top-down variables. Important to note, and disappointing to SWB researchers, is the fact that these external, objective variables have consistently produced only small effect sizes (Andrews & Withey, 1976; Campbell, Converse, & Rodgers, 1976; Diener, et al. 1999). One study found that these demographic variables,
even when combined, accounted for less than 20% of the variance in subjective well-being (Campbell, Converse, & Rodgers, 1976).

Consequently, SWB researchers have begun to see limitations to focusing solely upon this bottom-up approach. They have begun to discuss more complex correlational issues in what has been termed the top-down, or internal variables. In this approach well-being studies look at things like individuals' goals, aspirations, personality traits, social comparisons, and coping strategies as they related to feelings of happiness and the experience of well-being. Diener, Suh, Lucas, and Smith (1999) summarize these trends in well-being research:

Early research on SWB was limited to cataloging the various resources and demographic factors that are correlated with subjective well-being. Although the most recent 30 years of research have increased our knowledge in this area, the most important contribution is in the understanding that these external, bottom-up factors often are responsible for only a small part of the variance in SWB. One's temperament and cognitions, goals, culture, and adaptation coping efforts moderate the influence of life circumstances and events on SWB. Theoretical models have been developed in each of these areas to explain how internal factors within the person moderate and mediate the impact of the environment on people's SWB. (p. 286).

Readers are referred to the following sources for substantial discussion of the internal, top-down theoretical approaches to the explanation and prediction of subjective well-being: Brief, Butcher, George & Link, 1993; Diener & Fujita, 1997; Headey & Wearing, 1989; Kasser & Ryan, 1993; Lucas, Diener, Grob, Suh, & Shao, 1998; Lykken & Tellegen, 1996; Michalos, 1985.

2.1.2 Limitations of psychological perspectives of well-being

Though it is true that current trends in literature and research on the psychology of well-being hold a more sophisticated view of the concept than previously seen, they
continue to carry with them two limitations. The first is that this research has still relied upon correlational inquiries as the main methodological process. In their review of research on subjective well-being, Diener et al. describe some of the limits of the field stating, "SWB research is limited by the almost exclusive reliance on cross-sectional correlational designs" (1999, p. 277). Correlational studies necessarily view individuals as static, finished products to be objectively measured. This type of research has its strength in the process of prediction. For example we can explore demographic variables as well as personality traits, goals, and coping mechanisms, in order to then predict what quality of life, or level of well-being individuals will report. While these studies may be helpful in predicting a general sense of well-being, they do not help in increasing that experience. Positively impacting, or increasing, well-being is a necessary and important piece of well-being research that has to a great extent been neglected in psychology perspectives.

An exception to this trend is Argyle (1996) who asks, "Can human happiness be increased?" He answers this question by "considering how each of the domains of causes of happiness could be manipulated" (p. 39). He concludes that the "causes" of subjective well-being or happiness are social relationships, work, leisure, and personality. Assertiveness training and mutual help groups can improve social relationships; vocational guidance and job enlargement can increase job satisfaction; encouragement to practice leisure activities more often, or "pleasant activities therapy" can lead to more leisure satisfaction; and psychotherapy can help to change personality variables. These, according to Argyle, are the ways to increase well-being. In his work
In Pursuit of the Quality of Life, Offer (1996) reiterates Argyle's views by stating, "Happiness can be enhanced by social skills training, cognitive therapy, increasing pleasant activities, or twice-daily positive mood induction" (p. 2). Somatic perspectives may well be able to add to this list.

The second limitation of psychological perspectives is that the current discussions rely solely upon cognitive and emotional domains to evaluate well-being. As discussed in chapter one, this inquiry moves away from traditional views of well-being as only a component of mental health, and begins to move toward Experiential Well-Being (EWB) which takes into account the domains of mind, body, and spirit. Because so many scientists, scholars, researchers, authors, and practitioners have dealt with and continue to expand wisdom and discussion of physical health or wellness, as well as mental/emotional health or wellness, it is not the intent of this researcher to discuss or review the mass of information on those specific subjects. However, because EWB includes aspects of not only physical and mental dimensions, but also spiritual, a discussion of the nature of spirituality or spiritual well-being, as viewed in this study, is necessary. It is to this subject that we now turn.

2.2 Spiritual well-being

Spirituality is a multidimensional concept with roots in many of the worlds oldest religious and wisdom traditions (Gyatso, 1998, 1999; Harris, 1989; McKeever, 1998; Spretnak, 1991; Vardey, 1995). It is beyond the scope of this discussion to begin to delineate those traditions. Instead, common links or threads in the multifaceted spirituality discourses are addressed. There are limitations to distilling many traditions
into one "spirituality" concept. As one author wrote, "It is naïve and mistaken to assume that the teachings of all religions can be woven into a variegated spiritual poncho, suitable for all occasions." However, he continues with, "On the other hand, it is equally parochial to imagine that we do not have much in common with, and to learn from, others who have sought to cultivate the sacred" (Martin 1997, p. 155). Thus many disparate spiritual philosophies and practices share common threads. This is reminiscent of the way that somatic practices, though varying in specific content, share similar process orientations or assumptions.¹

Spirituality in this discussion is not associated with any particular religion, yet neither does it exclude any religion. Instead it has been referred to as the inner life (Grant 1997, Gyatso, 1999; Palmer 1983, 1996, 1998; Vardey, 1995; Williams, 1993), consciousness path (Chopra, 1993; Dyer, 1991), process of enlightenment or awakening (Brumet, 1995; Harris, 1989; Moffett, 1994; Myss, 1997; Vardey, 1995), and cultivation of the sacred (Dyer, 1991; Spretnak, 1991; Underhill, 1914/1986), among other descriptions.

Spirituality can be defined as sensing a deep interconnectedness with self and others (Gyatso, 1998; Jenkins, 1995; Moffet, 1994; Nhat Hanh, 1987), as well as with whatever is ultimate or divine in the universe (Harris, 1989; Tart, 1997; Taylor, 1997; Vardey, 1995, Williams, 1993). It has been described as having a sense of meaning or purpose in one’s life (Dyer, 1991; Gyatso, 1998; Holmes, 1943; Walsh, 1999) or experiencing one’s inherent wholeness and balance which leads to profound feelings of

¹These common somatic assumptions were delineated in depth in chapter one of this project.

45

Additionally, a sense of spiritual well-being brings with it the recognition of an wholeness and interdependence of all of life (Harris, 1989; Kesson, 1994; McKeever, 1998; Moffett, 1994; Vardey, 1995).

According to many authors spirituality also deals with everyday living, as opposed to an esoteric or secret dimension only experienced by saints or sages (Cady, 1999; Dreaver, 1993; Moffett, 1994; Nhat Hanh, 1999; Palmer, 1983; Walsh, 1995). Thus it is possible to embrace spiritual well-being through the mundane occurrences of daily life rather than to wait for a special time and place, or specific religious ritual.

Author Anne Lamott states, “sometimes when you need to feel the all-embracing nature of God, paradoxically you need to hangout in ordinariness, in daily ritual and comfort” (1999, p. 167).

A last dimension of spiritual experiences is that they often allow individuals to have a palpable sense of another dimension or reality to life (Sheldrake, 1996; Taylor, 1997). Palmer asserts that:

Spirituality is not primarily about values and ethics, not about exhortations to do right or live well. The spiritual traditions are primarily about reality. The spiritual traditions are an effort to penetrate the illusions of the external world and to name its underlying truth - what it is, how it emerges, and how we relate to it (1996, pp. 34-35).

2.3 Intersections of somatics and spirituality

The dimension of the spirit may not only be an important part of Experiential Well-Being, but it may also fit within the principles of somatics. Although somatic practices are often referred to simply as "mind-body" practices, to stay within the realm
of truly integrated perspectives of which somatics boasts, it seems those practices must address the holistic convergence of not only mind and body, but also spirit. Therefore it would follow that the areas of somatics and spirituality should share some common themes. The work of several somatic practitioners suggests this is true.

Ida Rolf, in describing her technique of Rolfing, begrudgingly links spirituality with her somatic process:

This is what Rolfers are doing: we are lifting a body up. It all sounds so much alike: I will lift up my head; I am lifting toward the Lord; I am lifting toward the mountain. All religious thinking has tended to understand that there was a lifting up in terms of growth in the spiritual realm. I hate to use that word - spiritual - because I know I don’t know what it means. Nevertheless, I call it to your attention. Lifting up has been recognized down through the years as something that has to do with behavioral patterns - behavior in a deeper sense than just psychological behavior. (1978, p. 108)

For Dreaver, the body is the medium through which we both awaken to and express our spirituality. Therefore, somatics work is vital in spiritual growth because spiritual insight becomes useful only to the extent that we can embody it in a practical way (Dreaver, 1993). Mary “Tad” Hanna, the daughter of the late Thomas Hanna, also links somatic or bodily experiences with spiritual traditions stating, “All the great spiritual and inner development traditions are in essential agreement as to the key elements in the formula whereby the body can become a vehicle for contacting the true nature of reality - ‘a vessel of the spirit’ ”(1997, p. 16).

Even Herbert Benson, M.D. discusses convergences of spiritual practice and his "relaxation response" (1976). After describing the feelings of calmness, connectedness, and well-being that often come about from experiencing the “relaxation response,” he
then suggests that another technique that may lead to the same experiences is “a prayer from your religious tradition” because he believes, “as did William James, that these age-old prayers are one way to remedy an inner incompleteness and to reduce inner discord” (Benson & Klipper, 1976, p. 165).

According to Johnson (1995), Thomas Hanna recovered from the New Testament the Christian mystical source of the term ‘soma’ which meant “the luminous body transformed by faith” (1995, p. xv), indicating spiritual roots. Johnson (1983), who has written at length about the theoretical underpinnings of somatics, as well as about many specific embodiment practices, states quite simply that the “rituals that characterize all spiritual traditions produce somatic states in which people can experience what Norman O. Brown meant when he said, “Union and unification is of bodies...” (p. 205). Even in defining somatics, Johnson included the spiritual dimension as a part of the field:

For more than one hundred years, a number of independent groups have been exploring and teaching a view of the human body and its relation to physical, mental, and spiritual health that differs radically from conventional notions. These schools of thought and practice - which collectively may be call the ‘Somatics Movement’ - reject the separation of spirit from a mechanistic human body, a view common to both mainstream biomedicine and orthodox religion.

The pioneers of Somatics introduced to the West an alternative vision of health and the body which emphasizes an intimate integrity of movement, anatomical structure, intelligence and spiritual consciousness. These teachers encouraged respect for lived experience and the wisdom that can be found through ‘attending to’ rather than ‘conquering’ or ‘controlling’ life process (Johnson, 1996, p. 8).
Awareness and Inner Wisdom. Johnson’s words bring up an important area in which somatics and spirituality converge: the belief that there is a deep wisdom within, and the importance of awareness in leading to that inner wisdom. Many spiritual traditions have at their root the practice of becoming aware of the inner, quiet realm whether through prayer, meditation or other practices (Holmes, 1938; Jenkins, 1995; Mckeever, 1998; Rathbun, 1994; Underhill, 1986; Vardey, 1995). This mirrors somatics’ guidance to be continually aware of proprioceptive or internal processes (Feldenkrais, 1977, 1985; Greene, 1997; Hanna, 1977, 1988; Johnson, 1983; Knaster, 1996; Rolf, 1978). In both cases awareness is the first step in the process of change toward experiencing more freedom, connectedness, and a fuller sense of being oneself (Behrens, 1999; Knaster, 1996). These changes take place by listening to the quieter, internal world. Northrup has called “the still, small, wise intuitive voice” within each of us “that voice of our own body” (quoted in Knaster 1996, p. 110). This sounds almost identical to the “still small voice” for which spiritual traditions have long encouraged us to listen.

Johnson, describing the experiences of Sister Ruth, a nun with whom he worked, recounts that during her work with meditation and sensory awareness she discerned not only bodily feelings but also feelings of God. She learned to use somatic techniques to increase awareness of God’s presence. Sister Ruth, “discovered feeling for God erupting into her prayer life. During her morning meditations it emerged from subtle pulses in her blood and breath” (1983, p. 204), thus connecting somatic experiences with spirituality. Johnson also links somatic awareness and spirituality in his own
spirited upbringing. He explains that he was taught to make decisions about God’s direction in his life based upon getting into a quiet meditative state and listening to his “deepest impulses,” the impulses that moved through his body as he considered various options (1983, p. 199).

Dreaver (1993) contends that to experience the spiritual qualities of peace and harmony in the “real world,” or in daily living, one must first come back to the wisdom of the body and of the emotions. In this way one can take spiritual ideas or concepts and use them to help solve challenging situations in everyday living. He asserts, “The way to bring our [spiritual] understanding out of the conceptual realm into our lived experience is to bring our awareness into our body” (1993 p. 37). Knaster (1997) also talks about how the body’s wisdom or “somatic perception” can be used as a guide for daily living, reporting that when individuals are awake to it they, “know when, what, and how much to eat, exercise, rest, interact with others, or be alone; [they] know when something is beneficial or destructive to [them]” (p. 42).

Thich Nhat Hanh, a Vietnamese Buddhist monk, also teaches of the importance of awareness or mindfulness in “the here and now.” In what appears to be a joining of somatics and spirituality Nhat Hanh states:

awareness is not a matter of time. You don’t have to practice eight years in order to begin to see the fruit of your practice. As soon as you begin to practice awareness you can notice a transformation within you. If you apply the techniques of mindful walking or breathing or drinking, right away you see that you live more deeply, you have more joy, more peace (Simon 1998, p. 94).

**Embodied experience and the limits of language.** Another common link between spirituality and somatics is the importance of embodied experience and the
limits of language. Language can be severely limiting in communicating spiritual
(Behrens, 1999; McKeever, 1998; Moffett, 1994) and also somatic (Holzer, 1996;
Kleinman, 1999) experiences. In States of Grace, Spretnak (1991) addresses some of
the wisdom traditions or spiritual traditions of the ages. She discusses how in those
traditions there are ways to approach the inexpressible that are not language-bound.
This is connected to the idea of finding the silent places within, and the belief that the
experience of such can lead to a realm beyond reason and language (Rathbun, 1994).
Spretnak questions, "What is it about, say, the meditation practice taught by the
Buddha, which strips away all constructions regarding present moment, just as the
courageous dimension of postmodernism attempts to do, yet ends up in love and

Somatics, too, addresses the ineffable and does so in terms of honoring first
person perception or 'lived experience' to borrow the term of phenomenologists.
Kleinman contends that understanding the experiential act of the embodied individual is
severely limited when it must rely on the written or spoken word alone (1999). He
asserts, "Knowledge and understanding gained by and through the embodied, moving
person does not 'compute' readily into verbal and written discourse. Knowledge gained
of and by the living, expressive subject... takes us into the world of the ineffable-
beyond words and perceivable expression" (p. 11).

With her eloquent ability to capture the ineffable, author Anne Lamott gives
many examples of the convergence of somatics and spirituality. In one touching
passage she writes:
But it was the singing that pulled me in and split me wide open. I could sing better here than I ever had before. As part of these people, even though I stayed in the doorway, I did not recognize my voice or know where it was coming from, but sometimes I felt like I could sing forever...Then the singing enveloped me. It was furry and resonant, coming from everyone’s very heart. There was no sense of performance or judgment, only that the music was breath and food.

Something inside me that was stiff and rotting would feel soft and tender. Somehow the singing wore down all the boundaries and distinctions that kept me so isolated. Sitting there, standing with them to sing, sometimes so shaky and sick that I felt like I might tip over, I felt bigger than myself, like I was being taken care of, tricked into coming back to life. (1999, pp. 47-48).

Primacy of practice

As seen above, both somatics and spirituality focus upon the importance of direct experience as opposed to sole cognitive understanding. This highlights the primacy of practice in both areas. In an article discussing spiritual philosophies, Graham states, “Most important, mere intellectual understanding of these spiritual teachings is not sufficient; experience is what counts... One must practice” (1997, pp. 160-161). Echoing this position Mellin (1999), introducing a “spiritual process” for body change, affirms simply that, “the skills required by our method are very simple but like most spiritual tools, mastering them takes a lot of work and time” (p. 27).

The somatic innovators, too, embarked upon years of personal practice and daily experience to come up with their respective somatic techniques (Johnson, 1983), and implied in somatics as both a theoretical orientation as well as a specific practice is the underlying assumption that it takes time, patience, and discipline to engage regularly in the process or practice. Reading about conscious breathing, Alexander Technique, Feldenkrais work, yoga, prayer, meditation or any of the other somatic and/or spiritual
practices, for example, can only lend itself to a superficial and flat understanding of the process. Engaging in any of these practices leads to a much richer experiential knowingness of the ‘thing itself.’

Personal responsibility. The importance of experience and practice in both somatics and spirituality is closely related to the issue of personal responsibility. Just as was discussed in the assumptions of somatics in chapter one, certain views of spirituality also point to the primacy of personal responsibility (Rathbun, 1994; Scovel Shinn, 1925; Vardey, 1995). In the same way that engagement with somatic practices takes time and discipline to be effective, the same is true with spiritual understanding. Unfortunately one can not attain the effects of somatic and/or spiritual practices by simply reading expert or mystical accounts, or by being in the presence of a guru. Instead it takes personal discipline (Behrens, 1999; Harris, 1989; Herrigel, 1953; McKeever, 1998; Palmer, 1983; Tart, 1997). Kabat-Zinn, in discussing mindfulness or awareness, asserts:

While it may be simple to practice mindfulness, it is not necessarily easy. Mindfulness requires effort and personal discipline for the simple reason that the forces that work against our being mindful, namely, our habitual unawareness and automaticity, are exceedingly tenacious. They are so strong and so much out of our consciousness that an inner commitment and a certain kind of work are necessary just to keep up our attempts to capture our moments in awareness and sustain mindfulness (1994, p.8).

Ambiguity and paradox. Reminiscent of the somatic foundation of embracing ambiguous tendencies, Martin (1997) in his article outlining different spiritual disciplines states that the power of spirituality, “comes partly from its determination to overcome artificial divisions and restore wholeness to a seemingly splintered creation”
Other authors as well address the apparent fragmentation that is entwined within the holistic human experience (Holmes, 1938, 1943; Rathbun, 1994; Walsh, 1995, 1998; Vardey, 1995), noting that two contradictory processes can occur at the same time. This illustrates that, as with the field of somatics which embraces ambiguity and paradox as an important part of its holistic outlook (Greene, 1995, 1997; Hanna, 1970, 1976), so too it is with spirituality. In Neale Donald Walsh’s Conversations With God, Book 3 ‘God’ states:

Life itself is a dichotomy. It’s important to learn about Divine Dichotomy and understand it thoroughly if you are to live in our universe with grace. Divine Dichotomy holds that it is possible for two apparently contradictory truths to exist simultaneously in the same space. Now on your planet people find this difficult to accept. They like to have order, and anything that does not fit into their picture is automatically rejected. For this reason, when two realities begin to assert themselves and they seem to contradict one another, the immediate assumption is that one of them must be wrong, false, untrue. It takes a great deal of maturity to see, and accept, that in fact, they might both be true (1998, p. 175-176).

In this way it can be understood in both spirituality and somatics that it is possible to have a theoretical orientation of inherent holism while at the same time having an ongoing dialogue in their practices about the need to return to an experience of wholeness. It is possible to say then, borrowing the idea from Shigenori (1992), that while both areas have an ontological position of non-duality or wholeness, they also have an epistemological orientation of duality or fragmentation.

Connectedness. Another convergence between the field of somatics and the area of spirituality is the base assumption of connectedness. The awareness that individuals cannot separate themselves from others is a basic principle of both somatic
processes and spiritual practice. From a somatic view there is a "simultaneous recognition of man, his body, and the ultimate reality of all existence as, essentially, one" (Hanna, 1970, p. 162). Therefore, if truly working in the theoretical context of somatics, individuals are aware of the importance of the "other" or of community as part of the self. Indeed, according to Greene, there is a "social concern," or an interest in the interrelationship between self and others, implicit in somatic theory (1995).

So too does spirituality have a primacy of focus on loving interconnection, assuming that all of life is infinitely connected as one (Gyatso, 1999; Holmes, 1938; Palmer, 1983). This recognition merges a dichotomous polarity, self versus other, into a holistic unity.

**Self-care.** An additional theme of both spiritual well-being and somatics is the importance of caring for the self. Johnson defines spirituality as a “distillate of sensual experience” and suggests that both embodiment practices and spiritual techniques “help get rid of the barriers that keep us from being in love, the egoistic rigidities that prevent us from serving other people” (1983 p. 205). This illustrates the link between focusing care and attention on one’s self first in order to then be better able to serve other people. Spiritual traditions have long addressed this concept which is contrary to the fear based myth that somatic practices will lead to extreme self-indulgence and separation from community care.

The *Tao Te Ching*, an ancient Chinese spiritual text, addresses the need for somatic self-care as a prerequisite for caring for others. It admonishes individuals to cultivate their own inner authority and suggests that, “people who don’t cherish their
own bodies can’t look after other people effectively” (Peterson, 1998, p. 50). Thich Nhat Hanh, the Vietnamese Buddhist monk too affirms that, “It is so essential for social activists, for peace workers, for helping professionals to learn to practice - to nourish themselves - not only for themselves but for the sake of the people they try to help” (in Simon, 1998 p. 94). And Kabat-Zinn echoes that the degree to which individuals can help others depends directly on how balanced they are themselves and adds rather adamantly, “Taking time to ‘tune’ your own instrument and restore your energy reserves can hardly be considered selfish. Intelligent would be a more apt description” (1990, p. 44, emphasis in original).

2.4 Somatic or Experiential Well-Being (EWB)

The above discussion of the common themes of spirituality and somatics illustrates that though embodiment processes are often only called "mind-body" practices, in actuality the field of somatics focuses as well upon spiritual dimensions. For this reason Experiential Well-Being can also be called somatic well-being. Experiential Well-Being was defined in chapter one as the personal experience, or perceived sense of wellness or wholeness, satisfaction and contentment in the areas of mind, body, and spirit. The same definition can apply then to somatic perspectives of well-being.

Somatic practitioners would agree that they are fully engaged in the art of Experiential Well-Being (EWB). To explore this proliferating field and its current trends in literature and practice, this discussion reviews three specific somatic modalities: qigong, hatha yoga, and stress-reduction. After a description of the
theoretical underpinnings of these mind-body practices, the review then explores common processes of each that link them together as somatic forms engaged in the pursuit of EWB.

2.4.1 Qigong

The concept of qi (or chi) is at least 3,000 years old, and is described in the oldest existing medical text, the Yellow Emperor's Classic Book on Internal Medicine (Yount, 1997). Qi is the Chinese word for “vital energy” or “life energy” and gong means “work” or “benefits acquired through perseverance and practice.” Thus Qigong means “working with life energy, learning how to control the flow and distribution of qi to improve health and harmony in mind and body” (Cohen, 1997, p. 3). Qigong is an ancient Chinese healing art form that is an integral aspect of the broader healing system of China known as Traditional Chinese Medicine. This system “states unequivocally that sickness arises when your flow of energy within becomes blocked” (Chin, 1995, p. vii). Qigong is a method of self-implemented health and well-being that combines slow rhythmic movements with visualization, concentration (or meditation) and conscious breathing to increase the balanced flow of life energy, or qi, throughout the body (Chan, 1996; Chin, 1995; Cohen, 1997). As a practice, it has long been used in China as a powerful form of preventive medicine, as well as a process for healing specific diseases (Woo, 1998).

Though there are at least 2600 different forms of qigong practiced, including t’ai chi ch’uan and other martial arts (Cohen, 1997), their underlying commonality is the

---

2There are several different categories of qigong. This discussion focuses only upon medical qigong which is designed to prevent disease, promote health, and prolong life (Gao. 1997).
movement of qi within the body, and between self and nature (Woo, 1998; Chan, 1996; Cohen, 1997). According to Woo (1998), the primary aim of all forms of qigong is to cultivate qi to promote self-healing and balance between body, spirit, and qi. This balance leads to overall well-being. Interestingly, Woo does not mention “mind” as a separate aspect and she states that, “Such an explanation of qigong’s therapeutic purpose may not by sufficiently illuminating to the Western-trained person. Qigong’s very simplicity often frustrates those seeking a more elaborated theory” (p. 18), especially as qigong stresses practice before cognitive understanding. This position is echoed by Cohen (1997) who explicates the importance of first practicing the gentle qigong movements in order to later understand the theory of qi flow. There is an assumption that with consistent practice the understanding of the theories underlying it will come naturally (Chan, 1996; Chin, 1995; Cohen, 1997; Reid, 1996; Woo, 1998). Cohen explicates:

The Chinese have traditionally had a pragmatic attitude toward qigong; it is important to use what works and to consider what is obvious to the human senses, rather than getting too caught up in the elegance of the theory...Theory can come later. For the qigong student, the practice is what is most important. How can one understand qi without practice of qigong? (1997, p. 41).

Though this view of the importance of practice before cognitive understanding is stated again and again in the literature, typically a discussion of underlying qigong theory follows. Qigong master, Yu-cheng Huang even reports that “the underlying theories of Qigong must be understood. The student who only learns method will be disadvantaged over time by a limitation in understanding and an inability to self-adjust” (quoted in Woo, 1998, p. 21).
Qigong theory. In qigong theory the individual is approached as a unified system in which mental, physical, and spiritual aspects of life are inexorably connected. Moreover, each life is "united with the life of the universe itself. It is one life, which all things share" (Monte, 1993, p. 7). This universal life energy that constitutes all things, including the living body, is called qi and cannot be equated with any other substance or mode of circulation in the body (Grossinger, 1995). Qi infuses the entire human being, causing the body to have vitality, movement, and function, and also gives the individual power to correct imbalances, heal disease, and create well-being.

This view constitutes a major difference between traditional Eastern and Western views of health and well-being (Monte, 1993). Its implication is that in Traditional Chinese Medicine, as well as more specifically in qigong theory, the body is seen as having the ability to not only cure itself in times of illness, but also to keep itself healthy by preventing imbalances before they occur. Traditional Chinese Medicine has stressed self-reliance and individual responsibility in preventive health-care (Chin, 1995) which is one of the main goals of pursuing a consistent qigong practice. In describing the qigong system, Chin (1995) admonishes us to remember that "it is always your body alone that heals itself. A doctor may bandage a wound to ward off infection but the actual healing of that wound, the rejoining of the skin, is all the result of your inner energy at work" (p. 26).

Also important to qigong theory is the view that life energy or qi is continually moving between two poles: yin and yang. It is the incessant energetic movement between these two opposing poles that is the activating force of all phenomena (Hafen
& Frandsen, 1983). This constant flux, or movement, is understood to be at work in all things throughout the universe - from the smallest particle to the largest cosmic bodies. Yin (soft, dark, cold, empty, negative, female, passive) can be conceptualized as the tendency toward contraction, and yang (hard, light, warm, full, positive, male, active) as the tendency toward expansion. Yin and yang are complementary forces that "represent the essence of life - conflict and interdependency. They do not represent separate, opposing elements; to the contrary, they symbolize that nothing can exist in and of itself" (Chin, 1995, p. 5). Reminiscent of the somatic assumptions of ambiguity and interconnectedness3, everything is seen to exist in connection to everything else, and can only be understood within the context of relationship and continual movement.

Chin elaborates:

The [yin yang] symbol shows us that there are no such things as opposites, per se, just two ways of seeing the same thing - and each of these two aspects is always in the process of becoming the other. We cannot understand what something is without understanding all it is not. For example, you would not be able to understand daytime without knowing what nighttime was, or hot without cold...In fact, as soon as you create one aspect, you instantly create the other in order to understand it. Yin and yang are linked by the relationship each side has to the other. Each aspect continually works to control, balance, and harmonize the other. They represent the constant give-and-take relationship that is life activity itself, thereby establishing a process where the potential for movement arises. Qi constantly passes back and forth between them. Life is based on this potential. (Chin, 1995, p. 6).

Two final aspects of qigong theory are the five elements and the meridian system of the body. According to Chinese tradition, after qi is “broken down” between the polarities of yin and yang, it gradually becomes denser, more physical, and

---

3See chapter one for a discussion of these and other somatic assumptions.
forms the “five elements.” From these elements: earth, water, fire, wood, and metal, all things are made (Gao, 1997). According to Chin (1995) this process can be likened to a transformer which steps down more intense forms of energy into slower, denser currents. The qi moves not only in yin and yang cycles, but also through the five elements or phases to form all the things that make up both our internal and external world (Chin, 1995; Gao, 1997; Monte, 1993; Nakayama & Sivin, 1973).

In qigong theory the five elements correspond with certain systems or organs within the body. Diagnosis in Chinese medicine is concerned with finding the location and nature of energy imbalances. This means identifying which organs they effect and whether there are deficiencies or excesses of qi within them. Thus the goal of qigong is to correct any imbalances in the body, mind, or spirit, or even to keep those imbalances from occurring through the correct distribution and movement of qi. However, Weil (1995) cautions those in the West about equating “organs” of the Chinese system with our Western concept of organs. He states:

The Chinese term tsang, usually rendered as ‘organ,’ means something like ‘sphere of function’ and does not necessarily equate with any object known to an anatomist. When Chinese doctors diagnose an excess of ch’i in the liver, they may not be talking about the liver as we know it but about a sphere of bodily function that may include all or part of the anatomical liver and whose activities may or may not correlate with Western scientific ideas of liver function. (Weil, 1995, p. 145).

According to proponents of qigong, qi travels in the individual through twelve major energy vessels known as jing luo or meridians. Jing means “to move through” and luo means “a net.” Thus, meridians are a “network of channels” (Cohen, 1997, p. 159). These energy highways or channels carry qi and fluids throughout the body-
mind, providing energetic nourishment to the entire person as well as regulating the balance of yin and yang energy. In the qigong system, complete well-being is based on the uninhibited circulation of qi throughout the body. Nothing is constant or static even for a moment (Grossinger, 1995) and sickness or unrest is seen as a result of imbalances, disharmonies, or blockages within the body. In performing qigong exercises then, the goal is to build up and harmonize the internal qi allowing it to flow smoothly along the twelve major meridians (Gao, 1997). Before describing some qigong breathing exercises, Cohen (1997) prefaces his instructions with a metaphorical explanation of the process stating, “In these meditations we will clear the main thoroughfares - the superhighways of qi - of any traffic jams and obstructions, so that the qi can reach and heal the parts of the body where it is needed” (p. 159).

It will be seen below that the second somatic form, hatha yoga, also addressing energy flow as a vital aspect of its perspective, has much in common with the practice of qigong.

2.4.2 Hatha yoga

Though often used in the West as merely a system for stress reduction, increased strength, and flexibility, yoga, in its traditional Indian form, is much more than that. It has a two-fold aspect - the physical as well as the spiritual (Brunton, 1991; Carrico, 1997). In terms of its physical importance, it has come to mean developing harmony and balance in the various systems of the human body; in terms of its spiritual importance, it aims at the well-being of the spirit or soul, the “real life-principle” of individuals (Singh, 1980). Budilovsky & Adamson explain:
The Western approach to yoga tends to be more fitness-oriented, while the Eastern approach to yoga is based on the idea that a healthy body makes it easier to progress spiritually. Either approach benefits both body and mind, however. If you’re interested in yoga for its physical benefits, you can consider the spiritual “centeredness” you achieve a splendid bonus. Or, if you tend more toward the Eastern way, consider fitness the icing on the cake of spiritual growth. Either way, yoga fitness power means self-confidence, self-control, and inner peace. (1998, p. 20)

The Sanskrit word yoga means to “yoke”, “unite” or “join together”, and has been interpreted mainly in the West as yoking or reuniting mind and body, or mind, body, and spirit of the individual. However, at its most basic level, yoga is interpreted as yoking or joining the individual with the divine or universal (Carrico, 1997; Singh, 1980). Feuerstein & Payne state directly that “all branches of Yoga seek to achieve the same final goal, [spiritual] enlightenment” (1999, p. 16).

Yoga is considered a conscious way of life. It is an integrated process of education and healing for the body, mind, and spirit and has been called the “art of right living” (Sivananda, 1996, p. 6) as well as the “science of life” (Hewitt, 1993). Though one author discusses yoga using the words “religion” and “spiritual path” interchangeably (Singh, 1980), other authors very specifically state that yoga can be seen as a practical healing system and/or a spiritual path, but not a religion, explaining that the system deals with “universal truths” applicable to everyone, whatever their specific religious beliefs (Brunton, 1991; Budilovsky & Adamson, 1998; Feuerstein & Payne, 1999; Sivananda, 1996).

Though the information is thought to have been passed on orally from one generation to the next for many years before, the Indian healing system of yoga was
first compiled between 5000 B.C. and 300 A.D. by Patanjali who described yoga in his book, *Yoga Sutras*. The Sutras outlined eight principles showing step by step how a person can find inner peace and knowledge (Ornish, 1990). Steps one and two of the Yoga Sutras deal with ethical considerations (nonviolence, nonstealing, purity, contentment, etc.); steps three and four focus upon body postures and breath control respectively, which are the basis of hatha yoga; steps five through seven of the Sutras deal with aspects of concentration and meditation; and the final and eighth step of the yogic process as outlined by Patanjali in the Yoga Sutras is the superconscious state of enlightenment, or spiritual awareness, and experience of the union of all life (Brunton, 1991; Budilovsky & Adamson, 1998; Carrico, 1997; Singh, 1980).

There are six different paths or branches of yoga: karma yoga (the active or service path), bhakti yoga (the devotional path), raja yoga (the meditation path), jnana yoga (the wisdom or scholarly path), tantra yoga (the sacred ritual path), and hatha yoga (the physical path) (Carrico, 1997). Hatha yoga is the form addressed in this discussion.

Hatha yoga combines slow deep breathing, called pranayama, with a variety of gentle stretches, in a way that works directly on the autonomic nervous system to decrease dominance of the sympathetic nervous system (Hewitt, 1993; Monte, 1993). The yogic system aims at developing the health and efficiency of the internal organs including the heart, lungs, glands and nerves (Lalvani, 1996). According to Gordon (1990), studies have shown that the regular practice of hath yoga can be helpful in treatment of anxiety, depression, hypertension, asthma, diabetes, and arthritis. Unlike some Western forms of physical exercise, such as high-impact aerobics and jogging,
which can be extremely stressful to the body, hatha yoga postures, called asanas, are nonviolent and provide gentle stretching which lubricates the joints, muscles, ligaments, tendons and other parts of the body. They are said to improve circulation, release tension, and increase strength and flexibility (Sivananda, 1996), as well as promote harmonious health of the spine, the nervous system, and the endocrine glands, whose efficient functioning have an important impact on vitality, health, and even longevity (Hewitt, 1993).

Health of the body, however, is not the full importance of the practice, as the ancient yogic tradition has viewed the body as a sacred vehicle for the soul’s path (Carrico, 1997). Hatha yoga, with its focus on care of the body/mind, has been seen in the traditional Indian sense as merely a preparation for the “higher art” of meditation and spiritual enlightenment, instead of an end in its own right. Singh reports on hatha yoga:

This form of yoga deals with the control of the body and the bodily activities as the means of stilling the mind. Its aim is to make the human body strong and capable...and to make it immune, as far as possible, from physical diseases and ailments. But beyond a robust physique and possible longevity...it is not of much help in self-realization by itself....It aims at perfecting the body as an instrument for higher types of yoga....All treatise on yoga insist that the sole purpose of the physical practices of Hatha Yoga is to surmount physical obstacles [as the first preparation toward] the spiritual path or royal path of reintegration (Singh, 1980, pp. 89-90,95).

Hewitt (1993) concurs, suggesting that though the ancient texts were well aware of the improvement in physical and mental health produced by engaging in the practice of yoga, and “experienced as lightness, relaxation, and poise,” such changes were only
“secondary to the supreme goal of spiritual freedom and mystical union between individual spirit (Atman) and universal spirit (Brahman)” (1993, p. 10).

Yoga theory. There are striking similarities between the somatic practices of qigong and hatha yoga. In this Indian system, as was seen in qigong, life is seen as holistic, inextricably connected, and springing from a universal source of energy. Instead of qi it is here called prana or “life energy” and its vehicle is the breath (Monte, 1993). As with qigong, “the school of Yoga maintains that in order to achieve the enjoyable product of wellness the vital forces of the body must be balanced” (Christensen, 1996, p. 10). Grossinger even states more directly that, “Illness can be cured directly by restoring the flow of prana through the practice of yoga and meditation” (1995, p. 321). Hatha takes its meaning from the syllables ‘ha’ which means ‘the sun’, and ‘tha’ which means ‘the moon’ (Carrico, 1997). Just as yoga itself means union, or uniting, hatha yoga is the union of sun and moon. This is a symbolic term for uniting the positive (‘ha’) energies and negative (‘tha’) energies. Reminiscent of the qigong process, hatha yoga helps its practitioners achieve balance and strength of all the body’s energies (Budilovsky & Adamson, 1998).

Also similar to qigong theory is the idea that the life force energy divides itself into complementary aspects. Instead of breaking into two complementary forces as in qigong’s yin and yang, yogic prana is understood to be subdivided into three aspects: rajas, the positive and expansive (yang) aspect; tamas, the negative and contractive (yin) aspect; and sattvas, the neutral field which represents balance and the possibility for continual movement (Chin, 1998).

66
Another strikingly similar aspect of the yogic view is that these subdivided qualities further slow and intensify into what is again called “five elements,” though the two systems do not share the same five elements or the same body system correlated with each. Yogic theory understands the five elements as fire, earth, water, air and ether, but here again the five elements are the last stage in completing the energetic process that begins with the source of all energy - prana - and manifests into physical matter. As in the Chinese system, it is the universal or vital energy which moves through the five elements to bring forth all of creation (Chin, 1995). In describing the yogic and qigong energy systems, Chin proposes that even though there are differences between the two, the similar underpinnings of energy theory can be seen in four explanatory statements:

(i) Energy, despite its limitless manifestations, all comes from one universal source. (ii) Movement of energy is the basis of all life. In order for energy to move it must have an inherent polarity relationship: that is, it must have something or somewhere to move to. (iii) Matter is an expression of energy and vice versa. It can neither be created nor destroyed, only transformed into another form of energy. (iv) All things are manifestations of energy, including us; that is, all things are essentially “living” things in that energy flows through them, despite our inability to observe this phenomenon directly. (Chin, 1995, p. 12)

In terms of the flow of life energy, or prana, hatha yoga assigns the highest importance to the spine as the conduit of this energy from “out there” to “in here.” Therefore, many of the yoga movements are intended to improve function of the spinal nerves, and promote flexibility and natural alignment of the vertebral column (Weil, 1995, p. 133). This can be understood by the fact that in hatha yoga theory the main energy channel of the body runs parallel to the spine. In qigong the energy channels are
called meridians; in the yoga tradition these pathways are called nadis (Feuerstein & Payne, 1999). Where many nadis cross each other, an energy vortex or chakra exists. There are seven of these energy centers, or chakras, in the body, all located along the length of the spine between the base of the spinal column and the crown of the head. Each chakra, or ‘wheel’ radiates energy in a circular motion through the vital centers of the spine and corresponds to a certain color, sound, emotion, and biological function (Lalvani, 1998). The Western anatomical model of the human body’s nervous and musculoskeletal systems is complemented by these chakras which are said to store and release prana, or life energy (Budilovsky & Adamson, 1998).

One last aspect of yoga that runs parallel with qigong philosophy is the great importance placed upon practice in terms of understanding and benefiting from the system. In describing his book Teach Yourself Yoga, Hewitt states,

> the main emphasis...will be on practice. This is as it should be within Yogic tradition. ‘Practice alone is the means of success,’ says the Hatha Yoga Pradipika, a key text of its school. And the mystical philosophy of Yoga and of Eastern religion in general is based not on arid theorizing but on experiencing certain states of consciousness which are revealed by means of meditative practice” (1993, p. 2).

This primacy of practice is seen not only in qigong and hatha yoga, but also in the third somatic modality, stress reduction.

2.4.3 Stress Reduction

Stress reduction or stress management programs continue to proliferate throughout the United States in response to estimates that nearly eighty percent of all

---

4 Although the focus in this discussion will be on distress, or “negative” stress that tends to lead to illness, it is widely known that eustress, or “positive” stress is necessary for optimal creativity, motivation, innovation, growth and development (Gordon, 1990).
health challenges currently experienced, and for which people seek health-care, are stress related (Smith, 1997). Hans Selye first popularized the term “stress” in the 1950’s with his studies of what happens when animals are placed in extreme conditions. It is now used as a general term connoting the various pressures we experience in daily living (Kabat-Zinn, 1990). Selye defined stress as “the nonspecific response of the organism to any pressure or demand” (quoted in Gordon, 1990, p. 14).

Stress can be thought of as acting on different levels, including the physiological, psychological, and social levels.

One of the most intriguing and fundamental aspects of stress reduction is that it is not the stressor itself, but instead how we perceive it and react to it that determines whether or not it will lead to stress (Gordon, 1990; Kabat-Zinn, 1990). As an example, it is interesting to notice reactions to heavy traffic. It is possible to observe visibly irritated and upset individuals with tense, angry facial expressions and, in the same traffic, to spot at least one person smiling or simply appearing calm and unruffled. If an event is interpreted as threatening to our well-being, then it will be a stressor. However, if it is interpreted differently, then the same event might not be (as) stressful. In describing this phenomenon Kabat-Zinn states:

*Given a particular situation, there are usually many ways of seeing it and many potential ways of handling it. It means that the way we see, appraise, and evaluate our problems will determine how we respond to them and how much distress we will experience. It also implies we have much more control over things that may potentially cause us stress than we might think. While there will always be many potential stressors in our environment over which we cannot have immediate control, by changing the way we see ourselves in relationship to them, we can actually change our experience of the relationship and therefore modify*
the extent to which it taxes or exceeds our resources or endangers our well-being (1990, p. 240, emphasis in original).

This in itself is one of the most important steps in stress-reduction: increasing personal well-being by learning how to react differently to situations that have habitually caused us stress (Benson & Klipper, 1976; Benson & Stuart, 1992; Borysenko, 1987; Cooper, 1997; Girdano, Everly, & Dusek, 1997; Santorelli, 1999).

Stress reduction theory. Unlike the energy based practices of yoga and qigong which stem from ancient philosophies and techniques, the theory underlying stress-reduction is fairly new. Pelletier states that “these forms of Western relaxation grew out of the need for both psychological and physical therapy in an over-stressed environment rather than being generated from a religious or philosophical belief system” (Pelletier, 1977, p. 228). Stress-reduction has roots in the conventional Western medical system and more specifically in the recent addition called behavioral medicine. This branch addresses and researches possible connections between emotional, cognitive, and social aspects, and our physical health (Moyers, 1993). An exciting field in behavioral medicine is psychoneuroimmunology which looks specifically at the links between our thoughts and emotions, and the functions of our immune system.

Western medical theory with its non-energetic focus, describes two aspects of the autonomic nervous system. The autonomic nervous system is the part of our nervous system that regulates the internal states of our body such as heart rate, blood pressure, and the digestive processes. One aspect, called the sympathetic nervous system, is responsible for our ‘fight-or-flight’ process for heightened activity. The other
aspect, called the parasympathetic nervous system, is responsible for what Benson called the ‘relaxation response’ characterized by deep rest, low energy expenditure and relaxation.

The sympathetic system acts to speed things up, originally in preparation to either fight or run from danger. When this system is triggered breathing becomes fast and shallow, the heart rate increases, blood pressure goes up, muscles become tense, pupils dilate, and hormones which provide quick energy flood the body. Two of these hormones, adrenaline and cortisol, are actually inhibitors of the immune system (Borysenko, 1987). This is the ‘ready-for-action’ gear that we often experience in the midst of stress. This can be a positive and life affirming response in connection with life-threatening situations. The problem, however, is that because our society is a high stress culture, and because the sympathetic system kicks in regardless of if the threat is real or imagined, its continuous engagement can exacerbate and even cause health problems (Benson & Stuart, 1992; Girdano, Everly & Dusek, 1997; Kabat-Zinn, 1990). Borysenko describes it this way:

This integrated [fight-or-flight] response evolved millions of years ago because it ensured that the whole organism would be ready for action at the slightest hint of danger. The response is still with us today, hard wired into the human body’s communication systems, even though in our infinitely more complex world, danger can take the form of unpaid bills or boredom in marriage or some unspoken dread produced entirely by the imagination. Fighting or fleeing are not very useful options against such dangers. Nevertheless, through the fight-or-flight response, anxiety still has access to the pathway that elevates blood pressure, and stress still activates pathways that lead to muscle tension and thereby to numerous aches, pains, and bodily disorders (Borysenko, 1987, p. 14).
On the other hand, the parasympathetic nervous system acts as a brake. When it is activated, heart rate and blood pressure drop. Breathing slows and oxygen consumption is decreased in response to a decrease in the need for energy. There is also a shift in brain wave pattern from the alert beta-rhythm to a more relaxed alpha-rhythm (Benson & Klipper, 1976; Borysenko, 1987; Pelletier, 1977) According to Herbert Benson this response “brings the body back into what is probably a healthier balance” (1976, p. 26). About his research with the parasympathetic system response Benson tells us:

The evidence we gathered had compelling implications about the control you can exert over physiological functions. It suggested strongly that you could use your mind to change your physiology in a beneficial way, improve health, and perhaps reduce your need for medications. I subsequently coined the term relaxation response to describe this natural restorative phenomenon that is common to all of us (Benson & Stuart, 1992, p. 35).

The purpose of many stress reduction programs, then, is to reawaken personal awareness and control of our reactions to stress, thereby increasing our experience of health and well-being. Stress reduction practices focus upon three primary ways of doing this: eliciting the relaxation response within the body, becoming more aware of the present moment, and cognitive restructuring of habitual thought and belief patterns (Borysenko, 1987; Davis, Eshelman, & Mckay, 1995; Domar & Dreher, 1996; Greenberg, 1993; Kabat-Zinn, 1990; Mason, 1980; Ornish, 1990).

Many of the techniques used in stress relieving practices are the same ones used in yoga and qigong: focusing on awareness, gentle movements, breathing, and meditation. According to Ornish (1990), though these stress reducing programs and
techniques have been adopted in the United States fairly easily, being validated and
legitimated by Western medical theory, it is interesting to note that stress reduction,
which is considered a Western somatic form, has ultimately been derived to a great
extent from the Eastern yogic tradition. In describing relaxation and stress reduction
techniques Ornish states, “Yet almost all of these techniques ultimately derive from
yoga. It’s a testimony to the power of these techniques that entire careers have been
built around different aspects of yoga, sometimes even renamed after the person who
rediscovered that practice” (1990, p. 140).

There are, however, at least two profound differences between stress reduction
from the West, and yoga and qigong from the East. The first is the blatant absence, in
the stress reduction literature, of any discussions of the spirit or spiritual aspect of
individuals and their well-being. Even when describing deep meditative states there is
often no indication or discussion of the experience of being part of a greater universal
whole. There are exceptions to this overall trend (Borysenko, 1987; Kabat-Zinn, 1990;
Ornish, 1990; Santorelli, 1999), but generally speaking it is a distinct contrast from
qigong and yoga where the spirit is accepted as an integral part of being.

The other major difference is the inclusion of a separate cognitive component in
stress reduction practices. In all three somatic forms there is a great deal of emphasis
placed upon the importance of awareness and concentration. However, stress reduction
forms specify awareness of habitual thought processes. The idea, emphasizing somatic
principles, is that one must become aware of something before it can be changed. Once
an individual becomes aware of “negative” or destructive thought patterns the next step

73
is to replace them with other, more appropriate or more health producing ones.

Describing this component of stress-reduction practices, Cooper asserts that a vast body of scientific literature in the stress field goes under such names as ‘mental therapy’ or ‘mental healing.’ He states:

Cognitive therapy is a catchall for several rather straightforward and well-established psychological techniques for overcoming bad stress. In general, the idea is to change your usual way of thinking and acting so that your feelings of being stressed out are changed or eradicated. Specifically...you may learn to relabel your stress problem (or stressor) so that you can approach it in a more productive way (Cooper, 1997, p. 133).

Though both yoga and qigong include continual awareness of the body-mind, there is nothing in either of those Eastern somatic forms that parallels the ‘thought stopping,’ ‘cognitive restructuring,’ ‘changing distorted thought patterns,’ or ‘changing self-talk,’ found in stress reduction programs (Benson & Stuart, 1992; Charlesworth & Nathan, 1984; Cooper, 1997; Davis, Eshelman & McKay, 1995; Domar, 1996; Greenberg, 1993; Roskies, 1987).

2.5 Common practices

Though qigong, hatha yoga, and stress reduction all have their own rich historical and theoretical bases, the actual healing practices or techniques themselves can be seen as having commonalities. In an attempt to describe what can only be fully grasped by direct experience, this discussion turns now to their common somatic practices: awareness or mindfulness, breathing, movement, and meditation. This is not
a suggestion that these mind-body traditions could ever be molded into one larger perspective, but instead only a heuristic for explanation and for highlighting connections among these holistic perspectives.

2.5.1 Mindfulness or awareness

One common practice among all three of these mind-body approaches is awareness, or mindfulness which was discussed in chapter one as an integral part of the field of somatics. Being aware is an extremely simple yet often difficult thing to learn and practice, especially in a culture of "busyness," and yet is imperative to the experience of well-being (Burke & Hogan, 1995). Kabat-Zinn refers to mindfulness as "the direct opposite of taking life for granted" (quoted in Domar, 1996, p. 61). Being aware or mindful, as a daily practice, nourishes one's ability to be fully engaged with whatever is occurring at the present moment. Knaster explains, "Awareness practices will enable you to increase your attention and aliveness in the here and now... They are neither Eastern nor Western but universal - the direct and immediate awareness of your sensory experience, exactly as it is, from moment to moment" (1996, p. 127).

In one qigong form, mindfulness begins with the instructions, "Feet together, body centered, slowly close eyes" (Chan, 1996). There is an invitation to feel or notice the body-mind as the movement form begins, and to stay centered within this awareness throughout the practice. In hatha yoga, encouragement of mindfulness takes place as the individual gets into and out of each asana or posture. It is an extremely important part of the process to continually notice how the body feels, honor its messages, and work at one's own level of ability and comfort. Stress-reduction programs, too,
encourage awareness in all of their practices. Jon Kabat-Zinn, founder of the popular
Stress-Reduction and Relaxation Program at the University of Massachusetts Medical
Center, in explicating many reasons for practicing awareness, states:

Unawareness can keep us from being in touch with our own body, its signals
and messages. This in turn can create many problems for us, problems we don't
even know we are generating ourselves. And living in a chronic state of
unawareness can cause us to miss much of what is most beautiful (1990, p. 25).

Through awareness or mindfulness, these three somatic practices are designed to
not only condition the body and focus the mind, but also to reconnect individuals with
the calmness and centeredness of the spirit. Awareness reawakens the ability to pay
attention to what one is feeling and how one is moving.

2.5.2 Movement

Another important feature of somatic practices which adds to the experience of
well-being is movement (Grossinger, 1995; Hoffman, 1997; Jacobs, 1996; Monte,
1993). Qigong movement forms, hatha yoga asanas, and stress reduction exercises are
all done without strain or force. The breathing, stretching, balancing, twisting, and
gliding movements are all done with great attention to, and honoring of, the capabilities
and needs of the body (Christensen, 1996; Hewitt, 1993; Jacobs, 1996; Monte, 1993;
Pierce & Pierce, 1996; Reid, 1996). In their book Body Wisdom, Ruhnke &
Wurzburger (1995) remind readers to, "Stay in touch with how your body is feeling.
Don't push it past the point where it feels like a pleasant stretch...The point is to feel
from the inside how you can move, to explore the space in there and to allow it to open
up and relax, to become more flexible" (p. 22).
In somatic work there is a need to let go of efforting or trying too hard. This can be contrary to much of Western culture and Mason contends, “letting go and giving in to relaxation is the hardest part. Trying too hard will always create more excess tension, and make it more difficult for you to learn to relax” (1997, p. 22). Though challenging, with persistence these gentle approaches toward the body can facilitate the experience of harmony and quietness in the mind and spirit as well. In describing the movement process of yoga, Feuerstein & Payne (1999) tell us that “yogic postures are more than mere bodily poses. They are also expressions of your state of mind. An asana is poise, composure, carriage - all words suggesting an element of balance and refinement. The postures demonstrate the profound connection between body and mind” (p. 120). This is true of not only yoga asanas, but also of the movements in stress reduction and qigong practices as well. According to Hewitt (1993) after only a short period of regular practice, “health and vitality improve, suppleness increases, muscles firm and tone, and there is a feeling of lightness, relaxation, and poise that suffuses consciousness as well as the body” (1993, p. 1).

2.5.3 Breathing

It is difficult to speak about the movement process without also addressing the breath. When engaging in the movements of qigong, yoga, or stress-reduction, as well as many other somatic practices, there is a continual focus upon conscious breathing, focusing upon both inhalations and exhalations. This focus upon breathing acts as a bridge between the external and internal worlds and again aids in the experience of well-being (Christensen, 1996). For example, when balancing in the yogic “tree
posture" students are reminded to take slow mindful breaths in, feeling the strength and power of the body, and then during the relaxed exhalation to become aware of the feelings of balance and poise within.

Though different bodymind practices encourage different kinds of breathing - some to reduce tension or relax, some to energize, some to deal with emotions, some to balance energy, etc. - somatic educators generally consider attention to the breath an integral aspect of their work. Slow, deep diaphragmatic breathing acts as a natural tranquilizer to the nervous system (Borysenko, 1987; Benson & Stuart, 1992), and yoga, qigong, and stress-reduction all address the importance of relaxed abdominal, or diaphragmatic, breathing as essential for optimal health and well-being (Cohen, 1997; Domar & Dreher 1996; Feldenkrais, 1977; Hanna, 1988; Hewitt, 1993; Weil, 1995). The deeper one breathes the calmer the mind becomes, naturally and without strain (Lalvani. 1998), thus conscious breathing is another somatic process that links the body and the mind, and ultimately the spirit in a holistic trinity of Experiential Well-Being.

2.6 Limitations of somatic perspectives

Though somatic writers and practitioners have broadened the discussion on well-being to include a more holistic view of the person, and also have turned the discussion away from mere prediction and toward praxis, there has typically been a glaring limitation to their discussions: most of the information available has not been based upon systematic inquiry. Even writers in the field have criticized somatic discourse as being, “strong on intuition and introspective first-person observational
skill, but often short on scientific grounding” (Myers, 1991, p. 9). Eddy (1991) concurs stating, “little has been done to document studies or to gather data within the somatic field” (Eddy, 1991, p. 26).

This is not to say that there have been no quality studies done utilizing somatic approaches. In fact there are numerous studies in the somatic areas of meditation (e.g. Barnes, Treiber, & Davis, 2001; Carlson, Ursuliak, Goody, Angen, & Speca, 2001; Cunningham, Brown, & Kaski, 2000), tai chi (e.g. Li, Harmer, McAuley, & Duncan, 2001; Li, Hong, & Chan, 2001; Wang, Lan, & Wong 2001; Wolf, Sattin, O'Grady, & Freret, 2001), yoga (e.g. Arambula, Peper, Kawakami, & Gibney, 2001; Manchanda, Narang, Reddy, & Sachdeva, 2000; Ornish, 1990; Pettinati, 2001; Yardi, 2001), qigong (e.g. Litscher, Wenzel, Niederwieser, & Schwarz, 2001; Loh, 1999; Mayer, 1999; Sancier, 1999), psychoneuroimmunology or PNI (e.g. Kalt, 2000; Kaye, Morton, Bowcutt, & Maupin, 2000; Keicolt-Glaser, Glaser, 2001; Williams, Kiecolt-Glaser, Legato, & Ornish, 1999), relaxation (Gillani & Smith, 2001; Keefer & Blanchard, 2001; Matsumoto & Smith, 2001; Telles, Reddy, & Nagendra, 2000), and others. And this important research continues. However, most of the studies have looked at specific physiological aspects of physical health such as blood pressure, heart rate, balance, respiration, and wound healing among others, and not the holistic picture of somatic or Experiential Well-Being.

The current research project is important not only because it adds to the systematic inquiry necessary in addressing the area of somatics, but also because it focuses on the holistic concept of Experiential Well-Being. In the next chapter the
methods of the inquiry are discussed. Those methods include action research, participant observation, grounded theory, evaluative surveys, and semi-structured interviews. However, before a discussion of the design and methods of the study, an understanding of Somatic Education is necessary. Somatic Education is the somatic process utilized in this study and a description of it begins the next chapter.
CHAPTER 3

DESIGN AND METHODS

The somatic modality utilized in this project is called Somatic Education. Somatic Education, as defined in this inquiry, refers to a specific four week series of classes taught by the researcher and described in a following section. Before turning to a description of this integrative practice, I move first to an account of the processes underlying the creation of this mind-body or embodiment approach.

3.1 A Grounded Theory approach

Grounded theory has been called "a general methodology" for developing theory that is grounded in systematically gathered data (Strauss & Corbin, 1994). According to Glaser and Strauss (1967) who outlined the process, a central feature of the approach is "a general method of constant comparative analysis" (quoted in Strauss & Corbin, 1994, p. 273). It is a way of thinking about and conceptualizing data from the ground up, opposing focus upon a priori definitions, and instead highlighting the constant interplay of data, analysis, and interpretation (Alasuutari, 1995).

Through continuous gathering and analysis of data generated from the sources described below, a somatic theory of well-being emerged. Its emergence was based
upon continual comparison and interpretation of information collected over years of work and scholarship, thus lending itself well to the grounded approach (Strauss & Corbin, 1994).

Grounded theory insists "that interpretations must include the perspectives and voices of the people whom we study" (Strauss & Corbin, 1994, p. 274 emphasis in original). Thus careful reading of personal documents including journals and evaluations, systematic observation of many classes, and attentive listening to shared experiences of students and workshop participants were not only important in finding and interpreting patterns and categories, but necessary in terms of a grounded approach to this somatic study.

Consistent patterns or dimensions came to the forefront through the researcher's in-depth experience with theory and practice of somatics. Rich data (Richards & Richards, 1994) was generated from those somatic experiences which included twelve years of being a consultant and educator in areas such as dance/movement, self-awareness, yoga, relaxation and mind/body/spirit connection; observing university students working with those somatic processes in the classroom; reading hundreds of students' journals describing their experiences in those classes; being immersed in somatic theoretical assumptions through interaction with somatic discourse, completion of somatic coursework, and dialogue with colleagues and faculty; and lastly, studying specific somatic practices including hatha yoga, qigong, and mindfulness based stress-reduction.
The data generated from those diverse sources was utilized as grounded information in the creation of a somatic theory of well-being that served as the base hypothesis or predictor for this study. For Glesne and Peshkin (1992) the grounded theory approach focuses upon "theory generation through discovery" in order to serve as a tool for "explanation and prediction" (p. 19). That description served well as a methodological model for my research design as I first discovered consistent patterns and then predicted somatics' influence on well-being. Based upon discoveries born from the above experiences and the grounded hypothesis that well-being is an holistic experience which can be affected by somatic processes, my prediction was that Somatic Education, described below, could positively impact the experience of well-being.

3.2 The process: Somatic Education

The researcher's above cited experiences as somatic educator, practitioner, and scholar have come together to allow four specific themes or processes to emerge: awareness, breathing, movement/flexibility, and spiritual or inner dimensions. Those themes, introduced in chapter two, and grounded in academic, professional, and personal experiences, became the basis for the creation of the Somatic Education classes utilized in this inquiry.

Somatic Education is an integration of the three embodiment practices explored in chapter two: yoga, qigong, and stress-reduction. With such diverse mind-body practices already available, and with researcher experience utilizing some of those forms, it could be asked why this project did not simply employ an already established somatic practice for its inquiry? The purpose of combining three forms was to embrace
a more universal approach to the somatic process, emphasizing principles rather than a specific technique. The research questions explored were less focused upon a specific mind-body form, and more focused in theory, upon the underlying somatic assumptions (discussed in chapter one), and in practice, upon the four consistently appearing themes listed above. In following these two guidelines, and in hopes of allowing for a broader experience of somatics, the researcher created the process called Somatic Education.

In this study Somatic Education was the four week series of classes described below and outlined in detail in Appendix A. The four classes, held one hour per week for four consecutive weeks, all followed the same general sequence.

**Class sequence.** Though focusing on distinct themes, the four classes engaged in the same general sequence of five elements each week: 1) centering or quieting, 2) warm-up, 3) gentle movements, 4) breathing, and 5) relaxation.

**Centering or Quiet ing.** The Somatic Education classes all began with a centering or quieting activity or process. The participants came to the classes either during their lunch hour, or directly after work. Fast paced work days often contribute to mental "busyness" (Burke & Hogan, 1995), and it was important to begin with a quieting or calming time to help participants release the stressors of the day and prepare for the rest of the class.

Centering was accomplished through the practice of bringing attention to the body-self. Participants sat as comfortably as possible on mats or towels on the floor. They were instructed to close their eyes, relax their faces and shoulders, lengthen their spines, and bring attention to their bodies, specifically where they were making contact
with the ground. After a few minutes of quietly sitting and noticing the rhythm of the breath, micro movements of the body, or other proprioceptive processes (Knaster, 1995), class continued with the warm-up process.

**Warm-up.** The second element of the Somatic Education classes was a warm-up activity. These activities focused on allowing the spine and joints to feel warm and flexible, getting ready for more active movements. The warm-ups focused especially on loosening the lower back and experiencing a feeling of fluidity and motion in the joints. At the conclusion of the warm-up segment the classes moved to the more active movement portion of the sequence.

**Postures/Movements.** The participants next engaged in movements and/or postures which were the core of the classes. Some of the movements were yoga asanas (poses), others were qigong activities, and others were stress-reducing sequences\(^1\). All of the postures and/or actions emphasized at least one of the following elements: strengthening, stretching and flexibility, increasing ease of movement, enhancing flow of energy, and/or balancing.

The movements were gentle enough that most of the participants appeared to follow along and engage in them fairly easily. Participants were continually reminded to work at their own pace and comfort level because in somatics work, doing "more" and pushing harder does not make it more effective. It often hinders it (Claire, 1995; Hanna, 1988; Knaster, 1995). Keeping in line with the somatic foundations discussed

---

\(^1\) Though all of the movements could be characterized as "stress-reducing," these particular activities came from Davis, Eshelman, & McKay's Stress-Reduction and Relaxation Workbook (1995).
in chapter one, the classes emphasized personal awareness, non-competition, and attention to body messages. The participants were encouraged to rest or skip movements anytime they felt it was appropriate for them to do so.

**Breathing.** Another process of all the classes was conscious breathing. Either as part of the centering activities presented above, or prior to the relaxation segment (see below), the participants engaged in breathing exercises. Sometimes the focus was on simple awareness of the breath, other times controlled breathing techniques were utilized.

**Relaxation.** The final process of the four classes in the Somatic Education series was a resting period or deep relaxation. Participants were instructed to lie down on mats or towels and were given directions to help facilitate relaxation. Some sessions utilized a body scan, guiding the individuals to notice different parts of their bodies and how they made contact with the ground. During other weeks visualizations were used. There was always soft music playing in the background and after the body scan or visualizations, participants would lie quietly for 5-8 minutes.

An important note is that throughout the Somatic Education series the researcher made a particular effort to create a safe, non-judgmental, and non-competitive environment. The participants were reminded often to "be loving and gentle with yourselves," to "do less instead of more," and to "listen to and honor your own body-selves."

**Four Somatic Education themes.** Classes followed the same above sequence, but focused each week on one of the following four themes: awareness, breathing,
stretching/flexibility, and inner or spiritual dimensions. The classes were initiated by an introduction to the weekly theme. Each week the researcher passed out a hand-out consisting of a brief description of that week's theme and several quotes from somatic practitioners about the concept (see Appendix B for weekly hand-outs). Before beginning the Somatic Education sequence explicated above, the researcher read aloud the thematic description and a few of the quotes, and encouraged the participants to focus on that week's theme throughout the class.

3.3 Research site and participants

The Faculty and Staff Wellness Program (FSWP), a division of the University Health Connection at The Ohio State University, offers classes and workshops on diverse health and wellness subjects. The classes are offered at no cost to employees as a service to the university. The Wellness Program utilizes interdisciplinary perspectives to broaden the information available to university staff and faculty.

FSWP and the somatic studies program in the College of Education at Ohio State have worked collaboratively since March, 2000. The Wellness Program initiated seven Somatic Education series' (described above) between January and August, 2001. The Somatic Education series' came under the heading Complementary Health Initiative Pilot Program and according to Wellness Program coordinator Marianne Robinson was included because, "Wellness is a holistic way to look at or engage in health and we feel that complementary disciplines are a valuable asset to the Program" (personal communication 4/16/02).
The Faculty and Staff Wellness Program used three avenues to announce the somatic classes: the university's Human Resources publication "ReSources," the Wellness Program's "Wellness Website," and Ohio State's "Netwell" publication. The classes were also advertised through word of mouth by employees "who tend to follow wellness activities" (Robinson, personal communication 4/16/02).

The series were held at seven different locations on The Ohio State University campus. Six of the series were held during the common lunch hour from 12pm to 1pm, and one was held after work from 5pm to 6:30pm. The number of participants in each Somatic Education series ranged from nine to forty-five with an average of seventeen attendants per session. The vast majority of participants were women; the total number attending all seven series was 117 and only eight were male.

Though no actual record was kept indicating numbers of faculty versus staff, all of the pilot surveys returned (see discussion below) were from staff, as were all of the interviews (discussed in a following section). In a similar vein, though the Wellness Program did not gather data on ages of participants, eighteen out of twenty interviewees were age forty or older. As an observer at every Somatic Education session, though not attempting to claim specific numbers, I can say that seemed to be a typical age range for many of the participants.

The researcher was asked to teach all seven of the somatic series' and was granted permission to use the class experiences as data for the current research project.
3.4 Action Research

Action research is a particular form of qualitative or interpretive research that takes inquiry beyond exploration and understanding. It is based on the assumption that the mere investigation and recording of events and processes, and the subsequent explanation of such events by an uninvolved researcher, is insufficient in and of itself (Stringer, 1999). Action research seeks not only to uncover the meaning perspectives of participants involved, but also to bring practical benefit and change to all those with whom it is engaged. In describing this aspect of action research Stringer declares:

If an action research project does not make a difference, in a specific way, for practitioners and/or their clients, then it has failed to achieve its objectives. The analogue of hypothesis testing in action research is some form of change or development that is tested by its ability to enhance the lives of the people with whom it is engaged (1999, p. 11).

Having had the specific aim of not only understanding participants’ experiences of well-being, but also “enhancing the lives of the people” by positively impacting those experiences, the current project falls into the category of action research.

Another aspect of action research is that it takes those who have been traditionally seen as “subjects” and allows them to be actively involved as participants in the process. The key is to enable people to develop their own understanding of issues, such that they are then able to apply knowledge obtained in ways that benefit them directly (Stringer, 1999). This is a distinct approach from more traditional forms of inquiry where, in terms of benefiting from the knowledge gained, the researcher is the primary stakeholder. This dimension of action research is particularly relevant to somatics work generally, and Somatic Education specifically, where the participants
were engaged in the systematic process of self-investigation. As the practitioner-researcher I made an explicit attempt to encourage the participants to engage in self-research, becoming aware of what “worked for them,” and thus discovering what served them well and benefiting personally from knowledge or awareness gained.

According to McKernan (1991), “As a theory of practice, action research attempts to make some difference to how people behave or live their lives; to how they feel and think” (p. 21). Work within the field of somatics, which also attempts to make a difference in people’s lives, fits well within the parameters of action research. Somatic theory holds that because life events are processes instead of static conditions (see chapter one for somatic theoretical discussion), increased freedom and ease are always possibilities. As the father of somatics, Hanna’s writing emphasized the inherent possibility of somatics work to contribute to conscious change, growth, and renewal of individuals as well as of society (1988, 1989). Thus, action for improvement through awareness or examination has always been a prominent focus of the field of somatics.

In describing action research, and ringing of somatic concepts, McKernan ascertains, “The ultimate aim of inquiry is understanding; and understanding is the basis of action for improvement” (1991, p. 3). Also linking somatic concepts with action research Halsey (1972) defined action research as “a small-scale intervention in the functioning of the real world...and the close examination of the effects of such
interventions” (quoted in McKeman, 1991, p. 4). In a similar vein, Bogdan & Biklen see action research as “the systematic collection of information that is designed to bring about social change” (1982, p. 215).

Another area in which somatics and action research converge is the importance of linking theory and practice. Though somatics is known for its practices, the field is grounded in theoretical assumptions. Working with theory and practice simultaneously is an important keystone in embodiment work. Rarely are somatic scholars not also competent practitioners. Similarly, according to McKeman (1991) research can be considered action research only to the extent that it involves practice, solving practical problems. Of the theory and practice relationship he explicates, “Theories are not validated independently of practice and then applied to curriculum; rather they are validated through practice” (1991, p. 4). Summing up action research’s intimate connection between theory and practice. Denzin and Lincoln ascertain that “action research provides a model for enacting local action-oriented approaches to inquiry, applying small scale theorizing to specific problems in specific situations” (in Stringer 1999, p. 10). Somatic Education is such an action-oriented approach.

3.5 Pilot study

Following Glesne and Peshkin’s suggestion to "pilot your observations and interviews in situations and with people as close to the realities of your actual study as possible" (1992, p. 30), the first two Somatic Education series’ were used as the pilot study. I knew from previous field work, as well as the professional, personal, and academic areas described in the grounded theory section, that I was interested in
researching the affects of Somatic Education on the overall experience of well-being. I was also interested in the area of spirituality and anticipated that dimension to be viewed as being separate from well-being.

For the pilot study I asked participants of the first two Somatic Education (SE) series' to fill out a questionnaire (see Appendix C) that asked about their experiences in the classes, their ideas about well-being, their concepts of spirituality, and what role (if any) the classes seemed to play in their experiences of well-being and/or spirituality. The questionnaires were given out at the final (fourth) class of the first two SE series', along with addressed, stamped envelopes addressed to the researcher. Twenty-one of thirty-nine were returned to the researcher. The information on the questionnaires was used "as a chance to inform [myself] about the topic itself," to clarify both research and interview questions, and to decide upon an appropriate data collection procedure (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992, p. 31).

I found true Janesick's declaration that "the pilot study allows the researcher to focus on particular areas that may have been unclear previously" (1994, p. 213). That seemed especially to be the case with participant ideas and definitions of well-being. Their concepts appeared much broader and more integrative than the definitions I had been reading in the literature, often addressing both mind and body in their answers. Thus, I added more detailed questions to my interview protocol, realizing that an important dimension to any discussion on "well-being" includes the participants' personal views of what that concept may entail.
Another point illuminated by the pilot study was in the area of spirituality. I had anticipated that discussions of spirituality would fall under a separate category from overall well-being, and thus asked the questions separately. However, I found that participants fell into two categories when answering the questions - those who saw it as distinct, and those who described spirituality as part of well-being. My interest in this distinction added clarity about my desire to understand the participants' views on spirituality.

Before the pilot study I had anticipated using similar questionnaires as my main data source in the actual study. However, after reading the pilot questionnaires I became convinced that interviewing would lead to "richer, thicker" descriptions and understanding (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Geertz, 1973). Some of the participants seemed to want to write more than the available space allowed. Others provided only short phrases or sentences. In both cases I desired to ask more questions and to get further clarification about answers they had written.

Using the pilot study to refine and readjust the study design and questions (Janesick, 1994), I began the task of data collection.

3.6 Semi-structured interviews

As the main methodological process for collecting data I conducted interviews with participants of the last two Somatic Education series'. According to Fontana and Frey in their essay Interviewing: The art of science, "Interviewing is one of the most common and most powerful ways we use to try to understand our fellow human beings" (1994, p. 361). At the conclusion of the third and fourth classes I announced that I
would be holding interviews to explore participant experiences with the Somatic Education classes as well as their concepts about well-being. I explained that the interviews would be approximately forty-five minutes long and held at a time and place convenient for them. I asked all who were interested to put their name and contact information on a sign-up sheet. A total of twenty-three individuals signed up and a total of twenty interviews were conducted (see Appendix D for the interview protocol).

Accessing information from the pilot study as well as from previous somatic work, the questions and discussions focused not only upon respondent experiences with the classes and their perspectives on well-being, but also upon their interpretations about the role of Somatic Education in the experience of well-being.

The discussions took the form of semi-structured interviews. With semi-structured interviews the researcher is interested in general topic areas or questions, but allows the participants to guide the response patterns. Semi-structured interviews fall between structured and unstructured, or open, protocol. In structured interviews the researcher asks each respondent pre-established questions which have limited response categories. There is little flexibility in the way the questions can be asked or answered, and the interviewer plays a neutral role not responding to, or giving opinions about, the respondent's answers (Fontana & Frey, 1994).

The unstructured or open interview situation allows for greater breadth of information where the researcher is prepared to follow unexpected leads that arise from respondent perspectives (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992). Fontana & Frey (1994) ascertain the major differences between structured and unstructured interviewing:
The former aims at capturing precise data of a codable nature in order to explain behavior within pre-established categories, whereas the latter is used in an attempt to understand the complex behavior of members of society without imposing any a priori categorization that may limit the field of inquiry (p. 366).

Thus semi-structured interviews fall somewhere between those to categories.

According to Marshall & Rossman (1995) interviewing is a data collection method relied upon extensively in qualitative research where the purpose is to uncover and describe participant perspectives on subjects or events. In describing interviewing they suggest that though the researcher may introduce and explore general topics, it is important to respect how the participants frame and structure their responses. They state. “This, in fact, is an assumption fundamental to qualitative research – the participant’s perspective on the phenomenon of interest should unfold as the participant views it, not as the researcher views it” (1995, p. 80).

For this reason I attempted to convey an attitude of openness and acceptance regarding participant answers to the interview questions in hopes of showing that “the participant’s information is valuable and useful” (Marshall & Rossman, 1995, p. 80). That open attitude helped to develop a strong rapport between the participants and myself, adding a dimension of credibility to the study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In one interview, however, it created a challenge as the respondent continually moved the discussion away from the research topics.

Having been granted permission from the respondents, I tape recorded all of the interviews. Taping the sessions allowed me access to more detailed and accurate accounts than would have been possible solely through note taking. I listened to the tape recordings in the car on the way home from the interviews in an attempt to keep
the information fresh and to hear details that I may have missed when actually interviewing the person. I was surprised how often I heard bits of discussions seemingly for the first time. Whether I had missed those pieces of the conversation because I was focusing on previous discussion points, concentrating too much on note taking, growing weary of active listening, feeling bored with the discussion, or some other reason, tape recording the conversations proved to be an immensely useful tool for getting an accurate account of participant responses as I transcribed the interviews.

After each transcription was completed, following Lincoln & Guba's guidance for member checking as one way to establish trustworthiness in interpretive research (1985), I sent a copy of the transcriptions to the interviewees by electronic mail (e-mail) thanking them for their time and asking them to read over and verify the accuracy of the information. I invited each of the respondents to reply with any changes or additions that s/he would like to make. Stringer (1999) admonishes researchers to verify the information with each participant stating simply, "When used, tapes should be transcribed as soon as possible after the interview, and the researcher should verify the accuracy of the resulting text with the interviewee" (p. 70).

One participant responded with some clarifying information, reporting that the additional ideas "came to [her] as [she] was re-reading the transcription." One other respondent corrected the spelling of a disease about which she had spoken. The other participants either indicated that they received the information and that it was accurate, or they did not reply at all. I assumed that non-responses indicated that the information was accurate.
3.7 Evaluative surveys

The Faculty and Staff Wellness Program creates evaluative surveys for every program they offer, and then distributes those surveys to all participants attending the classes. If the program is a series of classes then the surveys are distributed at the concluding session. Participants are encouraged to return the surveys, being told that higher numbers attending classes and returning surveys helps increase chances of continuing the wellness programs offered.

According to Robinson, program coordinator, the Wellness Program collects the data in order to “increase awareness and provide education about the specific programs offered so that employees are able to make informed choices about their own health and wellness.” They also gather the data in order to record the number of people participating in the programs offered. The numbers indicate if they are able to continue with a certain type of programming because it helps establish cost effectiveness of the program (personal communication, 4/16/02).

The evaluative surveys developed for the somatics classes were intended to disclose not only information about participant experiences with Somatic Education, but also about how those experiences related to the employees work life. The Wellness Program wanted to know if these classes could help retain employees, increase job satisfaction, reduce absenteeism, or be seen as an employee perk.

Though the surveys were not created specifically to gather information and gain understanding about the subject of this inquiry - Somatic Education’s role in overall well-being - they held the possibility of adding another dimension to my understanding.
of participant experiences with the classes. I felt the surveys added a depth to the
information I gathered not only because the questions were written by someone else and
thus may illuminate broader areas of interest, but especially because they were one form
of data that could be shared anonymously, making it possible for participants to express
negative experiences without fear of repercussion or disappointing the researcher.

The seven Somatic Education series had a total of 117 participants. Eighty-
seven surveys were returned. When asked to have access to the evaluative surveys as a
source of data for this inquiry, Dr. Stephanie Cook, medical director for the Faculty and
Staff Wellness Program, granted permission.

I endeavored to read the surveys as if exploring the topic for the first time.
Some questions were similar to those of the interview questions discussed above.
Others were directed more specifically to participant work experiences. Though
attempting to approach the surveys with open interest and curiosity, I was aware that as
an interpretative researcher I began immediately to categorize, analyze, and truncate as I
tried to make sense of the data. Emergent themes and patterns that informed the
research objectives of this inquiry are described in chapter four.

3.8 Trustworthiness

According to Kvale (1989), positivist research focuses on verification,
measurement, and generalization of existing knowledge in the objective world, while
interpretive inquiry is concerned with investigation, and the generation and application
of knowledge. Because the present inquiry fell into such an interpretive category, the
traditional positivist concerns of validity and reliability were not a focus of this study.
Marshall and Rossman (1995) have ascertained that with qualitative or interpretive research, where the purpose is to explore and describe participant perspectives, "the subjective view is what matters" (p. 81). For that reason it was not the objective views of validity that concerned this researcher. While discussing action research, one form of interpretive research, McKernan claims that "the validity of the concepts, models and results it generates depends not so much on scientific tests of truth as on their utility in helping practitioners to act more effectively, skillfully and intelligently" (1991, p. 4).

In describing criteria for judging the quality of interpretive research, Lincoln questions "how do we separate good research from poor research across disciplines and traditions?" and concludes, "Interpretivist inquiry requires as serious a consideration of systematic, thorough, conscious method as does empiricist inquiry" (1995, p. 276). In an attempt to follow such guidance, the researcher turned to Lincoln & Guba's (1985) postpositivist criteria of trustworthiness. Trustworthiness was established in this inquiry by the use of triangulation, member checks, the reflexive journal, negative case analysis, and peer debriefing (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Triangulation was established by gathering information from multiple data sources. Though interview transcripts served as the primary source of information in this study, other sources included evaluative surveys, participant-observation of the classes, and a researcher log.

Member checks were another important tool used for achieving trustworthiness. During the interview process I paraphrased answers back to the respondents asking for
confirmation or clarification. As discussed above, when the interviews and transcriptions were complete I sent the documents back to the participant for review and feedback.

The reflexive journal proved to be an immensely useful tool for bringing to light researcher biases, and thus helping facilitate trustworthiness of the project. Reading over the research log after the second interview I found this question, "Why aren’t they saying anything about the need to relax?" illuminating a rather obvious preconception. Through personal reflection I was able to become more aware of my biases than would have been possible without the reflexive journal.

Negative case analysis was also used in this study. After discovering emergent themes, there was an attempt to locate not only confirming evidence in the data, but disconfirming evidence as well. According to Erickson (1986), "A deliberate search for disconfirming evidence is essential to the process of inquiry, as it the deliberate framing of assertions to be tested against the data corpus" (p. 147). Evidence of negative case analysis can be found in chapter four’s data analysis.

One final criterion used to establish trustworthiness of this interpretive inquiry was the consistent use of peer debriefing defined by Stringer as “processes that enable research facilitators to articulate and reflect on research procedures with a colleague or informed associate” (1999, p. 176). I shared procedures, assumptions, frustrations, and findings with two colleagues (Maryanna Klatt and Jennifer Strickland) who are familiar with my work. The bi-weekly meetings were a forum which provided continued support and necessary feedback about my methods and findings.
3.9 Chapter summary

Chapter three focused upon the design and methods of the study. It began with a discussion of Somatic Education, the embodiment practice used as the four week process of the study and hypothesized to play a positive role in the experience of well-being. It continued with a description of the grounded theory approach which utilized data-theory interplay to develop an emerging somatic theory of well-being.

Following the section outlining the research setting and participants, discussion turned to the pilot study which informed questions and procedures for the actual study. Action research was then discussed with its relevance for this inquiry. The chapter concluded with an exploration into the sources used for data collection, and finally with a discussion outlining the establishment of trustworthiness.

In the following chapter the researcher turns the focus to data analysis.
CHAPTER 4

DATA ANALYSIS

While the preceding chapter dealt with the design and methods of the study, chapter four has as its focus the analysis and interpretation of data collected. According to Glesne and Peshkin (1992):

> Data analysis involves organizing what you have seen, heard, and read so that you can make sense of what you have learned. Working with the data, you create explanations, pose hypotheses, develop theories...To do so, you must categorize, synthesize, search for patterns, and interpret the data you have collected (p. 127).

In this chapter I attempt to develop accounts that represent participants' lived experience of the researched events (Stringer, 1999), the Somatic Education classes. In searching the data repeatedly, themes and patterns emerged. Following qualitative or interpretive research perspectives the themes were derived through inductive analysis, "which means that categories, themes and patterns come from the data" and were not imposed prior to data collection (Janesick, 1994, p. 215). The emergent categories became basis for the assertions generated below.

My data analysis was based, to a great extent, upon discovering or developing answers to the three research objectives: 1) To understand participant experiences in the
Somatic Education classes. According to each individual, what were the classes about? What were some of their own experiences? Were there any seeming effects outside of class?

2) To ascertain participant ideas and definitions of well-being. What is well-being? What are the components of well-being? How is it experienced?

3) To explore the role that Somatic Education plays in the experience of well-being. Is there a connection between engaging in Somatic Education and experiencing a sense of well-being? Is Somatic Education a possible tool for positively impacting well-being?

I made sense of the data by repeatedly moving between the research questions and the data collected from the interviews, survey documents, researcher log, and observations. What were the answers to the questions of interest? Or more appropriately asked, what were the participants' answers to the questions?

In an attempt to understand the full range of participant experiences I sought to uncover disconfirming as well as confirming evidence for each assertion. In discussing data analysis and the importance of testing and retesting assertions against the data base, Erickson (1986) states, "To test the evidentiary warrant for an assertion the researcher conducts a systematic search of the entire data corpus, looking for disconfirming and confirming evidence, keeping in mind the need to reframe the assertions as the analysis proceeds" (p. 146). At the conclusion of each theme discussed, any negative cases or disconfirming evidence found are presented.
Because I based my data analysis around uncovering participant experiences with regard to the main research questions, at times I excluded from the analysis interesting categories that seemed not to have relevance to those particular questions. This was less an omission based on non-importance of material and more based on constraints of the study. Some of those topics included gender issues, job satisfaction, body image, and self-esteem. All of these are relevant and important research topics as they may relate to somatic work. In chapter five I recommend future research in these and other areas.

4.1 Objective 1) Experiences of Somatic Education

By far the most prevalent theme to emerge with repeated review of the data corpus was in regard to the first study objective: To understand the participants’ experiences of the Somatic Education classes.

4.1.1 Relaxation and stress-reduction

Through systematic analysis it can be asserted that a primary participant experience of engaging in the SE classes was significant relaxation and stress-reduction. According to one participant, "I went over there and I was always hyped up from work. We did deep breathing and I felt like I was slowing down. I felt more relaxed." One individual was "amazed" as she experienced "a lot more relaxation than expected in that short hour crammed in between everything else." Another concurred stating, "I was often pretty stressed when I got there. It always helped me relax and it helped me de-stress." Many other remarks were expressed throughout the interviews, on the
evaluative surveys, and during discussions before and after class such as "feeling relaxed and refreshed," "feeling good all over," and "feeling calm and energized at the same time."

My observations as facilitator-researcher, as well as information gathered through the above listed data resources all provided strong evidence for this assertion. As the facilitator I was able to observe first-hand the participants' somatic expressions and behaviors, as well as experience the energetic or emotional atmosphere of each class. When the participants entered the class rooms they were most often coming from work, either in the middle of their work day at lunch time, or directly afterward in the early evening, and seemed relieved to have what one person called a "time of respite from normal daily activities."

As the somatic educator and researcher I was pleased to watch a subtle softening in appearance during the sessions. As we sat on the floor, closed our eyes, and began to take note of our physical selves, and/or our breath, I was aware of a difficult-to-define "slowing down" or "releasing downward" of energy in the room.

As the instructor I made it a practice to first become self-aware, and then to expand my awareness to other participants in the room. Therefore, at times I closed my eyes for the class processes, but at other times I continued to observe the participants. When I kept my eyes open the most compelling thing I observed was a softening in the face. When participants first closed their eyes many would shut them tightly, as if in an attempt to shut out the "busyness" of the day, creating deep lines of the oft described "furrowed brow." During the classes, however, I witnessed a softening of the forehead
and eyes, an easing of the tension lines, and an emerging appearance of gentle non-
doing in place of what had been tense, tight facial expressions.

I also observed the outward signs of relaxation and stress-reduction when participants were lying on the ground during the relaxation portion of the class. Not only were their facial expressions soft, but their bodies appeared to be resting fully into the ground which, according to one participant was, "amazing really since we were in a big room on a hard floor with a bunch of people we didn't even know." Most significantly however, was the slow, gentle rhythm of breathing that could be easily seen in the subtle rise and fall of the participants' bellies, indicative of Herbert Benson's relaxation response (1976).

The many participant accounts from interviews and evaluative surveys describing feelings of "relaxation," "slowing down," "easy resting," and "stress-reduction" all substantiate my observations.

4.1.2 Ineffable quality of experience

Related to the experience of relaxation and stress-reduction was a common pattern of difficulty in describing the bodily feelings or sensations associated with the Somatic Education classes. When asking participants what they felt during the classes many responded with statements such as, "I don't know. I just felt really good." or "It's hard to describe, but really relaxed." One interviewee described, "It's like your entire body feels good from head to toe. And something is happening with the muscles and the joints, and I don't know scientifically what that is." Another respondent in attempting to describe her experiences and illustrating the ineffable quality ascertained:
Well, it was definitely a sense of relaxation. But not fatigued. I kind of want to say a glow. It was a different feeling. It was kind of a (pause) well-being, or some kind of a descriptor that would mean well-being. I guess glowing would almost be it, or the closest I could get to as a descriptor. It was definitely different. It felt warm and all the parts were working right. Like the mind was working, the eyes were working. Everything felt just very loose and in the right place, like the arms and legs in the right place. I didn't feel any kinks; I didn't feel any stress; I didn't feel any strain.

Similar descriptions such as "just less tight," "not as constricted or constrained," "looser and freer," and "the feeling of being whole" were sprinkled throughout the interview transcripts and surveys. One respondent indicated the difficulty she had in finding appropriate descriptions:

It's really hard to describe. I just think I'm usually pretty constricted physically. I don't move a lot in my normal life, but after the class I would feel like I had a greater range of motion. I want to say that my muscles would feel warmer, but that doesn't mean warmed up. It means that when I feel looser I feel a little bit warmer and my body is more relaxed and pliable. And I felt really happy. I don't know how to define it. It's very hard to describe but I left with kind of a feeling of wholeness or oneness. It's really a rare feeling, not feeling compartmentalized.

During the interviews I often had to take notes describing gestures that would accompany participants' words, or lack of words, when outlining their personal experiences of the classes. During one interview I wrote "[she keeps] breaking off verbal descriptions and 'pulls taffy' up and down in explanation." Another time I indicated that the participant was "floating [her] hands above [her] head in a cloud" when describing a "free" feeling she got from the classes.

4.1.3 Breathing as stress-reducer, energizer, or gauge

When asked about their experiences in the Somatic Education classes many participants also spoke of the importance of the conscious breathing exercises. In
analyzing the interview transcripts three distinct patterns of interpretation presented themselves, all dealing with breathing. Participants were divided, understanding breathing as important because 1) it aided in reducing stress, 2) because it had an energizing effect, and/or 3) because it acted as a gauge of activity outside of class.

The respondents who indicated that breathing was helpful in reducing stress and/or in energizing not only saw it as helpful during the classes, but outside class as well. Participants used the breathing techniques in an attempt to decrease stress and tension levels during stressful times such as "on the freeway when there's someone right in front of [them]," or when "having to confront someone," or when "giving a presentation to a high powered group." A number of participants claimed that it helped them to feel "calm and centered" or "relaxed with less stress." One individual expressed it this way, "Breathing really helps me calm down or feel somewhat in control - in the good sense of the word. It really focuses me."

Others experienced the breath as a process for vitality and energy that could be used instead of afternoon caffeine intake to "get [them] through the day" or when sleepy during a long drive. Some saw the breathing exercises as both calming and energizing at the same time. One interviewee explained:

Like in the car coming back from Chicago I was tired. And by taking deep breaths I was able to wake myself up. I had to do it several times but it does help...Breathing is very calming and energizing at the same time. It's really weird.

Other respondents expressed the importance of the breathing experiences in terms of it being a good gauge of their physical activity level. Thus instead of being an important part of the actual class experience, it was a practical procedure for them to
keep track of "how they were doing" during daily activities or exercise. One runner explained that "it tells you when you are working or pushing, when you are about to reach your absolute max. So it's definitely a good gauge during exercise." Others discussed being able to gauge or measure how "in shape" they were based on being winded or not winded after going up flights of stairs or hiking.

The above assertion stated that conscious breathing was a positive, important process for the research participants. In the search for negative cases of this theme I reviewed a transcript that yielded one clear and rather amusing example:

PPT: Well, I know you have to breathe to stay alive, but when I start thinking about it, it kind of freaks me out. And I feel like I'm not breathing deep enough, and sometimes I feel like I'm hyperventilating. I makes me sick I guess, when I consciously think about it. Yuk! (laughs) When I start thinking about it I just can't do it.
RE: So in terms of conscious breathing it seem to actually play against your sense of well-being? (laughs)
PPT: Yeah.

4.1.4 Different than "exercise" - emphasizes mental focus

Another assertion that can be made from repeated analysis of the data collected is that individuals experienced the Somatic Education process as "different" than "regular exercise." In some cases the differences could be seen in terms of a gentleness to the movements that is often not involved with more traditional exercises. According to one sports enthusiast:

I ended up with the same types of feelings, but it was different. I would basically call it "movement" and not "exercise." It was a process of self-centering, focusing. My background is in aerobics and sweating, so that's what
I’m usually into for exercise. So “movement” to me is much gentler and more sing-songy, and more relaxed. Not so much sweating and gutting it out.

This description echoed several of the descriptions I was given throughout class discussions and interviews.

In other instances the main cause of that difference, according to analysis of the data, was the awareness component or mental focus of the somatic practices which helped to “quiet or slow” their minds. One individual, expressing a common theme described it as “the ability to think more clearly when I was done because of the mental focusing.” She continued stating, “Instead of thoughts kind of coming and going, like something being thrown at you and only catching bits and pieces of everything. I was able to have one entire thought at a time.” Several participants stressed this mental focus as important in their class experience. One statement illustrating this theme read:

We did, I wouldn’t say exercises, we did movements. And maybe it was just the process of going through the motions, but I don’t think so. It takes a certain amount of concentration. Almost relaxing and satisfying focus maybe more than concentration. I think some of the importance is the physical process of stretching and how that loosens you up. But the whole mental process was, I mean we were doing physical things, but there is a mental focus and calmness that really goes along with it. And I don’t think the movements or stretching would be as valuable without the controlled relaxing, mental focus of it.

4.1.5 Importance of bringing focus to self

Another theme that emerged in the interview transcripts, surveys, researcher log, and discussions with participants before and after classes was that the somatic sessions created a time for “much needed” focusing on “self.” A number of participants explained that they had not been taking any of what they called “self-time” or “me-time”
or simply "time to take care of myself." The Somatic Education classes not only served as reminders that those times were important, but also served as those "self" times. One participant expressed it this way:

[The classes] made me realize that I certainly need to incorporate some quiet physical time for myself into my schedule. I mean, I think I deserve that. Again, going back to the busy lifestyle, I have to quit some of that and give myself permission to do that. To give myself some quiet physical time.

As I listened to several individuals during interviews and during discussions before and after class, I was quite interested by their tones as they explained that the classes reminded them of the necessity of taking time for themselves. Whereas most of the other segments of discussion had what I would consider a "normal conversational tone," many of the statements that involved this idea of "importance of focus on self" were made either more adamantly or more apologetically than the rest of the interview. I reflected upon this in my journal questioning, "What's going on with needing to either apologize or get really strong sounding when talking about taking care of themselves? If it comes up again shall I ask them? or maybe I'm just trying to play counselor if I do... hmmm. Kind of manipulative if you think you already know why Darc"

(researcher journal, 10/30/01).

4.2 Objective 2) Participant concepts of well-being

The above assertions, or categories, were helpful in understanding participant experiences of the Somatic Education classes. The following themes were uncovered in an attempt to explore participant views of well-being. In chapter one an emerging perspective of well-being was developed and introduced. This expanded version of well-being was called Experiential Well-Being (EWB) and was defined as the personal...
experience of, or perceived sense of, wholeness or wellness, satisfaction and contentment in the areas of mind, body, and spirit. In working with somatic theory and practice the researcher hypothesized that the actual experience of well-being is an holistic concept, moving beyond only mental health, and thus that EWB is the most appropriate approach to well-being. However, because one of the purposes of the study was to explore participant perspectives of well-being, the term Experiential Well-Being was not used. Instead the researcher used the common term "well-being" to uncover participants' personal views.

4.2.1 Holistic components of well-being

From analyzing the data collected it can be interpreted that participants held a more holistic view of well-being than the truncated perception of only mental health. Their integrated perspectives included components of mental, physical, and spiritual domains. Several individuals discussed how all of these dimensions were integral to their total experience of well-being.

A number of participants when asked their definition or idea of well-being answered simply with statements such as "[It's] a combination of taking care of your body, mind, and spirit" or "It's kind of a phrase that sums up how we feel physically, emotionally, and spiritually. If one piece of that is missing then the rest of it sort of falls apart too."

Others elaborated on what those areas meant. In the area of physical aspects definitions of "having no chronic problems and feeling physical comfort," "the feeling that your body is content, kind of the combination of relaxed and energized," and
"feeling stretched and relaxed" were included, moving beyond a simple lack of illness or disease. In terms of the mental/emotional aspects of well-being participants described things like, "a sense of mental relaxation," "non-stressful feelings mentally," "mental clarity and positive thoughts," and "mental focus and looking at the rosie side of things." Spiritually respondents discussed things like "a feeling of inner peace," "faith in God and the goodness that is out there," "having a comfortable relationship with God," and "being aware of the Divine spark within us."

When explaining her concepts of spirituality, one respondent discussed how her views changed based upon her involvement with the Somatic Education classes. She described:

I probably thought about spirituality a little bit before I took these classes. But not so much specifically with physical well-being. I didn't link the two together so much. I'm a religious person and I always find solace in that. And I can't think of the word but, I have more of a connection now between the spiritual and the physical since I've taken the classes. I feel that they are more closely related now and that I can use the spiritual to improve and enhance the physical.

These integrated concepts are consistent with the expanded version of well-being that was introduced in chapter two as Experiential Well-Being, and was defined as the personal experience or perceived sense of wholeness or wellness, satisfaction and contentment in the areas of mind, body, and spirit. One participant, describing his perspectives of well-being, and resonating with the above description of EWB stated:

With well-being you're addressing the physical, the mental, the emotional, and the spiritual. My belief is that they're all one, but with the various aspects you can talk about, say, physically you'd be healthy and feel vitalized. Mentally you'd be thinking clearly. Emotionally you would have very positive emotions. And spiritually you'd feel a sense of peace, love, and oneness.
4.2.2 Stretching and age concerns

Participant responses to the question, "What role, if any, does stretching/flexibility/movement play in your experience of well-being?" were surprisingly united. Most respondents not only said that it played an important role in well-being, but they also brought up stretching and movement in relation to age concerns. That struck me as significant especially because nowhere in the interview did I ask questions in regard to age related matters. One participant, when asked about the role of stretching/flexibility/movement in the experience of well-being reiterated this point explaining:

Oh, I just think it does wonders for your body. And of course as you get older, like I am, I think it really helps. Because as you do get older, your joints become stiff. And this just really helps, all this stretching.

A critical participant experience or belief when uncovering this theme was that as individuals get older, "beyond twenties and thirties," their bodies begin to stiffen, making it more difficult to do what had once been done easily. Therefore, an integral part of well-being, according to the participants, was being able to do physically what one wanted to do or "had always been able to do before." According to one individual:

As we begin to age it's really important to keep the flexibility of our bodies. Everything on aging well tells us that now. And the older I get the more aware I am of the need to keep moving and keep my flexibility. I just feel so much better, younger even, when I do. I didn't used to think about that at all.

Those were common discussion points among a number of the participants.

4.2.3 Concepts of Spirituality

When searching the data corpus in an attempt to understand participants' subjective experiences, two patterns emerged in relation to their concepts around
spirituality. Typically the interviewees felt strongly that spirituality was an important part of well-being. Statements such as, "I think spirituality plays a huge role," "It's very important to me," "It's essential," and "It's a really big thing" were common throughout my discussions with interviewees. As the facilitator-researcher I found that discovery surprising, expecting many participants to report that it was not a significant area.

Common perspectives about the importance of spirituality included its ability to give individuals a sense of meaning or purpose in their life. One person explained:

Spirituality is a major part of my life and always has been. It puts all the other pieces in perspective. Sort of the prime mover of the other pieces. I think it's the part that makes sense of the other things for me, brings them together. I just provides the reason for being.

Other commonly discussed aspects of spirituality were its ability to put situations into broader perspective, to alleviate fear or worry in order to experience peace, to facilitate being in touch with one's self, and to allow a feeling of love and connection either to God or to others. For one individual:

[Spirituality] takes away all fear. And probably - well, I guess it gives you a sense that no matter what happens in the world that seems so terrible, there is a totally deeper meaning that makes everything else (pause)...I don't want to say unimportant. I'll say it just puts it into perspective.

More interesting perhaps was the division among participants in their actual utilization of those spiritual ideas. On the one hand, for some respondents it was not only important theoretically, but they also utilized their personal spirituality concepts on a daily basis. For those respondents spirituality served as a background for other daily activities. They described it as "an essential part of my daily life," and "a guiding force I try to be in touch with all the time." One participant explained:

115
I think spirituality is critical. I am somewhat amazed at how little spirituality plays in the day to day lives of people. And to me I think it should be an integral part of every day of our life. To me the spiritual should be a part of everything we do.

On the other hand, some respondents saw spirituality as important theoretically, but for different reasons they did not incorporate it into their daily activities. The individuals in this category sounded conflicted about the actual role spirituality played for them, stating such conflicting feelings at times. As an example, one participant began her discussion of spirituality saying:

Oh, I'm conflicted about it. I know it plays a significant role in my well-being, but because I have these old tapes I've never addressed spiritual issues. And I think that one of my problems with not feeling centered or sometimes not feeling connected and together is because there is this whole piece of my life as a human being that I just never go to.

Some of those individuals indicated a desire or need to "get back to" their spirituality at some time in the future. For one participant, though she felt that spirituality was important for well-being, she stated:

I'm just away from it for the moment. I see myself getting back at some point though because it is important. Some people would add the spiritual component to well-being. And it is part, but it's just not a part of my life at the moment. Though I don't want it to be a lack of. I want to get back to it and am getting closer to that.

The above assertion claimed that Somatic Education participants understood spirituality to be an important part of well-being, whether or not they used those concepts on a practical daily level. In an attempt to uncover disconfirming as well as confirming evidence for that assertion I reviewed one transcript that held a divergent
perspective about spirituality. For that participant it held no importance practically or theoretically. When asked "For you what role, if any, does spirituality have in the role of well-being?" the interviewee stated:

None, none. I like to say that I'm a heathen. I am not a heathen. I believe in the goodness of people. And I think that they can believe in whatever they want if it makes them happy. And they don't need a specific God, building, or symbol.

4.2.4 What participants "should" do

Another pattern that emerged during data analysis, in an attempt to understand participant perspectives of well-being, was that many individuals carried personal "should" categories in terms of maintaining their own sense of well-being. For example when asked, "What role, if any, does breathing play in your experience of well-being?" one participant exclaimed:

I have done some deep breathing exercises. They're good. They do give you a little burst of energy. I should do them more. I don't do them enough. I need to get into the habit. I should put a sticky note on my computer to remind myself (laughs). Yeah, when I do it it's great. But I just have to do it, and I plain forget. That should be my screensaver: stretch and breathe.

Another, when asked if, or how, spirituality affected her well-being stated:

I'm very bad about not taking the time every day to do that. I should do it more and I think if you are dedicated to it, I think that's probably where you would get into total feelings of well-being. Through spirituality.

These "should" categories presented themselves in several of the interview areas including stretching and practicing awareness, as well as the breathing and spirituality areas quoted above. Thus there is a distinction between what participants understood as behaviors that positively impact their well-being, and the behaviors in which they actually engage. Illustrating this point one participant told me:
I have been saying for probably two years that I should stretch. I know if I stretched it would help me and I'd feel better. I just started believing that. Didn't act on it though (laughs). And in fact I think the first time I really did it was in this class. And it really made a big difference. I should keep doing it.

4.3 Objective 3) The role of Somatic Education in the experience of well-being

The major indication, based on systematic review of participant experiences, was that Somatic Education (SE) has the potential to positively impact the experience of well-being. For some participants SE impacted well-being by "increasing the connection between mind and body, or at least the awareness of it." For a number of people it helped ease specific body ailments, especially problems with the back. One participant explained, "After doing the flexibility with the back things it made a huge difference in just a short period of time so I didn't have any little twitches and weird things going on with my back after that."

For most of the respondents, however, Somatic Education was seen as being able to impact well-being through the experience of relaxation and stress reduction. The following illustrates common ideas elicited during the interviews:

RE: During our four weeks of classes, did Somatic Education seem to play any role in your experience of well-being?
PPT: Oh, I would say yes. Yes. Just the feeling of relaxation. Of being removed from work stress. It's almost like a reminder. When you do these stretches and these deep breathing and relaxation things it's a reminder that yes, you need to do this every day. Because it feels good, just to stretch and breathe and relax. And you don't have to spend you whole life worrying about work, and cleaning the house and all the other outside stuff.
RE: And so being reminded that you don't have to do that, and doing something that feels good, and feeling relaxed and being removed from work stress are all aspects of your well-being?
PPT: Oh yes.
Another description of the ways Somatic Education may impact well-being highlights not only relaxation, but also the mind-body connection and lower back pain:

I think these Somatic Education things work for anyone. I think anyone can go to those classes and get some benefit in terms of relaxation. And people who have never done any kind of movement could probably learn that they can do things with their bodies than can affect their mind in a positive way. They may not know that. Maybe everyone knows that, but maybe they don't. I'm not sure. I think that for a lot of people this could be a real learning experience. And for other people who have already done yoga type things, it's not new but it's still good.

So I think relaxation is the number one thing. The other thing would be people might be surprised at how they can expand their body's abilities in terms of flexibility and maybe having less back pain and stuff like that. And back pain is a big thing. That's one of the reasons I do those stretches at home too, because of my lower back. And they really help. It makes a huge difference.

4.3.1 Need to "educate the masses"

As illustrated above, when asked their opinion about if "generally speaking" could Somatic Education positively impact well-being, participants answered enthusiastically that they thought it could. However, the strong affirmative responses were often coupled with a condition necessary for that to happen: cultural education. After describing how Somatic Education can affect well-being, one respondent asserted, "I think there has to be an introduction though. In other words we have to educate people about it." Thus according to respondents, while the field of somatics holds the possibility of impacting well-being, there needs to be increased education about somatic concepts and processes before that possibility comes to fruition. Illustrating this point one interviewee stated:
I just think we could spend a lot of time and energy to at least get the message out. Which falls into the category of educating the masses. You know, these aren't new ideas. But we have to be able to communicate about it so people can hear it.

For some respondents that education should begin in grade schools:

PPT: It [SE] should be required in schools (laughs).
RE: You'd be amazed if you heard how many people have said that same thing.
PPT: Well, it should be part of gym class. It should. Screw volleyball (laughs). There are a lot of people like me, that just don't like those stupid sports. So they end up doing nothing because they don't know what else is out there. So yeah, we need to be educated about this stuff. And I think gym classes in schools should incorporate this. I really do. There needs to be a lot of emphasis on body and wellness. Just teaching the kids to do a half-hour stretching without stopping. That's what everyone needs. So yeah, I would want to put Somatic Education stuff into gym classes.

4.3.2 Becoming aware

Participants were asked if the Somatic Education classes seemed to have an impact on their own well-being and/or that of "others, generally speaking," and in what ways. One theme that was uncovered was the importance of awareness as a necessary first step in making positive changes. In describing Somatic Education's focus on awareness one participant expressed:

PPT: I think it's got a big place in well-being. I think it's real easy to get into bad health and stress related habits, and not be aware of what you're doing to yourself. I think you have to be aware enough to realize when something is wrong. And then you can change it, so you have to stop and think about how you really feel. I have in the past, for instance, gotten into caffeine habits to get through the day. And they kind of sneak up on you, and you don't realize it until you're suddenly drinking ten cups of tea every day. And you have to say, wait a minute, why am I doing this? What am I really feeling? So yeah, you have to be aware and say, what am I doing that's covering up something else? For me it's just very easy to drink lots of diet coke and tea. And just keep going. And then it gets to be a habit and you don't really even know why you're drinking it.
RE: And so awareness may help you to go on another route and not do that?
PPT: Well, yeah. If you stop and think about how you really feel and then think, okay, I'm not going to take caffeine. I'm going to go home and do some
stretches and go to bed. Or something like that. I think you have to stop and think. And then take steps to get out of bad habits, and get back to your well-being.

In a similar vein, a number of others spoke of the importance of awareness in well-being in terms of being a tool for illness prevention:

Awareness helps as far as being aware and in touch with your body, and with what you need. A lot of times I can tell if I'm getting sick or something because my body is trying to tell me that you need to slack off for a couple days. Or take it easy or sleep. So you have to be aware that your body is trying to tell you these things to keep you healthy or to get you back to being healthy. Before it gets bad and you really get sick. Sort of a preventative thing.

For others the concept of awareness was important in terms of becoming aware of embodiment practices, like Somatic Education, that hold the possibility for impacting their lives for good. This awareness or education about "what else is out there" emerged as an important issue for a number of participants. One respondent explained it this way:

Awareness of these things is especially important for me because the idea of being centered or focusing on me and the mind-body connection was new to me. I just really wasn't aware of it before. I don't know these kinds of things that I should be aware of, so the educational process that was involved in introducing me to the classes and to the things that one can work on is extremely important.

4.3.3 Long term possibilities - short term experiences

One theme that continually emerged as a limitation to the Somatic Education process was that the positive effects of being relaxed, feeling less stressed, breathing more freely, feeling peaceful and happy, sleeping more soundly, etc. were only short term, ranging from one-half hour to one week. When asked about effects of the classes one respondent explained:
[I felt affects] for a little while. Really not more than an hour max. And then it was right back into the rush around the office routine. When I would first get back I would feel in a better mood. Not as grumpy. Not as stressed. But then the phone would start ringing, and people would be coming in with their rush orders. And before long I was rushing around feeling nervous and trying to get things done, and feeling irritated every time the phone rang. Back to normal (laughs). Well, actually though my muscles were more relaxed too, and I'd say the physical relaxation lasted longer than the mental relaxation.”

Similarly another participant, when asked if he noticed any seeming effects outside of class stated, "No, I wouldn't say I have. Well, I might have been a little more relaxed during the afternoon, but nothing very long term though.”

A number of participants remarked on the possibilities of Somatic Education to increase the experience of well-being in themselves and in the general population. However, those encouraging remarks were most often accompanied by statements that the somatic process would need to be either longer than four weeks and/or more often than once a week for any long term affects to be seen. As an example, one participant said pointedly:

Yeah, it [Somatic Education] can really affect well-being. I think it's something that needs to be kind of ongoing though. Maybe once a week. I don't think you can go to a class for one day or four days or anything like that.

4.3.4 Importance of group - social component

When discussing both their subjective experiences with Somatic Education and their views on the role of SE in the experience of well-being, another emergent theme was the importance of the social component of the classes. Like the "stretching and age" theme above, I was particularly interested in this theme because it was not addressed in any of the specific interview questions, nor did I discuss it during the class sessions.

122
Individuals found the social component or group atmosphere to play an important role in the Somatic Education classes, and in the possibility of increasing well-being in general. Perhaps tying into the "should" category above, a number of individuals stated that the group environment facilitated their engagement in the activities. Echoing many of the comments made in regard to this theme one individual stated, "That's why the classes were so good. I had the date and the time and it was like, this is when I am going to be there. Because on my own I'll think well, I'll just do it later, and then I don't."

Another participant described it as being, "easier to want to do because of the fact that we were in a group. As a group we had the luxury of doing it, increasing a sense of well-being among the people in the group, together, in relationships."

This social component was seen as quite different from, and more effective than, following a video at home or attempting the processes on their own. The participants understood the group or class component to increase their likelihood of engaging in such processes. The following statement expressed what a number of participants indicated as their experience:

I've done some yoga-type classes from time to time and I find it to be a positive experience, but I don't have the discipline to really keep up with it on my own. That's why this was nice. If I had a regular ongoing class, you know something like this but ongoing every week, I'd probably do it.

For some respondents not only did the group environment encourage participation, but some simply enjoyed the camaraderie of being somewhere "where everyone was really nice," or like they were "in a friendly place." One participant tying the classes to her work experience stated, "It just felt good to get out of the office and
interact with other people. And they were all nice. I think it's good to have a class, because I think that part of enjoying your job is the social aspect." Others enjoyed being with "like-minded people."

Thus the social component was an important part of the Somatic Education classes by creating a friendly, enjoyable place to go, and it was important in the broader perspective of increasing well-being by acting as a motivator for engagement in somatic practices. One participant expressed this idea by explaining that being in the group atmosphere "offers more discipline to practice than I could muster alone."

4.4 Researcher bias

Based on my experiential knowledge of the field of somatics, and its impact on myself and students throughout my teaching career, I had a preconceived notion that people would include the concept "relaxation" in their definitions of well-being. To my surprise, not one of the pilot study questionnaires returned with "relaxation" discussed in the well-being question.

Instead of using this as an opportunity to "show changes in the fieldworker's perspective across time" (Erickson, 1986, p. 151), I assumed that there must be something "wrong" with, or missing from, the questions asked. Still unaware of, and thus non-reflexive about, my rather obvious preconception, I added a question to the interview protocol that would "help" the participants say what I "knew" they meant - that being relaxed in the body was an important aspect of their well-being. After asking for their definitions or concepts of well-being, the additional question was, "For you what place, if any, does the body have in the role of well-being?"
I became frustrated after the third interview when, much to my surprise and even
dismay, participants were not only excluding "relaxation" from their definitions of well-
being, but also from discussion on the body's role in well-being. Answers to the "body"
questions usually contained reference to the body being physically well or not sick. As I
reviewed my research log following the third interview I read, "Why aren't they saying
anything about the need to relax?" At that point I realized that I was not only holding
tightly to a preconceived notion about the participants' meaning experiences, but that it
was apparently an erroneous notion at that. Hughes (1992) states:

We cannot rid ourselves of the cultural self we bring with us into the field any
more than we can disown the eyes, ears and skin through which we take in our
intuitive perceptions about the new and strange world we have entered (quoted
in Olesen. 1994, p. 165).

"However," adds Olesen, "the researcher still needs to be reflexive about her views"
(p. 165).

After reflecting on my unwitting bias, I was able to more easily let go of the
preconception that relaxation was part of well-being. Self-reflexivity facilitated a more
accurate perception of what the participants were saying. However, as I listened to and
interpreted participant discussions, an interesting contradiction or discrepancy emerged.

4.5 Discrepancies between definitions and experiences

Connected to the researcher bias introduced above, and perhaps the most
interesting finding in terms of participant perspectives of well-being, was the definite
discrepancy between initial definitions of the concept and later experiences of that
concept, as both were described to the researcher. This became most apparent with the
experience of relaxation.

125
As described above there was a distinct omission of relaxation in participant definitions of well-being when the direct question "What is your experience, idea, or definition of well-being?" was asked. However, when asked to later expound on the possibilities of Somatic Education to positively impact well-being, almost every respondent not only answered affirmatively, but also asserted that the number one way SE increased well-being was through relaxation. Being sensitive to my earlier expounded bias, and not wanting to misinterpret their statements, when participants discussed relaxation during this part of the interview I consistently clarified by asking, "And so relaxation or feeling physically relaxed is part of well-being for you?" Almost invariably the participants would answer affirmatively with statements such as "well definitely" or "of course."

Thus participants initially defined or conceptualized well-being in such ways as to distinctly exclude the component of relaxation. Subsequently, however, the same consistency emerged with the seemingly opposite response in their experiential descriptions that because Somatic Education allowed them to feel relaxed it therefore increased their well-being. And it did so, according to the participants, because being relaxed is part of their well-being. Thus a contradiction emerged in the data.

One rather pointed example of this discrepancy was a participant who never mentioned relaxation while defining or describing well-being, yet later in the interview discussed:

PPT: Awareness helps to get me to the sense of well-being, where I let go of what's behind me, leaving whatever is kind of a drag on me, leaving it behind. It's like opening up a new possibility, or opening up a brand new day. Being in the moment. To me that's a sense of well-being. Leaving off the mental cycling
and having a state of peacefulness in your mind. And then allowing yourself to just be. And when I get to a point where I feel like I have stopped the mental cycling, I'm hearing nature, I'm feeling aware of myself, I'm feeling good and nothing hurts, then I call that relaxation.

**RE**: So relaxation is....?

**PPT**: Well, it's kind of the name for well-being. I don't really use the term well-being that much, though it's a really good word. I think instead I use the word relaxation.

In uncovering the above discrepancy or contradiction, disconfirming evidence for the above assertions emerged in two cases. One respondent did include a feeling of relaxation in her original definition of well-being stating, "I think it's important to work on physical well-being, which is part of the whole well-being thing. You need to do things like the relaxation. It's part of it and we have a responsibility to take care of that."

The second negative case analyzed was a participant's view that relaxation was specifically *not* a component of well-being asserting:

I don't think it [relaxation] is really part of my well-being. Currently I don't think I'd perform at peak performance at my job if I were just floating in a relaxation state. I have to be very mental in my job and I choose to be mental and focused in my persona with the people I work with here. So right now, not much for me, though I really look forward to the lunchtime relaxation.

### 4.6 Chapter Summary

This chapter described the analysis of data as interpreted by the researcher. Through analyzing the data collected through participant observation, semi-structured interviews, evaluative surveys, and a researcher log it was found that participants experienced relaxation, stress-reduction, and feelings of being energized yet mentally focused as a result of their participation in the Somatic Education classes. Participants felt that SE could not only increase their own well-being, but that of others in the...
general public as well. For that to happen however, classes would need to be longer in
duration than four weeks and there would need to be increased education about somatic
activities and processes. Another finding was that participant accounts of well-being
were holistic in nature encompassing aspects of physical, mental, and spiritual domains.
Those accounts corresponded with the previously introduced notion of Experiential
Well-Being and will be discussed further in the next chapter.
CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In chapter one it was argued that as a culture we are not well. It was reported that perceived stress levels continue to climb in the general population, as do numbers of individuals suffering from chronic, stress-related illnesses including cancer, heart disease, ulcers, and hypertension (Ballentine, 1999; Cooper, 1997; Davis, Eshelman, & McKay 1995; Domar 1996; Hoffman, 1997). It was also discussed that mounting numbers of people are dissatisfied with their jobs, suicide and divorce rates are on the incline, there is an increasing prevalence of mental and emotional illnesses such as anxiety disorders and depression, and there is a general sense of dis-ease or unrest experienced by many in the U.S. (Buchannen, 1999; Williamson, 1997).

Thus it was ascertained that many Americans lack the experience of well-being, and that there is a need to address that lack, with the specific intention of facilitating an increase in the experience.

5.1 Experiential Well-Being revisited

The concept well-being has typically been seen as a dimension only of mental health. This can be seen in at least two prominent areas. The first is that specific
research and literature that utilizes the term "well-being," coming primarily from the field of psychology, defines the concept in terms of life satisfaction and affect, thus utilizing only cognitive and emotional components. Also, the culture at large accepts the phrase "health and well-being" which assumes the former to be an aspect of the physical body and the latter to deal only with the mental/emotional realm.

Somatic theory, however, holds that human beings are holistic in nature, not able to be conveniently categorized into disparate components. According to somatic theory the triune nature of individuals encompasses mind, body, and spirit in an holistic unity. Because of this view the field of somatics assumes that any look at the wellness, happiness, or well-being of an individual must include attention to all three components.

Holding to the foundational assumptions of somatic theory which included: 1) continually returning to awareness; 2) understanding the human as a synergistic connected process or soma; 3) privileging first-person perception; 4) highlighting body wisdom, inner authority, and personal responsibility; 5) focusing upon mind-body integration; 6) bringing focus to the interconnectedness of life; and 7) tolerating ambiguity, or being able to hold opposing tensions simultaneously, a new comprehensive approach to well-being was introduced. That concept was called Experiential Well-Being and was defined as the personal experience of, or perceived sense of wholeness or wellness, satisfaction and contentment in the areas of mind, body, and spirit.

Because somatic practices, also called embodiment or mind-body practices, hold the possibility of attending to the individual on an holistic, integrative level, it was
hypothesized that Somatic Education, one particular Somatic process, would be able to
positively impact individuals' well-being, or more appropriately, their Experiential
Well-Being.

5.2 Research objectives revisited

Because of the different possible ways to view well-being this study was in part
an attempt to ascertain participant definitions and descriptions of well-being. Would
they view that concept in the culturally traditional way of a mental health dimension?
Would they view it in line with somatic concept of Experiential Well-Being? Would
they experience it as something altogether different than those two possibilities?

Somatic Education was a newly developed embodiment form which integrated
three already established mind-body approaches in an attempt to create a process simple
enough for anyone to practice. Because it was a newly created process, another of the
inquiry objectives was to understand participant experiences with the Somatic
Education classes.

Lastly, after ascertaining participant perceptions of the two primary research
components, Somatic Education and well-being, perhaps the most important question
addressed in this inquiry was that of the interaction between the two: Did Somatic
Education positively impact participant experiences of well-being?

5.2.1 Importance of ongoing practice

The analysis of data showed clearly that, according to respondents, Somatic
Education (SE) not only positively affected participants but that it also holds the
potential for increasing well-being in the general public as well. It was just as clear
from that data, however, that for SE to have an impact for more than a few hours or days, it would have to be an ongoing process. Once a week for four weeks was not enough to make a lasting impact. This fits hand in hand with other somatic processes which have long addressed the need for consistent, long term practice. Kabat-Zinn, in discussing his stress-reduction program and echoing many somatic practitioners stated, "Mindfulness doesn't just come about by itself because you have decided that it is a good idea to be more aware of things. A strong commitment to working on yourself and enough self-discipline to persevere in the process are essential" (1990, p. 41).

5.2.2 Somatic Education, relaxation, and well-being

In exploring participant experiences with the somatic classes the most prominent description given by respondents was that they experienced relaxation and stress-reduction from the sessions. That experience, coupled with the fact that Somatic Education is an easily accessible, inexpensive, simple self-care practice makes SE a powerful healing tool, capable of lowering stress levels. This is particularly important given the fact that it has been estimated that nearly eighty percent of all health challenges currently experienced, and for which people seek health-care, are stress related (Smith, 1997). Chaline states:

Stress is fast becoming the number one health problem in the developed world, and the major obstacle to maintaining our sense of well-being. Although present day stress has mental not physical causes, it is known to trigger a set of responses in the body that contribute to a wide range of physical ailments. Unfortunately, the conventional Western dualistic view that separates the mind from the body leaves us poorly prepared to deal with stress related symptoms. And although there is a growing awareness of the need to be physically fit, there is too little recognition of the mental preparations we need to make in order to deal with stress and maintain a positive outlook on life (2001, p. 281).
Also of interest was that participants interpreted the relaxation and stress-reduction as the main way that SE increased their personal sense of well-being. This is contrary to what some authors assumed to be true. According to Argyle (1996) there are only four paths to increasing the experience of well-being or happiness: social relationships, work, leisure, and personality. As a somatic practitioner I do not doubt that those four areas have an important effect on individuals' life experiences.

However, somatic theory in general, and specific outcomes of this study, both show that SE is at least one other way to increase the experience of well-being. It is a simple process that, unlike some of Argyle's described approaches, begins to affect participant well-being immediately.

5.2.3 Need for long-term implementation

The above discussion leads to another assertion about the role of Somatic Education in impacting well-being. Though SE begins immediately to increase well-being by allowing participants to feel relaxed, energized, and mentally focused, those effects lasted only a short time period, from a few hours to about one week.

If Somatic Education is going to have any lasting impact on the individuals who engage in the practice, it must be longer than four weeks and at best practiced more than once a week. As the researcher and also a somatic practitioner I would like to see individuals engage in the practice one to three times per week on an ongoing basis. It is my desire to see SE programs implemented in worksites across the country. These programs could be put into practice in six week sessions, with one or two week breaks in between each series. Individuals could pay a class fee based either upon the number
of participants enrolled or on a flat rate. An even more effective scenario would be human resource programs, like the Faculty and Staff Wellness Program of The Ohio State University, paying for the services as a perk for employees.

5.3 Future research recommendations

Of course, in order for that to happen research needs to be conducted and reported to validate spending on such programs. Specifically, studies involving somatic practices and variables such as absenteeism, job satisfaction, employee retention, and productivity levels are necessitated before this scenario is a realistic option for companies and worksites.

Another important research topic involving long term participation in somatic programs is employee use of health insurance and health benefits packages. The current crisis of continually rising costs of insurance and health care necessitates that individuals learn to take responsibility for their own health - before they develop major illnesses. Somatic Education, with its ability to decrease stress levels holds the potential for facilitating the paradigmatic shift from illness care to health care. Long-term experimental studies are needed to validate the implementation of such somatic programs.

Because the current study was one of the first inquiries to systematically investigate somatic processes' impact on holistic well-being, replication of this study utilizing Somatic Education and other mind-body practices is warranted. Specifically, do participants of other studies find that somatic processes increase their well-being? Do participant definitions of well-being change during the course of the classes? With
hind site it would have been an interesting aspect of the study to interview individuals before and after the somatic sessions to see if any changes in perception occurred. Do Somatic Education participants have qualitatively different descriptions of well-being than non-participants? It could be that only people with an holistic concept of well-being are attracted to somatic classes. Inquiry into these subjects is recommended.

Two other project areas, having relevance to somatic processes and brought to light by participants of this study, include gender issues and self-esteem. According to Marianne Robinson, program coordinator for The Ohio State University Faculty and Staff Wellness Program, well over ninety percent of the wellness services are utilized only by women. The Somatic Education classes, offered by the Wellness Program, were no different, with ninety-six percent women and four percent men in attendance. As a somatic educator in university and community settings, I have noticed this to be a typical trend. Because I believe that men can benefit as much, if not more, than women from somatic processes, I recommend that future inquiries develop initiatives that facilitate men's involvement in somatic activities, and then explore any benefits experienced. Discussing this area of interest one participant assessed:

I really think it's important for somebody to try and get guys interested in this stuff. Guys have different needs and interests in our culture, and someone's got to do that. Different ways of defining themselves. And they don't want to appear wussy and fluffy. So I think it would be excellent to find out how to market this to them, because they need strength and flexibility and relaxation and breathing. And I feel bad for our men because I think our culture still promotes them to be laborious, hurting their knees, their joints...We're living in an era of cultural diversity. So you have to think of a guy mindset and what they need and how far can they go from where they are.
One last recommended area of study for somatic practitioners and educators is body image and self-esteem. With a reported one in four college women having an eating disorder and countless people unhappy with their bodies and self-images, the field of somatics, with its focus on internal awareness and honoring of the body-self, as opposed to external judging of culturally compared looks, holds potential for growth and healing in this important area. I would particularly like to see somatic research projects involving women with anorexia and bulimia.

I recommend that future somatic researchers look toward any or all of the above as important topics of investigation.

5.4 On the discrepancies of relaxation and well-being

In chapter four a prominent pattern that emerged from the data was a discrepancy between participant definitions of well-being, which excluded any discussion of relaxation, and their later experiential description of their own well-being, which often began with the feeling of relaxation. Based on my experience as a somatic educator, consultant, and researcher, I have two notions as to why well-being definitions and experiences differed, especially in terms of the inclusion or omission of relaxation.

5.4.1 No common cultural language for somatic relaxation

The first reason is that the experience of relaxation or "feeling good" was coupled with difficult-to-describe sensations such as feeling "stretched out," "lengthened," "in alignment," "loose and free," etc. The body experience of relaxation was something beyond mental relaxation or focus, though both seemed to be part of
participant experiences. I have labeled the combination of mental relaxation and physical relaxation, somatic relaxation which includes descriptors such as "looseness," "less tight, less stressed," "unknotted-up," and "more stretched, less crinkled or tense."

One participant described this somatic relaxation as she disclosed, "My well-being improved. My body felt more stretched, less tense. Also, the focus and awareness and meditation made me feel more mentally relaxed. So there's something about the combination, but I don't quite know how to word it."

It occurred to me that part of the reason respondents did not include (somatic) relaxation as part of their definitions of well-being, may be because as a culture we do not yet have a common language for its description. Throughout my work as a somatic educator I have come to notice that often the ability to describe a condition and the awareness or experiencing of a condition seem to work hand in hand. Thus perhaps participants did not realize that feeling somatically relaxed was part of their well-being experience because they did not have the common language with which to describe it.

Could it be that the absence of language or words to describe some event or condition presupposes its conceptual or even experiential omission? Because the participants did not have a common language descriptor for the feeling of somatic relaxation, they may not have even been aware of the experience until they were prompted to try to describe the felt sensations attained through the SE classes. If that is true then there is a definite need for a common language of somatically "feeling good." so that people are not only aware when they are feeling that way, but also when they are feeling less than that. Introduction of the concept and label Experiential Well-Being is
one step in creating the common language which facilitates cultural dialogue of the possibilities of experiencing an integrated sense of wholeness or wellness, indeed the possibilities of Experiential Well-Being.

5.4.2 Cultural disapproval of relaxation

Another possible reason that relaxation was omitted from the well-being definitions, even though it was later discovered that relaxation did have a definite positive impact on their well-being, is that being relaxed and not harried, and professing that one is feeling relaxed, is perhaps looked down upon in our culture of "busyness."

Addressing this possibility as she described feeling relaxed, peaceful, and "together" one participant explained:

[But that] is not rewarded in our culture. We are so activity driven. Just look at peoples' schedules. Look at my schedule. We are so driven to do all this stuff that we don't have time for reflection, for peace. I am most at peace on a Saturday morning when I'm sitting outside and it's not light yet, and it's quiet and I'm doing nothing - other than attending to the world around me and how I feel sitting there. But that is the antithesis of our culture. Because that's wasted time. There are so many other things I "should" be doing.

Therefore, while many people say they have the desire to relax, decrease stress, and experience more peace, it is still more acceptable to complain about being too busy, stressed, overworked, and overwhelmed, than it is to proclaim that one has released the need for "busyness," for working too hard and too long, and for being stressed, and instead now moves at a comfortable, easy, effortless pace, taking time everyday for self-care practices that facilitate the experience of feeling relaxed, energized, calm, centered, peaceful, and well. Indeed, what might reactions to that be?
Whether or not these two ponderings hold any truth, there mere possibilities, partnered with the fact that the discrepancies did exist in the study, indicate that there is a need for increased somatic experiences. Based upon the two possible explanations delineated above, and more so on the mere fact that the discrepancies between definitions and experiences of relaxation and well-being existed in this study, I would like to see somatic programs continue to proliferate until somatic relaxation is a common daily experience.

5.5 Need to inform public - "universalize" the experience

This concept was echoed by many of the participants who saw the need to "educate the masses." What I have seen repeatedly as a somatic practitioner and consultant, is the same thing respondents became aware of with their four week introduction to Somatic Education: in order for somatic programs to make a lasting difference in our culture, they have to not only be available to the general public, but also considered collectively to be something necessary, doable, and practical on a daily basis.

One participant talked about the need to introduce people to somatic work, especially in a group, in order for the necessity of the experience to be "universalized" into our culture. She expressed:

PPT: I thought [Somatic Education] was really useful because we need training in this almost, to be able to work it into your life. Yeah, I think it's really good. Darcy, to have a class like that because these are invalidated areas for people.
RE: What are?
PPT: That for our well-being we need to do some of those [somatic] kinds of things that we don't think about like breathe, and be relaxed, and move. And I'm sorry, but part of it is being together and normalizing the need and normalizing the truth of it. The truth of our bodies' and minds' needs to do these things. And
it's good to be in a group because it validates it. It's a universalization of the experience. And it's just that kind of learning so you can say, 'Hey, this is something my human animal needs.' Like, 'Look at all these other human animals. They thrive with this too.' And it validates it. And it makes most people feel like, 'Oh, this is a good thing and I should try to work this into my world.' So I think the buy-in to the universalization of the human need for this kind of stuff is a good way to do it.

5.6 The gap between knowing and doing

Another relevant point of discussion brought to light by this research project is the disparity between theory and practice, or stated more simply the gap between knowing and doing. I had long held the assumption that new information, or expanded knowledge, automatically lead to new ways of doing things, that if people learned a way to enhance their lives that they would engage in that process or activity. However, I have learned through observing not only others' behaviors, but if I am honest by observing my own behaviors as well, that simply knowing something serves us well does not necessarily mean that we engage in that something. I have therefore come to terms with the fact, as presented again in this study, that there is an enormous gap between knowing and doing.

One of many examples from participant discussions of the Somatic Education classes was a woman who at one point described enthusiastically:

The feelings my co-workers and I had were, "Oh, I feel so much better." And the next morning, "Wasn't that great? Don't you feel so much better?" Like you could hear all the comments of "Wasn't that so nice?" And "I always feel so much better when I leave." I think you could see it in people's faces too. Less stressed, more relaxed.
However, the same participant then admitted, "When your class ended the three of us talked about, "Hey, we could still get together and do this." But we didn't. Nobody wanted to coordinate it."

5.6.1 Bridging the gap

The above discussion brings up one of the most prominent limitations of the study: The fact that, according to participant understanding, Somatic Education did increase their experience of well-being, and that it holds the potential for impacting the well-being of others, does not presume the use of it for enhancing life. The finding that SE can positively impact well-being is only a small step in increasing well-being in the general public. The task now at hand is the paramount one of understanding and bridging the immense gap between those who on the one hand "know" the ability of somatic processes to increase well-being, and yet do not continue the practice, and those who on the other hand "know" the ability and therefore take the responsibility to engage the practices.

An interview with Bill Moyers and Jon Zawacki, M.D. illustrates well some of the difficulties with actually engaging persistently in any self-care practice. Zawacki had taken a meditation course and explains to Moyers:

**Zawacki:** I went to church on the Sunday morning of the weekend of that course, and I listened to the organist, who always plays terribly, and I turned to my wife and said, "This is the best organ music I've heard from this lady." She was still hitting wrong notes, as always, but I heard it differently. I went to Jon [the meditation teacher] and said, "Gee, this is wonderful." He just smiled knowingly. Then I went to work the next day, Monday, and had ten phone calls in fifteen minutes. Because I was mindful of things, I saw how crazy my life was. The heightened awareness of how stressful my life was made it even more stressful.
Moyers: So you learned your life was crazy, but you didn’t do anything about it.
Zawacki: I didn’t do much about it. I tried the meditation each morning, but I found I wasn’t as disciplined as I thought I was. I wasn’t very successful (Moyers, 1993, p. 148).

I believe a next important step is identifying characteristics of people who are actually following various somatic and self-care practices, and why they report doing so. That may uncover an understanding which could lead to important steps in the much needed cultural shift away from illness-care and toward self empowering well-being. Knowing the many positive effects of somatic processes means little if there are few who actually engage in the practices.

5.6.2 Importance of group environment

Participant answers to the above problem were addressed when they spoke of the importance of having a class and a facilitator, instead of attempting to do it on their own. Their experiences were that having a class to come to on a consistent basis increased the likelihood of their doing the somatic work. One reason for that may be because of the convenience of having the SE classes held at the worksite, thus not having to take the added time and energy to find an outside class.

Another reason may be the sense of friendship or community that can develop when people share group experiences in a friendly and safe environment. Addressing this possibility one respondent said, "It was nice to see the same people there every week. If that went on, you could almost develop a little community of support."

A third reason that participants may have found the group environment helpful in increasing their likelihood of engaging in somatic work is that the classes had a
facilitator and therefore someone to guide them in the movements and processes of
class. In several teaching situations people have come to me explaining that though
they attempt to do some of the activities outside of class, it is difficult to remember
those processes when they are home or by themselves.

5.7 Somatic practitioners' responsibility

As a somatic educator it is encouraging, if not naive, to believe that having
Somatic Education classes available on a regular basis can play a part in engaging
people in important self-care practices. However, this brings up a point of discussion
based upon another theme that emerged during chapter four's data analysis: the need to
"educate the masses." As somatic practitioners we have far too long been satisfied with
working in a limited radius, waiting for people to come to us, hiding behind the
"practice" of the theory-practice continuum to shirk the responsibility of educating those
who are not at first open to somatic work. It is time that somatic practitioners, whatever
our specific modality, begin to take the time, effort, and risk necessary to acquaint and
eventually immerse the culture in somatic possibilities. On a small scale that can be
done by opening classes and workshops to the general public in settings such as
corporate worksites, public schools, and traditional health-care settings. At the same
time it is extremely important for somatic educators who have limited themselves to
practice, to begin to engage in prolific writing, reporting, researching, and publishing.
It is in that way that we can create a cultural dialogue about somatic issues and the
possibility of Experiential Well-Being.

143
APPENDIX A

SOMATIC EDUCATION WEEKLY OUTLINE

WEEK ONE: AWARENESS

SIT IN AWARENESS. PELVIC ROCKS. WINDSHIELD WIPERS OR KNEES SIDE TO SIDE, STRETCH LEG UP, SIDE LEG LIFT, STAND IN MOUNTAIN, STRETCH SIDE TO SIDE, THEN INTO TRIANGLE, BALANCE ON ONE LEG, BODY SCAN RELAXATION.

WEEK TWO: BREATHING

SIT IN AWARENESS OF BREATH. PRACTICE ABDOMINAL BREATHING. RHYTHMIC BREATHING (INHALE 4, HOLD 2, EXHALE 4, HOLD 2 - 5,3 - 6,4), PELVIC ROCKS, KNEES SIDE TO SIDE, CAT/DOG, BALANCING CAT, EAGLE ARMS. STAND UP AND STRETCH. FLUID MOVEMENT FROM HEAD DOWN TO FEET, WARRIOR 2 & EXTENDED SIDE ANGLE, BALANCE. RELAXATION/VISUALIZATION WITH BREATH CIRCLE UP THROUGH FEET FLOWING OUT THE CROWN OF THE HEAD AND DOWN.

WEEK THREE: STRETCHING/FLEXIBILITY

SIT IN AWARENESS. SPINAL TWIST, SEATED FORWARD BEND. BUTTERFLY LEGS, PELVIC ROCKS, ½ BRIDGE, SPINAL ROCK/HUG KNEES, BELLY BOAT, INVERTED "V", STAND AND STRETCH SIDE TO SIDE, STANDING FORWARD BEND WITH HANDS INTERLOCKED BEHIND BACK, WINDMILL, AWKWARD STAND, RELAXATION WITH OCEAN VISUALIZATION.
WEEK FOUR: MOVEMENT AND SPIRITUAL DIMENSIONS

AWARENESS WITH MOVEMENT/ENERGY/CHI, WIDE ANGLE STRETCH, PELVIC ROCKS, WINDSHIELD WIPERS, CAT/DOG, BALANCING CAT, STAND AND SWAY SIDE TO SIDE THEN AROUND IN CIRCLES AND/OR FIGURE 8’S. CIRCLE BODY WITH ARMS IN DOOR PLANE, ARM SWINGS FRONT TO BACK, THEN GET KNEES INVOLVED WITH SWINGING, GENTLY BOUNCE KNEES AND HEELS, JIGGLE, WARRIOR 1, BALANCE, BODY SCAN RELAXATION.
APPENDIX B

SOMATIC EDUCATION HANDBOOKS

WELCOME TO:
THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY
SOMATIC EDUCATION PROGRAM

Presented in a joint effort by:

The University Health Connection, the OSU Faculty and Staff Wellness Program, and the OSU Somatic Education Program

Dr. Stephanie Cook
Medical Director, Faculty and Staff Wellness Program

Marianne Robinson
Wellness Program Coordinator for Health Education

Darcy Lord
Facilitator, Somatic Education
Educational Policy and Leadership

SOMATICS

The field of Somatics integrates theory and practice, focusing upon the art and science of the mind-body connection. Somatics is an umbrella term that has gone by many names including body-mind disciplines, holistic movement education, movement awareness, bodywork practices, and mind-body integration.

Though specific Somatic techniques differ in their actual practices, all are based upon common theoretical underpinnings which honor the subtle experiences of the body. Some of the common links or basic assumptions foundational to the field of Somatics are:
Continually returning to awareness. The goal of Somatic awareness is to simply experience whatever processes are going on in the bodymind in the present moment.

Understanding the individual as a dynamic process. The Somatic view is that we are continually moving and changing, never stuck or static.

Privileging first-person perception. This is in contrast to the dominant paradigm which views only third-person (objectivist) perspectives as valid.

Highlighting body wisdom and inner authority. Because of this view, Somatics also charges every individual with personal responsibility for their own life experiences.

Focusing upon the infinite interconnectedness of life. This assumption points to the social and environmental concern implicit in Somatic theory.

The integration and practice of these assumptions may have profound effects as Somatics returns agency and responsibility to individuals and communities. Indeed, Somatic theory and practice holds powerful implications for both health-care and education.

**AWARENESS**

Awareness is paramount to the field of Somatic Education. In Somatics work, awareness can be described as the process of paying attention to proprioceptive processes, or sensing the subtle experiences of the body. It is often referred to as ‘listening to the body,’ ‘experiencing the body from within,’ ‘paying attention,’ or ‘noticing what is going on.’

The goal of Somatic awareness is simply to experience whatever processes are going on in the body/mind in the present moment. There is a shift away from analyzing cognitive concepts and toward experiencing and honoring physical truths of the body.

An important assumption of Somatics work is that simple awareness begins the healing process.

**Awareness quotes:**

Unawareness can keep us from being in touch with our own body, its signals and messages. This in turn can create many physical problems for us, problems we don't even know we are generating ourselves. Awareness requires only that we pay attention and see things as they are. It doesn't require that we change anything.

Jon Kabat-Zinn

Like a child, your body wants attention and feels comforted when it receives it.

Deepak Chopra
If I brought five percent more awareness to my body - I'd know when I was tired; I'd take better care of myself; I wouldn't get sick so often; I'd recognize what foods aren't good for me; I'd live more in the moment; I wouldn't rush by so fast; I'd be quicker to know when I'm hurt or angry; I'd feel more alive; I'd better understand my body's signals.

Nathaniel Branden

Awareness practices will enable you to increase your attention and aliveness in the here and now. They are neither Eastern nor Western but universal - the direct and immediate awareness of your sensory experience, exactly as it is, from moment to moment.

Mirka Knaster

What we are learning today is that one of the keys to good health is a state of heightened awareness.

George Leonard

Effective holistic medical therapy depends on self-awareness. This medicine is based on what you pick up by tuning in to inner cues - not on what a laboratory test might tell you. Your lab is your body; experiments going on there constantly allow you to find out what suits you and what doesn't. Operating from your own awareness allows you to pick up signals and make adjustments in your life while you are still basically healthy, instead of waiting until you're sick.

Rudolph Ballentine

Awareness Resources:


BREATHING

The art of full breathing is essential for optimal health and well-being. Though different bodymind practices encourage different kinds of breathing - some to reduce tension or relax, some to energize, some to deal with emotions, some to balance energy, etc. - Somatic educators generally consider attention to the breath an integral aspect of their work.

Breathing quotes:

By "proper breathing" I mean full, deep expansion of the lungs, with expiration at least as long as inspiration and the rhythm of breath slow and quiet. Improper breathing is a common cause of ill health. By decreasing general vitality, it increases susceptibility to agents of disease. It can also directly cause problems in many different systems of the body. Learning how to breathe and working consciously with breath is a simple, safe, effective, and inexpensive way to promote good health of mind and body.

Andrew Weil, M.D.

The typical chest breath moves only about 500 cubic centimeters of air - about half a pint. A full diaphragmatic or abdominal breath moves eight to ten times that volume!

Joan Borysenko, Ph.D.

A research study was carried out with 153 heart attack patients in the coronary care unit of Minneapolis-St. Paul Hospital. These patients were examined to determine whether they were abdominal diaphragmatic breathers or thoracic breathers, whose tight abdominal muscles forced them into the labored chest-lifting characteristic of shallow breathers. The results of the survey were devastatingly clear: Every single one of the 153 patients examined were thoracic breathers!

Thomas Hanna

Correct breathing (using the diaphragm) functions as a natural tranquilizer to the nervous system. The deeper you breathe, the calmer the mind becomes.

Vimla Lalvani

Our breathing reflects every emotional or physical effort and every disturbance.

Moshe Feldenkrais
Breathwork is a general term for a variety of techniques that use patterned breathing to promote physical, mental and/or spiritual well-being. Some techniques use the breath in a calm, peaceful way to induce relaxation or manage pain, while others use stronger breathing to stimulate emotions and emotional release.

Gail Harris

Breathing Resources:


STRETCHING/FLEXIBILITY

The Somatic approach to stretching and flexibility suggests mindful, gentle engagement with the movements. The primary focus is away from external comparing and competing, and toward honoring inner sensations of the body. The assumption is that the bodymind has enough wisdom to signal when we have an appropriate stretch, and will always communicate that when we take care to listen/feel for its messages.

Stretching/flexibility quotes:

The bodily decrepitude presumed under the myth of aging is not inevitable. It is, by and large, both avoidable and reversible. Muscular contractions have become so deeply involuntary and unconscious that, eventually, we no longer remember how to move about freely. The result is stiffness, soreness, and a restricted range of movement.

Thomas Hanna
Ever watch a cat wake up? Tabby usually starts with a slow, purposeful stretch. First one furry leg extends forward, then the other. After the classic cat back arch, she finishes with an all-out, tension taming yawn.

Prevention Health Books

The fundamental way that stretching betters health is by increasing flexibility. Maintaining flexibility means your muscles keep their range of motion as you age. Flexible people appear much younger than they really are and limber people don't seem to get as many aches and pains.

Helen Schilling, M.D.

These are gentle letting-go stretches. The best way to develop a supple, limber, and relaxed body is to focus on melting into each stretch. Never bounce or push beyond what feels comfortable.

Joan Borysenko

Work at or within your body's limits at all times, with the intention of observing and exploring the boundary between what your body can do and where it says, "Stop for now." Never stretch beyond this limit to the point of pain. Some discomfort is inevitable when you are working at your limits, but you will need to learn how to enter this healthy "stretching zone" slowly and mindfully so that you are nourishing your body, not damaging it as you explore your limits.

Jon Kabat-Zinn

Stay in touch with how your body is feeling. Don't push it past the point where it feels like a pleasant stretch. The point is to feel from the inside how you can move, to explore the space in there and to allow it to open up and relax, to become more flexible.

Amiyo Ruhnke and Anando Wurzburger

Stretching/Flexibility Resources:


SPIRITUAL DIMENSIONS

In this description spirituality is not associated with any particular religion, yet neither does it exclude any religion. Instead it has been referred to as the inner life, consciousness path, and process of awakening. It can be defined as sensing a deep interconnectedness with self and others, as well as with whatever is ultimate or divine in the universe, having a profound sense of meaning or purpose in one's life, experiencing a profound sense of peace, as well as recognizing the wholeness and interdependence of all of life.

Spirituality/movement quotes:

I want to awaken that still, small, wise intuitive voice in all of us, that voice of our own body that we have been forced to ignore through our culture's illness, misinformation, an dysfunction.

Christiane Northrup

There is a force within which gives you life - seek that.
In your body lies a priceless gem - seek that.
O wandering Sufi, if you want to find the greatest treasure don't look outside, look inside. and seek that.

Rumi

The more deeply we enter into our body and into our breath, the more deeply we enter into God.

Gabrielle Roth
The power of love to change bodies is legendary, built into folklore, common sense, and everyday experience. Love moves the flesh, it pushes matter around. Throughout history, "tender loving care" has uniformly been recognized as a valuable element in healing.

Larry Dossey

For more than one hundred years, a number of independent groups have been exploring and teaching a view of the human body and its relation to physical, mental, and spiritual health that differs radically from conventional notions. These schools of thought and practice - which collectively may be called the 'Somatics Movement' - reject the separation of spirit from a mechanistic human body, a view common to both mainstream biomedicine and orthodox religion.

The pioneers of Somatics introduced to the West an alternative vision of health and the body which emphasizes an intimate integrity of movement, anatomical structure, intelligence and spiritual consciousness. These teachers encouraged respect for lived experience and the wisdom that can be found through 'attending to' rather than 'conquering' or 'controlling' life process.

Don Johnson

Movement and Spirituality Resources:


153
APPENDIX C

PILOT STUDY SURVEY FORMS

THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY SOMATIC EDUCATION PROGRAM

I am interested in exploring and understanding the role that Somatic Education may play in perceived quality of life, experiences of well-being, and spirituality. If you decide to complete this voluntary questionnaire, I ask that you answer the questions as openly and honestly as possible, using the back or extra paper if desired. Your name and answers will be kept confidential. I so much appreciate your time and energy to come to the Somatic Education classes and for answering these questions. Feel free to contact me at any time: Darcy Lord, 876-7157, lord.6@osu.edu

Thank you and much peace!

Name:
Address:
E-mail:
Phone:

1) How many of the four (4) Somatic Education classes did you attend? 1 2 3 4

2) If someone were to ask you "What were the classes about?" or "What did you do in the classes?" how would you answer?

3) In your own words, describe what you experienced during the classes - regardless of whether those experiences seemed "positive," "neutral" or "negative".

4) Have you noticed any seeming effects on you outside of class? YES NO

5) If yes, what kinds of effects and for what duration? (For example, if you say you felt more relaxed how long did it seem to last? or if your back felt more tense how long did it seem to last? ½ hour? 3 hours? 2 days? etc.)

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
6) What is your definition, idea or experience of "well-being"?

7) What is your definition, idea or experience of "spirituality"?

8) During our four (4) weeks of classes, did Somatic Education (i.e. what we did in the classes) play any role in:
   Your perceived quality of life? If yes, how so?
   Your experience of well-being? If yes, how so?
   Your experience of spirituality? If yes, how so?

9) Is there anything else you would like to share about your experiences?
APPENDIX D

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Exploring the Role of Somatic Education in the Experience of Subjective Well-Being

As a doctoral student in the Somatic Studies program at the Ohio State University, I am interested in studying aspects of well-being. The purpose of this research project is to explore and understand the role that Somatic Education may play in the experience of subjective well-being.

During this interview I will ask about your experiences in the Somatic Education classes. I will also ask for your ideas and definitions about the subject of well-being. If you decide to engage in this interview, which will take approximately thirty minutes, I ask that you answer the questions as openly and honestly as possible. This is completely voluntary and if there are any questions you do not want to answer for any reason, feel free to pass on that question. In addition, you are free to end this interview at any time. Your name and answers will be kept confidential.

I so much appreciate your time and energy to come to the Somatic Education classes and for answering these questions. Feel free to contact me at any time with questions or concerns about the classes and/or our interview: Darcy Lord. 876-7157. lord.6@osu.edu

Thank you and much peace!

Name:
Address:
E-mail:
Phone:
Date of birth:
Circle: Male or Female
Circle: Faculty Staff Other

Highest level of education completed:

156
High School / Some College / College Graduate / Some Grad. School / Graduate Degree

1) How many of the four (4) Somatic Education classes did you attend? 1 2 3 4

2) If someone were to ask you "What were the classes about?" or "What did you do in the classes?" how would you answer?

3) In your own words, describe what you experienced during the classes - regardless of whether those experiences seemed "positive," "neutral" or "negative".

4) Have you noticed any seeming effects on you outside of class? YES NO

5) If yes, what kinds of effects and for what duration? (For example, if you say you felt more relaxed how long did it seem to last? or if your back felt more tense how long did it seem to last? ½ hour? 3 hours? 2 days? etc.)

6) What is your experience, idea, or definition of "well-being"?

7) For you what all does "well-being" entail? What are the components of "well-being"?

8) For you what place, if any, does the body have in the role of "well-being"?

9) For you what place, if any, does awareness have in the role of "well-being"?

10) For you what place, if any, does breathing have in the role of "well-being"?

11) For you what place, if any, does stretching/flexibility/movement have in the role of "well-being"?

12) For you what place, if any, does spirituality have in the role of "well-being"?

13a) During our four (4) weeks of classes, did Somatic Education (i.e. what we did in the classes) seem to play any role in your experience of "well-being"?

13b) If yes, how so?

14) Generally speaking, do you think it is possible for Somatic Education to positively impact the experience of "well-being"? How?

15) In general would you say your health is:
   Excellent / Very Good / Good / Fair / Poor

157
16a) Do you have any chronic illnesses or chronic conditions?

16b) If yes, what are the symptoms?

17a) Not including the Somatic Education classes, do you generally engage in any form of regular exercise or movement?

17b) If yes, what kind and typically how many days per week and for what duration each time?

18a) Not including the Somatic Education classes, do you generally engage in any form of stress-reduction activity?

18b) If yes, what kind and typically how many days per week and for what duration each time?

19) Is there anything else you would like to share about your experiences or about the role that Somatic Education may or may not play in the experience of well-being?
LIST OF REFERENCES


Erickson, F. (1986). Qualitative methods in research on teaching. In M.C. Wittrock (Ed.), *Handbook of research on teaching* (pp. 119-161). New York: Macmillan.


the Bodily Arts and Sciences, 11(2), 50-54.


Gyatso, T. His Holiness the Fourteenth Dalai Lama & Cutler, H. C. (1998). The art of


Holt, Rinehart and Winston.

Bodily Arts and Sciences, 1(1), 30-34.

Hanna, T. (1977). The somatic healers and the somatic educators. Somatics:


journal of the bodily arts and sciences, 4(2), 1.

and Sciences, 5(4), 4-8.

Bodily Arts and Sciences, 6(1), 4-9.

In S. Kleinman (Ed.), Mind and body: East meets West (pp. 175-181).
Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics.

Hanna, T. (1988). Somatics: Reawakening the mind's control of movement, flexibility,

165


Li, F., Harmer, P., McAuley, E., Duncan, T., et al. (2001). An evaluation of the effects of Tai Chi exercise on physical function among older persons: a randomized controlled trial. Annals of Behavioral Medicine, 23(2), 139-146.


168


Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.


174


