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Dance to Change, Dance to Heal

THESIS

submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements  
for the degree of

MASTER OF FINE ARTS

in DANCE

by

Francesca Allyson Lee

Thesis Committee:  
Assistant Professor Dr. Kelli Sharp, Chair  
Professor Loretta Livingston  
Professor Molly Lynch

2017



# **DEDICATION**

To

my parents, Randy Lee and Kazuko Harada-Lee

Thank you for all you have sacrificed to provide me with an opportunity to dream and live life passionately.

To my dad, thank you for your endless support and always daring me to take risks. Your positivity and life lessons have led me to soar high.

To my mom, I miss you. This is for you. Your relentless love and devotion shaped me into the woman I am today. Thank you again for your love, trust, and guidance through life.

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## **ABSTRACT OF THESIS**

Dance to Change, Dance to Heal

By

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Master of Fine Arts in Dance

University of California, Irvine, 2017

Dr. Kelli Sharp, Chair

This qualitative study explores dance as a therapeutic coping mechanism used by those affected by change due to a stressful life event. This research identifies key components of dance as a holistic approach to control stressful life events. It adds to the existing body of knowledge of more healthy ways to manage an individual's wellness.

This investigation is divided into three parts. Research on dance professionals, Joan Skinner, Erick Hawkins, Ohad Naharin, and Anna Halprin, provide a background of incorporating dance as a coping mechanism. Interviews of pre-professional, professional, and recreational dancers demonstrate how dance has been used to relieve stress and an adjustment tool to life change. Using key components identified by dance professionals and interviewed participants, along with a personal stressful life event experience, I create and present an abstract dance concert, *FLUX*. Themes that emerged from all parts of this study include a strengthened sense of identity as well as sense of heightened awareness and mind body connections, which could contribute as advantageous to an individual's mental and physical well-being.



## **CHAPTER 1**

### **DANCE TO CHANGE, DANCE TO HEAL:**

#### **Overview of Dance as Healing**

At times, life can be overwhelmingly stressful and may seem like a constant battle. Stress can impact everyone's life differently. For some, it triggers a reaction where a change must occur. This reaction, the fight or flight response, could challenge a person to rise to the occasion or diminish a person's quality of life (Ratey 62). The method in which a person adapts to change is based on their capability to overcome these events. This process, or coping mechanism, can be constructed by an individual's perception from the demands of stress (Hanna, "Dance and Stress" 7).

The effects of stress could be beneficial or detrimental. Eustress, positive stress, creates an "arousal of the mind and body" that could be used to prevent negative stress (Schafer 6). On the other end of the spectrum, distress or negative stress, causes disharmony. Negative effects of a stressful life event could harm a person emotionally and physically. "Experts say that 50-80 percent of illness episodes are stress-related" (Schafer 8). Illnesses include, but are not limited to, migraine headaches, anxiety, irritability, ulcers, heart attack, cancer or high blood pressure (Schafer 8). Distress could also produce intellectual stress that puts a strain on daily productivity and dissatisfaction toward relationships. Intellectual stress can lead to possible illnesses, listed above, as individuals are unable to think clearly or remember important information due to being overloaded (Shafer 64-65).

There are many key factors determining how people react and choose to manage stress in their lives. A negative outlook in managing a situation may continue to foster undesirable effects such as anxiety (Schafer 131). These negative approaches in life could be related to an

individual's perception of an event. A stressful life event could overload an individual by damaging an individual's sense of control. A positive key factor in stress is having control, which assists in adapting to as well as resolving a situation (Sapolsky 261). It diminishes the "sense of helplessness and fear related to pain while coping" (Hanna "Power of Dance" 326). An individual with control could have a sense of self-efficacy in managing a situation. Outlook and control can affect an individual's coping method to minimize or reduce the impact of stress.

Coping is the way individuals survive and break down an issue to make stress manageable (Weisman 4-5). The way issues present themselves affect ways in which an individual reacts. For example, an individual that manages stress by participating in an enjoyable activity could facilitate a greater sense of self-worth, companionship, feelings of appreciation, solitude, and/or diversion (Schaefer 296). In result, an enjoyable activity creates a purpose for an individual as it offers positive advantages. If a purpose in life exists, there is a "goal of coping better and tolerating distress" (Weisman 32).

Coping is not focused on the end results, but a means towards a transformation from one place to another (Weisman 5). During this transformation, a process of coping could be harmful such as self-inflicting pain for temporary release through drugs or alcohol, possibly turning into addiction (Sapolsky 343). Coping strategies could also be used in negative approaches such as distraction, humor to change tone, vent, blame, or denial (Weisman 36-37). A healthy coping strategy can be participating in an enjoyable activity that can either be physical or in the arts. Exercise has been proven by many researchers to have a positive effect on cognition and mental health (Ratey 7). It can elevate and stabilize mood while improving self-esteem (Sapolsky 401). It also serves as an outlet for frustration by purposefully turning on a stress response with exercise to reduce tension (Sapolsky 416).

Dance is a combination of both a physical activity and an art form by intentionally producing movement with the body. Dance is not limited to physicality and artistry, but also “transforms and may fulfill different functions at different times” (Hanna, “Dance and Stress” 35). It can be used as a medium to build an individual’s character like confidence, composure morale, and adaptability, which creates a range of options for coping. These qualities could be used in exceeding stressful life events. Physical activities, such as dance, support a healthy lifestyle physically and mentally (Sapolsky 123). It increases one’s physical well-being such as cardiovascular health, muscle strength, as well as motor skills (Alpert et al. 155). Movement in dance increases flow of oxygen to the brain and body allowing for an “invigorating experience” (Hanna, “Dance and Stress” 20). Researchers have explored dance as a therapy for older individuals with Parkinson’s, diabetes, and depression (Houston and McGill). Other studies have found dancing to enhance motor behavior, balance and posture, as well as perceptual and cognitive abilities (Kattenstroth et al. 8).

Dance is a participatory art that can be accessed by anyone at any time using their body. Elements within a dance class such as music, community, and instruction create an alive experience for individuals to embody intentional movement. A study implementing dancing into a homeless shelter displayed that movement contributed to enhancing self-determination within participants (Knestaut et al. 298). By physically moving, homeless participants could “nonverbally express their level or source of stress” (Knestaut et al. 300). These individuals performing movement exemplified the concept of using dance as a dynamic activity utilizing the mind and body, as well as engage the mover/dancer in a form of communication and expression. Dance can be used to provide relief for an unwell individual, while guiding him/her on a path to becoming his/her best self.

## PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES

This is a reflective study on the complexity of how dance assists individuals during stressful life events. It parallels personal understandings as to why dance is a distinctive coping mechanism. The purpose is to find key components, or common themes, through interviews of those who have experienced stressful events and how the act of dancing served to support their coping.

The goal of this research identifies shared mindsets, values, opinions, and approaches regarding the influence of dance as a coping mechanism. Briefly investigated are dance professionals, Joan Skinner, Erick Hawkins, Ohad Naharin and Anna Halprin, who used dance to overcome stressful life situations. Common themes from dance professionals' unique movement technique are recognized, then related to the process of coping through dance.

Interviews are conducted in order to distinguish key components of participants' experience with dancing during stressful life events. Eight adult dancers, over eighteen years of age, are interviewed to discern key components of dancing that align with the research of dance professionals' movement technique. These intersections support ways in which dance aids an individual's well-being.

This investigation utilizes key components on dance as a coping mechanism that arose from interviews, as well as research of dance professionals, to serve as points of departure for a choreographic concert, *FLUX*. This dance concert's aim was to bring a visceral experience to audiences in understanding coping and a transformation beyond a stressful life event. In this aspect, dance is used as the means of presentation for audiences to recognize the process of coping through movement.

Ultimately, discussed are themes that emerged from the experiences of dance professionals' common themes, participants' viewpoints found through interviews, and a personal choreographic concert process of *FLUX*. These themes, identity, awareness, and mind body connection, lead to the conclusion of the potential of dance as a coping mechanism to provide an individual with a positive mentality and increased physical strength.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **DANCE AND STRESS:**

#### **Background on Dance Benefits, Stress & Coping**

Dance is movement projected by the body. It physicalizes the “body in space and time” (Katan 9). It is an art form that serves as a means to express and create which may offer benefits to the well-being of an individual. This chapter distinguishes dance benefits by various scientific studies to establish a foundation for how dance could help an individual enhance quality of life mentally as well as physically. In addition, this chapter explores the importance of stress and coping on individuals. By understanding dance benefits and stress, a correlation between the two can demonstrate how dance can relieve tension in an individual during a stressful life event.

#### **DANCE: How Movement Can Guide and Identify Inner Thoughts**

Dance can be used as a form of expression by giving “meaning through movement” (Katan 12). Intended movement allows for a creative mind to perform actions with significance. “Dance is inseparable from the dancer: creator and instrument of dance are one” (Hanna, “To Dance is Human” 3). With dance, an individual can use movement to guide their minds and vice versa. This is supported by research on power posing developed by social psychologist Amy Cuddy. Power Posing illustrates how movement can empower a person in a social setting. For example, holding your arms above your head with a lifted head creates confidence and assertiveness. Cuddy affirms that “your body can shape your mind” through power posing.

Similarly, the performance of movement in dance can create a heightened network between the mind and body (Cuddy).<sup>1</sup>

A person's artistic choices or quality of movement, such as their control and articulation while dancing, can help reveal their personality. In *Dance, Spectacle, and the Body Politick, 1250-1750*, author Jennifer Nevile refers to Renaissance dance by analyzing movement as a moral virtue revealing a person's soul (87). She considers how Renaissance dance masters wrote about control in movement relating to control in emotion signifying "educated behavior" (Nevile 85-86). Movement can reveal larger patterns of behavior creating meaning to an individual, which could relate to how a person manages themselves in a stressful situation (Hanna, "Dance and Stress" 5-6).

Outcomes of various research studies have found dance supporting healthier lifestyles, including elderly individuals' cognitive and sensory performance (Kattenstroth, et al.), neurological diseases like Parkinson's disease (Houston and McGill), and mental health (Duberg, et al.), the results supported dance as aiding in a healthier lifestyle for the participants. The main benefits of dance from previous studies identified are heightened focus/concentration as well as perception/awareness, healthy body image, and better mental acuity during aging.

### **Focus, Awareness, and Perception**

Dance teaches discipline with focus, concentration, and awareness of one's own body or surroundings (Atkinson and Scott 5). With these qualities, dance instills positivity within an individual resulting in a healthier lifestyle. In the article, *What Educators and Parents Should Know About Neuroplasticity, Learning and Dance*, Judith Hanna writes that from a young age,

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<sup>1</sup> As Amy Cuddy explains on a PBS website, [www.pbs.org/video/2365274204/](http://www.pbs.org/video/2365274204/).

dancers develop a “skill set such as coordination of limbs, posture, balance, gesture, facial expression, perception, and action in sequences that create meaning in time and space.” Dance is a quick paced activity requiring concentration and focus, derived from an individual’s perception through their senses, to perform an order of movement correctly. As a result, these skill sets could provide efficiency with clear comprehension, decisiveness, and heightened memory to complete tasks (Sasson).<sup>2</sup>

Perception and awareness are key components to the concept of embodiment, which could be effective for coping (Bojner Horwitz et al. 2). The body gathers meaning through sensations to support our values and knowledge. Embodiment is giving a visible form to an idea, concept, or feeling. Embodied knowledge is understanding how to elaborate through dance the process of thinking (Katan 7). The relationship between the body and idea constructs an association for awareness. A study done on alexithymia, “impairment of emotional awareness/emotional regulation,” explains how embodied cognition measures a dancer’s skill (Bojner Horwitz et al. 2). Dance includes “motor, emotional, visual, sensory, and intellectual emotions” contributing to how dance relates to an individual’s cognition and perception (Bojner Horwitz et al. 2). Philosopher Paul Valery mentions in his article *Philosophy of the Dance* that dance is more than a physical activity, it also cultivates wisdom and knowledge (65). The concept of embodiment defines the body as more than an instrument for work or communication.

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<sup>2</sup> As stated in *The Power of Concentration* article on the Success Consciousness website, [www.successconsciousness.com/index\\_000004.htm](http://www.successconsciousness.com/index_000004.htm). Accessed 23 Apr. 2017.



## **Healthy Body Image**

Another benefit dance provides is promoting a healthy body image, strength in the physical body, and overall health (Alpert 155). A study done with line dancing for Korean middle-aged women documented positive physical benefits such as strengthening muscles and preventing cardiovascular disorders (Jeong Kim and Lee 4). Not only did the physicality of these women line dancing improve, but it also boosted their mental attitude. Participants expressed that “thinking of line dancing is always a joyful thing” and prevented stress (Jeong Kim and Lee 4). The study suggests these middle-aged women were often lonely, having lost their sense of identity. While dancing, they avoided isolation by creating social interaction. One participant said she had the “feeling of growing younger while participating in line dancing” (Jeong Kim and Lee 4). Line dancing for these women served as an outlet. It allowed participants to relate with one another through shared experiences at home, along with new experiences created while dancing.

## **Mental Acuity During Aging**

Dance is also beneficial for mental health while aging. Physical activity plays a “decisive role in aging physically and mentally” (Jeong Kim and Lee 2). A twenty-one-year period study with over four hundred senior citizens older than seventy-five years of age found physical activities, such as dancing, prevented dementia. This study, completed at the Albert Einstein College of Medicine, compared cognitive activities to physical activities with elderly participants to understand what best could prevent dementia. Cognitive activities consisted of “reading books or newspapers, writing for pleasure, doing crossword puzzles, playing board games or cards, participating in organized group discussions, and playing musical instruments” (Verghese et al.

2510). There were eleven physical activities measured, including “playing tennis or golf, swimming, bicycling, dancing, participating in group exercises, playing team games such as bowling, walking for exercise, climbing more than two flights of stairs, doing housework, and babysitting” (Verghese et al. 2510). Out of these activities, dancing was the most effective activity in preventing dementia (Verghese et al. 2512). Dancing increased participants’ heart rates while strengthening their muscles, as well as providing a mental challenge to stay focused. It helped protect them from illnesses and keep their minds sharp.

Not only can dance contribute to positive mental health for elderly to prevent dementia, but also toward self-esteem at a young age. For example, in an intervention of dance and adolescent girls with mental health problems, dance positively affected connections of body, relationships to others, and personal emotions (Duberg et al. 2). Mental health issues are an internal stress for these adolescent individuals causing them to be personally sensitive topics. Their negative stress is due to the participants’ personal failures and witnessing other’s successes. “Dancing seems to facilitate the identification of both adverse and empowering emotions, and thereby increases access to embodied knowledge” (Duberg et al. 2). This study speaks about the concept of the “lived body” by French Philosopher Merleau-Ponty. The “lived body” is being in the present through “sensations, thoughts and communication” boosting the relation between bodily connection and conscious self (Duberg et al. 2). Dance for adolescent girls served to “strengthen bodily connection” (Duberg et al. 2) of the mind and body. The study concluded in providing a “safe platform” for “self-care” (Duberg et al. 12). Dance broke through negative barriers of mental health issues participants were experiencing.

These scientific studies support the notion that dance can be a positive influence for an individual in many ways. According to Judith Lynne Hanna, dance “interweaves with other

aspects of life” through concepts mentioned such as communication, change, relationships, etc. (“Dance and Stress” 1). These various advantages the previous research concluded, such as concentration, focus, physical strength, and heightened awareness, of dance can be applied when managing stressful life events.

## **STRESS & COPING**

Stress could be described as a feeling during a heightened moment. It is a word thrown around often and sensed by every human. John Ratey, Harvard Medical Professor of Psychiatry, explains stress as a “ripple effect putting strain on the mind and body” (59). Psychologists Richard Lazarus and Susan Folkman define coping as “constantly changing cognitive and behavioral efforts to manage specific external and/or internal demands that are appraised as taxing or exceeding resources of the person” (141). In short, what affects the mind, affects the body leading to the type of behavior an individual may use to manage stress.

Stress is understood as negative, but there are two sides of the spectrum. Eustress is a positive factor, affecting a person with “health, satisfaction, and productivity” (Schafer 6). On the other hand, distress harms the body, creates disharmony and imbalance (Sapolsky 14; Schafer 9). Distress can lead to illness, anxiety, depression, anger, fear, or frustration (Schafer 8; 61-64). Negative stress might remain, creating unpleasant emotions or lingering health issues such as insomnia, cancer, or ulcers (Schafer 55-60).

Stressors are factors contributing to induce stress. Walt Schafer, author and Professor Emeritus at Chico State from the Department of Sociology, defines stressors as “demands put on our mind and body” (6). Stanford professor, Robert Sapolsky, similarly states stressors are anything that affects you and “knocks you out of homeostatic balance” (6). This could be the

small things that happen to large stressful life events. According to the Holmes-Rahe Life Stress Inventory scale from the American Institute of Stress, there are forty-three stressful life events contributing to “stress induced health breakdown.”<sup>3</sup> This list consists of death of a loved one, change in marital status, injury or illness, and change in career. Stressful life events could be considered as large transitions in life creating change in everyday life.

When stressful life events occur, an individual may experience the fight or flight response (Schafer 32). The fight or flight response is a way of responding to stress, or the body’s alarm system, that mobilizes the body into action preventing negative effects from stress (Ratey 61-64). The fight or flight response begins in the brain with the amygdala that triggers a chain reaction to determine the severity of the stressor. Norepinephrine is released creating arousal and alerting the sympathetic nervous system to release adrenaline into the bloodstream (Ratey 61-64). The physiological reaction is an increase in heart rate, breath, and blood pressure. In addition, cortisol is released suppressing the immune system. The amygdala signals the hippocampus to create memories and then decides how the body should respond to a situation. The body will then react physically, cognitively, and behaviorally (Ratey 61-64). Stress can bring about negative effects influencing choices a person takes to manage stress. A positive choice might enable advancement past the stressful life event with a confident outcome.

Coping is how we manage stressors. It “requires a preliminary and provisional anticipation of feasible consequences” (Weisman 4). Well-intended coping is dependent on the individual and stems from “self-exploration, self-instruction, self-rehearsal, self- assessed consequences” (Weismen 34-35). Depending on the situation, coping could be approached

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<sup>3</sup> See Appendix A for Holmes-Rahe Stress Life Inventory Scale found on the American Institute of Stress website, <https://www.stress.org/holmes-rahe-stress-inventory/>.

through multiple outlets. As stated earlier, dance can help manage stress-related diseases as it utilizes “muscles and neurons that affect the body and mind to be more resilient to handle future challenges and adapt more easily” (Ratey 71).

Scientifically, physical activity like dancing “increases levels of serotonin, norepinephrine and dopamine, important neurotransmitters that traffic in thoughts and emotions” (Ratey 5). Exercise is a way to prepare the body and mind to react to stressful life events (Hanna, “Dance and Stress” 61). The act of dancing can create empowerment, boost self-esteem, and give a sense of self-mastery to a person (Atkinson and Scott 5; Hanna 19). These qualities of dancing can positively boost a person’s emotional level. On the creative side of dance, new movements by a person can be challenging, but joyful through allowing the body to freely move. Dancing is a “process of shaping the embodied meaning” (Katan 13).

### **RELIEF FROM STRESS: Dance as a Coping Mechanism**

The concept of movement within dance could be a temporary escape from everyday life (Hanna, “Dance and Stress” 25). It could also be meditation, a way to relax, or an oasis from stress (Duberg et al. 5). In a study titled *“It Gives Me Purpose”: The Use of Dance with People Experiencing Homelessness* by Knestaut et al., a therapeutic recreation dance program was offered to people in a homeless shelter. The aim of the study was to provide a “coping mechanism for stress relief” and the results presented that stress was lowered in participants. Dance provided a way to “nonverbally express one’s level or source to stress” (300). Relief from stress in participants through dance was a way to illustrate how dance heals and contributes to the well-being of a person.

Dance delivers a multitude of ways toward benefitting an individual's life. Past scientific studies, as described in this chapter, serve as building blocks to support dance as a healthy coping mechanism during stressful life events. Dance can promote personal enhancement of a physical and mental state as well as "affect satisfaction in life or improvement in happiness" (Jeong Kim and Lee 2). In understanding advantages of dancing, there can be relationships formed between movement and coping.

# **CHAPTER 3**

## **DANCE PROFESSIONALS:**

### **Literature Review**

In the previous chapter, research was used to positively support dance for mental improvements and physical function for an individual. Dance professionals have applied these dance benefits to stressful personal life experiences. In this chapter, the focus will be on dance professionals Joan Skinner, Erick Hawkins, Anna Halprin, and Ohad Naharin, who encountered stressful personal life experiences that directly influenced their work. While each of these dance professionals' careers heightened in various time periods of modern dance history, they have similar approaches to dance pedagogy. These dance professionals all have developed their own dance techniques to cope with their stress. With the forward thinking of these dance professionals, dance has excelled from developments in teaching, choreographing, and performing techniques. It could be understood that they used dance as a coping mechanism in creating their techniques.

Joan Skinner's stress was initiated by a ruptured disc in her spine. To heal, she gained strength and awareness back to her body by heavily relying on Alexander Technique, an early somatic practice that acts as a "guidance and control system that organizes the body for optimum functioning and coordinates the distribution of psychophysical processes" (Rosenberg 34). Alexander Technique gave Skinner the capability to "realize new freedom at the joints and sense new possibilities for alignment and balance" (Davis 18).

Erick Hawkins strained his sacroiliac joint which made him doubt his training, realizing he was not taught how to "think/feel" his body (Hawkins 89). Hawkins was aware dance was

damaging his body and researched movement through anatomy (Matt).<sup>4</sup> Turning to concepts of Ideokinesis, Hawkins developed his own vocabulary to retrain and educate his students about “intellectualized academic kinesiology and kinesthetic awareness” (Matt).<sup>5</sup>

Ohad Naharin, current Artistic Director of Israel’s Batsheva Dance Company, suffered from a herniated disc in the spine in his late twenties (Namerow).<sup>6</sup> To cope with his injury, Naharin created a movement language he named Gaga, which he described as “yoga-improvisation-movement therapy” focusing on control and efficiency (Lewis).<sup>7</sup> Without the use of mirrors, as seen in a traditional ballet dance class, Naharin believes, “movement is something that can heal the body, even if it’s very strenuous” (Naharin).<sup>8</sup> Gaga is experienced through embodiment, creating awareness through the way dancers “comprehend their own movement while moving because they are integrated with the knowledge of it” (Katan 54, 78). When practiced, Gaga can be seen as self-research, aiding injury prevention because of the individual’s heightened awareness of their bodies.

Anna Halprin’s dance practice in the 1970’s became directed toward healing and transforming when she was diagnosed with colon cancer (Worth and Poyner 33). Halprin was curious how dance can transform artistic expression from life experiences, and she found ways for people to be creative and have an “opportunity to break the chain of identifying ourselves with our suffering” (Halprin, “Return to Health” 29). Considered as a “holistic approach to

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<sup>4</sup> As quoted on the Ideokinesis website, [www.ideokinesis.com/dancegen/hawkins/hawkins.htm](http://www.ideokinesis.com/dancegen/hawkins/hawkins.htm).

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> As stated on Dancing Perfectly Free website, [dancingperfectlyfree.com/2009/05/04/out-of-focus-a-documentary-on-ohad-naharin/](http://dancingperfectlyfree.com/2009/05/04/out-of-focus-a-documentary-on-ohad-naharin/).

<sup>7</sup> As quoted on the Movmnt Magazine website, [www.movmnt.com/ohad-naharin\\_00196.html](http://www.movmnt.com/ohad-naharin_00196.html).

<sup>8</sup> As stated in an Interview with Zachary Wittenburg, *Critical Correspondence*, 13 Feb. 2011, [movementresearch.org/criticalcorrespondence/blog/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/Naharin\\_Whittenburg\\_2\\_13\\_20111.pdf](http://movementresearch.org/criticalcorrespondence/blog/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/Naharin_Whittenburg_2_13_20111.pdf).



teaching dance,” Halprin utilizes improvisational movement exercises as an outlet for an individual to personally express themselves (Worth and Poyner 35). She understands each person is their own, especially when it comes to style and approach.

Within the techniques of Skinner Releasing Technique, Hawkins Modern Dance Technique, Gaga, and Halprin’s Life/Art Process, there are many key components found in their dance pedagogy, including imagery, awareness, and mind body connection. These techniques were all founded after a stressful life event where each artist used dance as the vehicle to change a dancer’s mental state and artistry.

## **IMAGERY**

One key component of all four of the dance professionals’ work is the practice of imagery, applied as a prompt for dancers to connect and associate to their knowledge. Imagery is a tool that promotes practice of movement “with appropriate intensity, artistry, and expressiveness” (Taylor and Estanol 154). This tool allows for the dancer to correspond with the educator or choreographer on a similar level, which might improve the outcome of dance training and performance. Imagery can also be known as “mental practice” (Hanrahan and Salmela 18). In a study titled *Dance Images – Do They Really Work or Are We Just Imagining Things?*, Christine Hanrahan and John Salmela rationalize imagery to “motivate dancers to convey their desired messages” and enhance communication. This study concludes that images are successful in influencing quality of movement (Hanrahan and Salmela 21).

## **Imagery for Proprioception: The Skinner Releasing Technique**

Joan Skinner relied on imagery to direct students in “letting go” to release tension blocking energy within an individual (Skinner).<sup>9</sup> Imagery also supports “orienting ourselves in space, as motor, kinesthetic, and visual inputs” (Skinner et al.).<sup>10</sup> Skinner Releasing Technique is described as “image-guided floor work to ease tension and promote an effortless kind of moving, integrated with alignment of the whole self... Skinner Releasing Technique smoothly integrates technical growth with creative process” (Skinner).<sup>11</sup>

In the thesis titled *Releasing into Process: Joan Skinner and the Use of the Imagery in Dance* by Bridget Davis at the University of Illinois-Urbana, Skinner “discovered movement training is not dependent on movement” (36). Dr. Lulu Sweigard, a pioneer of Ideokinesis, confirms Skinner’s technique by stating “movement resides in the thinking, not muscle action” (36). The mind connects to “sensory perceptions” and taking students out of the conscious control. They are concentrated on the image work and less analytically (Skinner).<sup>12</sup>

Imagery enhances a dancer’s ability to discover new ways of moving and has a kinesthetic effect (Skinner).<sup>13</sup> Images are purposeful as a “framework of the kinesthetic principles with a constant self-recollectedness, a constant awareness” (Davis 52), but can also be as an aesthetic experience, as dancers may feel weightless (Skinner et al).<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> As stated in an Interview with Stephanie Sukra,  
[www.contactimprovisation.ru/download/RELEASING\\_DANCE.doc](http://www.contactimprovisation.ru/download/RELEASING_DANCE.doc).

<sup>10</sup> As quoted from an article from the Skinner Releasing Institute website,  
[www.skinnerreleasing.com/articles/imageryarticle.html](http://www.skinnerreleasing.com/articles/imageryarticle.html).

<sup>11</sup> As stated in an Interview with Stephanie Sukra,  
[www.contactimprovisation.ru/download/RELEASING\\_DANCE.doc](http://www.contactimprovisation.ru/download/RELEASING_DANCE.doc).

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> As quoted from an article from the Skinner Releasing Institute website,  
[www.skinnerreleasing.com/articles/imageryarticle.html](http://www.skinnerreleasing.com/articles/imageryarticle.html).

Imagery in Skinner Releasing Technique allows students to remove thinking in order to use another pathway of awareness to evoke proper alignment through dance. “Skinner Releasing Technique is a system of kinesthetic training which refines the perception and performance of movement through the use of imagery” (Davis 34). Imagery opens communication opportunities to convey kinesthetic information through nonverbal material and used “intuitively rather than analytically” (Skinner et al.).<sup>15</sup> An individual can reach an innovative potential while abandoning habits in creativeness and freedom through the concept of imagery. Imagery in Skinner Releasing Technique is “the entirety of one’s inner felt life and experience” (Metcalf),<sup>16</sup> allowing for discovery within a “strong sustaining process” (Skinner).<sup>17</sup> Through this process, a dancer becomes skillful; moving in a healthy fashion with attentiveness.

### **Ideokinesis and Eastern Ideas: Hawkins and Imagery**

Similar to Skinner Releasing Technique, imagery is integrated into Hawkins’ Modern Dance Technique. Inspired from a background of Ideokinesis, Hawkins’ Modern Dance Technique uses various images to direct dancer’s vocabulary. One illustration is Hawkins’ tassel image, where muscles in the arms and legs are “allowed to decontract sufficiently, they will respond organically to movement initiated from the torso” (Celichowska 51). The use of a tassel is to direct flow, a dynamic range, fluidity, and ease (Celichowska 52).

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<sup>15</sup> As quoted from an article from the Skinner Releasing Institute website, [www.skinnerreleasing.com/articles/imageryarticle.html](http://www.skinnerreleasing.com/articles/imageryarticle.html).

<sup>16</sup> As quoted from an article from the Skinner Releasing Institute website, [www.skinnerreleasing.com/articles/what\\_is\\_process.pdf](http://www.skinnerreleasing.com/articles/what_is_process.pdf).

<sup>17</sup> As stated in an Interview with Stephanie Sukra, [www.contactimprovisation.ru/download/RELEASING\\_DANCE.doc](http://www.contactimprovisation.ru/download/RELEASING_DANCE.doc).

Tension felt in Hawkins' body influenced him to exude no effort in his movement vocabulary. His notion was to "let the movement happen," which supports his use of Zen philosophy (Matt).<sup>18</sup> Hawkins was inspired by harmony and "integration of the body, mind, and soul" (Celichowska 2), and looked for free-flow and effortlessness in the aesthetic of movement (Stern).<sup>19</sup> His aesthetics derived from Orient views such as poetry or the Chinese Philosophy of Yin and the Yang along with Western kinesiology viewpoint (Celichowska 2-3). Combining the two brought harmony of nature and body (Kisselgoff).<sup>20</sup> Western scientific aspect provided a driving force, while the Orient was a reverse aesthetic of "grace, sensuousness, immediacy, poetry and free, and effortless flow" (Celichowska 2). Hawkins' practice in dance, or his "voyage of discovery," incorporates poetry and spirit to elevate harmony within one's self (Hawkins 12). Harmony in both mind and body supports positive effects of how dancing might bring about relief of stress. Tension is released allowing the body to move more freely while the mind allows for the fluidity in movement. This led to acknowledging natural movement instead of stressing how to execute movement.

### **Movement Language in Gaga: Naharin and Imagery**

Comparable to Skinner and Hawkins, imagery guides Ohad Naharin's Gaga classes. One term often used in Gaga class to continually move from one exercise to the next is "float." "Float" is a metaphor generating movement qualities that are light and "moves steadily on the

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<sup>18</sup> As quoted on the Ideokinesis website, [www.ideokinesis.com/dancegen/hawkins/hawkins.htm](http://www.ideokinesis.com/dancegen/hawkins/hawkins.htm).

<sup>19</sup> As stated in the Dance Magazine website, [www.dance-teacher.com/2007/09/erick-hawkins/](http://www.dance-teacher.com/2007/09/erick-hawkins/).

<sup>20</sup> As referenced in Erick Hawkin's obituary in The New York Times website, [www.nytimes.com/1994/11/24/obituaries/erick-hawkins-a-pioneering-choreographer-of-american-dance-is-dead-at-85.html?pagewanted=all](http://www.nytimes.com/1994/11/24/obituaries/erick-hawkins-a-pioneering-choreographer-of-american-dance-is-dead-at-85.html?pagewanted=all)).

light water waves that are carrying” an individual (Katan 46- 47). Other movement language words are “biba” which means to “pull your body away from your seat bones” and “oba” the “traveling stuff inside your body” (Katan 45). Gaga plays with metaphors in terms of textures and forces, generating awareness and adaption to change. The perceptions of metaphors, such as “float,” enables the “perceived object (as if it) were real” (Katan 65). Perceiving an image as real creates an openness for the dancer to be receptive to be challenges.

Naharin, like Skinner and Hawkins, developed imagery through use of somatic practices. Gaga movement language stimulates ideas of textures and with the sensations of the body consciously being used. The constant movement within a class prepares a dancer for discovery and research (Galili 369). Sensations are used to generate awareness and are “distinguished from perceptions, since they generate information concerning what happens within the body in rather intuitive, unconscious way” (Katan 50).

Naharin not only uses Gaga in class, but in choreography as well. He can communicate with dancers through imagery and his movement language. Gaga produces an organic and effortless quality of movement. In an online article about Naharin’s process working with Cedar Lake Contemporary Ballet in 2009 and the filming of the *Mr. Gaga* documentary, writer Evan Namerow describes how Naharin provides imagery to assist dancers in creating his preference in quality of movement. Naharin’s aim is to provide “supportive awareness” and create a “human situation” (Namerow).<sup>21</sup> In *Mr. Gaga*, documentary about Naharin, there is a scene where he directs a dancer to fall to the floor. He directs her repeatedly to let go and to feel the sensation of falling without holding back. He utilizes key components of Gaga movement language based on

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<sup>21</sup> As quoted on the Movmnt Magazine website, [www.movmnt.com/ohad-naharin\\_00196.html](http://www.movmnt.com/ohad-naharin_00196.html).

imagery to accompany movement he provides dancers to gain quality of movement. Naharin uses Gaga in his choreography as well as a personal practice to cope with injury.

### **Halprin and Visualizations: Imagery and Emotions**

Anna Halprin uses an exercise called psychokinetic visualizations, a form of imagery and play through the mind. “Visualizations connect image to movement and feeling through dance” (Halprin 26). The concept of visualizations is to draw a self-portrait image of one’s self. Halprin discovered her cancer through a self-image by drawing an “O” around the area of her pain. The drawing represented two-dimensional stage where there are hidden aspects of a person. “Drawing is a critical first step in externalizing sentiment and sensation before it can be given kinesthetic form and danced as art” (Ross 303). Then, the visual image is embodied through improvisational exercises.

Visualizations embody an individual’s issue at hand. It is the idea of a person’s dialogue with the self (Halprin 128). The purpose of visualizations is to “create change” (Halprin 14). “The interplay between drawing and dancing offers the individual the opportunity to reflect on the meaning that the movement holds for them and how it relates to their ‘personal mythology’” (Worth and Poyner 63). Halprin was inspired by Fritz Perl’s Gestalt theory, an experimental psychotherapy that focuses on the present moment of thoughts, feelings, and actions.

The approach with dance is validated through Halprin’s explanation that “emotions may be accessed directly through the body” (Worth and Poyner 62). This concept embodies self-reflection and self-talk which could be utilized by all. It confronts, identifies, releases, changes, and integrates the issues at hand (Worth and Poyner 128). Visualizations allow the dancer to tap into their unconscious and confront themselves.

Imagery supports these techniques to generate open minds and bodies of dancers. It is a teaching tool predominantly utilized in these techniques that becomes more than developing movement and interrelation to an individual. Certain qualities, such as an effortless aesthetic, might be obtained by dancers when exercising imagery as a teaching tool. Skinner, Hawkins, Naharin, and Halprin all comprehend these ideas and integrated them as foundation of their developed techniques in order to cope with their stressful life situations.

## **AWARENESS AND MIND BODY CONNECTION**

Imagery, as stated earlier, is used to influence movement quality of dancers. Dancers are prompted to find connections to the image provided, facilitating awareness to one's body placement, to the environment, and to the situation at hand. Awareness is a necessary tool to cultivate the connection of the mind and body. The mind body connection is evident as a driving idea throughout each of the dance professionals' careers in dance, as well as personal well-being.

### **Awareness to Change**

Skinner verbalizes that "awareness is the first step to change" (Davis 24). Her students become aware of habits and movement patterns by exploring new pathways using graphic exercises and imagery (Davis 31). Skinner uses the mind and body with imagery. The capabilities of Skinner Releasing Technique can be brought into other applications like "healing, sports skills, psychotherapy, voice and more" (Skinner et al.).<sup>22</sup> Skinner Releasing Technique emphasizes the "process of change" (Skinner et al.).<sup>23</sup> In an article titled

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<sup>22</sup> As quoted from an article from the Skinner Releasing Institute website, [www.skinnerreleasing.com/articles/imageryarticle.html](http://www.skinnerreleasing.com/articles/imageryarticle.html).

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

*Regarding the Nature of Process in the Skinner Releasing Technique* by Robert Davidson explains Skinner Releasing Technique and change.

“Change is a product of the laws of disorientation and integration experienced during releasing. Disorientation of the self- (confusion) allows for the union of opposites, of diverse and disparate segments of the whole self, which is integration. This is the process of allowing change to happen.”

The whole self during movement has heightened senses. Through being awakened and cognizant while dancing, an individual might be capable of positive change.

### **Awareness for an Effortless Aesthetic**

Erick Hawkins believes desired aesthetics coexist in dimensions of life. Effortless and flowing aesthetic of Hawkins are examples connecting mind and body. These qualities “elevated the study of dance technique with Hawkins to a profound experience of artistry and life” (Celichowska 129-130). Supporting beauty with clarity and simplicity was Hawkins goal as an educator, performer, and choreographer. Hawkins explains that dancers should look toward the need of the body through “coenesthetic sense,” defined as “commonly felt state of sensation,” and is gained through awareness (Celichowska 12). In effect, it requires the mind to analyze what the body senses and how to use the sensations to produce movement.

For Hawkins, connecting imagery to the kinesthetic aspect unifies a body and mind (Celichowska 19). Imagery and kinesiological concepts are deeply rooted within one another, enabling release of unwanted tension. Hawkins integrated “coenesthesia, or a commonly felt state of sensation” by French philosopher Hubert Benoit into dance (Stern).<sup>24</sup> He found

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<sup>24</sup> As stated in the Dance Magazine website, [www.dance-teacher.com/2007/09/erick-hawkins/](http://www.dance-teacher.com/2007/09/erick-hawkins/).



inspiration of movements with imagery controlled and initiated from the pelvis to find efficiency in spinal alignment (Stern).<sup>25</sup>

Hawkins informs that movement occurs all the time with our bodies. A dancer must stay focused to how movement feels in the body to discover how “movement find(s) its own rightness” (Celichowska 120). The idea of awareness develops “ability to recognize, perceive, sense, experience, and trust universal principles” (Celichowska 119). Clarity and recognizing time of “now” enhances artistry in freedom, or “greater skill” (Celichowska 127). Hawkins stands firm that “it is awareness that leads to the inmost heaven, the normative ideal” (Hawkins 98). The present state of a person augments focus and awareness, placing personal issues or tension in the body to the side.

Effortlessness is an aesthetic in Gaga and seen in Batsheva Dance Company. To obtain effortlessness, it involves the mind and body to be felt and present during the practice (Katan 32). Gaga exchanges between being conscious in imagery and direction of class, but also with unconsciousness to let go of tension and become graceful (Katan 32). The embodiment of imagery provided in class use past experiences to bring flexibility to the mind (Katan 33).

Gaga is a hermeneutical practice requiring mindfulness/awareness that communicates with an individual through research and discovery (Katan 24). A dancer might detect normal habits, but also discover different approaches to movement, broadening knowledge. The mind and body connection brings about wholeness in the experience of Gaga. Because of this, dancers become more aware of their body and environment.

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

## **Awareness and Perception**

Halprin explains awareness derives from natural movement consisting of consciousness through the physical, emotional, and mental capacity (Worth and Poyner 57). A dancer is invited to let go of their issues and find a resolution. Physical awareness includes the body, sensations, and movement while the emotional awareness involves a person's feelings. The mental capacity is where imagery takes place. Associations of how images relate personally (Worth and Poyner 57). Halprin's technique of dance demonstrates all three levels of awareness as interconnected (Worth and Poyner 58). Awareness embraces the "spirit" of a person creating "a sense of wholeness" (Worth and Poyner 58). The mind body connection brings consciousness into the way a person moves. Awareness within the dancer provides understanding of senses linked to perception.

## **DANCE TECHNIQUES DEVELOPED TO COPE**

The success of these dance professionals using dance as coping mechanisms is based on the key components of imagery, awareness, and mind body connection which enable dancers to discover and focus on different cognitive sensations. Imagery heightens awareness which leads to a mind body connection; together creating a whole-body experience. The physical along with mental bodies must be present as well as aware for a person to heal and cope.

The coping techniques of these dance professionals all identified dancing to find awareness within themselves for a refined perception and performance of movement through imagery. Joan Skinner, Ohad Naharin, and Anna Halprin techniques pioneered influences of improvisation in modern dance pedagogy. Although each of these dance professionals have choreographed works, their innovative techniques were mainly developed to cope with

their stress from fragile physical conditions. Joan Skinner, Erick Hawkins, and Ohad Naharin, discovered enhancement of kinesiology using the body to perform movement, while Anna Halprin used dance as an avenue to express stressful life events. Although developed for different reasons, all techniques strive to obtain harmony and well-being for an individual.

The key components of imagery, awareness, and mind body connection are utilized to educate as well as promote mental and physical advantages, explained in the previous chapter. The act of dancing can be applied as a tool to enhance an individual's perspective into life, specifically in managing stressful life events.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **FROM A DANCER'S EXPERIENCE:**

#### **Interviews about the Role of Dance in Participants' Lives**

In this chapter, interviews were conducted to understand viewpoints and opinions based on participant's personal experiences with the relationship of dance and stress. Objectives of interviews were to determine how dance affected their life and why it held personal significance. The interviews looked to discover how benefits of dance might have been used in stressful life situations. Interviews showcased how dance determined ways an individual conducted life decisions because dance was often practiced in their life. Participants justified benefits of dance through individual experiences. Further, interviews regarding participants' practice with dance serves as methodology to support how dance could be a coping mechanism promoting mental and physical well-being. As illustrated in Chapter 2, dance has proven in previous research to promote well-being for an individual. In Chapter 3, dance professionals, Joan Skinner, Erick Hawkins, Anna Halprin, and Ohad Naharin, were studied to understand how their dance pedagogy with imagery created awareness and mind body connection. Alongside awareness and mind body connection, these specific dance professionals influenced their dance students to obtain mental and physical benefits of dance.

#### **METHODOLOGY: INTERVIEWS**

Participants of two categories were interviewed. One category within the two sub-populations were pre-professional and professional dancers. Pre-professional and professional participants were dancers pursuing a career in performance concert dance, or might have an

accomplished performance career in dance. The second group were recreational dancers.

Recreational dancers attended an open adult dance class usually in jazz, but did not work in the dance field as their career.

After obtaining IRB approval for interviews, participants were contacted through email.<sup>26</sup> Emails, along with the IRB Study Information Sheet, were sent to recreational dancers who have participated in adult open classes at local Southern California studios.<sup>27</sup> Pre-professional and professional dancers were contacted with an IRB approved email requesting their participation.<sup>28</sup> Fliers were also posted on community boards at the Claire Trevor School of the Arts at University of California, Irvine in search of potential participants.<sup>29</sup>

Eight participants total were interviewed, four participants in each category. Table 4.1 shows pre-professional and professional dancers referenced as Participants 1 through 4. Recreational dancers interviewed are referenced as Participants 5 through 8. Interviewed participants range from twenty-years old through sixty-years of age.

<b>Table 4.1: Interviewed Participant Categories</b>	
<b>Pre-Professional and Professional Dancers</b>	<b>Recreational Dancers</b>
Participant 1	Participant 5
Participant 2	Participant 6
Participant 3	Participant 7
Participant 4	Participant 8
<b>Mean Age:</b> 22-years old	<b>Mean Age:</b> 45-years old

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<sup>26</sup> See Appendix B for approved IRB Protocol Narrative

<sup>27</sup> See Appendix D for approved Study Information Sheet

<sup>28</sup> See Appendix C for IRB approved Recruitment Email

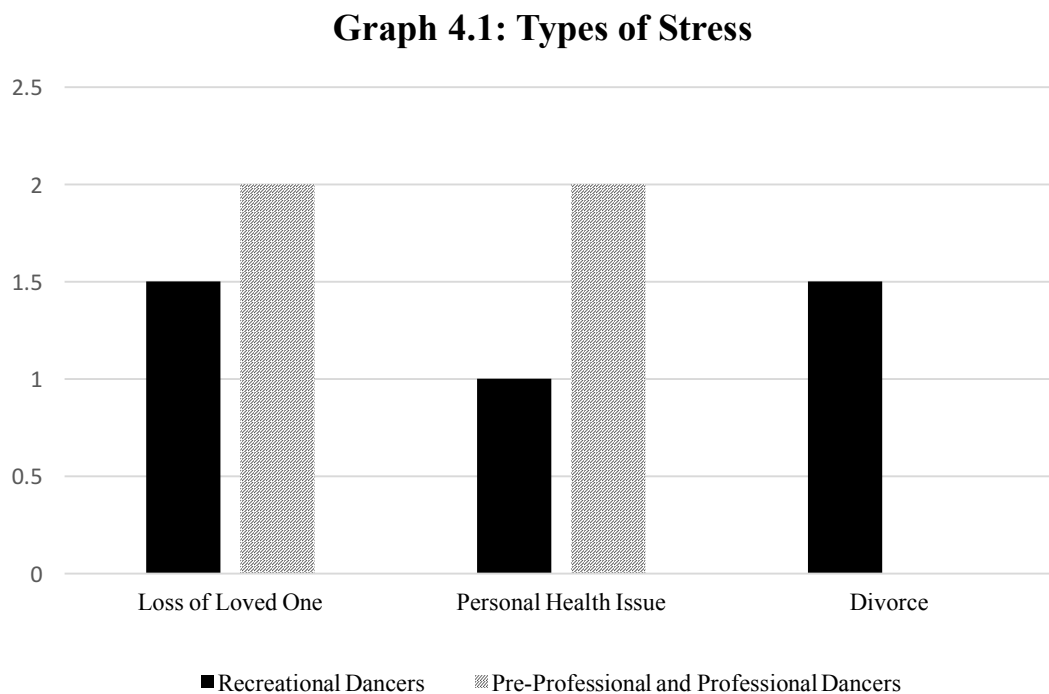
<sup>29</sup> See Appendix E for IRB approved Recruitment Flier

Table 4.2 shows a comparison of interviewed participant demographics in their categories of pre-professional and professional dancers participants next to recreational dancers.

Recreational dancers were older in age, as a result had more experience dancing. These age differences and length of time dancing separated the two categories of participants in emerging themes.

<b>Table 4.2: Interviewed Participant Demographics</b>			
<b>Subject</b>	<b>Mean Age +/- SD</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Time of Dance +/- SD</b>
<b>Pre-Professional and Professional Dancers</b>	22 +/-	3F/1M	15.5 +/-
<b>Recreational Dancers</b>	45 +/-	3F/1M	29.75 +/-

Graph 4.1 displays types of stress between the two categories of interviewed participants. The common types of stress within interview participants were losing a loved one, a personal health issue, and divorce. All stress types are in the top ten of Holmes–Rahe Life Stress Inventory (American Institute of Stress).<sup>30</sup>

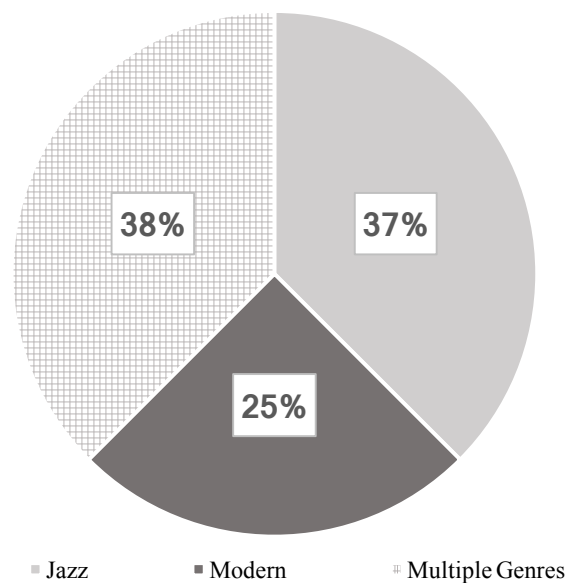


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<sup>30</sup> From the American Institute of Stress website, <https://www.stress.org/holmes-rahe-stress-inventory/>.

Graph 4.2 specifies interviewed participants' most common practiced genre of dance. Jazz and modern were the two most common types of classes taken by participants, while multiple genres include hip hop and ballet in addition to jazz and modern practices. Most participants took multiple genres of dance classes and could not relate to one type of dance more than another.

**Graph 4.2: Genre of Dance Preference**



IRB approved questions below were asked to discover history and significance of dance in each participant's life. Dance was evaluated to find how influential it was in relation to managing stressful life events. The questions produced answers to draw their conclusions as to how the benefits of dance resonated in their lives. Common themes emerged differentiating each group of participants as well as common themes with every participant.



Each category of participants was asked the following IRB approved questions:

- What is the history of dance in your life? (Dance Background)
- What role does dance hold in your life?
- What makes dance unique in your life?
- What drives you to dancing and movement?
- Has there been a stressful time in your life? If so, could you please describe? During this time, how did you cope with the stress?
- Has dance benefitted your life in any way, shape or form?
- How does dance influence your lifestyle and choices?

## **PRE-PROFESSIONAL AND PROFESSIONAL DANCERS**

Interviewed pre-professional and professional dancers were enrolled at University of California, Irvine. Three were undergraduate dance performance majors and one graduate student in the dance department. Twenty-two years of age was the mean in this category. Table 4.3 shows the demographics of pre-professional and professional dancers interviewed. In their interviews, each participant spoke about their stressful life events including health issues, loss of a loved one, and injury.

<b>Table 4.3: Demographics of Pre-professional and Professional Dancers</b>					
	<b>Age</b>	<b>Sex</b>	<b>Length of Dance</b>	<b>Genre of Dance</b>	<b>Type of Stress</b>
<b>Participant 1</b>	20	Female	10 years	Modern	Personal Health Issues
<b>Participant 2</b>	20	Female	17 years	Modern/Jazz/Ballet	Personal Health Issues
<b>Participant 3</b>	21	Male	13 years	Tap/Modern/Jazz	Death in Family
<b>Participant 4</b>	25	Female	22 years	Modern	Near Family Death/ Personal Accident

## **Choices Made to Dance**

Overall, pre-professional and professional dancers spoke about how their actions and choices were in relation to being able to dance. Although some of them have experienced serious

injuries in their career thus far, participants chose to focus on personal experiences outside of their dance career. One such example was how actions of pre-professional and professional dancers effected their dancing capabilities. Participant 1 and Participant 2 explained their health issues required them to eat healthy and to manage stressors in life, such as school. If they were not healthy, they were unable to participate in technique classes, rehearsals, or performances. In this situation, being able to manage their health supported dance, which made them feel “normal.” They felt confined by not being allowed to dance. It was way to “come back to me” (Participant 2).

### **Unique Use of Body**

Another common theme described was understanding use of the body. The act of dancing was a way of “discovery” (Participant 3). Participant 1 described how they are not very fluent when it comes to speaking their mind and not verbal with opinions, but dance presented a means to use the body by creating their own type of communication. They specified movement was their “personal type talking without saying anything out loud” (Participant 1). They further explained how dance was appealing because the meaning of movement can be subjective to a viewer’s eye.

Participant 3 and Participant 4 experienced a stressful life event with family. One lost a family member and the other was close to losing a close family member. Participant 3 found during this time, it was comforting to dance because it required coordination of their own body and application of the mind. It was also a way to “make people feel moved” within the “artistry of emotions” while taking their audience away from reality (Participant 3). Both participants

spoke about how dancing brought them outside of what was happening in life and allowed them to focus on something else.

Participant 2 appreciated dancing because it allows them to use their body in ways others do not, such as doing handstands, rolling on the floor, and moving through space. They compared movement of dancers as complex in comparison to a “normal person” who sits at a desk for eight hours a day for work. Participant 2 experienced life as a “normal person,” who could not dance, when their medical issues prevented them from dancing. They understood life without being able to move since medications and severity of their situation caused them to live this “normal person” lifestyle for an extended period of time. They expressed that movement in dance allowed them to feel with their body and sensations, which provided a different outlook on life, like being upside down. This outlook in life provided “experience (of the) body in so many ways” and to be “more in tune with their body” compared to a “normal person” (Participant 1). These participants’ perception of how dance benefitted their lives organized their experiences into knowledge. This brought them more awareness to one’s self, since they mentioned perception assisted in observations of their surroundings.

### **Induced Stress**

The last theme each pre-professional and professional participant mentioned was dance induced stress. Participant 1 said dancing at times was difficult since their life revolved around dance. One example was when they were injured. It was a setback in opportunities such as performances, as well as getting healthy and getting back into technique class to make progress. Dance was “integrated into life” where it put “pressure to help them grow as a dancer” and find balance with other aspects of life.

Another opinion in how dance induced stress was described by Participant 4. They pronounced dance as not natural to their body and they often would “hold tension, feel stressed, and anxious. (Dance) felt like work” (Participant 4). This opinion towards dance “as work” was significantly true to each participant in this category since dance was shown in their dedication and motivation to make it their career choice. Dancers often attempt to reach perfection as the ideal dancer for performance opportunities. Even though dance induced stress, they “overall enjoy(ed) it because of the challenge” (Participant 4). Participant 2 described dance as having “endless possibilities” allowing them to keep discovering new ways to move. Dance inducing stress was a challenge for this category of participants. Although dance was a challenge, it captured qualities and skill sets they described they gained such as being determined, concentrated, and open minded to change.

Dance was the future of these pre-professional and professional dancers. They attended University of California, Irvine in pursuit of gaining an education to boost their career in performance. The future of dance was considered in every aspect of choice for their mind and bodies to maintain positive health. Dancing was their lifestyle which in effect caused them to make healthy choices to allow them to pursue success.

The benefits of dance for participants were embedded in knowledge through their perceptions of a situation, which enabled them to be prepared for stressful life changes. Their interest in dancing was because it, as Participant 4 described, gave them life and a healthy challenge. Dancing was an “overarching purpose” for these participants (Participant 4). Every action and choice in their life was dictated by how dance fit into their life.

Dance was indicated as a stress inducer, which in effect allows these participants to be quick on their feet. This has an effect in the way participants in this category approach a possible

life change. Participants can apply their knowledge and perspectives from dance into managing themselves in society such as in dance auditions or in a new social setting where they must interact with unfamiliar people. These brief scenarios could be a stressful life situation where dance prepared them to manage induced stress.

## RECREATIONAL DANCERS

Recreational dancers spoke of their stressful life events experienced as well as support of dance during these times. This participant group had a mean age of forty-five. Table 4.4 displays demographics of recreational dancers interviewed. The key components found were that dance was different from their normal life, they felt accomplished with dance, relaxed and unguarded, dance was life's savior, and a safe place. As a category of participants with an older demographics, shared topics showed support of dance to stressful life events rather than for a dance career. These common themes, detailed below, all support how they chose to manage careers, family, and personal well-being.

<b>Table 4.4: Demographics of Recreational Dancers</b>					
	<b>Age</b>	<b>Sex</b>	<b>Length of Dance</b>	<b>Genre of Dance</b>	<b>Type of Stress</b>
<b>Participant 5</b>	58	Female	39 years	Jazz	Cancer
<b>Participant 6</b>	58	Female	36 years	Jazz	Spouse Death/Divorce
<b>Participant 7</b>	35	Female	33 years	Jazz	Divorce
<b>Participant 8</b>	29	Male	11 years	Modern/Jazz/Hip Hop	Death of Parent

## **Different from Normal Life**

Each mentioned dancing was different from normal life and felt accomplished. Some said, “not everyone can do it,” “makes you feel important and special,” “feel young,” or “brings joy and happiness.” Participant 8 said when they were going through a loss in their family, dance was the only thing keeping them emotionally stable while grieving. Participant 7 stated they mentally felt smarter with dance, especially in ballet while overall feeling “better in and out.” Dancing displaced them from their attitudes and moods in their daily life and prompted them to be motivated in dancing combinations of movement provided in class. In learning choreography, Participant 7 stated that they must perform choreography quickly after movement is given to them, which kept their mind sharp. Each movement might involve weight shifting, balancing, levels, or various effort qualities strung together to create a complex phrase that required them to coordinate the mind and body. They could find a self-mastery and success when performing movements correctly. It showed progress and forward moving from the stress of learning movement in the beginning. Recreational participants could feel better within themselves by finding success in coordinating movement, as well as physically due to cardiovascular and coordination requirements, leading to perspiration in dance. With dance keeping their mind sharp, Participant 5 mentioned that dance translates into life, preparing them for changes especially during stress.

## **Relaxed and Unguarded**

Dancing was a way for these participants to be “relaxed and unguarded” allowing them to separate themselves from their stressful situation (Participant 5). The “relaxed” state was achieved because they enjoyed engaging in an activity making them less anxious. “Unguarded”

for these participants was found in how they could be vulnerable and exposed, but also confident in an environment where they felt comfortable. Participant 8 mentioned after a long day in their field, dance destressed them by calming their mind. Their career was emotionally jarring and dance allowed them to release developed tension. They continued to speak about how movement through space soothes them. It is where they can get lost, feel the air around their body, and skin in space and be “in the moment” (Participant 5 and 8). After dancing, Participant 7 said a “change” occurs and they are less tense (Participant 7). The sweating and movement in the body “transcends” them allowing to “rid anxiety” (Participant 5). The idea of dance as being therapeutic was described by these participants as relaxed and unguarded, which allowed them to find comfort in themselves and focus on one activity.

### **Life’s Savior**

Dance to recreational participants was “life’s savior” (Participant 7). Dancing brought them “back to life” (Participant 7). For Participant 7, it was after a divorce. Dance served as mental release and held special purpose to them personally (Participant 5). As a teacher, Participant 7 always challenged their students “on why they are doing what they are doing.” Participant 5 and Participant 6 elaborated on how dance displaced them from work as well as personal issues. Dancing prepared their minds to think about those stressful issues after dancing with control and self-mindfulness (Participant 5). Participant 5 was a cancer survivor. Dance was therapeutic, a way to let go, and only think about dance. They told their story about how they attended chemotherapy in the morning, then participated in a dance class every evening at Jimmie DeFore Dance Center in Costa Mesa, CA, and slept the rest of the day. Dancing brought them community, purpose, and spirit. Community was given by fellow dancers at the studio who

took class with them. The owner of the studio also allowed them to take class for free, which they understood as a symbol of open arms for support. The new purpose in life for Participant 5 was to “live life to its fullest.” Dancing kept them encouraged and inspired because they could move their body, giving them a sense of freedom. Being active in a dance class brought them the sensation of liveliness. As if they were not with pain and felt themselves as healthy. While dancing, they described their sensations as being “in the moment,” or a mental release. For Participant 8, dance saved them when their father passed away. The long hours of rehearsals and taking classes brought satisfaction and self-mastery. Dancing offered an outlet to share and express their sentiments in a “safe and accepting way.”

### **Safe Place**

Overall, a “safe place” was created through dancing for recreational dancers. Participant 6, who experienced a spousal loss and a divorce from another spouse, shared dance was their “sanctuary.” It not only helped them grieve, but release frustrations as well as show excitement for positive things in life. Dance as a safe place, or sanctuary, offered empowerment for these participants. It provided “a straight path to discover self-worth, responsibility, and self-respect” (Participant 5). Participant 7 experienced an uplifted mood and felt secure because “dancing had no judgement.” They stated that within dance, everyone could speak their mind and everyone could be heard with acceptance (Participant 7). For Participant 8, dance was where they were most focused on their self while reminding them to breath and simplify their thoughts. “It (was) my base, my home, my go to... dance is where I go for everything... it my safe place” (Participant 8). Dance as a “safe place” and “life’s savior” for these participants’ during stressful life events could be considered an escape from reality. It was how these participants could



release their emotional build-up in a healthy way. They could express themselves in movement, while not being interrupted, judged, or restrained.

## **OVERALL COMMON THEMES**

There were very few differences separating dance for pre-professionals and professional dancers to recreational dancers. There were various common themes emerging from both categories of participants. Many participants overlapped in descriptions of how dance made them who they are in the present day and how it influenced their choices in moments of stress. The correlation between dance and participant provoked answers from IRB approved questions during the interviews were personal, but within similar themes such as identity, freedom, consistency, and connection.

### **Identity**

Identity was found within dancing. Participant 1 said dance was a “relationship with self” which was unique in their life. Dance provided knowledge of themselves, a mental challenge, kept them physically active, and provided goals. Participant 5 stated, the “purest form of me is when I dance.” When dancing, they expressed “it is their own thing... (in dance) this is who I really am and everyone else sees something else.” Furthering this, they mentioned dancing as a solo act and a way to know “who you are.” Participant 7 agreed by affirming they could “be me without worry.” When they started dancing after their divorce, people saw a change. They were not as tense or angered by their situation. They felt like they could be cognizant and sensible with their mind and body to assess the situation. Participant 7 further explained others stated to

her, “there she is,” as if they found themselves again. They said this could be that dance was their therapy to let out negativity without inconveniencing others about their situation.

From another perspective on identity, a few participants spoke about how dance could enable them to be someone else. Participant 6 mentioned in some classes, such as a Broadway jazz, they “took on a different role and personality that is not their normal.” Because Participant 3 mentioned they are socially introverted, dancing made them happy to be a different character to entertain audiences. It allowed them to be out-going in a comfortable manner.

Besides finding identity within one’s self or taking on a character role, each participant identified themselves as dancers, although recreational dancers had careers in various fields. Most of them expressed this was because they danced before anything else and a continued practice they participated in dance frequently. The idea of identity was asserted clearly by Participant 4 who said dance reflected their lifestyle and realized dance gave them purpose in life. As their chosen career, it brought them support, cultural experiences, and “emotional support.” Participants categorized identity by those they associated, as well as how they distinguished themselves amongst others.

### **Dance as a Physical Activity**

In a dance class, there is constant movement of the body which increases heart rate, blood flow, and use of muscle. Dance as a physical activity for all participants kept them active and motivated (Participant 3). Participant 7 explained dance aided them in accepting their body image. It brought them back to physical health from having two children and being unhealthy when going through their divorce. They said, “I wouldn’t be who they are without it”

(Participant 7). Dancing as a physical activity decreased stress in the body while improving self-esteem.

## **Freedom**

An emphasized theme spoken about by all participants was freedom. Freedom was achieved by allowing themselves to let go and escape from their normal lives. Participant 7 stated that as soon as they entered the dance studio, all negative stress was left behind. Freedom included dance as an outlet by focusing on something else such as performing movement in the correct order. Freedom in movement was their method of venting while draining heightened negative energies from stress. Participant 7 said when their first marriage fell apart, they used dance as an “escape from home” (Participant 7). Movement provided a mental release from the stressful life issue while providing motivation to learn choreography. Movement in dance was a way for them to get out of normalcy and habits. They stated with dance, “it is okay to be different, it is okay to experiment, it is okay to be wrong” (Participant 7). They also implemented these ideas into their teaching curriculum. They encouraged students to experiment with dance to learn what methods are successful and does not work.

Dancing creates spontaneity within structure allowing dancers to make their own quick choices during movement. Within a dance class, dancers know what to expect. For example, a technique class builds with each exercise to have larger or more complicated movements. Spontaneity, on the other hand, is interwoven within the structure. Choreography taught is the framework, and the dancer fills the framework with their movement style such as energy in dynamics, musicality, or emotional connection.

## **Consistency**

Each participants' personal testimony concluded dance was consistent. Dance "is always there" for Participant 2 who experienced chaos of moving often with their family growing up as well as health issues. Dance had a place for them, providing stability, no matter their situation in life (Participant 2). They found dance was easily available to them at a local studio. Not only was it a place for them to go, it was also familiar for them in their body when moving (Participant 2). Participant 2 and 5 survived major health issues and relied on dance to keep them spirited, resulting in a positive attitude. Participant 7 explained they do not have to be in a studio to dance. It could be done anywhere allowing them to "feel good about themselves." Participant 3 said there was comfort in dancing. Dancing to these participants related personally to them because it had been a regular routine in life as most of them began dancing at a young age. Dance as a constant factor in life allowed participants to fall back on what was familiar for their bodies. Dance was always there and can be found within themselves, in a studio, or social setting.

## **Connection**

The last common theme was connection. Connection through dancing was important for participants. The connection between the body and mind, body in space, and body to others. The connection between the mind and body, as described in Chapter 3, generates awareness. From another perspective, Participant 8 said the connection to space with the body was soothing. The body contact with the floor and air within the space provided fulfillment. The connection of dance in space was how the body utilized their senses to connect with an environment. Participant 5 described connection as energy felt by one another while dancing together. They mentioned comfort in others' physical presence emerging from touch and moving together with

the same movement. The energy of another dancing together delivered comfort and acceptance of others around. They even said that “dancers only understand” when there is something going on in their life because of the connection felt with another while dancing. Participant 6 explained community and connection sensed during her divorce made her feel supported in a way that was indescribable. Participant 1 mentioned being in the dance field provided them with like-minded people. Connection within dance provided recreational dancers with a community with others who understand their attitude toward dance. The connection was also found within an enclosed private, yet open-minded, studio to explore movement within the body. Connection was a multi-layered common theme contributing to how dance could be a coping mechanism since it is enjoyable, while providing a place where participants could be understood by others through dance.

## **MOVING FORWARD**

Common themes were distinguished from each category of participants based on interviews. Although dancing might induce stress for pre-professional and professional dancers, dancing during stressful times allowed them to appreciate the use of their body. They made life decisions with dancing in mind to promote their career and future. Amongst recreational dancers, commonalities lie within dance being different from normal life, a sense of accomplishment, being able to relax, and be unguarded. Overall for recreational dancers, it became “life’s savior,” a safe place. Each category of participants came together to support dance as it created identity, remained consistent, provided freedom, and offered a connection. Participant 2 and 6 said dance was a way to “move forward” from difficult times. These common themes from personal statements of participants support how dance can be used to overcome stressful life events.

## CHAPTER 5

### *FLUX:*

#### Choreographic Choices

*FLUX* means “continuously moving on or passing by” and “a continued flow” (Merriam-Webster Dictionary). In researching coping and stress, this title represented the idea of transformation in an individual’s life. *FLUX* was my choreographic dance concert with the main objective to integrate the key components identified in this study. The overall concept was based on my stressful life event experience of my mother passing. I used my experience with coping, along with key components identified in this study, for the creation of *FLUX* through an abstract form that did not follow a linear story line. The aesthetics of this concert was to represent a transition, or shift, from a dark place in a person’s life to find joy. To blend these ideas, I utilized a specific venue, scenic elements, a video component, original choreography, and unique composed music that was specifically created for this concert to bring a visceral experience for audience.

#### xMPL VENUE

I wanted to create an intimate atmosphere in the Experimental Media Performance Lab (xMPL) of the Contemporary Arts Center at University of California, Irvine’s Claire Trevor School of the Arts campus. This venue was a black box with many possibilities as an untraditional performance space. I chose to have the dance floor in the center of the space with audience members facing one another. The seats for audience members were only a few feet away from the dance space at eye level, which provided a different experience for each audience

member. I also incorporated a video screen, set up perpendicular from the audience, and across was space for entrances and exits for dancers as well as a focus toward the screen. This square arrangement aided my goal of providing an intimate atmosphere between the dancers and audience.

## SCENIC ELEMENTS

I was inspired to create a visual for the concert as my own interpretation of Anna Halprin's psychokinetic visualization. Although *FLUX* did not have the same process of Halprin's visualization, the drawings throughout the piece were used as a means to showcase the process of coping through dance. There were two scenic elements utilized to showcase emotional aspects of the journey within the concert. Brown paper connected with tape was placed over the dance floor to represent a blank canvas. Each section of dance used chalk, another scenic element, of different colors on the dance floor to create a drawing at the end of the concert.

The chalk's aim was to engage audiences in understanding an abstract approach to visually see a transformation and to allow them to relate to another aspect with movement. Chalk was used in a powder and solid form. The powder form was applied in the beginning when dancers first entered the dance space with improvisational tasks of rubbing powder chalk on their bodies to characterize stress impacting an individual. The powder chalk left a light haze in the air where the lighting caught the cloud of chalk before it fell to the floor, allowing the symbolism of my experienced frustration from a stressful life event. Throughout the concert, solid chalk was used to draw on the floor, which was symbolism for internal thoughts or feelings a person may experience in response to stress. For example, in the first piece, a circle was drawn to exemplify the confinement of how it may feel when stress happens. Another example was in the middle of

the concert when all dancers used chalk to draw on the paper floor to symbolize internal brainstorming of how to manage stress.

## **VIDEO COMPONENT**

A video component was used to reflect different stages of personal experiences in coping between dancing sections. The aim of the videos was to relate to audiences to the concepts that dance might not otherwise be able to communicate. Effects, such as slow motion or layering segments, contributed to play of emotions for audiences. It also acted as the consciousness supporting dance sections.

Each video was set in a different environment to portray a specific attitude. The first video segment, *Blur*, reflected the disharmony stress creates. The dancer performed movement inspired by the emotions of frustration and confinement in a set camera position that acted as boundaries. The close-up shots of the dancer in the video were used as a tool to showcase moods and attitudes live performers might not be able to convey to audiences. *Letting Go*, the second video segment, replicated release of stress and frustration. The video was outdoors in a setting with greenery, which contrasted the blank indoor walls of the first video. Nature could be represented as a life cycle and forward progress. The last video segment, *Relaxed and Unguarded*, was set in water. Floating in water represented the relaxed and unguarded key component of interviewed recreational dancers. This video was to convey a mental release from stress as well as acceptance of one to move forward past the stressful life event.

Although each video was different, they had the common motif of a framed photo of my mother. Each showcased the frame differently. *Blur*, had a few quick seconds of the still frame, then remaining in the end. The framed photo quickly being seen was to give the appearance that



something was lost and broken. *Letting Go* showcased the dancer in the video holding the frame or dancing behind the glass in the frame as a sign of progression. *Relaxed and Unguarded* showed the photo in the same skin tone as the dancer to represent a memory. The framed photo was used as an insight to my personal ties to the concert and research.

## **MUSIC AND LIGHTING**

Music was a large factor in creating a visceral experience for audiences. The music in the first half of the concert used a synthesizer to create a frustrated mood while providing a rhythmic pattern to drive the concert forward. Toward the second half, piano was incorporated to project a feeling of simplicity and purity. For the end of the concert, the composer went for a feeling of buoyancy along with feeling grounded. There were percussions, such as drums, that brought a grounded feeling and higher pitched ambient voices contributed to light-hearted emotion.

I collaborated with three composers who made original works for *FLUX*. Each of the composers wrote music for different sections of dance and video based on the concepts. I chose to ask each of these composers based on their aesthetics of music qualities. For example, Norman Beede was one of the composers whose strength was improvisation on piano. He wrote music that was in high spirits and bright for the men's piece, *Ease*, explained further below. The process in working with this composer, was unique in that Beede was available to attend a rehearsal where he watched all my choreography at that time, the section he was composing music a few times, and improvised on the piano during a few runs of the section. We went into the recording studio where Beede recreated his improvisation developed during the rehearsal he attended. Beede then watched a video recording of the dancers while he recorded and understood the ideas of where I was headed with *FLUX* since he attended a rehearsal. His improvisational

technique was key to marrying the movement choreographed to the emotional aspect of this section.

Another composer, Jordan Tani, was a graduate sound designer student at University of California, Irvine who helped blend the concert's music together so it was seamless. We spent a few meetings in the sound design studio working on the concept for each section of music. This was important because we were able to make *FLUX* an expressly crafted concert through cohesion of music and movement. He also wrote music for the last section, *Moving Forward*, where I gave Tani words and images such as grounded, warmth, joy, comfort, peace, and the idea of reconnecting with a close friend. The music was composed after I created the last section, and found it a challenge to work backwards from choreographing into fitting music into the piece. Tani was present for the creation of the piece and understood what was occurring as a conclusion to *FLUX*, which gave flexibility to the process of concluding my concert the way I imagined.

In the space of the xMPL, Tani also customized the placement of speakers in each corner of audience seating on both sides of the dance floor. These four speakers created a surround sound as if in a movie theater. Specific sounds in a few music pieces floated from different speakers to give audiences an affective experience.

The graduate lighting designer, David Hernandez, came to a few rehearsals and we met multiple times during the creation of *FLUX*. We kept each other updated on images to communicate emotional aspects of each section. When we arrived into the xMPL, Hernandez worked alongside myself and the dancers in setting lighting with dance sections in the dance space.

Lighting of each section coincided with *FLUX*'s journey, which enhanced the experience as an audience. In the beginning, there was a distinct diagonal line geometric shape that cast a pattern on the paper floor. Colors of dark blues, reds, and ambers were used to emulate the tension at the start of the show. One example was a pulsing gobo geometric shape to the beat of the music. This was to represent the energy and climax of the impact stress could have before the stress turned into an action. As the concert developed, colors of orange and ambers became more dominant with a higher intensity. There were no geometric shaped lights in order to promote clarity of the picture drawn on the paper and joyful intention of dancers. Hernandez's lighting understood the moods and attitudes that I was aiming for and was successful in aligning my movement to his lighting ideas.

Music and lighting brought a cohesion to the intention of *FLUX*, as it was an opportunity for audience members to use more of their senses to relate to the research in dance form. Both were main factors towards highlighting choreography to make the concert unified. Each collaboration was significant toward building an arc within *FLUX*, as well as interpreting my thesis concert in other artists' eyes to communicate with audiences and bring cohesion.

## **DANCE MOVEMENT SECTIONS**

*FLUX* was segmented into eight movement sections of dance.<sup>31</sup> Each section represented a different key component from interviewed participants in this study, as well as personal moods and attitudes experienced through coping. Structurally, each section of dance and video component, as discussed earlier, flowed into the next, as listed below.

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<sup>31</sup> See Appendix F for *FLUX* Dance Thesis Concert Program

- I. **Video:** *Blur*
- II. *Tension*
- III. *Identity*
- IV. *Support*
- V. **Video:** *Letting Go*
- VI. *Consistency & Concentration*
- VII. *Awareness to Act*
- VIII. *Flow & Release*
- IX. **Video:** *Relaxed & Unguarded*
- X. *Ease*
- XI. *Moving Forward*

I wanted audiences to experience a transformation of coping with stress into joyfulness. In addition, have them relate to what was happening in their personal lives in this journey of *FLUX*. Although the story line was not linear, a solo dancer represented myself through the videos as well as in a few movement sections, which allowed audiences to understand my interpretation of a transformation through coping with stress. The solo dancer held responsibility of translating choreography to be accessible for audiences to understand what was happening in the movement. For example, the first time the solo dancer was on the dance space, she had to be able to evoke complicated emotions of desperation, frustration, and sadness.

Two motifs were developed throughout *FLUX* creating a significance to the progression of my concert as well as a choreographic technique to make my choreography accessible to audiences. Further explained below, my objective with these motifs was to bring familiarity to audiences to see a development in the emotional aspects of my concert.

### ***Tension***

After the first video, *Blur*, the full cast section titled *Tension* created an extension of the video into live performance. This section symbolized a blurry moment when an individual may feel blindsided, or in shock, causing uncertainty as to how to react. It reflected the day after my mother passed and there were complicated emotions. On one hand, I remembered having a feeling of relief because she was not in pain from cancer anymore, but on the other, also feeling a new tension of uncertainty for the future, and a hole of a significant person missing in my life.

The concert started with a pile of broken pieces of chalk in the center where the solo dancer was trying to put the pieces together again, while a few dancers switched off trying to embrace her, but would try to return to the pile. When dancers came out, each took a piece of chalk from the center to represent a person's presence turning into fading memories. Dancers also improvised with chalk powder to represent effects of a stressful life event mentally or physically on an individual. During this section, a circle was created in the chalk taken from the center to represent confinement and frustration of how an individual might feel when a stressful life event happens.

During *Tension*, the solo dancer was lifted by other dancers above their heads. This lift was one motif created throughout *FLUX* that embraced a different mood each time performed. The lift in *Tension* symbolized being struck with a stressful life event without understanding how to manage it. Another motif to show the process of coping with stress was a slapping motion of dancers' arms on their chest and thighs. In *Tension*, these slaps were heavy, made a sound, and kept with the tempo of music. This movement represented the aggressive attitude an individual may feel in a stressful life event an individual may feel.

## ***Identity***

*Identity* was a duet where two dancers mirrored each other with the same movement as if they were the same person. This was to characterize a person internally looking at themselves and evaluating their stressful situation. The solo dancer, representing myself, took on the role of being effected by stressful life event, where the second dancer represented her internal thoughts. The second dancer performed movements that forcefully manipulated the solo dancer's movement, like holding her head and leading the solo dancer around the stage, to represent self-talk effecting emotions felt. I told the two dancers the intention of this section was to have a competitive feel between them. The dancers were to compete with one another, such as in mirroring each other's running movement back and forth along the stage, as if a person is internally fighting with themselves. *Identity* was relevant to interviewed participants' key component of dance as oneself, which is further explained in Chapter 6. This section used dance to demonstrate self-talk by showing an internal reaction from a stressful situation.

### ***Support***

The third section, *Support*, was about connection and care found in a community through dance. Emotions conveyed were those of being lost and looking for support. It reflected the key component of community from interviewed participants, where I could also relate. After my mother passed, I spent time away from dance. I had built up tension from being engrossed in the arrangements needed to be done. When I returned to dance, I found that support from a community in dance was refreshing because the commonality of the act of dancing was comforting with others who share the same interest. This was a point of adjusting without her physically in my life.

Movement vocabulary showed support from each of the dancers in partner work. I told the dancers that *Support* would heavily rely on partner work to convey a web-like, tangled feeling, between the dancers. One choreographic imagery example of the web-like feeling, was the idea of a human knot where dancers were connected by holding their hands of two other dancers and trying to untangle themselves without letting go of their hands to make a complete circle. This section was built by dancer's strengths as I verbally gave movement tasks while they interpreted how to naturally move.

In the end of *Support*, dancers became separated, dancing apart from one another while powder chalk was picked up and distributed by one dancer. The chalk was then improvised on their bodies, like in the beginning, which was built up into larger movements creating a haze of chalk on the dance floor. This was to represent the mourning of my mother lost and was the heightened moment of frustration, anger, and tension of *FLUX*. The solo dancer, representing me, was left on stage and scanned the audience while running in the circle drawn in *Tension* as a cry for help and desperation.

The slapping motif from *Tension* came back as a vigorous push in *Support* symbolizing the feeling of being irritated. I gave the image to the dancers that these vigorous pushes were as if they were each on a surfboard or paddleboard in the ocean and they were fighting the current. Or, another image was trying to swim through mud or quicksand. With these images, I was looking for a heavy bounce, requiring dancers to use their bend of their knees and contracted torsos with tension through their arms, to highlight heightened stress of this dance section.

## ***Consistency***

*Consistency* represented dance as a constant factor, as discussed in Chapter 4. In order to make the idea of dance as a constant factor, I used the choreographic method repetition of a movement phrase. The constant movements that occurred symbolized consistency, a key component, interviewed participants expressed as the role of dance in their lives. This was created with one movement phrase repeated multiple times in different areas of this section. One example is the choreographic technique of a roll-off, or cannon, where each dancer performing the same movement slightly off in time from the dancer before, was used to show consistency. The movement vocabulary was steady, matching the constant heavy beat in the music. The slap motif developed into a push was also performed in this section with a smooth even tempo quality, as if the dancers were using their arms to skim the surface in a pool of water. This highlighted the steady beat of music to assist the idea of consistency.

At the end of this section, a triangle was created from chalk to show connection of an individual to stress after the hard life event occurs. Phrases and gestures from other sections were showcased as moments remembered with stress becoming a memory and acceptance.

## ***Awareness to Act***

*Awareness to Act* was about how dance could prepare an individual for responding to stress. This was an all-women section in order to have a sense of sensuality and buoyancy. It was inspired by an energized and animalistic feel to approach stress found with a playful and confident attitude of the dancers. The movement vocabulary had quick movement qualities that were linear to show readiness for action to move past stress. I told the women to have an aggression that was ready to attack and confront a stressful situation. It represented scenarios or



thoughts a person may have of where to go after a stressful life situation. For myself, I threw myself back into my regular work schedule as well as looked toward options for my future with dance. There were also many intentional walking patterns complementing the quick up-beat music, which changed the attitude of *FLUX* from tension into an individual being aware and ready to act upon a stressful situation experienced.

### ***Flow & Release***

The second full cast section, *Flow & Release*, was composed of improvisational tasks provided by imagery. The concept of water, much like Joan Skinner's totality imagery, was used as an inspiration. The movement vocabulary in many parts of this section showcased organic movement from the dancers. One example was dancers with the task of floating the solo dancer above their head while moving her around the dance space. I gave the task to the solo dancer to trust the dancers holding her up by having her eyes closed showing a sign of relaxation and trust. This task was a motif variation of the beginning lift of the solo dancer in *Tension*. There were also many ideas of surrendering to go with the flow, giving a sense of ethereal power. The movement effort in this section was light and indirect to showcase ideas of being liberated.

In *Flow & Release* the slap and push motif further developed into a smooth sway of the body back and forth representing relaxation. When developing this motif into a sway, I was looking to mimic the last video, *Relaxed & Unguarded*, of the solo dancer floating in water to represent a serene and peaceful state of mind. This sway then furthered remained as it continued into the next section, *Ease*. This motif was to show progression of a rigid mood into a compassionate mood assisting the emotional development of *FLUX*. *Flow & Release* was

representative of an implementation of the problem solving from the women's piece. This section displayed an elegant intention to find a place of a pleased well-being state of mind.

### ***Ease***

*Ease* was performed by all men and captured effortlessness, an aesthetic found in Skinner Releasing Technique and Erick Hawkins Modern Dance Technique. Movement in this section contrasted with the heaviness and tension from the beginning. All movement given to the male dancers was based on an image of being blown in the wind, an example of what could be a totality image in Skinner Releasing Technique. The movement vocabulary was strong, seen in difficult partner lifts between the men, juxtaposed with the feminine flow of all rounded shapes. To showcase these ideas, movement in *Ease* had many small jumps, such as multiple sautés and rolls to the floor that traveled in a circular pattern, which I presented to the dancers as skipping stones in water, or as rounded shapes that flowed together with no end. With this movement vocabulary, *Ease*'s intention was about finding serenity and satisfaction in life.

### ***Moving Forward***

*Moving Forward*, was the resolution of a journey in coping based on personal experience replicating ideas of positive well-being and health of a person with a sense of joyfulness. This section represented key components interviewed participants identified such as being free, safe, unguarded, and relaxed. It had a light-hearted intention, but with a sense of grounded type of movement vocabulary to show a satisfied intention. During this final section, dancers drew a picture of a tree. Charcoal was used for the trunk of the tree that represented a foundation of an individual. The green leaves were made from construction paper to show how leaves symbolize

growth as well as how their past make them who they are as a person today. Audience members received a colored leaf in their program. They were asked to participate by drawing or writing a name on it. In the end, dancers asked audience members to place the leaf on the tree. The colored leaves in the end represented support for an individual again, representing the key component of identity as part of a community.

After audience members were assisted back to their seats, the dancers came together to recreate the motif of the lift of the solo dancer above the dancers' heads. This last time, the lift had a sense of freedom to move forward with an appreciation of the past to make an individual who they are today. The solo dancer was left on stage as other dancers stood behind her and left the dance floor one by one. The solo dancer went back to the tree and wrote *FLUX* on the trunk of the tree to give the image that she was etching a memory in the tree. This last gesture of my concert represented the idea that my mother will forever be a part of me.

## **CHOREOGRAPHIC PROCESS**

The process of this concert started with outlining moods and attitudes from my personal experience of a stressful life situation and incorporating key components identified in the research, which served as concepts for each section. From here I gathered dancers who I knew were experienced with quickly working under a tight timeline and would be able to understand tasks given with the responsibility to remember movement created each week. *FLUX* was created in ten four-hour rehearsals in the dance studio along with three technical rehearsals and three dress rehearsals in the xMPL. Each rehearsal was segmented into the sections needing attention. I purposefully left the last section, *Moving Forward*, until the cast and I could use the xMPL due

to audience interaction. I wanted dancers to physically be in the space to understand their orientation with the use of the scenic elements.

In working with the cast, I found dancers who worked well with one another and most of the time could understand the method of choreography I had. Through my process of choreography, I usually teach dancers a phrase of movement I choreographed, then further progress it into variations, which was seen in the duet, *Identity*. Movement was performed by the dancers as it was taught to them, which then I collaborated with the dancers to develop it into partner work.

Another process I used was coming into rehearsal with a visual or image in mind and directed dancers verbally into my ideas, but modify as best for the dancer to perform the movement. In larger groups of dancers, I found a handful of dancers who have not worked with me on a project before *FLUX* needed a few rehearsals to adjust. They were used to being directed to do every movement precisely like the choreographer, whereas I prefer working with dancers on building movement collaboratively. Dancers who worked with me before were helpful to dancers in learning my process by interpreting what I said for their peers. There were a few rehearsals where we choreographed most of a section because the dancers could understand my movement vocabulary in their bodies, which allowed it to flow.

Movement vocabulary through my choreographic process incorporated floor work, unison movement, lifts with a partner or in groups. Throughout the concert, there were many sections of improvisation tasks given to connect the intention of the section. The dancers, of all shapes, sizes, and various dance experience, created their own movements using their own understanding of the vocabulary I provided. It gave dancers the opportunity for freedom in dance, a key component from interviews, to interpret the imagery with their own movement.

Improvisation exercises came with tasks and were inspired by techniques of Ohad Naharin's Gaga or Joan Skinner's Skinner Movement Technique. One improvisational section, *Flow & Release*, was different as all dancers had to work together to hold the solo dancer above their head and replace one another as the solo dancer gave in to the push and pulls of the dancers holding them up.

## REFLECTION

*FLUX* was a reflection my personal stressful life event of my mother passing. With dance I discovered catharsis, tension dissipation, and therapeutic relaxation. My personal aim with this project was to find movement quality that could be a vehicle for expressing my experiences in coping. This choreography process allowed me to gain insight and communicate this research from another perspective.

Through the process of choreographing *FLUX*, I explored many options through trial and error with chalk. The first challenge was with powder chalk. I tried three different variations before I found the type of powder that settled after the dancers improvised with it at the beginning of the concert. Other variations of chalk would linger in the air causing it to settle throughout the xMPL, instead of on the dance space. Some other challenges I faced was chalk rubbing off the brown paper floor when the dancers were moving on it. To address this issue, I made three sections, *Tension*, *Flow & Release*, and *Moving Forward*, chalk intensive to develop the final tree drawing.

If time allowed, I would have incorporated more chalk within dance sections to build the drawing of the tree throughout *FLUX*. There were points in my concert where I had incorporated this idea, and I would have explored further throughout each section adding chalk elements so the tree would almost fully be developed by the last piece. Another aspect of *FLUX* I would have explored more, if I had more time, would have been transitions between each section. I would have edited and developed transitions between each section of dance to further connect emotional aspects in my concert. I appreciated how the transitions developed with the time dancers and I had, but were choreographed later in the process so there could have been more focus on how to connect the concepts of each section.

The most challenging aspect was creating movement that looked different while complimenting each mood and attitude for each section. Collaboration in music, lighting, video, and scenic elements, provided access for audiences to relate *FLUX* to their own lives. *FLUX* was successful in showcasing an abstract story of beginning in a dark, tense mood and attitude into rediscovering joy.

## **CHAPTER 6**

### **DANCING AS A COPING MECHANISM:**

#### **Intersection Between Dance Professionals, Interviewed Participants, & Choreography**

This qualitative study aims to address how dance could be used as a coping mechanism for stressful life events. So far, this body of work has explored previous scientific research in the effects of physical activity in relation to stress and coping. It related stress to dance by exploring dance professionals in modern dance history, as the dance techniques of Joan Skinner, Erick Hawkins, Ohad Naharin, and Anna Halprin were briefly explored. These dance professionals uniquely used imagery, awareness, and mind body connection in their exploration of stressors in relation to dance.

This research study additionally explored personal testimonies through interviews. IRB approved questions revealed ways dance assisted participants through difficult situations in life. By interviewing participants, key components, or common themes, were identified. Pre-professional and professional as well as recreational dancers identified both differing and mutual themes targeting movement as a coping mechanism. Pre-professional and professional dancers interviewed said dance was their future, the reason they make certain choices, and their interest in the unique use of the body. Recreational dancers' commonalities were that participating in dance was different from normal life, a sense of accomplishment, being able to relax and be unguarded, life's savior, and a safe place. Overall, key components from participants of both categories were identity, freedom, and connection. All participants supported dance as advantageous in relation to their lives.

After researching and interviewing, key components were utilized to create the dance concert *FLUX*. Through interviews and research of dance professionals, commonalities were implemented as the concept for each section.

This chapter bridges each part of the research to find points of intersection. These intersections validate dance as a coping mechanism contributing to an individual's well-being. Each intersection showcases how dance assists in personal growth from stressful life events.

## **IDENTITY**

The first intersection is identity. Identity might be how one places themselves in social groups or how one perceives themselves. According to the social identity theory and identity theory, the concept of identity is “the self is reflexive in that it can take itself as an object and can categorize, classify, or name itself in particular ways in relation to social categories or classifications” (Stets and Burke 224). Social identity theory is the association within a group, while identity theory is the “self as an occupant in a role” (Stets and Burke 224). Dance professionals used awareness to create identity by generating consciousness of the relationship between an individual's surroundings and self in an environment. Awareness could contribute to the perception in how one identifies themselves in the world. Participants in interviews described both ways of relating to social identity theory and identity theory, such as being part of a community, using dance as a label, finding one's self in dance, or as a role played. These concepts of identity are how interviewed participants relate to dance to support them during stressful life events.



## Identity as Part of a Community

The first form of identity is a common association in a community. Interviewed participants enjoyed the camaraderie created with others who took the same dance classes. A sense of community within the group provided a safe environment allowing participants to let go of attitudes/life stressors and focus on dancing. This in turn allowed for participants to bond/connect through dancing, a shared common experience. A community encourages acceptance in one's self because of acceptance from others. For example, as described in Chapter 2, in the study done with Korean middle-aged women, identity surfaced as they expressed their experience of line dancing as a "road to myself" (Kim and Lee 4). Identity was found within the group of women who share common situations separately at home and dancing together. Participants were middle-aged women whose children have grown and often spent their days alone. Dancing brought these women, who have similar situations, together to share a common physical activity as well as opening an outlet to share their home life situation. Overall, they were also able to form a social community in dance. By comparing this study to interviewed participants, coping is found in the community formed by dance as a support system for stress. Commonalities with individuals are found in dance creating a bond for emotional support with personal stress.

Within my choreography process of *FLUX*, I explored the concept of community with dancers. In the section titled *Support*, movement was lifting and partner-work to signify encouragement for one another to build a community, or support system. The section titled *Flow & Release* also exemplified community. The flow of movement was through breath to initiate the next section of movement. This section was not set to any musical counts or cues, but rather,

breathing together to create the dancers' own rhythm and guide one another to stay connected. All movements relied on each dancer to lead movements.

Outside movement choreography, a sense of community was created in rehearsals. In each rehearsal, dancers had to work together to create an environment where they had a willingness to collaborate with myself, the choreographer, and other dancers to form a sense of community. Through my instructions and movement visualizations, dancers experienced and practiced creative dance-making and problem solving together.

### **Identity of Oneself**

Identity in personal artistic movement choices could show characteristics of an individual. For example, in Gaga and Skinner Releasing Technique, movement research with improvisational exercises can allow a dancer to discover new pathways of movement and think outside of their habits. This leads to using a person's unique and special personality to identify themselves through movement. This could relate to identity as a distinction of one's self in movement. By understanding identity of one's self in movement, an individual can find harmony within themselves. In this case of identity, art can be an expression and outlet for negative moods or a place to find one's self in movement. One example is a study of adolescent girls with dance as an intervention for internalizing problems like "somatic symptoms and mental health problems" including headaches, stomach aches, stress, anxiety, or nervousness (Duberg et al. 1). Embodiment of dance was used to allow participants to "claim space" (Duberg et al. 6). Taking up more space provided a "powerful feeling of dance as an energizing and vivid experience" (Duberg et al. 7). The energy and connection stated by the adolescent girls, and interviewed recreational dancers, could also be part of identity by instilling confidence as a defining

characteristic of their personality. It was a boost in morale to trust themselves in stressful situations.

Individuals could also express themselves in dance, which could be a form of venting to another individual about a situation. Participant 3 explained dance was easier than speaking. Dancing was their way of communicating to articulate emotions. In a questionnaire study conducted with non-professional dancers with dance experience, dancing was a means for improvement in participants' emotional state such as expressing "true character" (Murcia et al. 155). Dance could be considered a form of expression often reflecting personal emotions and experiences.

Anna Halprin embraced confidence and expression of negative moods through her psychokinetic visualization technique. By drawing life-size self-portraits, a dancer can use this tool to find their identity. Their moods and attitudes are showcased in a drawing, which is then translated into movement. The movement is the reaction of their drawings that bring about realizations, thus opening possibilities for an individual while creating self-reliance. These realizations reveal what is occurring in an individual's stressful life event. The improvisation explores different avenues through the body to find a clear pathway to visualize possibilities in approaching their stressful life event.

In the second piece of *FLUX*, identity was explored with the use of mirroring, where two dancers mimic one another's movement at the same time. This duet, *Identity*, showed the idea of looking at oneself and evaluating one's past, present, and future. This mirroring choreography tactic was to show an individual in reflection of who they are as a person, how to manage stress, and an approach of one finding themselves. It was to represent internal thoughts of a person reflecting on their life in trying to problem-solve a stressful life-event.

## **Identity as Role-Playing**

The last form of identity is linked to dance by participants was allowing the opportunity to play a different role. An individual could forget who they are while portraying a character not normally themselves. Role-playing is different from how they perceive themselves, creating an escape from reality. One participant said they enjoyed dancing other roles because it entertained others. Role-playing could create a light heartedness towards their stressful issue and find amusement in the extremity of an issue. A change in role could cause laughter and light humor. Laughter creates “change in one’s attitude toward sickness, conflict, and pain” (Weisman 40-41). The idea of being something other than yourself, or being placed in a different location, an individual can use their senses to be creative.

Role-playing is a link into imagery such as Joan Skinner’s totality and specific imagery techniques. One could imagine being submerged in water as a totality image, or specific image like moving oneself as if the body of water. Imagery, discussed further below, could take a person out of their current state of mind to embrace a different character.

Identity through role-playing, community, and distinction of one’s self allows for acceptance and liberation. These qualities could break the chain of tension while experiencing stressful life events. After dancing, an individual might discover possible new approaches to their situation. Identity found in dance explores new territory with the body and mind, which could trigger consciousness for a person to consider an approach to a situation from another perspective. An individual can be displaced from stress with a sense of new excitement to approach life.

## **IMAGERY**

Imagery is a tool dance professionals in this study use in their pedagogy. The use of imagery acts as a language for students in understanding movement qualities while bettering communication between student and instructor (Hanrahan and Salmela 18). Imagery could be a memory recalled, causing a student to use their mind to direct their body. Imagery could be a way to mentally picture one's self going through the motions and successfully executing them in dance, or in handling a stressful life event. Embodiment of imagery could create expressiveness in individuals to produce a sense of freedom.

### **Embodiment in Imagery**

Embodiment of imagery is used to teach specific movements or improvisation exercises. It requires students to use their knowledge, as well as memory, of what might be sensed while, for example, floating in a pool. Dance professional, Joan Skinner's Release Technique used a totality image example of floating in a pool, as explained in role-playing, is relatable to most individuals, but each student's interpretation to bring this into the dance studio with movement is different. Embodiment through an image affects movement choices. Skinner Release Technique is about freedom through imagery while finding a sense of self (Skinner et al.). Embodiment creates an open mind through imagery by dictating movement which could lead to subtle changes in the body's connections one's relationship in the world and to others.

Embodiment can translate to coping by bringing new ways of approaching a situation. Through embodying a new topic, mood, or concept, an individual can explore new territory. An experience in the consciousness from imagery in dancing can translate into reality. "Experiences during a physical activity like dance can be complex and can include subtle changes in bodily

connections, perceptions of the self within... emotional aspects” (Duberg et al. 2). Embodiment of dance can better prepare a person through finding trust and acceptance within themselves, which is carried outside the dance space.

Embodiment developed in Ohad Naharin’s Gaga movement language relies on imagery. It is layered through detailed instructions with the purpose of bringing awareness in a multi-sensory experience (Gaga People). Imagery is used to express heavy sentiments within the body, then physicalized through improvisation. Improvisation could “capture and embed all aspects of embodiment as it is an intellectual, emotional, and physical mediator for understanding our bodily way of being-in the world” (Duberg et al. 2). Improvisation requires quick decisions from one movement to the next with the ability to adapt in different scenarios. This quick spontaneous response helps to promote problem solving with rationality during unforeseen events. Spontaneity allows a dancer to add artistry into movement, but maintain control by being aware of guidelines within movement. In coping, the quick changes of the body and mind through imagery prepares the body for a possible situation that may arise. It is being ready to interpret and react in the world.

### **Freedom in Imagery**

Embodying an image could lead to freedom by releasing tension in the body creating fluidity in movement and release of the mind. Freedom was found in dance by interviewed participants as a means to let go of stressful issues by channeling negative tension into movement. It suggests self-mastery and accomplishment by allowing participants to react in their own way. Participants explained dance provided self-assurance in preparation to attack a situation and empowerment through ownership of what actions need to be addressed.

Empowerment in imagery could be through freedom to make choices as to how an individual might move their body in their own way. Empowerment in the dance studio could promote confidence and strength of an individual to find freedom while maintaining control of their situation (Duberg et al. 6). For dance professionals, freedom found in imagery was used to move naturally without force. Skinner Release Technique and Erick Hawkins Modern Technique strive for tension released to move with ease. For Erick Hawkins, his tassel image is used to create effortlessness while performing movement showing an effortless quality.

Imagery through my choreographic concert, *FLUX*, was used in many forms throughout the concert. The first with use of chalk to draw an image on the floor as a personal interpretation of Anna Halprin's Psychokinetic Visualization. One specific example would be a circle drawn in the beginning to represent confinement. Another use of imagery within my choreography, as explained in Chapter 5, was powder chalk improvised by dancers rubbing it into their arms and legs symbolizing internal impact of stress. The lingering color of powdered chalk was a visual for audiences to relate with dark edgy emotions portrayed. Lastly, visual imagery in the video component was found in the framed photo of my mother. The consistent single shot of my mother's frame symbolized memories specific to her and provided a motif to the abstract story.

Imagery used when presenting my choreography to the dancers was like a game. In *Tension*, the first section of my choreography, I presented the handling of chalk as the idea of something precious crumbling. I told the dancers to rub the chalk on their bodies to leave a residue. Chalk represented a cherished relationship that was fleeting away. As the chalk crumbled dancers were trying to piece it back together before it fell apart. I presented the emotion of being frustrated because "life" was not going their way, but handling the chalk with care so "life" could still be in their control. In the section titled *Support*, dancers were seen

performing partner work that was intertwined and web-like, which eventually would break free as a progression from a situation being complex to decongested. In another section, *Flow*, there was structured improvisation based on imagery such as floating in water as my interpretation of Joan Skinner's totality imagery.

## **AWARENESS AND MIND BODY CONNECTION**

Awareness, a key component of dance professionals, required dancers to connect their mind and body to understand one's placement in an environment. Awareness is a way for an individual to move forward from stress in their lives and find intention for future actions. Dancing "promote(s) greater body awareness, focus, and concentration, sensitivity to personal and social space, all of which serve to enhance subjective well-being in terms of managing emotions, self-esteem, awareness and respect for others and skills in communication, cooperation and building trust" (Atkinson and Scott 5). These qualities through dance relate to how a person could react toward a stressful life event. Interviewed participants found dance was a way for them to prepare for handling unpredictable and difficult stress in their lives. Joan Skinner states "awareness is the first step toward change." Change is determined by the mindfulness of how to adapt to unpredicted situations. An individual who practices awareness is observant in recognizing factors in a situation to regulate one's self through life when change occurs.

### **Awareness to Move Forward**

Mind body connection from awareness gently directs a person to move forward. Positive reinforcement of dancing allows a person to train their mind for success through movement. Participant 5 detailed how in a class they must quickly perform choreography by using their



mind to remember movement to perform movement with their body. They described their experience as discovering “self-mindfulness,” “control,” and “preparation to think” about life issues. They could visualize the next movement and be aware of how to move their body. Participant 5 discovered overcoming stress was possible because the process of picking up choreography required them to arrange their mind and body to visualize an approach to the situation in front of them. In Gaga, Ohad Naharin uses images for mind body connection to visualize the Gaga term “float” between images. “Float” acts as a home base after movement research in other Gaga terms. Dancers can return to “float” by bring themselves back to a clean mind to visualize a new approach to a movement concept. The preparation in movement of dance can convert into reality. “Dance is a mind body experience that increases blood supply to the brain, provides an outlet for releasing emotional expression, allows for creativity, and the socialization aspect lowers stress depression and loneliness” (Alpert 156). Awareness and mind body connection draws new observations and analysis in movement. Dance can be a method in coping because awareness prepares the mind for future situations.

In *FLUX*, as explained in Chapter 5, was the women’s section titled *Awareness to Act*, which was created to represent many scenarios or thoughts a person may have of where to go after a stressful life situation. The use of chalk in movement phrases represented the brainstorming of ideas and the multiple choices while coping to stress. There was an awareness within the dancers to then act on what may seem best for a situation.

### **Awareness Requires Organization**

Interviewed participants found dancing gave them a sense of accomplishment, as well as gained self-worth, while appreciating dance provided a safe place to let go. This attitude could be

from awareness and mind body connection dance professionals require in their movement technique. As discovered earlier, dance professionals require awareness through mind body connection. An aware individual could find concentration to “sustain attention, leaving worries, fears, and other threats outside the narrow scope” of a single activity such as dance (Divine 46). Awareness internally could bring organization of the mind body to focus on, think about, or engage in experiencing dance.

Organization within the body is found through awareness. Erick Hawkins and Joan Skinner necessitate release of tension in the body, promoting an efficient and proper way to kinesthetically perform movement. One example of awareness through dance is Erick Hawkins’ tassel image. A dancer can experiment themselves with movement initiated from the center of gravity and spine. Thinking of movement anatomically brings a sense of responsiveness to be organized to perform the movement efficiently. Another example is Joan Skinner who mentions that imagery allows a person to understand the relationship of body and mind (Skinner et al.). Imagery, although discussed earlier, could assist students also find organization between the physicality of dance and mind through visualization. Both imagery approaches help the body find focus in the mind to organize intentional movement.

Dance, as an active lifestyle, could assist an individual understand how to use their body safely, efficiently, and dynamically. The physicality of dance increases concentration and finds organization within the mind to perform movement. Awareness requiring organization could be beneficial for pre-professional and professional interviewed dance participants who see dance as their future and are interested in the unique use of their body. Awareness might prolong their careers if they understand how to organize their mind to implement a proper use of their body

kinesthetically. They could eliminate tension in performing movement with awareness possibly diminishing risk of injury.

## **CONCLUSION: A TRANSFORMATION**

Dance as a coping mechanism, in relation to a stressful life event, depends on the motivation and understanding of dance in an individual's life. Dance was found as enjoyable for participants in this study as indicated by their continuation of dance practice in their current lifestyle. Their preference to dance was because it was always consistent and never failed them when it came to needing a place to discharge. It produced a positive mentality with preparation to approach life changes and choices in a healthy manner. Other ways dance created a healthy coping mechanism was in finding self-assurance, confidence, and a sense of empowerment. This is seen through indicated key components that enhance a wholesome lifestyle of interviewed participants.

The effectiveness of dance as a coping mechanism relates to the multitude of benefits dance could offer. Dancing supports what an individual may be experiencing in life such as providing an individual with a method to express themselves, a sense of self-mastery, and a place to escape. Within the practice of dance, dance professionals' methods are foundational to why movement could resonate with dancers as a coping mechanism. By presenting movement with imagery, awareness is generated to engage in movement that could possibly prepare a person for a stressful situation.

Beside internal benefits, such as self-mastery, control, and accomplishment, for an individual with dance, there is a sense of community present. This community provides a unique relationship through sharing space together leading to a comradery with others. As per

Participant 5, relationships built in dance and based on the understanding of experiencing how dance transcends a person from a stressful state of mind to being relaxed and unguarded.

This research study meets the aims of identifying key components in how dance could be used as a coping mechanism while promoting a better quality of life and happiness. The willingness and acceptance of a stressful life event makes dance as a coping strategy effective. This is a brief insight in investigating how and why dance could be a positive activity for life, especially during stress.

## **LIMITATIONS & FUTURE RESEARCH**

Within this study lies a few limitations regarding demographics such as less men than women and the age range was dominant toward twenty-year-old interviewed participants. The pool was limited to only University of California, Irvine in the pre-professional and professional participant category, and did not explore other professionals elsewhere. Also, most of the dance forms of those interviewed were modern, jazz, and ballet.

To further this study, other dance forms, such as ballroom or hip-hop, could be investigated. Future research could also be a comparison of dance to other forms of movement like sports or other art forms such as music. A larger pool of participants with wider demographics can also validate the key components discovered in this study to gain a better understanding of dance as a coping mechanism.

## **DANCE TO HEAL**

The act of dancing, as supported by previous research, leads to an individual obtaining many beneficial skills. These benefits could be knowledge applicable to other parts of life. Dance

as a coping mechanism supports the well-being of an individual. This study suggests that dance allows a person to be prepared to move forward and past hardships while being mentally flexible before or after a stressful life event occurs. Dance is a positive coping mechanism that harmonizes an individual to be aware of their environment, organize their thoughts, and makes them conscious of many possible outcomes.

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## APPENDIX A

### HOLMES-RAHE LIFE STRESS INVENTORY

#### The Holmes-Rahe Life Stress Inventory The Social Readjustment Rating Scale

**INSTRUCTIONS:** Mark down the point value of each of these life events that has happened to you during the previous year. Total these associated pointed.

Life Event	
1. Death of spouse	100
2. Divorce	73
3. Marital Separation from mate	65
4. Detention in jail or other institution	63
5. Death of a close family member	63
6. Major personal injury or illness	53
7. Marriage	50
8. Being fired at work	47
9. Marital reconciliation with mate	45
10. Retirement from work	45
11. Major change in the health or behavior of a family member	44
12. Pregnancy	40
13. Sexual Difficulties	39
14. Gaining a new family member (i.e. birth, adoption, older adult moving in, etc.)	39
15. Major business adjustment	39
16. Major change in financial state (i.e. a lot worse or better than usual)	38
17. Death of a close friend	37
18. Changing to a different line of work	36
19. Major change in number of arguments with spouse (i.e. a lot more or less)	35
20. Taking on a mortgage (for home, business, etc.)	31
21. Foreclosure on a mortgage or loan	30
22. Major change in responsibilities at work (i.e. promotion, demotion, etc.)	29
23. Son or daughter leaving home (marriage, college, military, etc.)	29
24. In-law troubles	29
25. Outstanding personal achievement	28
26. Spouse beginning or ceasing work outside the home	26
27. Beginning or ceasing formal schooling	26
28. Major change in living condition (i.e. new home, remodeling, deterioration, etc.)	25
29. Revision of personal habits (i.e. dress, associations, quit smoking, etc.)	24
30. Troubles with the boss	23
31. Major changes in working hours or conditions	20
32. Changes in residence	20
33. Changing to a new school	20
34. Major change in usual type and/or amount of recreation	19
35. Major change in church activity (i.e. a lot more or less)	19
36. Major change in social activities (i.e. clubs, movies, visiting, etc.)	18
37. Taking on a loan (i.e. car, tv, freezer, etc.)	17
38. Major change in sleeping habits (i.e. a lot more or less)	16
39. Major change in number of family get-togethers (i.e. a lot more or less)	15
40. Major change in eating habits (i.e. a lot more or less, eating hours, surroundings, etc)	15
41. Vacation	13
42. Major holidays	12
43. Minor violations of the law (i.e. traffic tickets, jaywalking, etc.)	11

**Now, add up all the points you have to find your score.**

**150pts or less** means a relatively low amount of life change and a low susceptibility to stress-induce health problems.

**150 to 300pts** implies about a 50% chance of a major stress-induced health problem in the next 2 years.

**300pts or more** raises the odds to about 80%, according to the Holmes-Rahe prediction model.

Sources: Adapted from Thomas Holmes and Richard Rahe. Holmes-Rahe Social Readjustment Rating Scale, *Journal of Psychosomatic Research*. Vol II, 1967.

## APPENDIX B

### IRB PROTOCOL NARRATIVE



Institutional Review Board  
Human Research Protections  
Protocol Narrative ~ Expedited/Full Committee  
Social/Behavioral/Educational Research  
Version September 2015

Upload this completed narrative and any supplemental documentation to the <a href="#">IRB Application</a> .	<b>IRB USE ONLY –</b> <b>HS#: 2016-2893</b>
<b>Lead Researcher Name:</b> Francesca Lee	
<b>Study Title:</b> <i>Dance to Change, Dance to Heal</i>	

#### **ABSTRACT**

Provide a non-technical summary of the proposed research that can be understood by IRB members with varied research backgrounds, including non-scientists and community members. The summary should include a brief statement of the **purpose of the research** and a brief description of the **procedure(s)**. *This summary should not exceed more than 250 words.*

My thesis will investigate dance as a therapeutic coping mechanism used by those affected by stressful life events causing change. A coping mechanism will serve as the method external and/or internal stress is managed. According to the American Institute of Stress, a familiar definition of stress is “a condition or feeling experienced when a person perceives that demands exceed the personal and social resources the individual is able to mobilize.” With this meaning, stressful life events will consist of, but not limited to, bereavement in losing a friend or loved one, violence, physical injury, change in career, moving to a new environment, and accidents. The proposed research project aims to find how the general public and dancers integrate movement to relieve stress and adjust to life change.

I will research ways dance professionals use key components in the act of dancing as a coping mechanism. I will look at historical dance makers who utilized dance to surpass hardship such as Anna Halprin, Martha Graham, José Limón, Bill T. Jones, Ohad Naharin, and Eugene Louis “Luigi” Faccuito. Analyzing their techniques of teaching and choreography will allow me to find common themes such as imagery and self-talk.

I will interview, with IRB approved questions, up to six people of the general public and dancers who use dance as a coping mechanism. All research participants will complete a consent form so I may use the material in my thesis writing and choreography.

## **SECTION 1: BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RESEARCH**

1. Provide the scientific or scholarly **rationale** for the research. Describe the relevant background information and the specific gaps in current knowledge that this study intends to address.

The rationale for this qualitative study is to listen to dancers in how they utilize dance, specifically as a coping mechanism for stressful life events. This research strives to use information about dance as a coping mechanism toward contributing to general pedagogy and choreography, which may change an individual's wellness. By describing the utility of dance, this research strives to align dance as a coping mechanism to my preference as a choreographer and teacher. It also furthers the discussion of the value of dance as it affects a person to overcome life's challenges. The purpose of this study is to existing body of knowledge in pedagogy and choreographic process by focusing on an individual's body and mind for wellness during a stressful time. This research will aid in the writing for my thesis for the Master's Degree in Fine Arts in Dance.

2. Describe the **purpose, specific aims or objectives**. Specify the hypotheses or research questions to be studied.

- What key components in the act of dancing help a non-dancer cope?
- What key components in the act of dancing help a dancer cope?
- In what ways have dance professionals utilized the act of dancing as a coping mechanism?
- How might choreography reflect commons themes emerging from dancers and non-dancers' key components, and if themes emerge, how might tools from dance professionals be incorporated?

3. List up to **ten relevant references/articles** to support the rationale for the research.

1. Doidge, Norman. *The Brain's Way of Healing*. New York: Penguin Group, 2015. Print.
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9. Nieman, David C. *The Exercise-Health Connection*. Champaign: Human Kinetics, 1998. Print.
10. Worth, Libby and Helen Poynor. *Anna Halprin*. New York: Routledge, 2004. Print.

## SECTION 2: ROLES AND EXPERTISE OF THE STUDY TEAM

**Complete the table below (LR: Lead Researcher, FS: Faculty Sponsor, CR: Co-Researcher, RP: Research Personnel). Indicate whether the study team member will be involved in the following research activities.**

**Note:** Personnel who are not interacting with participants for research purposes and/or who do not have access to identifiable private information about the research participants (e.g., statisticians) are not engaged in human-subjects research and therefore should not be listed below.

If there is a Faculty Sponsor, s/he **must be** listed below (even if s/he is not engaged in human-subjects research), as s/he must be identified to provide oversight and guidance to the Lead Researcher.

Name	Role	List Department, Title, & Degrees. Include UCI Affiliation - Faculty / Staff, Grad- or Under-Student	Recruitment	Informed Consent Process	Interact with Participants	Access Participant Identifiable Data?	Analyze Participant Identifiable Data?
Francesca Lee	LR	Dance Graduate	Yes / No	Yes / No	Yes / No	Yes / No	Yes / No
Kelli Sharp	FS	Dance, Faculty	Yes / No	Yes / No	Yes / No	Yes / No	Yes / No

<p><b>Certificate of Confidentiality:</b> Specify whether a <a href="#">Certificate of Confidentiality (COC)</a> has been or will be requested from the National Institutes of Health (NIH). If yes, explain in what situations personally identifiable information protected by a COC will be disclosed by the UCI study team.</p> <p><i><b>Note:</b> If the COC has been secured, provide a copy of the COC Approval Letter with your IRB application or provide it to the IRB upon receipt.</i></p>
<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Not applicable – No COC has been requested for this study.</p>

*there is a necessity to use portable devices for initial collection of identifiable private information, the portable storage devices or the research files **MUST BE ENCRYPTED**, and identifiers transferred to a secure system as soon as possible.*

☐ Not applicable – No study data will be maintained on portable devices.

**OR**

Interview audio will be recorded on an audio recording device (Sony Digital Audio Voice Recorder ICD-Ux533) and stored on a personal password locked laptop computer.

**Data Retention:**

8. Explain **how long participant identifiers** will be **retained**. This includes the key code linking the data to the participants.

***Note:** If more than one of the options below is applicable [e.g., the study involves children], records should be kept for the longer period.*

☐ Not applicable. No identifiers are retained.

☐ Destroy once its purposes has been served (e.g., for recruitment, after compensation granted)

☐ Destroy once data collection/analysis is complete.

☒ Destroy after publication/presentation.

☐ Maintain for approximately\_\_ years (e.g., 3 months, etc.)

☐ Maintain indefinitely. Other researchers may have access to de-identified data for future research.

Note: **Appendix M is required if identifiable data will be shared with non-UCI Researchers.**

☐ Identifiable research records will be retained for seven years after all children enrolled in the study reach the age of majority [age 18 in California] as this study includes children.

☐ Other:

**Data Destruction of Recordings / Photographs:** If subject identifiable audio or video recordings or photographs will be collected, specify the timeframe for the transcription and describe retention / destruction plans.

☐ Not applicable – No audio/video recordings or photographs will be collected.

☐ Audio or video recordings transcribed and de-identified; specify time frame: [<Type here>](#)

☒ Audio or video recordings maintained with identifiers; specify time frame: [From time of interview until September 2017](#)

☐ Audio or video recordings destroyed; specify time frame: [<Type here>](#)

☐ Photographs maintained with identifiers; specify time frame: [<Type here>](#)

☐ Photographs destroyed; specify time frame: [<Type here>](#)



<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Names	<input type="checkbox"/> Social Security Numbers	<input type="checkbox"/> Device identifiers/Serial numbers
<input type="checkbox"/> Dates*	<input type="checkbox"/> Medical record numbers	<input type="checkbox"/> Web URLs
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Postal address	<input type="checkbox"/> Health plan numbers	<input type="checkbox"/> IP address numbers
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Phone numbers	<input type="checkbox"/> Account numbers	<input type="checkbox"/> Biometric identifiers
<input type="checkbox"/> Fax numbers	<input type="checkbox"/> License/Certificate numbers	<input type="checkbox"/> Facial Photos/Images
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Email address	<input type="checkbox"/> Vehicle id numbers	<input type="checkbox"/> Any other unique identifier

☐ Other (Specify all): [<Type here>](#)

\* birth date, treatment/hospitalization dates

---

2. Indicate **how identifiable data will be recorded, stored, secured.**

*Note: If the research data includes identifiable private information the storage devices or the electronic research files must be encrypted. [For guidance on the use of cloud services, please review the [UCI OIT policy](#).]*

---

☐ No identifiers will be maintained

☐ Biological specimens

☐ Other(s) (specify): [<Type here>](#)

**Electronic Data (check all that apply):**

☐ Coded data; code key is kept separate from data in secure location.

☐ Data includes identifiable information. *Note: Encryption software is required.* Provide rationale for maintaining identifiable info: [<Type here>](#)

☐ Data will be stored on secure network server.

☐ Data will be stored on stand-alone desktop computer (not connected to network/internet)

☐ Data will be stored in the cloud (specify source providing service):

☒ Other (specify here): [Data will be stored in a password-protected laptop computer.](#)

**Hardcopy Data, Recordings and Biospecimens (check all that apply):**

☐ Coded data; code key is kept separate from data in secure location.

☐ Data includes identifiable information. Provide rationale for maintaining identifiable info: [<Type here>](#)

☒ Data will be stored in locked file cabinet or locked room at UCI/UCIMC.

☐ Data will be stored locked lab/refrigerator/freezer at UCI/UCIMC.

☐ Other (specify here): [<Type here>](#)

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**Data on Portable Devices:**

- Specify whether participant **identifiable data** will be stored on the device. If so, **explain why** it is necessary to store identifiers on the device.
- Describe the **portable device(s) to be used** (e.g. audio/video recording device, tapes, cameras, mobile phones / iPhone, laptop, tablet, portable hard drive including USB flash drives).
- Explain how long the identifiable data will be maintained on the portable device.

*Note: Only the "minimum data necessary" should be stored on portable devices as these devices are particularly susceptible to loss or theft, thus creating a source for potential breach of confidentiality. If*

The benefits of this study to society are the potential ways to possibly boost quality of life through dance. Interviewees will provide data that will identify what key components in how the act of dancing serves as a coping mechanism. Information will inspire other educators and choreographers in how dance is presented, taught, and used to manage stressful life situations. This will be implemented into my choreographic thesis.

#### **SECTION 8: PARTICIPANT COMPENSATION AND REIMBURSEMENT**

1. If participants will be compensated (e.g., money, extra credit, etc.) for their time and effort, indicate the method/type (i.e., cash, check, gift certificate, etc.) and **exact amount**.
2. Indicate **when** compensation be provided (e.g., directly after participating in the interview, within two weeks) **and how** it will be provided (e.g., in person, by mail, emailed an electronic gift card code)?
3. Compensation should be offered on a **prorated basis** when the procedures involve multiple sessions. Provide a **breakdown of the amount, specifying for which exact procedure it pertains, and the total amount** that may be given.
4. Specify whether subjects will be reimbursed for out-of-pocket expenses (i.e., parking fees, transportation, etc.). If so, describe any requirements for reimbursement (e.g., receipt).

☐ Not applicable - This study involves no interaction/intervention with participants (i.e., involves the use of data, records, charts, specimens).

☒ No compensation will be provided to participants.

☒ No reimbursement will be provided to participants.

**OR**

#### **SECTION 9: CONFIDENTIALITY OF RESEARCH DATA**

1. Will researchers maintain any participant identifiers? Check all that apply:

☐ Participant identifiers are not maintained (i.e., researchers will not collect information that can link the participant to their data)

**OR**

Names, contact information, and voice recordings will be collected only with participant permission. Data from interviews will be organized with appropriate identifiable information to be able to contact each person in the future, in case more questions arise or clarifications are needed, as well as to send a thank you card and my final thesis paper to them. My research and purpose for interviewing these specific interviewees is for their ability to provide pertinent, information-rich data about their personal experiences and opinions. I will keep each interviewee's contact info kept separate from data collected in password-protected computer.



**IMPORTANT TIME SAVER: PLEASE ATTACH ALL MEASURES FOR REVIEW. APPLICATIONS ARE INCOMPLETE AND WILL NOT BE REVIEWED UNLESS MEASURES ARE PROVIDED.**

## **SECTION 7: RISK ASSESSMENT AND POSSIBLE BENEFITS**

### **A. Level of Risk**

Place an "X" in the bracket [ ] next to the level of review (based upon the investigator's risk assessment).

[ ] This study involves **greater than minimal risk** and requires **Full Committee review**.

[X] This study involves **no more than minimal risk** and qualifies as [Expedited research](#).

### **B. Risks and Discomforts**

1. Describe the **risks/potential discomforts** (e.g., emotional reaction from personal or sensitive information included in surveys, interviews, focus group, etc.; embarrassment or stigma; invasion of privacy) associated with **each** intervention or research procedure.

[Specific stressful life events will be asked about during the interview therefore emotions and sensitive information will be disclosed.](#)

[X] **This study involves the collection of participant identifiable data** (even if temporary such as for recruitment or compensation purposes), and as such, a breach of confidentiality is a risk associated with the research.

2. Discuss what steps have been taken and/or will be taken **minimize and prevent** any risks/potential discomforts described above.

[The audio/video of interviews will be kept locked on a password-protected laptop stored in a locked cabinet. I will inform the research participants the nature of research questions prior to consent. I have also developed a list of interview questions to help guide the conversation in a positive path.](#)

### **C. Potential Benefits**


Discuss the potential benefits directly **to the participant and to society**. **Compensation (i.e., gift cards, cash, course credit, etc.) is not a benefit.**

[X] There is no direct benefit anticipated for the participant.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>b. Indicate how much <b>time will be required of the participant</b>, per visit and in total for the study.</li> <li>c. If a procedure will be completed more than once (e.g., multiple visits, pre and post survey), indicate <b>how many times</b> and the <b>time span</b> between administrations.</li> <li>d. If a procedure will occur via a crowdsourcing Internet marketplace (e.g., AMT) or in the cloud (e.g., Google Docs), please describe.</li> <li>e. Indicate if study procedures include collecting <b>photographs</b> or <b>audio/video recording</b>.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A. This is a qualitative study</li> <li>B. This will be a one time up to one-hour interview face-to-face at a location convenient for the participant, Skype, or over the phone with each participant</li> <li>C. N/A</li> <li>D. N/A</li> <li>E. Only with Participant consent, there will be optional <b>audio recording with a Sony ICD-UX533 digital voice recorder</b> during the interview process.</li> </ul>
<p><b>2. Off-Site Research –</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. See <a href="#">Guidance for Letter(s) of Permission</a></li> <li>b. See <a href="#">Template Letter of Permission</a></li> </ul>
<p>[ ] Check here to confirm <a href="#">Letter(s) of Permission</a> has been / will be obtained and kept on file.</p>

## B. Measures / Data Sources

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. List the measures that will be administered or data sources that will be accessed.</li> <li>2. Submit <b>data collection instruments</b> (e.g., data abstraction sheet listing the variables that will be collected/analyzed for records reviews, measures, questionnaires, list of interview or focus group questions, observational tool, etc.).</li> </ul>
<p>1. I will be conducting interviews in relation to dance and coping.</p> <p>2. Data Collection Instruments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Sony Digital Audio Recording Device (ICD-UX533) will be used.</li> <li>2. Final Open ended Interview Questions with professional and recreational dancers:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- What is the history of dance in your life?</li> <li>- What makes dance unique in your life?</li> <li>- What role does dance hold in your life?</li> <li>- What drives you to movement and dance?</li> <li>- Has there been a stressful time in your life? If so, could you please describe?</li> <li>- During this time, how did you cope with the stress?</li> <li>- Has dance benefitted your life in any way, shape or form?</li> <li>- How might dance influence your lifestyle and choices?</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

<p>4. <b>Children / Minors:</b> If children (anyone less than 18 years old) are participants, please describe the <b>parent / legal guardian permission</b> process and the <b>child assent</b> process.</p>
<p>5. <b>Deception:</b> If <b>deception</b> is involved, describe the process by which participants will be informed of the true nature of the study after participation has been completed. Please attach a '<a href="#">Debriefing Script</a>.'</p> <p> <i>Complete Appendices G (Deception) and O (Alteration of Consent).</i></p>
<p>6. <b>Release Form:</b> If publications and/or presentations will include <b>identifiable information</b>, specify how the study team will obtain permission from participants. Please submit a '<a href="#">Release Form</a>'</p> <p>1. <a href="#">The research participants will be verbally asked if their identifiable information will allowed to be used in the study.</a></p> <p>2. <a href="#">A Release Form will be presented at the time of a consent form</a></p>
<p>7. <b>Non-English Speaking Participants:</b> In order to consent participants who are unable to communicate (i.e., read, write, and/or speak) in English, the English version of the consent form must be translated into appropriate language(s) once IRB approval is granted. Please specify in 'Section 2. Study Team' who will be responsible for interacting with non-English speaking participants.</p>
<p><b>Check all that apply:</b></p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>[X]</b> Not applicable - Only individuals who can read and speak English are eligible for this study.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> <b>[ ]</b> The English version of the consent form will be translated into appropriate languages for non-English speaking participants once IRB approval is granted. An interpreter will be involved in the consenting process. <i><b>Note:</b> After IRB Approval, distribute to participants the version of the document with the IRB-approval information in the footer.</i></p>

## **SECTION 6: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY/STUDY PROCEDURES**

### **A. Study Design and Procedures**

<p>1. Provide a <b>description of the proposed research</b> (e.g., pilot testing, screening, intervention/interaction/data collection, and follow-up) and <b>procedures</b> (e.g., surveys, interview, focus group, and observation). See <a href="#">Guidance for Online Research</a>.</p> <p>a. Include an explanation of the study design (e.g., randomization, cross-sectional, longitudinal, etc.).</p>
--

## SECTION 5: INFORMED CONSENT PROCESS

1. **Submit the Consent, Study Info Sheet, Courtesy Letter, Assent document(s).** *Note: After IRB Approval, distribute to participants the version of the document with the IRB-approval information in the footer.*
2. Describe the specific **steps for obtaining consent.** See [Guidance for Consenting Process](#).

Check all that apply:

☐ **Written / Signed informed consent will be obtained.**



*Customize the Consent for SBE Research.*

☒ **Oral / Implied informed consent will be obtained (i.e., requesting a waiver from obtaining signed informed consent).**



*Customize the [Study Information Sheet](#) and Complete Appendix P.*

*Note: If obtaining consent online (e.g., research involves completing a survey electronically administered via AMT, EEE, etc.), participants should:*

- *View the Consent/Study Info Sheet prior to participation*
- *Be prompted to verify they meet the eligibility criteria, and*
- *Indicate their willingness to participate in the research (e.g., click "Yes").*

☐ **Informed consent will NOT be obtained (i.e., requesting a *complete* waiver of informed consent). No contact with participants; using existing data, records, charts, specimens, etc.**



*Complete Appendix O. [Skip to Section 6](#).*

Obtaining Consent by:

1. Explaining the study to potential participants verbally or ability to send information to participants via email or posting on social media. This explanation includes the purpose, procedure, risks, and benefits of the research.
2. Allow participant to ask any questions regarding the study
3. Provide IRB approved Study Information Sheet to potential participant and allow time for participant to review
4. Allow participant to ask any further questions, in person, through email, or phone regarding the study and verbal agree to participate in study

3. UCI Students / Employees: If study team members will approach their own students or employees:
  - a. Explain what precautions will be taken to **minimize potential undue influence or coercion.**
  - b. Explain **how compromised objectivity will be avoided.**



## B. Eligibility Criteria

1. Identify the criteria for inclusion and exclusion.
A professional dancer and/or recreational dancer
2. If eligibility is based on age, gender, pregnancy/childbearing potential, social/ethnic group, or language spoken (e.g., English Speakers only), provide a <b>scientific rationale</b> .
<input type="checkbox"/> Not applicable: Subject eligibility is not based on these factors. Must be 18 years and older

## SECTION 4: RECRUITMENT METHODS AND PROCESS

<input type="checkbox"/> This study involves no direct contact with participants (i.e., use of existing data, records, charts, specimens). <a href="#">Skip to Section 6.</a>
---

### A. Recruitment Process

<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Describe <b>when, where, by whom</b> and how potential participants will be approached. If posting on your Facebook page or other social media sites, please explain.</li><li>2. If you will recruit by e-mail, phone, etc., explain how the researcher will obtain the participants' <b>contact information</b>.</li><li>3. Please <b>attach Advertisements, Flyers, Social Sciences Human Subject Pool (SSHSP) Form, Scripts, Letters, and Announcements</b>. See <a href="#">Recruitment Guidelines</a>.</li></ol> <p><b>Note:</b> If recruiting via online sources / social media (i.e., Facebook or Amazon Mechanical Turk (AMT), etc.), submit the statement that will be posted. Refer to participants as 'research participants,' not 'workers'.</p>
Recruitment materials will be sent via email, by phone, mail, or posting on social media. I will seek out professionals from online resources, universities, LinkedIn, referrals from fellow colleagues, and use existing professional relationships as potential interviewees. All publicly available. I will obtain all contact information from publicly available sources.
A flier will also be posted on community boards in classrooms, dance studios, and offices as well as bathroom stalls in the Claire Trevor School of the Arts for potential participants who may be interested in the study.
Facebook Post: I am currently researching dance as a coping mechanism. If you have used dance as a coping mechanism and are willing for me to interview you, please contact me by email, falee@uci.edu. Thank you!

#### A. Training of Personnel

<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Describe the training plan that will be provided to your study team members. Who will provide the training, what will be included in the training, how will their level of knowledge be assessed to ensure they are ready to perform their assigned duties, and who will provide ongoing oversight.</li><li>2. Please identify who will interact with non-English speaking participants, if applicable.</li></ol>
<p>Dr. Sharp will provide training on proper study recruitment strategies, proper consent process, and train Ms. Lee on how to perform interviews. Dr. Sharp will meet with Ms. Lee weekly to discuss progress of her project. Dr. Sharp will provide oversight.</p> <p>Non-English Speaking participants will not be participating.</p>

### SECTION 3: RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

#### A. Individuals To Be Enrolled on this UCI protocol (Persons/Records)

<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Complete the table of participant enrollments below. <i>Include additional rows for subject category/group, as needed.</i></li><li>2. If the study involves the use of existing or prospective records, specify the maximum number to be reviewed / collected, and the number needed (i.e., expected to complete study) to address the research question.</li></ol>			
Category/Group (e.g., adults, parents, children)	Age Range (e.g., 7-12, 13-17, 18 or older)	Maximum Number to be Consented or Reviewed/Collected	Number Expected to Complete the Study
Adults	18 and older	10	6
Total: 10			



## APPENDIX C

### RECRUITMENT EMAIL

Recruitment Documents:

(Below is the script I will use for how I recruit potential participants.)

Hello,

My name is Francesca Lee, MFA candidate at University of California, Irvine. I am in the Claire Trevor School of the Arts Dance Department, researching how the general public and dancers integrate the act of dancing to relieve stress and adjust to life change. I would be grateful for your participation in this study if you're interested. You will not be compensated in any way.

1. If you agree to be interviewed, we may meet in person to a place that is suitable for you, or we may do a phone or email interview, if that is more feasible. This will not take more than an hour. If you choose to participate and want to answer questions via email, I will do so.
2. With your permission, I may video or audio record the interview. I may use information in my choreographic thesis concert in 2017, but not identify participants.
3. I am the Lead Researcher and have access to the information, which will be stored on a password protected laptop computer.

The rationale for this qualitative study is to listen to dancers in how they utilize dance, specifically as a coping mechanism for stressful life events. By describing the utility of dance, this research strives to align dance as a coping mechanism to my preference as a choreographer and teacher. It also furthers the discussion of the value of dance as it affects a person to overcome life's challenges. The purpose of this study is to add to the existing body of knowledge in pedagogy and choreographic process by focusing on an individual's body and mind for wellness during a stressful time.

Thank you for your time and consideration. Contact me if you have any questions.

All the Best,

Francesca Lee  
falee@uci.edu  
(209) 914-4721  
Lead Researcher  
MFA in Dance Candidate  
UCI

Thesis Chair: Dr. Kelli Sharp, Dance Department  
Claire Trevor School of the Arts

# APPENDIX D

## STUDY INFORMATION SHEET

UCI IRB USE ONLY: Info Sheet v. May 2011

### University of California, Irvine Study Information Sheet

#### *Dance To Change, Dance To Heal*

##### **Lead Researcher**

Francesca Lee, Dance Graduate Student  
Dance Department  
(209) 914-4721 // falee@uci.edu

##### **Faculty Sponsor**

Dr. Kelli Sharp, Dance Science  
Dance Department  
ksharp@uci.edu

- You are being asked to participate in a research study that aims to find how dance professionals and recreational dancers integrate movement to relieve stress and adjust to change. This research strives to use information about dance as a coping mechanism toward contributing to general pedagogy and choreography, which may change an individual's wellness.
- The benefits of this study to society are the potential ways to possibly boost quality of life through dance. Interviewees will provide data that will identify what key components in how the act of dancing serves as a coping mechanism. Information will inspire other educators and choreographers in how dance is presented, taught, and used to manage stressful life situations. This will be implemented into my choreographic thesis.
- You are eligible to participate in this study if you are at least 18 years of age or older.
- The research procedures involve an audio taped interview that will last approximately 60 minutes at a location convenient for you, through Skype, or over the phone. Possible follow up contact will occur if clarification is needed or further questions arise from interview.
- Possible risks/discomforts associated with the study are emotions and sensitive information disclosed by sharing specific stressful life events during the interview.
- You will not be compensated for your participation in this research study.
- All research data collected will be stored securely and confidentially on a password locked laptop computer. The interview will be recorded on a Sony ICD-UX533 digital voice recorder and will be transferred directly to the password locked laptop immediately after the interview. The interview will be transcribed one week after it has been conducted and will be destroyed after the project has been completed. Participants who give permission may have their picture taken, voice recorded, and/or video recorded. I may use voice recordings in my concert thesis in Spring of 2017 (only participants who give permission in a separate Release Form specific to this purpose).
- Contact information will only be retained for recruitment purposes and kept separate from data collected in a password-protected computer.
- The research team, authorized UCI personnel, may have access to your study records to protect your safety and welfare. Any information derived from this research project that personally identifies

you will not be voluntarily released or disclosed by these entities without your separate consent, except as specifically required by law.

- If you have any comments, concerns, or questions regarding the conduct of this research please contact the researchers listed at the top of this form.
- Please contact UCI's Office of Research by phone, (949) 824-6662, by e-mail at [IRB@research.uci.edu](mailto:IRB@research.uci.edu) or at 5171 California Avenue, Suite 150, Irvine, CA 92697 if you are unable to reach the researchers listed at the top of the form and have general questions; have concerns or complaints about the research; have questions about your rights as a research subject; or have general comments or suggestions.
- Participation in this study is voluntary. There is no cost to you for participating. You may choose to skip a question or a study procedure. You may refuse to participate or discontinue your involvement at any time without penalty. You are free to withdraw from this study at any time. **If you decide to withdraw from this study you should notify the research team immediately.**

APPENDIX E

RECRUITMENT FLIER

*Dance to Change, Dance to Heal*

Have you experienced stressful times in your life? Do you enjoy dancing? Have you considered how dance and stress are related?



Thesis research study with Francesca Lee  
2<sup>nd</sup> year MFA Dance Candidate

Francesca's thesis research is based on personal stressful life events and how dancing might influence someone during this time in their lives. Her study will include a one-hour interview. Participants will not be compensated.

If interested, please take a pull tab below and contact Francesca!

Francesca Lee  
falee@uci.edu

Francesca Lee  
falee@uci.edu

Francesca Lee  
falee@uci.edu

Francesca Lee  
falee@uci.edu

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Francesca Lee  
falee@uci.edu

Francesca Lee  
falee@uci.edu

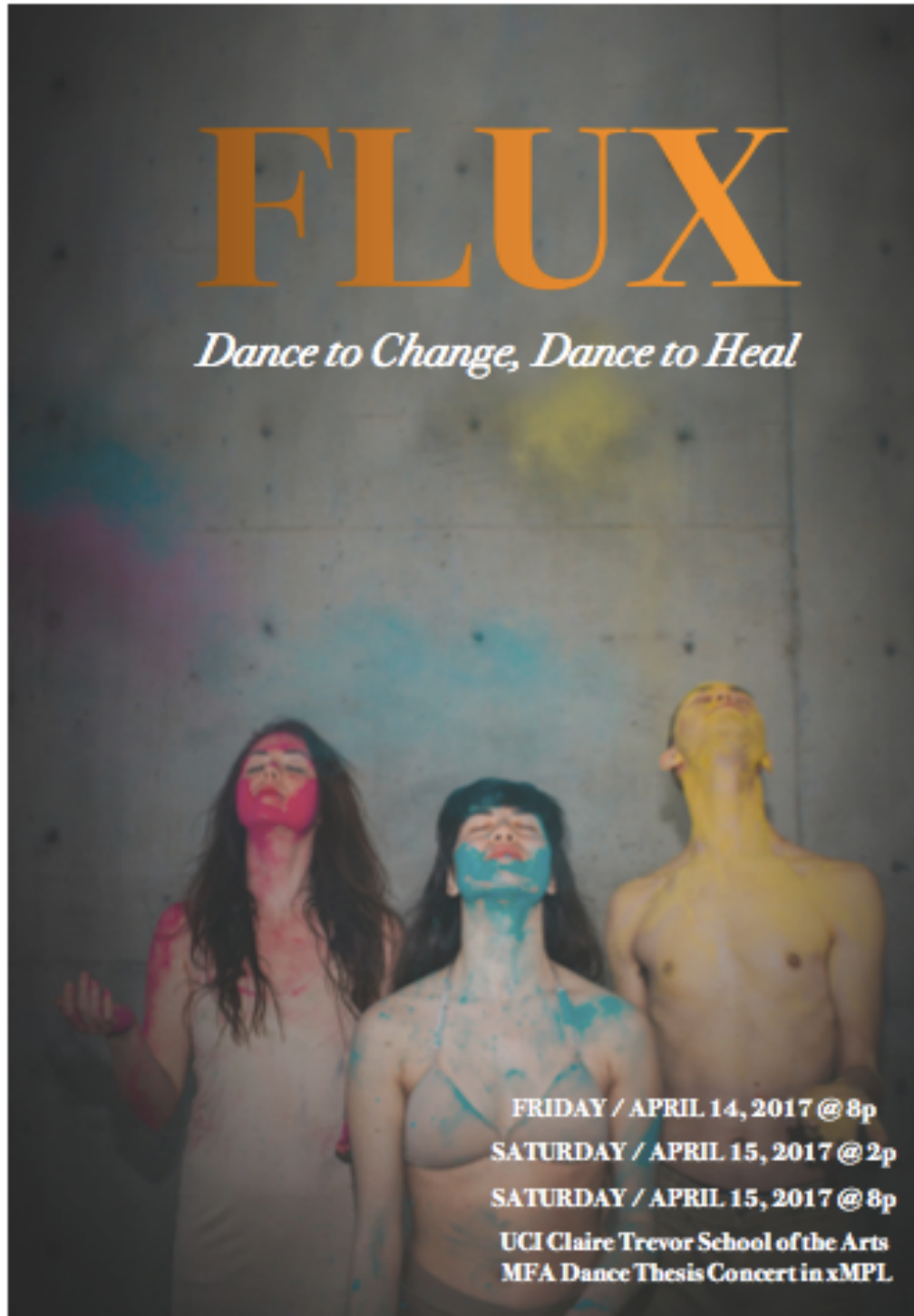
**APPENDIX F**

**INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**

- What is the history of dance in your life?
- What role does dance hold in your life?
- What makes dance unique in your life?
- What drives you to movement and dance?
- Has there been a stressful time in your life? If so, could you please describe? During this time, how did you cope with the stress?
- Has dance benefitted your life in any way, shape or form?
- How might dance influence your lifestyle and choices?

APPENDIX G

***FLUX: DANCE THESIS CONCERT PROGRAM***



# FLUX

Choreography and Concept by Francesca Lee  
in collaboration with Scenic Designer Vanessa Fusi-Hoblit  
Stage Management by Matthew Terzigni  
Assistant Stage Management by Miriam Mendoza  
Lighting Design by David Hernandez  
Sound Design by Jordan Tani  
Music by Norman Beede, Jordan Tani, Mike Wall, & George Wheeler  
House Management by Joshua Estrada-Romero  
Costume Design by Ginger Simonson  
Video Direction by Mike Esperanza  
Video Editing by John Kim  
Photos by Emily Duncan

## Dancers

Edgar Aguirre, Annika Alejo, John Barclay, Terra Deal, Jamie Elster, Simon Harrison, Megumi Iwama, Ashleigh Moss, Racquel Mar, Carl Ponce Cubero, Andre Rivera

- I. **Video:** Blur
- II. Tension
- III. Identity
- IV. Support
- V. **Video:** Letting Go
- VI. Consistency & Concentration
- VII. Awareness to Act
- VIII. Flow & Release
- IX. **Video:** Relaxed & Unguarded
- X. Ease
- XI. Moving Forward

My thesis investigates dance used as a coping mechanism for stressful life events. *FLUX* was developed to explore movement representing key components in the benefits of dance from my research.

**\*WARNING:** Chalk may resonate in the air during the performance

Dedicated to my mother, Kazuko Harada-Lee



## SPECIAL THANKS TO

Vannessa for helping get this concert off the ground and running. It was inspiring to bounce ideas off of you.

Matt, I know I am crazy, but thank you for dealing with my “normal” to make this a success.

David, your lighting talents made this thesis concert come alive. Thank you for your time and care into this project.

Jordan for bringing in your talents to create original music, building an intimate sound space, and reading my mind when I could not put thoughts into words.

The amazing dancers, I am forever in debt to have worked with you. I am so blessed by your open minds and hearts to commit to this process.

Mike Esperanza, thank you for flying in from NYC to assist in bringing the concert films to life. Thank you for being an amazing mentor and friend. You are an inspiration.

John Kim for your willingness to keep editing the films until they were perfect.

Emily Duncan for providing your photography skills for this project.

George Wheeler and Norm Beede for such inspiring music and collaborating with myself and the dancers.

My dad, Randy, for dealing with me. Thank you for encouraging me take risks and think outside the box.

My supportive chair, Dr. Kelli Sharp, for your guidance and excitement. Without you, this could not have happened.

Committee members, Professor Loretta Livingston and Professor Molly Lynch, for your support and positivity for my thesis.

Keith Bangs for your ideas and assistance to help make my visions come to life.

Bruce Warner for the support and guidance in the xMPL to fulfill my vision.

Kari Borg for your endless support, mentorship, and friendship. This concert would not have happened without you. I am grateful for everything you have contributed to *FLUX*.

Leann Alduenda for your support and love as a mentor and friend. Thank you for also leading me into this program at UCI.

Koryn Wicks, my partner in crime, for sharing this concert together! WOO! We did it!

My amazing cohort who have turned into supportive and loving friends. I am blessed the universe brought us to UCI. Love you!