

## Research Approaches to Movement and Personality

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Part of the ten-book "Body Movement Series" for which Dr. Martha Davis is the advisory editor, *Research Approaches to Movement and Personality* presents three classics of movement research: "Expressive Movements Related to Feelings of Dominance" by Philip Eisenberg; "Effort-Shape Analysis of Movement: The Unity of Expression and Function" by Irmgard Bartenieff and Martha Davis; and "Studies of Psychomotor Personality Tests I" by Martti Takala. Each one of these sections summarizes an important approach to research or methodology.

In the first section, Eisenberg's working hypothesis is "that there are expressive movements which are related to an underlying attitude of dominance" (p. 8). The difference between an expressive and a functional movement is an important question for dance/movement therapists. Eisenberg defines expressive movements as "Adaptive acts, considered as dependent less upon external and temporary conditions than upon enduring qualities of personality" (p. 5). Dominance feelings are defined and measured by Maslow's Social Personality Inventory. The syndrome of dominant and non-dominant *behavior* found in the study parallels the *feelings* of dominant and non-dominant people as described by Maslow.

Eisenberg's study, first published in 1937, marks a pioneering effort by a psychologist to examine the relationship between behavior and attitude. Yet, looked at from today's perspective, it can seem naive. For example, the definitions of dominant and non-dominant seem quaint and stereotyped, so that one sometimes wonders if parallels between behavior and attitude reflect a self-fulfilling prophecy between subjective cliches. However, despite these drawbacks, this study can be important for those interested in the historical body of research which investigated the relationship between behavior and attitude.

Bartenieff and Davis' "Effort-Shape Analysis of Movement: The Unity of Expression and Function" bears testimony to their multi-leveled, wholistic thinking. Their major questions are: "What is expressive behavior? How does it interconnect with functional behavior? How does the measurement of expressive behavior relate to the measurement of functional behavior?" Bartenieff and Davis approach these problems by attempting to find a purely objective language for studying movement.

An historical summary of movement research begins their case for an objective movement language and includes William James' search for "meaning" in the relation between posture and psychological association, psychoanalytic and developmental approaches. Bartenieff and Davis then present their choice of effort-shape over semantic or symbolic language. In their subsequent history of the development of effort-shape, they show how effort-shape grew out of an analysis of both dance and work patterns. Thus it is the observation tool of choice to test their main hypothesis that movement characteristics are constant and pervade all movement, functional and expressive.

After spelling out the historical and theoretical basis of their observation system, Bartenieff and Davis present the neurophysiological correlates of effort-shape analysis. It is their contention that visible movement patterns and qualities in space correlate with patterning on a minute, cellular level. Expressing the unity of adaptive, biological, and expressive functions of movement, effort-shape qualities reflect the "visible manifestations of the graded responses which the neurophysiologist studies in the different areas of the nervous system" (p. 18). It is this assumption of unity which is so basic to their work and which is so far-reaching and radical in its implications.

In the next section, the authors present two important ways in which the inner state finds expression and meaning in outer movement. The first one explores how effort-shape patterns and variations in movement are considered the product of adaptation to inner and outer stimuli. The second contains the well-known formulation of the metaphoric relation between horizontal movement and communication, vertical movement and presentation, and sagittal movement and operation (p. 27).

Bartenieff and Davis conclude by stating that the "effort-shape theory of movement is based on an organic model of behavior," and that "neural processes, adaptation, and expression are integrated in movement" (p. 51).

Martti Takala's study is broadly comprehensive and his goals are admittedly practical. He claims that "continuous analysis and control of diagnostic—and particularly characterological—methods is necessary, if applied psychology is to give satisfactory results" (p. 3). He wants a psychomotor test which is objective; that is, one which depends less upon the skill of the clinician-tester than upon the behavior itself.

His presentation of the main problem and methodology is clear. Choosing the salient traits to be measured and looking at the relationship among traits, Takala then examines the relationship between primary description and interpretation. His distinction between a holistic, field-theory, intuitive mode of description and an analytic, statistical one is

very helpful. Acknowledging the undeniably complex relationship between personality and implicit and explicit movement characteristics, Takala nonetheless proceeds to "analyze the most intuitive methods also in order to attain the clearest possible formulation of the obviously very complicated principles on which they are based" (p. 15). His methodology is to choose certain primary signs which are measurable, to include "impressions" which are not directly measurable, and then to relate interpretation to primary signs.

Meaningful and statistical groupings of variables seem to provide the link between measurement and interpretation. It is not the primary signs which are symptomatic, but it is their total configuration or pattern, or the relation between the different variables which seems to express essential aspects of personality.

Takala presents and analyzes the Expectancy Reaction Test (ERT) and the Kyokinetic Psychodiagnosis (MP or MIRA) and relates them to the Bernreuter Personality Inventory. His conclusion is cautious: "Comparisons between psychomotor personality tests and other methods of personality research have given positive results by providing additional evidence in support of the hypotheses which were made concerning these tests" (p. 123). His suggestions for further developments in methodology are instructive, and his grasp of the complex relationship between movement and interpretation can continue to be useful for the student of movement research.

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