The Possibilities of the Moment

An Inquiry into the Experience of Improvising in a Small Group.

Kevin Jeynes

A research paper to meet the requirements of the Master of Arts program at The Melbourne Institute for Experiential and Creative Arts Therapy.
Abstract
In this paper I present a research inquiry into the experience of improvising in a small group. This group, in which I had been a participant, had been improvising together each week for just over one year prior to this inquiry. Our improvisations had incorporated the use of movement, vocalized sound and text.

The research is based on the MIECAT procedures of inquiry, the epistemology of which includes experiential, phenomenological, collaborative and multimodal arts elements.

The initial data for this inquiry was developed when the research participants (the improvisers) reflected on the question ‘what was your experience of improvising in the group today?’ This reflection took place during a forty-five minute period immediately following an improvisation and was in the form of talking whilst drawing together with crayons on a shared single sheet of paper.

The data was gathered during this form of reflection following three consecutive improvisations. These initial talking-drawing reflections provided the material on which a further four reflective activities were carried out over the next three months. These activities were in the form of a ‘dialogue’ between individual participants and the researcher, the ‘language’ of the dialogue including the expressive modes of drawing, writing, poetry, and collage.

Consequently, seven independent streams of text (one from each of the seven participants) developed from the dialogues. In the latter part of the inquiry these texts were reviewed by the researcher to identify what might be understood about both the content of the inquiry, ‘the experience of improvising’ and the context of the inquiry, ‘the application of MIECAT procedures’.

This paper is the documenting of this inquiry – commencing with the improvisation and finishing with the researcher’s reflections.
Acknowledgements

This research was only made possible due to the generosity, trust and the enthusiastic support of the four participants, Clare Apelt, Margi Brown-Ash, Barry Farrin, and Anna Smith. In the process of inquiring these colleagues freely gave of themselves, their time, and of their considerable expertise. Their willingness to openly explore improvisational possibilities and to share their experiences has provided a rich resource into which to delve.

I would like to express my gratitude to Dr. Warren Lett, Dr. Jan Allen and to Mr. Andrew Morrish – each of whom have been instrumental in ‘bringing to life’ for me, the concepts which underpin this inquiry.
Declaration

I declare that this is a true and accurate record of the research inquiry based on my own work with acknowledged reference to sources materials. Any further information related to data, references or research materials is available from the author on request.

Signed:              Date: 1st June 2006

Kevin Jeynes
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. Improvisation 1
   1.1 My interest in improvisation 1
   1.2 Defining improvisation 2
   1.3 Movement based improvisation – a partial history 3
   1.4 Key words - impulsive, unpredictable and emergence 4
   1.5 Improvising in a group context 4

2. The MIECAT Approach to an Inquiry 6
   2.1 The origins 6
   2.2 MIECAT procedures 7

3. Research Epistemology 8
   3.1 Paradigms as worldviews 8
   3.2 Positivism – a quantitative approach 9
   3.3 Post-positivism 9
   3.4 Constructivism - a qualitative approach 9
   3.5 The ongoing emergence of paradigms 10

4. The Conceptual Foundations of the MIECAT Approach 11
   4.1 The informing principles 11
   4.2 How we come to ‘know our world’ – experientially and multimodally 11
   4.3 Representation - an ‘alternative experience of worlding’ 12
   4.4 Experiential, self-referential knowing 13
   4.5 Phenomenology 13

5. The Initial Considerations for an Inquiry 16
   5.1 The MIECAT scaffold 16
   5.2 The emergence of a form 16
   5.3 The ‘scaffold’ and ‘emergence’ coupling 17
   5.4 My Involvement as both participant and researcher 17
   5.5 Ethical considerations 18

6. The Context of the Inquiry 20
   6.1 The setting 20
   6.2 The participants 20
   6.3 The sessions 21

7. An Overview 23
   7.1 Documenting the inquiry 23
   7.2 The three phases and thirteen steps 24
8. Phase 1 – The Collaboration
   8.1 Initial considerations (step 1) 26
   8.2 The improvisation (Step 3) 29
9. Phase 2 – The Dialogue
   9.1 The researcher distributes the data (step 6) 34
   9.2 Each participant responds to the data (step 7) 34
   9.3 One stream of the inquiry 35
   9.4 The researcher’s response (step 8) 37
   9.5 The scroll (steps 9 and 10) 43
   9.6 Towards a conclusion of the dialogue 44
   9.7 The participant’s creative synthesis (steps 11a and 11b) 44
10. Phase 3 – The Researcher’s Reflection
    10.1 A reflection on the inquiry (steps 12 and 13) 46
    10.2 Three considerations 46
    10.3 Presenting the words and collages. 49
11. The Researcher’s Reflections on the Data
    11.1 Identifying common features 59
    11.2 The cluster names 65
    11.3 Forming a creative synthesis 65
12. The Researcher’s Reflections on the Inquiry
    12.1 The content of the inquiry 69
    12.2 The context of the inquiry 71
13. Bibliography 78
14. Appendix 1
    14.1 Session 1 82
    14.2 Session 2 96
    14.3 Session 3 108
1. Improvisation

1.1 My interest in improvisation

I have chosen to inquire into the experience of improvisation as a result of my involvement in movement based improvisational practices coupled with an interest in the place of improvisation in the contexts of both psychotherapy and in daily living. My background in dance-movement practices had included contact improvisation and improvisational performance. In psychotherapy it has incorporated elements from MIECAT, Process Oriented Psychotherapy, dance-movement therapy and a number of other body inclusive approaches.

I had been one of a small group of peers who together had been exploring improvisational practices over an extended period of time, and this situation provided the circumstance and the opportunity in which to inquire.

The utilisation of ‘improvisation’ has been long acknowledged in dance and theatre, and aspects of it permeate all creative explorations in the arts. Improvisation may be most readily identified in any of these areas where the outcome emerges from within the process of ‘doing’, an outcome that is not pre-determined and is most usually unexpected.

Extending, exploiting, and developing this aspect of the creative process is well evidenced in dance, drama, and music (particularly jazz). It is also integral to explorations in arts inclusive approaches to psychotherapy and sociotherapy such as in dance-movement therapy, drama-therapy, and playback theatre. In these contexts, material may present spontaneously and responses may be required ‘in the moment, on the spot’ without time for prolonged consideration.

It has been suggested that the psychotherapeutic relationship (Spinelli, 1997, p.8) between client and therapist, may benefit from the inclusion of an attitude of unknowing, and that this “‘un-knowing’ refers to an attempt to remain as open as possible to whatever presents itself to our relational experience”.

In the more process oriented approaches to psychotherapy, the content of experiencing is often considered to emerge from within the process of inquiring.
There has however been less acknowledgment of the place of improvisation in our daily lives, in the way we relate, respond, adapt and make choices, often ‘on the go’.

It was a shared interest in the exploration of improvisation in movement practices, and in personal reflection, that was central to the activities of the small group during the year immediate to this inquiry. We had improvised together on a weekly basis and this had incorporated elements from our combined interests in theatre, dance, visual arts, psychotherapy, meditation practices, and education.

1.2 Defining improvisation

One aspect considered fundamental to improvising, seemingly independent of the context or setting, is the intention to allow possibilities and outcomes to develop ‘on the go’, and to execute choices ‘in the moment’. As such, improvisation requires that we act and respond without pre-planning, that we remain attentive and responsive to our immediate circumstance, and that we avail ourselves of a range of possibilities both foreseen and unforeseen.

Montuori (n.d.) states that ‘the latin root of improvisation is ‘improvisus’, or the unforeseen. Life, and improvisation, both require the ability to react appropriately to unforeseen events, and actually generate those events - to act creatively and innovatively. The ability to improvise implies to deal with, and actively generate, the unforeseen, the unpredictable, the original, to dialogue between order and disorder’ (p.6).

He also suggests that when improvising we have ‘chosen to think on our feet, which requires a willingness to take risks, to let go of the safety of the ready-made, and to think, create, and ‘write’ on the spot’. (Monturio, p.6). Improvisation is inviting us to draw on our ability ‘to go beyond the already-known, and explore the possibilities of the present’. (p.6).

Improvisation has been referred to as a form of play (Halprin,2003, p.117), of playing with what is available ‘in our immediate environment including the concrete objects in our surrounds, as well as our internal sensations, emotions, ideas, and fantasies’. As such, improvisation requires being attentive to our moment-by-moment responses to these inner and outer circumstances and impulses.

Whilst improvising we appear to become increasingly sensitive and responsive to our arising ‘impulses’, and as such it has been suggested that improvisation sits at the threshold between the ‘conscious and the unconscious’ (Halprin 2003, p.119). Halprin
suggests that as we develop improvisational skills, the ‘mutual education’ between these two areas unfolds. At its best, improvisation is like a ‘full bodied theatre of free association in which things occur without preconception or attachment to outcome and where we may give form to impulses that simply arise’. (Halprin, p.119)

This interface between the conscious and unconscious, between more reflective and pre-reflective experiences, may be of benefit in the psychotherapeutic endeavour where this mutual education may contribute to our understanding of ourselves.

In this context, it has been suggested that two types of organizing principles (Magid, 2002, p.91) operate within this ‘prereflective’ unconscious domain. The first ‘invariant organizing principles’ are ‘rigidified structures that impede fluid engagement with one’s surround’. These may be considered to be patterns of habitual response and have been described by Spinelli as being more ‘sedimented’ attitudinal patterns (Spinelli, 1995, p.51). These are in contrast to ‘variant, developmental, adaptive organizing principles which remain open to adaption and change and to spontaneous engagement with novel situations’. (Magid, p.91).

An involvement in improvisation may well provide an opportunity to identify our responses, our patterns of responding, and to explore how we may remain more open to adaption.

1.3 Movement based improvisation – a partial history

The movement improvisational practices in which we, as a group, had been involved had included elements of performance, therapy and self-exploration. A common, and rather recent, historical origin of these three areas is the development of post-modern dance in America in the early 1960s (Banes, 1987). This period in dance history has been considered pivotal in the exploration and development of more free-form and spontaneous approaches to movement.

The approach of this period supported the validity of the spontaneous generation of movement in both the content and the form of dance. It also gave credence to body based (kinaesthetic and proprioceptive) forms of knowing. This post-modern impact on dance generated movement practices which were less dependant on coded technique, and were sourced more immediately and directly from both the performer/mover and the context in which the event occurred.
These changes coupled, at the same time historically, with the development of a number of ‘body-mind’ inclusive forms of psychotherapy (including Gestalt, Bioenergetics, and Reichian approaches) further qualified the somatic aspects of experiential knowing. There developed a recognition that the body was a meaningful source of experiential and movement material, and that this included spontaneously generated movements.

Expression from the body, through movement, whether by trained or untrained movers, and whether by intentional or unintentional movements, would now be considered valid and valuable in a range of fields including dance and psychotherapy.

1.4 Key words - impulsive, unpredictable and emergence

We each bring to the improvisational context all that we are, and we become the resource for what may happen, for what is possible whilst improvising. Asker (2001, p.20) comments on this:

‘The improvisation process occurs in a context, and it is performed by someone, with a history, with cultural, economic, political, and philosophical context, with a perspective, habits, and eccentricities, with the ability to make choices. It is a thinking and feeling, and living that creates a dialogic, embodied, improvisational dance of order and disorder, reason, feeling, and imagination’.

Our capacity to be available, to remain ready and willing to respond to our immediate circumstance, to be impulsive, may be at the heart of improvising. Wunder (2002, p.17) suggests that a major tool of the improviser is ‘thoughtless activity that allows you to take risks and suspend judgments’.

The importance of impulsiveness when improvising is further supported by Blom (1988, p.6) who suggests that “The ‘kinaesthetic self’ is free to partner the imagination impulsively, without preparation or preconception and to follow a diversity of possibilities in any direction for as long as the mover pleases”.

1.5 Improvising in a group context

Improvising within the context of a group presents a complex dynamic, with the content of the improvisation arising from within the group as a combination of both spontaneous emergence as well as a more active discernment. Sawyer (2001) has
extensively researched collaborative improvisation in two areas – in performance (in theatre and in music -jazz), and in everyday conversations. Sawyer (2001) has been particularly attentive to the way in which material ‘emerges’ whilst collaborating and he identifies commonalities in both these above areas. He characterizes ‘emergent systems’ as ‘displaying behaviour that cannot be predicted from a full and complete description of the component units of the system (p.62), with the improvisational process resulting in ‘the emergence of unexpected and unpredictable outcomes.’ (p.62).

David Bohm, also interested in the emergence of material within a collaborative context, has developed a form of group inquiry which he called ‘Dialogue’ (Bohm, 2002, p.8). He states that ‘participants find that they are involved in an ever changing and developing pool of common meaning’ (p.7), and in this he refers to the place of ‘uncertainty’ in the emergence of material from within a group: ‘Beyond a point of a feeling of knowing, or certainty in a group, however, lie significant realms of creativity, intelligence, and understanding that can be approached only by persisting in the process of inquiry and risking re-entry into areas of potentially chaotic or frustrating uncertainty’. (Bohm, p.7).

How we are able to be present to ‘uncertainty’ appears to impact on the availability of emergent material and may well be central to the process of improvising.
2. The MIECAT Approach to an Inquiry

2.1 The origins

This approach commenced with an arts-based research activity facilitated by Dr Warren Lett, involving four co-researchers, and extending over a period of two years. The resultant research and subsequent considerations led to the development of a MIECAT 'form of inquiry'—a collaborative experiential approach.

In the documentation of this research Lett (2001, p.1) states that ‘It was not therapy, it was not an encounter group, but it was small group process learning. The explorations were multimodal, that is, used as many modes of inquiry into inner experiencing as seemed apt. There was an attempt to engage in a search for personal meanings in a socially interactive matrix, and there was a search for procedures of inquiry that could be seen as facilitative of knowing about lived experience.’

This statement outlines the defining features of the MIECAT form of inquiry. It is an experiential, multimodal collaborative endeavour which acknowledges the inter-relational situation in a research inquiry between the participants, the researcher and the focus and the form of the inquiry.

Lett (2001, p.5) comments further on the experiential basis of this approach and states that ‘...what is perhaps new, is the effort to explore living experience as it arises, not constructs of experience predetermined, and to find new forms of inquiry, which might be termed experiential, not only phenomenological.’

This is an inquiry into the experiences of those who participate. It utilizes a range of procedures, commencing with an initial focus on the immediate experience, giving form to this experience through multimodal arts representation (creating a text), and then reflecting collaboratively with another or others on these texts.

What is meaningful for each participant may be identified in a self-referential and collaborative context, and according to Lett (2001, p.13) meanings may become apparent in the process of inquiring: ‘The meaning is not just derived at the end of an analysis; it is discovered in the experiencing and is present continuously in the representations and the intersubjective responses (from other participants).’
A range of opinion exists within the arts therapy profession as to the extent that therapeutic benefit results directly from expressing and representing our experience in arts modes, and how much may be from a reflection upon and an interpretation of these texts. MIECAT suggests that understandings and meanings may develop both during the process of representation, and subsequently, in a more reflective and collaborative way, when the artworks are intentionally viewed with another.

2.2 MIECAT procedures

The methodology and procedural steps for an inquiry into a focal topic can be fundamentally conceived as:

a. **Identifying a focus** for the inquiry and **immersing** in the experience of that focus, the phenomenon which is being explored or inquired into.

b. **Representing** the experience using the multimodal arts to form a text.

c. **Re-entering** the text/representation and **reflecting** on the experiences, either alone or with another/or others.

d. **Identifying** what ‘I‘ or ‘we‘ **may now know**, or what may be meaningful about the focus. How this may then be articulated will be relevant to the context of the inquiry, for example, whether it be related to therapy or research.

The process of inquiring will potentially cycle through these phases as the inquiry progresses. In establishing a form for a research inquiry, these four phases provide an overview, a readily identified ‘scaffold’ from which to conceptualize an inquiry. This is further considered in sections 5.1 and 5.2.
3. Research Epistemology

3.1 Paradigms as worldviews

A paradigm, within the research context is defined by Guba and Lincoln (1994, p.105) as being ‘the basic belief system or worldview that guides the investigator’, and it is recognized that ‘all researchers are guided by a set of beliefs and feelings about the world and how it should be understood or studied’. Reason (1994, p.195) states that ‘Worlds and people are what we meet, but the meeting is shaped by our terms of reference’.

These worldviews, in research, have changed over time and continue to do so. It has been suggested by Heylighen (1993, p.1) that the most significant shift that has taken place within the history of epistemology is from ‘the early concepts of knowledge which stressed its absolute, permanent character (a positivist approach), to the later ones which put emphasis on its relativity or situational dependence, on its continuous development or evolution, and on the active interface between the worlds of the observed and the observer’ (p.1) (a more constructivist approach).

Positivist and constructivist approaches tend to be at opposite ends of the spectrum of research positions. The positivist approach attempts to exclude the researcher from the context of the research in the belief that it then becomes possible to clearly elucidate that which is the focus of the research, i.e. the data reflect accurately the permanent, unchanging nature of the focus. A constructivist approach however acknowledges that the very participation of the researcher impacts on that which is being observed, and co-creates it.

A further categorization has been suggested by Monaghan (2003, p.3) between ‘three major ways of knowing’ in research. She identifies these as being ‘Social Sciences based and Science based’, and she suggests that each of these areas utilize research methodologies appropriate to that application.

Research in the arts and social sciences is more likely to be based on constructivist, qualitative approaches because in these areas it may be more readily conceded that the experiencing of the participants is valid and may in itself comprise the data, and the relationship between the researcher and the participant is in itself significant. The physical sciences tend to employ a more positivist quantitative approach, where every
attempt is made to hold the focus of the research at a distance from the researcher in order to identify its characteristics in isolation.

Arts therapy approaches in general, and MIECAT in particular, incorporate elements from both the Arts and the Social sciences. The paradigms that inform the MIECAT approach are qualitative, experiential, constructivist, and participatory.

3.2 Positivism – a quantitative approach

Quantitative research approaches attempt to place the researcher outside of the researched context in the position of an objective observer who exerts little or no influence on the research context on the data obtained. A ‘positivist’ approach to research is the most historically significant form, having been applied in the physical sciences. Positivism has also been referred to as ‘objectivism’ and ‘naturalism’ by Embree (2001, p.6).

Knowledge from a positivist perspective is said to represent a real apprehendable world, considered to exist outside of and separate from the researcher. Knowledge gained from the research can be tested and is considered to be true if it consistently reflects the world independent of the researcher.

The positivist inquiry therefore attempts to be researcher value-free, and to achieve and guarantee this, by virtue of the ‘objective’ methodology employed where the researcher is isolated from the context of the research.

3.3 Post-positivism

In the early 20th century a ‘post-positivist’ research position developed which still supports the positivist position, that maintains that the object of focus for the research is real and exists distinctly separate from the researcher, but which states that the researcher may have difficulty in clearly apprehending what is there. The post-positivist view is that reality still exists ‘out there’, discoverable though difficult to fully apprehend by the researcher, because ‘human intellectual mechanisms are inadequate to the task’ (Allen, 2003, p.2).

3.4 Constructivism - a qualitative approach

A constructivist approach postulates that the relationship between the researcher and the inquiry is more researcher inclusive and the interactive nature of the inquirer-
inquired dyad is acknowledged. This is particularly relevant to research in the social sciences and the arts.

Constructivism argues that knowledge and reality do not have an objective or absolute value, that the knower actively participates in the construction of a reality based on his/her experiences and interactions with the environment. The data is co-created.

The MIECAT approach is researcher inclusive, and is shaped by the constructivist position. It is suggested that a research inquiry is researcher value-bound in a number of ways which include the choice of the research topic, the paradigm that guides the investigation, the theory that guides the collection and analysis of data, and by the actual context of the inquiry.

In general, qualitative research (McNamee, 1992, p.27) seeks to ‘understand how people experience themselves in relation to their world’, and a constructivist position implies that this is situationally dependant and that meanings are socially constructed. The fluidity of meanings and the role and impact of the researcher in the emergence of meanings is summarized by Lett (2003, p.15):

‘Rather than seeking essences or universal truths, multiple knowledges are understood to co-exist. The researcher is involved in developing knowledge through ‘ever more informed and sophisticated constructions’.

Both the positivist and post-positivist approaches postulate that there exists an essence, an unchanging essential quality in the object of focus which can be elucidated through the research. A constructivist position implies that there is no fixed or inherent essence to the phenomena, and that which is identified is co-created, or at least informed by the relational context.

3.5 The ongoing emergence of paradigms

These three paradigms may be considered as recognizable landmarks in research, but paradigms, and worldviews, do continue to evolve and Heron and Reason (1997, p.290) suggest that we actually participate in this and that we are able ‘to articulate reality within a paradigm, articulate the paradigm itself, and can in principle reach out into the wider context of that paradigm and reframe it’. They quote Ogilvy (in Heron and Reason, 1997, p.292) who suggests that the developing paradigms ‘respond creatively to the emerging mood of our times, ....and above all offer humanity a more satisfying myth to live by’.
4. The Conceptual Foundations of the MIECAT Approach

4.1 The informing principles

The MIECAT approach to an inquiry maintains that we come to know our world experientially, multimodally, and relationally and that we may utilize experiential and multimodal procedures to inquire into, to express, to identify and clarify what is meaningful for us as we live our lives.

A number of approaches have informed both the ontology and epistemology of the MIECAT approach, these include a constructivist approach as to how meanings are constituted and inquired into (collaboratively), as well as influences from phenomenology; existential, experiential and humanistic psychotherapies; and experiential learning and arts education and practice.

Constructivism places emphasis on the belief that meanings and understandings are relationally constructed, and it is within a collaborative context that these meanings are explored or developed ‘co-creatively’. Lett (2001, p.13) comments on this: ‘it means we do not discover an existing ‘essence’, something fixed but hitherto unaccessed, but we assist in the co-creation of one. This is the most significant characteristic of experiential therapy and research’.

4.2 How we come to ‘know our world’ – experientially and multimodally

One of the basic tenets and assumptions in the MIECAT approach is that experiencing is a primary source for understanding our lives, and ‘our functioning engages the whole conception of experiencing involving the interaction of feelings, emotions, thought, imagery, actions and values’ (Lett, 2003, p.1). It is through our range of senses, including hearing, sensation, vision that we are able to maintain awareness of our experience.

The concept of multimodality encompasses both this multifaceted nature of our experiencing, as well as the range of expressive arts which may be utilized in an inquiry with which to represent, explore and reflect on our experience.
Multimodal expression provides a range of languages which may potentiate a more thorough or accurate description and representation of our experience. It is argued that incorporating a range of art modes offers the benefit of incorporating a number of ‘languages’, which Lett (1993, p.15) suggests is an advantage: ‘Thus, experience and reflection which involve only talking would be a vast under-representation of experiencing’. Barnes (2003, p.2) also acknowledges the advantages of multimodal representation and expression: ‘There is also some difficulty in actually describing lived experiences fully because human beings experience their worlds in multimodal ways, through their bodily senses of sight, sound, touch and vision, our minds also cognitively analyse and make meaning from these experiences. Verbal descriptions require the conversion of these experiences to language. The richness of the experience can be lost in the cognitive interpretation into language’.

The range of expressive languages is further commented on by Reason and Hawkins (1988, p.81): ‘There are many languages in which meaning can be created and communicated: the languages of words which lead to stories and poetry; the languages of action which lead to mime, gesture, and drama; the languages of colour and shape that lead to painting and sculpture; the languages of silence and stillness which are part of meditation’.

4.3 Representation - an ‘alternative experience of worlding’

Representation is the attempt to express, to give form to our experiencing, and hence provide the opportunity to reflect on this record of the experience. The attempt to represent our experience in the various modes (multimodally) may, in itself, clarify or change our sense of what it is that we are experiencing, of how we are able to be in relationship to it, and hence how it is meaningful to us.

The relationship between representation and meaning is commented on by Willis(2001, p.7): ‘Meaning is part and parcel of all experience, although it may be so interwoven with that experience that it is hidden: it needs to be created, or made manifest, and communicated. We work with the meaning of experience when we tell stories, write and act in plays, write poems, meditate, create pictures, enter psychotherapy, etc.’

One arts therapy approach developed by Knill (Halprin, 2003, p.75) refers to multimodal expression as ‘poly aesthetics’, and describes each art mode as a ‘communication modality’. In the context of an inquiry he uses the term ‘intermodal transfer’ to describe the change from one art medium to another ‘according to what will enhance the focusing process, emotional clarity and imaginative range’. 
It is also suggested that the arts offer an alternative to the ‘more conventional ways of relating to our narratives of distress’, and this has been referred to as (Halprin, 2003, p.75) ‘an alternative experience of worlding’.

### 4.4 Experiential, self-referential knowing

MIECAT emphasizes that our understanding of our experience may be self-referential, in that it is possible to make sense of our life without necessarily referencing an outside theory or body of knowledge, but based on understandings which develop through personal reflection on our experiences.

Lett (2001, p.7) identifies two forms of self-knowing: ‘tacit–felt-experiencing, and distanced-holistic-experiencing’. He states that ‘both of these forms of experiencing seem different from the knowledge said to be attained when a psychological theory is brought to bear upon experiencing to explain the meanings as in hermeneutic explication….this form of interpretation (hermeneutic) is theoretically referential. However the two former descriptions (tacit and distanced-holistic) might better be described as personally referential, or simply experiential.’.

Willis (2001,p.7), considers this from a phenomenological basis and asks ‘can we develop an as it were pre-interpretive hermeneutic by which we can hold the phenomena in our gaze and drink it in, waiting for it almost to name itself in our consciousness while resisting the temptation to locate it on conceptual grids and grand theories’. Willis calls this an ‘expressive’ or ‘immediate’ interpretation and states that more elaborated interpretations can be referred to as ‘explanatory interpretative processes’. The MIECAT approach, Lett (2001, p.331) ‘would keep the living experience as close as possible to the possibility of locating personal meaning, without the attempts to conceptualize or make the knowledge theory referenced, as distinct from remaining life experience referenced’.

### 4.5 Phenomenology

Phenomenology has been a major epistemological influence on the MIECAT approach and provides a means with which to consider experience. It has, as well, been a formative influence on a range of existential, humanistic and experiential approaches to research and to psychotherapy which developed during the second half of the 20th century.
This has been due, in large part, to its historical origins where it is proposed that (Willis, 2001, p.3) phenomenology developed out of a reaction to positivism in the sciences. Abram (1996, p.31) states that as such phenomenology ‘forcefully called into question the modern assumption of a single, wholly determinable, objective (positivist) reality.’

4.5-1 A starting point - description rather than explanation

Phenomenology, as it has developed over time, is not a single or homogenized approach, but is a philosophy and a set of principles which has been variously applied to research, education and therapy by various writers.

It is, in essence, fundamentally different from a positivist approach to research in that it seeks not to ‘explain the world’ but to describe as closely as possible the way the ‘world makes itself evident to our awareness’. The emphasis is initially on the way in which the things that we perceive arise in our direct, sensory experiencing.

Phenomenology asks us in the first instance, to attempt to put aside, to bracket out, our tendency to interpret what we perceive according to our preconceived notions. Abram (1996, p.35) describes phenomenology as ‘a direct investigation and description of phenomena as consciously experienced ‘without theories about their causal explanation and as free as possible from unexamined preconceptions and presuppositions’.

Phenomenology discerns between a ‘description’ of, and the ‘interpretation’ of the phenomena that is experienced. Willis (2001, p.3) clarifies these concepts: ‘Phenomenology wants to slow the researcher down and hold his or her gaze on the phenomenon itself - the lived experience of some activity - seeking not to locate it in an abstract matrix by saying how its abstracted structure might be similar to others, but rather to illumine its specific quality as an experience’.

Description is an attempt to ‘be with’ and identify what is actually presenting to us experientially via our multimodal perceptions, and the context of how this becomes meaningful is addressed by Willis (2001, p.3): ‘The meaning of things is not inherent in objects, but is actually located in the individual’s inner life… The researcher’s task is to understand reality as it is, actively and consciously created by subjects, not as a pure entity that exists ‘out there’.

This approach to phenomenology postulates the ontological position that what is meaningful is based on what we experience and on our attempts to ‘make sense’ of
that experience, rather than meanings being inherent in the experience itself. Central to this approach are two aspects, firstly our awareness of what it is that we are experiencing, and secondly how we interpret or make sense of it for ourselves.

This underpins the MIECAT focus on experiencing, and on our attempts to make sense of our experience.

4.5-2 Reflexive phenomenology

‘Reflexive phenomenology’ according to Tesch (1990, p.65) is one of the approaches to phenomenology in which the researcher uses their own experience as part of the research data.

Heuristics, as a form of inquiry, is researcher inclusive, and as such requires ‘the investigator to have had a direct encounter with the phenomenon being investigated’ (Moustakas, 1990, p.14). This differs from other forms of phenomenological inquiry where ‘the researcher need not had have had the experience’. Here the researcher has undergone the experience in ‘a vital, full and intense way’. Heuristic processes do include the internal frame of reference of the researcher and this includes tacit, intuitive, or observed phenomena.

Willis (2001, p.9) clarifies these two applications of phenomenology: ‘It is then possible to inquire about the nature of the experience and how it presented itself as a phenomenon (as in classical phenomenology) or to follow the alternative (empathic phenomenology) by inquiring what the subject made of the experience; what was its significance’.
5. The Initial Considerations for an Inquiry

5.1 The MIECAT scaffold

A MIECAT inquiry incorporates a number of identifiable procedures. At its most basic the pattern of an inquiry will commence by attending to the experience being investigated (the focus), describing and representing the experience using multi-modal arts, and then reflecting on this in dialogue with another or others. This then assists in identifying what is meaningful or significant for those involved. This can be outlined as:

a. Identifying the focus of the inquiry.
b. Access to, and immersion in the experience of this focus.
c. Description and representation of the experience.
d. Reflection on this with another, and identification of what is significant or meaningful.
e. Forming a (creative) synthesis of current understandings.

Meanings or understandings may become evident at any time throughout the inquiry, not only in the latter reflective stages where it may be a more intended focus.

5.2 The emergence of a form

In my, and our, initial considerations about a form for the inquiry, we identified ways in which it might be conceived and structured. It could be set up in advance using a number of pre-designated steps, or the form could develop more ‘on the go’ in response to the material of the inquiry. It would also be possible to combine each of these ways with the context and the content informing each other.

We were also interested in incorporating an approach that might have parallels to improvisation – of being responsive to the content which emerged during the process of inquiring. Enabling the emergent circumstances to shape the form of the inquiry is supported and clarified by a number of researchers including Van Manen (1984, p.7) who states that ‘the research plan or proposal is a balance of explicit statements on the methodological process and an openness that allows for choosing directions and exploring techniques, procedures and sources that are not always foreseeable at the outset of a research project’. 
A more detailed consideration is presented by Guba and Lincoln (1983, p.41) who suggest that ‘the researcher elects to allow the research design to emerge (flow, cascade, unfold) rather than to construct it preordinately’.

They offer more detailed reasoning for this, and suggest that:

- it is inconceivable that enough could be known ahead of time about the many multiple realities to devise the design adequately;
- what emerges as a function of the interaction between inquirer and phenomenon is largely unpredictable in advance;
- the inquirer cannot know sufficiently well the patterns of mutual shaping that are likely to exist;
- and the various value systems involved (including the inquirers own) interact in unpredictable ways to influence the outcome’. (p.41)

5.3 The ‘scaffold’ and ‘emergence’ coupling

As there appeared to be value and purpose in each of the approaches, we decided to incorporate the benefits of each, by in advance having an overview of an inquiry process as well as by making choices ‘on the go’ in response to the presenting circumstance.

These choices may include which representational modes might be used, how we might share, what is most important to attend to as the next step, and the duration of the inquiry.

At this initial stage in the inquiry it was certainly unclear as to an overall or a final form that it might take, but it seemed as though we had the means to develop an inquiry in response to the emergent material.

5.4 My Involvement as both participant and researcher

As I had been a participant in the improvisations prior to any consideration of the group being involved in a research activity and as a consequence I needed in my initial considerations, to clarify the implications of this on a research inquiry. This was both prior to approaching the group about participating in an inquiry, as well as during our ongoing discussions.

I wondered how appropriate it would be for me to participate in the improvisational sessions which might become the focus of the research, and if or how I might assume
the dual positions of participant and researcher. The other participants had suggested that they would be most comfortable with my usual involvement in the session, rather than by me becoming separate to or distanced from the improvisation.

Moustakas (1990, p.42) confirms ‘the benefit of intimately knowing the ground of the inquiry’ by supporting the involvement of the researcher. It seemed that I could be involved in the source improvisations for this research, and have the benefits as a researcher of ‘intimate knowing’.

5.5 Ethical considerations

Ethical considerations were discussed with the participants, and these were based on the contents of the MIECAT ethical consent form. As each of the participants had previous involvement in some form of research, and coupled with our trust and familiarity with each other, it was suggested, and I agreed, that a formal signing of consent forms did not seem necessary.

There was an understanding that I would restrict the use of the gathered materials to this research assignment only, and that I would agree to abide by the discussed ethical guidelines. At any time that any concerns might arise, we agreed to discuss this as a group. In hindsight I would now concede that an agreement, signed by each participant, might have been preferable as the circumstances of our friendship, our trust in each other and the composition of the group might well have changed or have been challenged during the research.

It was my intention to consult with the participants throughout the inquiry, to seek opinion on decisions that would need to be made regarding its form, but it was also acknowledged that I, as researcher, would be responsible for and able to make decisions regarding the final form of the inquiry and the documentation of it.

Informed consent provides protection for the research participants by identifying and agreeing that there will be (Willig, 2001, p.18):

a. no deception by the researcher.

b. a right for the participant to withdraw from the research.

c. the opportunity for debriefing, if requested.

d. a maintaining of confidentiality.
I noted that Van Manen (1990, p.7) cautions the researcher who is utilizing qualitative research methods to remain aware that:

a. *The research may have certain effects on the people with whom the research is concerned and who will be interested in the phenomenological work.*

b. *There are possible effects of the research methods on the institutions in which the research is conducted* (this was not relevant in this situation).

c. *The research methods used may have lingering effects on the actual ‘subjects’ involved in the study.*

d. *Phenomenological projects and their methods often have a transformative effect on the researcher.*
6. The Context of the Inquiry

6.1 The setting

The group of colleagues had been ‘improvising’ together once each week for just over one year. Each improvisational session had been of approximately two hours’ duration and had been held in the same location, a large timber hall. The size of the group had varied on each occasion, with between 3 and 6 in attendance, and the mix of participants differed with each session. The group was without a designated leader.

Four of those who had been involved for the duration of one year have participated in this study.

6.2 The participants

There was no consistency in attendance by the participants at the three consecutive improvisation sessions which were the source of material for this inquiry. This was circumstantial, and it had been my initial anticipation to have each of the four participants involved in each of the data gathering sessions. I had some concern about this lack of consistency, and I wondered if this might still provide a ‘valid’ source of material into which to inquire. This concern was reconciled by taking the view that the inquiry was into each person’s experience of improvising at an individual session, not the combined experience of the three sessions.

Each participant is willing to be identified by name, hence pseudonyms are not used here. Four improvisers participated in the first session, with three at the next two sessions. I was the only person to attend each of the three sessions. Participants at the three sessions were:

- Session 1 - Anna, Barry, Clare, Kevin.
- Session 2 - Clare, Margi, Kevin.
- Session 3 - Anna, Margi, Kevin.
6.3 The sessions

The sessions consisted of an exploration of collaborative participation in movement and vocal based improvisations. Although elements identifiable as art making, therapy, personal reflection, performance or play were present, the overall purpose and form of our improvising was not readily conceptually described or defined by any single one of these.

Our improvisation may best be described as sharing through a multimodal dialogue or conversation. Bohm (1987, p.10) describes this form of dialogue as ‘an unfolding process of creative participation between peers’, and this seems to provide a succinct definition of our improvising.

The improvisational sessions were informed by our immediate interests, our backgrounds, and significantly by the context itself – the cumulative history of having improvised together over an extensive time.

We did not identify with any single pre-existing form or approach to improvising, with our improvising being shaped by our ongoing explorations and reflections. We shared a simple commitment to ‘meeting regularly’, to ‘collaborating’ in a way which was not immediately outcome or goal oriented, and to our ‘remaining open’ to a range of explorational possibilities.

The form of our sessions was without a fixed template, the content and the form emerging on the day. Some semblance of a pattern did exist though, and at the beginning of a session we would ‘meet’, ‘greet’ and ‘share’ with what could be described as a ‘movement and vocal’ conversation for somewhere between 15 to 30 minutes. This seemed to serve as a physical warm-up phase, as a time for connecting and as a means of identifying a focus, an emphasis, or direction from which to commence the improvisation.

Most usually some focus would emerge during this initial time together. At times this focus would be something which we might have identified of interest from a previous session, but most usually it arose from the immediate sharing and it was from here that we would commence.
'Emergence' was a key. We would identify what arose, and discern and make choices on the go. This was in essence our improvising - following whims, images, concepts, feelings and thoughts to wherever they might lead, and then continuing with what might next unfold.

In the latter part of each session, we would individually ‘present’ (a form of performance) to the others, and receive some response from those of us observing. We would then take time to reflect, as a group, on our experience of that session. This sharing became an important activity for us and seemed to help to identify significant individual and group interests which might be carried forward into other sessions, taken into our own practices and into our lives.

This simple structure seemed to readily accommodate our range of interests, our personal tendencies, and our reasons for participating. We did acknowledge the free-form of the sessions, the fluidity and the spontaneity inherent in improvisation as we had come to know it, and as a consequence we were able to trust and allow each session to ‘find its way’ on the day.
7. **An Overview**

7.1 **Documenting the inquiry**

I had maintained a record of each of the activities during the inquiry, and on completion of the inquiry I was able to utilize these records to map the activities and procedures which were used. From this mapping I identified thirteen focal activities which I refer to as steps. These were landmarks within the dialogue, steps taken at times intentionally and at times less intentionally.

The transitions between these steps had involved considerations and choices as to what may be now appropriate, what means or procedures might be utilised to continue the reflection on the material. The inquiry ended when key aspects of the experience of improvising had been identified by the participants, and when the data became sufficiently substantial.

I was able to group these thirteen steps into three phases of the inquiry, each phase reflecting a shift in the focus of the inquiry and/or in the form of involvement of the participants and the researcher. These phases now provide a ready form with which to document and present the inquiry.

**Phase 1** (The Group Collaboration) consists of the initial considerations, consultation with the group, preparations for the inquiry, the collection of the initial data and the immediate reflections on it. Each of these activities were collaborations.

**Phase 2** (The Participant-Researcher Dialogue) is a number of multimodal exchanges between each participant and the researcher commencing with the initial data. This included the identification of significant experiences and key elements from within the evolving material.

**Phase 3** (The Researcher’s Reflection) is the researcher’s reflection on the materials gathered from during the collaboration and the dialogue, and on the process of the inquiry itself.

In presenting these steps and phases, I reiterate that decisions were made on the go as to what to do next in the inquiry. Some comment on what precipitated these decisions and choices will be presented within the documentation of the material and
includes the details and considerations for creating a structure for the inquiry, the process of inquiring itself, and the outcomes of significance for the participants.

7.2 The three phases and thirteen steps

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PHASE 1: THE COLLABORATION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Step 1:</strong> Preliminary discussions with the Participants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Step 2:</strong> Identifying the initial parameters for the inquiry</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **Step 3:** The Improvisation  
  Session 1  
  3 Participants  
  Session 2  
  2 Participants  
  Session 3  
  2 Participants |
| **Step 4(a):** Group sharing immediately following the improvisation in response to the question – “What was your experience whilst improvising today?” |
| **Step 4(b):** The generation of a text (text 1): A Group drawing whilst sharing in 4(a), and an audio tape of this reflective sharing |
### PHASE 2: THE DIALOGUE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>The researcher transcribes audio tape and photocopies the drawings (reduced to A4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>A colour photocopy of the group drawing and a copy of the tape transcript is forwarded to each Participant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Participant response to the drawing and the transcript in the form of one page of ‘free’ writing and a poem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Researcher responds to the ‘free’ writing and the poem as a poetic intersubjective response</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Researcher creates a scroll, being a composite of the materials produced by each participant and the researcher’s response</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>A scroll plus 2 x A4 colour photocopies of the initial group drawing is sent to each participant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11(a)</td>
<td>Each Participant identifies what is significant for them upon reading the scroll and the Researcher’s ISR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11(b)</td>
<td>Each participant represents this significant material in a collage based on the 2 x A4 copies of the group drawing as well as with 10 ‘key words’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>The participant sends the collage and the key words to the Researcher</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### PHASE 3: THE RESEARCHER’S REFLECTION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>The Researcher reflects on this material</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Session</th>
<th>Reflections</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
8. Phase 1 – The Collaboration

Section 8.1 presents the initial considerations by the group in developing a context for the inquiry. (steps 1 and 2).

8.1 Initial considerations (step 1)

The inquiry had commenced with my discussions and subsequent negotiations with colleagues about the prospect of pursuing an inquiry within the context of our improvisational sessions.

The initial approach to the group was to find out if they might participate in an inquiry into some aspect of our improvisational activity for the purpose of my MA research project. At this early stage I had not identified a specific form for the inquiry other than to suggest that it would be ‘an inquiry based on MIECAT procedures’ into ‘some aspect/s of our improvising’.

I had wished to incorporate as much collaborative participation as possible, and as such I hoped to include the input of the group in both these initial considerations and in reviewing the inquiry as it proceeded.

8.1-1 On choosing a focus (step 2)

During our preliminary discussions we considered what it might mean to ‘inquire’, what the ‘focus’ of an inquiry might be, the ‘methods’ for inquiring and the place of collaboration. As a result of these discussions some clarification was required in a number of areas, these being:

a. Identifying a clear and appropriate focus.
b. When and how to gather the data – for example during or after the improvisation.
c. The form of the data.
d. The form of the inquiry beyond gathering initial data, and
e. The form of involvement of the participants during the ongoing process of the inquiry.
Warren Lett (2001, p.331) identifies a range of possible foci for an experiential inquiry. They are:

a. *In pursuit of a stated theme or question as in heuristic studies of Moustakas.*

b. *A construct of lived experience as in most phenomenological studies.*

c. *A life problem which might be pursued in an experiential therapeutic form of inquiry.*

d. *Knowing oneself by researching one’s process of self-experiencing.*

This statement was presented to the group as part of the early considerations. This prompted discussion and it became clear that the preferred focus would be into our experience of improvising together. This precluded item ‘c’ from this list, but each of the other three presented possibilities. It was suggested that ideally ‘knowing oneself’ would be a part of the outcome of any experiential inquiry, and a combination of (a) and (b) might be feasible.

**8.1-2 Naming the focus**

This choice of a focus for the inquiry proved to not be as straightforward as it might first appear. We were hoping to utilize the inquiry to enhance our understanding of how we each experienced improvising in the group context.

There were considerations about what we might focus on. Would it be our memories or impressions of having improvised over time/ together? How might we share these memories? Were we attempting to define what improvisation meant to each of us? There were many possibilities, and further questions. Could a session be video-recorded? Might participants be interviewed? Would I ask the group to note significant experiences during a session?

We decided to attempt to incorporate the beginnings of the inquiry within the pre-existing context of our improvising, and to ask the question: *What was your experience of improvising in the group today* after one of the sessions.

Our response to this question would provide the opportunity to gather data from the more immediate experience of the improvisation, it would focus on what was experienced on that day and we would reflect at the end of the session as had been our usual pattern. This is where the inquiry commenced.
8.1-3 On gathering data

We had agreed that the improvisational session would proceed as usual, and that data would be gathered away from the session, and that no requirement of the research would directly impinge on the improvisational context.

Our regular discussions following improvising seemed to be the appropriate context in which to reflect because it was both pre-existing, and immediately followed the improvisational experience, hence with minimal separation of time and space.

8.1-4 Data, as text, as continuity of experience

Creating a text as a representation of the experience provides an opportunity to have time to reflect on the experience of improvising and to have a form with which to embody or imbue aspects of that experience. Lett (1995, p.316) writes of the benefit of an immediate representation of experience in research as being 'directly experiential in the phenomenological sense of maintaining an interactive continuity between the first experience with the process of staying in it, re-entering it and so recreating the experience and carrying it forward'.

Other researchers have considered this relationship between the experience and a representational text. Willis (2002, p.3) writes ‘...an appropriate textual genre would carry the immediacy and ‘livedness’ of the experiences’, and Fenner (1999, p.27) speaks of ‘shrinking the distance between experiencing and expression or representation’.

This is what I wished to achieve by attempting to keep the initial form of the reflection close to that of the experience of the improvisation, as though it is a continuation of it.

8.1-5 Modes for reflection and representation

Our previous reflections following improvising had been in the form of a discussion. It was decided that it would be of interest to include a mode that would remain a more permanent representation, one that could be re-revisited as part of the ongoing reflections. We had on occasions drawn together so this was included as a second mode of representation. Drawing together on a shared sheet of paper seemed to be an appropriate means, as it would maintain the interactive, collaborative quality of a group improvisation, it remains an ‘embodied’ activity and it would provide a permanent text.

This shared drawing would be an extension of the interactive nature of improvising and hence diminish the ‘distance’ between the focus of the inquiry and the initial
representation of it. The collective drawing and our conversing in response to the focal question became the initial data for the inquiry.

8.1-6 Reflecting on experience

One of the distinguishing features of improvisation is the immediacy of responding on the go, of reflecting ‘in action’. This includes two aspects of reflection, those that are more pre-reflective – the spontaneous arisal of experiences – images, sounds, movements, impulses, responses to another person and those that are more reflective (and selective) including reflection ‘in action’ and also making more considered choices. There is a parallel here to experiencing considered within an existential context. Spinelli (1995, p.24) identifies two aspects of experiencing and of making sense of our experiences, and these he refers to as - ‘Straightforward experience – the experience as it occurs, and reflective experience - our interpretation of that experience’.

Throughout this inquiry there was an attempt to incorporate elements of both of these reflective positions, the more pre-reflective such as including ‘spontaneous’ writing, underlining and responding, as well as reflections that are more considered and carried out on materials ‘after’ the event.

8.1-7 Other considerations

I chose to collect data from three improvisational sessions so as to include, what I had considered a broader context and inclusion of a range of experiences. For instance, if only one improvisation session was used and it happened to have a certain focus, then it may not be reflective of nor provide a sense of how it may have been for us to more generally improvise.

At this stage I/we had not conceived an overall form, or further steps for the inquiry, and we were accepting of this open-endedness which would allow for the possibilities of emergent design. This was appropriate for a group of participants who were familiar with MIECAT procedures as well as with improvising.

8.2 The improvisation (Step 3)

The group improvisation occurred as had been usual for us without any change in the context as a result of being a focus for the research.
8.2-1 Reflection 1- creating texts (step 4)

The context for commencing the inquiry and collecting the data was clarified as:

1. The initial data would be gathered during a reflection on the experience of improving and would combine speaking and drawing.
2. The drawing would be a collective one executed on a large (102 cm x 75 cm) single sheet of paper (and hence become another modal arena for the improvisation to continue).
3. The drawing would be a continuous activity, ongoing independent of whether somebody was speaking or not at the time. (The continuity of drawing might have its own momentum, and carry both pre-reflective and reflective elements)
4. The 'speaking' would be recorded so that a transcript might be available to be incorporated into the inquiry.

The collaboratively drawn image and the transcript of the recording from the first session are presented as follows. I have attempted to give a form to the transcript (step 5) that would convey the sense of the discussion itself. It was not continuous, there were times (gaps) where nothing was said, the sentences were not always flowing and when we spoke, we were often taking time to find words and to respond to each other.

The form of the discussion was not specified, there was no request that it be descriptive, and it was in response to the question ‘what was your experience whilst improvising today?’.
8.2-2 The group image (step 4a) from Session 1

(Actual size 102cm x 75cm)
8.2-3  The tape recording (step 4b) and transcript of Session 1 (step 5)

Staying with what is happening.

We were just leaning against each other for quite a long time.

It felt safe to just do that for quite a long time.

It seems to take a lot at times to be at ease with just allowing it to happen.

Sometimes I am feeling as though I am wasting time and then with a small turn of attitude I am more present to what is happening for me now.

Trusting in each other, trusting in the process.

Trusting that something will happen.

I feel confident in us being together, we have been improvising together for quite a long time now.

I find that I do not need to feel too accountable for what I do, I mean, you all have a choice about what you do with what I bring forward.

You have a choice about what you do with it.

I feel vulnerable at times, just being here, but it seems to give me some license to be myself.

There is something important for me in the not questioning from where what I am doing is coming from.

I see somebody doing something and I feel that I can do that also, and I do. This feels as though I am becoming more than I thought I was capable of.

I have a sense of accepting others ideas and of being accepted.

A multiplicity of things are happening and I feel as though I can just move in and out.

I can focus on my own activity, or I can be aware of others and be influenced by them or move between these.

It feels as though there is more to me, that I have access to more than my own movements.

Who would have known that it would end up as it did?
Sometimes we experience something but we seem to ‘have forgotten to assign meaning to it’. This is a quote from somewhere, and it seems to be true of what I feel here.

I feel that I can go from one experience to another without clearly assigning meanings.

Maybe there can be a felt meaning, there can be meaning which is not articulated, almost like dreaming. A betwixt state, both responding and reflecting in the moment.

The experience goes somewhere, not necessarily where I expected it to.

It’s a little like kids bumping around in the playground, something is expressed and communicated.

Things seem to surface, things that I was not so aware of, unexpected things just seem to happen.

It involves being present to what is appearing and to others.

It is to do with meaning being what we are doing.

There is an ease about being together in this situation. The meaning may be in the feeling, and this maybe enough.

I wonder if, and how, we take this experience back into our lives away from this situation. Being here seems to give context to other things in my life.

The meaning may be in just being. Freeing up and allowing.

There is a certain freedom in being able to put out there what arises for me.

This seems to have elements of free association and of active imagination.

It feels like being with life as it is, rather than making a construct of it. It seems to flow on into my life.

It involves allowing experience to present and to just let it be.
9. Phase 2 – The Dialogue

9.1 The researcher distributes the data (step 6)

As the researcher, I now assumed responsibility for further decisions as to how to reflect on the gathered materials (the data). I forwarded the data to each participant with a number of specific requests as to how to further consider and respond to it. The tape-recording had been transcribed and a copy of this transcript, accompanied by an A4 colour photocopy of the group drawing, was sent to each participant (step 6). We did not meet again, as a group, for the purpose of this inquiry and during the exchanges that followed each participant responded to their own material in a multimodal dialogue with the researcher.

9.2 Each participant responds to the data (step 7)

This first request was for each participant to spend time with, and then respond to the data (the reduced A4 copy of the group drawing and the transcript) in a specified form – one page of ‘free writing’ followed by writing a poem (step 7). This was a reflection, distanced (in time and space) from the initial improvisation, on the collected data in an attempt to identify what might now be significant from within the data.

The requested response, the free writing, offers what I considered to be an opportunity to include both pre-reflective and more reflective elements of the response to the material. Pre-reflective responding has a parallel to the experience of improvising in that it allows a response to form on the go. This is then followed by a reduction to what is now significant in the poem, which is a more reflective procedure.

The procedures of the inquiry at this stage resulted in a reduction – a reduction from the original experiencing to the representation of it in the initial data, a further reduction by writing the one page, and then a reduction to a poem.
It was requested that each participant:

a. Spend some time looking at the drawing and reading the 2 pages of transcript.
b. Then write one page of ‘free form’ writing in response to the drawing, to the transcript and to any memories that you may have of the session.
c. Identify what now stands out for you from this page that you have just written.
d. Write a short verse as an expression of this, the verse is to be of 5 lines in length, and up to 8 words per line. (the form was specified by me in order to create some commonality in the responses).
e. Send to myself (the researcher) the one page of free writing and the verse (written on separate A4 sheets) in a provided envelope. If you were present at more than one session please specify the response as being to sessions 1, 2 or 3.

Once this was completed, the involvement of each person had now included:

1. Collaboratively developing a concept of, and a form for the inquiry
2. Participation in the Improvisation
3. The drawing-talking reflection
4. A one-page free form written response
5. Identifying what was significant in this page of writing
6. Expressing the significant aspects in a short verse
7. Sending the free writing and verse to myself.

9.3 One stream of the inquiry

Seven ‘streams’ of material were developed during the inquiry. Each was a multimodal record of the dialogue between myself and a participant. Three streams were from the data of the first improvisation, two from the second improvisation and two from the third.

One stream is included here as the means to document the inquiry, the other six streams are included in Appendix 1. This stream of material, from the participant Anna, is documented in its entirety as a way of presenting each of the stages of the inquiry. This stream had its origins in the first improvisation.
9.3-1  The one-page of ‘free-form’ writing

This is Anna’s writing in response to the transcript and the group drawing:

I remember us staying with each other
Just being alongside each other
Sometimes leaning in
Sometimes moving against
Sometimes with
Alongside
For quite a long time
We moved
For quite a long time
Just allowing each other
Just trusting in
Confidence in us being together
For quite a long time now I feel this
You have a choice what you do with what I bring
A freedom I can move from
Feeling vulnerable
A freedom to be…
A freedom not to question from where my doing comes
But to play with the present as it emerges
Why not? It’s always playing with me.

The present - a multiplicity of presents

I see someone doing
I feel myself leaning that way
And I do
Feeling myself
becoming more
I move in and out
Between myself and others
From one experience to another
We are here now
Noticing what comes next
Feeling meaning
Going somewhere
Next
Next to me a presence I visit
Next to me a moment
Visits me unexpected
Visiting or visited
Moving through
As if something will come next
Emerging
A score
That is us
More
than before

**9.3-2 and Anna’s short poem**

We are here now leaning into the unarticulated

Being with each other and what comes next

We play free and vulnerable

Substantial transparent emerging we are here now.

**9.4 The researcher’s response (step 8)**

My consideration of, and response to Anna’s free writing and poem is the next stage in the dialogue and it was my intention to identify those aspects that now seemed to stand out as being ‘significant’.

**9.4-1 Identifying key elements**

One MIECAT approach to identifying what may be significant from within material is through selecting key elements – and these may include words, feelings, images and themes, patterns. There are several ways by which this may be done in response to the materials created by another person. It can be done collaboratively, it may be done by the participant, or the researcher may do this alone.
I chose to do this alone in response to the material of the participant. Whilst considering how I might proceed with identifying key elements, I noted a statement by Van Manen (1984, p.21) in which he suggests three approaches to identifying thematic statements from within written material: ‘The holistic or sententious approach; the selective or highlighting approach; and the detailed or line by line approach’.

Each of these approaches offer a ‘lens of examination’ of the material. The first approach is a more global one, seeking to identify an overall meaning of the text. The second approach focuses on identifying phrases or sentences that stand out in the text, whilst the third is a close examination of the text sentence by sentence.

Tesch (1987, p.232) further considers the latter two approaches mentioned by Van Manen, the ‘highlighting’ and the ‘line by line’ approaches, and refers to them as ‘panning’ and ‘surveying’. She writes that when panning (highlighting), ‘the researcher looks for precious elements, which take the form of descriptive expressions in the material that are at the ‘centre’ of the experience…. All other ingredients are sifted out; they are not included in the analysis’.

9.4-2 The underlining of Anna’s writing

I chose the ‘highlighting – panning’ approach in my attempt to identify what (the words and phrases) was significant for me, as the researcher. The first step was to underline the phrases that had taken my attention, and this I did by initially reading the ‘free writing’ with a broad focus and paying little attention to detail, then during a second reading I underlined what stood out for me.

I was not attempting to create a thorough summary of each of the main points within the writing, nor to reflect thoroughly on each sentence, but I was identifying what resonated for me as I attended to the material. The underlining was:

I remember us staying with each other
Just being alongside each other
Sometimes leaning in
Sometimes moving against
Sometimes with
Alongside
For quite a long time
We moved
For quite a long time
  Just allowing each other
Just trusting in
  Confidence in us being together
For quite a long time now I feel this
You have a choice what you do with what I bring
A freedom I can move from
Feeling vulnerable
A freedom to be…
A freedom not to question from where my doing comes
But to play with the present as it emerges
Why not? It’s always playing with me.

The present - a multiplicity of presents

I see someone doing
I feel myself leaning that way
And I do
Feeling myself
becoming more
I move in and out
Between myself and others
From one experience to another

We are here now
Noticing what comes next
Feeling meaning
Going somewhere
Next
Next to me a presence I visit
Next to me a moment
Visits me unexpected
Visiting or visited
Moving through
As if something will come next
Emerging
A score
That is us
More
than before

and of the poem:

We are here now leaning into the unarticulated

Being with each other and what comes next

We play free and vulnerable

Substantial transparent emerging we are here now

9.4.3 The researcher’s intersubjective response

Having completed the underlining I then formed an intersubjective response. This was my attempt to articulate and give form to what seemed significant for me from within Anna’s material, and to then offer it back to her as a part of our dialogue.

When forming this response I chose to stay ‘close’ to the participant’s material and to only include words in my response from the participant’s own writing. As the next step in forming this response I compiled the underlined phrases, a further reduction of the original material. This compilation is:

Staying with each other
leaning in
moving against
with.

Just allowing
just trusting
confidence in being together.
I see someone doing
    I feel myself
    leaning that way
    and    I do.

Becoming more
    Here now.

Feeling meaning

Next to me
    A presence
    A moment
    visits me
    unexpected
    as if
    something will come next
    emerging
    a score
    more than
    before.

*Leaning* into the unarticulated
    substantial
    transparent
    emerging.

In further forming my intersubjective response to this material, I then re-read Anna’s writing and poem, I read my compilation of underlined material and then considered what was at the ‘heart’ of this material. Again I chose to ‘remain loyal’ to the content of Anna’s work by using only the words from within the compilation, and to give form to what now appeared to me to be significant from within her work.
My intersubjective response became:

莱恩·因

the unarticulated

transparent

substantial

emerging.

With each other

trusting

being with each other

osmotic assimilation.

We seem to

become more

than we are

or at least were.

莱恩·唐

away

from myself

I find that

I lean into myself.

This emerging expanding self.

I had used a number of procedures in developing my Intersubjective Response to Anna’s material, these were:

1. An initial broad reading
2. Re-reading and underlining
3. Compiling the underlined words and phrases
4. Considering these in the overall context of Anna’s material
5. Creating an intersubjective response using only Anna’s words
9.5 The scroll (steps 9 and 10)

I was now ready to forward my response to Anna in order to continue our ‘conversation’. I was aware of the substantial reduction in material during the process of forming a concise intersubjective response. I had reduced, shaped and focussed the material and was aware that this response might or might not be one that resonated with, or was meaningful for, Anna.

This intersubjective response was formed from identifying those elements significant to me, which might be useful to the other (Anna), and which spoke from myself to the other. This is the process of dialogue, as materials and responses pass back and forth between those participating, and meanings and understandings are co-created.

I wanted to provide the opportunity for Anna to consider my response within the context of the overall body of inquiry material. To achieve this I would attempt to carry forward the material as it had developed, so as to enable Anna to have access to both the complete body of material from her stream, as well as that which was highlighted as significant by myself.

To this end I created a scroll – in a way an embodied history, in the form of a linear sequential linking (by gluing A4 sheets) of the material, commencing with the initial group drawing, and including all the materials that had developed along the way. This would provide an opportunity for each participant to respond to the researchers response, within the overall context of the materials of the inquiry.

I refer to Lett (2001, p.11) in order to place in context the inquiry as it was at this stage, and how collaboration was integral to the outcome.

‘In the experiential research for personal meanings, the responsibility for the clarification of meanings is a shared one…. The meanings then are a combination of implicit and explicit understandings, contained and held in the constructions of shared understandings over time’.
9.6 Towards a conclusion of the dialogue

The scroll (specific to each person) was then forwarded to each of the participants (step 10) accompanied by an outline of the next requested step, and a requested form for the response.

I chose to now bring the dialogue phase to an end for a number of reasons, but primarily because the amount of accumulated material was now very substantial and the inquiry had spanned a considerable time period. In considering how it might be appropriate to end the inquiry I reasoned that there should now be a meaningful reduction of the material – meaningful for each of the participants, in that I hoped they would have an opportunity to identify what was now significant for each about the experience of improvising (and present this as a Synthesis), and meaningful for myself as the researcher in that the reduction could be carried forward into a reflection on the data.

Each participant was sent a copy of the scroll accompanied by two reduced A4 size photocopies of the original group drawing and a sheet of A3 white paper. Each was asked to review the scroll, to read my intersubjective response (the last sheet on the scroll), and to then form a further response to the material.

I had specified a form for this final response in order to have a common form for the final data, as I thought that this might be of assistance in a final analysis. This request was:

‘Your next response should be in the form of a collage on an A3 sheet of paper. The source material for your collage is the 2 photocopies of the original drawing. Please cut and paste these (onto the A3 sheet) as you form a ‘creative synthesis’ of what now stands out for you from our reflections on your experience of improvising in a small group. Identify 10 ‘key’ words that reflect what is now significant for you about the experience of improvising in the group context’.

9.7 The participant’s creative synthesis (steps 11a and 11b)

This is the collage from Anna, as well as the 10 key words (steps 11a and b), and is the final step in the dialogue.
9.7-1 Anna’s collage

(Actual size – 30cm x 42cm)

9.7-2 The 10 key words

Unarticulated leaning
Transparent

Substantial
Emerging
Becoming
Being
With
Each
Other
10. Phase 3 – The Researcher’s Reflection

10.1 A reflection on the inquiry (steps 12 and 13)

This final response – the collage and 10 key words was forwarded to me by each participant (step 12). These seven final responses completed each of the streams of material and become the data on which I, as the researcher, could now reflect. This reflection constitutes the third phase of the inquiry.

Each stream consisted of the accumulated material which had formed during the dialogue between each participant and the researcher. Each dialogue had followed the same sequence of procedures that were presented in the example of Anna in Phase 2. The material in each stream was documented in the order of its formation as a scroll, commencing with the reflection (the group drawing and the transcript) done immediately following the improvisation and concluding with the final response from each person, the collage and 10 key words.

These scrolls provide a record, a mapping of both the context – the steps of the inquiry, and the content – the responses of each participant from during the inquiry.

It would have been possible for the dialogue to have continued and I did consider the possibility of further exchanges, but the inquiry was to end and I needed to find an appropriate way to do this. The participants had identified the key words and created a collage, a reduction to what was now significant for each person about the experience of improvising – they had formed for themselves a creative synthesis.

10.2 Three considerations

In order to decide when and how the inquiry might finish, I identified several considerations:

1. to re-clarify the aim of this research (10.2-1)
2. to decide how the research dialogue could be brought to a conclusion (10.2-2), and
3. to identify how the data could then be considered (Section 11).

Each of these considerations are now presented in some detail.
10.2-1 Re-clarifying the aim of this inquiry

The form of the research until this point had been substantially shaped by the momentum of the dialogue, and by the choices that were made progressively as to the next appropriate step. At this point though, I needed to consider the data in its accumulated form, how it was meaningful to the participants and how it might be meaningful to myself as researcher within the context of an inquiry outcome and conclusions.

I did this by reconsidering the possible aims of both MIECAT and phenomenological approaches to an inquiry. In phenomenological research it has been stated there are two different emphases on the outcome of an inquiry. An inquiry may focus either on ‘the experience of’ a phenomenon (improvising) by the participants or it may attempt to identify what can be understood about the phenomenon itself.

Crotty (1996, p.3) comments on this distinction when comparing ‘new’ versus ‘mainstream’ approaches in phenomenological research. *The new phenomenology works hard at gathering people’s subjective meanings, the sense they make of things,…whereas…Mainstream phenomenology, in contrast, wants to elucidate, first and foremost, the phenomena to which people are attaching meaning*.

Allen (2005, MIECAT notes) also discerns between these two inquiry outcomes and articulates them as – an inquiry into the phenomena itself (in this case of Improvising), or into one’s experience of the phenomena (as in this inquiry). She states that what is common to each inquiry is the initial gathering of data from an experiential origin, then a reflection on this data using a number of procedures. These procedures include a reduction to key phrases, clustering these phrases, indwelling and naming them. She states that this can then lead to one of two possible outcomes:

a) ‘A creative synthesis that is an expression of both tacit and explicit knowing – it is an approximation of ‘what do I now think/feel I know’; or

b) ‘Combined essences – a final statement of the essential features of the phenomenon’.

This inquiry into improvising had developed around the first focus – ‘gathering people’s subjective meanings’ (Crotty, 1996, p.3) of the experience of improvising. I now wondered if it would be either valid or possible to review the data in order to consider the second focus- to identify essential features of the ‘phenomena to which people are attaching meaning’ (Crotty, 1996, p.3).
In this inquiry, each stream had led to the identification of what was meaningful for each participant, ‘an expression of both tacit and explicit knowing’ (Allen, 2005), and this had then been represented as a creative synthesis in the form of a collage and key words.

I wondered if it might now be possible to identify common features from the seven streams of data in order to articulate ‘essential features of the phenomena of improvising’ (Allen, 2005), as in outcome (b) shown above. This is a shift in the focus of the inquiry, and as such I am aware of a methodological concern regarding a potential ‘slippage’ between these two research outcomes. There may be implications regarding maintaining clarity of both purpose and intention of the inquiry.

I had originally set out to collect data on the experiences of participants, and now I was considering further use of this data in order to know something more about the phenomena itself.

10.2-2 How might the research be brought to a conclusion?

In the light of the above considerations, it was clear that the inquiry into the ‘experience of improvising’ was now complete. The experiences of each of the participants, were reflected upon in the dialogue and understandings were synthesized and expressed in the 10 key words and the collage. Lett, (2001, p.14) states that one of the ‘most significant characteristic of experiential therapy and research is that the interplay of meaning recognition and meaning construction is a personal one. It is not something ‘done on your data’ by another’.

It was appropriate for the participants that the inquiry might finish here as each person had reflected on and synthesized their own data. The inquiry, from its commencement, had been into the experience of improvising and had commenced with the question ‘what was your experience whilst improvising today’. As a result of our dialogue each participant has identified significant aspects and formed a creative synthesis.

The collage in itself ‘communicates the mood’ (Willis 2002, p.7) of the experience of improvising, and the 10 key words articulate significant aspects of the experience, and this may reflect something of both ‘tacit and explicit knowing’.
10.3 Presenting the words and collages.

The creative synthesis, in the form of the Collage and key words, of each of the participants in each session is now presented. This is done by firstly displaying the initial group drawing executed immediately following the improvisation sessions, and then the final collage and key words from each of the participants present at that session. It should be noted that photocopies of the initial group drawing were used as the source material for creating the final collages.

10.3-1 Session 1

The Group Drawing
Anna – Session 1 Collage

Anna’s 10 Key words:
Unarticulated leaning
Transparent
Substantial
Emerging
Becoming
Being with each other
Barry – Session 1 Collage

Barry’s 10 Key Words:
One
Many
Open
Learning
Play
Fun
Others
Relationship
Moving
Space
Clare’s 10 Key Words:
Present
moment
In between
Possibilities
Releasing
Grasp
Moving
Falling
Exploring
This falling
10.3-2 Session 2

Group drawing
Clare – Session 2 Collage

Clare’s 10 Key Words:
Being
Here, now
Noticing
Wide-focus
Body-mind
Weight
Release
Following
Motion-impulse
Of body
Margi – Session 2 Collage

Margi’s 10 Key Words:
Vibrant
Red
Blood
Heart
Sight
Rich
Musical
Undone
Expansive
Unique
10.3-3 Session 3

Group drawing
Anna – Session 3 Collage

Anna's 10 Key Words:

Words
Exposed
Vulnerable
Hanging
Movement
Inhabiting
Paradox
Becoming together
A rhythm shared
In free fall
Margi – Session 3 Collage

Margi’s 10 key Words:
Clarity
Sings
Separate
Silenced
‘Its not the words’
Sight
Opening
Within
Bound
Clean lines
11. The Researcher's Reflections on the Data

11.1 Identifying common features

As the researcher my task is to now reflect on the data from the inquiry. My rational for what I might do now has been presented in 10.2-1. These reflections have been formed without any further contact with the participants for the purpose of this inquiry.

This reflection was carried out with the aim of identifying common features from the seven streams of data in order to articulate what might be known about the 'phenomena of improvising'. It is a change in the focus of the inquiry and it is my attempt to consider the aggregate materials of the inquiry and identify and present patterns from within them.

I refer to Willis (2001, p.11) who when presenting a phenomenological approach to research, suggests that identifying key features can be approached 'by using various texts from various perspectives to generate a 'layered picture' rather like a series of transparencies overlaid on an overhead projector. These are then explored for common elements that recur not in the ideas of the thing but in its experience narrated from different points of view.'

In a MIECAT approach the aim at this stage in an inquiry is to consider the materials in an attempt to identify themes or patterns from within it. Allen (Miecat course notes) defines 'themes' as "the prominent or frequently recurring approximations of meaning resulting from experiencing, re-experiencing, attending, accessing, representation, description, keywords -images-feelings listing, intrasubjective depiction, intersubjective responses'.

I have identified common features from within the data (the key words only) by applying five procedures:

1. Listing the key words (10 x 7 = 70)
2. Pooling the words randomly
3. Clustering the words according to similar meanings
4. Naming the clusters
5. Sequencing the clusters
This process is detailed as follows:

**11.1-1 Listing the 70 key words**

- Unarticulated
- Leaning
- Transparent
- Substantial
- Emerging
- Becoming
- Being with each other
- One
- Many
- Open
- Learning
- Play
- Fun
- Others
- Relationship
- Moving
- Space
- Present
- Moment
- In between
- Possibilities
- Releasing
- Grasp
- Mmoving
- Falling
- Exploring
- This falling
- Being
- Here, now
- Noticing
- Wide-focus
Body-mind
Weight
Release
Following
Motion-impulse
Of body

Vibrant
Red
Blood
Heart sight
Rich
Musical
Undone
Expansive
Unique

Words
Exposed
Vulnerable
Hanging
Movement
Inhabiting
Paradox
Becoming together
A rhythm shared
In free fall

Clarity
Sings
Separate
Silenced
‘its not the words’
sight
opening within bound clean lines
11.1-2 Randomly pooling the words

Unarticulated leaning  Transparent
Substantial  Possibilities
Emerging
Becoming  Moment  In between
Being with each other  Present  Releasing
Grasping  moving
Falling  Exploring  This falling  Being
Here, now  Noticing  Release  Vibrant
Red  Blood
Heart  sight  Following  Motion-impulse
Of body  Wide-focus  Body-mind  Weight  Rich
Musical  Sings
Separate  Undone  Expansive  Unique
Words  Exposed  Vulnerable  Hanging  Movement
Inhabiting  Paradox  Becoming together  A rhythm shared
In free fall  Clarity  Silenced  ‘its not the words’  Sight
Opening  Within  Bound
            Clean lines

11.1-3 Clustering the words, naming and sequencing the clusters

In clustering these words, I initially combined them into groups that appeared to have similar meanings or connotations, and then named each group. I then listed these groups in a sequence that to me was meaningful within the context of my exposure to the data as it had accumulated throughout the inquiry.

The Word Clusters
inhabiting
of body
body-mind
substantial

Naming the Clusters
embodied
The Word Clusters

within Relationship
separate bound unique
unarticulated leaning
becoming together
a Rhythm Shared
following
being with other
being one paradox relational
exploring
learning
noticing
wide-focus exploring

words
‘its not the words’
silenced
sings musical sounding

rich
play
fun
vibrant
red heart playfulness

transparent
sight
sight
clarity clean lines seeing
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Word Clusters</th>
<th>Naming the Clusters</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>moving</td>
<td>moving</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>moving</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>motion-impulse</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>release</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>releasing</td>
<td>releasing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>undoing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>falling</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>falling</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>in free fall</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hanging</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>in fall</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>grasp</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>exposed</td>
<td>vulnerable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vulnerable</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>open</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>space</td>
<td>opening</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>opening</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>emerging</td>
<td>emerging</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>becoming</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>possibilities</td>
<td>emerging</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
11.2 The cluster names

These are the cluster names: Embodied
Relational
Exploring
Sounding
Playfulness
Seeing
Moving
Releasing
In free fall
Vulnerable
Opening
Emerging

11.3 Forming a creative synthesis

I now, on the basis of these ‘clustered’ and ‘named’ word groupings, and a re-reading of the data from the inquiry have formed a synthesis of what appears to be prominent elements or essences from within the experience of improvising.

I have found relatively few guidelines as to how to go about forming such a synthesis, but both Clark Moustakas (Heuristic research) and Warren Lett (MIECAT) comment on this.

Moustakas (1990, p.32) speaks of the challenge ‘to put the components and core themes into a creative synthesis’ which ‘usually takes the form of a narrative depiction utilizing verbatim material and examples, but it may be expressed as a poem, story, drawing, painting, or by some other creative form’.

Lett (2001, p.13) suggests that a synthesis: ‘does not necessarily imply generalization or theory building’ and that it ‘does not mean a survey of all knowings. It is in some sense a statement of what is important and how it is experienced in the living of the life….However, the artistry of constituting significance is the last integrative task of the research’
**11.3-1 A synthesis in the form of a composite poem**

In forming a synthesis I commenced with these word clusters, particularly the cluster names, and then in a sense, wove these words together into a ‘broad net’ which I then ‘trawled’ through the materials of the inquiry – (letting my attention) catch what it might.

This resulted in identifying and gathering words and phrases that resonated from both within the ‘group of 70 words’ and from a further reading of the data. I have responded to the material as it now presents and speaks to me, and I have only included the words and phrases of the participants themselves.

This synthesis is a statement shaped by my own subjectivity when prioritising and selecting the words and phrases from within the overall body of the research material, but one in which I have attempted as much as possible to bracket aside my own pre-conceptions and attempt to let the material speak for itself.

I hoped that this might provide an opportunity for patterns within the material to come forth, spill over, and become a part of this synthesis. And as it turned out it was something like this, it was as though there was a coalescence. This was not a laboured attempt to synthesise the material, nor an attempt to incorporate all key aspects, but one in which patterns emerged.
The Synthesis

We start from where we are
with what we have
with what we are

and immerse in
an experiential stream
flowing
unfolding emerging
words and images appearing

in free fall

in an interactive web
that engages nourishes provides generously.

Inhabiting this moment together,
reveals the possibilities of the moment, inhabited together.
open eyed awareness, in this there may be a constant,
an attentive vigilance
a vigilant attentiveness

Being
sensitive to
and responding to
that which is emerging,
that which has incorporated many parts into one body,

it is as though we are all within this creature,
this improvisation,
as it emerges and takes form moment by moment,
sensitive to its circumstance,
fluid, transparent and yet substantial.
Heart, blood, alive, common to us,
Isolated cells
    in
relationship to
each other
and in
between runs a
    river of red, much strong red.

Places of possibility
Places of transition, choices are available here
    choices, to linger, to move on, to release, to grasp, to drop
    choices, responding, being filled, changing form

Relationships between each other and to the overall
    separate and overlapping
    within, between, shaping, being shaped by,
    born of many different qualities
    moving together
    receiving and responding
    in our own way
    in our own time
    be-coming together.

Spheres of influence and receptiveness
    The domain of shaping and of being shaped.

    Leaning
away
    from myself
    I find that
I lean
    into myself.
    this emerging
    expanding
    self.
12. The Researcher’s Reflections on the Inquiry

This is the end of the inquiry process, and I now review what I have come to understand from the research endeavour by considering:

a) The content of the Inquiry - The experience of improvising, the phenomena of improvising, and
b) The context of an inquiry – setting up and carrying through the inquiry.

12.1 The content of the inquiry

I had originally set out to inquire into the experience of improvising in the small group. This had its origins in the regular group discussions that had followed our improvising about our experiences during the sessions and I hoped that this inquiry would provide the means to consider our experiences in a more structured way. It was anticipated that the form of inquiry might be patterned on the form of our discussions.

12.1-1 Naming the focus

Soon after the initial group discussions about the possibility of participating in an inquiry, I became aware of the significance of naming the focus of the inquiry. It was a challenge to simply name the focus with clarity, and it appeared that this naming would shape the form of the inquiry as well as the form of the data. In now reviewing the inquiry it is apparent that the content of the data is directly related to the initial aim of the inquiry – whether it be into identifying essential features of the phenomena itself or into the experiences of the participants – both valid focuses but with different implications.

This distinction was unclear when I commenced but became evident as the inquiry proceeded.

12.1-2 The emergence of experience

In our group discussions following individual sessions (these being prior to and independent of this inquiry), we often shared our sense of the emergence of material.

We noted that a theme or focus emerged during our improvising and we referred to this as the ‘score’. This focus (whether single or multiple) seemed to be emerging from, and coming into the foreground of the group experience.
At times it seemed possible to identify what each of us might be contributing to this emerging focus, whilst at other times the focus was unexpected and seemed to be unrelated to our individual contributions. The context of collaborative emergence is commented on by Halling (2005, p.1) who writes: ‘We say that we ‘conduct’ a conversation, but the more fundamental a conversation is, the less its conduct lies within the will of either partner. In reflection we realize that we arrived at a new understanding by giving our full attention to something that really mattered to us and to our partners in conversation and through our willingness to be ‘carried away’.

12.1-3 Co-creation

The inquiry had been a collaborative, co-creative dialogue which culminated in identifying key words and forming a collage. The constructivist position supports the notion that meanings are formed in the context of the dialogue, and as such we have not set out to uncover pre-existing meanings. Lett (2001, p.14) articulates this: ‘From an interactionalist perspective, the respondent is part of the creation of experiential meaning, through his own response… This is significant, because it means we do not discover an existing ‘essence’, something fixed but hitherto unaccessed, but we assist in the co-creation of one’.

There was no attempt by myself as the researcher to remain outside of the research, also no attempt to identify something in isolation about the experience of each participant, nor an attempt to uncover the ‘essence’ of improvising. It is acknowledged that what is presented here are materials that have been co-created in dialogue.

As a consequence it is not possible to isolate what was distinctly the material of each participant and how it may have been shaped by my responses during the dialogue. I had at all times attempted to maintain an emphasis on the participants material by using their own words as the basis for my various responses and to retain an allegiance to the integrity of their material. It is now evident though that whether the focus of the inquiry was into the experiencing of participants, or into the phenomena of improvising, the data has been formed collaboratively – it has an infused mutuality to it.

Halling (2005, p.8) cites George Gusdorf as stating ‘Speaking is not merely a means of expression, but a constitutive element of human reality’. This seems to be the nature of a collaborative inquiry as well as of group improvisation, it is constituted and shaped by the very nature of communicating and sharing. The word ‘speaking’ in the above quote
can be extended to include any communication mode, whether that be moving, drawing, touching or looking.

12.1-4 The composite poem

The composite poem is my attempt to say something about the phenomena of improvising. This has been reduced and articulated from its origins which were the reflections of each of the participants. The line by line detail within this composite poem could well be considered more thoroughly, expanded upon or used as the basis for a more extended statement or reflection on improvisation.

But I am comfortable that this poem speaks for itself. As a statement it is a coalescence of numerous facets of the experience of improvising, and if I were to further reduce what was now significant to 10 key words, then these would be:

- immersing
- inhabiting
- together
- trusting
- flowing
- unfolding
- transitions
- choices
- emerging
- shaping

Immersing in, being shaped by, exercising choices, and emergence are some of the essential features of collaborating and co-creating in the contexts of both improvising and of inquiring.

12.2 The context of the inquiry

I have previously presented and detailed the various inquiry steps and procedures of the inquiry and these are documented in the chart on pages 21 - 23. A further clarification of the mechanisms of the inquiry is presented here in the following chart and includes an outline of what ‘was done’ at each step of the inquiry, the MIECAT procedures that were utilized, and how they were implemented.
### 12.2-1 The what and how of the inquiry – in MIECAT terms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase 1</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>What was done</strong></td>
<td><strong>How it was done</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| CONSIDERATIONS for an INQUIRY | Discussions with a group of improvisers with a history of working together.  
Collaborative development of the focus for an inquiry. |
| The IMPROVISATIONAL EXPERIENCE | Improvising together as a small group for one and a half hours.  
Access to and immersion in the experience of improvising. |
| GENERATING the INITIAL DATA – DATA 1. | Talking and drawing simultaneously on a single shared sheet of paper.  
A group reflection on, and representation of, the experience. |
| PREPARATION of the DATA. | The researcher compiles and distributes the data.  
Transcribes the audiotape, photocopies the group drawing, sends to participants. |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase 2</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>What was done</strong></td>
<td><strong>How it was done</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PARTICIPANTS (Alone) REFLECT ON AND REDUCE THE DATA.</td>
<td>Reflecting on the data, responding to it, reducing it. A ‘free’ writing response to the data, and writing a ‘key’ poem.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RESEARCHER’S RESPONSE TO THE PARTICIPANTS’ REFLECTION</td>
<td>(a) Reduction of the material. (b) Forming an Intersubjective Response. © Offering this in context of overall material.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(a) Reading, spontaneous underlining and compiling of words. (b) Responding to the compilation and creating a poem. © Forming a scroll.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PARTICIPANTS’ REDUCTION and REPRESENTATION – DATA 2</td>
<td>(a) Reflection on the scroll. (b) Representing what is now significant. © Identifying key aspects.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(a) Reading the scroll and looking at images. (b) Creating a collage from photocopies of the initial data. © Identifying 10 key words.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Phase 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What was done</th>
<th>How it was done</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>RESEARCHER REFLECTS ON DATA</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(a) Redefining the intention of the inquiry.</td>
<td>(a) reflecting on my current understanding of the focus and outcomes of the inquiry.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(b) Pooling the key words.</td>
<td>(b) Combining the words at random.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(c) Clustering these words.</td>
<td>(c) Grouping words according to similar meanings.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(d) Naming the clusters.</td>
<td>(d) Identifying one word which carries the meaning of the cluster.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(e) Forming a creative synthesis.</td>
<td>(e) Reflecting on clusters and Data 2, and writing a composite poem.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| **RESEARCHER’S FINAL REFLECTIONS UPON THE INQUIRY.** | |
| What do I now know now about: | Identifying what now stands out about: |
| (a) The content of the inquiry. | (a) The experience of improvising. |
| (b) The context of the inquiry. | (b) The form of the inquiry, and the MIECAT procedures used. |

### 12.2-2 A summation of inquiry attributes

In reflection I have identified several significant personal understandings about this approach to an inquiry. These are now detailed.

### 12.2-3 Emergence of the inquiry form

Halling (2005, p.4) comments on the nature of a collaborative inquiry, and states that ‘It is not so much a method, in the sense that that one follows predefined steps, as the process of discovery that takes place when a group of researchers sets out to study a phenomenon in a profoundly collaborative way’.
This is a succinct summary of what now stands out for me about the inquiry. The MIECAT methodology supports collaboration within an inquiry, it provides a scaffold with which to approach an inquiry, and provides procedures, processes and steps with which to inquire. But it allows the ‘process of discovery’ to prevail, allows for the emergence of the form of the inquiry and the resultant data.

The form of this inquiry has maintained some close parallels to the improvisational process. There has been a limited structuring in advance, the inquiry has taken its form through our ongoing collaborative considerations, through selecting ‘on the go’ what seemed to be the next appropriate step in the process of inquiring.

The collaborative and dialogue phases (1 and 2) of the inquiry can be described as a ‘purposeful conversation’. A conversation in which I as the researcher was fully involved, whilst being attentive to ensure that it was the experience of the participants that remained the focus.

On reflection it appears that there are close parallels here to therapy, where the experience of the client remains the focus, but where understandings, clarifications and insights emerge from within the context of relational sharing. This is the domain of conversation, co-creation, collaboration, and co-construction of meanings and outcomes. This is a conversation that remains true to its purpose – to inquire into life experiences, and to facilitate the emergence of understandings.

12.2-4 An underpinning (soft) rigor

I have found that an element of ‘rigor’ was necessary to maintain and contain the inquiry. Rigour implying a clarity of intent and purpose in carrying through the inquiry, and in making decisions regarding appropriate inquiry procedures and considering ‘where to next’.

This was appropriate when creating limits and in identifying landmarks within the process of inquiring. This was particularly relevant because of the open-ended nature of the inquiry, coupled with the tendency for improvisational activities to rapidly broaden or to veer off into new directions.
The conceptual scaffold mentioned in Sections 5.1 and 5.3 was of benefit in ensuring an ongoing adherence to MIECAT principles and in maintaining an ability throughout the inquiry to name and articulate what was occurring at any time, as well to provide a rationale for decisions and choices as they were being made.

12.2-5 Further understanding reflective positions

A number of reflective positions can be identified from which we attend to our experiencing. Each of these has had a place in the inquiry, and each can be identified within the context of improvising.

Pre-reflective or straightforward experiencing according to (Spinelli 1995, p.24) is ‘action based’ and is ‘timeless because it always functions in the ‘now’ of any event’. It involves our immediate immersion in experience, and our attempt to maintain it involves letting our experience remain uninterrupted by interpretation, whilst our experiencing continued to emerge.

Reflective experiencing is where there is a separation in place or time from the event hence providing the opportunity to reflect back upon. This involves our attempt to render our experiences meaningful through understanding and interpretation.

And a fusion of these two forms is the domain of Reflection in action or reflecting ‘on the go’ from within the immediacy of our experiencing. It is here that discernment takes place and decisions are made whilst we are in the midst of doing. Phrases such as ‘thinking on our feet’, ‘keeping your wits about you’, ‘making sense of’ are applicable here, when maintaining a sense of context and perspective in the midst of action is required.

This inquiry has involved an intertwining of each of these reflective positions, positions which may be best described as being tendencies within the spectrum of our awareness of our experiencing.

There were times in the inquiry when it was important to let things run their course, for data to be generated without restriction, to let experience pour forth. There were times when discernment and decision making was required in the moment, on the go. And finally there was the opportunity to review the data at the end of the inquiry with time to dwell upon and consider what was now meaningful.
12.2-6 The outcome

This inquiry has developed with what I will refer to as a combination of the precise and of the poetic. The precision being in the capacity to name and articulate the structure of the inquiry which can be justified both within the overall context of research possibilities as well as within the methodology of MIECAT constructs.

The poetic being the very nature of our experiencing, of making meaning from our experiences and in attempting to communicate and share this with others. Most of the content of the collaborative and dialogical parts of the inquiry has been an attempt to articulate and represent what had been experienced whilst improvising and to share this with the other participants and with myself as the researcher.

Edwards (2005, p.1) refers to this attempt within a dialogue when he states:

'Everyday experience is founded on implicational cognition, much of which is not verbally formulated. An unacknowledged aspect of debate is individuals’ attempts to negotiate the expression of their unformulated experience'.

The poetic has been the mode in which experience has been articulated. Our personal and shared attempts to express our unformulated experience has a direct parallel with the attempt to identify what is significant within a body of data (the material of the inquiry). The poetic enables the opportunity to be both succinct as well as to ‘hint at’ in our attempt to name what is becoming known.

In this sense I have felt well supported by a quote from Willis (2001, p.9) who, in the context of considering how a creative synthesis may be formed, writes:

'We begin to discern the silence in the writing – the cultivation of one’s being, from which the words begin to proliferate in haltingly issued groupings, then finally in a carefully written work, much less completed than interrupted, a blushing response to a call to say something worth saying…’

THE END
13. Bibliography


Heron, J., Reason, P. 1997 A Participative Inquiry Paradigm, Qualitative Inquiry, Vol 3, No 3.


Monturio, A. publication date unavailable. Creativity, Complexity and Improvisation in Daily Life. Notes from the California Institute of Integral Studies.


Wunder, A. (Publication date unknown) Teaching Improvisation, Positive feedback (Section 1), Proximity, Vol 1, Ed 3, p 17.
14. Appendix 1

The complete body of data that has formed the basis for this research is included here. One stream of material, Anna’s, was included in the assignment by example. The remaining six streams are presented in this sequence:

Session 1
Clare
Barry

Session 2
Margi
Clare

Session 3
Anna
Margi

In presenting the material of Clare from the first session, the letters of request regarding the next response in the dialogue are included. This provides a more complete record of the dialogue. The materials of each stream are presented here in the sequence of formation from during the inquiry, this being:

1) The group drawing
2) The transcript of the ‘talking whilst drawing’
3) The letter of request – letter 1
4) The response
   a) free writing
   b) essence poem
5) The Researcher’s response
   a) compiled underlining
   b) intersubjective response
6) The letter of request – letter 2
7) Participants’ response
   a) the collage
   b) the 10 key words
14.1 Session 1

The Group Drawing

The Transcript

Staying with what is happening.

We were just leaning against each other for quite a long time.

It felt safe to just do that for quite a long time.

It seems to take a lot at times to be at ease with just allowing it to happen.

Sometimes I am feeling as though I am wasting time and then with a small turn of attitude I am more present to what is happening for me now.

Trusting in each other, trusting in the process.

Trusting that something will happen.
I feel confident in us being together, we have been improvising together for quite a long time now.

I find that I do not need to feel too accountable for what I do, I mean, you all have a choice about what you do with what I bring forward. You have a choice about what you do with it.

I feel vulnerable at times, just being here, but it seems to give me some license to be myself.

There is something important for me in the not questioning from where what I am doing is coming from.

I see somebody doing something and I feel that I can do that also, and I do. This feels as though I am becoming more than I thought I was capable of.

I have a sense of accepting others’ ideas and of being accepted.

A multiplicity of things are happening and I feel as though I can just move in and out.

I can focus on my own activity, or I can be aware of others and be influenced by them or move between these.

It feels as though there is more to me, that I have access to more than my own movements.

Who would have known that it would end up as it did? Sometimes we experience something but we seem to ‘have forgotten to assign meaning to it’. This is a quote from somewhere, and it seems to be true of what I feel here.

I feel that I can go from one experience to another without clearly assigning meanings.

Maybe there can be a felt meaning, there can be meaning which is not articulated, almost like dreaming.

A betwixt state, both responding and reflecting in the moment.

The experience goes somewhere, not necessarily where I expected it to.

It’s a little like kids bumping around in the playground, something is expressed and communicated.

Things seem to surface, things that I was not so aware of, unexpected things just seem to happen.
It involves being present to what is appearing and to others.

It is to do with meaning being what we are doing.

There is an ease about being together in this situation.

The meaning may be in the feeling, and this may be enough.

I wonder if, and how, we take this experience back into our lives away from this situation. Being here seems to give context to other things in my life.

The meaning may be in just being. Freeing up and allowing.

There is a certain freedom in being able to put out there what arises for me.

This seems to have elements of free association and of active imagination.

It feels like being with life as it is, rather than making a construct of it. It seems to flow on into my life.

It involves allowing experience to present and to just let it be.
Dear Clare,

As you are aware I am currently involved in my MIECAT Masters Research Project, which is an inquiry into ‘the experience of improvisation’.

The focus of the inquiry is on what was experienced and meaningful for you, as a participant, during the times when we improvised together on Wednesday mornings with the ‘emerging score’. I am using the material (data) which was gathered from 3 sessions in which there were 3 or 4 participants in each. This material is from the drawing/talking reflection which we did following the improv session together.

From each session I have the drawing (of which I send you a reduced copy) and a tape (from which I send you a transcript). I have not specified the speakers in the transcript and I have documented it in a way which (for me) reflects a certain randomness in the form of the discussion. At times the discussions were more conversational, but most of the time they were in the form of more isolated statements/musings.

In this next stage of working with this material I would ask that:

1. You spend some time looking at the drawing and reading the 2 pages of transcript.
2. Then write up to one page in free form writing (this maintains an element of the improvisational context) in response to the drawing, to the 2 sheets and to any memories you may have of the session.
3. You are then asked to identify what most stands out for you (the essence of) from this page you have just written.
4. Then write a haiku like verse as an expression of this essence. The verse is to be of 5 lines in length, and up to 8 words per line.
5. Send me the one page of free writing and the verse (on separate sheets) in the envelope provided. Feel free to keep the drawing and the transcript which I have sent you. If you were present at more than one session please specify the response as being to sessions 1, 2 or 3.
Your participation in the process would then have involved:

1. The Improvisation
2. The drawing-talking reflection
3. Free form written response to the drawing and the transcript
4. The essence verse

I highly value your involvement and support with this project. I will keep you informed on further developments and I do hope that you will remain available for a further response if required. It is my desire to continue to collaboratively involve the group in the formation of this paper.

Kevin
Clare’s response:

Free Writing
Being with what is the experience of just being present that is what improvisation is to me this is the meditation of improvisation I sometimes feel frustrated by the constant need in me to make meaning out of everything. The release I feel in impro is the release from this making of meaning I become an animal. Carefree, instinctive, being in the moment, playful, aware of where I end and another begins, respectful, allowing one moment to flow into the next,

One idea to transform into another into a story into a game into another whole universe. What is the purpose is this purpose able to be applied therapeutically if so then reflection needs to happen at the end, does a ‘witness’ need to be present to the impro experience or not or does the therapist improvise with client, entering into the transforming moment the transforming play that evolves when the censor, editor the constant chitter chatter floats away after a time after a warm up after feeling the need to be there is gone and that part of self is free to go and soak its feet in a clear cool stream and lie on warm sand looking up into the clear sunny blue sky through the dappled green of leaves and tree branches that create a lattice work that allows the imagination to play and enter a magical realm that takes that part of self on a complete holiday. Meanwhile the rest of self is enjoying the holiday as well and is moving playing laughing smiling, bending dropping, smoothing, flying, talking, whatever it feels like, moving in the moment, responding, instinctively, kinesthetically, enthusiastically, happily, joyfully, what play, what joy I feel when this all happens to and for me and with you all I feel free I feel us creating a game of joy and fun and sacredness and solemn-ness and a space where we all are in just being just being just being here in the moment it makes me smile it animates me it juices me my soul and I take it into my week my life my love of life I am reconnected through our play our co-creation together I am connected again to life to this planet to this soul to life energy and I relish it I love it a good improvisation is like love is life life is an improvisation the answer for me to existential anxiety is “IMPROVISE” this always makes me laugh when I read it on my fridge and I say it and it releases me from the ‘should’s’ the ‘ought to be’s’ the expectations and it helps me find the present moment and to live joyfully.

Essence poem

Being free to play
In, with, transforming moment
Release joyful life
Step 1 – Compiled underlining

Being with what is just being present
this is the meditation of improvisation.

The release I feel in impro is the release from (this) making of meaning.

Carefree
Being in the moment
Playful
Respectful
Allowing
one moment to flow into the next
one idea to transform into another

entering into the transforming moment
the transforming play
allows the imagination to play.

moving playing laughing smiling bending dropping smoothing flying talking.

moving in the moment
responding instinctively.

what joy I feel when this all happens
all are in just being
just being
here
in the moment.

I take it into (my week) my life.

I am reconnected through our play
our co-creation together.

It releases me from the ‘should’s’
the ‘ought to’s’
the expectations.

Free transforming moment release.

**Step 2 - Intersubjective Response**

I find myself
flooded by am image
of chimpanzees
swinging from
tree to tree.

Releasing the grasp
in order to move on from
the last tree
to be ready and open
to grasp the next one,

The unseen bridge between being one
of controlled free fall.

and grasping the next…….

Each tree being a
world unto itself,
where we may linger should we choose,
but
this momentum of
moving through, from one tree to the next,
reaching with one arm and then with the next,
carries us forward
pausing to eat ripe fruit, should we so choose.
Dear Clare,

I am in the final stages of gathering ‘data’ for my Masters Research Assignment, and this will now be the final interaction in our ‘dialogue’.

You will find attached a scroll (sheets of paper, joined into one continual length), which document your involvement until this point in time with my research into the ‘Experience of Vocal and Movement Improvisation in a Small Group’.

On this scroll, from the top sheet down, there is a record of:

- The group drawing done immediately following the improvisation.
- The transcript of the ‘talking’ whilst drawing the above.
- Your Intrasubjective response to these – one page of free writing and an essence poem.
- My Intra and Intersubjective response to your writing and poem – this is the last on the scroll.

You will also find two A4 sized reduced copies of the group drawing and an A3 sheet of white paper.

I ask that you read my Intersubjective Response (ISR) – the last sheet on the scroll, and to then create a further response to my ISR.

I ask that this be in a specific form - create a **collage on an A3 sheet**. The source material for your collage is the 2 copies of the original drawing.

Please cut, paste (on the A4 sheet) and work with this in a way that represents your response to my ISR, and to what now stands out for you in your experience of Improvisation in a small group. This could be called a ‘creative synthesis’ of what it is that is significant for you from the experience of improvising in this small group. You may add words and other art mediums to the collage.

Would you then choose 10 key words that reflect what is now significant for you about your experience of improvising, and send these separate from the collage.

Thankyou so much for your contribution.

Kevin
Clare - Creative Synthesis

The Collage

10 Key words
Present
Moment
In Between
Possibilities
Releasing
Grasp
Moving
Falling
Exploring
This Falling
14.1-2 Anna – Session 1

Anna’s responses are included as the example within the body of the assignment, hence not repeated here.

14.1-3 Barry – Session 1

Free writing

As I look at the drawing I feel that something very beautiful was created in that session. I felt when I first saw the photocopy of it I wanted to frame it and show it to other people. The drawing had captured the sharing feeling that we have developed. There is something very special happening in the group for me and it came out in this group effort.

As I read the transcript I get the feeling of a great adventure. It seems that I can trust people and take a risk but I also know that I have to take my time – I feel very confident of being myself and letting life happen.

It seems I can learn to be more myself and be more confident about being myself and that it is OK for others when I do so. I don't have to feel restricted. It is good to be able to reveal my fragility to other people. I sense as I experience my life more fully that I become more authentic.

When I read about school kids bumping into each other I sensed that was very true. How lovely to enjoy other people so closely. It all seems so true and somehow very spiritual for me.

It makes life very special in an ordinary way. The meaning is in just ‘being’. It seems so simple. Life feels free and beautiful, how lucky to be able to experience so deeply.

What stands out for me most, freedom, experiencing, bumping into people, living in the now, learning, relationships, fun, humanity, being ordinary, spirituality, working with others.

Essence poem

How beautiful the drawing of my day
We danced together in our ordinary way
Confident that our dance would create our relationship
Not scared to reveal our strength or fragility
We bumped into each other in total freedom.
The drawing had captured

the

shared feeling.

There is something very special in the group for me.

I get the feeling of a great adventure.

Take a risk

Being myself

Letting life happen.

To reveal my fragility to other people.

to enjoy other people so closely.

Very special in an ordinary way.

Bumping into people.

Relationships.

Working with others.

We danced together in

our ordinary way,

not scared to reveal

our strength

or fragility.
Step 2 - Intersubjective Response:

This extraordinary dance of ordinary people.

Sharing
Risking
Revealing
Enjoying
Bumping
Trusting
Relating

Dancing together in their (extra)ordinary way.

Sharing
Risking
Revealing
Enjoying
Bumping
Trusting
Relating

Dancing together in their ordinary way.
Barry - Creative Synthesis

The Collage

10 Key words

One
Many
Open
Learning
Play
Fun
Others
Relationship
Moving
Space
I enjoyed focusing on the experience of the inside of my body, rather than on the outside. The bits, the bits that combine to make the whole, or at least are in relationship to each other in some way. I like it when there is not a strongly stated agenda, it is the opposite to how I normally am in my life. When we get together we wait for something to surface, for something to appear, and we continue to do this during the session. I am different each day, it feels different each day, but the bouncing around in conversation, stories, movement is somehow the same - this bouncing around. We didn't move.
around as much today (this may be related to being outside as the key to the hall had been misplaced) but the form of the day seemed very mobile. I was aware of the things in the distance—trees, helicopter, birds. It reminds me of when as a child the outside world became the set for the games that we played. I didn’t follow as many of my impulses today, I went more with quietness. The inside of my body became the place of focus and it was like an inner journey. There seems to have been no strong rules, I wonder if there may have been unspoken ones. Is there such a thing as ‘no score’?

There may be no stated score, but there is this emerging score. Knowing each other well seems to be important for the emerging score to work. To work with the emerging score, it is as though there needs to be much trust of each other and less judgment. There was a sense of play. I have noticed the censor inside my head today and have felt stuck. The drawing we are now doing seems to have lots of empty space and that is how I have felt today. I felt less in contact with others today. I was attending to myself and for much of the time I felt less interested in being in relationship. Some isolation.

I was being more focused on myself, more contained within myself. Connecting.

Possibilities.

Focal points.
This purple crayon fell on the ground, and I picked it up and made a purple moon.

Today was an unfolding of unanticipated direction. Synaptic connections. Threads of connection. How meaningful the improvisation is, or may become, the form or the shape of the day may well be a product of where we each are when we commence.

We seemed to spend much of the time meeting each other today.

I often feel as though I need to seek permission before I move into another person’s space. I didn’t move as much today and I feel somewhat disconnected. It felt skeletal. I stretched and sat on the park bench and looked into the blue sky. Blue moon ... I see you standing alone ... for me it was deliciously wonderful.

Today I have a sense that what I arrived with, what 1 brought with me is reflected in how we were together. Some space has been left untouched. Synaptic connections.

No(h) awareness of time.

Threads.
Free writing

Is there such a thing as no score?

cop inside my head

Today I have a sense that what I arrived with, what I brought with me

Is reflected in how we

Were

Together.

An independent unit – surrounded by white…(image)….again – what I brought with me…

Compact

Separate

Clean lines

But there is connection… blood connection… veins… into the veins. Connection through our veins… through blood that is connected to the purple moon

Flowing

At one

Connected but controlled

Many thoughts

Head 10 x’s the

Size of the body

(which has no feet, no hands….)

pause

No hands. But hands have been

Drawn by someone else above me…

So they are there. But not my hands……

Takes me back to the

Handless maiden meeting

We had at the cottage

Last year….

I feel smile towards ‘me’, the depiction in session 2.

Clear

Complex
Connected
    Yet connection could so
    Easily be cut off… but
    If it is, perhaps I
    Would not live
    Without
    Purple and red blood
    Running through my
    Veins…

    Through the NECK
    Flows the veins…

**Essence poem**
    I live inside my head
    its big there
        my body moves
        but the richness
    is inside
    fed by the blood of
            others.....
The Researcher’s Response

Step 1 – Compiled Underlining
This is a sequence of words, phrases and sentences which I have spontaneously underlined (intrasubjective response) as I read your response and essence poem.

Inside my head
What I have arrived with (today)
what I brought with me
is reflected in how we were

An independent unit
I brought with me

But there is connection
connection

But controlled head
connection
could so easily

I would not live

without purple and red blood veins

My heart is in my head

but

the richness is inside

fed by the blood of others.
Step 2 - Intersubjective Response:
This day
(I arrive as an independent unit) this day.

Inside
   my head purple and red blood
   pulses
inside
   my head. The heart of humanity
   pulses
inside
   my head.

A vein
a common vein
a vein
   common to us.

A heart
a common heart
a heart
   common to us.
Margi - Creative Synthesis

The Collage

10 Key Words

Vibrant
Red
Blood
Heart
Sight
Rich
Musical
Undone
Expansive
Unique
Free writing

Two of us are good friends me the third a sore neck feeling a little shy but going with whatever happens going with what is might be a good improvisation – there you are a qualifier a quality judgement has already got into my system like a computer virus into the synapses between me and my thoughts the scientific always comes into my conversation I did science when I first left school I feel shy I feel young I feel sore I feel my neck is sore, stiff, I have not been sleeping very well, slept on my neck funny, chitter chatter chitterchatter the fifteenth of May three days before the community meeting I was glad to have got here at all working with what is enjoying the going with no key but missing the lush fleshy movement I really enjoy moving I am relying somehow on these sessions to get into my body which is why I feel release as these experiences reconnect me. I should – there you go the 'should's' have arrived on the scene the field the battle yes sometimes it is a battle for me with these 'should's'. I need I want to find a routine a habit – a positive habit a practice of finding that space that connection with self with my body with the life energy by myself yoga, meditation, how does one improvise with oneself I enjoy improvising with others the energy of a group of people small or large is so generous so motivating for me it frees me such an extravert I am well I suppose I am also myself by my alone self and I enjoy I do enjoy my own company but that chitter chatter discipline that's what I need. This is what has kept me separate this morning but even allowing myself to be here to be there in that chitter chatter space is the impro to work with what is to regard what is with an open eye/s with an open mind to hold at bay even the chitter chatter that questions and overlays even this process. Layers my body is my release, I sometimes have said I wish I didn’t have a head and a new friend just told me that he wishes sometimes that he could be a brain in a box. I think we are opposites we are also in a similar predicament somehow I don’t trust my mind my head and maybe he doesn’t trust his body. Learning to trust my mind learning to trust myself.

Essence poem

Chitter chatter head
What is here, now, even this
Trusting in myself
Step 1 – Compiled underlining

But going with whatever happens
  going with what is….  Chitter chatter chitter chatter

Missing the lush fleshy movement
  I really enjoy moving.

I am somehow  relying on these sessions
  to get into my body.
  these experiences re-connect me.

A practice of finding that space
  that connection
    with self
    with body.

How does one improvise with oneself?
  I enjoy improvising with others
    the energy of the group
      is so generous
        so motivating for me.

But even allowing myself  to be here
  to be there
    in that chitter chatter space
      is
        the impro to work with.

Open eyes
Open mind

My body is my release
  head body
Learning to trust myself
  what is here, now, even this
Step 2 - Intersubjective Response
Connection with head
Connection with body

The chitter chatter may very well be as rich and valid a place to start as any, but once embodied

whooowooosh

Connection to self
Connection to other

By entering the experiential stream immersed flowing unfolding emerging (score)

the interactive web engages nourishes provides generously.
The Collage

10 Key Words
Being
Here, now
Noticing
Wide-focus
Body-mind
Weight
Release
Following
Motion-impulse
Of body
14.3 Session 3

The Group Drawing

The Transcript

Even with a set score, it seems to evolve over time. We go along with what happens. It doesn’t get bogged down. There feels as though there is a genuine interest in each other. We each tell or show our stories. It feels as though it is intimately related to our lives. It is as though we have no need to impress each other. I always like to have something concrete come out of the activity. We talked much today, but the process seems to parallel how it is when we move more. I think that we (humans) are predominately thinking beings, but here we attempt to reclaim other modes of dialogue and communication. As we spend a couple of hours together, something always happens which was unanticipated. Today I was moving and as we began to tell
I began to feel a need to be more still and attentive to them (stories). Then after a while I needed to move again. Today the activity felt denser. It felt anchored. Your drawing has influenced mine. We are smudging as we draw.

Today we spoke more, moved less and stories unfolded. It felt as though there was trust and openness to each other. Some things are difficult for me to language, and I noticed that I then began to move. Our activity feels like an open ended conversation. There are minimal ‘have to’s’. Most of the time we play around and respond to each other.

Something in my body responds. Embodiment. It feels as though words which come forth are received and responded to by others in the group. It is as though they take on a form. I find that I often put myself on the edge where it is not so comfortable. Does challenge need to be uncomfortable? I often feel challenged here, but I am willing to explore this as I feel I can trust the situation. I feel as though I have some control over how much I am pushed to extend myself. There is respect between us about limits. It leaves me with choice. When we move or talk I am never sure where it will go next. There was a moment when I was not moving and I found that I distilled what I was experiencing, then I took it from there again in movement.

Sometimes it is hard to do justice by putting into words what I am feeling. Words for me are like icebergs - the word is the tip - but so much sits below. What swims around the words, our individual connotations. I want you to know how I inhabit the words which I use. I often desire to explore what is underneath the word. This may be a form of embodiment, with the words embodying experience. I often feel as though I am in the shadow of something and I try to find the words to represent it.

Body rhythm. Communication. We meander, we meander, we are fluid like in this activity. When we start to reflect with discussion the experience changes. A conversation. We bump up against each other.
Reflection, our brain seems to work very fast. I feel as though we are reflecting on the go. Reflection in action. I enjoy the rhythm of crossing between modes and responding to each other. I am happy to spend time in the unclear areas, in the smudgy areas. We seem to respond to each other without the need to overly interpret. But we are making meaning all the way, I think.

I feel exposed to various qualities, my own and others. As I draw, I see many different qualities, this is how I feel when we are moving together.

14.3-1 Anna – Session 3
Free writing
I remember drawing and talking

Using a word a promise to myself

But words have a way of hanging there complete
Unquestioned obstacles
Changing. The rhythm.
From here the blank spaces hold a rhythm
The smudged and floating rhythm of an empty access
heavy
uncomfortable
not easy to stay in the game

Some things are difficult for me to language
Something in my body responds
Words come forth
Received and responded to
They take on a form
On the edges
Uncomfortable
Sometimes
Sometimes
It’s hard
To do justice to my feelings
By putting them into words
Words are like icebergs
The word is the tip
But so much sits below
Our connotations swim around and through them
We inhabit them
In our own way
In our own
Time

And another time I’m happy
To spend time
In the smudges
Responding from the in-between
Without needing to interpret
Still making meaning
All the way exposed
To many different qualities
Moving together

**Essence poem**

words at the tip of so many connotations
born of many different qualities moving together
receiving and responding we inhabit them
in our own way
in our own time
Researcher’s Response:

Part 1 – Compiled Underlining

Using a word
but words have a way
of
hanging there
complete.
Unquestioned obstacles.

The rhythm, hold a rhythm, floating rhythm.

Some things are difficult
for me
to language.

My body responds
Words come forth.

Sometimes, sometimes
my feelings
putting them into words
connotations swim around.

Another time
happy, responding,
without needing
to interpret.
Making meaning, being exposed to different qualities, moving together.
Part 2 - Intersubjective Response:

Words

hanging hanging
a over a precipice
n threatening
g to

hanging take

hanging with

hanging them

then

floating feelings floating feelings

words words.

A rhythm of

committing to, and being committed by

committing to, my

words.

words shared with others

committing to, being committed by,

forming, being formed by,

inhabiting, being inhabited by

words shared with others in

free fall.
Anna - Creative Synthesis

The Collage

10 Key Words
Words
Exposed
Vulnerable
Hanging
Movement
Inhabiting
Paradox
Becoming together
A rhythm shared
In free fall
14.3-2 Margi - Session 3

Free writing

So once again I begin to peruse the artworks… as I read the session transcript I find the word ‘language’ jumps out, and I dislike the use of the word as an adverb… it pushes one further away…

I notice how language affects me deeply. How cross I become when language is used as a tool to shroud meaning…’crystal clear’

It… ah then I listen, then I journey with you…

I love to read this –

There was a moment when I
Was not moving and I
Found that I distilled
What I was experiencing –

But how can you distill your own experience – experience IS experience

I CAN ONLY DISTILL EXPERIENCE
AFTER I HAVE EXPERIENCED IT

Ahhh

Y
e

s

In reflection I DISTILL

What swims around the words

is

what I hear

RARELY DO I hear just the words

I read the subtext
I notice the blink of the eye
And the tilt of the head…
I may or may not
Hear your words… perhaps that is my weakness

I am not happy to spend
time in the unclear areas
in the smudgy areas

I don’t like the smudgy

Blink of the eye
tilt of the head…
The part (3 figures) of the visual for session 3 disturbs,
Yet there is a strength that is attractive… Yet I draw the 3 shapes like a Baboushka Doll, all sitting within each other. I draw 3 people, thinking that it is a representation of the Baboushka Dolls drawn in this session at Macrossan hall. But I have not.

There are 3 figures
The smallest figure looks to the other 2 figures. Has one eye.
other two figures have 2 eyes
no mouth, no nose.
They do not touch.

CHANGE…
Not smudgy
but clean black lines
thoughtful change
little talk

Essence poem
I don’t like smudgy lines.
Clear, clarity, clean
Is how I like to move
Within
Without
The word
   'language' jumps out
   language affects me deeply.

I can only distill experience
   after
   I have experienced it.
   In reflection
   I distill.

What swims
   around the words
   is
   what I hear.

Blink of the eye, tilt of the head.

All the parts make up
   the whole.
Change.
   Not smudgy, but clear.

Thoughtful change.
   One is going away
   for a while
   but
   the missing one is depicted.
Part 2 - Intersubjective Response:

smudgy
    clear
smudgy
    clear.
smudgyc
    lears
smudgycl
    earsm
smudgycle
    arsmu
smudgyclea
    rsmud
smudgyclear
    smudgy
clear.

One is going away for a while but the missing one is depicted.

All the parts make up a whole she says.

I can only distill experience after I have experienced it. In reflection I distill.
The Collage

10 Key Words

clarity
sings
separate
silenced
‘its not the words’
sight
opening
within
bound
‘clean lines’