The Dancing Classroom: Bringing the Body into Education Through the Creative Process

by

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Introduction

“Our society’s prevailing cynicism about the existence of deeply felt values, along with people’s general feelings of resignation, cannot but create atmospheres in our schools at odds with the restlessness and the unpredictability associated with art experiences, be they creative or appreciative.” (Greene, “Art and Imagination” 123)

In American culture over the past ten years, the products of the mind have been valued significantly more than the products of the body. As Andrea Mantell-Seidel writes, this country suffers from a “…cultural syndrome in which the body is marginalized or disregarded” (119). This is made abundantly clear in the structure of our classrooms. Outside of recess and physical education classes that happen once per week, movement in the classroom happens rarely. Children remain seated in their desks, forced to be still for hours on end. Their minds are the only part of their beings that are stimulated, and they receive information passively.

Because of the mind/body connection, everything that the body does is assimilated into knowledge, thoughts, and memories. In the construction of knowledge, the experiences of the body and the mind matter equally. Because of this, the body should not be ignored in the classroom. It must be confronted in the construction and sharing of knowledge as well.

The best way to bring use of the body into the classroom is with dance. I am not advocating for dance classes; however, I am advocating for the use of dance in the core subject – that is, English, science, social studies, or mathematics – classroom as a way to teach concepts under those umbrellas. While being a full-bodied, mind/body practice, dance can also communicate content in observation and creation of it. For
this reason, it is an extremely effective teaching tool. With this project, I hope to help bring dance into public elementary school classrooms.

Personally, I view dance to be expression through movement. This understanding is further informed by Sondra Horton Fraleigh’s definition of dance as “a creative and aesthetic extension of our embodiment” (31). It involves exploring, creating, learning, manipulating and developing, and performing movement. Whether or not it is intentional, dance always expresses some idea or concept, story, or emotion. Regardless of whether the movement’s message is that of the choreographer, dancer, or another outside person, that movement communicates something.

The purpose of this project is to explore embodied learning via mind/body connectivity and the creative process. All four chapters build and simultaneously contribute to this effort. In Chapter One, I briefly detail the workings of the brain and nervous system. The human nervous system is able to grow and change, forming different pathways in the brain, depending on the actions of the body. In a way, humans involuntarily “custom design our own nervous systems to meet the choice and challenges of our interests and livelihoods” (Hannaford 23). The growth and change of the mind has been termed neural plasticity. It is because of this process that humans are able to learn and relearn, in the case of damage to the brain (17). On the physical level of the brain, neural plasticity occurs because the nerve nets are flexible; the growth of new dendrites happens quickly and easily. The “complex patterns of neural pathways” that form with each new experience are constantly organizing and reorganizing themselves (17). On the mental level, plasticity manifests itself as the
ability to learn more complex concepts, and to change what has already been assimilated into the mind. Because of neural plasticity, the brain’s physical structures, as well as the mind’s thought patterns, change with ease when sensory stimuli are received. Therefore, humans are able to “receive outside stimuli and perform the myriad jobs of a human life” as their bodies grow and move (17).

The nervous system information that I provide serves as a context for the way the mind and body function. The mind exists because of the brain’s physical structure, but the mind is what gives the brain significance. Because of the mind, we are able to think, emote, and remember in the typical sense. However, as is not largely recognized by academia, the body can accomplish these tasks as well. As Susan Leigh Foster claims, “A body, whether sitting writing or standing thinking or walking talking or running screaming, is a bodily writing. Its habits and stances, gestures and demonstrations, every action of its various regions, areas, and parts…construct corporeal meaning” (Foster, “Choreographing” 3). A body executes habits, gestures, and actions by moving with muscles, bones, and organs. Thus the body is the physical object encompassed by the skin and is the amalgamation of all the parts underneath the skin, such as the bones, muscles, organs, and so forth.

In academia, specifically the field of cultural studies, the body is not given nearly as much credit as it deserves.¹ Oftentimes it seems that the body is valued only as a holding cell for the brain. In reality, the body is responsible for much more. Not only does the body gather sensory information from the environment and send it to

¹ According to Jane C. Desmond, cultural studies “…is a loose term that indicates a shared community of scholarly endeavor across a multiplicity of fields, formats, and theoretical approaches” (Introduction 4). Scholars in this field aim “…to theorize and grasp the mutual determinations and interrelations of cultural forms and historical forces” (qtd. in Desmond, Introduction 5).
the brain, but it also is a site of knowledge construction and transmission. According to the Oxford English Dictionary, knowledge is:

“1. Information and skills acquired through experience or education
2. The sum of what is known
3. Awareness or familiarity gained by experience of a fact or situation”

(“Knowledge”)
Knowledge is constructed and transmitted by texts, and texts are constructed by language. Language is a form of communication. A physical object that relays knowledge between people is a text. Texts can be constructed out of verbal or nonverbal language. Verbal language, or words, is communicated between people by speaking, listening, reading, and writing. The body is the mode through which nonverbal language is communicated. Nonverbal communication can refer to any bodily movement from small gestures to expansive full-bodied movement. In Chapter One, I detail the similarities and differences between these two forms of communication. Though each type of language can function effectively in their respective arenas, communication can occur on a deeper level if both communicative forms are used together. For this reason, bodily-constructed knowledge should be used in academia more often.

It was necessary for dance to develop as its own academic discipline before it could be assimilated into others. Only once knowledge constructed by the body is incorporated into academia can advocates for dance as education fully meet their goals of bringing dance into schools. The meaning of the phrase “dance as education”
differs from dance classes in schools. While the former signifies using dance to teach another concept, the latter represents dance as an art in education.

Chapter Two gives an abridged history of education since the beginning of progressivism in the late nineteenth century. John Dewey, American psychologist, philosopher, educational reformer, and pioneer of progressive education, wrote extensively about education in the United States during the first half of the twentieth century. As the pioneer of progressivism in education, much of his writing was focused on this movement. His thoughts on education and progressivism were based on his principle of continuity of experience; this states that every experience a person has impacts later experiences (Dewey, *Experience* 33). Because of this, the experiences that a child has throughout his or her educational experience must be positive. According to Dewey, “Everything depends on the *quality* of the experience which is had” (27). Dewey emphasizes, “Just as no man lives or dies to himself, so no experience lives and dies to itself. Wholly independent of desire or intent, every experience lives on in further experiences” (27). From this it is abundantly clear that creation of positive experiences is crucial when working with experience-based education (27). Due to the principle of continuity of experience, it is essential that these experiences become salient in the education of a child. However, it is even more so that educators “…select the kind of present experiences that live fruitfully and creatively in subsequent experiences” (28). For these experiences never die.

Though Dewey wrote in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the style of traditional education still exists in today’s classrooms to a larger extent than
is most effective for learning. The most basic definition of learning is to construct, or create, and transmit, or share, knowledge – whether it be through experience, study, practice, or being taught. In another sense, according to Maxine Greene, “Learning also is a process of effecting new connections in experience, of thematizing, problematizing, and imposing diverse patterns on the inchoateness of things” (Greene, Landscapes 3). When educators teach only to the minds of the students, it is difficult for learning to reach this level. Learning must be an embodied process, that is, a process that “…uses the body and the body’s internal and external awarenesses as a partner in acquiring knowledge, assuaging curiosity, and pursuing being a human being” (Lerman). Thus embodiment is the act of using knowledge produced by the body as an active contributor in thinking and interpreting; embodiment entails the union of the mind and body in action.

In Chapter Three, I detail how dance can be used to teach other core subjects in elementary schools. Because dance often involves full-bodied movement, it is an extremely effective way to cultivate learning on a deeper level. More specifically, creative dance, a term that Mary Ann Brehm and Lynne McNett use in Creative Dance for Learning, is improvised and based on the concept being danced as opposed to the technicalities of the dance (x). When engaging in creative dance, students use their kinesthetic sense, or the “process that regulates and guides voluntary movement” (6). This is the case is because dance activates the bodily-kinesthetic intelligence, as

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2 In my research, “traditional education” is used to refer to classrooms in which teachers share information only through verbal language, and the students passively receive knowledge in a disembodied way that only makes use of the mind.
well as the others about which Howard Gardner writes. Additionally, creative dance enhances the problem-solving skill sets of individuals and groups (x).

Among other reasons, dance should be used to teach other subjects because the bodily-kinesthetic intelligence can be employed to enhance the activity of other types of intelligences (Brehm and McNett 108). A student may be especially skilled in constructing knowledge through his or her body, but encounters difficulty when trying to tap into other areas of intelligence, such as verbal intelligence (108). This difficulty results in trouble with using verbal language, or words. (108). An educator can guide this student through activities that use the student’s movement problem solving skill set in order to enhance the use of other intelligences – verbal intelligence in this case (108). For example, the student could arouse this form of intelligence by “dancing the meaning of words or the ideas from a story” (108). Because this student would be comfortable moving and dancing, this type of activity would allow the student to feel at home in his or her comfort with bodily-kinesthetic intelligence. He or she would simultaneously be cultivating an insufficiently active verbal intelligence on a subconscious level. Since movement would be meaningful, this student can take what he or she learns through the body and apply it to the words or story in question.

Creative dance can also be used in reverse. As Brehm and McNett write, “…creative dance can be a tool for opening the world of movement for students who are not very comfortable kinesthetically but are at home in another intelligence” (108). Continuing with the above example, a student can employ his or her command of language in order to “…create word images with which to move freely” (108). The

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3 The other intelligences are intrapersonal, interpersonal, musical, spatial, linguistic, logical-mathematical, and naturalist. These will be detailed later in Chapter Three.
student would craft words and play with their arrangement, then apply movement to those words. Brehm and McNett explain, “The excitement stimulated through their linguistic intelligence will spill over to their movements, helping them use their body with newly discovered imagination” (108). By building a students’ confidence in his or her area of comfort, he or she is more likely to branch off into new or difficult areas – in this case, different modes of intelligence.

In addition to deepening the understanding of topics in core subjects, creative dance, through the bodily-kinesthetic intelligence, references innate human action. It encourages students to encounter and interact with problems “with the same sense of awe and urge for discovery that starts the infant on his or her developmental pathway” (Brehm and Mcnett 108). From the time humans are born, they are constantly interacting with and solving problems they encounter in their environment. When students are given activities that allow them to focus on their body in the solving of problems, “…they cultivate innate bodily-kinesthetic intelligence and find meaningful and satisfying movements to express their solutions” (108). If a student is not proficient in solely tuning into his or her body without a specified reason for doing so (i.e., completion of a task), he or she may have difficulty engaging the bodily-kinesthetic intelligence. However if given a problem to solve, the student can focus on the problem alone and does not have to be concerned with “feeling” the correct sensation in the body. The student can work through the movement while the appropriate changes in bodily/movement control and awareness still occur. These changes are still effective even if they occur on a subconscious level.
The process of embodied learning is a way to access progressive education, and dance is a way to access embodied learning. Dance takes progressivism further in education than the typical hands-on experience does. Dance inherently tailors an experience to the individual. Using dance can give each student more power over his or her education because no two people experience art in the same way – it is all up to personal interpretation. Creative dance activities accomplish “student-centered learning” while still allowing the teacher to keep control over what is taught and therefore learned.

In Chapter Four, I discuss my personal embodiment of this written research. I choreographed two ten-minute pieces – “Synæsthetics “ (Fall 2009) and “The Continuity of Experience (Spring 2010) – that involved the portrayal of the mind/body connection using movement in different ways. Throughout the creative process, my textual research impacted my choreography. For this reason, I was constantly creating situations in which the dancers were forced to think with their bodies as well as with their minds. I wanted them to experience the connection I am advocating for in the classroom.

In dance, the creative process stimulates the mind and the body simultaneously. The act of learning involves establishing neural pathways and networks. Because more networks grow when more sensory organs are stimulated, the amount of learning increases with the amount of sensory stimulation (qtd in Sprague, Scheff, and McGreevy-Nichols 9-10). Since dance activates all the senses (10), the creative process is an extremely effective way to engage the whole person in
a thorough embodied learning experience. With this project, I hope to contribute to the growing body of research on using the creative process in education.
Chapter One

The Mind/Body Connection and its Implications

The Mind and the Brain

The mind is the brain, but with another element infused into the physical structure. The brain is the physical object, and the mind is said object imbued with meaning. It produces thoughts, emotions, and knowledge. It stores these as memories. According to Carla Hannaford, the mind is “the unfathomable generator of reality, culture, history, and all human potentiality” (11). Scholars and researchers have tried to elucidate the mind by piecing together the factoids derived from brain research (11).

As stated by Hannaford, “From shortly after conception and throughout a lifetime, the nervous system is a dynamically changing, self-organizing system” (17). She adds, “It follows no single master plan and is never static” (17). However, there are some facts about the nervous system that do remain the same throughout a lifetime. First off, the brain is the commander of the nervous system, and the nervous system is made up of neurons – specialized cells that transmit electrical messages through the body. It has two divisions: central and peripheral. The central nervous system (CNS) is made up of the brain and spinal cord, and the peripheral nervous system (PNS) is the system of neurons that reside everywhere else in the body. The PNS is a neuronal network, and the neurons that it is comprised of transmit
information to or from the CNS. The three main types of neurons are sensory, intermediate, and motor.

Sensory neurons gather sensory information from all throughout the body: from the eyes, ears, nose, skin, and tongue. They also gather sensory information from proprioceptors. These are a type of sensory neuron that resides in the inner ear, muscles, tendons, and joints; they “relay information about muscle position or tension or activity of joints and equilibrium” (Hannaford 19). All sensory neurons take this information and bring it to the CNS.

Once sensory information arrives in the central nervous system, intermediate neurons – the neurons that make up 99.98% of the central nervous system – take over (Hannaford 20). Intermediate neurons form networks, and they transfer information between these networks throughout the brain. These networks form larger networks, eventually working up to the whole formations of the brain and spinal cord. Brain and spinal cord neurons process the sensory information received from the sensory neurons, then they initiate a bodily response to that information via motor neurons. Motor neurons bring electrical messages from the brain to muscles and glands in order “to activate their function” (20). No motion of or inside the body occurs without the action of motor neurons.

Each part of a neuron helps it either gather or transmit information. Dendrites, or highly branched extensions of the cell body, collect stimuli and transmit it to the cell body. The nucleus of the cell and its other organelles are located here. Because the nucleus is where genetic information resides, the cell body is often located in the skull or spinal column for bony protection. The axon, a long fiber, begins where the
neuron is no longer encased in the skull or spinal cord. It conducts the stimulus information away from the cell body and to a muscle, gland, or to the dendrites of another neuron. The electrical impulse is converted into a chemical signal at the end of the axon. The ends of the axon release this signal – the neurotransmitter – and it signals movement of a muscle or gland, or it is collected by the dendrites of the next neuron and will eventually reach a muscle or gland. Nerve impulses only travel toward the cell body by way of dendrites, and away from the cell body via the axon.

Humans learn by interacting with the world around them, with the nervous system acting as the messenger between the body’s internal and external environments (Hannaford 18). When a person encounters a new situation, a new neuronal pathway is formed. If the person continually encounters this type of situation, the nervous system becomes accustomed to using this pathway. The neurons along this pathway grow more dendritic extensions with which to better transmit nerve impulses, and these “act as contact points and open new channels of communication with other neurons” (24). With the growth of new dendrites comes the formation of “increasingly complex interconnecting networks of neural pathways” in the brain (24). The exact composition of nerve nets is always changing based on the amount and type of stimulation received. Hannaford adds, “This constant molecular communication can be restructured, depending on usage, undergoing coherent, synchronized change as learning occurs” (23). Local neuronal networks become parts of different regions that join forces and become systems. Thus, Hannaford claims, “The brain is a system of systems” (26). It is in this physicalized way that learning occurs.
Knowing how the nervous system functions gives insight into how the brain functions. Knowing the function of the brain gives some insight into how the mind—a construct that “intrigue[s] and baffle[s] us in our quest to understand ourselves” (Hannaford 11)—functions and what its capacity is. The process of nerve cell networking, described above, “is, in reality, learning and thought” (18). In the context of the brain, these ever-building networks are physical structures. However in the context of the mind, the connections and pathways are thoughts, emotions, memories, and skills. We then use the pathways and systems of the brain and mind as ways to “access and act upon our world” (18).

The journey of a sensory stimulus begins with one of the senses collecting information from the environment. The information travels from sensory neurons, to intermediate neurons, and then to motor neurons if the brain signals a motor response to the rest of the body. When “we explore and experience our material world, initial sensory patterns are laid down on elaborate nerve networks” (Hannaford 49). These initial sensory patterns, or base patterns, are central to the free-form information system of the human brain (49). Base patterning allows for a central core of knowledge that serves as a source of reference, and as “context for learning, thought, and creativity” (49). Base patterning is important because it allows people to make rules and generalizations about the world in which they live. Additionally, base patterning is the reason humans can “construct models of the way things work, make predictions, organize physical responses, and come to more complexity of understanding as we assimilate new information” (74). Without a base, these complexities would not be possible.
Because people are constantly encountering different experiences, this knowledge foundation is ever changing. The mind enlivens the physical structures of the nervous system, forming emotions and movement on top of the physical connections that the brain makes (Hannaford 49). As a person lives and encounters more new experiences, his or her mind assimilates new sensory experiences into the current archive. By the process of assimilation, the free-form information system updates itself (49). According to Hannaford, “Sensations form the base understanding from which concepts and thinking develop” (48). When the senses gather information, the brain, as well as the mind, processes this information. The brain processes it by the neuronal structures as described above. With the physicality of the nervous system as its foundation, the mind experiences a thought, emotion, or memory.

The Body

Cartesian dualists subscribe to the idea that the mind, and therefore thought and learning, can exist separate from the body. The extension of this belief is that thinking is a “disembodied process, as if the body’s role in that process were to carry the brain from place to place so it can do the important work of thinking” (Hannaford 11). According to Hannaford, this belief – that the body is not involved in intellectual activity – is entrenched in American culture (11). This notion follows from “…the attitude that the things we do with our bodies, and the bodily functions, sensations, and emotions that sustain life, are lower, less distinctly human” (11). On the contrary, these distinctly human qualities that American society often relates to the mind can
never happen without the body (11). Cartesian dualists resist the connection between mind and body, claiming that thought, creativity, learning, and intelligence occur only in the mind (11).

However, this is surely not the case. These “…are not processes of the brain alone, but of the whole body” (Hannaford 11). Granted the brain is the reason the mind’s existence is possible, but the brain is also a physical, tangible structure – and this structure is a vital part of the body. As Hannaford writes, “the body plays an integral part in all our intellectual processes from our earliest moments right through to old age” (11). Thus it is difficult – rather, nearly impossible – to speak about the body or its definition alone, because the mind and the body are so deeply intertwined. However, it would do this discussion good to attempt it. In this project, the body is the physical being contained by the skin and comprised of tangible structures, such as muscles, bones, tendons, ligaments, organs, blood, other fluids, connective tissue, and the brain. Several more specific structures exist, and these form systems with other structures that have the same functional goal. The body uses its muscles, among other systems, to move, eat, digest, and speak. Movements, emotions, sensations, and “brain integrative functions” are all rooted in the physical structures of the body (11). The brain receives information only because the body’s senses gather it from the environment (11). The mind archives this information and calls on it in order to “form an understanding of the world” and “create new possibilities” for thinking, acting, and reacting (11-2). It is the body’s movements that “express knowledge and facilitate greater cognitive function as they [these movements] increase in complexity” (12). The body’s movements do this whether it is through full-body movements – as in
dance – or through motion of only certain parts – such as the mouth when speaking. Because the mind enhances and allows a person to articulate and learn from his or her bodily experiences and the body communicates what the mind thinks, thinking, learning, and communication are, and should be cultivated as, embodied processes.

As stated above, the mind is inextricably connected to the body. A connection is a link that causes a whole entity to be greater than the sum of its parts. It is a link between one or more objects, concepts, or ideas. This link can be representative of similarities; or it can demonstrate that two (or more) things, when taken together, are greater than when taken separately. This is exactly what occurs between the mind and the body. The work of three American philosophers – William James, John Dewey, and Richard Shusterman – also supports the mind/body connection.

In *Body Consciousness: A Philosophy of Mindfulness and Somaesthetics*, Richard Shusterman – late twentieth century philosopher – writes, “…mental and bodily reactions are not two different things in search of a philosophical synthesis, but are instead analytical abstractions already enveloped in the primal unity of purposive behavior” (187). Thus this connection between the mind and the body does not need to be created because it already exists organically. He argues that the mind is “an emergent expression of the human body” in the same way that “…culture is not the contradiction of nature, but rather its fulfillment and reshaping” (186). Culture manifests itself in the same way that the mind/body connection just exists and is not “created” by its articulation.
Shusterman presents the Alexander Technique, created by Frederick Matthais Alexander, and supports it but offers a way that he feels it should be modified.\(^4\) This technique is an educational discipline that focuses on bodily awareness and coordination. Movers, oftentimes dancers, employ this technique if they want to improve their control of their body, or allow their movement to become freer. However, this technique focuses primarily on the positioning of the head and neck. Shusterman writes, “The living, moving body constitutes a multifaceted, complexly integrated, dynamic field rather than a simple static linear system” (208). Because the entire body can be extremely useful and effective in a dynamic way, it is somewhat nonsensical to focus on the position of only one small section of it. Shusterman agrees that motor control relies on some parts more than others, but “…somaesthetic attention should not be confined to a single body region or relationship defined as the ‘primary control’” (208).\(^5\)

In addition to Shusterman, late nineteenth-early twentieth century philosophers William James and John Dewey also support “pragmatic pluralism,” or the idea that all parts are useful and important as opposed to just one (208). They both agreed that while the Alexander technique is effective in postural control, it could be even more so if it focused on all parts of the body. If the only area of focus is the head and neck region, the Alexander technique cannot be performed if these channels is blocked. Shusterman claims that “the integration of multisensory information,” or

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\(^4\) According to the American Society for the Alexander Technique, this technique is a movement training method “…that people of all ages and abilities can learn to relieve the pain and stress caused by everyday misuse of the body” (Austin). When working to train his own body, Alexander discovered, at least in his own body, that posture, movement, and function of the body rely on the positions of the head, neck, and torso in relation to each other (Austin).

\(^5\) As Shusterman writes, somaesthetics refers to “…the critical study and meliorative cultivation of how we experience and use the living body (or soma) as a site of sensory appreciation (aesthesis) and creative self-fashioning” (1).
allowing the mind to function with all sensory information as its foundation – not just that from the proprioceptors of the head and neck – should be employed. This creates situations in the body in which sensory information can still reach the brain even if one sensory channel is blocked (207). Furthermore, Shusterman adds, “The complex combination of partially overlapping sensory inputs with respect to posture allows for more comparative feedback on body orientation and hence a more accurate, fine-tuned system for postural control” (207).

This change in focus that Shusterman advocates for is metaphorical for the argument that the body and mind should be used together when transmitting knowledge, as opposed to just the mind. In Shusterman’s argument, the objective is to obtain correct posture; in the latter, the objective is to communicate and transmit knowledge as effectively as possible. Where the head and neck region is the focus of the Alexander technique, the mind is the focus of communication and transmission of knowledge. Where Shusterman urges for a focus to be brought to the rest of the body, I urge for awareness to be brought to the physical body. In the same way that focusing on the position of the head and neck can be effective, so can focusing on the mind and thinking with the mind. However these both have their limitations. Just as it is important to focus on the positioning of all parts of the body, it is crucial to transmit knowledge with the mind and the body.

According to Stuart F. Spicker in The Philosophy of the Body: Rejections of Cartesian Dualism, he asserts that what is commonly referred to as Cartesianism is actually misinterpreted from the writings of Descartes. Regardless Cartesianism refers to the view of man “as a composite of two essentially distinct substances,” the mind
and the body (9). Under this dualism, knowledge is constructed in the mind only. Because of the connection inherent in the existence of the mind and the body, the body is also a site of knowledge construction.

Discoveries Can Be Unique to the Body

John Bulwer, English physician and early Baconian philosopher, wrote about exploration of the body and human communication. His work claims that the body can make discoveries that the mind cannot. In “Toward a Universal Language of Motion,” Stephen Greenblatt refers to Bulwer’s “conviction that speech and writing are only part of the signifying resources of human beings, and not the most reliable part at that” (25). Bulwer believes strongly that the “highest perfection of a living creature” is its motion (26). It is abundantly clear that he places the highest responsibility and honor on the motion of human beings. Bulwer claims that a human “would degenerate into a Plant or Stock” if he was robbed of the capacity to move (qtd. in Greenblatt 27). This is on the extreme end of the spectrum of mind/body philosophy, but Bulwer places large stock in the true communicative ability of the body, so much so that he is willing to declare that the very “qualities and attainments” of the species’ identity comes from the muscles of the body (27). He asserts that:

…without them man ‘would be left destitute of the grace of elocution, and his mind would be enforced to dwell [sic] in perpetual silence, as in a wooden extasie or congelation; nay his Soul which is onely known by Action, being otherwise very obscure, would utterly lose the benefit of explaining it self, by the innumerable almost motions of the Affections and passions which outwardly appear be the operation of the Muscles.’ (qtd. in Greenblatt 27)

He believes in the mind/body connection, as evidenced by his giving full responsibility to the body’s muscles for everything that occurs in the soul and the
mind. In addition to claiming that the soul functions because the body functions, he goes as far to say that the soul exists solely because of the body. Following the line of Baconian thought from which Bulwer descends, “Only by liberating oneself from the fraudulence and sloppiness and myth-making of ordinary language can one begin to acquire a genuine and well-founded knowledge of things…” (26). Constructing knowledge becomes easier when the body is used as well.

Verbal and Nonverbal Language as Forms of Communication and Knowledge Construction/Transmission

The way in which the body constructs and transmits knowledge is with body language. One way to codify this language is through dance. Murray Louis in “As I See It” claims that he has “always thought of dance as a language; a language that speaks through the human body” (3). The units of this language are body, space, time, and force.6 Choreographers use the instrument of dance – the body – in order to combine these different units. By doing so, they can convey an idea, message, or emotion just as a writer would use written language to combine words and sentences into an essay or other composition.

A text is a physical object that a person looks to in order to gain knowledge. Texts possess knowledge, or information, that can be transmitted through the form’s respective mode of communication. Reading is a way to transmit verbal knowledge. Dancing and viewing dance are ways to transmit nonverbal knowledge. Part of dance

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6 The body is the instrument of dance, and space refers to where in the studio (or other movement space) the movement occurs (Brehm and McNett 60-1). Force refers to “how energy is expended to create movement forms,” and the time element pertains to when movement happens (60).
is reading with, or through the body. A verbal text is read by the process that is commonly referred to as “reading,” or reading with the mind. A person reads a text, and he or she employs the knowledge of words and sentences when doing so. In order to “read” a body, one must have knowledge of the body/movement/dance and the kinesthetic sense (Brehm and McNett 6). The body is a nonverbal text read by the kinesthetic sense. This is not a dichotomy, but one way to apply the concept of embodied learning. In order to be a text, the object in question must make use of some sort of language. Writing and dance both do this; writing uses verbal language, and dance uses the body’s movements, or nonverbal language. These types of languages have similarities as well as differences. The similarities are important because they demonstrate that the two forms are easier to use together than it may seem. It is significant to note the differences as well because these highlight that, where one language falls short, the other can compensate.

Similarities

As mentioned above, dance is a type of nonverbal communication – that which does not use words. It uses the body. Dance is the language the body uses to speak and communicate; this is one of the reasons the body possesses a communicative ability. It has the capacity to communicate without using words, but by using action and movement (Greenblatt 25). Though the way the body does this is unique, it does share some qualities with words, the tools of writing. In To Dance Is Human, Judith Lynne Hanna claims that comparing verbal and nonverbal

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7 For the purposes of simplicity, here I use the word “writing” to refer to the processes of reading, speaking, and writing.
communication becomes clearer when dance is thought of “as more like poetry than prose” (86). Both forms require the brain to execute the same jobs – conceptualization, memory, and creativity (86). Hanna has termed several commonalities that dance and (verbal) language share. They both possess directional reception, discreteness, cultural transmission, ambiguity, “and a range of potential communicating participants” (86). Interchangeability – the idea that the same individual can send and receive a message – occurs in both forms (86). Many aspects of each form are not predictable; this quality was named “arbitrariness” by Hanna (86). Dance and language both have displacement; each can refer to something that is not present at the time of communication (86). They both also have productivity – the often-used possibility for a never before conceived message to be created, transmitted, and understood within an existing framework of structural principles (86). Affectivity, or “expression of an internal state with the potential for changing moods and for changing a sense of situation,” is another quality shared by both communicatory forms (86). Lastly, Hanna writes of the “duality of patterning” that dance and language share. She explains that each form of communication is simultaneously “a system of physical action and a system of meaning” (86).

Differences

The tools of verbal language (words) and the tools of dance (movements) can accomplish similar things. Susan Foster writes, “Where bodily endeavors assume the status of forms of articulation and representation, their movements acquire a status and function equal to the words that describe them” (Foster, “Choreographing
History” 9). This is to say that a body’s actions have the ability to communicate at the same level as the words, specifically those words that describe actions a body can execute. However, at times the body’s ability to transmit messages can surpass that of words. Foster writes:

The sense of presence conveyed by a body in motion, the idiosyncrasies of a given physique, the smallest inclination of the head or gesture of the hand – all form a part of a corporeal discourse whose power and intelligibility elude translation into words. Bodies’ movements may create a kind of writing, but that writing has no facile verbal equivalence. (9)

Even though both words and the body possess extraordinary communicative abilities, at times the body’s language can be more powerful. This is so because the rules of language are stricter than the rules of dance. Within the set of grammatical rules governing dance, there exists more freedom. These rules can be challenged more readily if need be. One reason a choreographer might want to do this is to portray chaos or nonconformity not only through content of the choreography, but also through structure via breaking traditional rules of dance grammar. Additionally, Hanna explains that, “Dance is a physical instrument or symbol for feeling and/or thought and is sometimes a more effective medium than verbal language in revealing needs and desires” (4). It is more difficult for dance to communicate “complex logical structures” than it is for verbal language to do the same (88). However dance possesses the capacity to use the body for communicating emotions and thoughts that fall in a gray area. Within this gray area, there is more freedom to articulate with the body. This stands in opposition to the black-and-white arena of verbal communication. The areas of life that fall in the gray area may be more difficult, or even impossible, to articulate with words. Because dance can communicate what
words sometimes cannot, movement – the most important aspect of dance – can take knowledge – which is often constructed and transmitted via verbal communication – to a deeper level.

Hanna details several distinctions between verbal language and dance. While language and dance both occur in the temporal dimension, it is only dance that exists in three spatial dimensions (Hanna 88). Hanna adds, “…specialization in language, the fact that someone can speak and be doing something else, is not generally applicable to dance…” (88). Because dancing requires a performer to be more physically involved than a speaker must be when speaking, a person generally cannot be dancing fully while simultaneously doing something else. In the study of language, experts agree that phonemes and morphemes are the minimal units of verbal language. However, dance scholars have yet to come up with an agreed upon term to describe the most minimal unit in dance. Also according to Hanna, “…the degree of language feedback, the speaker’s ability to perceive most things relevant to his speech as an acoustical phenomenon, is not possible in the multisensory mode of dance…” (88). A speaker can fully hear him- or herself while speaking, but a dancer cannot fully see him- or herself while dancing.8

While each system of communication can stand alone and communicate effectively, communication can become even more effective if the two are used in tandem. Though there are venues in which each of these forms of communication proves more useful, it is most effective to use each to enhance the other. Words can be effective in helping people to sort their thoughts about bodily sensations

8 See Appendix A to schematically view the similarities and differences between verbal language and dance.
(Hannaford 49). However, words “are not substitute for the force and vividness of actual experience” (49). Engaging bodily reading when using verbal language is embodied learning; this enhances communication, and cultivates learning on a deeper level.

Dance as a Distinct Discipline

The field of dance has not always existed as an academic discipline. Though this project is not specifically about this aspect of the field, it is valuable to mention the path dance has traveled in academia because dance had to assert itself as its own academic discipline before it could be integrated into other disciplines. This change came about in the twentieth century with the thoughts and work of several innovative artists.

Margaret H’Doubler, American philosopher and educator, was the first to introduce modern dance into higher education at the University of Wisconsin in 1917 (Kolcio, Movable 8). In Movable Pillars: Organizing Dance 1956-1978, Katja Kolcio claims that this was “an early epistemological change to the Cartesian dichotomies fundamental to European models of higher education, which separate theory from practice and mind from body” (8). In 1934, Martha Hill and Mary Josephine Shelley began a dance study summer program at Bennington College (Kolcio, Movable 13). This program was intellectually challenging and H’Doubler’s work, as well as events in the modern dance world at the time, inspired these women to embark on this project (13). They supported and added to some of H’Doubler’s ideas while straying from others (13).
Hill and Shelley established “standards of artistry through an emphasis on composition, technique, performance, and criticism” (Kolcio, Movable 13). The Bennington experience was intended to present a diversity of approaches to modern dance so their students could recognize and pursue an integrative approach to the art (13). According to Kolcio, “this heightened emphasis on artistry and dance as a distinct structured field” made it possible for Bennington to develop “modern dance into both a method and a subject of aesthetic and intellectual inquiry” (Movable 13). Furthermore, it was because of this that modern dance could become part of the “academic rubric as a fine art” (13). The Bennington model, more importantly, also reinforced “the idea that modern dance was a medium that could expressively convey significant meanings pertaining to the human condition that words alone could not capture,” as opposed to only conveying personal expressions of human truth and meaning (13). This became the foundation on top of which dance could insist on possessing “autonomous disciplinary status” (13).

During this time, concert dance and dance at universities developed “on the premise of a shared philosophical point of view that prioritized physical and creative practice as a meaningful cultural activity” (Kolcio, Movable 14). Kolcio writes, “It was this symbiotic relationship between these contexts that laid the groundwork necessary for the emergence of dance as a distinct scholarly discipline” (14). However, it was not only this genre of dance ideas that helped dance become its own field.
Racism in America at this time also indirectly helped dance assert itself.\textsuperscript{9} Racist contexts, such as those experienced by Katherine Dunham and Pearl Primus, formed the “philosophical and paradigmatic foundations” for art made by these choreographers (Kolcio, \textit{Movable} 16).\textsuperscript{10} Their problematization of the dichotomy between art and education, as well as between high-brow art and low-brow culture, showed to be a crucial step toward “developing the intellectual potency of modern dance” (16). Their success with theater audiences afforded them the opportunity to insert their choreographic work into public, as well as academic, frameworks (24). Most importantly, their work “directly countered the prevalent Cartesian model of knowledge production that relegates theoretical analysis to semiotic form” (24). By so seriously calling Cartesianism into question, they were able to link theory and practice in an effective way. This formed the basis for “the intellectually progressive conceptualization of dance studies” far earlier than this started to become a part of conventional scholarship (24-5).

Additionally, African-American modern dance pioneer, Edna Guy, always aimed to make “beautiful and soulful art,” while simultaneously being a role model for others to do the same; she was acutely aware of “the creative and the representational power of dance” (17). The combination of these powers drove Black dancers to use dance as a way to reflect on their cultural and social situation (17-8). By doing these things, African-Americans used the body as a text, and thus set

\textsuperscript{9} For more information about racism in America during the 1930s and 1940s, see \textit{Black Scholars on the Line: Race, Social Science, and American Thought in the Twentieth Century}, edited by Jonathan Scott Holloway and Ben Keppel.

\textsuperscript{10} See Appendix B for more information about the work of Dunham and Primus.
standards for cultivating the scholarly discipline of dance, far before American academic discourse did so (18).

The Body in Academia

Because the body is a text, it can be used to enhance other academic disciplines. Academia – specifically cultural studies in Britain and North America, according to Jane C. Desmond – is very text-based and object-based (“Embodying Difference” 30). The sources of research continue to be mainly literary texts; film texts and art historical objects are also commonly used, though not as much so (30). Unfortunately, the human body is rarely considered a valuable source of knowledge. Even scholars whose work does focus on the body concentrates on representations of it, rather than the body itself (30). Furthermore, Desmond explains, “Even the now popular subfield of critical work on ‘the body’ is focused more on representations of the body and/or its discursive policing than with its action/movements as ‘text’ themselves” (30). The potential of the body’s actions and movements to be used in the latter way Desmond speaks of has yet to be fully realized, for in academia scholars have developed a “fictive separation of mental and physical production” (30). This separation is, of course, untrue. Because of this development, humanities scholarship (i.e., dance) that explores the material body is not deemed as valuable as other areas of scholarship (30). If it was, it would be more visible, and discoveries made by analyzing “the mute dancing body” (30) would be more numerous and more present in academia. Additionally, scholarly interest in popular culture much more often concerns visual and verbal products, as opposed to kinesthetic actions (30).
While it is acceptable for thoughts about the body to exist in work that deals with it specifically, it is important that it become incorporated into other subsets of academia because knowledge can be produced by the body. An effective way to do this is through dance because, as Helen Thomas writes, “…dance offers cultural and social criticism a rich and relatively uncharted terrain for studying cultural bodies” (3). Not only can dance enhance other disciplines, but it can also be used to strengthen the work that is already being done on the body. Thomas also states that dance is available as a resource to challenge and defy the mind/body dualisms that have been largely troublesome to discourse on the body (4). In Susan Foster’s Introduction to Corporealities she echoes support for body work to form a more interactive relationship with different subject areas (xv). She claims that it would “…enable a reorientation within existing disciplines, and…inspire unconventional formulations of human agency that promise to move us past current modes of academic and political stasis” (xv). As stated, the body should become one of the texts that cultural studies uses; it should become one among verbal texts and visual objects. Within that, dance should be included. Dance research, human movement studies, and questions raised by kinesthetic semiotics can improve the field of cultural studies, as well as other academic fields (Desmond, “Embodying” 30).

At least in Europe and America, dance is thought of as a pastime, as entertainment, or as an “art form” in performance by mainly women (i.e., ballet) or “folk” dancers (Desmond, “Embodying” 30). It is partially for this reason that dance scholarship occupies the place it does in the academy (30). The full value of dance and the body does not seem to be realized. The aim is to “…move away from the bias
for verbal texts and visual-object-based investigations that currently form the core of ideological analysis in British and North American cultural studies” (30). In order to do this, these benefits – those of incorporating dance into bodily texts in cultural studies – need to be realized. Though there are exceptions that “indicate a growing conversation between dance scholarship and cultural studies,” these exceptions need to become the norm (52).

Including dance – in all its forms, most notably theatrical performance, social dance, and ritualized movement – in studies of the body as text would open many doors (Desmond, “Embodying” 30). First, it can deepen the understanding of how bodily movement impacts the signaling, formation, and negotiation of social identities (30). Second, we could “…analyze how social identities are codified in performance styles and how the use of the body in dance is related to, duplicates, contests, amplifies, or exceeds norms of non-dance bodily expression within specific historical contexts” (30).

**Paving the Way for Dance in/as Education**

Though there is of course much to be done, the development of dance as its own intellectual discipline has begun to pave the way for incorporating body work into other academic disciplines. Doing this will help the body, movement, and dance become a larger part of public elementary school learning. If bodily writing becomes more incorporated into academia, the chances are much higher of it transforming the way elementary school children learn because scholarly thought impacts what is taught in schools. For example, the fact that American scholarly thought and society
privilege products of the mind over those of the body is clearly evident in the format of most schools across the country – students remain in their desks for most of the day and use only their minds. As exhibited by the work of Maxine Greene, academic trends blend into trends in education. Her work, specifically the collection of essays in *Releasing the Imagination*, is an effective example of the relationship between academia and education. Because she supports the connection of body and mind in an academic sense, she advocates for the use of both in the classroom as well (Greene, “Art” 131). Scholarly thought is closely linked to ideas on what should be taught in schools.
Chapter Two

The Importance of Experience in Education

Brief History of Education Since the Beginning of Progressive Education

Led by John Dewey, progressive education arose as a movement in the late nineteenth century. Along with others, he fought a growing national movement that aimed to save academic education for the few, and reserved narrow vocational training for the general population (Sherman 4). Like education movements of the past century have tended to be, the Progressive Education Movement was part of a larger societal movement at the time – in this case, progressivism (Ohmann 9). Richard Ohmann explains, “…school reformers’ vision of social progress was congruent with that of the urban planners, the advocates for public sanitation and health, the enemies of child labor, and so on” (9). These groups of people all fought not for radical change in their respective fields, but rather a redirection of the progress already made. Progressives of the early twentieth century were content with the development that had already occurred in the time period – “the principles and institutions of American democracy [and] its great transformation by machine production and industrial capital during the post-Civil War decades” – but they strived to cleanse society of the malefactors, such as poverty, corrupt city machines, militarism, and great wealth, that had tarnished it (9).

As applied to education, progressivism focused on the child as “the center of educational endeavors” (Sherman 4). Educators pushed for classrooms that would
mirror democratic society (4). Shelley Sherman details, Dewey’s “vision includes recognition of the uniqueness of every child; the importance of personal relevancy in the learning process; the requirement for an active, engaged quality in learning environments; and an image of the school as a microcosm of and preparation for life in a democratic society” (4). Additionally, progressives believed that education should be a social interaction with teacher and student as participants, as opposed to members of a hierarchy (Ohmann 2). Another goal of progressivism in education was more political – educators wanted “to prepare the young for active participation in civic life” (8).

This movement indeed derived its meaning from its root word; the main force of the movement was an air of the “new” (Ohmann 9). Proponents of progressive education had objectives that “were integral to its [the movement’s] project of building a rational and decent industrial society on the foundations laid in the early days of the republic” (9). Their movement was in response to the state of primary schools; progressives were fervently against the crowded classrooms of the era, “learning by rote,” authoritarian teachers, and a curriculum that had not been altered since the mid-nineteenth century (8). They were also against education that arose from a “potted curriculum” – they stressed that education should emerge from children’s life experiences (8). Additionally, Ohmann writes, “It [education] should seek integration of experience, putting to work the child’s ‘innate’ desire to explore, interpret, and create” (8). Schooling should rely on active, or embodied, learning as opposed to passive learning methods, such as drilling and memorization (8).
Progressivism became a purely educational, no longer political, movement after a short spurt of radicalism in the 1930s (Ohmann 9). Until the mid-1940s, progressive practices were prevalent in schools. However, a shift in this attitude occurred after the Soviet Union launched Sputnik in 1957 (Sherman 4). Critics of progressive education wanted to see a “more academic curriculum” and “rigorous science and math standards” (4). The United States wanted to be on par with the Soviet Union, and supporters of these standards saw this as the way to accomplish that.

In the mid-1960s, the open education movement began, inspired by Dewey and progressive education philosophy (Sherman 4). Behind this movement were people who focused on and placed significant value on the individuality of the student “as a unique developing human being” (5). They were against what had become the norm – standardized curriculum and whole-group instruction (5). The open education movement respected the development of a child’s cognition and social skills, and it recognized that each child experiences this development in a different way (5). Differentiated instruction, a teaching method whose philosophy is very similar to that of open education, was also inspired by progressive education in this time (3). Both methods of instruction hope to cater to individual students’ educational needs, abilities, and levels of growth and development (3). However, differentiated instruction calls upon educators to go the extra mile and actually alter their teaching plans to optimize the level of learning for each individual. To specify, teachers employing this method actually “modify curricula, teaching methods, resources,
learning activities, and student products to address the diverse needs of individual students and small groups of students” (qtd. in Sherman 3).

These methods of instruction are understandably quite difficult. However, if embodied learning was brought into public elementary school classrooms as a teaching method, open education and differentiated instruction would be more attainable. By teaching to the body and instructing students to tune into their bodily experiences and sensations, a lesson becomes inherently personalized. Every person has a different body, and every person experiences that body differently. In embodied learning, the body acts as a filter for the lesson material. All students receive the same information, but they perceive it through their bodies (and therefore their minds) in very different ways. Each student’s inherently personalized filter forms a lens through which he or she perceives, interprets, and assimilates information.

As mentioned, the 1960s brought the second wave of progressivism in education. Along with this came the critical pedagogy movement, which arose as an offshoot from feminism and “other allied radical movements attempting to re-read social hierarchy in the west” (Krishnan). Critical pedagogy stands in contrast to traditionalism in education that promotes “certainty, conformity, and technical control of knowledge and power” (Darder, Baltodano, and Torres 11). Instead, critical pedagogy aims to expose the deep connections between “objective knowledge and the cultural norms, values and standards” of society (11). Proponents of this strongly believe in the individual’s ability to “act and react upon the social world” in which they live (Shapiro 16). The tenets of this philosophy also recognize the ways in which an individual’s social class affects how this individual comprehends his or her
identity, as well as the identity that others perceive – in schools and in society (Darder, Baltodano, and Torres 10). The critical pedagogy movement bases itself on the chance of education becoming “a process of human liberation for social transformation” (Shapiro 10). Supporters believe that children should be educated in a way that leads them to become intelligent members of society. In order to achieve this, supporters are married to the idea of bringing into the classroom a democratic method of education (Darder, Baltodano, and Torres 9). They aim to empower students who are economically disenfranchised and culturally marginalized, and therefore transform classrooms that “perpetuate undemocratic life” (9). By ensuring that the classroom proceedings are democratic, critical pedagogues allow students to “find their voices,” a phrase used in this field that describes the process of developing spaces in the classroom in which children feel safe to “articulate their thoughts, concerns, ideas, feelings, and yearnings” (Shapiro 11). When children find their voices, they can take ownership of their learning experiences. Once they have ownership of their learning experiences, the material that is taught becomes a personalized lesson for each child because it is not received passively. This is not to say that each child learns something different, but each learns the material in a different way.

The antitheses of critical pedagogy include absolute dichotomies and the “rigid polarizations of thought or practice” (Darder, Baltodano, and Torres 11). Instead, this theory realizes the interaction between humans and their surroundings, and it aims to “support dynamic interactive elements” in the classroom. As Antonia Darder, Marta P. Baltodano, and Rodolfo D. Torres write, critical pedagogy “supports
a supple and fluid view of humans and nature that is relational; an objectivity and subjectivity that is interconnected; and a coexistent understanding of theory and practice” (11). Educators can metaphorically demonstrate these theoretical concepts to children through the formation of experiences in the classroom.

In order to implement critical pedagogical views of education, it is crucial that educators realize the ways in which “schools have embraced theories and practices that serve to unite knowledge and power in ways that sustain asymmetrical relations of power” (Darder, Baltodano, and Torres 10). These power relations are embodied, unfortunately so, in the “banking” concept of education about which Paolo Freire wrote.11 He defined this concept as a form of schooling “in which students become depositories for a set knowledge imposed by teachers” (Shapiro 14). In this situation, teachers possess power over the students. Once teachers recognize these problematic power relations that occur in traditional education, they can begin to change them.

Except for some “scattered pockets of robust progressive practice,” the 1970s and 1980s saw the decline of open education (Sherman 4). As Larry Cuban wrote, though this movement did have some influence, its long-term effects were negligible (qtd. in Sherman 4). According to Cuban, the 1970s classroom was indeed less formal than that in 1900, however “the core of classroom practice in all grades, anchored in the teacher’s authority to determine what content to teach and what methods to use, endured as it had since the turn of the century” (qtd. in Sherman 4).

11 Paulo Freire was a Brazilian educator and theorist who wrote about the conditions of Brazilian education and the conditions of Brazil's oppressed people (Darder, Baltodano, and Torres 5). For his writings, he was exiled for over fifteen years (5). In the 1970s he came to Harvard University as a visiting professor and his Pedagogy of the Oppressed (1971) was translated into English (5). These events became milestones for radical educators and social change activists (5). He is "considered by many to be the most influential educational philosopher in the development of critical pedagogical thought and practice" (5).
In 1990, the Network of Progressive Educators made an effort to change this; they tried to reinstate progressivism in education by creating a statement of principles (Sherman 4). S. Semel writes that these included: “a focus on active learning; a commitment to the interests and developmental needs of students; an embracing of multiple cultural perspectives; inclusive decision making; and interdisciplinary curriculum” (cited in Sherman 4). Unfortunately, Sherman assesses that progressive education practice “does not seem to have staying power in terms of what actually takes place in classrooms on a large-scale” (4). Dancing in the classroom is the way to solve this problem.\footnote{12 While this point will be detailed later, it is important to mention here in order to note where dance and progressive educational philosophy can come together.} Throughout the 1990s, progressives wrote about their opposition to the reliance on standardized testing in the United States (14).

This reliance became stronger with the passage of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) in 2001 and its enactment in 2002. According to the U.S. Department of Education, NCLB “is based on stronger accountability for results, more freedom for states and communities, proven education methods, and more choices for parents” (“Four Pillars”). This legislation aims to lead all students to academic proficiency by putting standards-based education reform into action, which is based on the idea that implementation of measurable goals and high standards can lead to improvement of learning for each individual student (“Four Pillars”). The Act allows states to create their own standardized assessments, and it gives the responsibility and privilege of budget management to local school districts (“Four Pillars”). Instead of national standards for achievement of these assessments, the standards are set by each state. Also under this act, yearly report cards are issued for states and public school districts
(“Four Pillars”). Parents of children who attend consistently (at least two consecutive years) low-performing schools have the opportunity to transfer their children to a public school, including a public charter school, that scores better on the annual report cards; the school district must provide transportation funds for these families to do so (“Four Pillars”). Additionally, children in low-income families who attend schools attaining sub par scores for at least three years “are eligible to receive supplemental educational services, including tutoring, after-school services, and summer school” (“Four Pillars”). Lastly, students who are the victims of violent crimes while in school or whose schools are consistently dangerous have the option to transfer to a safer school in their district (“Four Pillars”).

There are several problems with the No Child Left Behind Act. It is highly problematic that the government allocates funds to tutoring, summer school, and transportation to alternate schools if a currently attended school is performing poorly. Though it is understood to send a child to a new school if he or she experiences an act of violence, it is unacceptable to spend money on the other ways to clean up the poor performance of some public schools. The money that would go to families who want to send their children to a different school should go toward improving the school they already attend. Allowing districts to pump children out of “bad” schools and into better-performing schools perpetuates the low performance of the schools that children are leaving. This is so because effort and money are being spent on transportation instead of improvement of disadvantaged schools.

Another problem with the Act is its reliance on standardized tests to produce the annual report cards. In “The Future of Progressive Education” by William Hayes,
he presents findings from a research project summary. In the project, Audrey L. Amrein and David C. Berliner, discovered “negative results in high-stakes testing” (cited in Hayes 155). Standardized tests cause students’ chances of intrinsic motivation and engagement in critical thinking to decrease, and teachers’ control of students’ learning experiences to greatly increase; because of this, children become unable to control their own learning experience (155). Hayes supports Peter Sacks’ assessment of “test-driven classrooms” in *Standardized Minds*, stating that they “exacerbate boredom, fear, and lethargy, promoting all manner of mechanical behaviors on the part of teachers, students, and schools, and bleed children of their natural love of learning” (qtd. in Hayes 156). Despite these negative effects, many still support NCLB (156). A significant portion of this group sees negatively any manifestation of progressive education (156). Though I do support an uprooting of standards-based education as set by NCLB, I do recognize that this would be too difficult to accomplish by the time change needs to happen. Instead, I urge for a way to modify educational practices and curricula, specifically with embodied learning, while still being able to meet standards and pass tests.

The debate between traditional and progressive educational practices is still lively. According to Sherman, the “philosophical center” of open education and the “pedagogical framework of differentiated instruction” bear a strong resemblance to each other (7). In the past five years this movement, of which open education and differentiated instruction are offshoots, has gathered as much popularity as it had in the late 1960s and early 1970s (7). However, there exists a dissonance between the movement’s philosophies and what actually occurs in the classroom. Hayes claims
that present affairs in public education unfortunately coincide with the opinions of traditional method supporters (154). Rigid state standards “are restricting teachers’ flexibility in employing methods other than teacher-centered direct instruction” (153). The chances are high that progressive educators also feel concerned about losing class time if they are to embark on field trips, projects, or debates (153) in order to embody progressivism. It is likely that they fear taking time to lead interactive projects would take away from time that they should be spent coaching students to score well on standardized tests (153). As Hayes writes, “Lagging U.S. scores on comparative international tests continue to create pressure to concentrate on the type of instruction that traditionalists believe will be most effective in raising test scores” (153).

In the United States, progressive education options do exist. Parents can choose to send their children to schools that employ progressivism-inspired teaching methods, but the families who have access to these types of schools are often white, middle- or upper class liberals (Hayes 154). According to Hayes, “…growing numbers of urban minorities are considering choice as a way to escape schools they perceive as failing their children” (154). In order to instead improve what happens in the classroom, embodied learning should be used as a way to access the tenets of progressive education. If the use of embodied learning becomes widespread through public schools, then all, or at least most, students can have access to this mode of learning. In support of individualized experiential education, Maxine Greene writes, “It seems eminently clear to me that…a single standard of achievement and a one-dimensional definition of the common will…result in severe injustices to the children of the poor and the dislocated, [and] the children at risk…” (Greene, “Standards”
If in a situation of this sort, a wealthier family has the choice to send their children to a different school with the educational objectives of their choice. However, children of financially disadvantaged families do not have this option. In many of Greene’s works, she has stated that education should be available to everyone in any social class or situation (173). I support Greene’s mission of educational accessibility for all students, but, like her, I do not believe that mere access to education is enough. It should be access to progressive education that recognizes the existence of the mind in the context of the body – education that teaches the student’s whole being.

In order to improve the learning outcomes of individual students, traditionalists advocate for high standards and measurable goals. However, in reality this type of teaching does the opposite. The way to actually enhance the individual learning experience of each child is to pursue progressive educational practice. The philosophy of these practices values the experience of each individual child. Embodied learning, a technique that also places a large amount of importance on experience, is the way to access this philosophy. It is a process that makes attaining progressive education doable and exciting. The use of embodied learning to teach other subjects (i.e., math, English, social studies, science) gives students a way to take control of their own learning experience.

In order to employ the use of experience in education, it is crucial to understand what qualifies as an experience. It is also imperative to know how to properly assess the value and quality of an experience.
John Dewey

John Dewey had several problems with traditional education. One of his main issues “was not that it emphasized the external conditions that enter into the control of the experiences but that it paid so little attention to the internal factors which also decide what kind of experience is had” (Dewey, Experience 42). Under traditional education, a dance activity as a means to learn other material would not happen in the classroom. But suppose for a moment that it would. A “traditional” educator would execute a dance activity with little attention to what the children were experiencing. They would not modify their activity based on what the students were feeling in their bodies or the movement experience they were having on a personal level. This would most likely lead to an unsuccessful activity, because the experience had by each individual largely dictates the success level of the activity. The success of the group is of course important, but this is impossible to attain without success of the individual.

The Importance of Experience in Education

Dewey’s characterization of education is entirely based on the extreme importance he places on experience. Dewey himself defines education as “a development within, by, and for experience” (Dewey, Experience 28). He believes that education is based entirely on the experiences had in the classroom. Dewey also defines education as growth, however only if the experiences had are positive ones (36). The experience of critically engaging with material is the essence of education for Dewey. He feels that students should have interactive relationships with their school subjects. Actively interacting with taught information, as opposed to receiving
it passively, leads to situations that are beneficial to learning. Positive educational experiences are valuable simultaneously inside the classroom as well as outside of it, in terms of day-to-day life, and living as an intelligent citizen (Hall-Quest 10).

With the placement of more value on experience, comes the necessity to clarify what an experience is (Dewey, *Experience* 28). For example, an educator who engages his or her class in dance activities should know what qualifies as such. As Dewey writes, “…every experience is the result of interaction between a live creature and some aspect of the world in which he lives” (Dewey, *Art* 43-4). It is only once “…the material experienced runs its course to fulfillment…” that an occurrence becomes “*an* experience” and is assimilated into the subject’s archive of past experiences (35). According to Dewey, not only does an experience affect how future experiences are perceived, but “…every experience enacted and undergone modifies the one who acts and undergoes” (Dewey, *Experience* 35). Thus it is because experiences actually change people’s beings, that past experiences affect the present, and that the present affects the future.

At any given point in time, a person perceives and interprets a situation with all past experiences as a backdrop, or a lens. A person sees the present in the context of the past, and the past colors current situations. It is for this reason that people experience the same situations in an endless number of ways. Because no two people have the same lens or backdrop, no two people can assimilate any given experience in the same way. Additionally, every current experience affects all future experiences. This concept is what Dewey terms the “principle of continuity of experience.” He writes, it “means that every experience both takes up something from those which
have gone before and modifies in some way the quality of those which come after” (Dewey, *Experience* 35).

In fact, most important is the quality of an experience because of the “organic connection between education and personal experience” (Dewey, *Experience* 23). The existence of experience in education matters not if these experiences are damaging to the individual. This is especially so since experiences actually change the person who goes through them.

Two criteria that can be used to evaluate an experience include the immediate assessment of the situation by the one having it, and the long-term effect of that experience (Dewey, *Experience* 27). First, it is easy to see, through verbal and nonverbal language, whether a person is enjoying a situation (27). However, the long-term effect of an experience on the individual and his or her future experiences is “not borne on its face”; this aspect is more difficult to judge because it cannot be seen in the immediate moment of the experience (27). The differentiation between immediate and long-term effects comes in determining whether or not learning occurs. If learning occurs, then the future effect on a student is positive. In the case of a dance activity, the child is more open and receptive to future dance experiences. A negative movement experience leads the child to be less interested in future dance activities, or it harms the child’s self-esteem. A movement activity can do this by leading him or her to doubt his or her intelligence, self-worth, or body image. Under the principle of continuity of experience, the value of an experience is mostly judged for its impact on later experiences and on the individual’s being later in life.
Interaction, or engagement, is another quality that can be used to evaluate an experience “in its educational function and force” (Dewey, *Experience* 42). According to Dewey, there are two factors – internal conditions and objective conditions – in any experience (42). The internal factor is concerned with what occurs on an individual level. In a dance or movement activity, this refers to how an individual student reacts, learns, and grows (or does not grow), from the activity. The other factor, objective conditions – objective in that they are preexisting and oftentimes unchangeable in the moment – refer to the physical surroundings of an event. Dewey writes, “Any normal experience is an interplay of these two sets of conditions” (42). In addition to these, there actually exists a third factor in any experience – the social surroundings. For a dance activity, these are the dynamics within the group and that between the group and the educator. Though experiences have one more condition than Dewey acknowledged, movement experiences are still an interaction of all these factors. Therefore, a successful dance activity depends on the positive interaction between individuals’ movement experiences, physical surroundings, and social movement dynamics.

The principle of continuity of experience is especially important in education because that is where children spend most of their time as they grow. Giving experience a lead role in education produces a scenario in which each student receives a personalized education. This happens because no two individuals can have the same exact experience in any given situation. Every person perceives, interprets, and remembers events and situations differently. Three people may be present for the same situation and later recall what seems like three entirely different stories. Dewey
writes, “…basing education upon personal experience may mean more multiplied and more intimate contacts between the mature and the immature than ever existed in the traditional school” (Dewey, *Experience* 21). If education is based on the personal experience of each student, then it will be as though each has his or her own individual teacher. Each student’s individualized experience serves as this teacher. The “mature” that Dewey refers to is the educator, and the “immature” are the students. Creating an environment where several unique experiences can transpire allows for more numerous and more in-depth connections between teacher and student (21). Because of the enhanced connection, it is extensively beneficial for educational experiences to be positive.

Because the quality of educational experiences trumps the existence of experiences themselves, it is the job of the educator “to arrange for the kind of experiences which… promote having further desirable experiences” (Dewey, *Experience* 27). Not only must dance activities be wholly positive, they must be fun for the children to actually complete. If they are immediately enjoyable, then there is a larger chance that a given activity will lead to the seeking out of future positive movement experiences. In order to give each child the personalized learning experience that he or she deserves, the educator must simultaneously “survey the capacities and needs of the particular set of individuals with whom he is dealing” (58). He or she must observe the students and what their movement and academic needs and potentials are. These observations should factor into the teacher’s decision of what activity to do. The needs of the individuals, as well as the class as a whole, must be met in their movement experiences.
In a classroom where a teacher does the above things, the students have a guide, and not a dictator (Dewey, *Experience* 59). This guide, instead of ruling the classroom, travels along the educational journey with his or her students and creates conditions in which all can grow as a group. In addition to growing as a group, individuals can encounter personal experiences from which individualized growth results. In a dancing classroom, the educator is a facilitator who moves with the students as they become more experienced with dance and movement. A classroom where a student’s experience serves as his or her teacher may be mistaken for a classroom in which less guidance occurs on part of the educator. However, allowing students’ personal experiences to thrive actually leads to more guidance (Dewey, *Experience* 21). They may receive less direct guidance from the educator, but what may be seemingly lost there can actually be taught by the experience itself. This results in students receiving more guidance because the experiences that they have would have been created and nurtured by the educator.

The principle of continuity of experience in individuals is a microcosm of the principle in society. As mentioned it works on the individual, but it also works on society as a whole. Dewey writes, “…we live from birth to death in a world of persons and things which in large measure is what it is because of what has been done and transmitted from previous human activities (Dewey, *Experience* 39). For example, planet Earth is experiencing climate change because of what people living here have done in the past. Their activities have led the Earth, as well as its habitats and species to begin deterioration. If people had known to be more sustainable in the past, the Earth would probably not be in its current state. Additionally, sustainability
would not have to be at the forefront of global problems – it could be something that is effortless for the world’s population. This applies to dance because a group improves at and becomes more comfortable moving together the more often they do so. A movement group’s experience of moving together is never static. The group’s dynamics are slightly altered – for better or for worse – with the transpiration of each movement experience in the same way that an individual’s being undergoes a slight alteration with each movement or life experience.

Recognition of the Union between Mind and Body, and Environmental and Internal Experience

Dewey writes, “Experience simply does not go on inside a person” (Dewey, Experience 39). In addition, “Every genuine experience has an active side which changes in some degree the objective conditions under which experiences are had” (39). When a person has an experience, it happens not only internally but also externally in the environment. As stated, he or she is changed on the inside. The external, “objective conditions” can be viewed as the physical surroundings of an experience. These surroundings are also transformed in some way after each event that occurs. For example, if a group rehearsing in a dance studio breaks a floorboard, then the physical surroundings of the next group’s movement experience that occurs in the space will be altered by the hole in the floor. This change in objective conditions can be observed over time, in watching what physically changes in a place.

Parallels exist between this – the internal and external locales of experience – and the mind/body connection. In each binary, there is one visible and one invisible
aspect. Both aspects in each instance are changed by experiences. The internal place
where experiences change a person is parallel with the mind. These cannot be seen or
easily observed. A dance activity, for example, would change the person’s internal
kinesthetic sense. The activity would also alter the person’s mind by modifying how
that person thinks about dance, the body, or the subject matter of the dance. The
physical, environmental aspect of an experience is parallel with the body. Both are
physical and tangible. Many changes in the body, as well as changes in the physical
surroundings, can be observed because they are visible. In a dance activity,
 improvement in the way a student moves his or her body, in addition to alterations in
the physical surroundings, can be seen.

Both binaries need to be taken into consideration as a unified whole when
planning and leading dance and movement activities in the classroom. Both binaries
are greater when dealt with as their wholes instead of a sum of their individual parts.
Because of this, educators must be cognizant of the individual person, as well as how
an environment can be changed, when planning and executing dance activities. He or
she also needs to be aware of the effects these activities would have on the bodies and
minds of his or her students. When the principle of continuity is disregarded,
“...experience is treated as if it were something which goes on exclusively inside an
individual’s body and mind” (Dewey, Experience 39). However this is definitely not
the case. Dewey adds that it shouldn’t “be necessary to say that experience does not
occur in a vacuum” (40). He claims that experience is fed by the “sources outside an
individual” (40). It is these sources from which an educator should draw when
executing dance activities. On the level of the individual person, it is crucial that
teachers be aware of the effects an activity can have on a student’s body as well as his or her mind.

The impact of dance and movement can be felt, even if it cannot be articulated. Of the difference between arbitrary action and just, fair action on part of an educator, Dewey writes that it is unnecessary for “the difference [to] be formulated into words, by either teacher or the young, in order to be felt in experience” (Dewey, *Experience* 55). This can be applied to dance as education – the difference between learning through the whole being (mind and body) and learning through only the mind is intrinsically known. The former happens on a deeper level, a valuable level to arrive at even if it cannot be named. Positive experiences are valuable and lead to growth even if the students are unable to “articulate it and reduce it to an intellectual principle” (55). In the realm of dance and movement as a way of learning other material, it is effective whether or not the students can pinpoint what dance principles were acting upon their movement experience.
Chapter Three

Dance as a Teaching Method

Dance is a way of knowing because the body can construct knowledge. As Jennifer Donohue Zakkai writes, “Children…are innately primed to learn and share what they know through dance” (7). They experience life through motion. Beginning at infancy, people learn via physical interaction with their environment through actions such as crawling, walking, touch and so forth (7). Until they can speak well, children are dependent on gestures in order to communicate their needs and responses to their environment. Furthermore, full-bodied movement is the way children “express the vivid intentions of their own imagination” (7). This “full-bodied, expressive movement” is how cultures have expressed their values, beliefs, and artistic ideas throughout time (7).

The existence of the mind/body connection means that knowledge can be derived from movement of the body. This means that the body should be used as a text in academia and education because using the body as a text cultivates knowledge construction and transmission on a deeper level. Using the body provides new opportunities and enhances the functioning of the mind. Because the body cultivates learning on a deeper level, experience is important in education. The best type of “hands-on” experience is one that involves art. As Maxine Greene writes, “Aesthetic experiences require conscious participation in a work, a going out of energy, an ability to notice what is there to be noticed in the play, the poem, the quartet”
(Greene, “Art” 125). In order to complete an artistic or aesthetic task, a child must be engaged with the material. The most appropriate form of art for teaching is dance because it involves movement of the whole body, and full-bodied movement creates an endless number of opportunities for the construction of bodily knowledge. Dance should be used to teach core subjects because it engages the student, it is a way to access all types of intelligences, and it inherently caters to the mind/body connection. Additionally, dance is easily adaptable to many different concepts.

Why Use Dance to Teach?

Engagement

For many reasons, learning is more effective when accomplished through dance and movement – one of these reasons is engagement. There must be some sort of engagement, or interaction, with taught material in order for anything to be learned. If the student is not engaged, and therefore not interacting with the material, learning cannot take place. A good way to improve the chances that engagement will occur is to use the arts, specifically dance. In The Dancing Self, Carol M. Press indicates what engagement entails. She states that with engagement comes the necessity for the existence of an “other”; this other can be an activity, an individual, “or the artistic medium endowed with subjectivity,” but the other must be present (Press 158). In order to be engaged successfully, the student must be self-aware, and he or she must want “to interact with, and to be affected by, the other” (158). Dance acts as this “other.”
Engagement is relevant and significant here because it can be accessed effectively through creativity, and through movement. Press writes, “Creativity supports and enhances the individual’s ability to engage the world with exploration, self-assertion, vitality, reciprocity, to discover, express, and elaborate meaning and competence, and to be transformed by these experiences” (157). Movement and dance are extremely effective ways to access creativity. Moreover, dance exercises force engagement to occur. For a student to successfully complete a creative exercise, in dance specifically, he or she must become invested in the material. Press explains that participation in “such aesthetic endeavors is never passive, but requires, from creator and spectator, an active engagement of reciprocity between sense of self and other” (157). A student who successfully completes and learns from a dance activity is one whose sense of self interacted and formed a relationship with the taught material.

Engagement serves as the basis for learning other subjects through dance and movement. This is because the human need “to explore, and to assert, to influence others and to feel their effects upon us, to be nourished by functioning self-objects, and to extend such sustenance to others” is always present, from the very beginning of life to the very end (Press 158). In the case of dance, the engagement occurs with movement, and the student executes and interacts with movement on a personal and social level. Once taught, the student can notice changes in his or her own body, and changes in how he or she interacts and relates to the bodies of others.

If children are taught “the notion of engagement” in elementary school, they learn how one aspect of something, or anything for that matter, affects another aspect
(Press 159). They can learn through movement that their own bodies, as well as
groups of people, work like machines. If one part or system undergoes a change, the
rest of the machine has to adapt and accommodate that change in order to continue to
function. By understanding what it means to be engaged with educational material,
they can also realize their personal abilities to make explorations, discoveries, and
creations. According to Press, this is the foundation of “exploratory and assertive
problem solving” (159). Educators can use this type of problem solving to generate
activities that lead to solutions and expressions that are meaningful to the students
(159). Press claims, in the utopia of education, students “form a relationship of
engagement to the way their actions affect the world and the ways the objects around
them have the potential to interact and create change” (159). Approaching education
as a method of exploring and asserting in order to “create something new” is highly
effective (160). This method has the ability to push an individual to become someone
who is no longer comfortable with the obvious but instead seeks awe and discovery;
this place is the “exhilarating unknown” that is creative engagement (160). Dance can
be used to most effectively access this because it is heavily reliant on full-bodied
movement, and full-bodied movement is a way that people can come to know the
world because of the mind/body connection.

The fact that humans need to explore and engage with the environment
provides a jumping point for dance activities. Dance is one way by which this aspect
of human nature can be accessed. One type of dance activity, a movement problem,
involves creative problem solving. In creative problem solving, participants arrive at
a solution with minimal guidance from the facilitator. Movement problems, a type of
creative problem, force a heightened awareness of the body and of bodily relationships to other participants because problem solving must occur through use of the body. Students must rely on their bodies to give them answers. In order to truly participate in this type of exercise, the participant cannot be passive – he or she must be active in his or her experience (Press 157). Art and dance provide a space in which people can observe and challenge preexisting ideas and form new ones by interacting with movement and what the movement intends to express.

*Multiple Intelligences Are Stimulated by Creative Dance*

Another reason to bring dance and movement closer to the forefront of methodology in elementary school classrooms is because all students learn in different ways. Howard Gardner identifies eight different types of intelligences – bodily-kinesthetic, intrapersonal, interpersonal, musical, spatial, linguistic, logical-mathematical, and naturalist (Brehm and McNett 107). People can operate through more or less of a certain type of intelligence, but all types work together, to some extent, when a person perceives, interprets, and passes on information (107). Many theories about “diverse thinking strategies” identify these intelligences in different ways, but they all agree that learning is more successful when a topic is taught and explored through multiple intelligences, or modes of thinking; this method of teaching “taps into more of the brain’s potential by developing diverse intellectual paths” (107). Not only does teaching to different intelligences increase the learning of one single individual, it also allows for more students to relate to the material. Additionally, acknowledging the fact that students receive, process, and share
information in a multitude of different ways helps educators recognize “and build on what students can do instead of what they cannot” (107). Tapping into students’ strengths and using them “as a bridge to areas of weakness” can peak their interest and motivation (107). Educating in this way would automatically increase the chances of engagement by the students. 

Gardner is a supporter of arts integration into the classroom – a movement he views as necessary for active, or embodied, learning to take place (Brehm and McNett 106). His framework for planning and instruction also supports distinctiveness of the individual “and offers means for potentially engaging all students” (106). 

**Bodily-kinesthetic Intelligence**

According to Brehm and McNett, as well as dance educators for over a century, “…movement is an essential mode for learning and expression” (108). Gardner agrees with this and identifies a bodily-kinesthetic intelligence (Brehm and McNett 107). This type of intelligence “involves ‘thinking’ through the movement of the body” (108). This includes the ability to use movement awareness as a guide to making decisions, and as a form of expression (108). People with a strong bodily-kinesthetic intelligence are able and eager to do motor tasks, both large and fine (108). Additionally, these people “easily settle into the natural synchrony of body and mind” (108). Construction and transmission of knowledge through the body comes easily. They are able to use the body as a text, and to look to the body for solutions to creative problems.
Because creative dance employs movement as a way to solve problems and increases movement awareness via the kinesthetic sense, it deeply triggers the bodily-kinesthetic intelligence (Brehm and McNett 108). Though creative dance employs the bodily-kinesthetic intelligence most greatly, it activates several intelligences simultaneously (108). It is for this additional reason that dance and movement should be brought to the forefront of teaching in elementary school classrooms. Because creative dance uses movement and the bodily-kinesthetic intelligence to activate multiple intelligences at once, “…it can involve the whole person and can be used as a link from one intelligence to another” (108). Thus it can produce a situation in which the subject matters resonate with more students in the classroom.

**Intrapersonal Intelligence**

Another type of intelligence described by Howard Gardner is intrapersonal intelligence – this entails the capability to sense one’s own feelings and wants (Brehm and McNett 108). Based on this a person who is strongly engaged with this intelligence is able to make decisions with self-introspection as the foundation (108). The way this “works relates very closely to the way the mind makes associations and choices as part of the kinesthetic sensory loop” (108). In both the functioning of intrapersonal intelligence and the kinesthetic sensory loop, a person’s “…internal awareness becomes the basis for further action” (109), as in Dewey’s principle of continuity of experience. Regardless of how long the cycle takes, whether it takes a moment or an extended period of time to run its course, it happens repeatedly over time as a person tests different ways to solve a problem (109). This applies whether
the problem is intrapersonal or kinesthetic, as in a creative dance structure. In one of these, a student mover who is proficient in intrapersonal intelligence focuses inward, and “…the mind interprets objective movement sensations by remembering similar sensations, making emotional associations, and finding meaning in those associations” (108-9). Therefore, past intrapersonal experiences affect ones in the present, and present experiences affect ones in the future, following Dewey’s principle of continuity of experience.

Intrapersonal intelligence can be engaged by creative dance. For example, when students are working through a movement structure that involves making sequential movement decisions, they use both intrapersonal and bodily-kinesthetic intelligence (Brehm and McNett 109). When employing both of these intelligences simultaneously, decision-making takes on a quite different quality from that of making a logical choice (109). When executing this form of decision making, “…movements are discovered by the body and emerge through awareness of what the body wants rather than through manipulation of contrivance” (109). In this mode, the body is used as a text. Movers look to the body for answers, and the body provides them. The body possesses an intuitive knowledge that can guide the mover towards solutions to creative movement problems.13

Interpersonal Intelligence

When dancing with others, it is quite difficult to be successful without interpersonal intelligence. Because this type of intelligence “involves skill in the

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13 Because the body is a site of knowledge construction, people can use movement to find solutions to more general problems outside of the studio or classroom as well.
interplay of perception and response,” a person would have difficulty reading and responding to other people’s feelings and emotions without it (Brehm and McNett 109). According to Gardner, “the core capacity here [of interpersonal intelligence] is the ability to notice and make distinctions among other individuals and, in particular, among their moods, temperaments, motivations, and intentions” (qtd. in Brehm and McNett 109). Interpersonally intelligent people usually work well in groups (109). The fact that they can communicate effectively and sense what others need leads to their strength as group leaders and facilitators (109). These people “learn easiest in group situations in which they can benefit from relating, interacting, and cooperating with others” (109).

The application of creative dance to different types of intelligence is perhaps more easily seen here than in other forms. Oftentimes in creative dance, lessons proceed through different levels – the individual, to partners, to small groups, then to the whole group (Brehm and McNett 110). As the number of people working on an exercise together builds, the need for interpersonal intelligence builds as well (110). Brehm and McNett explain, “The dynamic of constantly working with thematic material in both individual and group explorations builds a student’s confidence in knowing how to function both as a strong individual and as a productive group member” (110). This applies not only to movement exercises, but to real life as well. The authors add, “To dance as a cooperatively functioning group is the kind of experience that supports the healthy development of interpersonal intelligence” (110). Individuals can use what they learn in a safe movement space and apply it to their relations with others outside of the movement space.
Creative dance group activities teach students how to operate within a group – both in movement spaces and in social spaces (Brehm and McNett 109). A specific type that can be effective for those uncomfortable with interpersonal relations is group dance improvisation (109). Those who often activate this intelligence successfully can further cultivate it when dancing in a group, while those who are uncomfortable can work to become less so because group improvisation forces them to engage with others.

Creative dance makes it easier for students who feel tense around others to communicate more easily because communication is boiled down to movement, a basic part of being human that does not necessarily need to be cultivated consciously. Shy students can create a dialogue through movement that can then “facilitate verbal communication outside of the dance experience” (Brehm and McNett 109). They can take what they discover through movement and apply it to how they use language, and to how they interact with others in daily life.

**Musical Intelligence**

Musical intelligence entails being able to adequately organize “sound into meaningful forms,” and it includes the ability to recognize nuances in sound qualities and how these qualities relate to each other (Brehm and McNett 110). Someone who is talented in musical intelligence is someone who is “able to feel and manipulate beat patterns” (110). This form of intelligence is also deeply intertwined with bodily-kinesthetic intelligence. Movers can engage it by actually making music – for example, by singing, speaking, stomping, clapping, or playing rhythm instruments
while dancing (110). While producing audible sound with the body is an effective way to make music while dancing, movers do not need to make music in order to engage their musical intelligence (110). Brehm and McNett write, “The rhythmic pattern of a movement can be sensed internally without being produced externally” (110). A mover can sense the speed of a movement, for example, through his or her kinesthetic sense even if the movement does not produce any sound.

The musical and bodily-kinesthetic intelligences can easily be engaged at the same time by creative dance. When movers concentrate on “the kinesthetically felt rhythmic pattern of movement impulses or internally sensed melodies” they are stimulating their musical intelligence (Brehm and McNett 110). Each individual possesses his or her own “internal drummer”; it is this that dictates a person’s sensation of rhythmic kinesthesia (110). When individuals are improvising as a group, the group theoretically becomes the individual. The parts of the whole are each person, no longer the parts of the body. The composition of the space moves from multiples gestalts – each is one individual person – to one gestalt, and that is the group. When this happens, “…the group works with a common pulse, sensing and responding to the beat of their ‘communal drummer’” (110).

**Spatial Intelligence**

A person who is highly capable of “perceiving, creating, recalling, and manipulating information that has a spatial pattern” is one who is talented in spatial intelligence (Brehm and McNett 110). Additionally, this individual is also in tune to
visual stimuli; he or she conjures mental images easily and gives descriptions that reference shape, color, and size (110).

Like all other forms of intelligence, the spatial can be accessed by use of creative dance and activation of the bodily-kinesthetic intelligence. One way to do this is to investigate creative movement problems “that heighten awareness of where they [the movers] are, where they are going, and the pathway that their movement takes” (Brehm and McNett 111). This can help students improve their sense of spatial awareness, thereby stimulating their spatial intelligence (111).

**Linguistic Intelligence**

Verbal, or linguistic, intelligence is what people use in order to communicate with verbal language, or words (Brehm and McNett 111). Verbal language is a way to express, communicate, and learn through words (111). An individual with a stimulated linguistic intelligence is talented at reading, writing, storytelling, and word games (111).

As Brehm and McNett write, “Creative dance activities can develop linguistic intelligence and sustain the love of language by linking children’s natural desire to move with the desire to communicate and learn through language” (111). As mentioned earlier, lessons can be designed in order to access linguistic intelligence through the bodily-kinesthetic channel. By dancing a reading assignment’s content, students are more likely to understand its purpose because they must embody the material in order to complete the task (112).
Though it is possible to use compositions that already exist—such as articles, essays or stories—in order to engage both intelligences simultaneously, educators can also stimulate both intelligences with the writing process.\(^{14}\) This process is very similar to the process of dance making; additionally, the marks of good writing are nearly the same as those of good dance composition (Brehm and McNett 112). Even though they operate through different mediums, both art forms possess messages that the creators, be it authors or choreographers, hope to communicate effectively (112). Key qualities of both forms include, “Succinct phrases, attention to descriptive detail, [and] transitions” (112). Comprehension of products in each form requires knowledge of “meaningful and logical sequence” particular to that form (112). These similarities can be applied to the education of elementary-age children. Educators can teach their students how to “kinesthetically sense the structure and flow of a dance composition” (112). Then they can apply this knowledge to understand how verbal language is assembled into compositions (112).

**Logical-mathematical Intelligence**

A type of intelligence that also requires comprehension of sequences is logical-mathematical intelligence. This encompasses the skill to recognize patterns and relationships, manipulate concepts and objects, and “classify phenomena into sets” (Brehm and McNett 112). A strong number sense is necessary for proficiency in this type of intelligence (112).

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\(^{14}\) Similarly, the choice needs to be made about whether to use already finished dance pieces, or the act of choreography to teach a concept. Improvisational dance can be used to teach as well.
Creative dance and bodily-kinesthetic intelligence can be linked to the logical-mathematical in activities that focus on relationships and the construction of patterned sequences (Brehm and McNett 113). People act upon the physical world by handling, sorting, and manipulating objects. When participating in creative dance, these “objects” are the children’s bodies and their parts (113). Brehm and McNett write, “When students use the movement of their bodies to inquire into patterns and relationships, they are concretely developing skills for abstract thinking” (113). Because students can more easily attach their minds to concrete and finite ideas, objects, and their relationships, they can acquire knowledge in that way then apply it to abstract thinking in order to develop the same skill set in that area.15

**Naturalist Intelligence**

Possession of naturalist intelligence implies an intimate relationship with the natural world as well as “an understanding of its intrinsic patterns” (Brehm and McNett 113). People who are naturalistically intelligent automatically pay close attention to detail, and they can easily classify organisms and understand how they interact with each other (113). Whereas logical-mathematical intelligence is based in a place of separation, naturalist intelligence relies on awareness of the whole environment (113). However, both of these types require “the ability to observe and

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15 Though students can make new discoveries by looking at dance through a logical-mathematical lens, Brehm and McNett claim that this and the bodily-kinesthetic intelligence should not be approached simultaneously (113). They write, “In any artistic endeavor, we do not recommend attempting to create and analyze at the same time” (113). Comprehension of logical-mathematical material requires thinking analytically, and this should not be done while engaging in creative movement (113). Creative movement is infinitely more beneficial when the student focuses on the whole experience, as opposed to attempting to tease it apart and analyze movement elements or group them into sets (113). At the same time, “…bracketing movement experience with logical-mathematical thinking provides an intellectual container for the dance experience” (113). It gives students a lens through which to view and apply their movement experiences.
discriminate” (113). This type of intelligence makes “a person become aware of an environment, the relationship between its parts, and its overall gestalt” (113). This type of intelligence can be applied to dance and movement as well – the environment is whatever space the group is moving in, the gestalt is the group of movers, and its parts are the individual bodies in the space (113).

Naturalist intelligence is activated when a mover dances in a group. This form of intelligence “is the faculty that enables an individual to experience the reality of a group body” (Brehm and McNett 114). This mode of knowing requires that an individual is alert to his or her environment and its parts, and how that environment functions (114). In group dancing, that environment is the group of movers of which the individual is a part. He or she uses naturalist intelligence to become aware of his or her contributions to the group, how that group functions (i.e., how movement themes develop within the group), and how the group’s parts (i.e., the other movers) relate to each other (114).

An individual can also activate his or her naturalist intelligence when dancing solo. He or she can do so by evaluating “the relationship of the parts of the body to the whole body, the quality of movement, and the development of movement themes in relation to the whole dance” (Brehm and McNett 113). In this case, the environment at the central focus of the mover’s mind is his or her own body and its kinesphere (113-4).

According to Brehm and McNett, the form “of creative dance is about exploring natural human expression beyond the focus of one’s individual personality” (114). Creative dancers can use their naturalist intelligence in order “to more fully
experience their own nature as expressive movers and as an integral part of all nature” – whether the group is dancing about themes from nature or a specific environment, or developing pure movement themes (114).

Because the bodily-kinesthetic intelligence can be activated in different ways in order to access the rest of the intelligences, creative dance is an effective teaching tool (Brehm and McNett 114). Creative dance has the power to cater to all types of learners (114).

Using Dance to Access Embodied Learning

In this section I will present curricular models of using dance to access embodied learning. I present these models because this project seeks to earn more value for the process and the practice, over product and theory respectively, in education.

The overarching problem is that not enough dance and movement exist in public elementary schools in the United States as a way to learn the core subjects. These are science, mathematics, social studies, and English/reading/language arts (Perie, Baker, and Bobbitt 1). Contrary to popular belief, the concepts in these subjects can be taught through dance.

How to Teach through Dance

Here I present examples that are to be used as curricular models. They are meant to show some of the vast possibilities that come with using dance to teach. In
order to use these in the classroom, they should be tweaked and detailed based on the specific aims of the lesson, as well as the age and maturity of the class. They are not meant to be used verbatim as lesson plans, but instead as proof that there exists several options to teach each core subject through dance.

My embodied learning practice is based in dance, but with a consciousness that students do need to pass standardized tests, regardless of my opinions about them. My practice is about using dance as a vehicle to learn, with the concept students need to learn as the main focus because ultimately they do need to pass their tests to advance through school.

When designing a lesson that will teach a curricular topic through dance, it is important to choose the concept first (Brehm and McNett 66). Within the core subjects exist an endless number of concepts that can be taught through dance. After choosing the concept, identify what intelligences need to be engaged in order to learn this concept. Then identify relationships between the parts of the whole of this concept. Analyze how these parts relate to each other, and identify which intelligence(s) are necessary to understand the concept. As stated above, all other seven intelligences can be accessed by way of the bodily-kinesthetic intelligence. Translate the relationships between the parts of the whole of this concept into movement in order to identify what elements of dance can be used to teach this. All elements are always acting in dance, but one can be emphasized (66). Concepts can be translated into movement literally/narratively (linearly or nonlinearly) or abstractly.\(^\text{17}\)

\(^{16}\) See Appendix C for examples of ways to do this with several school subjects.  
\(^{17}\) See Appendix D for clarification and examples.
The intrapersonal intelligence should always be activated when dancing.
Whenever dancing in a group, the interpersonal intelligence is stimulated. Unless
specified otherwise, these should be assumed for each curricular model. Music can be
added to all of these to further engage the students. Before each lesson, the educator
should warm up the appropriate dance elements in the students’ bodies.

There are several steps for teaching a core subject concept through dance.
First, educators should present the verbal material. In public schools, concepts
involve learning a wealth of knowledge, and students need to receive all of this
information. Next, the teacher should lead a movement exploration based on the
elements of dance to which the chosen concept has been related.\(^\text{18}\) The exploration
stage begins to show students the link between dance and the verbal material that they
just received in lecture form. The movement lesson should culminate in the
development of a performance piece of any desired length. Performance is important
because it allows students to see ways that their fellow students solved movement
problems. Additionally, a performance “brings…information to life” (Sprague,
Scheff, and McGreevy-Nichols 5). This stage solidifies the connection between
movement and the written material. According to the authors of Dance About
Anything, “The creation of a new product by using thinking processes that span all
subject areas and using skills and concepts from many different subject areas help
students to make connections across the curricula and to their own lives” (7). When
students solve problems creatively and develop their own work, the understanding of
the topic is enhanced (48). Performance is also important because it completes the
choreographic process, and more importantly the learning of the concept (68).

\(^{18}\) See Appendix E for different ways to explore the elements of dance.
Students also “gain physical and emotional power, self-esteem, and a sense of responsibility,” skills that they can apply to their daily lives (68).

There are multiple options for performing a dance about a concept that is originally in the form of verbal language. Depending on the age of the group, the performance can be an improvisation or set choreography. The former is often more effective with younger students, and the latter can be used with older students. A discussion can follow the performance, and the educator can elicit what the students learned that they did not know or were unable to articulate before translating the lesson into movement. As students get older, they can take more of this process into their own hands and take more control over their learning experience.

Curricular Models

Science: The Water (Hydrologic) Cycle

In order to understand the water cycle, a common elementary science concept, it is important that the student’s naturalist and spatial intelligences are engaged. They must understand how each segment of the water cycle impacts the entire cycle, and they must be able to conjure a mental image of where the different forms of water are at each point in the cycle. The most prevalent dance element in the water cycle is force because the important part of the cycle is the way in which the water moves energetically.

Present the Verbal Material

This lesson would begin with a lecture on the stages of the water cycle: condensation (the process of reducing a gas or vapor to a liquid or solid form),
precipitation (falling products of condensation in the atmosphere, as rain, snow, or hail), saturation, and evaporation (a change from liquid to vapor form). The basics would include the definitions of these terms, the order in which they occur, and what atmospheric and environmental changes cause them. Throughout the lecture, each stage should be discussed in detail, noting the ways in which each stage can happen, such as rain in precipitation (Brehm and McNett 231). The educator should also ask for words that describe the details of each stage, specifically the ones related to force, such as splattering rain (231). In order to more easily convert the concept into movement, images and figures should be incorporated into the lecture. For example, an image of this sort would provide effective visual stimuli with which students can translate verbal material into movement.


**Lead the Movement Exploration**

After the lecture, students should be led through a movement exploration with force as its focus. The educator should lead the students through individual explorations of polarities of force, such as moving strongly/lightly or
suddenly/gradually (Brehm and McNett 231). Once students become comfortable moving between the polarities of force, they can explore each stage of the water cycle through movement, using the list generated during the lecture and discussion.\(^\text{19}\) From the improvisations, the educator should choose one movement to portray each stage of the water cycle (231). Depending on the age and maturity of the group, the teacher can choose each word, or the students can make individual choices (232). The students should continue doing these movements until they know them well (232).

Develop a Performance Piece

When dancing about the water cycle, there are multiple options for a performance piece. An improvisational option is to split the class into four groups and assign each group to one stage of the cycle (Brehm and McNett 232). Each group should then be given time to determine how they will dance their stage using movements from the explorations (232). The dance begins with condensation; this group improvises and eventually finds and holds an ending shape (232). When the condensation group finishes, the precipitation group begins and the condensation group comes out of their shape to quietly watch the rest of the groups (232). This continues through saturation and evaporation (232).

A choreographic option is to create a simple movement phrase.\(^\text{20}\) The movements of the phrase should also arise from the movement explorations (Brehm and McNett 232). To begin the process of creating a water cycle phrase, the educator should choose at least one word for each stage of the cycle (232). After reviewing the movements that are associated with each word, the movements should be strung

\(^{19}\) See Appendix F for the full list generated by Brehm and McNett.
\(^{20}\) A movement phrase is a set of movements connected with transitions.
together to create a phrase in the order of the water cycle. In order to make this more of a dance and less of a presentation of movements placed next to each other, there should be transitions in between movements, as well as starting and ending shapes (232). Older students (third grade and up) can work in groups to choose words and create water cycle phrases (232). Once the phrase or phrases have been committed to memory, the class should split into groups and perform for each other. Students can repeat their water cycle dances, both the improvisations and the set phrases, multiple times in order to emphasize the “cyclical nature” of the water cycle (233).

**Social Studies: American Revolutionary War**

In order to understand this material, the students’ interpersonal and spatial intelligences should be engaged. They need to understand the different groups’ relationships to each other, as well as where different groups existed in space. As stated above, interpersonal intelligence is necessary for all group dancing, but this topic has this intelligence as part of its main focus. The body and force elements of dance are emphasized because the war had much to do with people’s bodies and the way in which these bodies confronted each other energetically.

**Present the Verbal Material**

Begin with a lecture and notes about the Revolutionary War. Explain the motives of the Americans and the British, the roots of this conflict, how the conflict climaxed, and how the conflict was resolved. The level of detail should be based on the age of the group. Younger students should be given this information, but older
students can research some of this topic on their own (Sprague, Scheff, and McGreevy-Nichols 24).

Lead the Movement Exploration

First, the educator should warm the students up by exploring the body and space elements of dance as movement for movement’s sake.

Because there were several groups of people who were in different political positions during the war, this concept can be explored through the body and force elements of dance. As can be imagined, the Americans, the British, and the Loyalists all moved in different ways when facing a group to which they were opposed. For example, the British navy took over many colonial coastal cities. Americans put the Loyalists in jail, and the Loyalists wrote letters pleading to be released. Eventually the Americans were victorious over the British. Each of these situations can be explored through movement fairly easily. The British would be embodied by dominant and strong movements, such as jumping, galloping, or leaping, when they captured the coastal cities. Americans, on the other hand, would be embodied by submissive movements such as crawling or slithering. However, the Americans were in a position of power when they put Loyalists in jail; here the movement of the Americans becomes strong, and the movement of the Loyalists is weak. Eventually, the Americans won; this would be portrayed strong, forceful movement.

The educator should lead the class through exploring each of these movement roles, focusing on the body and force elements of dance. He or she should guide the students to find as many ways as possible to embody each of these groups of people.
Develop a Performance Piece

Since the participants in the Revolutionary War were split in their views in real life, the class should be split into groups and assigned different roles. Since they would have just explored each role through movement, it should be easy for them to review their assigned roles’ movements. If the final goal is an improvisation, the class should move through each stage of the war with the students improvising their assigned roles. The movements during the exploration act as their vocabulary from which to choose. In order to create a set piece of choreography, each group should work on their own to choose a number of movements and create a phrase out of them; the number of movements can increase with the age of the students. Once the students are comfortable improvising in their role or executing their phrase, they can perform for each other. The rules of the dance can be made more complex with a more detailed lecture and older students.

Mathematics: Multiplication Tables

The foundation of multiplication is the ability to identify equal sets of numbers; this concept is taught through movement “by working with sets of an equal number of movements” (Brehm and McNett 244). These sets “are measured by counting the beats of the movements and grouping them with accents” (244). The number of beats that occur in one set denote a factor in a multiplication problem (244). The musical and logical-mathematical intelligences are necessary to learn multiplication through movement. Students need to be able to recognize beats, separate sets, and how these sets relate to each other. In multiplication, time and force
are the most effective dance elements with which to explore. These are useful elements because, in a movement structure, beats would occur at different times to denote multiplication factors, and beats would be accented in different ways to signify the separation of sets.

Present the Verbal Material

First, the educator should teach multiplication to the students the way it would most commonly happen – by verbal instruction and visual images and figures.

Lead the Movement Exploration

Next, the instructor should allow the students to explore movement through force and time on their own. To warm up, instruct them to move gently and strongly, and tightly and loosely. Help them sense how these qualities feel different in their bodies. Then lead the students through “Feeling Accents.”21 This activity emphasizes the polarities of force to the students. After this should be a movement exploration focused on the time element; one way to do this is by clapping on a steady beat (Brehm and McNett 245). Fuse this with the force exploration by clapping strongly then gently to recognize the contrast. This can progress to stepping with the beat but without clapping (245). Then it can lead to counting the beats out loud as a class (245). Count to twenty, and stop exactly on twenty (245). Continue this activity, but accent the movement on different numbers to indicate different sets, and thus different multiplication tables (245). For example, executing an accent movement on every second beat demonstrates multiples of two, every fourth beat demonstrates multiples of four, and so on (245). The accent movements can be clapping, stomping,

21 See Appendix G for the instructions to this activity.
raising the arms overhead, or turning a corner sharply (245). In between the accent movements, gentle movements should occur (245).

This can be explored as a group with the large group exploration that Brehm and McNett detail in _Creative Dance for Learning_.

Develop a Performance Piece

Multiplication facts can be performed as improvisations or as set pieces of choreography. Once younger students are given a multiplication fact, they can improvise what their strong and gentle movements are, but the group should execute each at the same time. For the performance, the students’ movements will be different, but the accent movements should occur together. Older students can set choreography using “Small Group Multiplication Problems,” and then they can perform these multiplication dances for others in the class.

English/reading/language arts: Writing and Spelling

There are an endless number of ways to teach English/reading/language arts through dance. The example I present is for teaching students how to practice writing in cursive and spelling. The linguistic and spatial intelligences must be stimulated to learn this material. Dance can be used to move through this topic with the body and space elements. By focusing on “the smooth, continuous feeling of moving in curved pathways,” students can feel the shapes of cursive letters with their whole bodies in space (Brehm and McNett 197).

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22 See Appendix H for the instructions to this activity.
23 See Appendix I for the instructions to “Small Group Multiplication Problems.”
Present the Verbal Material

First the educator should show the class what they will be learning through a lecture or notes that incorporate visuals. Note that “lines and shapes in movement,” as well as in written letters, “can be straight, curved, or a combination of the two” (Brehm and McNett 192). Brehm and McNett recommend showing straight and curved lines, or allowing students to point out ones that already exist in the classroom (192).

Lead the Movement Exploration

The educator should begin the movement exploration with awakening the students’ intrapersonal intelligences by instructing them to notice their skeletons (Brehm and McNett 192). Allow them to feel their straight bones, as well as their curved bones (192). Next, the students should explore how to make straight lines with their bodies in space (192). They can begin by using their arms, and then they can progress to using their legs or their heads and torsos. This should move into making straight shapes with the body, then curved lines, and lastly curved shapes (192-3).

This can progress into groups of students making shapes that relate to each other. After this, the lesson returns to movement on the individual level. Now instead of exploring just lines and shapes with the body, the educator should guide the students through exploring how to make different letters with the body in space. This can be applied to either print or cursive writing. Creating letter shapes on the group level can be representative of grouping letters in order to spell words. With older students, this can be taken further to create movement phrases, or sentences.
Develop a Performance Piece

Writing with the body can be performed improvisationally or choreographically. An example of an improvisation could be dancing the alphabet, whether in print or cursive. If this lesson is being applied to spelling, the teacher could use a spelling bee format and go around the class giving each student a word to spell with his or her body. To create a set piece of choreography, older students could use spelling or vocabulary words and decide on movements for each letter within small groups. This can progress into making phrases and constructing those into a new story or using them to portray a story that has already been written, whether by an author or by the students themselves.

Bodily writing is something that is not only important in teaching language arts concepts through movement, but in academia as well. Only once the academy widely accepts the body as a text can advocates of embodied learning fully realize their goals of bringing dance into public schools. As a supporter of bodily writing, I believe that dance can be used to communicate and express meaning. In conjunction with my written project, I choreographed two 10-minute dance pieces. Each piece embodied the portrayal of dance as a form of communication in different ways.
Chapter Four

Embodiment of this Research in the Choreographic Process

In my choreography it is very important that each dancer’s body and personal movement style (the way a dancer moves when freely improvising) is emphasized. Like Merce Cunningham, I allow my dancers to be “free to bring a variety of interpretations to the dance” (Foster, Reading 41). This is important considering that I define dance as a form of expression. One might argue that my definition would still hold true if my dancers performed my movements and my movement style – they would still be expressing something, but it would be my ideas. I will specify that I use my definition of dance as expression to allow my dancers to express ideas (whether it be my movement or theirs) in their own way. Cunningham and I both emphasize the individuality of each of our dancers. I ascribe meaning to the movements in my pieces, as well as to my pieces as wholes, while he has claimed, “that his dances express nothing but themselves, that instead of telling a story they focus on the physical facts of the body” (32). His movement sequences “emphasize the individuality of each human body: each dancer’s body shape, style or quality of moving, and ‘appetite for motion’” (32). On the contrary, the movement sequences in my pieces focus on the relationships between the dancers. While Cunningham emphasizes the bones, muscles, and joints of his dancers, I emphasize their emotive potential.
“Synæsthetics”

An Abstract Portrayal of the Mind/Body Connection

The concept of embodiment was the jumping point for the choreography of “Synæsthetics.” To me this means the unison of mind and body in action. The dancers used their minds and bodies when they performed this piece, and the sentiment of connection was manifested in the evolution of their movements.

Though aspects of my choreography are informed by those of Cunningham, some are inspired by the choreographic methods of Martha Graham as well. Regarding a quality that is characteristic of her choreography, Susan Foster writes that dancers in Graham’s pieces seem as if they are completely engulfed by the mood of the dance (Reading 27). The performers appear to be “unaware of the audience and unconcerned with the presentation of the movement” (27). While they do indeed look in the direction of the audience, their gaze does not react to the existence of the actual audience members, and instead it seeks “some supernatural validation or intervention in the dance” (27). Foster adds that viewing one of Graham’s dances is like secretly watching the “private world” of the dancers’ characters (27). In “Synæsthetics”, the four dancers were themselves as moving, dancing bodies who existed in the space together – at first separately, then as a unified group. Like Graham, I constructed on the stage a world in which only the dancers lived. I wanted it to seem as though this world would occur whether or not the audience was there to see it.

There were three short opening sections, each situated between blackouts. Whenever the lights came up or down in the piece, including these three sections as
well as the closing blackout, it happened while the dancers were still moving. This made it seem like the dancers were moving whether the lights were on or off – this created the essence of continuous movement. This essence is what helped to create the world in which the dancers lived. The atmosphere of the dance was evolutionary and personal. There was a clear progression of movement as a group, but the movement was also personal to each dancer and her body. Each dancer executed each movement differently – no movement looked the same on any two of them. While the audience did happen to come into the dancers’ visual fields at times, they did not acknowledge the audience’s presence. To them, the performance venue encompassed only the stage. This also contributed to the “private world” mood that the piece had. They found personal meaning for the piece in their fellow performers, the movement itself, and in their minds.

As the dance evolved from separate sections to a cohesive unit, I gave the dancers the typical “pep talk” before each run of the piece. I asked them to conjure up a mental image of the thing they want most. I instructed them to keep this visual in their mind while they danced any portion the piece, whether in rehearsal or in performance. Asking them to keep in mind what they are striving for paralleled with the fact that, with this project, I am striving for change.

There was one solo in each of the two opening sections; in the third section, two solos happened simultaneously. Each dancer’s solo occurred in their own quadrant of the stage delineated by a soft spot light; during the solos, the stage outside the occupied quadrant was not lit. Each solo was a set phrase choreographed by the dancer performing it. In the next section, all four dancers were present, and they
moved together but no actions affected other actions in the space. As the piece developed, the lines separating the dancers metaphorically blurred, and dancers’ actions increasingly affected other actions happening on the stage. My goal was to move the piece from a beginning place of disconnect to an ending place of connection and unification.

Generally, my creative process follows this trajectory: I give my dancers activities that lead to generating material in the form of (usually) short solos. I rearrange, trouble, and develop this material. I have dancers teach each other their solos, and I form different groupings and stage positionings. Metaphorically speaking, I give my dancers the ingredients to make clay. Cunningham does the same. Both of us allow our dancers to mix the ingredients in whichever way they choose, just as long as some semblance of clay arises. Susan Foster explains that Cunningham does not assign a motivation for his dancers’ movement, nor does he enforce “their technical mastery of it” (Reading 38). I also did not enforce mastery of the movement because it was important that my dancers could express themselves to the fullest within each movement of the piece. My process differentiated from his because I did often give my dancers “motivation for the movement.” Instead of directing how his dancers execute the movement, Cunningham gives his dancers clay ingredients (phrases, directions, timing, and so forth), and they “refine the phrasing, comprehend the value of each movement and the logic of the sequence, accomplish the movement within a precise amount of time, and attend to the movement’s expressivity” (38). This choreographic tool was evident in my work when I led my dancers through
“Body Party Connection.” In this activity, they chose their own clay ingredients, but were not instructed until after choosing that they would be mixing the ingredients together. Once I told them this, they had to decide how to make the sequence work in some way. They mix these ingredients together – in this as well as other activities – and give the clay back to me. I take this clay and mold it – never letting it harden and allowing the dance to continue its evolution. As the semester progresses, we build up a larger ball of clay, and I continue to mold it in different ways.

While molding the clay, choices I made include layering and unison. In the several places where I used layering, it was there in order to give the viewer ownership of their viewing experience by allowing them to choose what occupied their visual field. I did this because I believe that people should have ownership over their experiences when information is being given to them. This is part of my educational philosophy, as well as my choreographic philosophy. Cunningham’s choreography also allows the viewers to interpret the piece as they wish – by choosing which occurrence on the stage to watch at any given time (Brown 19). In his pieces, “…overabundance of activity in the performance space, coupled with the suggestion in many of the dancers’ entrances and exits that the dancing continues beyond the boundaries of the space accentuates the lack of a single authorial message” (Foster, Reading 41). Though I did have a specific message in mind while choreographing, the audience was still able to derive their own meaning from the piece. However, my piece was similar to Cunningham’s choreography in the

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24 The process of “Body Part Connection” will be explained later in the text.
25 See Appendix J for the dancers’ reflections on the process and product of “Synaesthetics.”
portrayal of continuous movement without boundaries. I depicted a world that seemed to exist endlessly.

Additionally, a running section in my piece relates to Cunningham’s idea of movement without boundaries. In this section, dancers ran across stage, paused to do any one movement of their choice from the upcoming unison section, and then ran across the rest of the stage. In between running across the stage, they stood offstage. This created the feel of boundless movement that Cunningham used. I used unison of the whole group once in the piece to visually demonstrate to the audience that the ensemble was coming together. After this point, any movement on the stage was the reaction to one before it and the impulse for one that happened after it.

After the unison, there was a short section with all four dancers doing movements in physical contact with each other that served as a preview for the two duets to come. Each duet was intended to send the same message, but they were created in different ways. The first one with Phoebe and Audrey was created through improvisation. At this specific rehearsal they were the only ones present. The movement vocabulary that they developed in their “Follow” fit well with the rest of the piece, so we made a phrase from it.\textsuperscript{26} I improvised creating a phrase in this way, and they improvised each new part. We began by setting one movement. They did this movement, and improvised to the next comfortable place; the dancers continued until the duet was the desired length. They were in physical contact for the majority of this section, and they had instructions to move using the most recent movement as their impulse. For the duet with Allison and Audrey that closed the piece I instructed them to each do their “Body Part Connection” phrases, except attached to each other.

\textsuperscript{26}The process of “Follow” will be explained later in the text.
Again, they were in physical contact for most of the time; and what arose was a duet with a similar tone to the previous one. The dancers were thoroughly connected, and every movement was simultaneously an action and a reaction.

At all rehearsals including the first, I began sitting cross-legged in a circle with my dancers. I would ask everyone to close their eyes and tune in to the channel of their breath. Then I would instruct them to “Inhale as one…and exhale as one.” I did this in order to foster a group unity and a common breath. I wanted the dancers’ relationships with each other to mimic the connection between the mind and the body. Group-building activities were necessary because, though the mind and the body are inherently connected, groups of people are not. I allowed them to open their eyes when they were ready, then they played “Follow.” Though this is a very common rehearsal activity, I learned it from Katja Kolicio. One dancer is the leader, the rest followers. The leader improvises with no limitations; the followers also improvise, but they are limited to the vocabulary of movement that the leader creates. In the beginning the dancers would replicate the leader’s movements. However, as the semester progressed I told them they could vary the movement’s speed, whether or not it traveled, and what part of the body did the movement. Finding a common breath and playing games that involve becoming accustomed to the movement styles of fellow dancers builds group unity.

At the first rehearsal, I led an activity called “Body Part Connection” that I learned from Katja Kolicio as well. I had the dancers write down a list of eight body parts, with no limits on their choices because they were unaware of what they would be doing with this list. After this, they “connected” these body parts to create a
phrase, inserting any transitions if needed. Schematically, their intended phrases were
– movement 1: body part 1 → body part 2; movement 2: body part 2 → body part 3;
movement 3: body part 3 → body part 4, and so on. If the body parts were unable to
physically touch, they were to create a movement with the intention that they could
touch if the movement kept going, uninhibited by the physical body. By using chance
procedures, Merce Cunningham “removes himself from direct decision making about
the dance and thus allows for unanticipated discoveries about movement and its
organization” (Foster, Reading 37).27 In a similar way, this exercise allowed me to
lead my dancers to generate movement material that was sometimes physically
impossible. Attempting these physically impossible movements led to interesting
ones that they would not have created otherwise. Not knowing that they would be
connecting their list of body parts, they chose many that could not be physically
connected – and they had to make it work in the way that Cunningham’s dancers did.

Another activity I did with my dancers was “Index Card Composition.” I
wrote each of these words on a separate index card: speak, words, read, text, study,
knowledge, robot, compute. Robot and compute are words I associate with the
mind/body dichotomy, or separation – the “opposite” of the mind/body connection. I
chose knowledge because I am concerned with how it is constructed and transmitted
in American society. Lastly, speak, words, read, text, and study were chosen because
they are words that are typically associated with verbal communication and being
literate. However, as mentioned earlier, the body can be used as a text on its own. I
wanted to see what would happen when words with this association were used to

27 “Chance procedures” is a method of choreography coined by Merce Cunningham and his musical
partner John Cage. This process involves removing the element of choice from the composer and
choreographer; the arrangement of scores and movement phrases happens by chance.
create something (i.e., dance, movement) that is not typically associated with being literate. Foster writes, “The act of writing about bodies thereby originates in the assumption that verbal discourse cannot speak for bodily discourse, but must enter into ‘dialogue’ with that bodily discourse” (Foster, “Choreographing History” 9). With this activity, I wanted to challenge an idea I agree with – the idea that writing should interact with bodily discourse – and see what arose from forcing my dancers to put two things together that may not have necessarily fit. In their rehearsal questionnaires, the dancers reflected that they enjoyed the challenge of having to make pieces fit together.

In order to execute this activity, I placed the index cards throughout the space, and gave my dancers instructions. They first assigned a shape or movement to the word on each card with the intention of calling back on what they created. This was allowed to be a reaction to that word, a literal representation, an abstract interpretation, or the result of whatever other method they chose to interact with the word. They traveled to each card, and the mode of travel between cards could have been anything except walking. The purpose of this was to facilitate creative thinking in movement. After they all completed this, I instructed them to choose five or six of the shapes or movements that they created and make a phrase with them, inserting whatever transitions, or connections between the shapes/movements, that they felt necessary. I also instructed them to choose their robot movement as one of the components of their phrase. I wanted that to be included because I thought it would signal the idea of robots to a viewer, and therefore the idea of disconnect that I
wanted to portray at the beginning of the piece. The dancers shared the phrases after they were finished, and I used three of the four solos in the final piece.

In the latter part of this seven-week process, I generated the last solo phrases by instructing the dancers to each choose two of their favorite movements that had happened during rehearsal thus far. It could have been from any solo, a “Follow” exercise, or anything else that arose in rehearsal. Each dancer shared her two favorites. This composed the vocabulary for what I termed the “favorite phrase.” Each dancer connected the movements in this vocabulary in order to create a phrase. Later on, I instructed them to create a new version of their “favorite phrase.” I wanted the movements to be in the same order, but this new phrase would be a reinterpretation of the originals. They varied the speed, the energy with which a movement was done, which body part executed the movement, or any other way that they chose. This would be a second appearance of many movements, as many of the chosen ones were movements that had already been put into the piece. I wanted the dancers to create a reinterpretation to further develop these specific movements within the piece. Though not all of the reinterpretations wound up in the final piece, it served to unify the different generations of movement material in my mind and in rehearsal.

There was one clearly pivotal point where the level of each movement’s impact made a large jump. At this point, the dancers had just completed a small unison section then united in a tableau. In this tableau, each dancer was on a different level with one arm held parallel to the floor. They quickly rotated that arm three times from the shoulder joint before exploding across the stage. After this point, every
movement that happened was the reaction to something that came before it and served as the impulse to another action. This section involved contact, weight sharing, and lifting between alternating combinations of dancers, and it served as a preview for the sections that came after it. The sections that followed were two duets. They both involved more physical contact, weight sharing, and lifting (see Figures 1 and 2). They were meant to portray the point at which the mind and body are connected, in contrast with the earlier portion of the piece in which dancers were moving together, but were clearly separate entities.

![Figure 1](Photo by Yannick Bindert)

![Figure 2](Photo by Yannick Bindert)

In this piece, the music (“Synaesthetic” by Blue Man Group) was meant to serve as a sub-textual story to the costume and the movement. It was sub-textual in that it did not impact interpretation of the choreography, but merely provided a soundscape. It began with a drumming pattern, and other sounds came in early on in the song. While this music was noticeable and powerful, it became background to the movement because the pattern of sounds became repetitive and therefore predictable about one-third of the way into it.
For the performance, the dancers wore black spandex shorts, and sheer nude-colored tops (see Figure 3). Underneath these tops, two wore black sports bras, and two wore open-back black leotards. Because the piece was heavily reliant on movement as opposed to other theatrical elements (i.e., music and lighting that dramatically affect interpretation of the piece), all the clothing was fitted in order to highlight the dancers’ movements. I chose sports bras and leotards for underneath the nude tops because these garments connote athletes and dancers, respectively. These are members of society who people generally understand to be frequent movers.

![Figure 3 (Photo by Yannick Bindert)](image)

As Judith Lynne Hanna writes, “Motion is one of the defining characteristics of life” (74). This is important because movement is what occupies the visual field of the audience when viewing a dance piece. Dance and humanity intersect more closely than many may realize. Hanna declares that, “To dance is human, and humanity almost universally expresses itself in dance” (3). This is so because dance is human behavior. Among other qualities, it is physical, cultural, social, psychological, and communicative behavior (3-4). The physical body performs movement, or organized energy, as Hanna defines it; she correctly claims that this is the “essence of dance” (3). The way a person interprets dance and “its physical production, style, structure, content, and performance” are strongly impacted by his or her values, attitudes, and
beliefs (3). Socializing with others is crucial in order for humans to master their environments (4). Dance has an interactive relationship with “patterns of social organization”; dance reflects and has an impact on the course these patterns take (4). Dance is also psychological behavior because it incorporates “cognitive and emotional experiences affected by and affecting an individual’s personal and group life” (4). Dance’s communicative behavior is crucial because it because it serves as a foundation for most of the other motivations and actions of dance (4).

To me, this connection between dancing and being human is inherent, but it may not be to the general public, a selection of which I have to assume viewed the Senior Thesis Dance Concert. However, I wanted the audience to feel that. In my personal experience, I have found that dance as an art form may seem unattainable to the general population who does not have extensive training in viewing and critiquing dance. I wanted the audience to connect with the dancers on a human-to-human level. Because of this, I attempted to immediately reject the possibility of a viewer putting the dancers on a pedestal – as people that can do things with their bodies that said viewer might not be able to do. For these reasons, I chose the nude tops. They were a visual portrayal of humanness. Nude, in an unlimited number of different shades of course, is the color of human skin. By being nude-colored, the shirts gave a more “human” feel to the dancers. I wanted them to be viewed as dancers, but also just as bodies that move to which audience members could relate.

The nude color was meant to make the dancers more accessible to the average viewer. Making the dancers accessible helped to give audience members a place to which they could attach themselves in the piece. Once the viewer can attach meaning,
the piece can become part of his or her personal archive of past life experiences. Without that, the piece would mean nothing. In order for a dance, or anything for that matter, to be meaningful, the viewer must be able to find something to which they can relate and engage. If they have this, they can insert the piece into the rest of their life experience. According to Dewey’s principle of continuity of experience, all past life experiences affect future endeavors, whether it is on a conscious or subconscious level.

In both “Synästhetics” and “The Continuity of Experience,” I explore how the mind/body connection can be portrayed through dance. “Synästhetics” was based more in visual aesthetics; I investigated how I could manifest the idea of connection through the dancers’ movements. In “The Continuity of Experience,” again I worked on portraying the idea of connection through movement. However, this choreography was based in somaesthetics. My main concern was not what the dance looked like, but how the dancers felt when they did it. They importance of the piece resided in the space between the dancers’ bodies. This space was always energized and made the dancers seem as though they were each a part of the same body. The high energy in the air between them created a rubber band effect: their movements stretched the boundaries of the space they were in, but they always remained connected.

“The Continuity of Experience”

*Process as Performance*

Because my textual research is process-oriented, specifically centered around the process of learning, I mimicked this in my creative movement research. It seemed
counterintuitive to create a piece based solely on visual aesthetics in the performance venue. Thus I was inspired to make a piece that would somehow portray my process to the audience. Improvisation is more based on the experience of doing the dance, and much less on the aesthetics of the dance. For this reason, I made my second semester piece mostly improvisation. The rehearsals for “The Continuity of Experience” valued process over product. Each element of the performance was like the mind and the body. They are all connected how I know the mind and body are, and how I hope the mind and body will come to be dealt with in the elementary school classroom. This piece was also an exploration of portraying the mind/body connection, but in a different way than “Synaesthetics” was. At the end of each rehearsal, the dancers spent ten minutes writing in their rehearsal journals about activities they liked, ones they hated, and ones from which they learned.28 Because my textual research is about the process of learning, I wanted to know how they experience my choreographic process.

All improvisational scores were developed by the group as a whole. I did this because I wanted to mimic how I think the power relations in a classroom should be. In the same way students should have ownership of their learning experience, my dancers had control over their movement experience. The curricular changes that I present in Chapter Three allow this arrangement of power to occur while the teacher, or choreographer in my case, still retains the main control of the process.

Though I had never choreographed a dance comprised mostly of improvisation, my regular choreographic tools did not become useless. I used movement that arose from using those tools in order to build a movement vocabulary

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28 See Appendix K for the dancers’ full journals.
from which the dancers drew during improvisational structures. I began each
improvisational score, i.e., “Classroom,” “Grid,” and “Trio,” by presenting a basic
score to the dancers.29 They moved through it multiple times, each time coming back
to the drawing board with me to add new limits, and subtract others. Any set phrases
were developed from phrases that the dancers created. My dancers and I created a
movement vocabulary and developed improvisational structures. I felt that this
method brought me closest to sharing my process with an audience.

My second semester piece is called “The Continuity of Experience,” after
John Dewey’s principle. Throughout the choreography of this piece, this idea was
particularly salient to me. Much of what is in the piece came from what occurred in
rehearsal as activities that were only meant to build the ensemble of the group. My
dancers’ existence in this piece is the way it is because of their experiences in
rehearsal. Their rehearsal experiences were seen through the lens of their past
experiences, and their experiences in my process will impact how they perceive and
interpret future rehearsal and performance experiences.

This piece began with a prologue that occurred while the audience was filing
into the theater. The dancers moved through an extended “Follow” structure. The
dancers could drink water, acknowledge the audience, stretch, and interact with the
live musician and each other. This acted as the dancers’ warm-up, as though they
were in rehearsal. Because the house lights remained on while the audience entered,
the audience kept speaking while observing the dancers already on stage. The
dancers’ casual demeanors let the audience know that they were warming up and
getting ready for the performance. The prologue made the transition into the “real”

29 The process of these scores will be explained later in the text.
performance not as drastic for the dancers or the audience because they had already been on stage for an extended period of time.

After the house manager came out to make the fire announcement before the beginning of the concert – during which the dancers continued the improvisational structure – the house lights went down and the “real” piece started. It begins in silence with one dancer at a time moving swiftly across the stage, pausing shortly to plead with an unknown outside force to “Pick me!” In this section of the piece, the dancers represent children and they are each embodying different ways that children attempt to make someone “pick” them, some actually say it and others demonstrate it with nonverbal body language. From the beginning, the space is energized.

The next section begins with a moving tableau; the dancers walk to downstage right one-by-one and execute cyclical two-dimensional, machine-like movements. After a few moments of this, they each simultaneously do their own full-bodied, self-choreographed solos while traveling to a certain formation. It is also at this point that the live percussionist begins. In this formation, they stand throughout the space and all face the downstage right corner. Once they arrive in their spots, they move into another full-bodied solo. Some are more gestural than others, but they are all relatively full-bodied. After these solos, dancers take turns carrying each other across the stage. Next, they move into a moment of unison – these are rare through the piece – doing the same solo that the furthest downstage right dancer has just completed. The end of this phrase is the beginning of the next section.

This section – “Classroom” – is an improvisational score with a movement vocabulary comprised of abstracted movements seen in the classroom. Whenever a
dancer says, “Line!” all the dancers scurry to make a line – of a different sort each time – then explode, melt, or fall out of it (see Figures 4 and 5). The movement and percussion in this section are both very high energy. The dancers enter and exit throughout the score, occasionally allowing the ensemble of six to dwindle to four. Except for when a dancer says, “Line!” this section is about the movement vocabulary, and not about where the dancers are in space. When they get the opportunity, the dancers form short duets and trios.

![Figure 4](Photo by Yannick Bindert)  ![Figure 5](Photo by Yannick Bindert)

Another improvisational score – “Grid” – follows; it is done in silence except for any repercussive sounds from the dancers’ movements. The dancers walk on a grid and complete a short solo when they “bump” into each other, then they continue walking (see Figure 6 on page 103). If they bump into someone who is also walking, they can choose to do one of their own phrases, or a phrase that the whole group knows. If they bump into someone who is in the middle of a phrase, they can do their own phrase or any segment of the phrase they all know, or continue walking.
One by one, dancers begin to exit until there are three left. This signals the beginning of the next improvisational section, “Trio.” In this section, there should only be three dancers on stage at any given time. The percussion is sparse until the end of the piece. Any dancer can choose to initiate a change in the group that is on stage; if someone enters, someone else has to leave, and vice versa. The movement vocabulary for this section is any movement that has occurred in the piece thus far. The dancers use this time to explore the movements in different ways, for example by improvisationally making a duet with material that had been a solo earlier in the piece. Up until this point, there has been a lot of movement and several bodies throughout the space. During this section, the space is finally given a chance to “breathe.” This idea is enhanced by the lighting: up until this segment of the piece, the looks were warm, but they switched to a cool blue as soon as there were three dancers on stage (see Figure 7 on page 104). The blue color evoked the ideas of space and clarity, thus allowing the stage to breathe.
One dancer initiates the next section by saying “One.” This cues all the dancers to get with their partner and execute their set duet that is associated with the number one. After these duets are finished, another dancer calls “Two,” and the dancers find different partners and complete the set duet that is associated with the number two. During both sets of duets, the dancers are intimately tied to their partner the entire time, and they find unique places of contact. Number one duets happen on stage right, and number two duets happen on stage left. Once the duets are finished, the dancers form a still tableau upstage center (see Figure 8 on page 105). It is reminiscent of the tableau at the beginning of the piece, but they form shapes around the other dancers’ bodies. One at a time, the dancers take different shapes – this sequence causes their collective shape to change and evolve throughout time. It changes in a way that is almost unrecognizable until the change happens. While this is occurring, dancers alternate saying “One” and “Two” to signal to their respective partner to move to the correct side of the stage and to perform that duet with her (see Figure 9 on page 105). This structure continues, but instead of forming shapes the dancers move into executing cyclical, non-linear movements. The music and this movement continue until the lights fade to black. This serves to reinforce the idea that
the prologue laid the foundation for: that the dance would happen whether or not the audience was there to view it.

Most of “The Continuity of Experience” involves a lush and rampant aesthetic. The entire space is energized for the most of the time, and there are several different movements happening on stage at any given time. The only time an economical aesthetic appears is at the end – the beginning of “Trio” – when the stage is finally able to breathe. During this time, the viewer can see a large amount of bare stage for the first time since the “Pick me!” section of the piece. At this point, the viewer has gotten used to seeing so much movement on stage at once, and it is jarring to abruptly see so much of the stage. This dissonance between economic and rampant aesthetics can create a viewing discomfort, or sense of relief. I established one movement aesthetic in the space that was then broken down in order to show the audience a recognizable shift in the dancers’ movement experience. In the context of this project, this shift in movement is paralleled with the shift in pedagogy for which I am advocating.

Throughout the entire piece, the dancers are extensions of themselves, because for the majority of the time they are executing movements that they themselves created. In the beginning, they act like children by pleading with an outside force to
pick them. However, these personas are still extensions of themselves – their inner children, or how each of them would have acted as children. They communicate with each other and build interpersonal relationships. They explore these relationships through different movements and vocabularies, formations, and physical contact.

The cues to switch sections came from the dancers themselves. As a group, they sensed when the section had developed fully enough, then one dancer (different each time) would initiate the change with a recognizable contrast in movement vocabulary, the movements from the next section. After one dancer initiated a change, it was an invisible understanding between the dancers that this signaled for the rest of the group to move to the next section as well. This was the most appropriate way to signal changes because it makes this group of dancers come across as one organic whole, and not like a group that is controlled by an outside force – as they would be if their movement cues came from music or lighting. My group was portrayed as an organic whole in order to demonstrate what it looks like when a strong connection exists.

This is representative of the experience an elementary school child would have if he or she is taught through experience, specifically through dance and movement. Dancing and moving to learn can give students ownership and control over their learning experiences because movement experiences are inherently personal and tailored to the individual. It is extremely possible that a class of twenty-five students would experience the same dance structure in twenty-five different ways. I wanted to give my dancers this same ownership over their rehearsal performance experiences.
The live percussionist, Nate, created the music for the piece with me. He had scores for each section, and he improvised along with the dancers. Because the dancers sensed the correct times to move through scores on their own, Nate took his cues off of the changes in the dancers’ movement vocabularies. This emphasized my value of movement over music. Of course music is extremely important in dance, but the movement vocabularies were more significant in the thoughts behind this piece. I wanted my dancers to live in an environment of improvised percussion because that method of playing music flowed organically from my choreographic process. I had one musician because I wanted a soundscape but did not want to distract the viewers from the dancers’ movements.

The dancers wore loose, flowing linen pants and tank tops; both articles of clothing were in an earthy color palette. I chose clothing that flowed with their movement in order to tangibly mimic the fluidity of the shifts between different sections of the piece. They each wore the same beige pants in order to represent unity among the ensemble. This was intended to symbolize my urging for the mind and body to be considered a unified whole in the elementary school classroom. Their tops were similar, but each different to symbolize each dancer’s individuality in the experience.

I chose the text “Pick me!” because these words, or at least their sentiment, are often seen and/or heard in an classroom. Hearing “Pick me!” in the beginning of the piece made it seem as though one winner would arise by the end. Outside of actively wanting to be chosen for an activity or privilege, humans always feel the need and want to belong. I juxtapose each dancer actively pleading to be chosen with
actually choosing everyone because they all dance and have an equal part in the piece. This is a visual and bodily representation of how I want the body and mind to be dealt with in the elementary school classroom. Choosing everyone to dance is metaphorical to what Maxine Greene urges for in schools. She urges for all to have an equal opportunity to access education (Greene, Landscapes 128).

The performance quality in my rehearsals arose when the dancers conducted themselves in a formal way during a run of the piece. As all experienced dancers, they know the appropriate way to carry themselves during a performance in modern concert dance. Outside of these runs, the dancers showed informality by talking and laughing. Conversely, there was also a rehearsal quality in the performance because they performed scores that developed from activities in rehearsal, many of which were initially meant to build ensemble unity. By including the prologue, I troubled the rehearsal versus performance dichotomy of movement quality. Though they were technically performing during the prologue, they “performed” it in a casual, or rehearsal-like way. When it came time to begin the “real” performance, their performance-like quality of movement did not seem quite as formal as usual.  

In “formal” or “theatrical” modern dance, process has been traditionally accepted as an “invisible” activity that occurs in rehearsal before the product appears in performance (Preston-Dunlap 31). Dancers and choreographers work with the beginning idea to generate a large amount of movement material; from this bank of material, pieces of it undergo “selection and refining” in order to achieve the final product for performance (31-2). Throughout this process, choreographers refine their ideas as well (31). As Victoria Preston-Dunlap and Ana Sanchez-Colberg write in

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Dance and the Performative, “The identity of the dance – the work – is seen as a product of this process” (32).

In post-modern dance, choreographers challenge these definitions of process and product, such as Lea Anderson in Smithereens (1999) (Preston-Dunlap 32). In this piece, the backdrop on stage only comes down to about knee level of the dancers (32). This allows the audience to see costume and character changes that the dancers undergo backstage throughout the performance (32). According to Preston-Dunlap and Sanchez-Colberg, “Their process becomes part of the presented product” (32). This what I sought to do by basing the performance in improvisation, and by including the prologue. I wanted the dancers to perform our process. Because “Follow” was a warm-up that we used often, I allowed the audience to really see a large part of our process. I pushed this by allowing the dancers to drink water, stretch, and speak to each other– things they would actually do while warming up in rehearsal.

Several parts of this piece arose from ensemble-building exercises that we did in rehearsal. For example, the moving tableau at the beginning, and the tableau at the end that transitioned from still to moving all came out of “Quarter: Taking Shapes.” Initially in rehearsal, we did this exercise close to how it is written. However, we made modifications that built on it. One of these modifications kept all instructions the same except the dancers did cyclical and circular movements instead of forming shapes. In the moving tableau at the beginning of the piece, they did two-dimensional, machine-like movements in order to symbolize the disconnect that exists between the

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31 See Appendix L for a list and instructions of a selection of the ensemble-building activities that I executed, including “Quartet: Taking Shapes.”
mind and the body in many public elementary schools. Though I know this may have not come across exactly, machine-like movements evoke thoughts of robotics and disconnect. I return to this tableau structure at the end of the piece in order to show progression. Instead of becoming a machine-like structure, the dancers form round shapes and then move to organic and non-linear movements, movements that cause the collective structure to resemble something closer to a beating heart. This was meant to portray the state of connection between the mind and body that I strongly believe should exist in the theories and practices of public elementary schools.

In the ideal situation for the open education and differentiated instruction movements, classrooms would be “humane, responsive places that honor the student as an individual and seek to create environments that are shaped by the students who inhabit them – rather than vice versa” (Sherman 9). This is the way classrooms should be, and I embody this in my choreography. My method of choreography is heavily reliant on activities that lead to the dancers creating their own movements. My rehearsal process and the ever-changing “product” reflect this responsiveness as well. Because so much of my choreography stems from movements that the dancers create, my pieces are extremely reflective of each dancer’s personal style. The choreography is specific to the group of dancers I choose, and the piece would be entirely different if any dancer was substituted. As a group, they could do and communicate more than as a dancer on her own. Like the mind and the body, this ensemble was greater when taken together as the sum of its parts.
Conclusion

By being a rich, full-bodied, mind/body practice, as well as an art, dance is able to engage the whole person. Because the body is a site of knowledge construction, it is impossible not to think when moving. The body is constantly gathering information through the sensory organs and transmitting it to the brain. It is here that the mind forms knowledge, thoughts, and emotions. When approached in the way this project does, dance caters to the body as well as the mind.

As a general rule, academia, as well as the American system of education, depends too much on verbal language as a way to communicate. Verbal language, as the main form of communication in American society, is of course important. However, words do not move, nor do they have an experiential element (Hannaford 49). Obviously words are crucial, but using the language of movement to add to words’ communicative value can enhance their power (49).

It is understandable that people may be anxious to tune into their bodies because, “…bodies are the clearest expression of human mortality, imperfection, and weakness…” (Shusterman xi). However, bodies perform best when we pay attention to them. By internally focusing on our bodies, we can become aware of our habits and change them if need be. If American culture can overcome this anxiety, society will be more open to the benefits that dance has to offer to knowledge construction and transmission.

Though dance as an art is, of course, a subject in and of itself, this form of movement expression also “shapes knowledge and helps students learn in
nontraditional but powerful ways” (Brehm and McNett 64). Dance allows students to learn with their minds and bodies simultaneously. It is important to use a practice in which this happens inherently, because the mind is receiving mental and physical stimuli at all times. If education only makes use of the mental channel, the physical channel is wasted, and the mind receives sensory information that does nothing to enhance the learning experience. Using dance to teach makes wonderful use of this additional channel with which to stimulate the mind.

It is possible to use dance as a tool to teach because everything in the world moves. The movement of the parts of the world has the same elements that the body does when dancing – body, space, time, and force. Thus relating concepts to the elements of dance is more organic than it may seem by boiling concepts down to the basics, though it may take extra time.

Though the No Child Left Behind Act is an inefficient and unfortunate way to lead a country’s education, embodied learning advocates can work within this structure to improve the teaching and learning processes that occur in the classroom. Eventually, however, it is my hope that this research will lead to dance becoming a teaching tool used in all classrooms. In order to do this, the use of standards and assessment are necessary. An interdisciplinary curriculum can be created based on core subject standards and the National Standards of Dance Education, set by the National Dance Association in 1996 (Kolcio, “Dance Education”).

Embodied learning should exist in public and private schools, as well as at all ages, but it is important to work first with a smaller segment of education – in this case, public elementary school – since this movement is young and not all are
persuaded yet. Using dance to teach is a more difficult and time-consuming process than a lecture or notes presentation is, but the benefits far outweigh the costs. Because dance cannot be broken down to a formula, embodied learning is now, and always will be, a work in progress. We are working with bodies, and hence there will never be a clear-cut equation for this type of teaching. Although embodied learning is a process that will always change, one aspect of using dance to teach is formulaic – making and performing it will always stimulate all the senses. Additionally, dance will always cater to and be produced by the mind/body connection. This project has sought to use the creative process and this connection in order to fully actualize the dancing classroom.
Appendix A

“Comparison of Design Features of Language and Dance”
(X = shared features)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feature</th>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Dance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Directional reception</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interchangeability</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arbitrariness</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discreteness</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Displacement</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Productivity</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Duality</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural transmission</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ambiguity</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affectivity</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Range of sizes of potential communicating partners</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Channel</td>
<td>Vocal/auditory channels predominate</td>
<td>Motor/visual-kinesthetic channels predominate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time and space</td>
<td>Temporal dimension</td>
<td>Time and space dimensions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feedback</td>
<td>Speaker can hear self</td>
<td>Dancer cannot see self</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Involvement</td>
<td>Total involvement in communication act is not necessary</td>
<td>Fuller involvement required in dance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minimal units</td>
<td>Minimal units of phoneme and morpheme agreed upon by linguists</td>
<td>Lack of agreement about minimal units</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complex logical structures</td>
<td>Greater ease in communication</td>
<td>Greater difficulty in communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Syntax</td>
<td>Detailed syntax governing sequences exists for many languages</td>
<td>Syntax exist for few dances</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Reproduced from Hanna 87)
Appendix B

Katherine Dunham

After studying anthropology at the University of Chicago in the 1930s, Katherine Dunham traveled to the West Indies to conduct dance research (Kolcio, Movable 23). She used ethnographic material gathered during her travels as the basis for her writing and choreography (23). She developed a technique that fused the movement styles of various cultures with American concert dance in order to “develop modern ethnographic concert performances” (23). By using movement to publicly display her ethnographic research, she circumvented “the academic dichotomy that privileges mind over body” (23).

Pearl Primus

Pearl Primus began studying dance at the New School for Social Research in the early 1940s (Kolcio, Movable 23-4). Her anthropological research began with a fellowship to study dance in Africa (24). Her work “…was at once social anthropological scholarship and critical political commentary” (cited in Movable 24). Primus brought African influences into her dance pieces after traveling through Angola, Cameroon, Liberia, Senegal, and the Belgian Congo (24). In the 1960s and 1970s, several schools asked Primus to teach dance and anthropology, concentrating on the social politics of race and on how dance in Africa and the Caribbean has influenced modern concert dance (24).
Appendix C

“Interdisciplinary Links to the Elements of Dance and Linking Lessons”
(abridged)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Body Element</th>
<th>Force Element</th>
<th>Time Element</th>
<th>Space Element</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-Nouns: how body parts or parts of anything are used</td>
<td>-Opposites and adjectives: quality of movement or physical characteristics</td>
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<td>-Plot development</td>
<td>-Syllables and word rhythms</td>
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<td>-Poetic form and chants</td>
<td>-Symbols, number and letter shapes, spelling</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>-Speech patterns of conversation or prose</td>
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<td>-Prepositions</td>
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<td>-Visual imagery</td>
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<td></td>
<td>from literature and picture books</td>
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<td>-Counting to a beat</td>
<td>-Spatial orientation</td>
<td>-Reading readiness</td>
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<td>-Addition and subtraction</td>
<td>-Sequences and patterns</td>
<td>-Size and number sense</td>
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<td>-Measurement</td>
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<td>-Time patterns in nature</td>
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<td>➔ Body systems and functions</td>
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<td>-Geography, land formation, erosion</td>
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<tr>
<td>-Layers: habitat, atmospheric</td>
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<td>-Astronomy: solar system, constellations</td>
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<td>-Objects in nature</td>
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<td>➔ Expressive qualities of historical characters</td>
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<td>-Map reading</td>
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<td>-Coordination, flexibility, balance</td>
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<td>-Conflict / cooperation</td>
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<td>-Assertiveness and responsibility</td>
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<td>-Emotions</td>
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(Reproduced from Brehm and McNett 94-100)

*Here I include additional subjects in addition to the core subjects to demonstrate how these other subjects can be taught through dance.*
Appendix D

A dance can be narrative, non-linear narrative, or abstract, and movements can switch between these throughout one dance. These are defined below.

Narrative dance: “A dance that tells a story to the viewers through enacting a literal story, representing a culture, or use of images (symbols) that have strong meaning” (“Judging Art Program”).

Non-linear narrative dance: “A dance that has recognizable elements of daily life in it, but that does not tell a story in a straight-forward fashion” (“Judging Art Program”).

Abstract (non-narrative) dance: “A dance that does not tell a story, but emphasizes the visual & physical experience of dance movement” (“Judging Art Program”).

“How to Make Literal Movements into Abstract Movements”
Example: The literal movement of a handshake
- “Change the rhythm. For example, make the rhythm of the handshake uneven; instead of going only up and down, shake up, up, down.
- Change or vary the speed. For example, shake hands very slowly and then extremely fast.
- Change or vary the size of the movement. For example, make the handshake so small that you can barely see it or so large that you have to move from a high level to a low level.
- Repeat the movement over and over. For example, repeat the movement until it loses its significance as a gesture and becomes simply a movement.
- Use the same movement with a different body part. For example, do the handshake with your elbow, foot, or head.
- Do the opposite action and combine it with the original movement. For example, instead of facing the person you are greeting, turn away as if to ignore the other person.
- Make a new, unrelated movement and mix it with the original movement. For example, spin on your toes and connect it with a handshake.
- Interrupt or have the movement take a detour to augment the original movement. For example, begin to shake hands, then use a locomotor movement (a movement that travels) to travel away, and finally return to finish the handshake.
- Let the movement grow and change. For example, repeat the handshake until it starts to change, and follow it wherever it might lead.”

(Reproduced from Sprague, Scheff, and McGreedy-Nichols 37)
Appendix E

Elements of Dance (abridged)
*The Body as Instrument*

**Structure**

- Head
- Torso
  - Center of gravity (lower torso)
  - Center of levity (upper torso)
- Spine
- Shoulder girdle
- Ribs
- Pelvis
- Arms and hands
- Legs and feet
- Vocal cords
- Bones and joints
- Whole body

**Basic Body Movements**

- Axial (in place)
  - Stretch
  - Bend
  - Twist
  - Turn
- Open and close
- Flop or drop
- Fall
- Shake
- Bounce
- Swing
- Undulate, wave, or ripple
- Locomotor (place to place)
  - Roll
  - Slither
  - Crawl
  - Walk
  - Run
- Jump (on two feet)
- Hop (on one foot)
- Gallop
- Skip
- Leap

**Physiological Functions**

- Kinesthetic sense
- Tension and relaxation
- Breath
- Heartbeat
- Alignment

**The Force Element (How energy is expended to create movement forms)**

- Impulse/creative pause
- Organic form
- Dynamic qualities as polarities
  - Forceful or strong / Forceless of gentle
  - Sudden / Gradual
  - Pinpointed or single-focuses / Scattered or multi-focused

**Accent**

**The Time Element (When the movement happens)**

- Beat
- Duration between beats
  - Long / Short
- Pace

**Group Work**

- Activity and Receptivity
- Synchrony
- Common pulse
Slow / Fast
Constant / Changing
  Abrupt / Gradual
Beat pattern or pulse
  Even, steady, regular / Uneven, mixed, irregular
  Measured / Unmeasured
  Syncopated
Moving with sound

*The Space Element (Where the movement happens)*

**Range**
- Large / Small
  - Personal or self-space, kinesphere / Shared or general space

**Position**
- Place
- Level
  - High, middle, low
- Facing

**Shape**
- Size (large to small)
- Curved / Straight, angular
- Symmetrical / Asymmetrical
- Positive space (filled) / Negative space (empty)

**Direction**
- Upward, downward
- Forward, backward, sideward, diagonal
- Pathways
  - Curved / Straight

**Dimension**
- One-dimensional (perpendicular lines or axes)
- Two-dimensional (planes)
- Three-dimensional (volumes)

*Group Forms for All the Elements*
- Unison
- Complement
- Contrast

(Reproduced from Brehm and McNett 60-1)
Appendix F

“Parts of the Water Cycle with Descriptive Word Lists”

“Condensation
Cloud: thick, light to heavy; rise, congeal, float, roll
Fog: low, gray, dense, opaque; linger, hover, engulf, shroud

Precipitation
Snow: gentle, delicate, unique, six-pointed, scattered; float, drift, twirl
Rain: gentle to strong; drip, shower, fall, lash, splatter, plop, drizzle
Sleet: direct, strong; pelt, pierce
Hail: cold, round, layered, hard; rise and fall, freeze, pound, bounce

Saturation
Melting ice: gentle, gradual; shrink, disappear, droop, release
Streams: lively, bubbly, bumpy, swift; trickle, flow, bounce, ripple
Raging rivers: powerful, turbulent; shoot, push, cut
Waterfalls: direct, rough, fast, steep, foamy; tumble, fall, drop, careen
Lakes: calm, flat, level, expansive; shimmer, lap
Big rivers: wide, slow, strong, muddy; swirl, meander
Estuaries: slow, gradual, spread out; split, seep, spread
Ocean: heavy, powerful, vast, deep, repetitive; wave, shove, pull, splash, sparkle, ebb and flow

Evaporation
Mist: gentle, gradual, light; lift, float, diminish, lighten, disappear, attenuate”

(Reproduced from Brehm and McNett 231)

Appendix G

“Feeling Accents”

- “Start by moving gently, with looseness. [Accompany gentle movements with a gentle drum beat.]”
- Every time you hear a strong drum beat, make a strong sudden movement (kick, stomp, pound, slash, or jump). Otherwise move loosely and gently. [Accompany the strong movements with a strong beat on a drum.]
- Rest.
- The strong movements stand out from the others. They are more noticeable than the gentle movements. They create accents in your movement patterns.
- [Throughout the rest of the lesson, play a drum to support students’ marking of the beat.]

(Reproduced from Brehm and McNett 244)
Appendix H

“Multiplication Large Group Exploration”
- “Stand in a large circle.
- Choose one number as a factor to work with [This factor should be small for less challenge. Factors over six are much more challenging in this study.]
- Begin counting around the circle, saying only your count. When a number is reached that is a multiple of the factor that has been chosen, sit down and hold your shape. As you count around the circle a second time, skip those who are seated. Continue counting until all students are seated. Notice the finishing number. This number represents the product of the factor multiplied by the number of students.

Example: Choose a factor of five. Every fifth student will sit down. If there are twenty students in the class (this number represents the multiplier), the ending number (product) will be one hundred: $5 \times 20 = 100$.
- Try a different number as the factor and repeat the study. (The multiplier is again the number of students.)”

(Reproduced from Brehm and McNett 246)

Appendix I

“Small Group Multiplication Problems”
- “Divide into groups of three to five. Provide each group with a complete multiplication problem.

Example: $3 \times 5 = 15$. For simplicity and time saving, keep factors under ten.
- Each group creates unaccented and accented movements to define sets and express the completed problem. They may use movements suggested early in the lesson or find others. Unaccented movements should be expressed more gently than the accented beats, which are expressed more strongly. The group repeats their sequence of movements until the product is reached, at which point the movement stops.

In the equation $3 \times 5 = 15$, $3$ is the multiple that will be accented

$\times 5$ is the number of sets they will do

$15$ is the ending count

- Groups should practice their movements and counts until they can perform the whole problem in unison. Counting aloud (either by the dancers or the audience) will keep the problem clear. [It is helpful to also have a ‘counter,’ a person who counts the number of sets as they are performed.]
- Share the dances with the class. The problem can be identified either before or after it is performed. Clearly expressing the problem in movement is the goal, whether the class is ‘guessing’ the problem or not.”

(Reproduced from Brehm and McNett 246)
Appendix J

“Synæsthetics” Dancers’ Questionnaires: Reflections on the Process and Product

Allison Hurd

1. When you performed the piece, how did you feel? Did you feel like you were expressing anything? If so, did you feel like you were expressing your own ideas or someone else’s?
I believe that this piece created a really special performing experience for all of its dancers because so much of the movement that we had generated, both individually and together, became integral aspects of the work. I had the sense that I was revealing my movement style in a very raw and intimate form, which is not something that I have experienced so profoundly in performance before. Whenever I was performing a phrase that I had created by myself or with the other dancers (solos, duet, final quartet), I felt the most invested in the work. More specifically, at these moments, I felt that I was expressing either my or our collective solution to the movement challenges that were given to us as the piece came together. The part in which I felt the least connected to my own expression of ideas was the running section.

2. How was it different to do this dance in rehearsal versus in performance?
Because my own choreographic work has led me to think a lot about performance quality, the act of performing this piece definitely affected my experience of dancing in it. Around the time of the performance, I was really bored with my own movement style and the limitations of my movement vocabulary. The idea of performance forced me to reflect upon ways in which I could re-imagine my dancing, which, to me, had become vapid. So, during the performance, I thought of the piece as an opportunity to rediscover myself as a dancing body and to allow the audience to witness or to be a part of that experience with me.

3. Did the process by which this piece was put together work for you? What did you like? What did you dislike?
I did like the process by which the piece was put together and there isn’t really anything that I disliked about it. What I liked the most were the challenges that were given to the dancers to generate movement, specifically when we were working together. I loved every experience to approach a difficult prompt with one or more of the dancers and to combine our movement inclinations as a way of solving it.

4. Did you like creating movements for this piece?
Yes.

5. How did it feel when you learned other dancers’ movements?
I can’t pinpoint any particular way that I felt as I learned other dancers’ movements, beyond the sense that I was completing a task that often occurs in the process of making dances. However, because I tend to work abstractly when I make dance, it is
always interesting for me to see other dancers creating movement that incorporates more literal interpretations of real life actions.

6. Did using “Follow” as a warm-up work for you?
I felt that “Follow” was a beneficial way of warming up and it definitely helped us understand each other’s movement styles more completely. I was also always sufficiently warm after completing this exercise. However, every so often, I would have appreciated the chance to use other methods of warming up that also promote body awareness and form connections between the dancers through movement. Typically, one warm-up allows dancers to know and understand each other in one way. Thus, the value of using various exercises during warm-up is the possibility for multiple channels of connection to be opened. I have also found that if a warm-up introduces me to a new way of thinking about movement, it brings me to a place of new self-awareness.

7. What was it like to add onto the body phrases once you knew what you would be doing with the list of body parts?
At first, when I knew how the body parts would be used, I found it difficult to maintain the integrity of the original exercise. However, when I began choosing the body parts randomly, instead of automatically thinking choreographically, I was able to add on to the phrase in a way that felt similar to its original creation. Although, as we were adding on, I also felt less beholden to the body parts, sensing that I had greater liberty to tweak my choices if they weren’t generating anything interesting.

8. Please write about how you felt [a] creating and [b] (if it was in the performed piece) performing the material from each of these movement-generation activities: Index card game
N/A

Body phrases
I really loved the challenge that this activity presented. I also feel that adding on to the body phrases throughout the semester was an extremely enriching opportunity, in that it helped me understand more completely how my body understands movement. This was one of my favorite phrases to perform because I felt that it was a very sincere representation of myself.

Favorite phrases
I felt that the favorite phrases offered a very satisfying (and sort of luscious) way of moving and I liked the opportunity to reflect back upon all of our rehearsals as a pull for movement. However, my favorite phrase also reminded me of how stagnant I felt my movement had become and I thus had to formulate ways of digging into the choreography more deeply for inspiration.

Allison-Audrey duet
I also loved the challenge of creating this duet and it was especially wonderful because I was able to create it with Audrey. I was amazed as to how much the
original phrases were deconstructed in the process of making the movement. I definitely think that this movement-generation activity requires mature dancers, but I, personally, was so grateful for the opportunity to choreograph in this way. Working from step to step with Audrey created an inherent connection between our bodies that made a seamless transition from the studio to the stage. This was probably the phrase I enjoyed performing most.

**Audrey McGlinchey**

1. When you performed the piece, how did you feel? Did you feel like you were expressing anything? If so, did you feel like you were expressing your own ideas or someone else’s?
Performing the piece felt very internal, as if I was dancing in a circle around my stomach. I very much felt that I was expressing my own ideas, even if the phrase was not something that I consciously constructed. This feeling persisted throughout most of the dance. Only during the running portion did I feel differently. During this section I felt that I was expressing someone else’s ideas but in a way that was of immediate attention. In other words, during the running section of the dance I felt that I was desperately trying to communicate someone else’s words. It was a feeling that felt both energizing and frustrating.

2. How was it different to do this dance in rehearsal versus in performance
I did not feel much of a difference between performing the dance in rehearsal and performing on stage for an audience. I think the feelings of internality, created by the beginning solos of our own construction, really allowed there to be no difference between stage and studio performance.

3. Did the process by which this piece was put together work for you? What did you like? What did you dislike?
I really enjoyed the way in which this piece was put together for me. I enjoy having time to play with my own choreography, and to really give it time to sink into my body and mold into my performance practice. I really enjoyed the organic process as well, i.e. follows. I love dancing extemporaneously to music, and feel that that is the place in which my best choreography is assembled. Also, I love moving from words and really enjoyed the exercise in which we created a phrase from various words. Honestly, I cannot think of something I did not dislike.

4. Did you like creating movements for this piece?
I think my previous answer responds well to this question. Again, I liked both the follows and the word exercise.

5. How did it feel when you learned other dancers’ movements?
Sometimes it felt awkward at first, but the rehearsals moved at a good speed. I was able to let other dancers’ movement sit in my body for some weeks, until by the end (performance time) all the movement was my own.
6. Did using “Follow” as a warm-up work for you?
I loved using “Follow” as a warm-up. Like I mentioned earlier, moving with/without aim to music is my most creative dance space. Also, in terms of warming up, it allowed each dancer to explore body parts that were sore/in pain/etc. And, because a “follow” seems more performance-like than a usual warm-up, the warming up exercises that each dancer went through slowly transformed into movements that were extremely unique and beautiful.

7. What was it like to add onto the body phrases once you knew what you would be doing with the list of body parts?
It was much more difficult to add onto the body phrases once I understood the exercise. Then, the result became the process. In other words, I kept thinking which body part would be the most interesting to move or what movement I wanted to do and then deducing what body part that most involved. Without knowing about the exercise, I felt more adventurous in choosing body parts and less focused on the final result.

8. Please write about how you felt [a] creating and [b] (if it was in the performed piece) performing the material from each of these movement-generation activities:

Index card game
The index card game, or word game as I called it earlier, was one of my favorites to create. I think the link between language and body is so entangled and connecting speech and movement is very rewarding to me. Regardless, because the index cards had single words on them, and not phrases, the creation process seemed a little disjointed, as if, to put it in speech terms, I was stuttering. Hence, I enjoyed performing the phrase more than creating it, because in the performance it felt more fluid, more like I had a phrase of speech and not an eruption of random words.

Body phrases
Creating the body phrase was similar in my eyes to creating by use of the index cards. Connecting singular items is difficult; connecting one word to the next and one body part to the next is hard. As with the index cards, I enjoyed performing the result more than I did creating it. With completion of the phrase came fluidity.

Favorite phrases
I think that the favorite phrases were the most enjoyable to create. Because they came not from necessarily singular movements I was more able to find connecting points between movements. Deciding how to get from one turn to the ground was much simpler than deciding how to get from ‘robot’ to ‘read’ via movement and not language.

Allison-Audrey duet
I think that it was easier for Allison and I to ignore the prompt, which was to connect our body phrases, and to resort to a more organic form of duet-making. We loosely stuck to our body phrases, but tried to move through them in a manner that would
allow us to interact more often. Since my body phrase was so internal it was hard to construct a dance from it that demanded I be more external, or at least externally aware of another body in the space. I thoroughly enjoyed performing this section of the dance; to me it had many highs and lows (both visually and emotionally) and felt like a life-story in half a minute.

Audrey-Phoebe duet
This duet was a little simpler to create because it came from a more organic place. While performing, the duet felt very galactic; often I felt that Phoebe and I were orbiting one another, less in terms of planets and more in terms of human orbit, or the orbit of two people in a relationship. I felt that at times I would open up to her (physically touch her or get close to her) and a connection would be made. Other times we would spin off from one another, to collect ourselves as individuals. I believe that much the same occurs in personal relationships, whether it be between friends or lovers.

**Phoebe Stonebraker**

1. When you performed the piece, how did you feel? Did you feel like you were expressing anything? If so, did you feel like you were expressing your own ideas or someone else’s?
Performing felt very relaxed. There was a comforting familiarity to movement and the other dancers. The best way to describe it is continually being pleasantly surprised by knowing how my body and those of the other dancers would move. If I was expressing anything, it was not conscious. That being said, there was a definite attempt to show how it felt to do the movement. So many movements were welcoming to my body; I guess I wanted to show those internal feelings externally.

2. How was it different to do this dance in rehearsal versus in performance? The black-outs during performance caused a surprising change in my dancing. Mainly at the very beginning for caterpillar, since we couldn’t find each other in the black out. In order to make sure we were in the right location, we would grasp for each other until we found out where others were oriented. I think that the question of not knowing being answered by touch introduced a new underlying theme to the dance.

3. Did the process by which this piece was put together work for you? What did you like? What did you dislike?
The process was wonderful as a dancer. It was good to my body and encouraging as a creator. I really enjoyed working with the other dancers who were so talented, and learning the way they moved. I felt like the piece really pushed me to be a better dancer.

4. Did you like creating movements for this piece?
Yes and no. I love creating movement, but not all the exercises worked for me. It was really exciting to see other dancers doing my movements.
5. How did it feel when you learned other dancers’ movements?
I loved it. Especially learning Allison’s was fun. She moves so differently from me, that it was a really pleasant challenge.

6. Did using “Follow” as a warm-up work for you?
YES YES YES! Loved follow. I felt that it prepared me well for creating movement with other dancers and being able to predict, understand and replicate their styles.

7. What was it like to add onto the body phrases once you knew what you would be doing with the list of body parts?
I’m not sure this is quite applicable to me because I always knew. (I missed the first rehearsal) But if it helps: I was always judgmental about how I was connecting the body parts.

8. Please write about how you felt [a] creating and [b] (if it was in the performed piece) performing the material from each of these movement-generation activities:
Index card game: I did this one separately on my own and sped up. I felt a lot of pressure when creating it. I was rushed and it was the first thing I was making for a dance with a choreographer and dancers I really respected. I wasn’t exactly happy with what I came up with, but it was fun to do it in the dance anyways. Especially since we didn’t know exactly when we would do it or which way we would be facing.

Body phrases: I ended up loving my body phrase, but I actually struggled with the process of making it. But once I stopped judging my choices, and improved the connections a little, the movements began to make sense and fit me. I enjoyed performing it because the improv became set and very natural.

Favorite phrases: I’ll be honest, I made one, but every time I went to perform it forgot it. The first move I did was so ingrained in me as being associated with a different phrase, that I never fully went into the new favorite phrase.

Allison-Audrey duet: N/A

Audrey-Phoebe duet: I love dancing with Audrey, and improvising in order to create the duet was wonderful. When the movements became set, I liked the phrase that much more. Our points of contact seemed to fit us and the moments apart were exciting as well. If I could change anything I would have ensured that we related to each other more. It felt like we were two individual dancers who occasionally found each other, but I think there is value in that as well.

**Meherazade Sumariwalla**

1. When you performed the piece, how did you feel? Did you feel like you were expressing anything? If so, did you feel like you were expressing your own ideas or someone else’s?
Very introspective, especially because we never looked at the audience or acknowledged their presence.

2. How was it different to do this dance in rehearsal versus in performance? I was more aware of the space and bodies around me in rehearsal, whereas during performance I was mostly only aware of my own body and the space directly around me.

3. Did the process by which this piece was put together work for you? What did you like? What did you dislike? The process was interesting because at every rehearsal, especially during the beginning, we went in sort of ‘blind.’ Not knowing what exercises/phrases we might be asked to do, if anything was going to be taught to us, if there was going to be any kind of musical accompaniment or not. I liked that we didn’t actually know what the piece was about at all until pretty much the very end (I’m actually still not a 100% sure I know what the piece was about.), and I disliked not knowing if what we were doing in rehearsal was going to be in the final piece in any form.

4. Did you like creating movements for this piece?
Yes, I did.

5. How did it feel when you learned other dancers’ movements?
I’m someone who is used to following the choreographer’s ideas/phrases/movements if I am not the choreographer, and this was the first time I worked on such a collaborative piece. I liked learning the other dancers’ movements, though everyone’s bodies definitely did not move in the same ways. What felt natural to one person felt really unnatural to another.

6. Did using “Follow” as a warm-up work for you?
In the beginning it was difficult for me to watch, ‘follow,’ copy and try to warm myself up simultaneously without hurting myself because my back may not have been as warm as necessary to do a jump/turn someone else did, but eventually I learned to like it; I started doing the same kinds of movements when it was my turn to lead.

7. What was it like to add onto the body phrases once you knew what you would be doing with the list of body parts?
It was difficult not to choose the new body parts in a way that I knew could work well transitioning from one to the next.

8. Please write about how you felt [a] creating and [b] (if it was in the performed piece) performing the material from each of these movement-generation activities: Index card game
The words were very ‘non-dancy’ words and it was difficult to put a movement to them without just trying to mime it. Only used 4-8 counts of it in the piece.
Body phrases
My body phrase was created when I was injured and therefore a lot of it was defined by movements that I could do. When I was no longer injured, it felt restricting to be doing those movements. I felt nervous during the performance.

Favorite phrases
Honestly, I don’t remember creating it at all.

Allison-Audrey duet
N/A

Audrey-Phoebe duet
N/A
Appendix K

“The Continuity of Experience” Rehearsal Journals

Rehearsal date: February 1, 2010

Irene Bright-Dumm
“Massages really are a fantastic way to come into your body at the beginning of rehearsal. I was aware of the tightness in my hamstrings while my neck was being touched. Normally I kind of hate having to come up with phrases on my own (especially quickly…like in class or rehearsal) but today – for whatever reason – I’m really digging it. I’m really excited about this group. In the exercise where we closed our eyes to be led around there wasn’t a single partner who had me questioning anything. I think it’s a great sign for us working together that we’re already comfortable with each other – and more importantly, trust each other’s bodies. Overall, good rehearsal. Feel really good.”

Emily Byrne
“I found that the blind lead was really interesting – how we intersected with each other’s bodies and the success of the lead really seemed to depend on quickly trying to understand each person’s touch and pressure. Good to carry on with weight-sharing after that! In the index card game it was nice to see all the different types/intensities of movements in each phrase and I think being able to learn a bit of other people’s movements will help bring some unity to the group while still keeping each person’s characteristics their own. With body surfing, I really liked the aspect of trying to keep the continuity of movement going without long pauses or readjustments.”

Allison Hurd
“Rub/pat down/按摩: love it! Stop/drop/go: Definitely warms up the body, but can become predictable. Blind lead: I really liked this exercise and the ‘trust’ element. I would like to continue with this and also have the leader actually move specific parts of the follower’s body through impulse (ex: moving the neck, right wrist…). Index card game: I think this is a great way of generating movement – even though I’ve done it before, new and interesting things came up. It is, for me, a great way of using a common language to create abstract movement. Learning Maia’s phrase: Tight! Always love learning other people’s individual phrases because they encompass so much of their personalities.”

Haley Perkins
“I experienced gratitude and trust during the Blind Lead exercise. Trust because, as the follower, my body was in the hands (or elbow, or shoulder or head!) of my partner, and gratitude because, as a leader, my partner possessed a certain amount of trust in me. There is a strong connection for me between these feelings and my experience of improvisation and performance. As a dancer improvising or a choreographer performing, a similar relationship exists between audience and performer. Trust and gratitude. As a freshman, it is a little bit hard for me to jump right into this group – it feels a little bit like I joined a year-long class halfway
through. I’m still having to gain everyone’s trust, and I’m also not yet fully comfortable trusting them. My process of joining this group seems to mimic the process of education or choreographing. I’m at the first grade or the first stage – the first rehearsal (literally and emotionally). However, I really feel that the activities we did today were completed in order to combat the barriers of trust that I expressed. We’re getting used to each other and everyone’s body.”

Phoebe Stonebraker
“It’s still difficult to remember phrases of movements for me. The index cards, although helpful to associate the movement without words, feels like an overload. But, once I wrote them down, the six movements I chose feel committed to memory. I like that the index cards have location associations, but the locations meld together when I dance to each one. Hopefully with more repetition I can begin to learn, memorize, and embody movement more adeptly.”
“I’m excited to improv! No memorization is exciting! I feel that my movements are better, more focused and more genuine when recall is not involved.”
“More massages please! Massages are superb. It was also a good idea to introduce touch right off the bat removing the need for that establishment later on. I recently heard about a school that required its students to cross their arms in the ‘observer position’ when in the halls…”

Maia Weiss
“It was really exciting to be in rehearsal again. Safe and with a familiar rhythm. Making things I didn’t like off the top of my head that turned into things I still didn’t like that turned into things I did and didn’t and on and on…I remember Emily’s touch being very light in the blind lead exercise and that making me nervous, Allison’s hands being big and warm and strong and sure and making me love her, not knowing other people’s hands but enjoying guessing and enjoying trusting them.”
“Noticing gender, afraid to be left standing alone eyes shut waiting for someone…Feeling a little cold and out of it. Little kids, learning processes, big color blocks, juice and plastic cups, sticky palms and hot feet.”
“In the blind lead, the rhythm of losing and gaining orientation and power (?). Giving and taking.”

Rehearsal date: February 6, 2010

Irene
“Making the second attached phrase was a lot harder. Creative juices were just not flowing. I think after the first one came together pretty easily – with the shapes easily adaptable to each other – working with a phrase that had such different lines/shapes seemed particularly challenging. I did find the ‘quartet’ taking shapes and moving exercises really cool. The way spaces were filled up and then emptied came together in a really cool way.”

Emily
“The first attaching of phrases was much easier than the beginning of the second. 1. I already knew Maia’s phrase, and 2. Both of ours were fairly stationary. However, we
both kept nearly all of our movement from our phrases intact. For the other groups it seemed like a lot more deconstruction had occurred. Bits I really liked from Maia’s and my attached phrase was the end with the attitude/straight leg weight sharing. The quartet taking shapes then moving helped a lot with making the second attached phrase with Allison (whose phrase moves a lot more than mine does).”

Allison
“Body part warm-up: I liked this exercise, but I feel like we could have transitioned into moving through the space (still using the idea) more quickly. Action word warm-up: I would have liked more words to be brought into the exercise (like what happened towards the end). Attached phrases: I really love this exercise and challenge – it’s a great way of coming up with very unique duets that are highly reflective of both dancers. Also it allows for a strong connection to be created between the dancers. Running and making individual shapes seemed like a transition. The quartet was fun, especially the moving quartet! The second attached phrase was daunting at first (was easy to think about first duet), but then it became very unique to the new partner once we began.”

Haley
“I was so inspired by watching the two other groups after the first attached phrases exercise. I was amazed to see the flow that was so evident which seemed to contrast Phoebe’s and my rather disjointed/distinct movements. The second time through, I tried to focus more on weight sharing and aesthetics, and less on staying true to my original phrase. It was still a challenge, but I do think that getting used to moving with the rest of the group first was helpful. It helped me to feel more confident in my body/moving body.”

Phoebe
Making the attached phrase the second time was not so successful. In fact, we did not come up with anything! Bummer… I did like the improv exercises we did beforehand, and think they would have been helpful for treating the attached phrases. But Irene and I were sick, so I think I will blame our bodies for the lack of creative juices and not the situation (of doing the same exercise twice).”

Maia
“I thought of the smashing together of two phrases as a combination between the negative space-filling exercise and something we did with the visiting artist for the modern technique class about matching up with the position of your core/spine with another person. It was hard for me because of this hovering in between two styles of mimicry/addition. It made all the contact feel light, non-committal and fluffy which I saw in a negative light in terms of contact improv but really it is not such a bad thing.”
Rehearsal date: February 7, 2010

Irene
“Not really sure why Phoebe and I can’t put our stuff together more easily although if we can figure out that flip over backwards thing we might have something cool. The weight sharing we did as part of the warm-up was great. I feel like today I had a lot of trouble getting out of my head and just moving...maybe that was part of the problem with lifting Phoebe. Need to be more present in my body. I’m really psyched to see how the making group shapes can be incorporated into the final product.”

Emily
“Finishing the phrase from yesterday with Allison brought about more deconstruction than with Maia, and lots more weight sharing. When we did that exercise separately (deconstructing the attached duet and making it a solo), mine was still very similar to the original but I wonder how it would have been with the second attached phrase – the differences when on Allison versus without her being there. The machine was really interesting, moving from being much stiffer and two-dimensional, to rounder and three-dimensional. It was much more free – machine versus heart. ‘Follow’ became a bit difficult to keep trying to watch what the leader was doing while still trying to move independently of her.”

Allison
“The warm-up was great! Working on finishing second attached duet: I really like this way of creating duets, although they do end up being relatively stationary because of the nature of ‘attaching’ things. Make original solo with unattached duet: I messed this up, but I definitely found that when I did the unattached duet without Irene next to me, it felt very different. Machine: This was cool, moving from 2-D to 3-D was more challenging than expected. ‘Follow’ was great. I always enjoy using other people’s movements as an origin for improvisation because I am bored with my own movement.”

Haley
“I think that the shapes exercise (especially the moving shapes portion) is beautiful. It demands creativity, spontaneity, and psychological/emotional/physical flexibility. These qualities remind me a lot of when I was teaching English in India. Any process of learning including teacher and student – really, any relationship – seems to require the fluidity that this exercise epitomizes.”
“I really enjoyed the weight sharing that I did today. It’s challenging for me because sometimes I think too much and I don’t allow for a natural weight-exchange, but I am invigorated by how beautiful it feels and how beautiful it is to see with other people.”

Phoebe
“Irene and I still struggled with making our attached phrase. The group structure went well, but I became too focused on the structure and forgot the movement. So glad ‘Follow’ is back! I like seeing people’s styles and then trying to replicate it on my body without having to worry about specifics. Once I understand their style (post- ‘Follow’) learning specific phrases seems easier.”
Maia
“When we were going in and out of the machine shape shifting structure I found myself really wanting to be in direct contact with people, feeling limited by the little thin layer of space between bodies. But also challenged to electrify it, make it living too. It was especially hard to do when you told us to spread away from each other even further, it felt like it was weaker but I think you just have to find more creative ways to make energetic contact through eye contact, line and shape.”

Rehearsal date: February 8, 2010
Irene
“I really wasn’t anticipating the quartet (moving machine, touching, still, other…all forms of it!) being so different. Having the space that just one more person could fill available when you approach the structure makes the options of how and where to fill and use space seem much more daunting. It made me reflect on how, in previous rehearsals, fitting what the structure was lacking had almost been subconsciously dictated to me which I think is actually very related to being comfortable and learning to communicate. Dancing with people always surprises me in how much of a relationship dynamic arises. Taking Emily out of the structure today brought me back to thinking a lot about that.”

Emily
“Sick today! Watching today made me notice a lot of things in the machine ➔ heartbeat exercise. When the group was close together and doing angular movements they were able to connect well but when they began to move apart (and with one less person) it seemed much harder to find the connections as people left. BUT, what was really incredible was seeing the group come back together from being far apart. There were two groups formed which were then connected by pointing and then once all together, not only were they relating by physically touching, but also by mimicking shapes of each other when they were not touching – like when they were far away. Once weight sharing and lifting was involved, it seemed much harder to keep a repetitive motion going.”

Allison
“In the machine exercise, I thought there were some really great and interesting moments that occurred. The weight sharing and moving at the end was difficult, but it could probably become more comfortable and fluid if we continued practicing. Body part connection phrase: Still fun! And it felt very different with the concept of traveling (looser commitment to the actual body part, stronger commitment to the idea of body part).”

Haley
“I’m really inspired by the body part-inspired choreography. It forced me to get very creative with my movements and my concept of ‘touching.’ This concept also came up during the group shape exercise – the idea of forming around one another without touching in congruence with ‘touching’ or making a connection (eyes, etc.) without physical contact.”
Phoebe
“Quartet extravaganza: We lost a member! The movement with contact was surprisingly difficult without Emily. Even though we had been relating to each other for a significant period of time in different contexts, the addition of contact while choosing one ‘heart’ (circular) movement felt messy, unrelatable, and at times, painful. It was clear that people wanted to exit which made it even worse. Perhaps that was the key difficulty, that we didn’t develop the contact.”

Maia
“I felt really frustrated during our contact improv machine shape. I think because (especially at Wesleyan) I am used to regarding human contact as precious and earned slowly, processually, rather than throwing myself into physical contact with an agenda other than just listening to another person’s body (still doing our repetitive movement). I felt no trust or rhythm within the group and it made me sad and angry.”

Rehearsal date: February 15, 2010

Irene
“I really, really enjoyed sloughing and the jungle gym exercise. There’s something really rewarding/centering about sharing as much weight as possible. Having a grid for the score was a great call – so much better in terms of letting the energy gain momentum. I’m pretty brain dead today so no more rules for scores are coming to me – but I’ll think about it…Actually! If there could be some kind of indicator for doing a full-body weight sharing thing that would be awesome. Because I always feel like putting your whole weight on someone in improv is more difficult to initiate/doesn’t happen as much.”

Emily
“I think the ‘Follow’ got a lot more interesting as weight sharing got involved. When I was leading and I got close to someone, we shared our weight, their movement then affected the way I could move and thus everyone else’s movement. The jungle gym got easier with time and it was cool to be able to feel someone else’s body on yours but not completely know what their non-contacting parts were doing. The grid score at first was a bit troubling because I found myself doing my body phrase the same speed – once we added Maia’s phrase to our movement library it felt much less repetitive. Hard to remember the actions of the ‘Classroom’ theme because there were so many.”

Allison
“I loved sloughing! Jungle gym was a great way to be comfortable with weight sharing because both people must take on both roles (one person is not always lifting, for example). Moving across the space all together (‘Amoeba’): At one point, I didn’t know which limbs were mine. ‘Grid’ worked much better with definitive lines and a little more structure. The classroom exercise – I would like maybe a couple more options, an idea of reinterpreting a line is great. Maybe more rules about abstracting or keeping actions’ literal representations.”

Haley
“I was an observer today. Although I find myself relatively aware of the aesthetics of my movements while in a typical rehearsal, actually participating as an audience member today offered a really interesting perspective. Instead of experiencing that soothing or strenuous or empowering sensation of weight sharing, I was only able to experience sensations limited to sight...I am so excited about the scores today! They look so dynamic and interesting and beautiful. I have never done improvisation with such a strong structure and I find it enabling instead of containing.”

Phoebe
“Improv is great! I liked the building on each other. Maia was a great partner and I felt very safe giving her my weight. This made the moving across the floor, although occasionally awkward, great. I also liked the 2 improv structures, 1) grid walking and 2) classroom. It would be fun to have a few common movements in the classroom one, i.e., if we all raised our hand in the same manner, but could also have our own abstract way of doing it. I liked the first improv, grid-walking thing even more when we amended it.”

Maia
“I’m sorry my brain is blank. I liked the contact/weight sharing.”

Rehearsal date: February 19, 2010

Irene
“Very low energy today...Will be better Sunday...I really like the school movements score. I was noticing as we were doing it how people’s facial expressions began to really reflect/slip into being a little kid in a classroom – super focused and curious. It is funny how certain movements trigger your emotional/experiential memory.”

Emily
“Low energy day for all of us, so it was nice to do a lot of review. Good to cut out some of the actions for the school score. Nice to involve more duets! Not so much to say about rehearsal, sorry I’m so tired!”

Allison
“Tired today (sorry!) so it is difficult to reflect in a helpful way. I understand and enjoy the structures, but I also feel as if they end up making my movement pretty stationary – in that I never ‘dance’ through the space, but more or less walk through it.”

Haley
“Going from observing last class to participating during this class was wonderful. I found myself thinking a lot about what the piece looked like from an audience’s perspective. Because I’m very aware of the classroom motions I’m translating, it is hard for me to imagine the whole picture we are creating. I recognize the movements
I am doing and the movements everyone else is doing, so it feels less exciting as a dancer and improviser. However, what you said when I spoke to you after rehearsal about focus on the process versus the image created opened my eyes to your vision for the piece.”

Phoebe
“Long week, but a good way to end. I like seeing the development of the scores. It shows that we (dancers/choreographers/movers) should try to return to things even if they aren’t our favorites. Although today was hard because general energy level was low… But in some ways it made it even more thoughtful.”

Maia
“Rather lackluster today. This time is rough for me, sun going down. I’m getting tired of the movement and it’s too early for that too happen. I’m excited to make new stuff on Sunday.”

Rehearsal date: February 21, 2010
Irene:
“SO excited to see the beginnings of how it’s all going to fit together. It feels really cool. I’m a little bit nervous (not the right word, but I can’t find the one I mean) about the speed of Allison’s phrase. It’s going to take some practice to keep up with her… brain’s not working. Need coffee. Love tracing things in the school score, especially people.”

Emily
“Great to put things together today. Knowing at first this was going to be improv was a little scary since that’s just so out of my normal comfort zone – as we went along I got more and more comfortable with it and today it barely even feels like what I think of as ‘improv’ even though I know it is! Very nice to have both the structure to it and also the aspect of not knowing where everyone will be/what they will be doing. Yay it’s coming together!”
“My only concern with what was done today was Allison’s phrase – it’s so her movement and I wonder what it will look like in unison with all of us doing it so differently?”

Allison
“I really enjoy putting the structures and phrases together. Sometimes I’m nervous about space and hitting people. Maybe it could be cool if amidst the sort of ambient drumming, there are a few brief parts that correlate more directly to the movement. I felt a little bad teaching my phrase because I probably could have been more clear.”

Haley
“It was so cool to see how our work this semester is starting to shape into a performance piece. The work that we have been doing has been so much about the process that it was hard to imagine a result, but what is so cool about this is that even when we are doing our final performance, we will still be working through a process.
This is such a neat collaboration of process and product that I haven’t experienced before. Doing Allison’s phrase today was such a good learning experience for me. I’m excited to teach my body to let go and to follow the momentum that Allison so beautifully is guided by.”

Phoebe
“The first day with the drums. Dancing with the drummer was more difficult than I expected. I think this was because he made his music/rhythms off of us, but I was deriving energy from him. While I think this can raise energy levels, it can also lower them. That was what probably happened today. I liked learning Allison’s second body phrase and I’m excited to work on that further. The portions of the dance came together nicely today. I kept wondering what it would look like from the outside, if what I was doing was ‘right.’”

Maia
“I liked working with Nate, especially for the first time doing the piece all together—music ties it together. Learning Allison’s piece was challenging because she has a very specific weight distribution/momentum pattern that takes a lot of strength, but I liked the challenge and hope we keep working on it. My shin and knee are really starting to bother me, which sucks out a lot of my energy and zeal…I can’t believe it’s all together! It was so easy and painless! I’m excited to perform it.”

Rehearsal date: February 22, 2010

Irene
“This is awesome! Obviously I don’t know how it looks, but judging by what I see when I’m offstage I bet it gives a really incredible impression. The concept of process over product couldn’t possibly be expressed better. The only thing I’m worried about is getting into that performance mentality that speeds things up…On another note—maybe this sounds cheesy, but I think this process as a piece brings up a lot of really important life lessons/skills. Like when we were talking today about unclear intentions in the trio, and maybe having to let it go that you don’t get to do exactly what you had in mind.”

Emily
“Today what you said about the process brought it all back to YOUR process for me and it all made a lot more sense! Really cool transitions and they all seem to run into each other seamlessly. The trio is all sort of a transition, which in itself pulls everything else together. This is exciting! The quartet into ‘heartbeat’ is really interesting – like it’s all evolving from stationary to movement with duets happening outside – almost like it’s a real body.”

Allison
“I feel good about the piece and the structures! Everyone is intelligent and has great body/space/time awareness, which makes everything work so well. I enjoy dancing with everyone and doing the structures.”

Haley
“What an amazing thing to be able to follow the progression of this dance through each other. Our cues are our bodies and the timing is decided by nothing more than a feeling/instinct. When you just asked if we felt anything was missing, I initially thought of transitions. I think this came out of our process, in which each portion of the dance remained very separate (‘Move from Grid to Trio’ – they even all had names). HOWEVER, after that last run-through I think that the transitions are such a strong point in the piece. I love how we gradually change from one thing to the next.”

Phoebe
“We have a dance! It feels good, and it’s nice not to know what’s going to happen. Improv, especially in this somewhat set manner, involves a kind of thinking that doesn’t always get to happen in dance. We need to make sure our spacing is good, our timing is right, and that we are relating to each other clearly. I’m excited to see the transitions on stage. What’s missing? ‘Follow.’ I love this score, but it makes sense why it’s not in the piece. Maybe at the beginning, like you were talking about.”

Maia
“I really like the feeling of us sensing the time/each other/ourselves rather than going off an external light cue. It makes the dance feel more organic, time to ourselves, less stressed and worried about being aware of the outside world. It’s a whole little whirling place now. BUT it still feels really messy for me. Like I’ve lost a lot of clarity and intentionality and purpose in my movement. I feel like I need something to think about while I’m doing it – a visual image or words… I’ll get it though. Not to worry.”

Rehearsal date: March 1, 2010

Irene
“This feels SO good! When we ran it with the ‘Follow’ at the beginning it absolutely didn’t feel like over 30 minutes… When you said we’d been dancing since 9:10 I felt like I was coming out of a trance… Like I kept writing in the beginning of the process – how I feel like we have good, comfortable relationships with each other for creating and dancing. Now I feel like that relationship is translating into performing together and understanding the timing.”

Emily
“The ‘Follow’ in the beginning went well – although at some points it was hard to tell who was leading. I think we all just have to keep our eye out for who’s starting after the freeze. With such a long ‘Follow,’ it’s also a bit hard to gauge the changes – will we have light cues? I feel like bringing various and more movements into the classroom score and ‘Trio’ is getting easier!”

Allison
“I enjoy doing the piece with an audience (although I know the piece is not about that). I think it’s easier for us to spend more time with the structures because we are more comfortable with them. Glad we had the option to do stretching or massage
(stretching is a more effective warm-up for me). I think that the ‘Follow’ is a good and appropriate way to begin the piece.”

Haley
“I’ve never performed (through dance) for as long as we did with the 20-minute intro today and I felt like I had been through something spiritual – I think that because the lights were low and there was a small audience (from Intro. to Dance) my dancing and my attitude were very different. It made me think a lot about the actual performance later this month (this month!!!). I feel exhausted and absolutely invigorated.”

Phoebe
“It’s hard to do two runs in a row! (and then write). The dance feels good and overall the energy level seems to increase when audience is there. What will it be like after we’ve taken two weeks off? Excited!”

Maia
“TIRED and STRESSED. I feel like I want more new material to add texture and spark because it gets monotonous for me to perform but for that reason it’s great to have this break from the material and come back to it with fresh eyes! I also want the beginning ‘Follow’ to be more structural/shape-y with bursts of high energy travel…rather than flowy and static. But I’ll be excited to perform when we return!”

Post-performance: March 28, 2010

Irene
“Doing ‘Follow’ as the audience entered the space I think was really great. I often feel like the transition from backstage to performing is drastic in a way that can lessen the performance. In all three performances, it felt like giving ourselves time to really get warm and comfortable in the space helped us be comfortable in the performance. I think this was probably especially important given how much of the piece is improv – if we weren't comfortable the movement just wouldn’t have been as creative. I’m not sure exactly how different the piece felt in front of an audience precisely because it is so much improv. Each performance seemed to take on a different energy level, but it didn’t feel like there was any specific, drastic difference in how it was performed rather than rehearsed. That’s something that I really appreciated about performing it, actually – it didn’t feel like all of a sudden it had to become something it hadn’t been.”

Emily
“Each night of performances felt different – we were all in different places energy wise for each show and I definitely think that made a large impact on how the piece looked. The first night felt the most energetic to me. Rehearsals had gotten to the point where it often seemed like I was doing many of the same things during each run, but the excitement of the first show helped me become a bit more original with some of my movements again, and I think that carried on with me throughout the other two performances. The fact that we were on stage as the audience entered the
theatre created an experience that I have never had before, one that was more informal and very comfortable. Not only were we becoming comfortable with our movement by warming up but we also became comfortable with the audience slowly entering and beginning to watch us – like baby steps into the ‘actual’ performance. The first night when an abrupt silence came over the audience prior to the house manager coming out showed their uncertainty of where the performance was exactly – had it started and should they be quiet, or were we still just moving around on stage to entertain them until the performance started?”

“All in all, I really feel like with the prologue included, almost the entire process of the creation of the dance was shown. We warm up and do follow in rehearsals, and then we turn to working on the material of dance. The audience was able to experience all of this along with us.”

Allison
“I really enjoyed having the prologue. I feel like it united us as an ensemble and, as the audience started filtering in, I think we all shared the feeling of having something or being part of something that was specific to who we were and the group dynamic that we developed.”

“For me, the performance aspect of this piece was a challenging experience. Because the dance requires that you remain extremely attentive to the other dancers, carefully following their bodies, and responding to their movements, I found that there was no opportunity to look out into the audience. Because the work was about its process, I know that this was part of your intent, it was just difficult for me to be on a stage without being able to engage with the audience (to establish the relationship that is created within a proscenium theater). Consequently, I think that the presentation of this piece could have worked really well in a studio setting. I also found that because the improvisation was quite loose in its structure, but also required us to pull from the same movement vocabulary, I had a difficult time finding new areas of discovery when ‘performing’ the dance. I wanted to work through new interpretations of my movement and it seemed that I only was able to do this during the ‘Trio’ section, when working with a partner. Something about the costume also made me a little uncomfortable, I think my pants maybe were a little too long. Additionally, I was slightly surprised by your choice of costume, because I didn't understand how the outfit related to the process of the piece. Overall, working through the process with you and the other dancers was a really wonderful creative experience, I just felt a strange dichotomy between the looseness of the dance and the starkness of the theater.”

Haley
“It's funny how there are both stark differences and striking similarities between performing for an audience and rehearsing for ourselves. On one hand, the audience definitely boosted my adrenalin and my energy or intention. I could feel myself moving more intensely, focusing so much on keeping my movement quality up and my excitement constant. In short, I was in performance-mode, taking less time to explore my body, and more time to ‘do stuff that looked cool.’ On the other hand, performing still seemed comfortable to me. Perhaps because the dance involved so
much improvisation, I experienced very little nervousness, and as a result, was confident working with the other dancers. Essentially, I could count on the imperfection to be perfect. I knew that every time we performed, differences arose, and this process of constant creation/reinvention was invigorating.”

Phoebe
“Performing the dance was an extremely different experience than doing it in rehearsal. The improv was really fed by the audience. The energy level catapulted. However, having such a casual introduction (the ‘Follow’ where we could talk), also made this switch into performance mode more difficult. I’m really glad we did improv, especially the scores with looser rules like trio. With the looser rules, it made performing much more exciting (versus scores like classroom which at times could feel a little stale). All in all, it was a very different type of performance than I was used to. I enjoyed the physical difficulties of being on stage for such a long period and how the dance changed from night to night.”

Maia
“I felt like the prologue made the adrenaline of performing in front of an audience dissipate significantly. Being able to move and talk and laugh on stage in front of people watching removed so much of the pressure to perform. My favorite part was the prologue, but I almost felt like its fun-ness sucked away the rush of performance. But it was really interesting to blur those boundaries I think. It made me think a lot about my ‘stage eyes,’ what you were saying about looking into the audience like you would look into a black hole, versus acknowledging humans that you do and do not recognize.”
Appendix L

Ensemble-building Activities
Throughout the entire rehearsal process I did many ensemble-building improvisation activities so the dancers could get to know each other’s movement styles and the types of improvisational choices they make.

“Blind Lead” (abridged)
“Step 1. Lead or Follow: Gather participants in a circle and have them form partner pairs. To demonstrate the first step, ‘borrow’ a partner and tell her to close her eyes. Say: ‘Now I’m going to take my partner for a walk,’ and begin moving the ‘blind’ partner around the space, demonstrating that she can be guided from in front (pulled), gently directed from behind (pushed), led by one hand or two, or by contact between various parts of the body. Emphasize that while leaders may change the point of contact, they should never let go entirely.

Participants decide who will lead and who will follow. They do the exercise for approximately 3 to 5 minutes. Tell participants to switch roles and continue the activity for an equal amount of time.

Ask ‘What did you observe.’ After a few minutes of discussion, continue to step two.

Step 2. Change Partners, Change Roles: Using a demonstration partner as needed, describe the new elements: Now leaders may bring their partners to a stop and walk away from them. At this point ‘blind’ partners have two choices: 1) They may stand in place until another leader claims them; or 2) They may open their eyes, start moving and claim a partner who is waiting with eyes closed. Likewise a person who has been leading may either: 1) begin leading a new partner from among those standing and waiting; or 2) stop, close eyes, and wait to be led. One person may change roles several times. Emphasize that if you are standing still, your eyes should be closed. If you are moving, you should be leading someone, being led, or finding someone to lead.”

(Reproduced from “Blind Lead”)

See the journal entries for rehearsal on February 1, 2010 for the dancers’ reflections on this activity.

Body work
I learned most of the body work techniques I know from Susan Lourie and Nicole Stanton at Wesleyan University. These techniques are often done in pairs and involve different ways of giving touch and weight to a partner. They allow the giver to experience the full of their body and its parts, and they give the receiver an awakening of their senses.
Body surfing

Body surfing occurs in partners, one begins lying down and the other begins lying perpendicular across the first person’s torso. After resting and feeling each other’s weight for a moment, the person underneath begins to roll, and as a result the person on top is moved through the space. Once the person on top is rolled to the floor, the partners switch places and continue across the floor.

Jungle Gym

This activity happens in partners. The stander takes a sturdy and grounded position. The climber finds as many ways possible to give their weight to the stander. After all options are exhausted, they switch roles. This continues multiple times with the stander taking a different position each time. Even as an ensemble-building activity, this is exciting and interesting to do and watch because the dancers find new and unique ways to share their weight and fill in the negative space between each other’s bodies. See the journal entries for rehearsal on February 15, 2010 for the dancers’ reflections on this activity.

Amoeba

- “Form a tight unit and as a group move across the floor.”

(Blom and Chaplin 100)

I did this activity so that the dancers would become more comfortable moving as a close-knit group. See the journal entries for rehearsal on February 15, 2010 for the dancers’ reflections on this activity.

“Quartets: Taking Shapes”

“Procedure

- All the dancers are in the space, divided into quartets, consisting of dancers A, B, C, D.
- Dancer A takes a shape. B takes a shape in relation to A’s shape. C takes a shape in relation to the shape of the duet AB. D is looking on. A leaves. B and C stay. D takes a shape in relation to the shape of this duet. Schematically we have:
  A
  AB
  ABC
  BC
  BCD
  CD
  CDA
- This rotation of duets and trios continues, allowing each dancer a moment to look and decide on a shape, and to watch the shapes evolve.
- The dancers should pay attention to the evolution of the sculpture through time, rather than seek unique individual shapes. They may choose to imitate
another’s shape exactly, or to vary level, direction of focus. They may sometimes be close and sometimes distant.

- Once the quartets have developed an ease in working together, each group shows a sequence of shapes to the rest of the dancers.

Variation
- Repeat with groups of five or more, always with one dancer rotating out to observe, as above.”

(Morgenroth 47-8)

Instead of doing this activity with four dancers, I did it with all six of mine. We started with an order, but then the dancers stepped out when they felt it was their time; however, there was only ever one dancer out at a time as instructed by this activity. At first we made shapes based on the instructions this activity gives, but we moved into making shapes by fitting into the existing structure. This activity created a constantly evolving group body shape. For the dancers’ reflections on this activity, see the journal entries for rehearsal on February 6, 2010.
Works Cited


