

The Meanings of A Modern Dance: An Investigation into the  
Communicative Properties of a Non-Verbal Medium

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## Dedication

*I wish that there was no reason for this page to exist, but life is not always what we wish.*

This thesis project, from its inception to its final stages, is dedicated to two of the most important people in my life. They both began this trip with me but left before it was finished. I know they both would have had nothing but smiles and joy for me had they been here, and even though they are not, I still feel their pride in my accomplishments.

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Linda Highlander-Assaf  
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## Abstract

Communication in all its various forms has one common goal: expressing and deciphering ideas. Education in recent years has taken a move towards more global approaches to learning/teaching. Within this context, more innovative and inclusive methods of communication need to be created. This study investigated the meaning-form connections in a modern dance experiment. Based on a poem, a dance was created and then performed for various audiences. Responses were recorded through survey and focus group interviews; and analyzed based on grounded theory (Strauss and Corbin, 1998; Charmaz, 2006). GT analysis coupled with hermeneutic constructivism offered an instructive and inclusive means of looking at the data. The results of the analysis along with inductive reasoning led to the result of six categories through which modern dance produces meaning and audiences decipher meaning from modern dance: *Conflict Resolution, Personal Experience/Trait, Linguistic Structures, Abstract Concepts, Compatibility, and Technical Ability*. The last stage of the study looked at a constructivist communication model “ecology of meanings model”, utilized its basic concept to build a communication for modern dance, and configured the newly found categories within it. My aim in this thesis project is to shed light on the manner in which a non-verbal means of communication, namely dance, is used to convey a message. The end result is a prototype of a possible communication model for modern dance which could afford choreographers/dancers/dance educators/dance spectators the ability to understand not only what modern dance means but also how. By illuminating this process, I hope that dance and communication experts will be able to enhance their educational procedures.

Key Terms:

Constructivism, Hermeneutics, Grounded Theory, Dance, Choreography

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# CHAPTER ONE

## THE BEGINNING

*“If I Could Tell You What It  
Meant, There Would Be No  
Point In Dancing It.”*  
Isadora Duncan

For years, people in the dance field have referred to the above mentioned words by Isadora Duncan. Her view was that dance expresses that which words cannot. I am a dancer, a choreographer, a poet and a language teacher; and even though I have great respect and admiration for Ms. Duncan, I do not completely agree with her. I believe that dance and language are mutually expressive and have many common configurations, particularly the ability to communicate meaning. This belief and the need to more thoroughly understand the process of how dance conveys meaning, led me down the path of discovery which resulted in this thesis.

This introductory chapter is divided into four sections. The first section introduces the reader to the purpose behind undertaking this particular research project, the second section discusses the initial research questions, the third section highlights the research context and the fourth section presents emerging questions.

### PURPOSE

Communication in all its various forms has one common goal: expressing and deciphering ideas. Technological advances and globalization mean that increasingly the

'readers' of 'texts' are people who do not have a common spoken/written language. For example, I live in a country (Lebanon) where three languages are, in most communication situations, used simultaneously. In these situations rarely do the participants have fluent knowledge of all three languages; nonetheless people in Lebanon can understand each other 'fluently' due to the exposure and integration of the three languages into the culture and communities that exist. In addition to the issue of common language, people are becoming more and more used to 'reading' messages in forms other than written texts, e.g. layout and images (Kress and van Leeuwen, 1996). With the visual and visual designs, being utilized more frequently, the need to have approaches that allow people to be more fluent in both production and comprehension of alternative methods of communication has risen. Another emergent form of communication utilization is human movement.

Body movement is a medium that in all cultures generates a wide variety of forms of knowledge, systematized in various ways with various degrees of performativity. (Farnell, 1995a, p.1).

Based on the results of anthropological studies done in the mid to late 90's, close attention should be drawn to the various and complex cultural resources that are employed to view, categorize and comprehend human actions (Farnell, 1995a) in order to make them more accessible to all fields of communication and education.

Communication, according to Farnell, involves more than simple transmission of information, it is the transmittal of meaningful knowledge which has been recontextualized to simultaneously offer meaningful comprehension to the receiver and respect for the originators of this knowledge (1995b). Within this context of meaningful

knowledge transmittal, more innovative and inclusive methods of communication involving the visual and the body need to be created and/or established. My aim in this thesis project is to shed light on the manner in which modern dance (a structured form of body movement) conveys meaning. By illuminating this process, dance and communication experts may be able to enhance their educational procedures thus integrating a broader scope of communication methods and styles into the educational system. This could also add to the field of research in dance by allowing different forms of dance to be incorporated in the theme of communication thus enhancing the education and training of dancers and choreographers.

A brief look at the communication process in today's world illustrates that it is a layered procedure, often using one or more modes to achieve its aim. For example, an advertisement in a magazine might use a photograph and a slogan as means of delivering an idea. In this case, the communication process relies on two modes: visual and verbal; the intended result being the comprehension of a complex message. Prominent linguists such as: Street, (1994); Gee, (1999); Barton, (2000); and Kress, (2001, 2000) have been working on analyzing and developing language in a multi-modal manner thus further integrating the non-verbal into the communication realm. Another area in which a number of noteworthy contributions to the body and its placement in the realm of communication can be found is anthropology. Two prominent researchers in the field are Brenda Farnell and Drid Williams. Their work is both interesting and relevant to the emphasis on the use of the body in mainstream communication and education. For example, Farnell in two of her publications (1995a, 1995b), discusses the body and its relevance to comprehension. Williams adds to this contribution by emphasizing the

importance of not marginalizing dance. She states, “To identify dances only as performances trivializes them, just as we trivialize language if we identify it as only speaking.” (2004, p. 73). However significant and current these contributions are, they do not sufficiently put forth clear and straightforward means and/or methods to comprehend body movement/communication. Despite the recent increased linguistic interest in Multimodality and the anthropological studies towards the body, not enough research has been done on the communicative properties of body movement in general and even less has been done concerning the communicative properties of dance specifically. Nevertheless, I believe this study of the communicative properties of modern dance could help to redress the imbalance.

In addition to prominent linguists’ and anthropologists’ concerns about the communicative properties of body movement, prominent dance researchers are also concerned with dance and its place in the realm of communication. For example, Foster (1986) applied one of the literary methods of analysis developed by Jakobson (1960) to analyze dance. It was an innovative way of looking at dance and the study she conducted was a pioneering work in establishing dance as the field of academic research it is today. To further elaborate the lack of attention given to the body’s communicative properties, I quote what Morris says of dance research: “[It] always deals in some way with the body, but one of the challenges now is how to mend the dichotomy between the mind and the body that has marginalized dance for too long.” (1996, p.10). Novak (1990) also comments on the manner in which researchers look at the body as if it was an “independent entity” and explains that it is this type of narrowness that allows the dichotomy to remain. In addition, Koritz (1996) argues that dance and its association with

other disciplines could help many communicative categories to flourish. One objective of my thesis is to enhance the understanding and use of dance as a message-conveying medium and clarify its contribution to the field of communication. Another objective is to outline or propose a framework to account for how meaning in dance is produced. If my objectives are achieved, dance might be one step closer to what Koritz (1996) calls the “intellectual mainstream”. Many scholars such as Susan Foster, Judith Lynne Hanna, Janet Adshead, Susan Manning, Mark Franko and Cynthia Novak have dedicated their lives’ work to achieving this goal and with my thesis; I am attempting to add something to this body of work.

## CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND METHODOLOGY SECTION

In order to fulfill the purpose of my thesis, research questions had to be developed and a suitable methodology chosen. I began by developing the questions stated below:

- How, specifically, does dance create meaning?
- How does the audience construct meaning from dance?
- How do choreographers go about putting their intended meaning into form?

After establishing whether or not there were any form-meaning connections in the dance medium, the concept of meaning was taken one-step further by exploring how the viewer deals with understanding the movement and how the choreographer deals with building the movement to deliver the meaning. Being a choreographer, I use the body to express ideas but I often do not know whether the idea is being understood in the manner in which I am portraying it. It is for this reason that I chose to work with modern dance and

investigate its communicative properties with hope of finding a means to clarify how meaning is produced in dance.

After reviewing the questions mentioned above and extensively reading about different research methodologies, I became interested in grounded theory (GT) as a research method for my study mainly because this approach coincided with the intuitive manner in which I had looked at some previous survey data (see chapter two for further explanation). In GT, the theory is developed from the data. It is an inductive approach to theory building which was originally created by two sociologists, Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss 1987; Glaser, 1992; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). According to Glaser and Strauss, GT is qualitative and consists of a series of steps to be executed with precision and contemplation (1967) and this will be explained in more detail in subsequent chapters of this thesis. Grounded theory was created primarily to deal with the need to understand functions and behavior in human interaction and relate them to the complexity and variability of the interactions (Glaser, 1992; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). The need to explain in further detail the functions of modern dance and its placement in the realm of communication made GT a suitable methodology to use in my research project.

## PRERESEARCH CONTEXT

Before I began my quest for answers to my research questions, I had read widely, covering areas such as communication, language and dance. These influences I refer to as my pre-thesis milieu. In this section of the chapter, I attempt to verbally choreograph the sequence of the influential principles I encountered.

### Language and Communication

To begin with, the literature on comprehension and how humans interpret things led me to the field of constructivism. Piaget (1955, 1963a, 1963b) basing his observations on biological context explains how we (humans) relate that which we know to reality. According to Piaget's Constructivist theory, one cannot build conclusions about the real world based on adaptation to surroundings. In other words, a person does not form a comprehension of their surroundings based on adapting to them.

A prominent researcher in constructivism is von Glasersfeld (1996), who emphasizes that knowledge does not exist outside a person's mind. He agrees with Piaget that knowledge comes from one's actions and one's reflection on them. The conceptual structures that make up knowledge or meaning are not ones that we can pass on from one person to the other. Each individual has his/her own constructs. Therefore, when dealing with the construction of meaning it is important to remember that mutual compatibility in our use of language comes from our social interaction, not from our individual conceptual structure (von Glaserfeld, 1996). In order to reach this stage of compatibility one must work through a process of accommodation that will eventually level off thus achieving harmony with other people and the surroundings (von Glaserfeld, 1996; Twomey-Fosnot, 1996). Von Glaserfeld points out:

... no matter how one looks at it, an analysis of meanings always leads to individual experience and the social process of accommodating the links between words and the chunks of that experience until the individual deems they are compatible with the usage and the linguistic and behavioral responses of others.

(1996, p. 6)

Taking into consideration this analysis of how linguistic communication works, and how meanings are composed, the notion that knowledge can simply be transferred from teacher to student does not hold up. Von Glaserfeld states that even though language is the most powerful tool available to teachers today, it does not transport meanings and concepts as such (1996). My thesis investigates similar issues of accommodation and construction of meaning in relation to modern dance as a medium of communication. Specifically, through the implementation of a survey which questioned what was comprehended after viewing a presentation of a modern dance, I probed into how individuals construct meaning in dance. More specific details of this investigation will be highlighted in the following chapters.

Continuing this train of thought, it is important to mention the influence on my work by Kress who, in Kress (2000a; 2000b), draws attention to the fact that communication modes have begun to change. In addition to the typical modes of speech and writing we have the visual mode, and he adds: “Other modes are increasingly pushing into the center of public communication: music; and the body and its movements” (2000b: p.182). He makes it a point to stress that the exclusion of these ‘new’ modes of communication from educational regimes does nothing more than hurt the ‘West’ and the western system of education thus making it “ill-equipped” to confront the more updated setting of communication. Kress (2000b) discusses the fact that language is not monomodal and claims that researchers need to view language as multimodal. He considers it of the utmost importance that there are factors other than verbal language affecting communication and in his opinion these factors should not be ignored. I agree with Kress (2000a; 2000b) in that there are other modes of

communication which need to be explored. This is another reason which motivated me to implement my research.

Kress's ideas follow the same line of thought as those of Street who discusses the "ideological model of literacy" which he describes as being a "multiplicity of literacies". According to Street (1994), there is not only one literacy but rather a compilation of meanings and cultural contexts which help to define the whole. He states:

There are many different ways in which we act out our uses and meanings of reading and writing in different social contexts and the evidence from different societies and eras demonstrates that it is misleading to think of one single unified thing called literacy. (Street, 1994, p. 139)

I also agree with Street in that it is not possible to continue to deem one single unified element as literacy. Currently the field of communication (particularly in education) is dominated by language and verbal skills. For example, speech courses at universities are assessed in a way which gives less importance to the non-verbal communication component. Instructors (who are mainly language or linguistics specialists) believe that the major emphasis should be placed on the writing of the speech and less on the manner in which the speech is delivered (non-verbal communication). The stress that most educators place on the issue of language as the major means of communication leaves less room for emphasis to be placed on creativity in the manner of expression because a majority of the teaching hours are spent on perfecting the language component. This issue is an area of concern in the West as previously discussed by Kress (2000), and also by Street (1994) who makes reference to the West and the westernized concept of the

'person' by stating that the West views the person as a "single, persistent and whole individual" (1994). The question is if this concept is useful when applied to each and every social context and what happens when change occurs. According to Street, within the Western view of the person there appears to be no space for change.

Another similar opinion is expressed by Barton (2000) who explores links between the field of education and everyday life. He highlights the issue of "critical self-reflection", mainly inspired by the work of Paulo Freire and his concept of conscientisation (Freire 1985 cited in Barton, 2000). According to Barton, when an individual uses the concept of self-reflection to link different areas of education and knowledge, awareness becomes a standard by which intelligence can be judged (2000). In other words, he is saying that a higher degree or quality of awareness equals higher intelligence. To explain it in yet another manner, the changes a person experiences through growth and development can help to affirm who the 'person' is as much as any standard test, or any other stable means of measurement.

The ideas discussed above perhaps explain why some research and educational minds were heading in the direction of Multimodality. Its basic premise of 'multiplicity of modes' was first discussed around the late seventies, one of the founders being Bourdieu (quoted in Berthelot, 1991) who states that incorporation of all the surroundings is needed for complete understanding to be established. If not every piece of the whole is taken into consideration then the whole ceases to be. Berthelot (1991) further expands on the idea of the "ritual idiom", originally coined by Goffman (in Berthelot 1991), by describing the importance of the body and its ritualized functions in defining the issue of being. Berthelot stresses the fact that one cannot ignore the importance of "personal

appearance..., gestures, postures, attitudes, looks, distances,... corporeal  
hexis....symbolic associations which link the body to image forming dimension which  
solidifies into media stereotypes” (1991). Berthelot’s main concern is the role the body  
plays in the development and awareness of sociological discourses. Out of all the  
researchers who have dealt with the body and its inclusion in intellectual disciplines,  
Michel Foucault could arguably be the initiator. Foucault suggests that the body should  
be seen as ‘the inscribed surface of events’; that is the body is a focal point of interaction  
of different discourses (political, social) and the effects can (and should) be analyzed  
(1977). Such disciplines as Sociology and Cultural Studies have accentuated the  
importance of the body in their research and analysis (Hockett and Ascher, 1964; Hanna,  
1979; Goldman, 1994; van Leeuwen, 1996; Morris, 1996; Ruthrof, 1997; Ruthrof, 2000;  
Kress, 2000; Mitchell et. al., 2000; Kress and van Leeuwen, 2001; Wetherell, 2001;  
Bartenieff, 2002; Carter, 2004). I would argue that other disciplines should follow suit.  
Kress (2001) stresses the link across the disciplines which multimodality affords, by  
analyzing the effect of socially and culturally significant factors on the development of  
language. It seems obvious in this context that body movement is another significant  
factor which should not be ignored. This raises questions about what dance is and what  
body movement is and whether they are totally different or overlapping phenomena.  
From a personal standpoint as a choreographer I tend to see them as similar; however,  
this will be discussed later in more depth in relation to the research project.

Fairclough (1997) also supports this ‘new’ manner of viewing disciplines and  
their effect on each other. He refers to Halliday who coined the term ‘transdisciplinary’  
as opposed to ‘interdisciplinary’ when implementing research which views language

socially. Fairclough focuses on the point of change in the use of social language in line with current changes in contemporary sociocultural research thus demanding “a change in the agenda of critical discourse analysis: CDA” (1997). CDA has been used in the past decade as a set of methods to find answers to questions about the link between language and society (Rogers et.al. 2005). Rogers et.al. describe CDA as,

...an attempt to bring social theory and discourse analysis together to describe, interpret, and explain the ways in which discourse analysis becomes constructed by, represents, and becomes represented by the social world. (2005, p. 366).

Interdisciplinary research and issues pertaining to the academic “real world’ are matters for further investigation in the fields of both linguistics and CDA. In this project, I am not concerned with CDA per se but rather how Fairclough highlights the idea of a change towards integration of issues beyond just the verbal discourse. The present research project was interdisciplinary in nature; it drew on matters in fields linguistics, communication and dance in an attempt to emancipate the marginalized field of dance (body communication). In relation to Fairclough’s stress on the need for interdisciplinary research, the present research project highlights areas which are common between two different disciplines (language and dance) and sheds light on how these commonalities can help to further enhance the field of communication, and benefit the education and training of dancers and choreographers.

Furthermore, most of the literature on culture and language or social studies and language (both combinations found under the larger umbrella of communication) do not mention the body and the visual; however, a few researchers do. For example, at the end

of a detailed analysis of an interview by Martin Bashir with Lady Diana, Wetherell (2001) poses a series of questions:

Are bodies part of discourse, however? What are the boundaries?  
What is discursive and what is extra-discursive? Is there anything  
extra-discursive? The circumstances of Diana's death were intensely  
physical... That surely is real beyond talk. (p.27)

Even after the discourse analysis had been completed, Wetherell had questions about the role of the body in the discourse. It is questions such as this which have led researchers to look more closely at the body and its relationship with language and communication.

Another interesting and innovative research study was carried out by Mitchell et.al. (2000) who conducted a study of writing practice in dance, a discipline where writing is not the main issue at hand. Building on Harré's model of personal identity formation (Harré, 1983) and Gee's discourse analysis (1996) the researchers analyzed the dancer's essays which were about the task of choreography and their experiences while attempting to create their dances. They found that in addition to "comment on the making of the dances, [the writing] creates meaning which is both unique and a part of the discourse" (2000). This allowed them to draw an analogy between "choreography" and "writing" (2000). In their analysis, 'transitions' and their corresponding component in dance are discussed with particular attention to whether something such as a 'transition' can be 'danced' (2000). Several detailed analogies are drawn and the similarity between dance creation and essay writing is recognized and commented upon by the dancers. Foster (1995) also delved into the body and its meaning portrayals. She claims that bodies do not only extend to the expression of something else but rather they "instantiate

both physical mobility and articulability” which maintain particular choreographies of signs through which the bodies discourse (Foster, 1995, p. xi). Foster also maintains that the body plays an important role in the cultural process and she states:

As writings on how bodies get inscribed through cultural practices, and where they don't, these choreographic operations can perform for that broader interest in the body that still awaits development in language. (1995, p. xi)

Two other prominent researchers in the field of the visual communication, Gunther Kress and Theo van Leeuwen, have produced very important work on the ‘physical’ and its influence on communication. Kress and Van Leeuwen (1996) raise several issues which link ‘that which can be seen and touched’ to the process of “ingesting” the total message and one of those is culture.

Yet another researcher who deals with language in a multimodal sense is Gee (1999). He outlines six building tasks (1999, pp. 85-86) present in any spoken or written form of communication. The building tasks which Gee discusses; *Semiotic, World, Activity, Socioculturally-Situated Identity and Relationship, Political, Connection*, are explained as the use of cues to assemble, construct relevance, or make assumptions about the situated meanings in any type of spoken or written communiqué.

Gee also discusses how we investigate “the world of talk and interaction” using particular “tools” (1999, pp. 12-13) for example: *Situated identities, Social languages, Discourses, Conversations*. The examples mentioned are different methods to measure and examine issues in the field of communication. Here I pose the question, can these

‘tasks and tools’ be used in measuring other forms of communication (i.e. neither speech nor writing)? At the end of the heading about “D” discourses, Gee states:

In the end a Discourse is a “dance” that exists in the abstract as a coordinated pattern of words, deeds, values, beliefs, symbols, tools, objects, times, and places and in the here and now as a performance that is recognizable as just a coordination. Like a dance, the performance here and now is never exactly the same. It all comes down, often, to what the “master of the dance” will allow to be recognized or will be forced to recognize as a possible instantiation of the dance. (1999, p.19)

Gee uses an analogy which makes Discourse a “dance”. I would argue that dance can in fact be considered a type of discourse and this thesis attempts to clarify this fact.

## Dance and Communication

Some researchers in the field of dance have worked to show how the structure dance takes to become a communicative event is similar to the structure used to develop a spoken or written piece of discourse. Foster (1986) outlines this process in her book *Reading Dancing*. She comments on the fact that the viewer (though untrained in dance) can learn to develop an understanding of the movement. The viewer can become aware of “choreographic codes and conventions” (1986) that make dance noteworthy and can hence comprehend the social context and the ‘language’ structure of the dance. Dance shares terminology with language and language learning; even the title of Foster’s book *Reading Dancing* (1986) implies a similarity between dance and written language (that which can be read).

In addition, Goellner and Murphy (1995) discuss the long road down which dance has traveled and discuss the problems that dance has faced in being accepted academically. They state:

“For most of its life, the field of dance studies had largely been divided in its research methodologies between history, movement analysis, anthropology, and aesthetics. Foster (1995) was a work that broke with these approaches.... Foster showed how dance, like the literary text, goes down in ‘language’” (1995: p.2).

The authors go on to explain that dance today is moving towards a different goal. It is working on bridging the separation that exists between the mind and the body. Dance is even challenging the dichotomy that holds verbal or written language in privilege to bodily or kinesthetic language. As a choreographer and a language teacher, I am in agreement with those who consider the body and its forms of expression as significant as linguistic forms of expression.

Another source of inspiration for my work has been Dempster (1995) who analyzed in depth how the body moves in different genres of dance. She focused particularly on Modern Dance which she terms an expression of “interiority” as opposed to external expressions (1995). She also refers to the work by Foster (1995) which divides the stages of postmodern dance into two: Objectivist and Reflexive. Objectivist dance focuses on bodily motion whereas reflexive dance focuses on the other events (i.e. other than the body). As Foster (1986) states:

...objectivist dance has laid bare the conventions governing representations to allow the body to speak its own language, reflexive choreography works with the same conventions to show the body's capacity to both speak and be spoken through in many different languages.

(p.188)

More and more can be seen in the literature about the body and its importance to the field of communication, culture and language. The body, however, needs to be connected to a format which would help to allow it to be described and categorized. Dance is one such format, and its link to the world of language should be studied and developed further. Because I am a modern dancer and modern dance choreographer, the above mentioned ideas of Dempster and Foster helped in allowing me to understand what I wanted to find out and consequently helped me to devise the questions I wanted to clarify through my research.

In summary, it can be seen that in literatures dealing with literacies, language, linguistics, anthropology, communication, dance and culture, mainstream thinking is increasingly occupied with multimodal-literacy, cross-cultural issues, and globalization. All of these terms involve a mixing and matching of different fields and academic issues. Even though all of these terms are interesting and relevant to any educational research study, the scope of this project does not allow for all of them to be thoroughly covered, hence the emphasis is placed on Modern Dance and its communicative properties, specifically how dance produces meaning.

Dance is attracting an increasing interest from researchers from various fields and backgrounds, not only dance (e.g. Farnell, 1994, 1995a, 1995b, Dempster, 1995; Goellner and Shea Murphy, 1995; Foster, 1996; Mitchell et.al., 2000; Thomas, 2003, Williams, 2004). Similarly, dance academicians are also searching and researching the fields of communicative competence in order to find a place for dance in academia (Foster, 1996; Jordan, 1996; Hanna, 1999; Thomas 2003). The literature has helped me trace a particular path which is to investigate how modern dance conveys meaning. What remains is narrowing down and choreographing significant ideas to generate my research study.

## POST RESEARCH CONTEXT AND EMERGENT QUESTIONS

As children, we leap over things which are in our path and hinder us from continuing on our journey. We never stop to consider whether the leap we take has a name or a meaning other than the obvious. Through accommodation and construction, by the time I reached maturity, I learned that the leap can have a name and when executed properly it becomes an essential move in dance technique, it is a jeté. This anecdote illustrates the manner in which I developed my methodology. At the beginning of the research process, I was leaping and bouncing all over data that I had collected from a survey (explained in more detail in the next chapter) and with every leap I landed in a new place with new questions and new issues to be looked at. At the time I did not know that my leaps were called ‘coding’ and my new questions were ‘emergent’, I was just very much like a child, doing what was needed and felt accurate. It was during this period that I became aware of GT and realized that everything could be given a name and a realizable significance. Hence, it led to my decision to use GT as a means of data analysis.

Below, I highlight the emergent questions and areas which were later added to the research project. All the specific details will be explained in chapter two.

After studying the initial data from the survey more questions came to mind. As will be discussed in detail later, I decided to carry out three focus group interviews, seventeen individual interviews and a choreography project (with four choreographers) to help in answering twenty emergent questions, which I hoped would elucidate my main research questions (above). All of the work was carried out in Byblos and Beirut, Lebanon. Some of the questions were (a full set of questions can be found in chapter four):

1. What was the general message or overall idea which you understood from watching the performance? What was it in the performance that put this message across to you?
2. Could you break down the message into more specific messages? Do you remember what it was in the performance that conveyed this message to you?
3. Do you think that body movement can be as effectively expressive as words? Please justify your answer.
4. What are some words that you might use to describe dance?
5. What are some words that you might use to describe language?
6. What are some (if any) of the similarities between language skills (both oral and written) and dance skills?
7. How do you interpret this poem?
8. How did you approach turning it into a physical representation?
9. Could you relate to the poem on a personal level? Please explain.
10. Would you choose dance over words to express something? What and why? Explain.
11. Do you think dance is a means of communication and expression? Explain your answer.

Needing answers is what motivates any researcher and by acknowledging that need I realized that my journey was only just beginning. Armed with the new questions, I collected the data and moved on to the next step which was analysis. Since I believe that individual worldviews are directly related to meaning comprehension, I was expecting an audience for my research with a worldview similar to mine so their deciphering of my

ideas could seem relevant. I expected my audience to possibly consist of dancers and choreographers, linguists and movement therapist. With all this expectation, I went about my journey. The process implemented as well as the results will be discussed at length in the subsequent chapters. Briefly, chapter two is a look at the literature which deals with meaning-form connections while chapter three explains the methodology used in the research project implemented for this thesis. Chapter four highlights the results of the study and chapter five discusses the conclusions which surfaced as well as possible future considerations.

## CHAPTER TWO

### Establishing Meaning-Form Connections

*“Knowledge of the mind-constructed world originates from the interaction between the lived experience, understanding of other people, the historical comprehension of communities as the subject of historical activity and insight into objective minds.”*

*W. Dilthey (cited in Mueller-Vollmer, 1985, p. 151-152)*

This chapter highlights some of the fundamental ideologies of how meaning is acquired and deciphered. The first part of the chapter takes a look at meaning interpretation through the concept of hermeneutics and how knowledge (through the deciphering of meaning) is constructively acquired. The second part highlights issues in multimodal communication, including the visual, the body and dance as communication mediums. And the final part takes a critical look at a few of the existing systems of dance analysis.

#### HERMENEUTICS: DECIPHERING MEANING

According to Heidegger (1977), to exist in the world places us at the crux of deciphering meaning. We are continually striving to interpret our existence as well as the existence of those around us. This is the basis of the notion of Hermeneutics. One cannot function in the world without the ability to decipher meaning from symbols that exist in all cultures and societies. These symbols consist of objects, texts, works of art, bodily movement, dance, non-verbal language, language and the list goes on. Anything that can relay a message or contain meaning can be a symbol, and these exist at the core of human development hence the core of human existence (Heidegger, 1977). Heidegger equates being with presence. For him a being necessarily involves acts of interpretation. Conversely, according to Heidegger no matter how systematic the form of communication, it will not mean a thing if there is no being (1977). This is the same

situation in modern dance for no matter how great the dance, without a dancer to interpret it and a viewer to understand it, it means nothing.

## Heidegger's Notion of Understanding

To better clarify Heidegger's notion it is essential to realize what is at the core of Hermeneutics, and that is the *circle of interpretation*. Heidegger says,

Every questioning is seeking. Every seeking takes its direction beforehand from what is sought. Questioning is a knowing search for being in their thatness and whatness. The knowing search can become an "investigation," as the revealing determination of what the question aims at (1962, p.24).

It is this need to question and search that leads the researcher in and within the circle of interpretation. As hermeneutic phenomenological tradition states, for every claim or speculation made, there is an equal and opposite claim to speculation which must be incorporated into the situation and negotiated (Heidegger, 1977, 1962). In the case of my research project, the need to understand how meaning is incorporated into modern dance and thus perceived by an audience was the motivating movement. This became my investigation. I was led to hermeneutic phenomenology through study of the data collected from the project. The more I read about hermeneutics the clearer the results became to me. The thatness and whatness held a new meaning. I was not initially familiar with Hermeneutics, but as Charmaz (2006) reminds the researcher, in grounded theory the literature review is not fully developed until after the data has been analyzed. It was

the analyzing of the data and the need to further explain how meaning was deciphered in dance which led me to find Hermeneutics.

Taking a deeper look at Heidegger's conception of existentialism one can see that it is embedded in the notion that 'being' is constantly in existence; that it is already there prior to the initiation of understanding or attempts at understanding (McNamara, 1994). The audience will have the ability to understand and identify meanings from modern dance simply because they can 'comprehend' prior to their arrival to watch the dance performance. Therefore, in accord with Heidegger's notion, the audience will comprehend the modern dance. However, it is an investigation into 'how' they comprehend which is the question of this research.

Central to an understanding of Heidegger's (1962) ideas are a thorough examination of three notions which he terms: fore-having, fore-conception, and fore-sight. He explains these three as the basis on which all human understanding is established. Fore-having is said to be that which all humans possess prior to any exposure to elements which require comprehension. One example is the body. Since all human beings have bodies, they are quite familiar with how the body functions and what certain movements represent. This does not mean that all humans will necessarily interpret the intended meaning in a modern dance the same way because in addition to the body there are also cultural and historical issues involved. However, they are capable of understanding some matters from modern dance based on the fore-havings which they hold. For example, in one section of the research project, a dancer was sitting on a chair (during a dance) and most of the audience read this as some type of waiting. The audience was using fore-having in their analysis of what they were watching; a chair

implies sitting and waiting. In reference to what and how an audience connects to dance, McNamara states,

We bring a pre-cognitive experience of movement with us to a dance concert which enables us to personally relate to the dances. When one makes an assertion about a dance it is with his or her own practical understanding of movement, or fore-having (1994, p.19).

As I have previously stated, the audience brings with it what it already knows and based on this knowledge it forms and adds new knowledge to that which already exists.

The second notion which Heidegger (1962) discusses is fore-conception. This dimension of preunderstanding has to do with all phenomena which we have and use to validate (or invalidate) the world which we live in. Our perceptions of the world are either accepted or not based on fore-conceptions we use in our evaluation process. For example, the audiences in my research project had a fore-conception regarding the relationship between dance and music. To them, dance must have music, otherwise it is not dance. In one part of the project, the audience viewed a modern dance without music. When they were questioned about what they saw, some of them gave answers which highlighted their fore-conception of dance being movement to music.

The third and final dimension in Heidegger's notion of preunderstanding is fore-sight which he defines as that which we use in order to make observations and interpretations more advantageous. Even though observation and interpretation of ideas comes from a point of reference which is directly linked to previously acquired theories and concepts, this does not mean that every new observation automatically becomes a

theory. What it does mean is that the idea of having a theory does (to a certain extent) precondition our observation. Foresight is a combination of what is already known and experienced with what is expected to emerge and this is not always deliberately developed. Sometimes people are not aware of the foresight dimension and the true effect of these foresights could be a subtle preconditioning of the interpretation. This may seem similar to fore-conceptions; nevertheless the main difference between what Heidegger refers to as fore-conceptions and fore-sight is the certainty which exists in the later. Fore-conceptions are clearly known and can be referred to when needed. For example, as a choreographer I have fore-conceptions about different styles of dance so whenever I watch dance I begin to comprehend based on those fore-conceptions. As for fore-sights, these are built based on potential possibilities with often times no awareness of the comprehension and development. When I began my research project I had several fore-sights such as dance and language are similar and any means of communication must have syntax to clarify its use. After the research project was over and the data had been analyzed, I found that my interpretations were not what I had previously envisioned (foresight).

## Husserl and Understanding

Husserl is another researcher who wrote in the field of human understanding and hermeneutics. He has also discussed the issue of pre-conceptions (which is similar to what Heidegger terms fore-sight). He terms these 'pre-given' (Derrida, 1973) feelings of awareness. Carr (1977) also mentions Husserl's idea of pre-given and states that the notion is that which is there prior to the activity, it is that which is "taken for granted". As the choreographer of this research project I had pre-given notions of meaning and how it

was transmitted. I thought that any idea could be easily and coherently transmitted to the audience or viewer through the means of dance/body movement. This was my predominate feeling of awareness as a choreographer.

Husserl deems thoughts and the process of thinking a result of being guided by that which has been experienced (Halprin, 2003). His ideas are linked to those of Heidegger and fall within a hermeneutic framework. Husserl believes that human understanding is built on an interdisciplinary approach which encompasses areas such as ethics, aesthetics, mysticism, education and consciousness (Halprin, 2003). I am of the opinion that my ability to convey a message through dance/choreography is also linked to my ability to teach English language. In other words, I believe that all the aspects of 'myself' come into play whenever I attempt to portray any idea or message thus leading me to agree with Husserl's idea of an interdisciplinary approach to understanding.

### Gadamer's Contribution

Hans-Georg Gadamer (mentioned above) is another researcher who has done extensive work in hermeneutics. According to Gadamer (1985), language is not only a combination of words but also a means of communication in which all human communication skills, such as gestures, speaking, and writing come into play with equal importance. Dance, as well as other fields of study and research, insists on the validity of modes other than speaking and writing in the domain of communication and comprehension. Gadamer (1985) stresses the physical as a part of human communication skills. In the field of dance, the physical (including gestures and facial expression) is essential in allowing the overall meaning to be understood. In the study implemented in this thesis, the overall meaning construction by the audience was affected by the dancer's

physical demeanor. Mention of facial expressions and gestures were made numerous times in the data.

According to Gadamer (1985) even in a face-to-face conversation, relations among the beings as well as between linguistic communities play a role in delivering the message, thereby uniting the speaker and the listener. This emphasizes the relations between beings based on their communal connections as well as their individual development. As will be seen in detail in the section of this chapter dealing with the field of constructivism, individuals grow and develop perception based on the communities and societies they exist in as well as their individual awareness and assimilation of experiences. In one section of the project conducted, the choreographers each approached the assignment of creating a dance to a poem in a different manner even though there were some basic commonalities in the results; the individuality of expression was predominant. This matter, as well as how audiences may or many not comprehend these differences, are discussed in further detail in subsequent chapters.

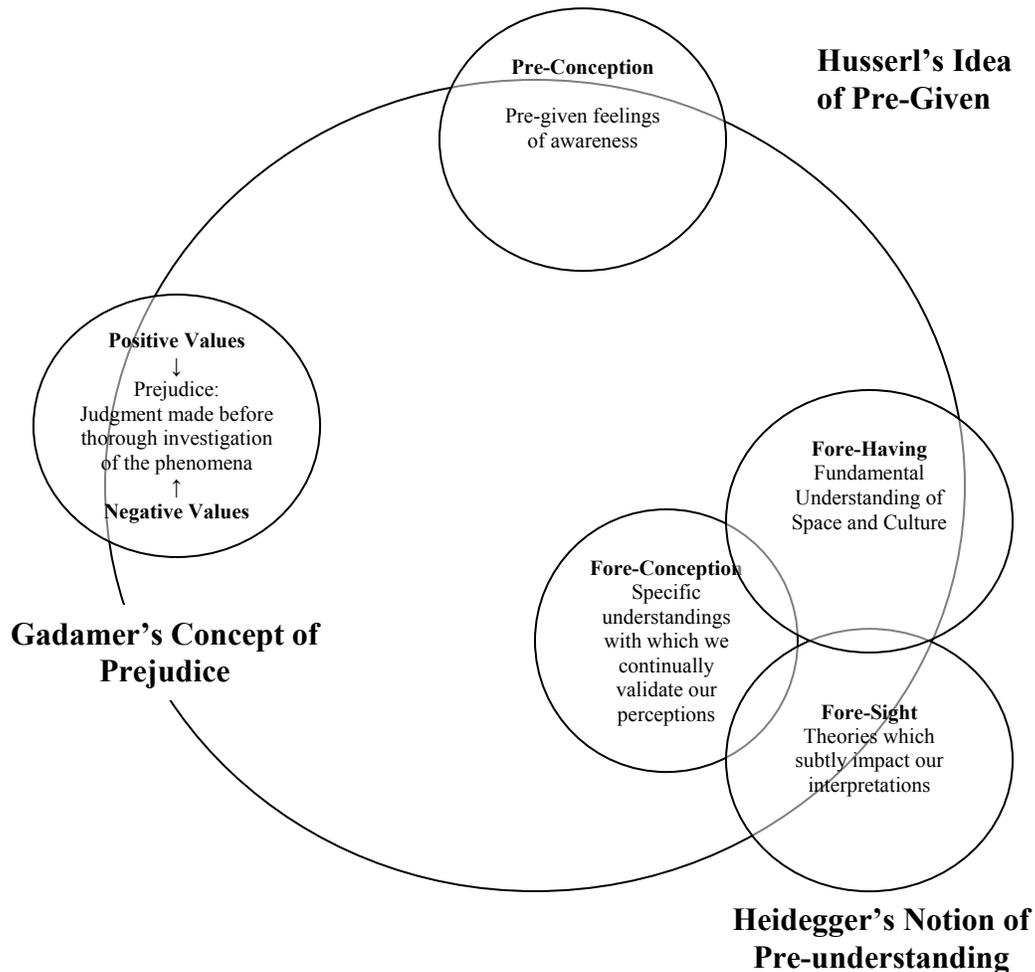
### Linking Notions Together

Add the ideas of Heidegger and Husserl to those of Gadamer and one can see the full circle of Hermeneutics (fig 2.1 below). Gadamer (1985) puts forward the idea of prejudice. Even though this word has a negative connotative meaning (i.e. prejudice against or for something often makes us think of narrow-mindedness and this is not something that is admired) we cannot neglect the influence prejudging has on the overall interpretation of meaning/understanding. In dance in particular, the issue of prejudgment has left its mark. An audience member who sits down to watch dance has already formulated an idea of what he/she will be seeing. Very often audiences cannot get past

the prejudgments they have and this is where the job of the choreographer becomes very difficult.

Taking a look at fig 2.1 (p. 29) we can see how all of these issues fit together along a circle of interpretation. Ruthrof makes mention of Heidegger's acknowledgements of the "inevitability of circularity in all understanding as the ground of any kind of reasoning" (1997, p. 24) and further discusses how Heidegger's three 'fore' notions interlace to form a circular group which moves along the larger circle of understanding. Gadamer's circle of prejudicial notions also falls into play along the circle. In the circle of interpretation, there is no beginning and no end. All the notions and concepts which are placed along it work together in making meaning exist.

## A Variation on the HERMENEUTIC CIRCLE OF INTERPRETATION



**Fig. 2.1** A combination of the Ideas of Heidegger, Husserl and Gadamer. Adapted from McNamara, 1994

In a general overview of these notions of understanding it may be somewhat inconclusive to say that understanding and expression are exclusively linked mainly due to the fact that a partial understanding of a concept can be expressed and feelings which we proclaim indescribable can also be expressed. There is no stipulation on how much understanding or comprehension must exist in order for a concept or idea to be expressed. Dance can be used to express meanings and ideas which are difficult to express in words, this does not lead to a disconnection between experience and understanding. As a choreographer attempting to convey meaning through body movement, it is important to

understand the varied layers of human understanding. It is not enough to assume that all meaning can be understood through dance, in this research I hope to work on highlighting the effect that comprehension has on the both the transmission and reception of the meaning being portrayed. However, this cannot be done without an awareness of the link between experience and understanding.

## Experience and Understanding

The subject of experience and its crucial role in the domain of understanding (as thus far seen in both hermeneutics and constructivism) is one that has been widely discussed. Feher (2000) discusses experience as the basis of understanding and emphasizes that it is constantly linked to linguisticality which is the ability and means to express meaning. It does not mean that all kinds of experiences have 'already existing' words to express them and that the words come from the outside to an already experienced occurrence. It means that from experiences come words to express them. Gadamer (1989) establishes that there are particular concepts of experience, mainly the ones used in sciences and philosophies, which are geared to natural scientific experiment. In other words, the concept is established and repeated, thus is not linked to the history of the experience (Feher 2000). According to Feher, understanding is inextricably linked to linguisticality and therefore bound to language. The relationship between linguisticality and understanding comes from the intertwining of understanding through concepts and their ability to be expressed (2000). This leads to insight about the relationship between all that is communicable and all that is understood. Nothing can be expressed if it is not understood and along the same line of thought, nothing can be expressed if there are no means by which to express it. This idea is important, however it does not limit

understanding to perfection or comprehensive neither does it restrict expression to only verbalization. Communication can also be non-verbal. The ‘intertwining’ of comprehension and ability to express it is of the utmost importance in the study conducted for this thesis which attempts to explore the meaning-form relationships in a non-verbal communication medium (dance). In order to achieve this goal, it is beneficial to take a look at the placement of language within the communication continuum.

## Language and Communication

Language is an integral part of communication because of its indispensability in understanding and thinking on a linguistic level. Therefore, the language topic cannot be discussed in a medium that is language free. This does not exclude non-verbal means of communication from expressing knowledge and emotions. Heidegger (1982, in Feher, 2000 p. 61) said,

When we question language namely about its essence then language must have already itself spoken to us. If we want to question the essence namely of language, we must have already been spoken to concerning what essence means.

(p.175)

The world revolves around language. One cannot take a stand outside the world one has experienced through language but it is possible to make out of this experience an object. Language transcends human experience and for years researchers have carefully examined language and its affect on human nature and understanding. According to Gadamer (1986) language is the most concealed of anything that humans can ever think of pondering. When humans think linguistically it makes the thought into a new object

that hides its own being by itself. Feher (2000) further comments on this ideology by saying that the world and language are interwoven. However, language is dependent in its relation to the world. The world is not just language and language has its own way of representing the world in itself. Language is so rich in terms of the way any message can be understood that parts or aspects of the potential message are always hidden. This applies also to dance. Dance is dependent on its relationship to the audience and hence the rest of the 'world' which views and practices it. In dance there is no such thing as complete and exhaustive interpretation because some of the message remains unrealized. The world of communication, however, is not just linguistic and when choreographers and dancers wish to present their ideas to the world, dance offers a distinctive manner in which to do so.

On the other hand, Heidegger (1962) stresses interpretation as appropriation of understanding that guides language users in an anticipatory manner. One can conclude that language is the universal medium in which understanding is reached. It is not a series of givens but a place where many meanings are constructed. Something similar could be concluded about dance. In the research project implemented, the result showed that there were several different (as well as several similar) understandings of the same subject viewed. Many meanings were read in the dance therefore many meanings must have been 'constructed' so to speak.

One of the first linguists to consider non-verbal modes as communicative was Roland Barthes. Building on the Saussurian concept of signifier and signified, Barthes added his analogy of the sign's notation to the sign's concept (Cobley, 1996). In some of his early work Barthes (1978) used signs as a model for the comprehension of cultural

events and art work and later he stressed the fact that signs must be seen as a combination of ‘signifier and signified’ thus enhancing his notion that signs have the ability to both denote and connote (Cobley, 1996). This is similar to the work of Derrida (1976) who stresses that without a specific context, meaning cannot exist. According to Foster, Barthes (along with Michael Foucault and Hayden White) argues that “reading and writing are forms of (bodily) inscription.” (1986, p. xix). It was this work that contributed to the placement of the body in the academic realm of communication.

### Semiotics and Understanding

Derrida (1976, 1973) highlights the vitality of written signs and posits that written signs have ‘semiotic independence’. According to Derrida, they are independent of any agent whether writers or readers or receivers whereas in a constructivists point of view they are not (1973). According to constructivists the meaning of a text resides in the mind of the writer and then in the mind of the reader. These meanings are bound to be different since they are constructed by individuals. Derrida, on the other hand, posits that a sign should be considered as an amalgamation of the signifier and the signified which occurs in a specified cultural and historical instance (1976). Thus the meaning of the sign is inseparable from the context or situation in which it exists. Derrida claims that spoken words do not have the independence that written words do. Written words can both exist and function independent from their authors whereas spoken words cannot. In this respect dancing is like oral language. Executing movement is not independent of the body therefore like spoken language, cannot exist without the body. Therefore, dancing is dependent on the body and cannot exist alone.

Gadamer claims that language is not only a combination of words but also a means of communication and this involves all human communication skills coming into play so that gestures as well as speaking/writing are important (1985). This highlights the concept of using the physical to further the communication process.

## Existentialia

According to Heidegger (Seung, 1982), existentialia is the manner in which a being exists in the world. He posits three layers, the first is *being situatedness*. This is the concern the person has with what he/she is and has been thus far (i.e. present and past). The second layer is *understanding*. This is the concern the person has with what he/she can and will be (i.e. ability and future possibility). The final and third layer is *discourse*. This is the ability to project human existence in a meaningful and articulated manner (i.e. use of communication methods and skills). This links into the ideas found in constructivism. A person must relate to what he/she is and how he/she reached that layer of awareness. Based on this the individual continues to learn and grow. According to Seung (1982), individuals, in order to be classified as such, must go beyond the “communal nexuses.” Individuals must establish themselves through “accomplishments and achievements.” However, the individual cannot do anything without a cultural legacy or heritage thus further enhancing his/her entwinement within the community. It is such dependence that blemishes the sense of individuality thus enhancing the anxiety of the modern world. It is the intertwining of self and community which lends meaning to the process of communication. When an audience is watching a dance each individual is attempting to understand the meaning in what they are viewing by relying on both their own personal experience and the communal culturally encoded understanding of what

specific movements mean. This, in a sense, is what Foster (1986) refers to as *codes and conventions* (see p. 75). Foster was influenced by British Philosopher David Best who (based on the influence of Ludwig Wittgenstein) insists that meanings must be concerned with communal norms. Irrespective of whether the meaning is emanating from movement or language, it is deciphered by how the movement or word is used in a specific context. When the correct use of the movement or word is mastered, we can communicate successfully based on the knowledge of the meaning and our dependence on the codes and conventions of an entire culture (1974). In this research project the use of focus groups interviews helps to clarify how this communal interpretation occurs particularly when viewing a dance.

### Art as Mimesis

According to Schirato and Webb (2004), mimesis is “ a term drawn from the writings of Aristotle and other Greek philosophers, meaning ‘imitation’, and used to describe any text or practice that is considered to reflect an external reality” (p. 196). Here I make reference to visual culture (art included) which sustains a mimesis of reality. This mimesis is a version of reality which is true to life from the perspective of the artist and his/her culture (Schirato and Webb, 2004). Visual culture is based on mimesis which in effect posits that the images we see are actually only imitations of the ideal (Schirato and Webb, 2004).

In support of the aforementioned idea, Gadamer (1985) maintains that modern painting no matter how much it avoids being mimetic, for example when Cubism uses conventional representations of objects, still is. Gadamer makes a distinction between what appears to be there and a replica of reality. Briefly, Gadamer is trying to prove that

even if art replicates a creation, concept or reality it does not necessarily mean that this reality exists outside of art. The artistic representations are not replicas of reality that can be clearly recognized without referring back to the work of art. What ‘works of art’ represent is only apparent in the representation itself. Some aspects of the works of art may be overblown and other features underrepresented. Hence, the work of art is not a mirror image of reality but it shows the artist’s “truth” of “reality.”

Gadamer further claims that art and aesthetic experience are types of knowledge. One observes a certain representation of an object in light of the truth that the representation suggests. Therefore, works of art are not only mimetic but also pedagogical. When one concentrates on certain aspects of object representation, one is taught more about the object than one comprehended before hand. For example, artists such as the impressionists teach their audiences to see objects and light from a different perspective. Based on Gadamer’s observation I speculate that dance can be a pedagogical tool, thus further clarification of how meaning exists in modern dance could led to developments in the field of education.

According to Kozel (1997), the theory of mimesis originated out of the need to explicate a division between life and art. Kozel points out that it was Noverre (the 18<sup>th</sup> century scholar and dancer) who realized that danced could be viewed in a similar light. Kozel believes that even though dance does contain mimicry (to a certain degree) it goes beyond that which it is attempting to mimic. This amount of excess is what gives the dance its artistic form. Kozel refers to this excess as *distortion*. Distortion does not mean ‘twisted’ as in out of shape or function; what Kozel means by distortion is a “challenge to the existing sense of order and normality” (1997, p.103). This challenge occurs through

the transformation and transgression of the normal. Here I cannot but ask myself, when I create dances do I mimic reality? As a choreographer, I attempt to present a picture of what I believe reality to be. In essence I am representing my own 'truth', and I do have an amount of transformation and transgression in the style in which I depict this reality. In the dance I created for this thesis, I was not creating a literal representation of the poem; instead, I created a representation of the words through movement. This is what I refer to as: a physical representation. I created a physical embodiment of the poem based on my knowledge, history and emotion, or as Kozel terms it: 'a distortion' of the poem. After analyzing the other choreographers' work I saw similar patterns in what they created for the same poem. Though the physical representations themselves were not similar, the approaches the different choreographers used were similar. In a sense, the reality I (and the other choreographers) created exists only in the dances (or pieces of art) and does not go beyond that. Audiences would then have to be able to relate to that reality or create one for themselves, thus constructing a manner of comprehension outside the norm of their current existence. In other words the audience is building (constructing) a new level of awareness and increasing their knowledge.

In general, if knowledge is a constant goal in human evolution, then it is insufficient to obtain an awareness of how meaning is represented in movement without the means to enhance, motivate and educate others about it. Hence educational frameworks to clarify and facilitate meaning acquisition from movement are of the utmost importance. Several academicians and researchers have developed frameworks which help in educating people about what meaning is in dance and movement (Humphrey, 1959; Laban, 1966; Hutchinson, 1970; Hanna, 1979; Foster, 1986, 1996,

1997; Adshead et.al. 1988; Novack, 1990; Franco, 1993; Farnell, 1994, 1995a and b, 1999; Ness, 1996; Kestenberg-Amighi et.al. 1999; Halprin, 2003; and Williams, 2004). However, this thesis strives to fill a gap in this body of knowledge by attempting to account for how meaning is produced in modern dance. Hence a look at some educational concepts of meaning construction is required and rationalized in the subsequent section of this chapter.

## CONSTRUCTIVISM: THE CONCEPT OF KNOWLEDGE

Constructivism is a fairly recent development in educational research. Within constructivism there are many different emphases though one theme is prevalent: “students do not simply absorb conceptual knowledge; they actively *construct* it by combining and reorganizing preexisting bodies of knowledge.” (Spiro et.al., 1995). According to von Glasersfeld (who has written extensively in the field of constructivism), understanding is a much more essential concept when we stop thinking of knowledge as an independent entity and instead relate it to our experiences (1995). According to constructivists, there are two ways of dealing with knowledge: the abstract concepts and the concrete ones. Von Glaserfeld states, “When the word existence is applied to the world that is supposed to be independent of our experiencing (i.e., an ontological world), it loses its meaning and cannot make any sense.” (1995, p.7).

According to von Glaserfeld, we cannot afford to forget that knowledge does not exist outside a person’s mind. It is also imperative to understand that the conceptual structures that make up an individual’s knowledge or meaning schemata are not ones that can alternatively be used from one person to the other. Each individual has his/her own constructs and mutual compatibility in language use comes from social interaction, not

from individual conceptual structure (1996). Von Glasersfeld draws attention to the fact that in order to reach this compatibility one must work through a certain amount of accommodation that will eventually level to achieve harmony with others. Even though he considers language an important tool in communication and a helpful guide for the student down the path of his/her conceptual construction, he emphasizes that it does not transport meanings or concepts (von Glasersfeld 1984, 1996).

Von Glaserfeld discusses the notion of viability and eliminates the concept that there is one truth that describes any given concept. Thus, practically, there is more than one description to solve a problem or to reach a certain aim, depending on one's experience and current concern (1995). Before further explaining the field of constructivism, let us take a look at its development.

### Development of Constructivism

Two leaders in the field of constructivism are Jean Piaget and Lev Vygotsky. The work of both theorists has been critically analyzed through the years but this has not lessened the impact their ideas have on the educational system in general and research in education in specific. Though both Piaget and Vygotsky are constructivists and share similarities in their approaches and ideologies, they also have several notable differences. Table 2.1 (p. 40) highlights the similarities and differences in their approaches.

Table 2.1: The Similarities and Differences in Piaget’s and Vygotsky’s Constructivism

| Piaget   | Vygotsky   | Both  |
|--|--|---|
| Knowledge is formed or constructed (invention)   | Social and cultural factors influence intellectual development (transmission)  | Knowledge is adaptation and individual construction (constructivism)      |
| Development is the main motivator in intellectual development                                | Learning is the main motivator in intellectual development                     | Development and Learning are self regulated                               |
| New construction is always built on prior construction                                       | Zone of actual development vs. Zone of proximal development                    | Development/ learning is not automatic                                    |
| Social interaction leads to social knowledge   | Social interaction plays a fundamental role in intellectual development        | Social interactions are important (though each has different reasons why) |
| Language acquisition facilitates, but is not necessary for intellectual development to occur | Language acquisition leads to improved intellectual development                |   |
| Knowledge reconstruction is based on socially provoked disequilibrium                        | Knowledge construction is mediated by social factors                           |   |
| Interaction with the social environment is necessary for disequilibrium                      | Interaction with the social environment is a source for models of construction | Development/ Learning is an active process                                |

Information in the above table is an accumulation from the following sources: Wadsworth 1996; Lester 1994; Fowler 1994; Zimmerman 1983; Piaget, 1971; Piaget 1973; Vygotsky, 1962

As can be seen in table 2.1, Piaget and Vygotsky were both concerned with intellectual development. Piaget, however, was concerned with how knowledge is formed or constructed in the mind of the individual while Vygotsky was concerned with how social and cultural factors influence intellectual development (Wadsworth, 1996; Lester, 1994). Based on issues I noticed in my research, knowledge is adaptive as far as it allows for the individual interpretation that we find in dance and dances while it is also a major function in developing an individual’s sense of reality. I also agree with both Piaget and Vygotsky in that knowledge is both constructed and acquired through social and cultural exposure and development.

In learning and development, Piaget and Vygotsky differ. Piaget believed that development itself is the driving force in intellectual development whereas Vygotsky believed that learning is the driving force (Wadsworth, 1996). As a teacher/choreographer/researcher, I find that there is an intrinsic link between learning

and developing so that to consider one without the other would not fully describe the resulting experience.

According to sources, language is yet another area in which the two researchers differed. Vygotsky viewed the acquisition of language as causing an improvement in thinking and reasoning whereas Piaget viewed language acquisition as enabling symbolic functioning (ability to use symbols to represent). In Piaget's view, symbolic functioning reflects intellectual development but does not produce it (Wadsworth, 1996; Piaget 1971, 1973; Vygotsky 1962). Piaget thus believed that language reflects intelligence but does not produce it. The only way to advance to a higher intellectual level is through action not through language (Fowler, 1994). Thus, whether or not we acquire language, we are developing and this development leads humans to acquire a system of communication. When exposed to the need to communicate, human beings find a manner in which to get the message across. This manner builds upon prior learning and exposure. When an audience views a dance it receives a message. This might not be the exact intended message of the choreographer, but a message is deciphered through the decoding system of the individual audience member and is valid in relation to the constructed knowledge of that viewer. This emphasizes the idea of knowledge being adaptive.

### Knowledge is Adaptive

Piaget (in von Glaserfeld, 1995) sees knowledge as adaptive which means that one can adapt one's knowledge to the task at hand by thinking of this knowledge as a treatise of actions and notions that are likely to prove successful to that specific task.

Both Piaget and Vygotsky agreed that construction of knowledge is important. Vygotsky, however, considered the construction of knowledge contingent on the

instructors and the educational program, as it depended crucially on social interaction, whereas Piaget perceived the construction of knowledge as purely the individual's (Wadsworth 1996). According to Piaget, to understand is to invent:

A student who achieves certain knowledge through free investigation and spontaneous effort will later be able to retain it; he will have acquired a methodology that can serve him for the rest of his life (Piaget, 1973, in Wadsworth, 1996, p.147).

I consider that both the innate and the environmental factors are crucial in acquiring and deciphering meaning and the research project results highlight this issue. Results in the study show that when audiences view dance they look to acquire or decipher meaning based on what they have acquired through life experience and learning. A factor which plays a large role in life experience is society and how the individual interacts in it.

### The Importance of Social Interaction

A final, but nonetheless crucial, matter of difference between Piaget and Vygotsky is social interaction. von Glaserfeld in his discussion of the importance of social interaction (1995) comments that Piaget has been criticized for not including the social aspect in his constructivist theory but points out that throughout his writings Piaget always mentioned social interaction and how it affects one's understanding and knowledge (1995). Vygotsky viewed social interaction as means for modeling, thus allowing the learner to construct a meaning of his/her own (which of course will be modeled on that which is seen) whereas Piaget viewed social interaction as necessary for

acquiring that which he called disequilibrium. According to Piaget, disequilibrium is a state of cognitive conflict where expectations are not fulfilled (Wadsworth, 1996). In the project which was developed for this thesis, the individual's experiences and construction of meaning were imperative. Furthermore modeling was apparent in how these constructions were proceeding. A lot can be said about both Piaget and Vygotsky; however, the most important is that they are both unmistakably constructivists and both contributed immensely to the field of education and intellectual development.

Let us take a closer look at some of Piaget's work in order to understand in more depth the process of intellectual organization and adaptation which he developed. Piaget posited four cognitive concepts: Schema, Assimilation, Accommodation, and Equilibration. To start with, schemata are the cognitive or mental structures by which individuals intellectually adapt to and organize the environment. Schemata change throughout development and because of these changes, allowances must be made for the growth and development of the learner (Wadsworth, 1996). Piaget also discussed the concept of assimilation. Assimilation is the cognitive process by which individuals integrate new perceptual, motor or conceptual matter into existing schemata or patterns of behavior. The next phase in Piaget's framework is accommodation. Accommodation is the creation of new schemata when the learner is confronted with new stimulus for which he/she has no existing schema (Wadsworth 1996). According to Piaget, assimilation and accommodation work together to drive the development and growth of the learner, where development is a qualitative change and growth is a quantitative change. This growth and development is what accounts for the intellectual progress of the learner (Piaget, 1971; Wadsworth, 1996). The final phase in Piaget's framework is that of equilibration.

Equilibration is the process of moving from disequilibrium (a state of imbalance between assimilation and accommodation and mentioned in the previous section) to equilibrium (a state of balance between assimilation and accommodation) (Piaget, 1971; Wadsworth, 1996). The process of equilibration is a necessary phase for the growth of the learner. The learner will continue to assimilate and accommodate the information until balance is reached. At this stage, the learner will have developed a new schema; and this new development is what Piaget and constructivists in general qualify as growth. So relating this to dance from an audience's stand point, the viewer will watch the dance and either recognize concepts/ideas based on previously developed schemata or will assimilate and accommodate until a new schema is developed, hence reaching the state of equilibrium. Does this allow for the viewer to consider areas of awareness and interest as well as areas of total lack of comprehension? This will be discussed in detail in chapter four. However, in brief it seems to be the motivation of the viewer which allows for some kind of code deciphering to take place. The viewer wishes to obtain some type of message or idea from the dance he/she is watching thus motivating him/her to continue assimilating and accommodating until equilibrium of some kind is reached. Looking at different ideologies in research, I found that one of the greatest differences between traditional (empiricists) and constructivist views of learner development and growth is the idea of motivation. For empiricists motivation is viewed as external to the learner with its main mechanism being reinforcement, whereas constructivists view motivation as an internally driven means for the construction of knowledge (Wadsworth, 1996).

Piaget is considered to be the father of Cognitive and Affective Development Theory (a constructivist approach) whereas Vygotsky is the father of Social

Constructivism (another constructivist approach). The basic premise behind social constructivism is that learning happens in a sociocultural atmosphere and learners are “active constructors of their own learning environment” (Mitchell and Myles, 1988, p. 162 in Yang and Wilson, 2006 p. 365). Vygotsky’s approach is based on four main premises: Dialogue, Purpose/Motivation, Scaffolding, and Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) (Vygotsky, 1978; Yang and Wilson, 2006). Dialogue is what Vygotsky referred to as the inter- and intra- mental process of understanding. In the case of the intermental, the interactivity is between the learner and the teacher or even the learner and the text that is being studied, whereas the intramental process is the action that takes place in the learner’s mind. The interaction in this case is between the learner and him/herself (Vygotsky, 1978). As previously mentioned, this is the case when an audience member is viewing dance (rather than discussing it) and hence the reason why social constructivism is a more appropriate theoretical framework for dance in the case of my project. The next notion is what Vygotsky calls purpose or motivation (1978). Yang and Wilson (2006) cite Lantolf (2000) who refers to this stage as “activity theory”. Whatever this stage may be called it basically means that the learner deals with input and stimulus differently depending on what the purpose of the activity is. According to Yang and Wilson (2006), teachers can play a substantial role in this by setting up environments for different learning purposes, but it is still the student’s point of view that matters most (2006). In the case of the viewer-performer-performance relationship, the performance is the environment and the performer and the choreographer (if the performance is dance) are responsible for setting up the situation.

The next notion in the Vygotskian approach is scaffolding. Scaffolding is the term used to refer to the support which surrounds the learner. This support can come from other people such as teachers and peers and it can also come from things such as reference books and articles (Vygotsky, 1978). The proper amount and type of scaffolding can allow the learner to achieve growth and development, but if improperly used it hinders growth and development. Focus group interviews which were implemented in this project exemplify how scaffolding can help in enhancing the learning experience.

The notion of scaffolding is connected to the final phase of Vygotsky's approach, the ZPD (zone of proximal development). It is the range within which the learner is capable of expanding his/her capacity to acquire knowledge through scaffolding (1978). According to Yang and Wilson (2006), teachers need a lot of skill in order to develop their learner's ZPDs (2006). This is a challenging aspect to deal with when considering dance performances and audiences' ability to comprehend meaning from them since a dance performance is not usually considered 'education'. Though Vygotsky referred to education per se, I consider that the ZPD notion can be applied to development and construction of knowledge in any context. For example in the case of a dance performance, there is not often a substantial amount of scaffolding available beyond the 'help' from the performance brochure and other audience members. Later, after the performance, some audience members may discuss issues with the choreographer and request help in dealing with comprehension.

An interesting study carried out in Canada by Early (2001) deals with social constructivism and Mohan's Knowledge Framework (Mohan, 1986). In the study, the

researcher dealt with issues pertaining to how learners processed information based on what they previously knew. In addition, issues such as ZPDs were taken into consideration and the results verified that using existing knowledge framework along with social interaction allows for overall better learning retention and comprehension, once again clarifying the way learners comprehend. Even though a dance performance may not be a learning situation per se, it is a communicative exchange between the dancer-choreographer and the receiver (audience) where information is processed. Just as Early advises her academic counterparts to engage in the use of knowledge framework and a social constructivist approach to help students achieve better learning, choreographers, dancers and audience members could also achieve advanced levels of comprehension through interaction with each other. One area of body movement/dance which currently utilizes this method is improvisation. Teachers and dancers share information and feelings (experience) both at the beginning and the end of an improvisation class and this helps in enhancing the newly acquired knowledge/experience for all involved. I do believe that knowledge framework and social constructivism could also help in exemplifying the manner in which modern dance conveys meaning thus enhancing the field of modern dance along the academic continuum.

In the early part of this chapter, I highlighted the similarities and differences between Piaget's and Vygotsky's approaches to growth and development. I find that Piaget's approach is more relevant to younger learners and Vygotsky's to older or more mature learners. Both schools of thought are applicable at different levels of my project; however, in the overall study of my research project, I feel that looking at issues from a social constructivist approach is more appropriate. As for the project implemented in this

thesis, I found myself swayed in the direction of Vygotsky, which is towards social interaction. Because a dance performance is not exactly a learning situation, it is helpful to take a look at some ideas found in the literature about constructivism and the arts.

## Constructivism and the Arts

According to Maxine Greene, who wrote an article dealing specifically with the arts and constructivism, constructivism brings together different lines of thought on how human consciousness makes sense of its surroundings through interactions with the world (1998). This could be describing dance and how dance is used in the world today, specifically modern or contemporary dance, particularly since constructivism focuses on the learner (Olivares, 2002). To further clarify, it is the focus of the choreographer to attend to the needs and perceptions of the dancer(s) and the audience. This could be compared to the role of the writer in writing but in dance there is a co-author which is the dancer. In most situations the audience watching dance is viewing the choreographers 'thoughts' transmitted through the dancer(s) body/ies.

According to Greene, today's teachers in the arts and humanities are supposed to transcend their self-conscious thinking in order to engage their students and enable them to think beyond the painting, the dance, the poem or the novel (1996 p.121). Greene also mentions how encounters with the arts become somewhat paradigmatic when we evoke Piaget's notions of assimilation and accommodation. Here again we are looking into the idea of developing individual understanding based on what we previously know or can adapt to.

Greene reminds us that the aesthetic experience is the move from that which we know to that which we would like to know (1996). Understanding the arts in this manner

(reading or interpreting beyond what is already known) creates a new experience in any given person. Breaking away from the ordinary is typical of the aesthetic encounter. The reader or the audience is trying to add to his/her own experience by breaking away from conventional interpretation. He/she is trying to link, or reshape his/her perspectives based on what he is reading/viewing and interpreting, thereby constructing a new world of realities where imagination plays a major role (Greene, 1996).

The way art is interpreted depends to a large extent on the amount of sensory details which emanate from the work of art (Winner, 1982). To adults, children's paintings or drawings are very expressive and replete; yet, that expressiveness may not be clear to the children themselves, whereas a painting that embodies colorful bright colors may express unwitting joviality (Winner, 1982). Dance is one of the more sensory art styles for the main reason that it includes the body in its form. The audience viewing the dance can relate to the corporeal sensations and expressions embodied in the movement based on their knowledge of their own physicality. As Greene mentions, the audience is reshaping and linking their perspectives based on what they are interpreting. It would be difficult for the audience at a dance performance to not relate to the sensory issues the body portrays. Fraleigh (1987) elaborates on dance being a more sensory art form, even for an audience, and she says:

The dance of someone else may become a part of me not distinctly but dissolved in my own consciousness .... I dance the dance with the dancer, enact it, dissolve it, and take it into myself. In this sense, I also embody the dance. The dance may cease to be other for me when I enact it in

my own experience. Then the dancer's dance also becomes my dance.... Dance derives from the pleasure we take in being body,.... (p.62).

For example, in March 2007 a modern dance performance was presented in Bahrain. In one of the scenes, the male and female dancers wore form fitting unitards (while in Bahrain there are strict dress codes which pertain to both men and women) and expressed love making through dance movements. The ethical police of Bahrain later accused the modern dance troupe of committing a sin because they enticed the audience making them feel sensations which are considered shameful in Bahraini society. The audience in Bahrain seems to have felt the interpretation the dancers were aiming to express thus exemplifying the idea of dance being one of the more sensory art forms.

Art, be it a painting, a dance (body in motion), prose, sound or film, is somewhat temporary regardless of the system of symbol interpretation. However, a constructivist will not accept the fact that there is the same set of phenomena representing all arts (Greene, 1996). Putting it in simple terms, constructivism is a school of theoretical thought regarding knowledge and intellectual development. According to constructivists (who are researchers or other professionals who work within a constructivist theoretical framework), people build on prior knowledge and construct worlds wittingly. For example, a poet cannot write new poetry if there is not a conscious world around him/her that inspires him/her (Greene, 1996). The same could be said about dance. A choreographer cannot create dances if he/she does not have inspiration from the world around him/her. It is the process of taking inspiration, embodying it through movement, and then transmitting it to the audience that this thesis strives to clarify.

The way one constructs meanings is not 100% arbitrary which means that there are not an indefinite number of interpretations for a given piece of art or work of literature (Iser, 1978 in Greene, 1996). Iser insists on the fact that a reader brings his own schema to the text he/she is trying to interpret (Iser, 1978 in Greene, 1996). A similar process occurs when an audience is watching dance. A dance audience is interpreting new material the same way the reader is interpreting new material.

Greene (1996) urges her readers to reflect on what they read and to think of the meanings they are reading and challenge them. In a dance situation, the choreographer is also asking the audience to think of what they are seeing and what this means to them.

A final idea comes from Dufrenne (1978a, 1978b), who considers art an embodiment of the culture and society in which it is found. According to Dufrenne, an artist is not capable of creating art until he/she is capable of autonomy and understanding of self. If the understanding does not exist then there is no meaning to be portrayed and hence no message or communication to be understood.

In summary, meaning interpretation is based on the individual and he or she reacts to and interacts with his or her society. Consequently, comprehension is receiver based and this makes the job of the sender more difficult. I suggest that modern dance (and all dance in general) can benefit from knowing more details about how audiences decipher movement, thus this thesis has a place in the continuum of dance education. A brief look at some of the details of choreography and body movement will help clarify this proposal.

## DANCE AND CHOREOGRAPHY: BODY COMMUNICATION

Before delving into some of the literature on dance and choreography and its link to body communication, I would like to highlight a few issues around the body and its placement in the communication realm.

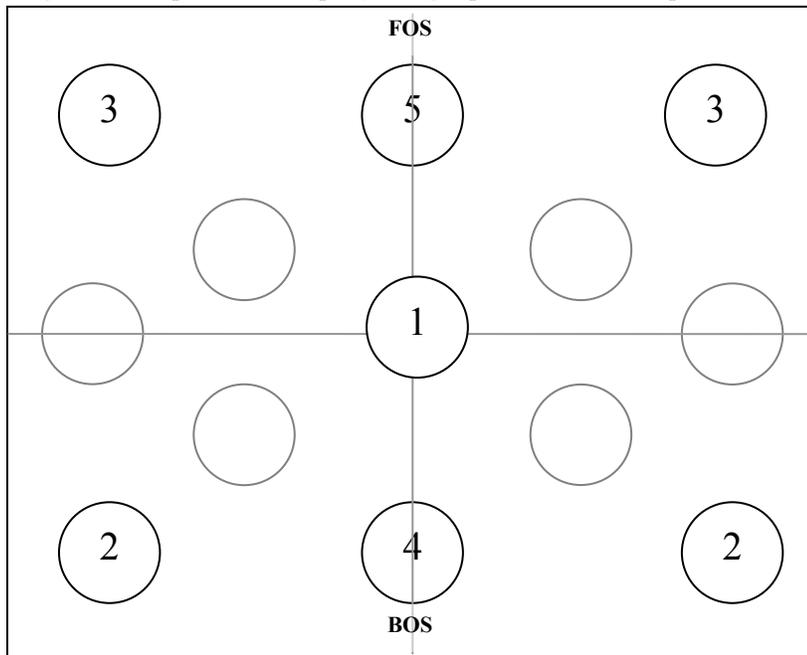
Foster (1997) views the body as “the sum of all” the words that can describe it. She posits that the body is a communicative vessel insofar as it portrays situations which a viewer (maybe an audience member) can relate to and understand. She also adds that the body has and is being used in critical writing (about the body) as either an ephemeral or theoretical vessel. She questions the whereabouts of the body that contains and expresses ideas, and this questioning led her to specific realizations. She maintains that technique (dance) through the years has been very specific as to what type of body it wished to create. For example, a classical ballet dancer must have specific body physique whereas modern dance dancers have intrinsic freedom and expression of self. These explanations vary according to dance technique. However, Foster (1997) discusses a new concept of body which she terms “the hired body”. This concept falls more in line with my concept of the body and how it is used or maintained in expression/communication. Foster’s ‘hired body’ is one which was born out of necessity (new choreographic measures which involved interdisciplinary performance genres) and requires a multitalented multifaceted body type (1997). According to Foster (1997) this new ‘body’ melds several of the previous techniques into one and also enhances aspects of strength and agility which are often found in athletes. This type of body is one which works for choreographers of today. Foster is critical of the ‘hired body’ and refers to it as self alienated body which strives to portray the message given to it (1997). She says,

“Uncommitted to any aesthetic vision, it is a body for hire: it trains in order to make a living at dancing.” (Foster, 1997, p.255). Nonetheless, in my opinion, it is the need to enhance communication through body ‘movement’ which has given ‘birth’ to this new type of body and not simply a need to make a ‘living at dancing’. Contrary to Foster’s critique, I view the hired body as one which is needed in the ‘interdisciplinary multifaceted communicative’ world of today. This body (similar to multiple language speakers) is a multi-expressive self which strives to build an aesthetic of its own, one where the multitude of movement dimensions overlaps to create a meaningful understanding of the body’s existence in the contemporary world. Therefore in order to better comprehend how this communication is achieved we must first understand more about dance/movement and its significance.

### Spatial Awareness and Importance

One aspect the body must adhere to in its struggle to communicate is ‘use of space’. Without space the body has no channel through which to convey its meaning. According to Humphrey (1959), there are natural meanings in the use of stage space in dance. Humphrey argues that dance has a use of stage space that is unique and not related to the theater or drama use of space. For Humphrey, there are six ‘weak’ areas and seven ‘strong’. As can be seen in the figure below, these seven areas are not considered linear; they are positioned in increasing and overlapping order of importance.

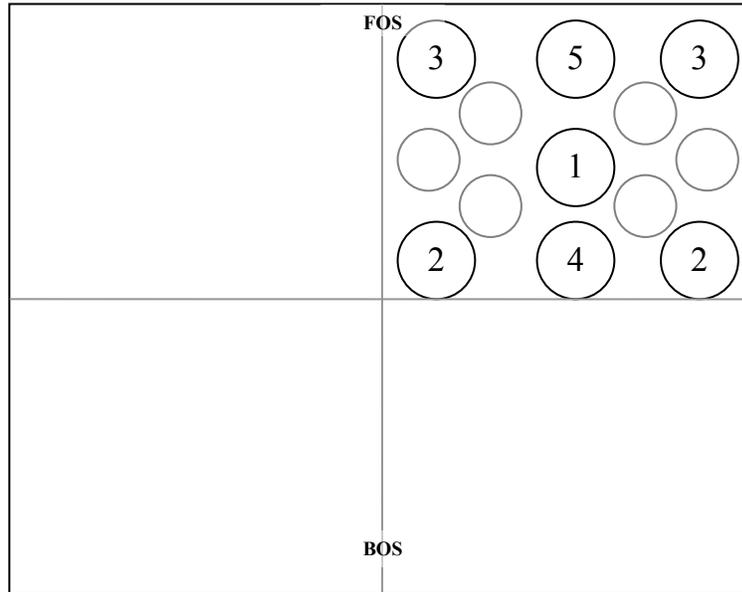
Figure 2.2: Adapted from Humphrey's Stage Space Divisions of Importance



The most important place is in the center with the second most important places being upstage, or back of stage (FOS means front of stage; BOS means back of stage) right and left. The third place of importance is downstage (FOS) once again to the left and right. Note that the important places are on the corners of the space and not just to the left or right of center. Humphrey places the final two areas of importance at the front and back of center (along the same line with center) however, the upstage place (BOS) is considered more important than the downstage (FOS) place. Much of Humphrey's analysis referred to lighting and the manner in which the stage space could be lit. Some of the advancements made in stage lighting today have placed these areas in a different light so to speak. A choreographer today can maneuver his/her place of importance to other areas of the stage. It would, however, be incorrect to say that Humphrey's work was no longer valid. We still consider the center as the most important position, even though a choreographer can adapt his/her space to contain more than one center, i.e. if a

choreographer chooses to use only one quadrant of the stage, he/she allows him/herself to place a center within that quadrant, so the stage spacing could possibly look like figure 2.3 below.

Figure 2.3: A Possible Move of Importance Placement (Staged Dance)



In such a situation, this does not mean that the importance of number one is no less than that of number one in figure 2.2; it is just a shift of staging. In addition, not all dance is created and preformed on a stage. However, wherever the dance may be it is presented in a particular form. Consequently staging has occurred and the issues of spacing considered. In my study, I was concerned with the issue of the prop I used (a chair) and what this prop and its spatial placement might do to the overall meaning. I was also concerned with the issue of general spacing in the dance because for most of the performances the dancer was in close proximity with the audience (confined space).

In addition, I was concerned with the issue of multicultural audiences and whether or not the concepts of space which Humphrey details could apply to other than western culture. I was reminded of the work Kress and van Leeuwen who looked at spacing and

how this affects the message which is being portrayed through the use of the visual. Kress (2000) mentions that their semiotic visual plan (made for two-dimensional study) is based on western culture and can be both changed and adapted to fit with any culture. The western cultures write from left to right hence giving the left the area of what is already known (given) and the right usually contains that which is arrived to (new) where as in the Middle East this may not be seen the same since writing Arabic moves from right to left. I questioned whether this was the same with respect to Humphrey's study. Kress does mention that "other distributions of space are possible and are in use in different cultures." (2000, p. 200). He also highlights the issue of pluri-cultural societies and how they may have several versions of the plan. Nevertheless, how does this affect dance and the manner in which audiences view dance? The first concern that came to mind was whether or not a choreographer could manage to get across a message to a pluri-cultural society. I was concerned because Lebanon (the country in which I choreograph) is such a culture. I had already implemented my survey and focus group studies when I came across the above mentioned literature, and finding this literature made me even more interested in viewing how different choreographers would approach the same task, hence the choreography analysis section in my project was added. More about the specifics of the study are discussed in chapter four.

### The Body, Dance, and the Communication Continuum

Several dance academicians have done extensive work in the field of dance and communication, one of them is Judith Lynne Hanna (1987). She has done work in the field of non-verbal communication paying particular attention to dance as a communicative tool. Gathering information about dance and comparing it to aspects of

language she has been able to build a solid foundation for dance as an entity of human behavior and thus a tool for interaction. Hanna explains that dance may be used for many communicative situations such as:

1. Providing information necessary to preserve cultural patterns.
2. Providing information necessary to help attain goals.
3. Providing information necessary to help in adapting to a new environment.
4. Providing information to help in integration or change. (1979, p. 26)

If any or all of these are true then we should have no problem in accepting dance as a tool of communication and all we need is to create a more structured mode for its use. One method to achieve this would be to investigate the manner in which people perceive meaning in dance and also how choreographers and dancers portray meaning through dance. The information provided through such a type of investigation could be relevant to a person, a group or a society at large.

Dance may support or refute the intended meaning by using repetition, augmentation, illustration, linguistic, paralinguistic, or other non-verbal communication forms (Hanna, 1979, p. 26, see the table 2.2 below).

Table 2.2: Definition and Examples of Dance Communication Styles/Techniques

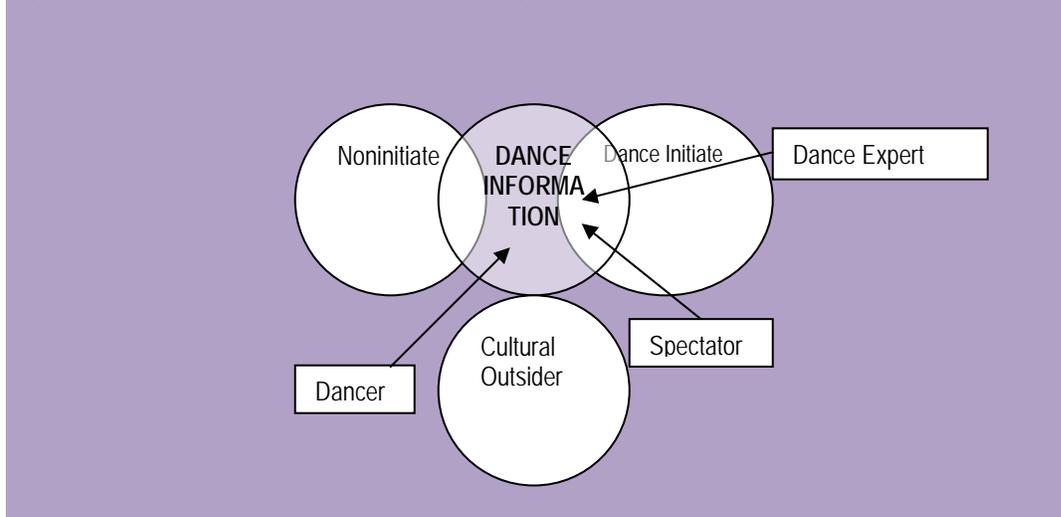
|                                      |  |
|--------------------------------------|--|
| Repetition                           | A movement (phrase) can be repeated. This will emphasize the main idea.  |
| Augmentation                         | A movement (phrase) can exaggerate or highlight the main idea.   |
| Illustration                         | A movement (phrase) can depict the idea. A replica of the thought or idea being expressed.                               |
| Linguistic                           | Verbal language or linguistic forms of communication can be added to the kinesic language to further exemplify the idea. |
| Paralinguistic                       | The voice or use of voice could be added to the kinesic communication to further exemplify the idea.                     |
| Other Non-Verbal Communication Forms | Example→ Visuals, Props, Music can all be used to add to the movement. These will help in clarifying the idea.           |

Regardless of the style of dance used, it is important to note that within a given culture there are varying degrees of comprehension. Issues such as age, sex, occupation, political belief can allow for margins of difference in understanding symbols (semiotics) of movement. This idea once again highlights the point that not all people 'see' and comprehend things the same way. Hence, the audience would need to construct levels of comprehension or knowledge which would correspond to their understanding (or culture) thus allowing them to comprehend the meaning of the message in the dance.

## Dance Culture

Some dance 'behavior' has a shared or common meaning with the spectator and some is intended to be interactive in that it attempts to evoke a response from the spectator. However both the dancer and the spectator possess cultural information about the body. In this sense, they both belong to a movement/dance culture. Birdwhistell explains in his *Kinesics and Context: Essays on Body Motion*, "humans move and belong to movement communities just as they speak and belong to speech communities....there are kinesic [body motion] languages and dialects which are learned by cultural members just as speech is learned" (1970, p. 39-40). Thus people who share information about body movements (values, beliefs, interpretations) belong to a 'movement community'. We cannot expect the cultural 'outsider' to have the same information as the dancer or the local spectator, just as in speech communities we do not expect people from outside the community to understand what is being conveyed, particularly if they do not understand the language. In figure 2.4 (p.59) Hanna attempts depicting this visually.

Figure 2.4: Realms of Dance Understanding adapted from Hanna (1987) p.27.



As the figure shows, the outsider has no connection to the dance information, however the dancer and local spectator do. A local spectator is included in the cultural realm of dance because he/she is participating through viewing. This means that any outsider can join the community if he/she views dance (they do not have to be a dancer or mover). However with respect to Hanna (as depicted in figure 2.4), does this mean that any spectator, even if just casual glances, of dance is as knowledgeable as a dance expert and dancer? According to the figure it seems so, but I have to disagree with this classification. Nonetheless I do agree that a spectator shares more dance information with the other categories than does the cultural outsider. The viewing process is a crucial part of dance culture. A dance performance cannot be delivered if there is not an audience to deliver it to. One might argue that a dancer could execute a dance by him/herself in the rehearsal studio (or even on stage without an audience) and that would still be a dance, and I would surely agree. However, I would argue that the dancer is a spectator of his/her dancing, particularly in spaces where mirrors are utilized. The idea of audience and the viewing process is further built upon in the thesis study through investigations into how the

audience deciphers meaning-form relationships. In the study it was important that the audience view the dance live. At one point in the initial structuring of the study I considered showing the audience video tapped dances and then asking them to explain in detail what each aspect meant to them, but I decided against it because I am primarily concerned with how audiences decipher meaning spontaneously through the viewing process, thus the live performance was crucial to my investigation.

## MULTIMODALITY: A MULTI-LAYERED APPROACH TO COMMUNICATION

Communication is a layered procedure often using one or more modes to achieve its aim. For example, an advertisement in a magazine might use a photograph and a slogan as means of delivering an idea. In this case the communication process relies on two modes: visual and verbal; the intended result being the comprehension of a complex message. Even though the past decades have seen verbal languages in the predominate position of use, the movement towards globalization and rapid advancements in technology are placing emphasis on the integration of other modes of communication (such as visual and kinesic) into the field. The focus of this shift to include other modes of communication is to aid in clarifying meaning. In an attempt to ‘globalize’ our ideas and messages we use different modes of communication because not all the inhabitants in our ‘global village’ understand and speak the same verbal or nonverbal languages. Consequently, a more diversified approach to communication needs to come into play; hence *multimodality* has become an essential concern in the field. The need to understand how dance fits into this multimodal field of communication is a reason for further research. This thesis attempts to introduce modern dance to communication studies by investigating how it produces meaning.

## The Need for New Grammars

Macken-Horarik, (2004) points out that the emergence of multimodality corresponds with linguistic analysts and researchers facing the limitations of linguistic grammars: “Consequently one is forced to look at new semiotic grammars that are sensitive to the characters and contours of specific modalities and responsive to their interplay in texts...” (Macken-Horarik, 2004, p. 5). The emergence of new semiotic grammars has been discussed in the works of Kress and van Leeuwen, particularly in their book titled *Reading Images: the Grammar of Visual Design* (1996). Kress and van Leeuwen focus on the idea of analyzing multimodal texts using terminology that would be compatible with any of the modes of communication. In further explanation of their work, Kress and van Leeuwen discuss how ‘visual lexis’ expresses aesthetic and pragmatic descriptions. They criticize most researchers for studying grammar in isolation from meaning and I believe this is what is the case in most dance studies I have encountered (Laban, 1966; Hutchinson, 1970, 2005; Hanna, 1979; Smith-Autard, 2005) . However, Kress and van Leeuwen choose to see grammar forms as “resources for encoding interpretations of experience and forms of social (inter)action” (Kress and van Leeuwen, 1996, p.1). Kress and van Leeuwen were influenced by the work of Halliday who has done extensive research on grammar. He states: “A language, then, is a system for making meaning: a semantic system, with other systems for encoding the meanings it produces.” In other words, it is meaning which determines structure (Halliday, 1985, p 17). From that perspective, any communicative form could be considered a language as long as meaning is encoded and comprehended. Hence it is essential to be able to study if and how meaning is encoded in modern dance if it is to be a more accessible means of

communication. This was one of the rationales behind undertaking this research project and is discussed in later chapters.

In light of the fact that there are new ways to study and evaluate communication, and researchers in linguistics and communication have pondered new territory such as grammars for visual designs, it seems relevant to ‘move down the track’ to formulate a ‘grammar’ for kinesics (specifically dance). This can only become a reality if we can understand better how meaning is constructed in dance. This is the reason why this research project was undertaken.

### Grammar for Visual Modes

If we have forms of grammar for written language and spoken language, then it would not be surprising if other modes of communication also had grammars. One modality which has been the subject of many studies is visual communication. Kress and van Leeuwen (1996) discuss the relevance of a grammar for other communicative modalities other than language. They describe the manner in which people, places and things depicted in visual design, rather than simply vocabulary, combine together to make visual statements. What was once considered the field of specialists only (visual design) is now more predominant and crucial in the field of public communication (Kress and van Leeuwen 1996, pp.1-3). More and more people are developing the sense that structure and analysis are needed to ‘speak and comprehend’ the language of the visual.

Inevitably this [need] will lead to new, and more rules, and to more formal, normative teaching. Not being ‘visually literate’ will begin to attract social sanctions and ‘visual

literacy' will begin to be a matter of survival, especially in the workplace (Kress and van Leeuwen, 1996, p. 3).

Just as functional grammar begins with the question of meaning, the grammar of visual design begins with the understanding of meaning. The recognition and awareness of the message when communicated visually comes from the function of the visual and the awareness and perception of the viewer. Kress and van Leeuwen also make the point that visual grammar is not universal. The grammar of visual design is a culturally specific one (Kress and van Leeuwen, 1996, p. 3). Just as different cultures have different verbal languages, they also have different spatial perspectives as well. Dance deals with space in its attempt to communicate. It would seem that different perspectives of space also would cause different meanings to come across when spectators are viewing dance. This research project deals with issues of space with respect to choreography (see details in chapter four).

## Grammar of Movement and Dance

Another viewpoint of grammar comes from Hutchison (1970). Claiming that movement has a grammar and syntax, she says: "Dance is a language of expressive gestures through which non-verbal communication can be achieved. Like verbal language, it has basic parts of speech" (Hutchinson, 1970, p.17). Hutchinson classifies the basic elements of movement into three categories: nouns (Table 2.3), adverbs (Table 2.4) and verbs (Figure 2.5). She states that though there are adjectives, they occur so rarely that they are better not considered (Hutchinson, 1970, p.17). Hutchinson's idea about adjectives and their occurrence can be disputed because movements themselves are adjectives in dance. For example, circling the arm, this is a movement and this is

describing the movement the arm is making. Some might argue that the movement itself should be considered a noun as well, but this makes the relevance of the movement with respect to the body more difficult to understand. When the body part is the noun, the movement gives more meaning to it similar to the function of an adjective in verbal languages. For example, Green, might in and of itself be used as a noun in particular cases but when used with the word tree it gives ‘tree’ more meaning. Hence in the example of the circling arm, a circle can be a noun but when used as a movement that is done by the ‘arm’, it is an adjective. Below are the tables and figures which depict Hutchinson’s divisions.

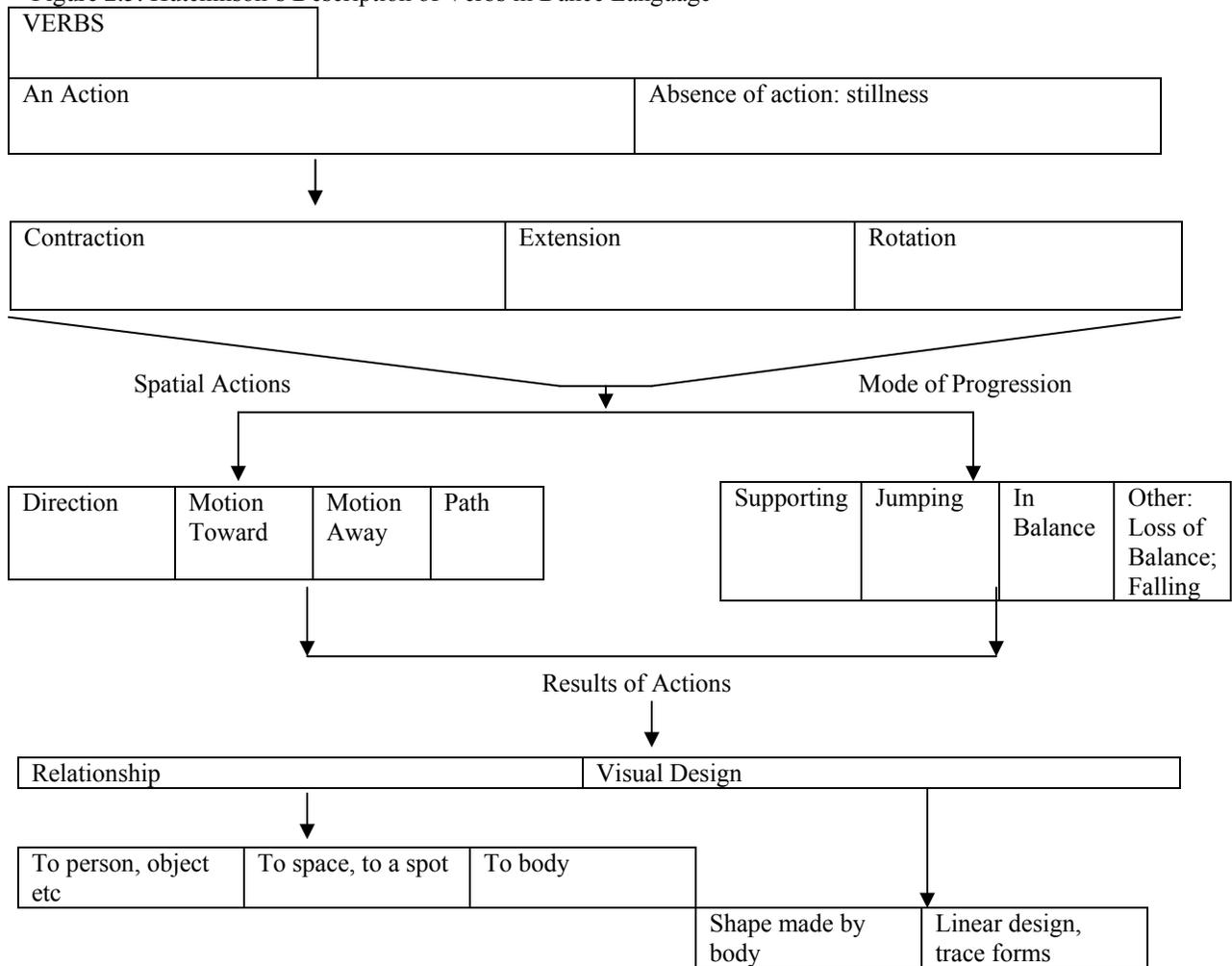
Table 2.3: Hutchinson’s Description of Nouns in Dance Language

|   |  |
|---|--|
| NOUNS   |  |
| The individual parts of the body which move   |  |
| A partner or other person to whom movement is related                                       |  |
| Parts of the room to which the performer must proceed or toward which gestures are directed |  |
| Objects or properties which are carried or handled  |  |

Table 2.4: Hutchison’s Description of Adverbs in Dance Language

|  |  |
|--|--|
| ADVERBS  |  |
| Timing: Sudden or Sustained, or any specific time value        |  |
| Dynamics: Use of energy flow, Flow of movement, Inner attitude |  |
| Degree of Action: Degree of rotation, Distance covered, etc... |  |
| Manner of Performance:   | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Physical Modification: initiation of the action, part of the body leading, guidances, sequential actions</li> <li>2. Spatial Modification: deviations in paths, variations in positions</li> </ol> |

Figure 2.5: Hutchinson's Description of Verbs in Dance Language



In addition to the above mentioned dispute, I disagree with Hutchinson's comparison of dance to a traditional schema of grammar. She takes the grammar divisions and superficially attempts to show what in dance is the equivalent of this term or division: Nouns being things like 'a person to whom the movement is related' or a verb being 'an action'. Hutchinson has provided a simple classification of formal resources (equivalent to a set of word classes and sub-categories of word classes in verbal language) without any link to meaning. Hutchinson's analysis is based on a semantic definition of word classes. For example, 'verbs describe action'; 'nouns describe people, places and things'. In reality, only prototypical members of each word class conform to

these definitions. 'Own', 'be' and 'seem' for example, are verbs but it is difficult to see them as action; 'being' and 'ownership' are nouns but very different from the prototypical noun. Secondly, it could be argued that the reason Hutchinson is able to identify word classes in dance is that she 'translates' dance into verbal language. And that consequently takes us nowhere with respect to the development of dance within the communicative realm. Hutchinson contributes to a circular argument which has us once again using language as the means of communication. Behind Hutchinson's work there seems to lie an assumption that in order to be a 'proper' mode of communication, dance 'ought to be' like verbal language. I argue that this is not the case. I consider movement (and particularly dance) to be a form of communication in and of its own, therefore more studies should be done to help clarify the manner in which this communication takes place. Simply turning dance into another verbal language will not suffice. Dance has a more complex structure than language. Albright (1997) posits that a dance not only represents meaning but also creates that which represents it and she states,

The double moment of dancing in front of an audience is one in which the dancer negotiates between objectivity and subjectivity- between seeing and being seen, experiencing and being experienced, moving and being moved- thus creating an interesting shift of representational codes that pushes us to rethink the experience of the body within performance (1997, p. 3).

To clarify, consider the following: 'dance is producing the body while the body is simultaneously creating the dance'. With thoughts of Albright's "shift of representational

codes” I am left questioning the significance of attempting to maneuver dance into the confines of language structure.

The main area of communication and purpose of any language is to express and clarify meaning. Hutchinson (unlike Kress and van Leeuwen, 1996) does not consider this in her explanation of a dance grammar. However, she does make a detailed comparison of dance and language. In language, meaning is essential; therefore a glimpse at what dance and language have in common is important.

### Dance and Language

Taking the communication potential found in dance a step further, Hanna used a set of design features of language (Hockett and Ascher 1964) and analyzed the similarities which exist in dance. She reached the conclusion that both forms of communication require the same mental capacity and ability for conceptualization, imagination and recollection. She believes the comparison between the verbal form and the non-verbal form of communication of dance would be clearer if we think of dance more as poetry than prose (Hanna, 1979). The following table (2.5 p. 67) shows the list of features analyzed, with X indicating the similarities between the design features of language and dance. Differences are indicated in the table by brief explanations

Table 2.5: Hanna's comparison of Design features of Language and Dance (X indicates similarities; differences are indicated by brief explanations)

| Features                   | Language  | Dance   |
|----------------------------|---|---|
| Directional reception      | X   | X   |
| Interchangeability         | X   | X   |
| Arbitrariness              | X   | X   |
| Discreteness               | X   | X   |
| Displacement               | X   | X   |
| Productivity               | X   | X   |
| Duality                    | X   | X   |
| Cultural transmission      | X   | X   |
| Ambiguity                  | X   | X   |
| Affectivity                | X   | X   |
| Channel                    | Vocal /auditory channels<br>Predominate   | Motor/visual-kinesthetic channels<br>predominate  |
| Time and Space             | Temporal dimension  | Time and space dimensions   |
| Feedback                   | Speaker can hear self   | Dancer cannot see self  |
| Involvement                | Total involvement in communication<br>act is not necessary  | Fuller involvement required in<br>dance( <i>with regard to the dancer,<br/>not the viewer</i> ) |
| Minimal units              | Minimal units of phoneme and<br>morpheme agreed upon by linguists   | Lack or agreement about minimal<br>units  |
| Complex logical structures | Greater ease in communication   | Greater difficulty in<br>communication  |
| Syntax                     | Detailed syntax governing sequences<br>and logical relationships (like<br>causality, inclusion etc) exist for<br>many languages | Syntax exist for few dances   |

According to Hanna, both verbal language and dance have similar features that are characterized by several notions which are explained in detail below.

*Directional Reception:* This is the fact that the signal/message can be heard (or seen) by any person within earshot or view; verbally we might yell out the words “help me” when we need help. A dancer, on the other hand, may run towards someone (on stage) or run to a pretend someone (reaching towards the audience or off stage) and use her hands and facial gestures to give the meaning of ‘help’. I do agree with Hanna that directional reception exists in both language and dance because messages can be seen and/or heard by anyone who is near enough to see/hear and proximity makes the message easily accessible.

*Interchangeability:* This means that the same person can act as either sender or receiver. Again here I agree with Hanna's analysis that this is common between language and dance. Verbally, a person can both deliver and receive a message. In dance this could also be the case; the dancer could be 'dancing' the message for the audience or could be receiving it from the choreographer.

*Arbitrariness:* This means that there is no essential or natural relationship between the sign and its referent; in other words the visual signs and the meaning are not unified. Verbally, take the word 'cat'. Cat does not look like the animal. It has no symbolism to show that it represents an animal. Hanna claims that this is similar in language and dance. I have to disagree. I do not think this is the case in dance. I think dancers strive to 'resemble' that which they are referring to, they may not always succeed but the idea that they strive to reach it is enough for me to consider this not a common point between language and dance.

*Discreteness:* This means that even slight variations can lead to miscommunication. Verbally, this is quite apparent, for example cheap and sheep. A dancer could execute a movement with a slight variation, for example a large jump (which is meant to represent a cry for help) could be executed smaller and led to the viewer misinterpreting the message. Hanna claims that this is a similarity between language and dance and I think she overly generalizes this point. I do not think that minor changes make a difference in dance. The main reason for my disagreement is that I do not 'see' common meanings in movement. I do not think all meaning is literal, especially when dealing with dance thus I consider misunderstanding to be less important in dance than it is in language. I believe

movement interpretation is relative to the interpreter and it is this constructed relativity which adds to the dance aesthetic.

*Displacement:* This means the ability to make reference to something which is not immediately present. In this situation memory and foresight are necessary. Verbally, it requires nothing more than referring to the situation, for example, “remember when we were young?” This may not be as easy to do in dance as it in language but it can be done; A dancer can be dancing in a ‘dream like’ state to represent thoughts of the past or future. Hanna’s comparison is very interesting. I, however, have a few comments to make. First, I find it difficult, though not totally impossible to represent certain issues of ‘time’ in dance (where there is nothing but the movement). The dancer is in the present when performing and it is not easy to have the dancer (in a live performance) represents issues in the past or future. I said it is not impossible because with the help of props or other supporting material it could work. My issue is with whether I would consider *displacement* in dance as effective as it is in language, and I do not.

*Productivity:* That is any message which has not previously been sent can be understood with the use of previously learned and recognized elements of communication. Verbally this means that people can say things that have never been said before and be understood. In dance this can take place as well, for example: a dancer climbs up a rope which is in the middle of the stage and does not return to the stage. This may have not been seen by an audience before yet they can understand ‘the dancer has left and is not coming back’.

*Duality of Patterning:* That is the effective use of both the physical structure of the language plus its effect on the meaning. Any language is made up of the smallest units of expression which in turn combine to make larger units of meaning (phonemes and

morphemes). The use of both of these can produce an infinite number of meaningful structures. Hanna sees that this exists in both verbal language and dance and I agree. However, I also agree with her discussion that there is not (yet) any agreement as to what minimal units are in dance and for this reason I find it difficult to assess the ‘system of meaning’ in dance. This is one of the issues I reason needs more development in dance, hence this research project.

*Cultural Transmission:* That means something has to be learned over a number of years. For verbal language it is important to remember that “human genes are not specific to any one language” (Hockett, 1977 in Hawkins, 1984). I agree with Hanna’s claim that cultural transmission exists in both language and dance. It takes a dancer many years to be able to execute the movements which are required.

*Ambiguity:* That means things do not have to be the same every time. Verbally we see this in everyday conversation. People rarely repeat the exact same words even when relaying the same message. In dance this is true to a certain degree. A dancer strives to be able to repeat the same thing again and again (not to be confused with repetition, this refers to repeating the same movements within the same dance within the same performance). However, this is usually not the case. It is difficult for everything to be the same, therefore I agree with Hanna’s claim that *ambiguity* exists in both language and dance.

*Affectivity:* That is expressing an internal state with the potential for changing moods and changing sense of situation. Verbally this is seen in a person’s ability to express a feeling, for example anger, and then be able to change that feeling with the change in circumstances. To elaborate, imagine a person coming home to find a huge mess in the

house. At first he/she might be angry with someone else whom also lives in the house, but when he/she is told that the house was ransacked by a robber, the anger subsides and another feeling takes place. In dance this is easily expressed. However, it is necessary to mention that facial expressions and gestures play a large part in transmitting the idea across. Also interaction with other dancers could help in establishing the meaning: for example, if the choreographer is attempting to portray truth or truthfulness, he/she might have the dancer interact with other dancers to establish honesty between them. This is not an easy task but it can be done.

In addition to the similarities which Hanna summarized, there are seven dissimilarities between dance and verbal language and these are explained in detail below:

*Channel:* The motor/visual –kinesthetic channels are predominate in dance; whereas vocal/auditory channels are predominate in language.

*Time and Space:* Language exists in a temporal dimension whereas dance involves temporal, time, and space dimensions.

*Feedback:* Speakers have the ability to have greater feedback (self-monitoring) because they can hear themselves speak whereas dancers cannot see themselves dance.

*Involvement:* Involvement in the act of speaking is such that the speaker may be doing something else while speaking however in dance the dancer is required to have fuller physical involvement in order to accomplish the communication act therefore focuses more on the act of dance. One might argue that this is not the case in all types of dance. For example, in social dance the dancers may be talking and dancing at the same time. However, Hanna emphasizes the fact that in dance for communication, the dancer must

pay more (or fuller) attention to the act of dancing than a speaker pays to the act of speaking.

*Minimal Units:* Dance has more difficulty in expressing more complex logical structures than verbal language does.

*Complex Logical Structures:* These are different in the comparison of dance and language because linguists agree on the minimal units of verbal language, whereas such agreements do not exist in dance. This is another issue which helped in motivating me to implement this project to help in clarifying how people comprehend dance.

*Syntax:* A detailed theory of syntax which governs language has yet to be worked out for all types of dance. If linguists consider syntax to be the arrangement of words to make a coherent sentence then, there are some dances with syntactical patterns whereas most languages have detailed syntactical theories. At this point in my research I am not sure that it is even necessary to have a detailed syntax for dance (if we consider syntax to be a set of rules) because dance can and does function within a set of conventions (which are more adaptable than linguistic syntax, see Foster, 1986). Whatever the case may be, I am relatively certain that something can be done to help make dance more accessible.

It is worth noting that the reason such detailed work for a theory of syntax in dance has not been carried out is not because of any intrinsic phenomena in dance, but rather due to a relative lack of motivation in the research world (Hanna, 1979). Hanna made this statement almost thirty years ago; fortunately, there has been a significant amount of change in the world of dance research since then. In order to better evaluate the needs of research in dance communication a look into what has already been done is needed.

## Systems of Dance Analysis

Two interesting accounts dealing with dance analysis come from the dance scholars Janet Adshead et.al. (1988) and Susan Leigh Foster (1986). Both of these academicians agree that choreography is a field worthy of scholarly analysis. Both also agree that dance has not been given its due place in the field of academia. Both have spent a great deal of time researching and writing about dance analysis and agree that in order to analyze dance one must break down its choreographic conventions and attempt to understand them by understanding the culture, history and society from which the dance emerged. This is similar to a hermeneutical way of thinking about knowledge acquisition. Taking a closer look at each of these pioneering techniques of dance analysis will explain what is lacking and why this thesis work is necessary.

One of the attempts to clarify how dance is deciphered is the fairly unique study developed by Foster (1986). She refers to codes and conventions which can explicitly examine the expressive act of the dance once it has been “de-naturalized” or removed from what is familiar to the viewer (p. xviii). According to Foster,

The first three conventions allow the dance to refer to the events in the world, and the last two, vocabulary and syntax, lend to the dance its internal coherence and structure. (1986, p. xviii).

Foster’s concentration on Poststructuralist theory has led her to argue that power relations are a structural base within which dance emerges as a signifying practice (Jackson, 1994). She argues that instead of intuiting the meaning the choreographer intended we can interpret the dance’s codes and conventions. She affirms that now we

need to be asking “how does a dance mean what it does?” (1986, xvii), hence Foster’s five conventions which illustrate this question are: 1- the dance’s frame (how it detaches itself from the familiar); 2- the dance’s modes of representation (how it refers to the familiar); 3- the dance’s style (how it personalizes itself); 4- the dance’s vocabulary (what it consists of); 5- the dance’s syntax (how it is put together). According to Jackson (1994), these codes and conventions are the elements a viewer should examine in order to better understand a dance. McNamara (1994) states that the basis of Foster’s work is the concept that bodies are “culturally constructed and act as an internal code of a dance.” (p.95). In my opinion, it seems that Foster’s focus is more on the dance and the body of the dancer than on the viewer, spectator, audience member. It seems that facts such as the body being a component of meaning delivery and a dance a unit of meaning, are more important than how that meaning is being construed by the audience. I do agree that Foster’s work has helped the world of dance to move forward along the academic stream, but I find the importance of how audiences perceive meaning to be lacking in this work. Foster’s later work in dance has been significantly towards the body and she says,

The possibility of a body that is written upon but that also writes moves critical studies of the body in new directions. It asks scholars to approach the body's involvement in any activity with an assumption of potential agency to participate in or resist whatever forms of cultural production are underway (Foster 1995, p.15).

Without a doubt the study of the body is crucial in developing dance and dance studies. However, I infer that the need for an increased awareness of how meaning is transmitted through dance is fundamental as well.

Further exploration into the field of dance analysis led to the work of Adshead et. al. (1988) who argue that there is a need for a theory which helps in the understanding and appreciation of both how dances are put together and how they create effects and meaning. Adshead and her colleagues coherently put together a system of dance analysis which isolates and describes the movements in the dance, then searches for patterns that highlight the manner in which the choreographer has pieced together the work. Some of these patterns could be: repetition, variation or motif development. According to Jackson (1994), after a viewer is able to decipher the parts, Adshead et.al. elaborate on the ease in which the viewer can recognize phrases which clearly represent things such as climax and transition. However, one cannot negate the influence of contextual information such as biographical data, cultural concerns and historical issues on the viewer. After all these are taken into consideration the analyst can then suggest a somewhat conceivable and convincing interpretation of the work thus allowing more profound comprehension and enjoyment (Adshead et.al., 1988). Jackson (1994) argues that by weakening the stronghold the social sciences had on human movement and physical behavior, and by highlighting the limitations in the methods of physical interpretation which only deal with movement description (effort-shape analysis), Adshead has demonstrated the need for a system that deciphers choreography based on a multi-dimensional procedure which synthesizes material from several domains: social, biographical and physical (the dance itself). I agree with Adshead et.al.'s focus on the multi-dimensional approach,

nonetheless, I find the issue of meaning and its development lacking in this study. For example, in chapter four of their work, they explain the procedure of interpreting the dance. Most of the emphasis is placed on the choreographer and the performer (dancer) with the spectator mentioned last and least. The chapter then goes on to explain 'concepts' within which 'interpretations' are made, once again leaving the sub context of 'meaning/ significance' till the end of the section. Hodgens (who wrote chapter four) states,

The overall aim of interpreting is, however, the understanding and appreciation of its meanings and or signifiers. In most cases the meanings and significances are nothing other than the character and qualities of the dance.

(1988, p. 84)

That being the case, where do the individual's constructs enter into the equation? If a viewer finds the dance to signify something 'more' than just the character and the qualities of the dance, does that make his or her interpretation incorrect or negligible? I do not believe so. I do however believe that the work done in the book *Dance Analysis* has left out the crucial part of the focus on how audiences and their individual/collective interpretations enter into the field of dance analysis. As Jackson says,

..... 'making sense' of the dance depends on the presence of viewers who bring with them an ever-shifting perceptual framework which allows them to organize what they see into coherent image or experience (1994, p.9).

I posit that in order to further dance along the educational continuum more study should be done to understand what this ‘perceptual framework’ is.

The final work I will mention is titled *Dance Composition* (2004, 5<sup>th</sup> ed). In this work, Smith-Autard discusses meaning in dance as an element within the choreography process. On page 16 she tells the reader (which she seems to assume is either a dancer and/or choreographer or someone aspiring to be), that they must ‘explore and experiment within a wide range’ of movement so they can “become fully acquainted with movement and the feeling/meaning connotation”. But she does not give details on *how* this is done. I question whether this is something she holds as intuitive and if that is the case, then how can we justify the fact that not everyone can ‘speak’ with his/her body? Or is Smith-Autard’s method to compose dance not taking others into consideration? She might be focusing on those who are dancers, and if that is the case (as it seems to this reader) then what has happened to the viewer’s perception? In my opinion, it is not taken into account. And I argue that a method to implement meaning into dance that does not factor in the viewer’s perception is a method lacking an essential factor in the meaning/comprehension process.

Smith-Autard goes on to say,

“While exploring, the composer will consciously or intuitively experience the expressive properties of the movement and feel of it will be stored for future use.”

(2004, p.16)

Here I pose the question, how is this done? It seems again the system being encourage requires the meaning to be dealt with only on the part of the sender

(dancer/choreographer) and no mention is made of how this is done, nor is there any mention of the receiver (viewer). I contemplated this idea and imagined myself attempting to guide my students through their comprehension of it. Images of their inquiring faces came to mind and I could not envision this concept being clear to many of them. In my world, I interact and scaffold dancers attempting to help them make sense of their world; I do not see Smith-Autard's text enhancing this.

What surprises me even more is that in a book about composition of dance, there are only three pages which mention meaning and forming meaning in movement. Most of the book focused on structure and movement. I am not implying that such a focus is negative; I am emphasizing the issue of meaning to highlight where I find the gap in the dance/communication realm. So again I argue that regardless of the type of dance, be it modern, postmodern, tribal or anything else there is meaning and this meaning has warranted attention for quite some time. Smith-Autard also shares this idea of meaning and she states,

All movements have expressive properties which are employed as a means of communicating ideas about human feelings, events or even about the movements themselves.

(p17)

If all movements have expressive properties (and I do agree with that statement), then why is there no clear means of what those properties are? Smith Autard continues by stating,

It should be clear that movement is a vast communicating language and that varieties of combinations of its elements constitute many thousands of movement 'words'. (p. 17)

It is easy to say that it should be clear; I argue that it is not clear. However, I do strongly reason that more effort should be put into making it clear. Smith-Autard continues by describing the three fundamental elements to convert 'a vocabulary of movement into visual images' as, movement, time and space (2004, p.17). And even though she reminds the reader that meaning in the movement is what is important, she does not express any technique, form or method which could possibly help the reader to understand this issue of movement and meaning forms. Further along the same page she states that symbolic dance (which is representation of basic human movement) can put forth several different interpretations and mentions the effect the nature of the audience and their openness to these interpretations has on the dance (Smith-Autard, 2004). However, she offers no means of analyzing, quantifying or even comprehending how this takes place. I regard dance as having the potential to attain the fundamental goal of communication: clarifying meaning. I argue that more effort should be placed into clarifying the process of how. Hence the undertaking of this thesis project which is structured to investigate details of this 'how'.

## Summary

In this chapter the concept of meaning and knowledge acquisition were discussed through the ideologies of Hermeneutics and Constructivism. Special attention was placed on how Hermeneutic Constructivism deals with the art world and emphasis was placed the question of whether or not social constructivism may help in further explaining the

process of dance communication. Ideas, methods and techniques concerning dance, the body and choreography were looked at with special attention drawn to how and what each methods contributes to the enhancement of the dance field.

Having taken a critical look at some of the methods of dance analysis and construction, I have better positioned myself to highlight the issues I find lacking in the field. In my research thus far, I have not been able to find a clear means of explaining how meaning is transmitted through dance from inception to exposure. Thus the rationale of this thesis project is to help to bridge the gap in the dance-communication field by attempting to find a means to clarify how meaning is produced in dance. The next chapter discusses the details of this project.

## CHAPTER THREE

### Discovering Meaning-Form Connections

*“If the artist does not perfect a new vision in his process of doing,  
he acts mechanically and repeats some old model fixed  
like a blueprint in his mind.”*

John Dewey, 1934.

This chapter clarifies the methodology used in my study by identifying and justifying the methodology selected, describing the data collection methods and participants, briefly describing the data analysis procedure, and discussing the ethical issues surrounding the research.

### QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

Qualitative modes for analyzing data give us several means of judging, examining, comparing and interpreting themes and patterns. Some of these means are ethnography, narrative analysis, discourse analysis and textual analysis (Bernard, 1994; Miles and Huberman, 1994; Berkowitz, 1996; Bernard, 2000). The present research project required examining data and comparing it in order to interpret themes which occur; this is why the choice of a qualitative paradigm was suitable. Qualitative analysis deals mainly with words and generates less universal rules than quantitative analysis; in particular ethnographic analysis for which the whole context (including objects and body language) is relevant (Miles and Huberman, 1994). The relevance of body language in qualitative analysis also helped in swaying my choice towards this paradigm despite the fact that qualitative research analysis has been deemed by some as unsystematic, undisciplined and purely subjective (Miles and Huberman, 1994; Silverman, D. 2000).

Even though this is one manner in which qualitative research is viewed, it is not the only one. Many researchers (Miles and Huberman, 1994; Silverman, 2000; Bernard, 1994; Francisco, Butterfoss, and Capwell, 2001, C Bernard, 1994; Francisco, Butterfoss, and Capwell, 2001; C Bernard, 1994; Francisco, Butterfoss, and Capwell, 2001; Creswell, 1994) state the benefits and strengths of using Qualitative methods of research, some of which are stated in the subsequent sections of this chapter.

### Qualitative Research and the Research Project

Miles and Huberman (1994) also discuss another distinguishing characteristic of qualitative analysis which is the loop-like pattern of re-visiting the data. This is repeated as many times as new questions evolve and has the potential to lead to a new understanding and deeper analysis of the data each time. This played another important role in influencing my choice of appropriate research paradigm. I found the aforementioned system of analysis both interesting and relevant to the research project undertaken mainly because I was uncertain as to what I might find in my search and my readings in the field had led me to no conclusive ideas as to what communication and dance may have in common. The research thus needed to be, especially in its initial stages, exploratory. In qualitative research, there is no dominating framework as to how the research should be conducted. There is a philosophy behind each project and this philosophy along with the theoretical framework is what guides the research project (Miles and Huberman, 1994). In this project I was concerned with investigating meaning form relationships in modern dance. I realized that a theoretical notion of what and how meaning and knowledge are connected was needed. This resulted in the discussion of hermeneutics and constructivism in chapter two. The processes followed in this study

were qualitatively because the main aim of the research was to arrive at a complete and detailed description of the issue being researched. Researchers often refer to qualitative data as rich and precise particularly since all cases, whether rare or frequent in occurrence, are given equal importance (Bernard, 1994; Francisco, Butterfoss, and Capwell, 2001). In addition, the reality of qualitative researchers' interest in the significance of how people make sense of their lives and the structures of their culture and habitats helped to focus the methodology of this project. In qualitative research projects the researcher him/herself is the main instrument for collecting the data and this was the case in this study as I myself conducted and gathered all the information.

### Qualitative Analysis and the Research Project

Regardless of what type of research project is being considered, there are criteria as to how to choose the appropriate design. According to Creswell (1994), five main criteria should be addressed. First the researcher's worldview must take into consideration; that means whether the researcher views reality in an objective or subjective manner. In the case of the research project for this study, I found myself attempting to be more objective but I found it difficult to remove myself from my work. I attempted to minimize my biases in an effort to lessen their impact (see further in subsequent chapters). However, as a researcher I find it difficult to say that I am totally objective. I cannot delete the 'me' from the situation at hand. Though I strive to maintain as open a mind as possible, I cannot but say that my subjectivity enters into play. My understanding of the issues at hand are the direct result of how I process the information and from a constructivists point of view, subjectivity enters in the equation.

However, in this research project subjectivity enters into it in two ways. First there is research bias, which has been dealt with as thoroughly as possible. Second there are the subjective views of the participants/research subjects which, as a researcher, I am particularly interested in (as opposed to objective ‘facts’) thus making a qualitative approach appropriate. Also the theoretical aspects of hermeneutics and constructivism are related to issue of subjectivity. In both notions, the ideas and awareness of the individual are crucial factors in the relationship between meaning acquisition and knowledge. It is a process of adaptation and construction based on individual and subjective issues of awareness.

The next item that needs to be focused on is the training and experience of the researcher. People skills are necessary for a qualitative researcher whereas statistical proficiency is necessary in quantitative research. Therefore, researchers who have experience in such issue would do well using the appropriate paradigm. Being a teacher has given me a great insight into human nature and communication. I believe this part of my character is what amplified my desire to view my research qualitatively. The researcher’s psychological attributes are another area which Creswell (1994) finds important to consider. Qualitative research can most often be without rigid structure and guidelines while quantitative research is more systematic and with more explicit procedures. Therefore researchers with preferences for one or the other must contemplate this matter. Of course, the nature of the problem is a major area of concern for the researcher. Here it is important to remember that qualitative research more often looks to formulating a theory while quantitative research aims to prove or disprove an already existing theory. In fact, hypotheses cannot be proven, only falsified. According to

positivist researchers as long as a hypothesis cannot be falsified it continues to be accepted as true (Miles and Huberman, 1994). Concerning this issue in particular, I believe my choice of a qualitative paradigm to be the correct one.

I have attempted an investigation into the communicative properties of modern dance. I found no existing theory regarding this which I could prove or disprove. I was curious about what (if any) are the meaning-form connections in dance. This, in my opinion needed formulation and thus a qualitative means of analysis.

Finally, Creswell (1994) finds it important to take into account the audience for the research project. Knowledge of the audience's background and whether their worldview is objective or subjective will have a substantial influence on the research method chosen for the project. Even though this study is set in a particular local context, I believe my work to be more widely relevant and that it could lead to further research. I wish to pursue more endeavors in fields dealing with communication (e.g. various means of communication, dance and its effect on communicative modes) therefore, I anticipated an audience for my research with a worldview similar to mine, possibly consisting of dancers and choreographers, linguists and therapist.

According to Polkinghorne (1983) most conventional research methods reflect a positivist view of science, where the relevance of the method is based on whether or not it produces objective truths; meaning that any particular instance which does not fit the measure cannot be included as part of the theory. In addition, the positivist tradition suggests that adequacy in any research project is determined based on the reliability and validity of the methodological design (Cohen and Manion; 1997). However, Lincoln and Guba (1985) have argued that the conventional meaning of reliability and validity do not

fit the requirements of qualitative research. If a phenomenon is recognized through the research but does not occur again, this would (according to positivist) make it unreliable, whereas this is not the case in most qualitative research and largely the reason why I work in a qualitative structure where phenomena in and of themselves are 'reliable' simply because they exist. Within this framework of thought, Polkinghorne (1983) claims that post-positivist paradigms look at truth as something which can be debated. They also view truth as emphasizing the importance of consistency in deciphering any given phenomenon. In other words, qualitative research aims to give a realistic portrayal of what has occurred but does not reach absolute and categorical conclusions.

Yet another realm of qualitative research is its lack of desire to be replicable (Marshall and Rossman, 1985). This in particular helped lead me towards Grounded Theory (GT). GT is known for its modifications and flexibility, thus making replication a challenging issue. Researchers who work in GT do not expect consistency among observers and this allows for modifications rather than refutation or proof of theories. This flexibility seemed to fit the needs of my research project precisely. Let us look more closely at what GT entails.

## DATA ANALYSIS: GROUNDED THEORY (GT)

After careful reading of the literature and developing the research questions, I chose GT as the methodology for analyzing my data. The term means that the theory is developed from the data or rather, grounded in the data. This inductive approach to theory building and was originally created by two sociologists, Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss 1987; Glaser, 1992; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Though it may seem unstructured, it in fact consists of a series of stages to be

executed with precision and contemplation. It was created and primarily based on the need to understand functions and behavior in human interaction and typically relates these functions and interactions to the complexity and variability of verbal exchanges (Glaser, 1992; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). According to Glaser (1978), the primary function of the analyst is to make theoretical (and not merely descriptive) statements about people, thus placing the power of the theory in the concept and not the description. Glaser (1978) also emphasized that theory in GT is not a set of findings but rather a set of hypotheses, which are grounded in the data and not proven. Glaser summarizes criteria for evaluating GT in four principles: fit, relevance, work (the actual collecting of data), and modifiability

The need to explain in further detail the functions of dance and its role in human communication made GT a suitable methodology to use in this study. Since I had no previous knowledge of any study on the topic, I felt that work needed to be done in attempt to analyze if any form-meaning connections exist. I had previously considered using Kress and van Leeuwen's work on visual design (1996) however; I realized that such a guided approach would limit my potential findings. Also, it was unlikely to help me understand what happens when audiences view dance and when choreographers attempt to create dances especially since their work was designed for two dimensional media. Another methodology I considered was Movement Analysis. Even though movement analysis techniques such as Labanotation (Laban, 1966) and Laban Movement Analysis (Bartenieff, 2002) provide thorough descriptions of how to analyze physical movement, there is no mention or attention to how meaning is acquired. Laban's work (which later was extended by Bartenieff) involved analyzing human movement within

three margins: position of body parts, body movement qualities, and body movement through space. Through his detailed study he produced two authentic and distinct schemata for analyzing body movement: Labanotation and Effort-Shape analysis. Labanotation deals with changes in body positioning and the timing within which those changes occur, while Effort-Shape considers the effort and flow between the movement and the body shape with respect to itself and its surroundings. According to Foster (1995), it was the pioneering work of Laban that detailed the multiple variables involved in body movement and presented structures with which to analyze them. These structures are crucial to the development of movement studies and several dance anthropologist and academicians (Novack, 1990; Ness, 1992; Farnell, 1995b; Williams, 2004) have used LMA to discuss the social and cultural meanings in dance. However, Farnell (1999) emphasizes that even though a vast amount of concentration has been placed on the body and studies concerning the body, the primary foci of these studies have been towards the ‘about and of’ the body within cultural and phenomenological realms. An insignificant amount of work has been put towards ‘talk from the body’ as dynamically embodied action in semantically rich spaces” (Farnell, 1999, p.342). My investigation involved finding answers to questions of how audiences interpret dance and in turn how choreographers put meaning into dance. Neither of these areas was covered in the research methodologies I encountered in my readings. Even though both Foster (1986) and Adshead et.al. (1988) used LMA categories in their studies of dance analysis with the intention of extending them to include meaning, I believe they fell short of that goal. Jackson (1994) comments on the limitations in both Foster and Adshead’s work by explaining that both do not fully realize the performative act of dance. She posits,

A more performative approach to dance analysis would extend our understanding of how dance is produced to how it is received, thereby realizing the extent to which structure and meaning are emergent only in the interactive process of the performance. Such an approach would recognize the wide range of critical responses to a dance possible within any given culture, and the unpredictable and improvisational ways in which people constantly engage with and negotiate conventions.

With this thesis, I was hoping to be able to extend the understanding of how dance is received. Thus when I came upon GT, I found that I had an option to investigate and analyze data without preconceptions and come up with theories (finalized or preliminary) based on that data. Since I had no preconceived notion of how dance is received I knew I needed to investigate, therefore I began the study of my data according to the stages of GT which are explained in the subsequent sections of this chapter. Before discussing the details of that investigation, I will highlight the historical background of GT and some of the debates surrounding its use.

## Background and Development of GT

GT is a popular method in qualitative research. The main premise in GT is to develop a theory which emerges from the data through a deductive and inductive sequence (Glaser, 1992, Glaser and Strauss, 1968, Charmaz, 2000). Following the emergence of the theory, it is 'grounded' by being tested in the real world. The original text of GT was written by Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss in 1967. These two founders of the method later went their separate ways with each advocating GT in his own fashion. The common theme in their separate approaches was to find a justification

for a theory that was grounded, i.e. which could stand the test of the real world. GT attempts to give qualitative research a place along the research continuum. Despite the debate it has provoked, GT seems to be capable of holding its own against its critics.

The roots of GT are strongly placed in the 'positivist ideas' of Glaser as well as the 'empirical beliefs' of Strauss (Charmaz, 2000, 2002). It was the combination of these two paradigms which resulted in its deductive/inductive combined approach. However, the union of the two did not last long, as Charmaz (2000, 2002) discusses: Glaser took a more theoretical approach while Strauss developed a more hands on theory. Both researchers continued to write together within their own paths until in 1992 their differences led to a split (Glaser, 1992; Charmaz, 2000).

The differences in the authors' approaches could be condensed into two words: purist and pragmatic. Glaser's background in sociology was largely influenced by Paul Lazarsfeld (who is known as an innovator of qualitative methods) and this exposure led him down a more candid approach regarding research where Strauss's background in sociology from a quantitative approach made him more ordered in his approach to theory building. In Glaser's (1992) approach, the researcher is considered raw material waiting to be molded by what he/she finds where Strauss's approach (Strauss and Corbin, 1998) stipulates a set of tools and principles which help to guide the researcher down the path of inquiry. According to Glaser (1992), theory should be created through emergence from the data and not be at all compromised by the biases of the researcher. This can be prevented by the researcher first being aware that it exists then using a research team to help in the data analysis stages. Strauss (Strauss and Corbin, 1998) states that the researcher should use GT along with other methodologies and allow for the outcomes to

help build substance where the subject matter allows and this will help to deal, with researcher bias.

More recent advancements have been made within the GT realm. Charmaz (2000, 2002) has worked on what she terms “constructivist’ GT. However, this variation on GT actually relies more on the original writings of Glaser and Strauss (1968) than on more recent out takes like those of Strauss and Corbin (1998).

If we take a look at figure 3.1 we can see an overall schematic representation of the development of GT thus far. The figure is adapted from Harwood (2002), and helps to shed light on the development of GT and where it stands today. As can be seen, all three approaches are still in use and viable in the research world, however, for the present research project, I followed the Strauss and Corbin set of tools and principles (1998) which are also key elements in Charmaz (2006).

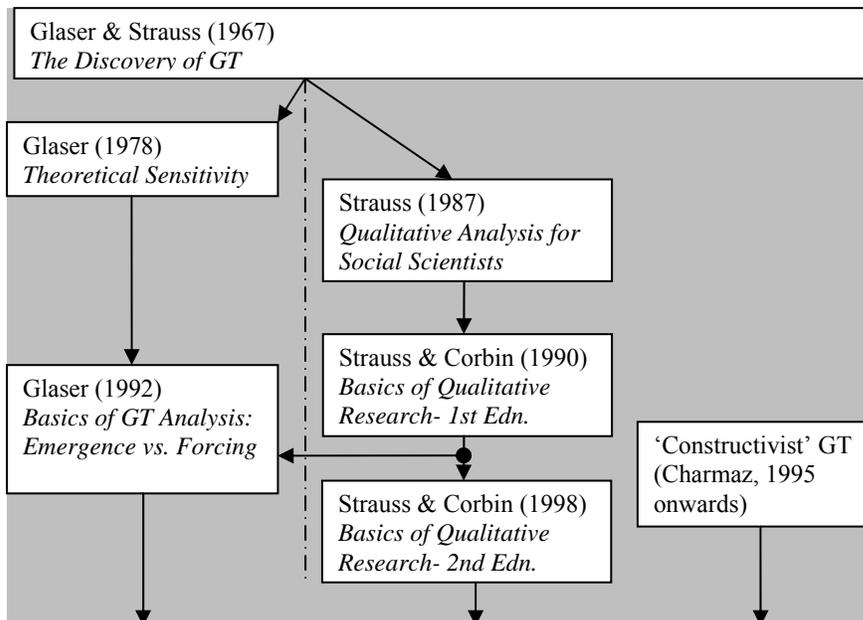


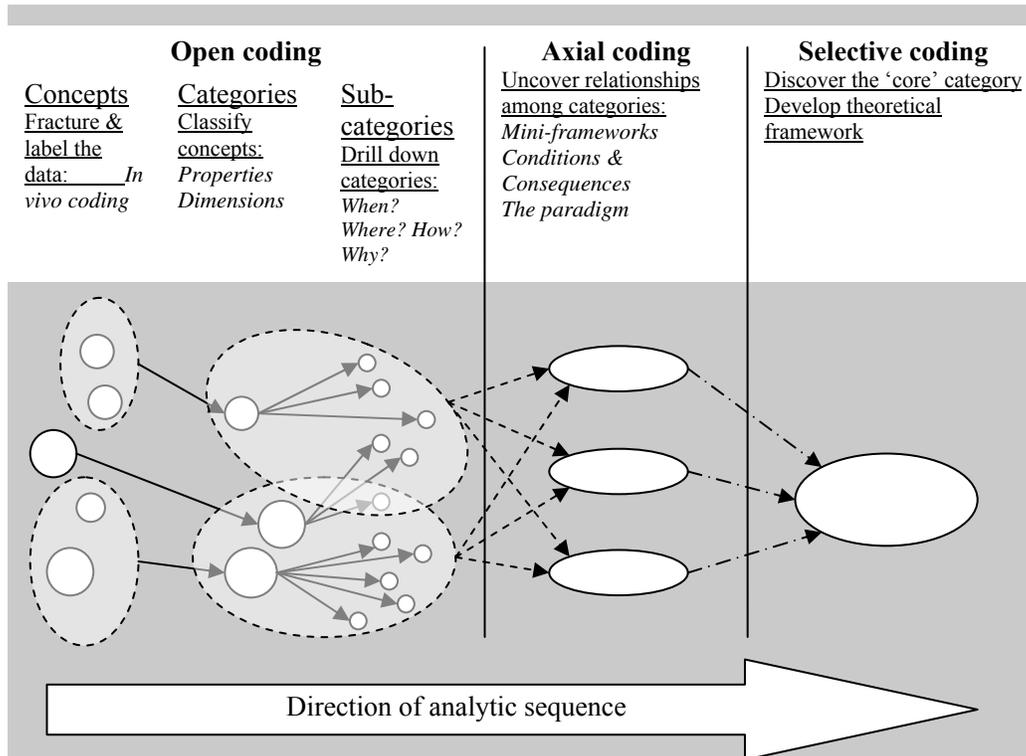
Figure 3.1: Key stages in GT development (adapted from Harwood, 2002 p.67; Warburton, 2005)

## Stages of GT

The stages to be followed in using GT as a method of research can be summarized from Strauss and Corbin (1998) as follows: gathering of the data (which also may be referred to as sampling), coding of the data, memoing the analysis/observations, sorting the memos, and writing from the memos. Data gathering can use any technique such as mentioned by Silverman (1993): interviews, observational field notes, videos, journals, memorandums, manuals, catalogues, and any form of written or pictorial material. After the data is gathered coding is repeated through several stages and processes. Because I felt the need to have diversified data results, my study employed interviews (both individual and focus group), videos, journals, questionnaires and choreographic floor plans.

Figure 3.2 concisely explains the stages of GT coding:

Figure 3.2: GT analytic process (adapted from Harwood, 2002 p.76, qf Warburton, 2005))



As can be seen in figure 3.2 (p.93), the stages mix and overlap to produce the final result. The overall direction of the process is linear. Even though within the stages (open, axial and selective) the movement is not linear, it consequently feeds into the direction of the analytic sequence. The manner in which this was applied in my study is explained in detail in chapter four.

Another stage in GT is Coding. Strauss and Corbin (1998) discuss the layers of coding as beginning with *open coding* which is an analytical process where concepts are identified and their properties and dimensions are discovered in data. According to Strauss and Corbin (1998), open coding consists of three tasks: naming concepts, defining categories, and developing categories with respect to their properties and dimensions. However, Charmaz offers a slightly different beginning to the process of coding. For Charmaz (2006), the first stage in coding is what she terms *initial coding*. This is defined as the exploring and remaining ‘open’ to any theoretical possibilities which might arise from the data. This seems very similar to what Strauss and Corbin term *open coding*. As a researcher working on my thesis I did not find any significant difference between the two explanations of open coding and initial coding in the coding stage. However, after initial coding, Charmaz moves the researcher to what she calls *focused coding*. For Charmaz this is the stage within which the researcher makes decisions about what has appeared in the initial coding and then categorizes the data intelligently and thoroughly. For Strauss and Corbin these two phases are in *open coding*. Another phase in the coding stage is referred to by both Strauss and Corbin and Charmaz and that is: *axial coding*. This is explained as the process of relating categories to their subcategories. In *axial coding*, the main objective of the researcher is to piece together

data that was divided or fractures during the open coding process. Also in *axial coding* the links between the categories (phenomena) and the subcategories (the answers to questions like ‘why?’) are established (Strauss and Corbin, 1998). *Axial coding* answers questions such as ‘when, where, why, who, how and with what consequences’ (Strauss and Corbin, 1998 p.125; Charmaz, 2006 p. 60). The final phase in the coding section of GT is what the authors refer to as *selective coding procedures*. These are procedures taken by the researcher to select and refine the categories which have been selected and developed in the previous phases. In this phase of the coding process the researcher narrows the many categories and concepts into groups that are more relationally connected thus in a sense explaining what is going on. This phase involves three parts; *selecting the central category, integrating the subcategories into the central category, and refining the theory* (Strauss and Corbin, 1998). After the coding stage the authors discuss the *theoretical sampling* stage which involves the researcher taking steps back when he/she has reached a place in the research where there are emerging yet incomplete categories. This stage requires the researcher to implement new methods of data collecting or maybe even the same methods with new participants to sum up, it involves finding more answers to emerging questions which will ultimately lead to an emerging theory (Strauss and Corbin, 1998; Charmaz, 2006).

As stated in Charmaz (2002) and Strauss and Corbin (1998), it is of the utmost importance that coding is derived directly from the data. This helps in establishing authenticity and is referred to as *in vivo* coding, with codes emerging from the actual verbatim words in the data. This stage was implemented in the present study and is explained in more detail in chapter four. Following the coding stages comes what is

referred to as *theoretical sampling*. This occurs when the researcher(s) find gaps in the data and go back to the research realm to collect more data with questions that have been designed to fit the task. In such circumstances the researcher(s) must select qualified and experienced people to answer the questions (Strauss and Corbin, 1998; Glaser and Strauss, 1968; Charmaz, 2006). In the present research project after the initial survey, I felt the need to find out more than I had originally planned. I began with the interest of how audiences perceive and decipher dance. However after reading the data from the survey I also became interested in how choreographers code meaning in dance. The gaps in the initial survey tool were filled by developing more questions for specific focus groups and also developing a new choreography part where four choreographers were asked to participate by making their own dances, which were then compared to the dance used in the research project survey and focus group sections. More about these sections of the research project are covered later in this chapter and in chapter four. (See further discussion in chapter 4.) Before going into more detail about other sections in the research project methodology, let us take a closer look at what the coding process (fig. 3.2 p. 93) involves.

### Analysis of Data through GT

The following section describes the process a researcher should follow when using GT. (See more specific details in chapter four.)

From the first appearance of GT until today, there have been different means of approaching the analysis of the data. The two founders of GT had a difference in opinion about how to deal with the analysis. The work done in this research project follows the methods of Strauss and Corbin (1998) and Kathy Charmaz (2006). Both approaches

follow a main sequencing system. After the collecting of data the researcher begins by what is referred to as a *microscopic analysis of the data*. This is the first stage in GT and entails very meticulous study and interpretation of the data. After this, the researcher then deals with the second stage which is *asking questions and making comparisons*. This stage entails choosing questions that serve the formulation of a theory. According to Strauss and Corbin and Charmaz (1998; 2006), Questions can be of four types: *sensitizing, theoretical, structural* and *guiding* and each of these types helps to elicit different types of answers. What both Strauss and Corbin as well as Charmaz hope the researcher achieves is obtaining rich and viable data. Glaser and Corbin (1998) also discuss what they term *analytical tools*, which they claim can facilitate analysis and enhance discovery while helping increase sensitivity towards the research topic, distinguish researcher bias and assist the researcher in overcoming any analytical blocks. They consist of: questioning; analysis of words, phrases and sentences; and analysis through comparisons. They suggest three approaches for analyzing through comparison: The *flip-flop* technique which involves the use of the opposite side of the issue or research phenomenon; *systematic comparison* of two or more phenomena which involves comparing the phenomena to one or more in the literature or from the researcher's experience; finally, *waving the red flag* which means that something in the data alerts the researcher to the fact that there is bias intruding into the analysis. This bias could be from either end of the research project, i.e. the participants or the researcher, even though 'participant bias' is often the object of the research in a qualitative paradigm and thus not something which the researcher would want to eliminate. Strauss and Corbin (1998b)

emphasize that it is not possible to be completely bias free; however, bias should not alter the analysis.

In summary, Borgatti (2005) describes the basic idea in using GT as the reading and re-reading a body of textual data (which can come from such documents as field notes or transcriptions from observations) in order to discover a theory to which the data can be applied. In cases where non-textual data such as video and audio are used, the researcher uses methods to note the data in textual form. In the section of my project where dances were implemented, I used video tape to document the dances but in order to carry out the analysis of them I used two different techniques of writing. First I used a floor plan technique. This is a technique that I (as a choreographer) use. Its main purpose is to help clarify the movement pattern of the dance/dancer(s). The numbers and figures drawn in the plan coincide with the description of the dance by the second technique which is writing it in dance terminology/linguistic form (verbal explanations of the movement executed). As can be seen, this study contains a variety of methods of data collection. This variety is often referred to as triangulation, which is discussed in the next section.

## TRIANGULATION

With regard to the study at hand, the methods were adjusted and added to depending on the analysis and evaluation of the data throughout the process. Several new phases were implemented and new tools were used to collect more data. Variety in method and data collection is important in any research study in order to bring to light variations in meaning and lessen limitations such as researcher bias (Begley, 1996;

Sandelowski, 1996 as discussed in Strauss & Corbin 1998b). This procedure is commonly referred to as triangulation.

## Use of Triangulation in the Research Project

Triangulation is considered a crucial element in the strengthening of a research design (Cohen & Manion, 1997; Patton, 1990; Patton, 2002). Denzin (1970) classified triangulation into six main categories which are, *Time Triangulation* which attempts to consider the factors of change across time; *Space Triangulation* which attempts to make use of cross-cultural techniques; *Combined Levels of Triangulation* which uses more than one stage of analysis: [individual, interactive (groups), and collectives (organizational, cultural, societal)]; *Theoretical Triangulation*, which uses more than one point of view (theory); *Investigator Triangulation*, which uses more than one observer; *Methodological Triangulation*, which uses either the same method on different situations or different methods on the same situation.

With respect to this particular research study, I have used *methodological triangulation*. I used different methods and applied them to the same situation.

When considering using a multi-method approach, the researcher(s) must ask three main questions. First, “What methods are to be selected?”; Second, “How are they combined?”; and third, “How are the data to be used?” (Cohen & Manion, 1997, p. 242). Cohen and Manion (1997) emphasize that the answers to the questions will rely greatly on the original research objectives as well as the kind of information desired and the particular situation involved in the study. As my own project developed, new layers were added and the variety of methods strengthened the potential results. Thus I also used *combined levels of triangulation*. I believe triangulation, in this project, proved to be

fundamental due to the extent to which the research design evolved as insights were gained and questions emerged. (See further discussion in chapters four and five.)

## DATA COLLECTION METHODS

In this section of the chapter, I will describe the data collection instruments implemented, the participants selected and the procedures used in my study. Before moving into the specifics of the methods I would like to remind the readers of the research questions:

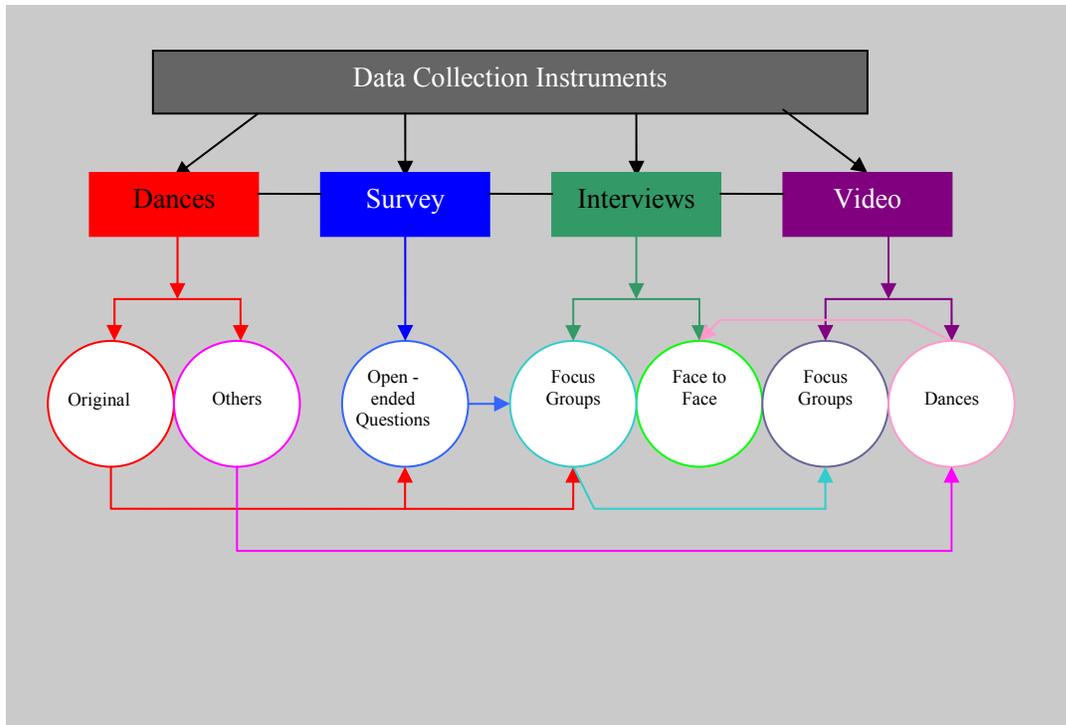
1. How, specifically, does dance create meaning?
2. How does the audience construct meaning from dance?
3. How do choreographers go about putting their intended message into form?

These are the research questions which guided the course of development of the data collecting. Figure 3.3 is a chart which shows what the data collecting methods are and how they are linked together developmentally. Some of the work overlapped (as can be seen in the chart). The rest of this section will focus on the details involved in the data collection. Specific details about the data analysis and outcomes will be thoroughly dealt with in chapter four.

### Instruments

Figure 3.3 below shows the different instruments used in the research project and how they are connected to each other. More detail about the process can be seen in figure 3.4 in the next section of this chapter.

Figure 3.3: Data Collection Instruments



As can be seen in fig.3.3, several different instruments were implemented during the research period of this study. Each phase was implanted depending on data analyzed in previous phases.

### *Dances*

There were two types of dance performances used in the study, a live performance of dance and videotaped performances. For the live performance, I choreographed a dance (hereafter referred to as the original dance performance) to a poem titled *The Wait* (Appendix C). The poem was chosen because of its intricate details. I am the author of the poem hence there was no need to obtain permission to use the poem in the research project. The poem explains the situation of a female who is struggling with emotional and psychological distress. It highlights her ability to put on a façade when the need arises, and how reality sets in when she is alone. The dance was created to represent both the situation and the actual words (even though it was not a mimesis of the words). The

basis of its creation stemmed from my desire to investigate whether or not modern dance could be a communicative medium in as effective a manner as verbal mediums are. In retrospect, one might question whether this effectiveness is an ideal to strive for or not. Verbal mediums of communication stress on the literal meaning of the communiqué more so than non verbal mediums, thus the effectiveness would not necessarily be comparable.

In order to better understand my conceptual framework it is necessary to take a brief look at the concept of multimodality and multiliteracy. To start with, the rationale behind the comparison of any communicative medium and the verbal medium (i.e. language) comes from the progress, familiarity and accessibility that language has experienced throughout history. Several researchers in the field of Linguistics (Cope and Kalantzis, 2000a & b; Gee, 2000; Luke, 2000; Lo Bianco, 2000; Kress, 2000a & b; Fairclough, 2000; Cazden, 2000, and Bond, 2000) discuss and investigate this familiarity and accessibility and raise questions about how other mediums can be as accessible. The previously mentioned authors were a part of a group referred to as the New London Group. They worked together on a literacy project and in brief, they based their work on the idea that appropriate literacy teaching must be diverse and universal. The result of their collective work was the coining of the term *Multiliteracies*. *Multiliteracies* is an approach which attempts to integrate the ‘multi modes of meaning making’ to enhance the pedagogy of learning (Cope and Kalantzis, 2000a). Cope and Kalantzis (2000a) summarize these thoughts in the following words:

A pedagogy of Multiliteracies, by contrast focuses on modes of representation much broader than language alone. These differ

according to culture and context, and have specific cognitive, cultural, and social effects. (p. 5)

I agree with the need to investigate different modes of communication and increase their familiarity and accessibility. This study aims to contribute in this regard by investigating how meaning is produced in modern dance (a non-verbal mode).

The original dance I choreographed was performed both with music and without music. The music used was *The Three of Us* by Ben Harper. It was selected to fit the mood of the dance and hence the message. In the pilot study of this section of the data collection I had not used music. Several audience participants had felt as if they were not watching dance (see chapter four for discussion). Therefore I subsequently decided to have the piece performed twice, once with music and once without. My intention was to allow the participants the freedom to compare what they felt and understood from the performances with hope that this comparison would lead to some interesting data. The performance of the dance was viewed by the participants of the survey and by two of the focus groups.

In addition to the live dance performances, there were also videotaped performances. As the study progressed and the data was being analyzed I realized I needed to investigate further how choreographers dealt with meaning-form issues. My work alone was not sufficient. I had originally planned to rely on myself as a choreographer but as the work progressed I realized that I could not objectify work which was based solely on my own choreography. In order to clarify the existence of meaning-form relations in dance I had to see what other choreographers do. I gave the same poem that was used in the previously explained phase to a group of choreographers and asked

them create a dance to it. The dances were presented to me approximately one month later. I video taped the performances and analyzed the dances from the video recordings.

### *Survey*

Another tool of data collection was the survey. Surveys are considered to be the most commonly used method of data collecting in educational research (Cohen and Manion, 1994). Survey data generally represents information about an issue at a specific point in time and is used to make comparisons or determine relationships that exist between certain events or issues (Cohen and Manion, 1994). In this part of the research project I was interested in looking into what an audience could decipher from dance. The survey contained questions related to the original dance performance.

One reason why I chose to use a survey in the first part of the study was that it allowed me to collect a large quantity of data from a large number of participants in a relatively short amount of time. When I decided to use a survey I was not yet sure what method of analysis I would be using. The survey results helped me to move towards GT (as previous explained). The objectives of my survey were determined by my research questions.

For the pilot study, I chose a class of language students. I included both closed and open-ended questions. After studying the results, I deleted the closed-ended section since it was not helpful in giving me any meaningful data. I also adjusted the open-ended questions thus improving the survey tool.

The main survey I used was made up of five open-ended questions only, designed to allow for the input to be rich and meaningful (another rationale for qualitative methodology). They required only short answers. The questions were again based on the

research questions, and the survey was implemented at a local American university where I am an instructor. Prior to the administration of the survey, the original dance was performed.

Question one (What is the general message you received/understood from watching the dance performance?) was designed to obtain information regarding the message the participants understood from watching the performance. Some might view this as a leading question. However, since the possibility of answering: “I understood nothing”, or “I did not perceive a message” were options, I did not feel that this was the case. In question two (Consider yourself the “voice” of the dancer; write a paragraph which illustrates the movements the dancer expressed. If you believe part one and part two to be the same, write “the same” below part two.) I added the option of explaining whether the participants thought music helped to enhance the message. The question of whether dance can be considered dance when it is performed without music arose more than once during the process of the research. I found it appropriate to allow the participants to express their view of this issue. Question three (Consider the dance as an essay, what title would you give it?) was intended to clarify the participants' answers to number one. Thus the participants were asked to give a title to the performance they had seen. I knew the participants had all had at least one academic writing course; therefore, they were aware of the link between a title and the main idea in an essay or a piece of writing. I wanted to see if they achieved that link in their explanation of the dance performance. Question four (Write two sentences below, one which you think can be easily expressed in movement, and one which you think would be difficult to express in movement.) had nothing to do with the particular performance. Instead, it was about what

the participants (viewers) thought was easy or difficult to express in dance. When designing this question I was concerned with what the participants considered to be expressional in dance and whether they found it easy or difficult to do. As for the final question, I was attempting to find out whether or not the participants equated dance and language. This question (similar to question one) could be seen as a leading question, however the participants had the freedom of answering on not, and more than two thirds of them did not answer this question. Due to the lack of responses, I decided not to include the answers to question five in this study.

### *Interviews*

Interviews are for the most part a ‘one to one’ exchange of information. This could be face to face, via telephone, via email and even via traditional mail. Interviews also have varying degrees of structure. Traditionally, researchers have referred to interview classifications as unstructured, semi-structured and structured. However, according to Patton (2002), three types of interview instruments are considered to be basic qualitative approaches and one is quantitative. He refers to these as: *Informal Conversational, Interview Guide Approach, Standardized Open-Ended, and Closed Fixed Response Interview*. All, but the last, aim to generate qualitative data. Patton’s classification gives a clearer and more positive overview of what the instrument does. For example, the traditional term ‘unstructured’ has a negative connotation which emphasizes lack of work or effort, whereas the term ‘informal conversation’ does not. Regardless of the terminology used the interview instruments are the same and are designed to primarily interview one individual at a time. Nevertheless, Patton does discuss a type of interview which is administered in groups and is referred to as the focus group interview.

A focus group interview can be broadly defined as a group interview which is lead by a facilitator (also called moderator; usually the researcher) and consists of approximately 6-12 people (McNeill and Chapman, 2005; Ruane, 2005; Patton, 2002). More specifically it is a social interaction where a group of people are guided through discussions of selected topics (McNeill and Chapman, 2005; Ruane, 2005; Patton, 2002). Its purpose is to provide a more dynamic and insightful exchange of information than a one to one interview might produce (Ruane, 2005; Patton, 2002). The moderator's job is to make sure the interview moves smoothly and does not go off track. Krueger (1994) prefers the word moderator instead of interviewer because it highlights the function of the interviewer as guiding the discussion. According to Patton, focus groups are primarily interviews; they are not problem solving sessions nor are they decision-making groups. In a focus group, participants give their comments and hear other participants' comments and get to add to their own. They do not need to agree with each other or reach a consensus nor do they have to disagree. Patton (2002) stresses that the main point is to obtain high quality data in a social context where people consider their own perspective in the context of other people's views.

Two different types of interviews were thus used to collect data for my study, focus group interviews and individual face-to-face interviews. There were three focus group interviews which were conducted at different time intervals according to the progress of the data analysis. The initial two focus group interview questions were developed based on the research questions, whereas the third focus group interview questions were developed based on issues that emerged during the data analysis. In the first two focus groups, the participants watched a live dance performance prior to the

interview discussion, whereas in the final focus group the participants watched four videotaped dance performances. As for the face-to-face interviews with the choreographers of the other dances (those which were used for a comparative study with the original dance), they were conducted on an individual basis.

Interviewing has long been a valuable means of collecting qualitative data (Lofland and Lofland, 1995) but, like other paradigms in research methods, it has undergone extensive development. The purpose for using an interview has changed with time. One issue which has contributed to this is the importance which Grounded Theorists (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Strauss and Corbin, 1998; Charmaz, 2006) have placed on the interview as a means of data collecting.

Charmaz (2006) comments on how appropriate ‘intensive qualitative interviewing’ is in GT. The use of such a tool can lead to a wealth of data. For Charmaz, it is essential to use interviewing as a tool due to its combination of structure and flexibility. The researcher has the ability to structure questions that he/she wishes to find answers to, yet has no control over how these questions are answered. Previously, in this chapter, I briefly discussed my point of view concerning questions that may or may not be what the literature calls leading questions. As a researcher I understand the idea of leading a participant to give answers which you may want to receive however, I do believe that participants are also very guided by their own opinions which consequently led them to give the answer which they believe in or relate to. In the process of developing the interviewing tools which were used, I attempted to keep the questions as flexible as possible yet still maintain the measure of the research project. With this in mind it is relevant to mention that Charmaz (2006) reminds the researcher of how closely

GT and in-depth interviewing are related due to their reliance on the issue of flexibility.

### *Video Document Analysis*

The final data source I used was video tape. Video is considered to be a type of document and hence its use as data is document analysis. It should be noted that video can be either a stimulus or a data source. Like a reading text, the data can be the participants' reactions to it or the text itself. Bogdan and Knopp-Biklen stress that a researcher may use documents either on their own, or in connection with interviews or participant observation (1998). Hence documents can be used on different levels within the research project and this is what took place in the present study.

I video recorded the dances (both the original and the dances the other choreographers created) and analyzed them from the video tape. To be able to use the data from the videotaped dances I had to implement a combination of structures and ideologies for analyzing dance. From Humphrey (1959) and Kress and van Leeuwen (1996) I followed ideas concerning space and stage structure. I was also influenced by movement arrangements and symbols from Laban (1966), Hutchinson-Guest (2005) and Kestenberg- Amighi et.al. (1999). I employed this influence in symbols which I, as a choreographer, use in my choreography notes as explained further in chapters two and four. Finally, when functioning within the realm of semiotics (where signs have two main parts: the signifier and the signified), it becomes important to understand and implement different methods of analyzing visual material. It is not only essential to think of the signifier (which in dance could be the movements); the signified (which in dance could be the idea being portrayed by the movements) must also be analyzed. It is noteworthy to mention that the relationship between the signifier and the signified is arbitrary and may

change with the individual dancer and viewer. Signifiers tend to trigger or create the signified in the mind of the perceiver. The triggers include both denotative and connotative meanings. Overall, denotations are more solid or stable in the long run (i.e. they change less with time and context) yet, connotations are still in the minds of the perceiver. Researchers who deal with concerns in semiotics agree on the need to use analytical methods which take into account both the signifier and the signified and show how they relate.

In a world where the visual is quickly overpowering the written word, researchers need to find viable and reliable means of analyzing the former. I also used videotaping in the focus group interviews. I later transcribed the video tapes to use the data from them. Details concerning all the above-mentioned techniques and notations will be discussed and examples given in later sections of this chapter.

## Participants

In GT research, researchers must have good rapport with the participants if they wish to obtain viable and rich data (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Dey, 1999; Charmaz, 2006). According to Glaser (1992), research participants include: people who partake in the experiment or situation, people who report on the experiment or situation and people who try to comprehend the experiment or situation. In my research project I had all three. There were the dancers and choreographers who played a part in the experiment and reported on the experiment. As for the people attempting to comprehend the data that came from the experiment, there were two language teachers who assisted in the data analysis in some of the project sections; and myself (the main researcher). More detailed

information about those who reported on the experiment in my study is described below in four subcategories.

### *Survey Participants*

In the search to find participants for the survey in the first phase of my study, I was mostly concerned with having a substantial number who came from varied backgrounds and who possibly had watched dance. In her discussion of how a researcher should select participants for GT projects, Charmaz (2006) highlights the issue of relevance by stressing that in any research project the researcher has a concern which he/she wishes to understand and the participant has relevant insight which comes from various experiences and helps in shedding light on the subject being studied.

For the survey, I used a *convenience sample*. According to Cohen and Manion (1997) a convenience sample is when the participants are chosen because they are readily available thus making the criterion: availability. In my case, I chose to use students at one of the American universities in Lebanon (a place where I work). I chose to use students who were attending one of the writing classes at the university (English language). Table 3.1 gives more specific details about the survey participants.

Table 3.1: Survey Participants

| Number of Participants                      | Sex                     | Languages   | Dance Experience  |
|---|-------------------------|---|---|
| 211 university students from various majors | 86 males<br>125 females | Most were fluent bilinguals with average aptitude in a third language. Some were tri-lingual<br>Some had partial proficiency in a fourth language | 121 no experience<br>79 experience ranging from three months to seventeen years<br>11 did not respond to question |

### *Focus Group Interview Participants*

For the focus group interviews I used what Cohen and Manion (1997) term *purposive sampling*. I chose the participants because of their specialty in using language for communication (language teachers) and/or their specialty and interest in dance

(dancers, choreographers and spectators). I conducted three separate focus group interviews and the following table (table 3.2) details the information concerning the participants.

Table 3.2: Details of the Focus Group Interviewees

| <b>Focus Group One</b>  | <b>Focus Group Two</b>   | <b>Focus Group Three</b>  |
|---|--|---|
| Language Teachers (November 2005)   | Dancers and Spectators of Dance (March 2006)<br><i>Note: in this corpus of data spectators of dance are defined as people who watch dance frequently.</i>  | Choreographers (November 2006)  |
| <b>Number of participants</b>   | <b>Number of participants</b>  | <b>Number of participants</b>   |
| 13 teachers were asked to participate but only 4 came on the assigned date. | 12 dancers/spectators of dance were asked to participate but 14 arrived and 13 participated.   | 9 choreographers were asked to participate and only 4 did.  |
| <b>Demographics/ Specialties</b>  | <b>Demographics/ Specialties</b>   | <b>Demographics/ Specialties</b>  |
| 3 males (Lebanese)<br>1 female (Turkish)<br><br>4 English Teachers          | 5 males (Lebanese)<br>8 females (Lebanese)<br><br>2 Bank Employees<br>3 Computer Engineers<br>1 Medical Doctor<br>3 Educators<br>1 Graphic Designer<br>1 UN Health Specialist<br>1 Insurance Agent<br>1 Mother/House maker | 1 male (Lebanese)<br>3 females (Lebanese)<br><br>1 Bank Manager<br>1 Sports Educator<br>2 Dancers/ Choreographers |
| <b>Dance Experience</b>   | <b>Dance Experience</b>  | <b>Dance Experience</b>   |
| 4 no experience   | 3 no experience<br>10 ranging from 1 to 20 years   | 4 ranging from 6 to 15 years  |

*Note: In this data set, dance experience refers to technical dance ability or involvement.*

Some unexpected things happened in focus groups one and two. In focus group one I had expected more people to come and participate since I had asked for responses to my invitations and only two responded negatively. In focus group two, in contrast, more people came than I had expected. Two guests asked if they may observe and I gave them permission. One of them, however, participated in the discussion and I found it inappropriate to ask her to stop. Another issue is the variety of backgrounds/careers of the participants of these interviews, apparent in table 3.2. I believe that the variety is an asset and as Cohen and Manion (1997) suggest, a collection of varied opinions can help in simplifying the outcome, thus making deduction easier. In the choreographers group for

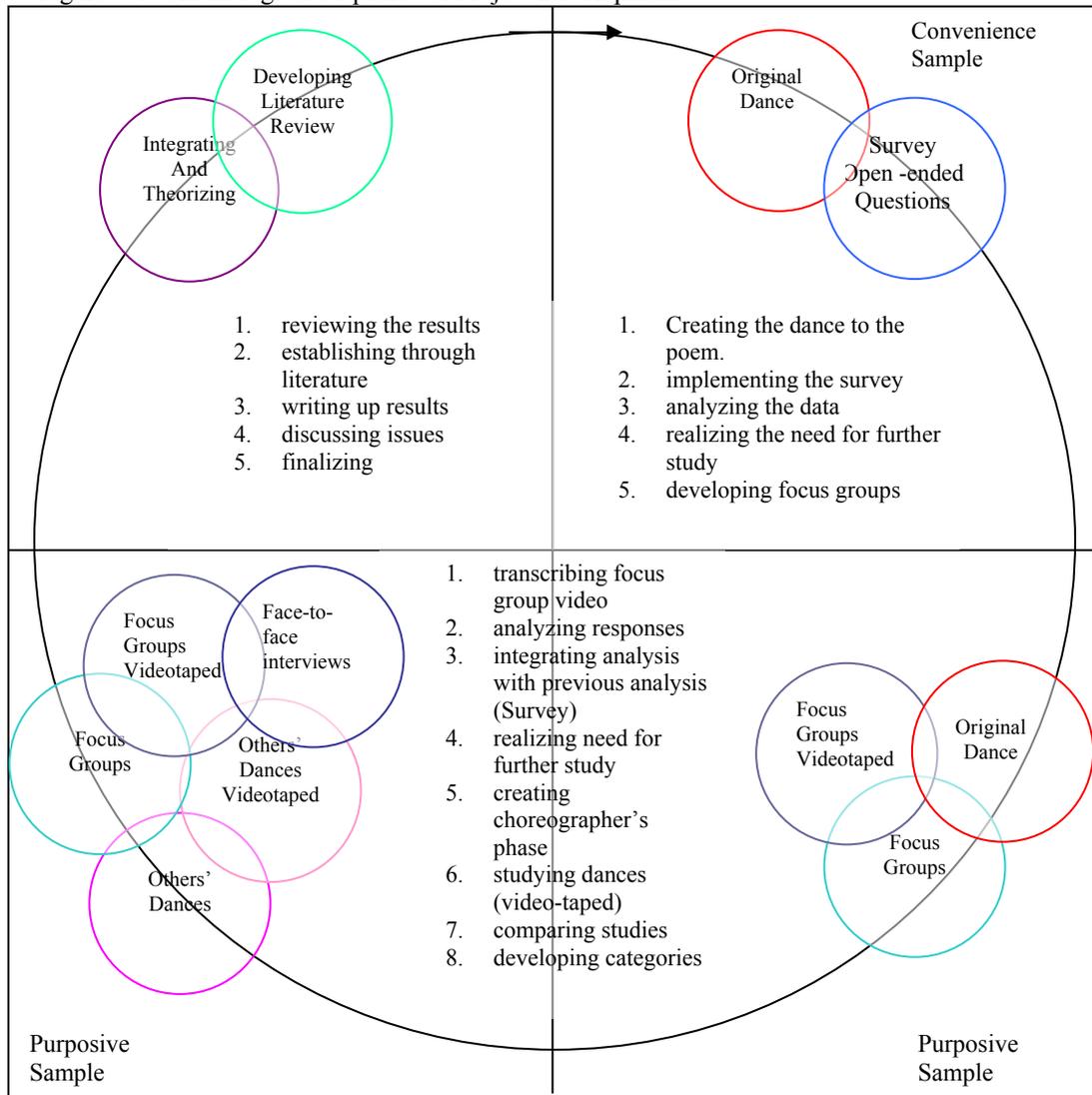
example, two of the four choreographers also had careers in fields other than dance (one bank manager, one sports educator). Another advantage in using variety could be that contrasting views could stimulate the discussion. One downside from this, however, could be that more powerful or dominate people in the group could make other members change their minds or feel reluctant to give their opinions. Another drawback from using focus group interviews is that the results cannot be extensively generalized thus requiring other methods of data collection to help verify findings.

#### *Video Analysis Participants*

The same choreographers who participated in the choreographers' focus group (see table 3.3) were also participants in the individual interviews for the video analysis of the dances. In the individual interviews they watched their own choreography and then were asked to talk about the dances they viewed.

Before moving on to the section which describes the procedures implemented in each section of the research, I would like to draw the reader's attention to figure 3.4 (p. 100). This illustration depicts the sequence of the complete project development and should be followed in a clockwise direction. The first phase of the project began with the creation of the dance and the survey study (which included a convenience sample of participants). The project developed different phases depending on what was emerging from the data and ended with the integrating and theorizing of the data from all the phases.

Figure 3.4: Chronological Sequence of Project Development



## Procedures

In this section of the chapter, I will explain the procedures I used in implementing each of my instruments.

### *Survey Procedure*

In each of the classes I attended, the same procedure was followed: The instructor of the class would introduce the researcher and the dancer and explain that what was about to happen in the classroom was voluntary. No one was obliged to participate in the

survey. The dancer performed first without music and then performed with music. The survey was distributed and the participants were asked not to talk to each other and to answer the questions as completely as possible. I had the participants sign consent forms (Appendix A) and I promised them that I would not disclose their identity. The complete dance/survey project took between 15 to 20 minutes to complete; that is the time from the beginning (i.e. presenting the dance) to the end (the participant completion of the survey). In this part of the project nothing disturbing or noteworthy occurred during the implementation.

#### *Focus Group Interviews Procedure*

In the first two focus group interviews (Language Teachers; Dancers and Spectators of Dance); the same procedure as above was followed. The participants arrived to the assigned location at the scheduled time. In focus group one, the location was the theatre at the university where I am employed. As for focus group two, it took place in Al-Sarab Alternative Dance School which is located in Jbeil, Lebanon. Because I am the owner and artistic director of the school and have unlimited access, it was easy to conduct the interview in this location. In both interview situations the participants were given informed consent forms (see appendix A) as well as demographic information forms. After they filled them out, the dancer performed the dance, once without music and then once with music. The participants were asked a series of questions and allowed to discuss the possible answers with each other. The interview was recorded by video camera, but the language teachers preferred not to be filmed, so the lens cap was kept on in focus group one. The dancers and spectators of dance did not mind the visual recording, therefore the lens cap was kept off during the interview. As the mediator of the

interview, I was careful not to allow the discussion to wander off track. Due to the fact that I used a somewhat unorthodox manner of conducting the focus group interview two in my research project, I would like to start by describing the manner in which a focus group interview is usually conducted. McNeill and Chapman describe a focus group interview as follows:

....a group discussion led by a facilitator whose job is to manage the group dynamics by establishing trust and rapport in what people hopefully interpret as a secure, comfortable and confident environment. The group is usually made up of 8-12 people. Focus group members are encouraged to talk to and respond to each other rather than the facilitator, thus allowing people to explore their own attitudes and experiences in their own words. The group includes an 'observer' who notes the organization of the room and the dynamics of the interaction.

(p. 65, 2005)

Other specialists in the field such as: Ruane (2005), Morgan (2002), Morgan, D. L. (1998), Krueger & Casey (2000), and Higginbotham & Cox (1979) agree with the above stated description with minor differences in the preferred number of participants. Some claim that the number should not exceed eight while others maintain that as few as four could serve as an appropriate focus group. The above description is the manner in which I proceeded with focus group interview one (explained above), but not true for what took place in focus group interview two.

For the focus group two interviews, I had the whole group of fourteen people sit facing the dancer's space (which initially consisted of the chair in the center of the room because the dancer entered from the left side of the space). The group remained seated in

their places throughout the performances, the one with music and the one without. After the performances and prior to the questioning session the group was subdivided: I took the large group of fourteen and divided it into two smaller groups of seven. I had them sit on the floor at opposite ends of the room. The room in which the interview took place is approximately 10 x 3 m<sup>2</sup>. The middle section of the room was used for the dancer to perform. There are mirrors in the room which were covered for the purpose of the performance thus insuring that the audience observed the movement by watching the dancer and not her reflection in the mirror. Watching the dancer in the mirror would give a distorted view of the dance to the viewer. It would be like trying to read the image of a book which is held up to a mirror.

The reason for the division into two groups was to allow for maximum output from each group. Taking into consideration that the participants have varying degrees of dance experience, I divided them so as to combine more experienced participants with less experienced ones. I asked each group to answer the questions amongst themselves and not to interact with the group sitting opposite them.

There was a video camera in the room to record the interview. Permission from the audience members was obtained prior to filming. The tape was later watched and the interview was transcribed. It took eleven hours and thirty minutes to transcribe and was done over a period of eight days. Transcription was relatively easy because of the clarity of the tape. However, there were two notable exceptions; both containing too much overlapping and inaudible speech. I asked the group members who were involved in those sections to come and listen to the tapes and help me transcribe the problematic areas but even after their help only one of those sections was deciphered.

Before the interview began, I questioned the time and the amount of energy anyone would have to talk at the end of a workday. Some of the participants had just finished attending a dance class and all of the participants work. I was concerned that my choice of conducting the interview at 9:30 p.m. might not be beneficial. In addition, as mentioned by Madriz (2000) the setting of the focus group is not a socially natural setting and having the participants sitting on the floor of a dance classroom made it even more unusual. However, being a dancer I found it natural and since some of them are dancers, I felt that they would be comfortable too. After reviewing the tape of the interview, I could see, however, that the non-dancer participants looked less comfortable than the dancer participants.

I was also concerned about how the two small groups would function and who would dominate the conversation. Since I know most of the participants very well, I kept in mind their communication styles when placing them in one group or the other. The end result was two heterogeneous groups. I hoped the dissimilarity coupled with the lack of familiarity amongst them would allow for a helpful and creative dynamic as previously mentioned by Patton (2002) and I was not disappointed. The groups gave interesting and varied answers.

I was the moderator of the interview, alternating between the two groups. I tried to be as impartial as possible. I did not want the participants to feel as if they had to answer in any particular way. I was careful as to how I dealt with the questioning process because several of the participants are previous students of mine and I felt that they may consider the interview to be a graded assignment. I wondered about how that would make them feel and how it would affect their answers. I hoped that my alternating monitoring

between the two groups would make them feel freer to express themselves than if I was a permanent presence. On the other hand, I felt as if my status as a teacher helped me to control the groups and move the interview along without anyone feeling cut off or slighted. Patton (2002) mentions that a good moderator should be able to control the interview and allot necessary time to each participant. I think my teaching skills allowed for an amount of trust to be built between me and the participants, even those who were not previously my students. Patton (2002) also mentions that participants in a focus group interview cannot be assured confidentiality when it is video taped, but I think their previous knowledge of me and my status as a teacher made them trust me and give permission.

Another matter of concern is that several of the participants know the dancer who was performing. I wondered if this familiarity would make them see things that were not intended. I was concerned about whether knowing the dancer and her mannerisms would cause the viewers to read more into the dance than I or the dancer had intended.

Familiarity existed also on another level within the groups as some of the members knew each other. Since familiarity among the participants in a focus group is considered by some as a limitation (Patton, 2002) I attempted to minimize the negative outcome of familiarity in the group by making sure that not many of the people who knew each other well would be in the same small group. Even with the attempts I made to diminish familiarity, not all of it could be done away with. I found that familiarity did not negatively affect the outcome because familiarity also generated interesting issues to analyze.

Finally, the post hoc focus group which was held with the choreographers followed a slightly different procedure. They first viewed the taping of their own dances (the ones they had choreographed and also danced) and then re-read the poem that they used to create the choreography. After the viewings and reading, the question session began. The interview was taped using a video camera but this time without filming. Once again, as the mediator, I strove to keep the group focused.

#### *Choreographing and Video Taping Dances*

As for the procedure in the choreography section of the project, the four choreographers who agreed to partake in the research project were asked to come to a meeting. At the meeting, they were given a copy of the poem and asked to choreograph a physical representation of it. No limitations were placed on the creativity. They had full freedom to use or not use anything they wished (e.g. music, props, other dancers). They were given up to four weeks to finalize the task. When they were finished, they performed their own creations, in other words they did not assign other dancers to perform their choreography as had happened in the original choreographed dance. Their final creations were video taped twice (each time from a different angle). The video tapes were later transcribed for analysis (as previously explained) and also used in the post hoc focus group interview.

#### *Face-To-Face Interviews*

After an initial study of the tapes, I realized that because I was trying to see if there are meaning-form connections which audiences can interpret in the manner which the choreographer intended, I had to interview each choreographer individually in order to efficiently and effectively transcribe the choreographers' dances. In order to decipher

this connection I had to understand the intention of the choreographers. Therefore, I asked each choreographer the following three questions after they had viewed the tape of the dance.

- How did you feel about implementing this task?
- How did you dissect the poem?
- What movements represented specific words?

As for the third question above, some may question whether this was a leading question or not. The fact is that the assignment which the choreographers were asked to implement was to create a dance to a poem. When they were asked the questions above it was to help in clarifying what meaning they had put into the dance so I could analyze the dance/form/meaning connections. It is also important to clarify that the word “movements” in the third question did not mean ‘only one’ movement per word, it also included phrases and/or styles of movement.

After most of the analysis of this data had been conducted, I still needed more information about their feelings and intentions so I informally questioned the dancers again individually. At this point in the research I had most of the graphs and tables drawn up so I used them in my talks with each dancer. I showed them what I had done and asked them to express their feelings about what I had interpreted. All but one of the choreographers said I had done a near exact job. The one who did not totally agree with my interpretation was choreographer number two. She felt that my discussion about her use of turns was not what she had intended. (For more detail about this discussion see chapter four).

Before moving on to the next section of this chapter I feel it is necessary to comment on the actual transcription of these dances. I did not conduct only a descriptive transcription (i.e. X is followed by Y and so on) but I had to be interpretive due to the rationale of including this phase/aspect in the study. I wanted to deal with meaning-form connections (if any) and these must be dealt with on an interpretive level. The main guide in the interpretation of each dance was the poem. I have included an example of how I transcribed the original dance in table 3.3, below. In the table, the poem is to the right and the movement descriptions to the left. The numbers on the far left represent the division according to the floor plans. More discussion on this issue is found in chapter four.

Table 3.3: Movement Choreography Corresponding to Floor Plan Original Choreography (1:47)

| #  | Movement Details   | Poem Equivalent  |
|----|--|--|
| 1  | Walking- Dragging feet-Five steps  | She sits alone in her room at night.                                     |
| 2  | Sits on chair- Feet under chair- Hands resting on sides of chair   |  |
| 2  | Looks from right to left- contracts head   |  |
| 3  | Looks up- Gets off chair- Walks three steps downstage right diagonal   | In the day,  |
| 4  | Small curtsey-   | she puts on a smile  |
| 5  | Chaineé turn   | that does not reach her eyes!  |
| 6  | Walks three steps across stage left diagonal   | In the day she pretends to laugh,  |
| 7  | Small curtsey-   | and suppress the tears....   |
| 8  | Chaineé turn- Three small steps  | she does this to make them all happy.                                    |
| 9  | Two steps- Two Chainees- toward chair  | She thrives in the night,  |
| 10 | Sits on chair- Feet under chair- Hands resting on sides of chair   | she does not sleep.  |
| 10 | Swaying side to side from right side- extends arms low- 5 times  | The pain and the anger keep her awake!                                   |
| 10 | Right hand grabs left wrist- Left hand is fisted-  | This is the only way she knows that she is alive for sure!               |
| 10 | Contracts upper-body inward and rocks upper-body while still seated- 3 times   |  |
| 10 | Attempts to rise- and then rises (still holding wrist)   | Her energy is sustained by the pain,                                     |
| 11 | Still holding wrist, dancer circles the chair clockwise three times  | she goes on day after day....trying to feed the flame.                   |
| 12 | Sits back on chair- Contracts to side left-  | Only few stop to notice, only few can get in.... she is covered in skin! |
| 12 | Faces front (still seated) and rubs her arms (starting right side)-her legs move in sequence with her arms- extending and contracting- | Skin which is too tight, she pulls at herself with all her might.        |
| 12 | Jumps out of the chair in a wide second position and lands back in chair- arms are extended to diagonals-X                             | "Help me!" she screams.  |
| 12 | Facing front- hands holding head/face- dancer rocks three times and sits back briefly  | But no one hears her tears, no one hears her fears....                   |
| 13 | Gets up holding wrist (as previous) and circles chair once- counter-clockwise  | Through it all, her love for life never dies, it simply never dies.      |
| 14 | Twist sits in front of the chair (right leg on top)  | So she sits quietly in her room in the dark.                             |
| 14 | Rocks upper body- hugs upper body  | She hugs herself and tries to get out of her skin....                    |
| 15 | Reaches up towards chair and un-twists- she sits back on chair- leans to side left   | No one is going to get in!   |

Another face to face individual interview was conducted with the dancer of the original dance performance. I was curious as to what she was feeling after having performed this dance several times in several different situations. The dancer who performed the dance for the research project is both a member of the Al-Sarab Troupe (which uses the school, in which the dance was performed for focus group two, as premises for rehearsals and classes) and a teacher in the school; therefore conducting the dance in the school premises made her feel more relaxed. Her comfort was due to two main reasons: familiarity with the space and appropriateness for dancing, both of which allowed the dancer to move unhindered. Having watched her in all the previous performances, I felt that for the focus group two she performed her best. She commented that the atmosphere and location both played a part in her feeling the 'role' much better than she had previously. She also felt that performing in the classrooms at the university was inhibiting and the audiences were not as welcoming. This issue was not one I had previously taken into consideration. The level at which a dancer feels the connection to the audience he/she is performing for seems to affect the manner in which the dancer transmits the message.

## DATA ANALYSIS

In this section of the paper, the procedure of data analysis is discussed. The findings as well as the problems faced and how they were solved, will be discussed in detail in chapter four.

### Researcher Experience versus Researcher Bias

An issue that needed to be considered was whether or not the familiarity of the researcher with the topic might create a bias. I have studied dance for the past forty years.

I have been a professional choreographer in several countries during the past seventeen years. In addition to my dance and choreography experience, I have been a dance instructor for 26 years and I created my own dance school in 1991. The use of this extensive background in dance helped in analyzing the data. However, to help prevent bias I asked two researchers (colleagues) to analyze the data as well. The work as a team contributed substantially to the analysis and helped to minimize bias and further clarification of how this was done is given in the subsequent sections and chapters. Strauss and Corbin (1998) argue that a researcher who has significant knowledge about the topic is an asset to the project. Researchers who feel “unafraid to draw on their own experiences when analyzing the data” (Strauss and Corbin, 1998, p.5) are qualified candidates for GT research. I felt and still do feel that I am not afraid to draw on my experiences, as Piaget and Vygotsky’s theories postulate, it is the experiences that we encounter that make us understand and grow.

### Procedural Implementation of GT

As previously mentioned, GT procedure was used to analyze the data. Each of the members of the data analysis team followed the process outlined below. Detailed descriptions and examples are discussed in chapter four. Here I would, however, like to briefly remind the reader of the process the research team followed

The team began the data analysis with *microscopic analysis* which was implemented in order to identify essential elements of form-meaning relationships and elements of construction of meaning from dance (Strauss and Corbin, 1998). After gathering information in this stage of the analysis the team then began to implement what Strauss and Corbin (1998) refer to as *open-coding*. Open coding was used to identify the

concepts, define, and develop categories with respect to their properties and dimensions, the results are explained in chapter four. All the time the open coding procedure was occurring, the team was also dealing with the *axial coding* which involved the use of comparison of the concepts and categories emerging from open coding (Strauss and Corbin, 1998). Axial coding was mainly done to compare new concepts to existing ones as well as new and core categories to existing ones. This helped to link the properties and dimensions of the concepts and to piece together data that was divided during the open coding process. During this process (open coding and axial coding) the links between the categories and the subcategories were established. The team worked together through discussion and comparison of *memos*, which are the documentation of the process and product of the analysis of the data (Strauss and Corbin, 1998). Through more comparison, selective coding procedures were developed to select and refine categories. The team narrowed the many categories and concepts into groups that were more relationally connected thus explaining what the form-meaning relationships were and how the viewer contrived meaning from dance. This stage involved three steps: selecting the central category, integrating the subcategories into the central category, and finally, refining the theory (Strauss and Corbin, 1998).

## ETHICAL ISSUES

In any research study, ethics is an important consideration. According to Ruane (2005), ethical considerations in research are recent developments but essential nonetheless. Ruane (2005) highlights several of the key ethical issues according to the *American Sociological Association's Code of Ethics*, and reminds researchers that abiding by them is vital.

## Key Ethical Issues and Considerations in the Research Project

First, research should not cause the participants any harm. This is the most important issue to consider when implementing a study (Ruane, 2005). The participants in the study I implemented were not in any danger of being harmed and all necessary measures were taken to insure the dancer had appropriate and safe space to perform during the implementation of each trial.

The second ethical issue highlighted by Ruane (2005) is obtaining informed consent. It is the right of every participant to know what they are involved in, and be fully aware of all aspects of the study. They also have the right to obtain further information when the study is finalized. I had all the participants in my study sign a consent form (see appendix A).

The third ethical issue to be considered is the participant's right to privacy. According to Diener & Crandall (1978, cited in Ruane, 2005) a research project needs to cover three privacy issues:

1. sensitivity of the solicited information
2. the location or setting of the research
3. the disclosure of the study's results or findings

I assured all the participants confidentiality. I assured them that I would not divulge their identities and that they would not be able to be identified from the final work. In order to assure this, each participant was assigned a participant number so use of names was not necessary. As for the sensitivity of the topic and the setting of the research, there were no problems which affected the ethical rights of the participants. Even though I am a teacher at the university where a lot of the research was implemented, and also a teacher at the

Al- Sarab Alternative Dance School, I did not feel that there was a power issue in the research. It did not seem that students answered based on their feelings towards me as a teacher or as their teacher even though I did feel as if my role as their teacher made them feel more secure. I also had many participants who did not answer all the questions. I believe they felt free to answer or not, and if they did answer, they felt free to answer in any manner which expressed their ideas.

Finally, Ruane (2005) highlights the issue of conflict of interest. A researcher should be dedicated to an objective and impartial data collection method. In my study, there were no issues that could be considered to cause conflict of interest. I made my intentions clear to all the participants. I also offered to share the work with them once it was finalized and in some situations, participants looked at the data before the project was over. Several times it involved the need for the researcher to further study one or more aspects of the project but that was not the only reason why participants were allowed to see the work.

There was no financial or other interest in a particular outcome in the research project. Therefore there was not conflict of interest in any of the phases of the research.

As for the hard work and effort the research team and choreographers put into this project, they were more than happy to participate because they felt that the project was worthy of investigation and showed promise for dance in the future. Also, the research team was interested in learning how to implement GT since none of them had previously used such a methodology. As for the choreographers in particular, they enjoyed the work and exposure to what they considered to be something new. None of them had previously choreographed a dance to a poem.

## LIMITATIONS

As previously mentioned, the issue of author's bias could be a limitation in this project. I attempted to lessen the probability of allowing bias to influence the results of the data analysis by adding two people (Amelia Yusuf-Karamah and Suhail Dasouki) to the analysis team. Both of them were language instructors and not dancers. By adding them into the analytical equation, I allowed for the interpretation of the data to be filtered through various notions and experiences and not just my own. In the team's attempt to develop a plausible theoretical context, the experience and knowledge of all three members were taken into account. However, even with the best of intentions, my experience still affected my choices. I made choices based on what I found to be relevant to my vast experience. My intent was for the added influence of the other two team members to counter any bias that might exist. In chapter four I discuss in detail how the work took place within the researchers' group. Here, however, I will say that it was not an easy task working in a group. Nonetheless I was interested and pleased to see how well the collaboration did work. Even though there was disagreement at times, the team managed to work through it and come up with a consensus that satisfied everyone on the team. Initially I was concerned with how my team mates would deal with me considering that I am the dance authority in the group. I was pleasantly surprised when I realized that the other two team members did not defer to me because of my expertise. On the contrary, at times they actually fought for their ideas or analyses which were contrary to mine.

It is also important to mention that even with the three members of the team analyzing the data, there still could have been other interpretations. The results of the

analysis are by no means the only plausible contexts and categories through which meaning can be conveyed in dance.

In addition, two of the instruments used in the research project; the original dance (live performance) and the poem (on which the original dance was based) were both creations of mine. It could be argued that my influence on so many of the parts of the design could constitute bias. However, once again I attempted to limit it by asking other choreographers (four) to choreograph a dance to the same poem. This helped in allowing the team to analyze how choreographers approach conveying a message as well as lessen bias. As for the poem, I asked a participant to interpret the poem (verbally) from her perspective (see appendix) in order to reassure myself of my interpretation. The request was submitted via email and the response from the participant was returned via email. This stage was not included in the study because it had no relevance to the conceptual framework. Nevertheless, it aided in affirming my interpretation of the poem and to a certain degree lessened the bias.

The next chapter explains the process in more detail by highlighting results and specific issues involving how meaning-form connections are deciphered by audiences after they are coded by choreographers.

## Summary

The basic principles of qualitative research are giving realistic portrayals of ‘what’ without being rigid in building answers for the ‘why’. It was this flexibility of the paradigm that attractive me to research qualitatively. Detailed explanation of the methodology of GT (grounded theory) clarified the choices made in this project. There was no certain knowledge prior to the investigation thus making it even more

worthwhile. Descriptions of the specifics (instruments, participants, procedures and analysis) help to situate the project within a communication milieu. In the next chapter I attempt to clarify how the above, in collaboration with the principles of hermeneutics and constructivism identify some new insights into how modern dance elaborates meaning.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### Investigating Meaning-Form Connection in Modern Dance

*“Dance remains a greatly undervalued and undertheorized arena of bodily discourse.”*  
*Jane C. Desmond (p.31, 1997)*

This chapter is divided into four sections. The first section explains and clarifies the methodology used in analyzing the data while the second section highlights the process of organizing the data and attempting to clarify the concept of communication of meaning in modern dance. The third section is a critical analysis of the outcome of section two and the final section modifies the process and clarifies the attempt at building a dance communication model.

#### OVERVIEW OF THE INVESTIGATION PROCESS

This chapter takes the reader through the process of investigating possible meaning-form connections. At an early stage in the research I thought about meaning-form connections in terms of particular words corresponding to certain and even specific forms (i.e. movements or stances) in Modern Dance. As I immersed myself further into the literature, and acquired some of the pilot data from the research process I realized that I should instead be thinking in terms of more comprehensive notions and areas of meaning, categories so to speak. The challenge then became to try and find some such areas and notions which could usefully be investigated. In order to achieve this I began first by constructing a survey question (see question number 1 p.104) which would prompt participants to nominate meanings. Meanings were also mentioned in the participants' discussion of dance in the focus groups and individual interviews. From all these data sources, but starting with the survey, my research assistants and I extracted and

named core meaning categories and subcategories which could be utilized in the analysis of a modern dance. The participants in the study considered some of these categories generally easy to express physically while others were thought difficult. For the process of categorizing we followed a very orthodox grounded theory approach. Second, I had to find ways of describing and analyzing Modern Dance as form. I opted for two modes; one verbal and one visual. These modes were then applied to the video recorded material which was gathered through several stages of the research process (the original dance and the choreographers' dances). This allowed me to establish meaning-form connections on different levels. After the categorizing was finalized (with the concept of theoretical sampling in mind) I searched for a communication model which would help me in placing the study within a more explicit context of meaning-form connections. This was how the implementation of the constructivist communication model 'ecology of meanings' entered into the equation. The remaining sections of this chapter clarify the process and highlight the results.

## CONSTRUCTING MEANING FROM MODERN DANCE AND MODERN DANCE FROM MEANING

This section of the chapter exemplifies and discusses the categories that surfaced from the participant data and which will ultimately serve as the basis of the emergent theory. Two of the original research questions are: How does the audience construct meaning from dance? Moreover, how do choreographers go about putting their intended meaning into form? In order to find answers a survey, a series of focus groups interviews and a choreographic project were conducted. As previously explained, the survey was

distributed to 211 participants after they viewed a Modern dance which was choreographed based on a poem. The questions included:

1. What is the general message you received/understood from watching the dance performance?
2. Consider yourself the “voice” of the dancer; write a paragraph, which illustrates the movements the dancer expressed.
3. Write an idea you think would be easy to express in dance and one you think would be difficult to express.

These particular questions were asked in hope of shedding light on the manner in which audiences extract meaning from Modern Dance. Similar questions were also asked to three focus groups. The questions included:

1. What is the general message or overall idea you understood from watching the performance?
2. What is the specific movement or series of movements which represented a specific idea or message to you?
3. Was the performance unified and coherent?
4. If the performer was speaking instead of moving, what might she have been saying?

The previously mentioned questions and research tools were geared towards finding answers to the first research question (How, specifically, does modern dance create meaning?) However, with regard to the second question (How do choreographers go about putting their intended meaning into form?) further data collection was implemented. By the end of the choreography project four things had been done:

1. A detailed study of each of the four dances and comparative analysis to the original choreography.
2. A verbal analysis of the poem and how each choreographer dissected it.

3. A focus group interview with the choreographers.
4. Individual interviews with each of the choreographers to further clarify their intentions and procedures.

The questions asked in both the focus group interview and the individual interviews with the choreographers were as follows:

Focus Group with the Choreographers:

- 1- How do you interpret this poem?
- 2- How did you approach turning it into a physical representation?
- 3- How would you judge your effectiveness in physically representing this poem?
- 4- Could you relate to the poem on a personal level? Please explain.

Individual interviews with the choreographers:

- 1- What movements for you represented specific words in the poem?
- 2- How did you feel about implementing this task?
- 3- How did you dissect the poem?

The following sections will explain the processes used in more detail and highlight the results.

### Studying the Data for Category Development

As previously mentioned in chapter three, in order to deal with the issue of author's bias the research team that studied the data (in both the survey section and the focus group interviews) consisted of the main researcher (the writer) and two assistant researchers. The assistants were language instructors and not dancers which allowed for the interpretation of the data to be considered through more than one set of experiences and not just that of the writer (who is a dancer, choreographer and language teacher). As for the comparison of the choreography projects, the same team did the work. This also

allowed for different interpretations of the information; as hermeneutics clarifies, the individual brings his/her experience to any situation.

After analyzing and thoroughly discussing the data in both parts of the research project, the research team identified and labeled four broad categories that represented how audiences construct meaning from Modern Dance and four that represented how choreographers construct Modern Dance from meaning. The categories which emerged from the data concerning how audiences construct meaning from Modern Dance are:

1-*Conflict Resolution* (in-vivo): any issue that requires some form of clarification or explanation of the persona,

2-*Personal Experience/Trait* (in-vivo): anything which further clarifies or improves one's state of being,

3- *Linguistic Structures*: formats within which the communicator relays issues such as command and orders, and

4-*Abstract Concepts*: ideas which explain the intangible and things not related to the 'here and now'.

Each category was named in accordance with what the researchers felt the subcategories represented. Numerous attempts were made to place the subcategories into larger categories until finally deciding on the ones mentioned previously. It is worth drawing attention to the fact that two of the broad categories are given in-vivo names (names that come directly from the data). Charmaz (2006) discusses in-vivo codes in detail and classifies the useful ones into three categories (see chapter two for details). Those used by the researchers in this project fall under her category number one which she defines as: "Those general terms everyone 'knows' that flag condensed but significant meanings"

(Charmaz, 2006, p.55). The importance of having an in-vivo core category is to allow the category to be acceptable and accessible so it will easily add to the knowledge of those using it. As in hermeneutics, the more awareness an individual accumulates the greater the amount of knowledge he/she has, thus with respect to the familiarity of in-vivo coding the idea of pre-conception (a notion in hermeneutics which was coined by Husserl and discussed in detail in chapter two) comes to mind. When the category is pre-conceived the more likely it is to be understood.

With respect to the manner in which choreographers develop Modern Dances from meaning, just as in the above-mentioned section, the data was analyzed, discussed and labeled according to the research question. The categories that emerged and are:

- 1- *Personal Experience*: measures which lead to human growth and development,
- 2- *Technical Ability (in-vivo)*: the ability to physically execute,
- 3- *Compatibility (in-vivo)*: links between the material or theme and the artist (choreographer), and
- 4- *Linguistic structures*: channels which allow for communication to take place.

The name for each category was selected based on what the researchers found best represented it. After several attempts to place the subcategories into larger categories the above mentioned were selected. This section of the project (as in the previous one) generated two in-vivo codes which were found to be essential as stated in the previous section.

Before going into detail about each of the main categories, it is important to note that these categories represent aspects of the specific modern dance presented for this project. These categories are such that the participants found themselves either capable of

understanding the message contained in the movement or able to express meaning themselves through movement. There were very few accounts which did not fit into these categories, and out of those few the category of ‘everything/nothing’ requires mention. This category represents replies from the participants who feel that everything can be expressed in dance and those who feel that nothing can be expressed in dance. Since they were a very small part of the total, the research team decided not to use the category. The rationale behind deleting these two categories is the issue of extremity. ‘Everything’ and ‘nothing’ are the two extremities of the continuum of meaning ciphering and deciphering and actually do not add anything new to the idea of meaning comprehension, even though from a hermeneutic constructivist point of view, this would not be the case. Hermeneutic constructivists do not acknowledge an observe-independent reality (Radskin, 2002) thus all is dependent on the observer and this would make any and all answers valid. However, for this study and as mentioned by Charmaz (2006), researchers should only consider keeping categories that clarify new ideas and should attempt to “subjugate” those which do not. It is also important to note that this project is an investigation into how modern dance conveys meaning therefore and answer such as ‘nothing can be expressed in dance’ or ‘everything can be expressed in dance’ does not help in clarifying how meaning in modern dance is constructed or conveyed. Another important point which needs mentioning is the results of this project (the categories) are specific to the details of the study and in my opinion, cannot be generalized to all types of dance unless further investigations are made.

Further explanation of the survey instrument leads to a brief discussion of question number two (see page 106). I thought that allowing the participants to give

examples as to what they considered easy and what they considered difficult to express in dance would provide the project more insight into the manner in which the participants view dance (specifically Modern Dance); it, however, did not. For this reason it will not be discussed further in this chapter.

Before discussing the specific outcomes of the data analysis it is important to reiterate that a notable difference in how people interpret items should be expected if we view meaning through the paradigm of constructivism. Ernest von Glaserfeld reminds us that the main difference between a cognitivist's and constructivist's view is adaptive functioning (1996). Humans not only rely on the innate but also the surroundings in which they exist. People decipher and construct meaning according to their personal experience and environment (von Glaserfeld, 1996; Piaget, 1970; Sercu, L., Méndez García, M. C., Prieto, P. C., 2005; Twomey-Fosnot, C. 1996; Vygotsky, 1978). The researchers' constructivist perspective played a role in impelling the participants to discuss various options of data interpretation throughout the analysis process. The research team members also noticed that throughout the process of analysis and discussion they tended to emphasize different issues according to their experience and knowledge. One of the primary notions of hermeneutic constructivism is that there are many groups in existence thus there are many knowledge systems (Radskin, 2002). For example the main researcher (who is a choreographer/dancer/language teacher) more often highlighted issues pertaining to feelings and contemplation whereas the other two members of the team (both of whom are language teachers) more frequently highlighted issues pertaining to structure and description. Hence exemplifying different groups of people view issues differently.

Nonetheless, there were areas where consensus existed. The two most commonly used subcategories were personal identity and development. Throughout the process of discussion and discovery notes were made about the team's emerging ideas and contemplations, for example (figure 4.1a):

Figure 4.1a: Example of a Team Memo in the Research Process

Why are there not as many responses of description as there are of emotion? We noticed that negative feelings seem more difficult to express than positive ones even though the choreographers disagree.

The work progressed due to the continual process of note taking. These notes are referred to as memos (Glaser, 1978) and are reflective of each member's understanding of the material, for example (figure 4.1b, p122)

Figure 4.1b: Example of a Memo in the Research Process

Does this use of bodies lead to the use of form in a different manner? It brings questions to my mind as to how much form-meaning connection comes to play and how do I really use it?

Memos such as this allowed the team to revisit their concerns and ideas throughout the analysis process. Use of memos proved to be helpful when each new session began because they could be re-read and the context of discussion could be picked up from where it previously ended. Also, additional comments could be made to the memos as subsequent sessions ensued. Further study of the memos led to the development of core categories.

Charmaz (2006) considers the *initial coding* phase as having two separate stages: *open coding* and *focused coding*. During the *initial coding* phase each of the research team members divided the data into units to be assigned category labels (*open coding*).

These units were then discussed with the rest of the team and the narrowing down process began (*focused coding*). The researchers looked at the data together and attempted to categorize, often adapting unit terms from each other. Also units were deleted according to their redundancy; or added according to their distinctiveness. The team's final decision was to include 16 of the original 27 units. These units were then, through *axial coding*, divided into four core categories each containing a number of subcategories. Table 4.1 (p.142) presents a complete list of the units which emerged at an early stage of categorization and was later refined through coding process. The rows in the table signify the initial grouping structure prior to finalizing the core category and identification.

Table 4.1: Complete List of Meaning Units Emerging from the Survey(audience)

|  |
|--|
| <b>Easy to Express (according to the participants)</b>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Feelings/ Emotions</li> <li>• Mood</li> </ul>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Actions</li> <li>• Description (the dancer or body describing something)</li> <li>• Gestures/Corporeal Language</li> </ul>                                      |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• State of Being (visible manifestations)</li> </ul>  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Declaration</li> <li>• Command/Instruction(in the sense of a communicative structure)</li> </ul>  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• State of Mind</li> <li>• Mental Pondering</li> </ul>  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Order (used in more than one manner: command and sequence/organization)</li> </ul>  |
| <b>Difficult to Express (according to the participants)</b>  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Abstract Concepts:</li> <li>• Spiritual/ Beliefs</li> <li>• Time</li> <li>• Identity</li> <li>• Morality/Ethics</li> <li>• Definition</li> </ul>                |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Satisfaction</li> <li>• Helplessness</li> <li>• Blame</li> <li>• Hope</li> <li>• Need</li> <li>• Conflict (both inner and outer: feeling and action)</li> </ul> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mental Pondering</li> <li>• Intelligence</li> </ul>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Skills</li> </ul>   |

These answers came from the analysis of the survey which was in the first phase of implementation in the research process. In the following section I will be further discussing the process taken to analyze the data which emerged from the survey and other phases in the research process.

### Constant Comparison and Categorizing (Survey and Focus Groups)

This section of the chapter deals with the data collected from the survey and focus groups (excluding the choreographers’ focus group interview). The data was studied with the research question: ‘How does the audience construct meaning from dance?’ in mind.

As previously mentioned in the chapter three, it is important to use constant comparison in order to preclude any possible bias in the analysis of the data (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). During work meetings, the members of the team constantly compared

new meaning ‘units’ to previously existing ones. Next, new categories were compared to existing ones and finally, new core categories were compared to already existing ones. Thus the determination of a specific category and its definition was developed through a process of grouping and elimination. Glaser stresses the importance of comparing incidents and concepts to each other (1992, p.40) and its subsequent outcome of core categories (Charmaz, 2006). By using constant comparison the team was able to place older categories under new ones as they appeared. The appearance of any overlaps was discussed, memoed and dealt with as each new category emerged. Memos also helped in determining the core categories by offering rationales which explain why the categories were formed, for example (figure 4.1c)

Figure 4.1c: Example of a Memo in the Research Process

“I still have hope that you can be my friend” was expressed by a participant and I am not sure to what category to place it in; on one hand it deals with the feeling of hope and on the other, the concept of friendship. The participant said it was easy to express and I feel that it is not easy because it contains more than one concept plus the addition of self. How do I, as a researcher, deal with this? Bias and personal opinion should not enter into play.

In order to overcome the initial confusion which existed among the researchers, the team decided to focus the research by using two statements. Either one of the statements could be used as long as the blanks were filled with answers which were logical. The statements used are: “I can understand \_\_\_\_\_ from a dance; \_\_\_\_\_ can be expressed through a dance.” By focusing on these two sentences and

the meaning units that could be filled in the blanks, the research team found an uncomplicated means to formulate core categories.

Specifically and in order to continue the process of revealing a theory and answering the research questions, the team developed a schedule of work sessions. In these sessions the team worked with the list they had previously compiled and transferred the units onto index cards which made the analysis and discussions easier because all the index cards could be laid out in front of the team and constantly discussed. The cards were also easy to move around when grouping was necessary and could be easily changed when the need arose.

In addition it was important to make notes on the cards as the analysis developed. Each team member used a different colored pen to write their comments and there were also different colored pens used for each work session. This allowed the work to be documented on a time line which could help the researchers remember when the actual development or change took place and the rationale behind it. On several occasions it was beneficial for the researchers to be able to refer back to both the notes taken on the cards and the sections highlighted on the data sheets. This reference helped to clarify any confusion which arose regarding the context and clarity of the meaning units. Here it is beneficial to clarify that the researcher and assistants were not attempting to impose their ideas on the categories. The attempt was at developing categories which best suit the data which emerged from the answers the participants made. Researcher bias may exist during the analysis because the research team is selecting the name of the categories but ultimately the naming is based on the participants' answers.

During the work sessions the team worked on how the items could be linked into broad categories. As previously described, the team reviewed the items several times and deliberated about how to categorize them. Different variations were considered until conformity was reached. Using constant comparison (as previously mentioned) the team members listed older units under newer categories as they developed. For example: a unit which was labeled 'state of mind' later became 'personal development' and finally re-categorized as a core category 'Personal Experience'. The rationale behind these changes depended on two things: first, the manner in which the team could compare the newly emerged units to the older ones and second, whether the comparisons led to the formation of new subcategories/core categories or assimilation into already existing ones. After the team decided on a number of sub and core categories which were derived from the survey responses, the analysis of the rest of the data was built on and implemented. The team systematically modified the survey categories as the analysis continued.

After deciding on the final four core categories: Conflict Resolution, Personal Experience/Trait, Linguistic Structures, and Abstract Concepts, the team worked on placing the subcategories under appropriate core categories. The main criterion was that the subcategories must contain, or represent elements of, the core category. In doing this the team constantly referred to the definition they developed for each core category. For example, when placing subcategories under the core category of Personal Experience, the team would ask themselves and each other whether the unit referred to "all measures which lead to human development and growth" (which was the team's definition of Personal Experience) and if the answer was yes, then the subcategory could be included under the core category. For example, one participant (SP 143) had written "a person's

way of thinking” as a survey response. The research team then asked themselves, “Does a person’s way of thinking lead to human development and growth?” They decided that the answer was “yes, it does”. Consequently, the response was placed as a subcategory of the core category Personal Experience. More details surrounding these categories and subcategories will be discussed in subsequent sections of this chapter.

### Constant Comparison and Categorizing (Choreographers’ Data)

The manner in which the team worked on this part of the project is identical to the manner in which they worked in the preceding section and therefore will not be explained again in detail. To capture the main ideas of the subjects’ responses, the statements used were: “I can express \_\_\_\_\_ in a dance; I can understand \_\_\_\_\_ in a dance.” This was similar to the manner in which the team worked in the previous section though the questions were different. Table 4.2 is a complete list of the meaning units identified in the choreography data. These were the initial emerging categories which were later analyzed and refined and (as in Table 4.1, p.142) rows signify the initial grouping structure.

Table 4.2: Meaning Units Identified In Part Two (Choreography data)

|   |
|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Feelings</li> <li>• Emotions</li> <li>• Mood</li> <li>• Expressions</li> </ul>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• State of Being (physical manifestations)</li> <li>• Physical Location</li> </ul>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Life</li> </ul>  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Actions</li> <li>• Description</li> <li>• Gestures/ Corporeal Language</li> <li>• Appearance (physical)</li> <li>• Music/Sounds</li> </ul>                               |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Seeing Oneself/Facing Oneself (understanding and being able to withstand conflict-inner or outer)</li> <li>• Understanding</li> <li>• Strength of Personality</li> </ul> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Need</li> <li>• Honesty/Deception</li> <li>• Annoyance</li> <li>• Obligation</li> <li>• Dependence</li> <li>• Overcoming</li> <li>• Achieving</li> </ul>                 |

Throughout the work sessions, the team analyzed the items in table 4.2 and decided on how they could be linked into broad categories. For example: a unit which was labeled ‘Gestures and Corporeal Language’ later became ‘Physical Ability’ and finally core-categorized as ‘Technical Ability’. The changes happened mainly due to one of two things: first, the constant comparing of older units to newer ones, and second whether the comparisons led to the formation of new categories or simply the assimilation of the unit into already existing ones.

As in the preceding section (after the team decided on the final four core categories: Personal Experience, Technical Ability, Compatibility, and Linguistic Structures) they worked on placing the subcategories appropriately under core categories. The main criterion was that the subcategories must include or represent elements of the core category. To be able to effectively place units into core categories, the team had to constantly refer to the definition of each core category. For example, if the team was

considering placing a subcategory under “Technical Ability”, they would (as done previously) ask themselves and each other whether the unit implied “the ability to physically execute” and if the answer was yes, then the unit could be included under the core category. The following example clarifies this: “my technique” (CP 01) was given as a response and highlighted by the research team and when the team questioned whether this could be considered as a part of the physical ability to execute, the answer was yes. Therefore it was placed as a subcategory of the core category Technical Ability. Finally, the result was the development of categories through which choreographers cipher and decipher movement meaning in Modern dance. In following sections of this chapter, the core categories, as well as the subcategories, are discussed at length. Specific examples are highlighted and they explain the rationale behind the formation of each category.

## CATEGORIES OF MEANING WHICH EMERGED FROM THE DATA

Finally, all the work on the survey, focus group interviews and individual interviews resulted in the clarification and statement of four core categories through which people are capable of comprehending meaning from Modern Dance and four categories through which choreographers develop meaning through Modern Dance. In the next sections, all the core categories will be discussed at length with specific examples to clarify the rationale behind the formation of each one.

### Meaning from Dance

Table 4.3 presents a concise explanation of each of the categories in part one (audience responses to the dance) which relate to how audience members construct

meaning from dance. In this section responses from both the survey and focus group interviews were used.

Table 4.3: Core Meaning Units with Subcategories and Definitions: Part One (Audience)

| <b>Conflict Resolution</b>  | <b>Personal Experience/Trait</b>   | <b>Linguistic Structures</b>  | <b>Abstract Concepts</b>   |
|---|--|---|--|
| Mental Pondering<br>Identity Situation  | Feelings<br>Needs<br>Intelligence  | Declarations<br>Actions<br>Gestures<br>Instructions   | Spiritual Beliefs<br>Time<br>Morality<br>Emotions  |
| <b>Definition:</b> any issue that requires some form of clarification or explanation of the persona | <b>Definition:</b> anything which further clarifies or improves one's state of being | <b>Definition:</b> formats within which the communicator relays issues such as command and orders | <b>Definition:</b> ideas which explain the intangible and things not related to the 'here and now' |

Each of the categories in table 4.3 will be explained in more detail in the subsequent sections of the chapter.

### *Conflict Resolution*

First and as previously mentioned, the fact that the participants used the label 'conflict resolution' makes it an in-vivo coded label. Based on the repetition of ideas in the data such as, "He wondered what to do but it was so confusing." (SP 07) and "Who am I, what am I doing in this life?" (SP 15) the categories of *conflict resolution* (cognitive conflict), *mental pondering* and *identity situation* emerged. The research team decided to label the broad category *conflict resolution*. They defined it as any issue that requires some form of clarification or explanation of the persona and considered it as one of the categories that choreographers and audiences use to define and decipher meaning in Modern Dance studies. Further examples to clarify the subcategories are: "All is burning inside, my lust, I crave for her but I must not show, because she'll know, but I know my eye will betray me." (SP155), this is a combination of *conflict resolution* and *mental pondering*. "Development of someone's personal character" (SP 152) is an example of *identity situation* where another example given by participant (SP 148) "I'm mad and angry. I'm revolting against everything in my way." is also example of *identity*

*situation* despite the use of feelings such ‘mad’ and angry’. Several of the responses could have been categorized in more than one core category, but in order to diminish the overlaps, the main idea of each response was considered to dominate. Another example is “conflict resolution” (FGE-A) which came from the focus group interview conducted with language teachers and led to the in-vivo coding of the category. In developing this category the research team focused on the meanings of the examples in the data as well as how they were linguistically developed. The data showed a lot of reference to feelings but once the examples were analyzed, the emphasis appeared to be on the need to express oneself. The participants’ answers all had to do with either some kind of identity issue (hence the subcategory *identity situation*) or mental deliberation (hence the subcategory *mental pondering*).

#### *Personal Experience/Trait (Viewer’s Perspective-VP)*

Originally, this category was entitled State of Mind. In a subsequent session of analysis it was changed to Personal Development, finally the decision to call it Personal Experience was made based on the fact that it was an in-vivo coded term. The changes occurred as the data was analyzed further and it became apparent that some of the initial terms for the broad category did not include all of the subcategories placed in it. In narrowing down the category and refining some of its constituents the team implemented what Charmaz refers to as theoretical sampling (2006). In theoretical sampling the researcher keeps “moving between targeted data collection and analytic memo writing.” (Charmaz, 2006, p.110). Thus after the process of analysis the team decide on the above mentioned category and defined it as: ‘anything, which further clarifies or improves one’s state of being’. The subcategories are feelings, needs, and intelligence. The subcategory

'feelings' is the one which includes all things that describe how a person is feeling, for example: "I am lonely" (SP 09), "She was mourning the death of a loved one" (SP 46). Here the participant gave an example of something that she found easy to express in dance, "I am lonely" in the form of a declaration. A declaration by some of the participants was considered easy whereas others found it difficult.

Views as to what is difficult and what is easy in both expression and understanding are relative to the participant and his/her environment and surroundings (Piaget, 1970) and particularly in cases where artistic work is concerned or being studied (Greene, 1996). In the focus groups interview with the choreographers, the researchers learned that according to choreographers, emotions (whether personalized like 'I am angry' or depersonalized like 'anger') are easy to express in dance and in particular those having to do with negative emotions like pain and anger. Needs is another subcategory of Personal Experience. Things like "I am happy, I want to share my happiness" (SP 14) and "I've got to go home because I need to study for my exam." (SP 107). The final subcategory in Personal Experience is intelligence. Examples of this are: "A person's way of thinking" (SP 143), and "Intelligence" (SP 160). This was considered by most of the participants as difficult to express through dance. Mental issues were considered difficult to express without the help of verbal language.

#### *Linguistic Structures (Viewer's Perspective-VP)*

Linguistic Structures (in this part of the study) are defined by the research team as 'formats within which the communicator relays issues such as commands and orders'. This category was originally named Communicative Formations but was changed to Linguistic Structures after a discussion around the rationale of the project. The team

decided that Communicative Structures could apply to all the categories since the research questions asked the participants to relay what was communicated. After a lengthy discussion the team decided that Linguistic Structures better represented the category. The subcategories included in this category are: declarations, actions, gestures and instructions. Declarations included statements such as: “Lebanon is democratic but not free.” (SP 78), and “I think you are a very attractive woman...” (SP 71). Actions represent statements such as: “I am walking” (SP 109), “Saying goodbye to someone” (SP120), and “He got stabbed in the stomach leading to tremendous Pain” (SP 07). Gestures represent things such as: “Crying a true tear” (SP 64) and “Facial expression and the right movement with the right space” (SP 80; FGA-J). The final subcategory in this broad category is instructions. Examples of instructions are: “Go away” (SP 03), “Go! Go and look for your soul mate.” (SP 45) and “come to me” (SP 71). All of these examples were given under the heading of ‘easy to express’.

### *Abstract Concepts*

This core category is defined as ideas which are difficult to explain tangibly. The subcategories included in this are: spiritual beliefs, time, morality, and emotions. All of these were present in the study and occurred at different levels of frequency. An example from the data is: (SP 02) “I Love God”; this example is a part of the subcategory spiritual beliefs and could be considered as a part of the subcategory feelings as well. As previously mentioned many of the responses were categorized under more than one subcategory. However, the inclusion in one of the categories rather than another was based on the predominant idea of the response. The participant (SP 02) considered the above example difficult to express whereas the examples of “love” (emotions) and “I

love you” (feelings) given by (SP 49) and (SP 154) respectively; were consider easy to express.

## Dance from Meaning

In this section of the analysis, the data was the video-recorded dances created by the four choreographers as well as the focus group interview with the choreographers and the face-to-face interviews which also took place with the choreographers. The dances which were video taped, were later transcribed in two different ways: 1- Floor plans which are transcriptions of the dances in a visual format which the main researcher developed to help in noting and recording the original choreography (see figures 4.6-4.10 appendix D) and 2- Movement transcription which was done using verbal language instead of Labanotation symbols as none of the researchers was qualified to transcribe in Labanotation (see tables 4.8 p 163. 4.9-4.12 appendix D). These two data sources along with the transcriptions of the interviews (focus group and individual) were given to the team and each member analyzed the data individually. The team then met over a process of several sessions in which categories that classify the ideas began to emerge from the data, but not as quickly as they had in the previous part of the project. Table 4.4 includes concise details regarding the core and subcategories.

Table 4.4: Core Meaning Units with Subcategories and Definitions: Part Two (Choreography)

| <b>Personal Experience</b>   | <b>Technical Ability</b>                             | <b>Compatibility</b>  | <b>Linguistic Structures</b>                          |
|--|--|---|---|
| Emotional Awareness<br>Physical Awareness<br>Mental Awareness          | Acquired Ability<br>Innate Ability                   | Physical Space<br>Personal Connection   | Actions<br>Gestures<br>Expression                     |
| <b>Definition:</b> measures which lead to human growth and development | <b>Definition:</b> the ability to physically execute | <b>Definition:</b> links between the material or theme and the artist (choreographer) | <b>Definition:</b> concrete channels of communication |

The research team worked through several readings of the data individually and then had three group working session. As in the previous section, the team worked on the

data individually first .They highlighted sections in which they saw relevance to the topic conferred with each other through discussion during the group meetings to ensure total comprehension by all. As in the previous part also, the team worked through all disputes and disagreements by continually discussing until an agreement was reached. Further details about each of the core categories in this section are discussed below.

### *Personal Experience (Choreographer's Perspective- CP)*

This category is defined as ‘measures which lead to human growth and development’. This definition was agreed upon by the team and is made to include anything which leads to the development of humans in both the physical and mental categories. Subcategories which fall under this category are: ‘emotional awareness’, ‘physical awareness’, and ‘mental awareness’. An example from the data, “I felt like the poem at one point was talking about me” (FGC-1) clarifies the rationale behind using the term personal experience. “You have to work on being a strong and happy person” (FGC-3). Both of these examples clarify the issue of personal experience because they clarify the area of emotional and mental awareness.

### *Technical Ability*

The next core category is technical ability. This category is defined by the team as “the ability to physically execute”. This category was found to be important to the choreographers. They did not feel that any meaning could come across to the audience if the dancer did not have the technical ability needed to perform what was required. For example, all four of the choreographers mentioned ‘the use of body’ and ‘being able to dance to express’. This is technical ability. Without it, the dancer cannot dance. The

choreographers made mention of two areas of ability, that which they referred to as innate and that which they referred to as acquired.

### *Compatibility*

The third category the research team decided on, in the realm of how choreographers placed meaning into dance, is that of Compatibility. The team decided to define this category as, “links between the material or theme and the artist (choreographer)”. The decision to call this category compatibility arose from the subcategories the team was working with. Those subcategories were ‘physical space’ and ‘personal connection’. Physical space was deemed thus due to examples such as: “I considered the space as the whole world and I divided it into smaller sections to represent different things.” (FGC-4), and “in some spaces things are different.” (FGC-2); while personal connection was what the team called the subcategory that arose from examples such as: “I felt like the poem was talking about me.” (FGC-1), “There are times when every person goes through it.” (FGC-3), and “It happened to me maybe.” (FGC-4). After a long discussion and re-reading the data several times, they agreed that the core category should be compatibility. The team felt that the choreographers were emphasizing the connection that they feel must exist between the choreographer and the theme which is being dealt with. In the focus group interview, the choreographers mentioned how they related to the poem and how this made them feel that the message they presented was much clearer than if they had no connection to the poem.

### *Linguistics Structures (Choreographer’s Perspective- CP)*

The final category which the team named is Linguistic Structures. This category (as with the case of the category with the same name in the previous section) was

originally named Communicative Structures. Due to similar problematic issues with the nomenclature as in the previous section, the name was changed to Linguistic Structures. This category arose from answers such as: “I want to go” (FGC-2), “Sometimes I need to be alone” (FGC-1), “depression is not healthy” (FGC-4) “expressions, feelings and expressions” (FCG-3). All these answers led the team to name the subcategories, ‘actions’ and ‘expressions’. These subcategories fit under the core category linguistic structures, thus the team defined this category as: ‘concrete channels which allow for communication to take place’.

By the end of the team work, there was a total of eight core categories which were directly related to meaning-form relations in a modern dance (specifically the dance designed for this study). From a constructivist point of view, if meaning is constructed by the individual, there should be no reason for the categories to represent either viewers or choreographers, hence a fusion seemed appropriate. Since the team had already named two categories mutually, it seemed that there could be consensus with respect to how one or the other of the groups used the categories which were not identically named. For example, could viewers decipher meaning from issues relating to the ‘technical ability’ of the dancer and could choreographers/dancers build dances representing issues of ‘conflict resolution’? I answered the question affirmatively and thus combined the information from both parts of the study. The result of this is table 4.5 (p.156).

Table 4.5: Core Meaning Units Existing in Modern Dance Representations: Deciphering and Encoding Meaning

| <b>Category</b>           | <b>Abbreviation</b> | <b>Subcategories</b>   | <b>Definition</b>   |
|---------------------------|---------------------|--|---|
| Conflict Resolution       | (CR)                | Mental Pondering<br>Identity Situation   | Any issue that requires some form of clarification or explanation of the persona.                               |
| Personal Experience/Trait | (PE/T)              | Feelings<br>Emotions (Awareness)<br>Intelligence (Awareness)<br>Physical Awareness | Anything which further clarifies or improves one's state of being thus leading to human growth and development. |
| Linguistic Structures     | (LS)                | Declarations<br>Actions<br>Gestures<br>Instructions<br>Expressions                 | Concrete channels of communication within which the communicator relays issues such as commands and orders.     |
| Abstract Concepts         | (AC)                | Spiritual Beliefs<br>Time<br>Morality<br>Emotions                                  | Ideas which explain the intangible and things not related to the 'here and now'.                                |
| Compatibility             | (C)                 | Physical Space<br>Personal Connection  | Links between the material or theme and the artist (choreographer).   |
| Technical Ability         | (TA)                | Acquired Ability<br>Innate Ability   | The ability to physically execute.  |

From a hermeneutic constructivist notion all knowledge is acquired through individual experience and adaptation. Each individual has his/her own constructs which allow for comprehension and mutual compatibility is the result of social interaction (von Glasersfeld, 1982; 1984). The categories in table 4.5 (above) are the direct result of studying individual results of the questions posed in this study. If we agree with the ideas posited by specialists in the field of knowledge and comprehension then we must at least consider the possibility that these categories are feasible in so far as this particular modern dance is concerned. The question remains, can they be applied in other situations and to other dances? Before attempting to answer that question, I probed a little further into the data to see if these categories made sense when applied to the specific modern dance context. I chose to do some further analysis of the floor plans and dance descriptions and that analysis is the focus of the next two sections of this chapter.

## MOVEMENT REPRESENTATIONS: DECIPHERING MEANING IN DANCE

### Participants' Responses to Movement Representation

The focus group participant's interpretation of the movements in the dance they watched is listed in table 4.6 (p. 157). After the participants viewed the dance, one of the questions the researcher asked was: What is the specific movement or series of movements which represented a specific idea or message to you? Table 4.6 lists all the responses given and several of them will be discussed in more detail following the table.

The table is a representation of the movement(s) selected by the viewer participants as representations of a comprehended idea (column one); the meaning the viewer participants assigned to the movement selected in column one (column two), and finally, what the researcher/choreographer intended to portray with the movement selected by the viewers in column one (column three).

Table 4.6: Responses of the Participants in the Focus Group Interview # Two [Question #2]

| <b>Movement Selected by the Viewer Participant</b>                         | <b>Meaning Assigned by the Viewer Participant</b>   | <b>Meaning assigned by the Choreographer</b>   |
|--|---|--|
| Moving in the Beginning  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Joy</li> </ul>   | In the day she pretends to laugh, and suppresses the tears.....she does this to make them all happy  |
| Facial Expressions   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Waiting for someone</li> <li>• Pain</li> <li>• Sadness</li> <li>• Hope</li> <li>• Attempting to live with pain</li> </ul>  | <p>In the day, she puts on her smile that does not reach her eyes!</p> <p style="text-align: center;">+</p> <p>In the day she pretends to laugh, and suppresses the tears.....she does this to make them all happy.</p>  |
| The Big X Jump   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Overcome by feelings of pain</li> <li>• Anger and frustration</li> <li>• Refusal</li> <li>• Waiting for someone</li> </ul>   | "Help me!" she screams.  |
| Holding right wrist with left hand and holding right hand in fist position | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A broken heart and not willing to give it away again</li> <li>• Feeling sad and removing the sadness</li> <li>• Pain</li> <li>• Sadness</li> <li>• Picking up the pieces and keeping them for herself</li> </ul> | Her energy is sustained by the pain, she goes on day after day.....trying to feed the flame.   |
| Moving on the chair  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sorrow</li> <li>• Letting go and coming back in a different direction</li> </ul>   | She sits alone in her room at night.   |
| The turning around the chair in clockwise circles                          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Acceptance</li> </ul>  | Through it all, her love for life never dies, it simply never dies.  |
| Rubbing her arms   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Struggle</li> </ul>  | Skin which is too tight, she pulls at herself with all her might.  |
| Sitting on chair contracted into herself                                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Deception</li> </ul>   | She thrives in the night, she does not sleep. The pain and the anger keep her awake!   |
| The end section (from floor to chair)                                      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Acceptance of fate</li> </ul>  | <p>Through it all, her love for life never dies, it simply never dies.</p> <p>So she sits quietly in her room, in the dark. She hugs herself and tries to get out of her skin.....</p> <p>No one is going to get in!</p> |

Table 4.6 (as mentioned above) represents the answers participants gave to the questions dealing with the specific movement they thought represented a specific idea they perceived. I organized the table to represent the idea the participant selected with the movement the participant also selected and compared it to the line of the poem that the movement actual did represent (with respect to the choreographer). In other words, when one of the participants gave the answer: “Holding right wrist with left hand and holding right hand in fist position” they said it represented “feeling sad and removing the sadness”. Whereas in the original choreography the above movement represented: “Her

energy is sustained by the pain, she goes on day after day.....trying to feed the flame.”

The table represents all the answers given by all the participants in this section of the project and they will be discussed in the following section.

### Researcher’s Interpretation vs. Participants’ Interpretation

Looking at table 4.6 (p.158), several similarities and differences can be seen. However, the movement most misinterpreted by the audience is what the researcher has termed ‘the jump’. The jump in the dance is a big jump in dancer second position with the arms reaching out to the upper diagonal sides of the body simultaneously at the moment of jump execution. The dancer looks like an ‘X’ in the air when executing the move. I (the researcher/choreographer) developed this movement (the jump) to represent the verse “Help me! she screams.” The viewer participants gave three different interpretations of this move: “waiting for someone”, “refusal”, and “overcome by feelings of pain, anger and frustration”. As we can see, none of them is the same and none of them is similar in meaning to what the movement was developed to portray. The idea of refusal could be somewhat acceptable (interpretively) if one was to consider a ‘scream’ of no as a refusal; and maybe even the idea of being overcome by pain, anger and frustration could lead to a ‘scream’ of frustration (i.e. wanting something to end or be done) and needing help in ending it; but the idea of waiting for someone was not one that I could understand unless it was made in reference to the seated position the dancer was in prior to the jump; thus lending meaning to the sitting and not the jump. However, when we consider interpretation as individually based experience, and we consider frame of reference as an essential factor in how messages are interpreted, we must be willing to consider all possibilities, even those which do not seem logical to us. It might be that for

some a jump in the air represents ‘the wait’ because the wait is now over. The jump could be a physical representation of the exaltation a person feels at finally seeing ‘the someone who is awaited’. Another reason why the viewers may have received or interpreted the message of waiting is the fact that the dancer is seated on a chair prior to executing the jump movement. Apply the meaning categories which emerged from the data it can be said that the choreographer interpreted the movement through the category linguistic structures (LS) because “help me” is a command, whereas most of the audience members interpreted through means of personal experience/trait (PE/T). The answer “waiting for someone” could be considered both a (PE/T) and an (LS) according to the definition set for those categories (see table 4.5 p. 156).

As for some of the similarities between what the viewers interpreted and what my intended meaning was, the viewer participants interpreted sorrow in one movement. The specific movement was the section in which the dancer moved on the chair (which, as mentioned earlier, was a prop in the dance). The movements contained several contractions of the torso with internal reflection as the main expression. I intended for these movements to represent the verse, “She sits alone in her room at night.” The choreographer considered this verse to be ‘sad and lonely’ thus the viewer interpretation “sorrow” coincided with this interpretation. The difference in this similar interpretation has to do with the actual words in the poem. Can we consider the movements as representations of the words in the poem as interpreted by the choreographer? From a constructivist point of view it cannot be a representation other than through the interpretation of the choreographer, and the perception of the viewer. Representation by itself is meaningless as all meaning is constructed. Consequently taking a look at the

constructed meaning which the audience perceived and comparing it to the choreographer's meaning intention with respect to the meaning categories in this study, there are similarities in that both the choreographer and the viewer approached the meaning development through (PE/T). The difference was that one viewer also used conflict resolution (CR) where as the choreographer had included compatibility (C) in her work. The example reaffirms the concept of individual interpretation and its importance within any communication model.

Another movement which was interpreted by the viewers in more than one manner was the 'holding right wrist with left hand and holding right hand in fist position'. According to table 4.6 (p. 158), viewers gave the aforementioned movement five interpretations which are: "a broken heart and not willing to give it away", "feeling sad and removing the sadness", "pain", "sadness", and "picking up the pieces and keeping them for herself". I created the movement to represent the verse of the poem which says: "Her energy is sustained by the pain; she goes on day after day.....trying to feed the flame." My interpretation of this verse is that she (the woman in the poem) has pain which belongs to her. This pain is a part of her and she acknowledges both its existence and its importance in her survival. This pain is the nourishment she gives herself everyday in order to be able to continue and therefore she is reluctant to part with her pain. If we study what the viewers saw we see that pain was obvious to some of them, while others saw sadness; however, sadness was not something I intended to portray. Some of the viewers managed to decipher the message of "not willing to give it away again" and "keeping them for herself". Both these interpretations coincide with my intended meaning portrayal of the verse. If we consider the meaning categories here we

find that the choreographer used (CR)+(PE/T)+(C)+(TA) while the viewers used (CR)+(PE/T). It is interesting to note that the two used by the choreographer which were not used by the audience (C) and (TA) are two which originally emerged from the choreographers study. From a constructivist point of view, I posit that all the meaning categories are relevant to all those involved in a dance performance, from the choreographer to the dancer(s) to the viewers. I had begun the project with a reasonably strong idea about how and why Modern Dance can and should represent specific words but as a result of the project analysis my thinking changed radically. These changes will be discussed in further detail in chapter five.

Continuing with the analysis of the responses, the viewers saw and referred to facial expressions as movement representations of the message they decoded even though I did not require the dancer to use specific facial expression, except for one place in the dance (see table 4.6 p. 158). According to the viewers, facial expressions represented: “waiting for someone”, “pain”, “sadness”, “hope” and “attempting to live with pain”. The only facial expression I used was a fake smile which represented: “In the day she puts on her smile that does not reach her eyes!” In the viewers’ responses, only two referred to the ‘smile’ on the dancer’s face. These two viewers had opposite opinions about what the smile represented. One of them saw the message the smile gave as “hope”, whereas the other viewer read the smile as an attempt to live with the pain. In the second case, the viewer referred to the movement as the “fake smile” and this is exactly what I intended for it to be. However, some viewers did not perceive the falseness in the smile and this is why the messages of hope and joy were read by some of the viewers. If the viewers read the poem, would they also be able to find hope and joy in the words? Regardless of the

answer, when we take a look at the meaning categories implemented it is apparent that there was similarity in viewer and choreographer responses (see table 4.7 below).

Table 4.7: Responses of the Participants in the Focus Group Interview # Two [Question #2] Plus Use of Core Categories

| Movement Selected by the Viewer Participant                                | Meaning Assigned by the Viewer Participant   | Meaning assigned by the Choreographer   |
|--|--|---|
| Moving in the Beginning  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Joy (PE/T)</li> </ul>   | In the day she pretends to laugh, and suppresses the tears.....she does this to make them all happy (PE/T)  |
| Facial Expressions   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Waiting for someone (PE/T)</li> <li>Pain(PE/T)</li> <li>Sadness(PE/T)</li> <li>Hope(PE/T)</li> <li>Attempting to live with pain (CR)</li> </ul>   | <p>In the day, she puts on her smile that does not reach her eyes! (PE/T)+(CR)+(C)<br/>+</p> <p>In the day she pretends to laugh, and suppresses the tears.....she does this to make them all happy. (CR)+(C)</p>   |
| The Big X Jump   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Overcome by feelings of pain (CR)</li> <li>Anger and frustration (AC)</li> <li>Refusal</li> <li>Waiting for someone (PE/T)</li> </ul>   | "Help me!" she screams. (LS)  |
| Holding right wrist with left hand and holding right hand in fist position | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A broken heart and not willing to give it away again (CR)</li> <li>Feeling sad and removing the sadness (CR)</li> <li>Pain (PE/T)</li> <li>Sadness (PE/T)</li> <li>Picking up the pieces and keeping them for herself (CR)</li> </ul> | Her energy is sustained by the pain, she goes on day after day.....trying to feed the flame. (CR)+(PE/T)+(C)+(TA)   |
| Moving on the chair  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sorrow (PE/T)</li> <li>Letting go and coming back in a different direction (CR)</li> </ul>  | She sits alone in her room at night. (PE/T)+(C)   |
| The turning around the chair in clockwise circles                          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Acceptance (PE/T)</li> </ul>  | Through it all, her love for life never dies, it simply never dies. (PE/T)+(C)  |
| Rubbing her arms   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Struggle (CR)</li> </ul>  | Skin which is too tight, she pulls at herself with all her might. (CR)  |
| Sitting on chair contracted into herself                                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Deception (PE/T)</li> </ul>   | She thrives in the night, she does not sleep. The pain and the anger keep her awake! (PE/T)+(C)   |
| The end section (from floor to chair)                                      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Acceptance of fate(PE/T)+(AC)</li> </ul>  | <p>Through it all, her love for life never dies, it simply never dies. (PE/T)</p> <p>So she sits quietly in her room, in the dark. (PE/T)+(C)</p> <p>She hugs herself and tries to get out of her skin.....(PE/T)+(CR)</p> <p>No one is going to get in! (LS)</p> |

Table 4.7 is the complete table of responses with the category representations (in red) placed in appropriately. When studying the table, I became aware of my use of linguistic structures (LS). Prior to implementing this study I would not have been able to explain my approach to choreographing that line in the poem. I knew it was not personal

experience and it had nothing to do with my emotions or feelings. Also, when the research team initially decided on the category linguistic structures, as a choreographer I questioned its use although it had emerged from the data. It was not until I developed table 4.7 (p. 163) that I understood the benefit of it.

Nonetheless, I still had some questions and one which I thought needed particular consideration. I had interpreted the poem from my denotative and connotative understanding of the words; but would other choreographers interpret the poem in the same way? This question led to the implementation of the choreographic comparison which is explained in further detail in the subsequent section of this chapter.

## PORTRAYING MEANING THROUGH DANCE

### Choreography Comparison

In this section of the study, I take a look at the commonalities that occurred among the different choreographies. As previously explained, I asked four choreographers to create a dance to the same poem. My objective was to study how choreographers express meaning and see if any commonalities exist. This part of the project emerged due to the analysis of the data in previous sections (refer to the GT methodology chapter three).

### Transcribing the Dances

After viewing the choreographies and transcribing them, I obtained two separate schemes to study. But only one offered interesting insights towards the object of the study and that was the scheme which contained the actual movement that represented the verses in the poem. I found it necessary to have face-to-face interviews with the choreographers after I transcribed the dances in order to accurately divide the

choreography according to their intentions (tables 4.8 in this chapter, and 4.9-4.12 in appendix D). The second scheme involved drawing floor plans (figures 4.2-4.6 appendix D) that represented the base of the dances but it did not offer any new insight into the study as all it confirmed was that different choreographers therefore it will not be explained further. However, the floor plans were an essential tool in allowing for the formation of the verbal representation tables.

### Studying the Movement Development

In this last section of analysis, I used the verbal representations of the dances. As I said previously, I found it impossible to interpret what the choreographers meant without asking them to show me. I would not have had such a problem if I had been an audience member at a dance concert. In such a situation I would have been satisfied with my own constructed meaning and would not have needed any further clarification to settle my curiosity. For research purposes, however, I needed to be absolutely certain what the choreographers' intentions were when they encoded their dances, so I interviewed them one more time. Table 4.8 (p.166) and 4.9-4.12 (appendix D) are the movement choreographies through verbal representation as they correspond to the poetry verses which resulted from those interviews.

Table 4.8: Movement Choreography Corresponding to Floor Plan Original Choreography (1:47)

| #  | Movement Details   | Poem Equivalent  |
|----|--|--|
| 1  | Walking- Dragging feet-Five steps  | She sits alone in her room at night.                                     |
| 2  | Sits on chair- Feet under chair- Hands resting on sides of chair   |  |
| 2  | Looks from right to left- contracts head   |  |
| 3  | Looks up- Gets off chair- Walks three steps downstage right diagonal   | In the day,  |
| 4  | Small curtsey-   | she puts on a smile  |
| 5  | Chaineé turn   | that does not reach her eyes!  |
| 6  | Walks three steps across stage left diagonal   | In the day she pretends to laugh,  |
| 7  | Small curtsey-   | and suppress the tears....   |
| 8  | Chaineé turn- Three small steps  | she does this to make them all happy.                                    |
| 9  | Two steps- Two Chainees- toward chair  | She thrives in the night,  |
| 10 | Sits on chair- Feet under chair- Hands resting on sides of chair   | she does not sleep.  |
| 10 | Swaying side to side from right side- extends arms low- 5 times  | The pain and the anger keep her awake!                                   |
| 10 | Right hand grabs left wrist- Left hand is fist-  | This is the only way she knows that she is alive for sure!               |
| 10 | Contracts upper-body inward and rocks upper-body while still seated- 3 times   |  |
| 10 | Attempts to rise- and then rises (still holding wrist)   | Her energy is sustained by the pain,                                     |
| 11 | Still holding wrist, dancer circles the chair clockwise three times  | she goes on day after day....trying to feed the flame.                   |
| 12 | Sits back on chair- Contracts to side left-  | Only few stop to notice, only few can get in.... she is covered in skin! |
| 12 | Faces front (still seated) and rubs her arms (starting right side)-her legs move in sequence with her arms- extending and contracting- | Skin which is too tight, she pulls at herself with all her might.        |
| 12 | Jumps out of the chair in a wide second position and lands back in chair- arms are extended to diagonals-X                             | “Help me!” she screams.  |
| 12 | Facing front- hands holding head/face- dancer rocks three times and sits back briefly  | But no one hears her tears, no one hears her fears....                   |
| 13 | Gets up holding wrist (as previous) and circles chair once-counter-clockwise   | Through it all, her love for life never dies, it simply never dies.      |
| 14 | Twist sits in front of the chair (right leg on top)  | So she sits quietly in her room in the dark.                             |
| 14 | Rocks upper body- hugs upper body  | She hugs herself and tries to get out of her skin....                    |
| 15 | Reaches up towards chair and un-twists- she sits back on chair- leans to side left   | No one is going to get in!   |

In table 4.8(above) which represents the original choreography, the total number of parts of the dance are fifteen with only two places of repetition (i.e. repeating the lines of the poem, not the physical representations of it) whereas choreographer one for example, (table 4.9, appendix D) had three places of repetition and the repeated parts

lasted longer. When I asked her about the lengthy repetitive parts, she said that she felt as if the repetition would clarify the message to the audience. With respect to choreographer two, she had two places of repetition and said they were the places that she felt needed the most emphasis. She also commented that had she been reading the poem to an audience those were the verses she would have repeated (the repetition of verses in poetry reading is a technique in Arabic poetry reading). As for choreographer three, she had three places of repetition. In her words, the reason why she repeated those parts in particular was she felt that those were the parts which best summarized the feelings of the girl in the poem, hence the important part of the message which choreographer three wished to portray to the audience. The most discrepancy from the original version was choreographer four. He had seven repeated sections. When asked about his approach, he commented on the fact that he was representing a woman (which he considered a difficult task) and this representation had him (the dancer) feeling confused. He said the repetition helped to keep him focused on the message (almost as if it was reassuring). According to Humphrey (1977) repetition is used to reinforce the message the choreographer/dancer is attempting to portray. She, however, warns about the excessive use of repetition as it can make the message decrease in strength or grow feebler with each excessive repetition. Smith-Autard (2005) discusses repetition in dance in more detail. She elaborates on the different methods in which repetition can be used in dance: restate, recapitulate, re-echo, recall, reiterate, revise, and reinforce. The definitions of these can be seen in table 4.8b (p.169).

Table 4.8b: Explanation of Modes of Repetition (from Smith-Autard, 2005)

| <b>Manipulation of Material</b> | <b>Definition</b>                        |
|---------------------------------|--|
| Restate                         | Say the same thing again                 |
| Recapitulate                    | Same thing shorter                       |
| Re-echo                         | Same thing in new context                |
| Recall                          | Bring back into memory                   |
| Reiterate                       | Stress the fact of repetition            |
| Revise                          | Go over again                            |
| Reinforce                       | Making part or the whole more emphasized |

Foster (1997) also discusses repetition as used in both technique (dance) class and performance. She stresses the fact that repetition builds the communicative factors in the body by allowing the images which are being described by the body to ‘create’ the body. With each set of repetitions, according to Foster, “metaphors that are inapplicable or incomprehensible when first presented take on a concrete reality...” (p.239). This process happens over time and through a “persistent” relation with any movement (Foster, 1997).

As for the repetition used in the dance mentioned above, choreographer number four was using it in a sense of revision and reinforcement. He was concerned with emphasizing the female aspect in the poem and allowing it to be more familiar to him while at the same time going over it again and again to make it more familiar to the audience. Seeing the difference with respect to how and why the choreographers used repetition, I was reminded of references in the literature to the fact that interpretation is very reliant on individual experiences and development; both Piaget (1963a, 1963b, 1971, 1973) and Vygotsky (1962, 1978) discuss it. In this project it was illustrated in both the choreographic study and the viewer study when each of these groups used different means of explaining or comprehending the same idea. As for the choreographic study, each of the choreographers worked on his/her dance according to the manner in which they interpreted the poem and then physically transcribed it in the manner which they

deemed appropriate to 'get the meaning' across to the viewer. A collective and inductive look at their work led to the naming of categories which help clarify how meaning is produced in modern dance.

Another issue I chose to look into with these tables of choreography was the ending of the dances. Here all the choreographers ended exactly the same in terms of the structure of the dance. All had one part endings which coincided with the one final phrase in the poem. When asked about the endings all but one of them said that they felt the poem needed a harsh sharp ending which did not carry over into more than one movement structure. The one choreographer who felt different said that she felt the ending need to be quick but not abrupt. I asked her for further clarification and she said, "I think the movement needed to end quickly but softly, she is a woman who is in pain not anger." At this point in the analysis I reached a clearer comprehension of how the category of 'linguistic structures' is used by choreographers in constructing dance from meaning. Things such as actions, gestures, expressions are found in the dances and help in exemplifying the message. The issue of concrete expression was important to the choreographers in this assignment because it dealt with a poem (a literary/linguistic device which conveys meaning), thus linguistic structures was the meaning category employed.

Another point of analysis was the movement elements across the lines. An effective way to do this was to analyze them verse by verse. That way, if there were any similarities or differences, I would be able to relate them to each other. With respect to the first line of the poem: "She sits alone in her room at night" all the choreographers used a form of sitting (see table 4.13 p.169). This can be looked at as a form or concrete

action, maybe a sort of description. One was kneeling on the floor resting back on her heels (a form of being seated). Another common feature (with respect to the first line of the poem) was the lowered head and/or gaze. When asked about it, choreographer number one said she felt as if avoiding looking at the audience would clarify the ‘alone’ meaning.

Table 4.13: Movement Choreography Corresponding to Individual Poetry Lines (Line One)

| Verbal Representation                       | Corporeal Representation  |
|---|---|
| <p>She sits alone in her room at night.</p> | <p><u>Original Choreography</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Walking- Dragging feet-Five steps</li> <li>• Sits on chair- Feet under chair- Hands resting on sides of chair</li> <li>• Looks from right to left- contracts head</li> </ul>   |
|   | <p><u>Choreographer #1</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Seated upstage-side view- feet towards stage right-arms hugging knees- head released on knees</li> <li>• Three rocks up (so that feet leave the ground)- no change in upper body or seated position</li> <li>• Feet walking (still seated) to stage right- four steps w/crossovers- step left- cross over right</li> <li>• Feet walking (still seated) to stage left- four steps w/crossovers- step right- cross over left</li> <li>• Two footsteps while seated- right- crossover left</li> <li>• Release upper body to swastika kneel position- right arm reaching stage right</li> </ul> |
|   | <p><u>Choreographer #2</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Seated on knees facing downstage diagonal left- rocking move with swinging arms at side- two times</li> </ul>   |
|   | <p><u>Choreographer #3</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Seated in twist sit position- left leg over right- arms wrapped around body and raised leg- rocking</li> <li>• Three rocks- stand up on third- right hand extended across body to stage left</li> </ul>   |
|   | <p><u>Choreographer # 4</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parallel- facing front- plié contract- arms forward in circle- head down</li> <li>• Sit to ground- knees bent upwards- arms loosely wrapped around legs- head leaning forward between knees</li> <li>• Rocking upper body- tapping feet (right left right left)</li> </ul>   |
|   | <p><b>Commonalities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Seated position (whether on knees or behind)</li> <li>• Head lowered, eyes not in direct contact with viewer</li> <li>• Swinging, rocking, dragging (quality of movement)</li> </ul>   |

Two moves which were used by all the choreographers was a rocking movement (not necessarily the same type of rocking, some rocked their upper body some their lower etc), and a rubbing or grasping of the upper arms (sort of like hugging one's self). When asked about their use of these, the choreographers commented on two verses in the poem: "She thrives in the night, she does not sleep" and "Skin which is too tight, she pulls at herself with all her might." According to the choreographers, such movements (as those that they used) represent the meaning presented by the use of the aforementioned words of the poem. However, both the lines of the poem and the dances created to represent the poem mean something more than just the words on the page. The lines of the poems have underlying references to several emotions and emotional situations, which the choreographers also used to create their individual dances that express the poem in corporeal language (4.9-4.12 appendix D), hence the utilization of personal experience/trait meaning category (PE/T).

The final issue I looked at was the manner in which the choreographers partitioned their dances. I was curious because no two were the same. Some of them had long phrases with only small amounts of movement, while others had a great deal of movement in shorter phrases. It seemed as if each dancer/choreographer (the choreographers danced their own creations) was creating the movement according to how he/she prefers to move in general. It is possible to see parallels here with how grammar and phonology are used as a resource to realize meanings. We speak/write in ways which we feel comfortable. While analyzing the dances, I could see how technical ability affected the choreographers' choice of movement. Since I have taught some of the choreographers in the past, I know somewhat about their technique and how they use

their bodies. When I stopped thinking like a researcher for a moment and looked at them as a teacher, I could see those technical issues coming about in the equation of their coded dances. This can also be paralleled with how different speakers/writers have different linguistic skills and different levels of skill at their disposal to realize their meanings.

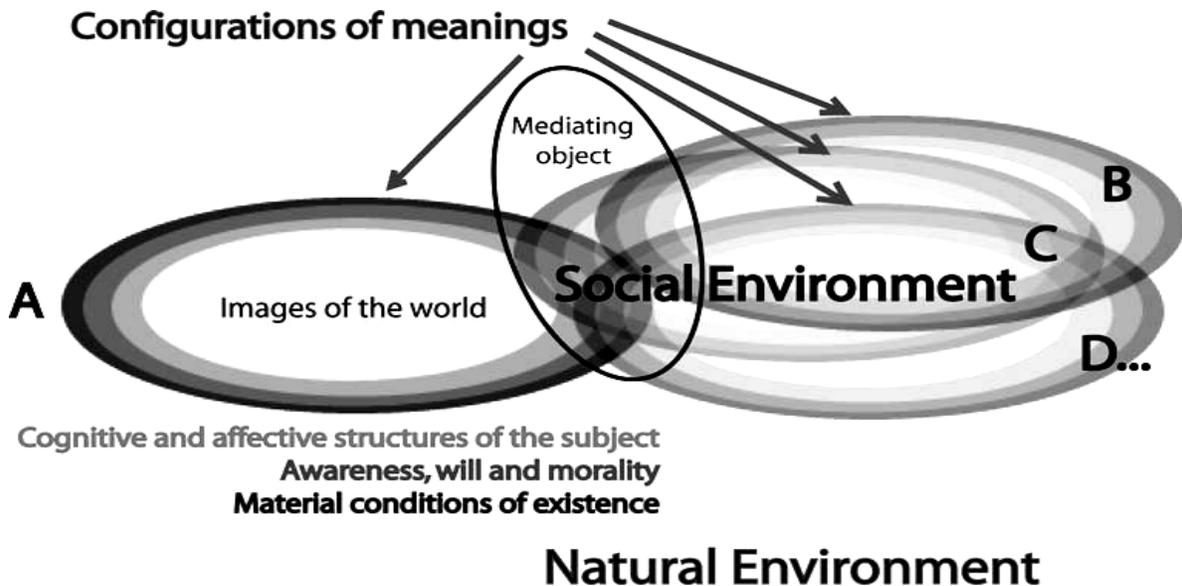
## A MODERN DANCE COMMUNICATION MODEL: MEANING-FORM CONNECTIONS

In order to better understand how the communication categories of this project work, it is necessary to take a look at how a critical constructivist communication model works.

Campos (2007) integrated Piaget's mode of exchange values and Grize's (1982, 1991, 1996, 1997) communication model of schematization and explores a theory of communicative research path which was visualized by Habermas (1987a, 1987b) through a 'critical constructivist approach to form what he terms an "ecology of meanings"'. According to Campos, an ecology of meanings is a "model to explain communication process" (2007, p. 386). He believes that in most communication models, culture is disconnected from human nature and he introduces his model (ecology of meanings) as an alternative to this disconnection. Campos argues that the lack of attention given to culture in most communication models is a communicative misrepresentation. His approach builds on the original epistemological definition of constructivism which was developed by Piaget (1950). According to Piaget (and as mentioned in chapter two of this thesis) knowledge does not exist in the mind and neither does it exist in the world

(Campos, 2007) it exists in the configuration of social situations and construction. Figure 4.8 (p.173) is a representation of Campos' ecology of meanings model

Figure 4.8: Ecology of Meanings Model (Campos, 2007)



According to Campos, the inner light gray area represents the areas in the brain that coincide with body and mental actions which allow for communication within an interactive social milieu and “is the result of permanent lifelong processes of constructing and coconstructing cognitive and affective structures which shape the moral values of people, groups and societies” (2007, p.401). The middle darker grey area accounts for issue such as consciousness and will and this area can arbitrate between the inner area (light gray) and the outer area (dark grey) and “is either *the source of inferencing* or *the source of culture* (2007, p401). In the dark grey area (outer circle) “external environmental conditions of existence” elicit events which might lead to alteration and development (2007, p. 397-398) and consequently the attainment of knowledge. The

outer circle, according to Campos, “is the result of permanent lifelong processes of living under contexts of authority resulting from historical socio-political-economic constraints.” (2007, p.401). The construction of knowledge happens through the utilization of the three areas hence the middle area referred to as: Images of the World.

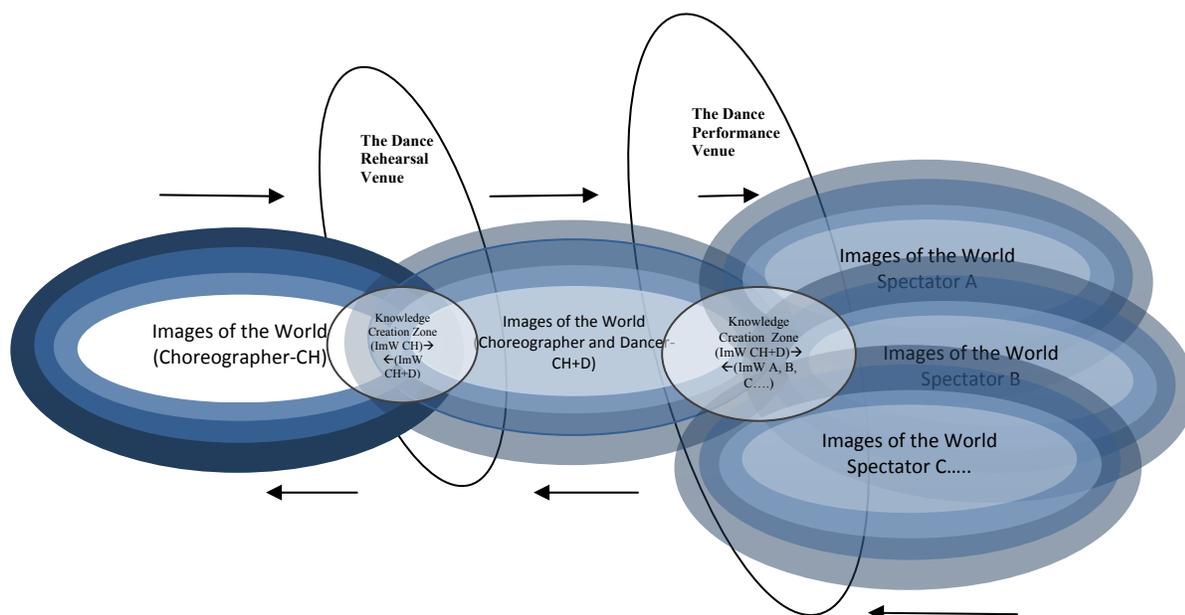
Knowledge occurs through communication. I argue that in order for modern dance specifically and any type of dance in general to project meaning and uphold knowledge it must be communicative. Therefore it must have communicative properties, or be able to be represented through a communication model. In previous chapters of this thesis I have discussed some of the ways in which academicians from various fields have likened dance to language and thus adopted linguistic systems to further explain it. I believe that these systems lack a detailed investigation into the social factor which is a part of Campos’ model and for this reason I believe it is a worthwhile endeavor to look more closely and the makings of this model.

First we must consider that although Piaget contributed affluently to communication and was thoroughly involved in research on language, like many of the current dance academicians, his studies rarely included meanings and culture as such. According to Campos, his model lacks an explicit pragmatic dimension; nonetheless, Piaget’s main contribution to communication is the model of value exchanges (Campos, 2007). Grize on the other hand, focused on the intertwining of mental operations and meanings thus developing his work (natural logic which includes schematizations) as an enhancement to Piaget’s work on value exchanges (Campos, 2007). A quick look at Grize’s (1996) natural logic model of communication shows it is based on five claims concerning communication. The first is *dialogism*: in order to communicate there has to

be a two way channel (a sender and a receiver). The second claim is *situation of interlocution*: the conditions and circumstances involved in the communication and influence the outcomes. The third is *representation*: the symbolic imagery which leads to construction of meaning. The fourth is *cultural preconstruction*: participants have preconstructed awareness which affects the manner in which they contribute to the communication. The fifth is *object construction*: what has been understood from the communication process lends to building meaningful objects. These objects find shared characteristics in the meaning of languages and are consequently built into the communication process and this is referred to as *schematization*. According to Campos, schematizations (which are the processes as well as the results of constructions) are based on images of the world (Im) (2007). Although in Grize's model, "images of the world" seem to relate directly to representations generated in verbal communication, Campos invites the reader "to go beyond this verbal conception..... and integrate possibilities of nonverbal languages" because images also have selective histories associated with the rules which govern meaning acquisition and representation (2007, p.391). I believe Campos' invitation is much needed and warranted, thus my attempt at dealing with these 'images of the world' as found in the non-verbal communication medium: dance.

Figure 4.9 (p. 176), is a representation of what I claim to be (based on this project) the notions involved in the process of dance communication.

Figure 4.9: A Modern Dance Communication Model



Knowledge Creation Zone: In this zone an Image of the World [ImW (T)] is developed.

The Dance Rehearsal Venue: The exchanged by the choreographer and the dancer is affected by the mediating object which in this case is the venue of creating and rehearsing the dance.

The Dance Performance Venue: The exchanged by the choreographer and the dancer is affected by the mediating object which in this case is the venue of the dance performance.

For there to be meaning-form communication at any of the connected points in figure 4.13 (i.e. from the choreographer to the dancer, or from the dancer to the audience member or the reverse in either case) there are issues that must be considered and channels by which this communication occurs. The three circles of different hues of blue which encompass the center (Images of the World- ImW) represent the areas of negotiation which an individual works through in order to comprehend meaning. Similar to the three which are discussed in Campos's Ecology of Meanings Model. However, I posit that a more detailed understanding of what each of these circles comprises can help in clarifying the meaning-form connection in dance. I suggest that the meaning categories which were established in the earlier part of this study can help by offering a possible

explanation as to how meaning might be transmitted to and comprehended by an audience. I advocate considering these core meaning units as fundamental parts of the inner circle (light blue area) in which, according to Campos, continual enduring configurations of cognition and effectiveness are being constructed and coconstructed thus shaping the moral values of all people and societies (2007). In this manner, part of the communication process (which occurs when a choreographer creates a modern dance, teaches it to a dancer who performs it for an audience) will be clarified.

A concise look at this communication process is key to explaining the role of the categories. From the perspective of this project, the initial step is the reading of the poem. The choreographer acquires or deciphers meaning based on his/her understanding and awareness which is based in the inner blue circle (where the core categories exist). From a constructivist's point of view this is done based on prior knowledge or experience the choreographer has, in other words: existing categories of understanding. From that point the meaning (which is now a part of the choreographer's images of the world ImW-CH) is transmitted (through meaning categories and all which affects or mediates the situation) to a dancer who must integrate the meaning into his/her inner circle (using the meaning categories) and add them to his/her ImW-D. This transmission and integration of meaning takes place in the Knowledge Creation Zone and can negotiate meaning in either direction (e.g. from choreographer to dancer or from dancer to choreographer). After the movement in the knowledge creation zone, the dancer must then transmit the meaning via a modern dance to the audience member who deciphers their meaning by use of the meaning categories and the previous process as between choreographer and dancer repeats, hence enhancing their ImW-A,B,C (and so on depending on the size of the

audience). Finally, by the end of the path the poem has been channeled to the audience by means of modern dance. In this example there are two mediating objects and they are the venues of rehearsal and performance. Both these 'spaces' will add or detract something from the meaning. It depends on the point of view of the receiver (on either end). As a final point it is central to realize that this process is a two way channel.

## Brief Summary and Conclusion

After investigating how dance creates meaning, I posit that personal experience and development of a human being straightforwardly shape the manner in which things are interpreted. This is discussed thoroughly in Gadamer (1985), who points out that even in a face-to-face conversation, relations among the interlocutors play a role in delivering the message and this is what unites the speaker and the listener. The same connection exists between writer and reader, choreographer and dancer/audience member. This simply accentuates the connection between beings based on their collectivity as well as individuality. As stated in chapter two, in the constructivism section, individuals grow and enhance their awareness based on the societies they live in as well as their individual experiences, and I suggest that this awareness is not infinite. I speculate that there can be broad categories ('deep structures' if I may use a term coined by Chomsky, 1957) of meaning which help in elaborating all the possibilities of human awareness which can be recognized in modern dance specifically, and in any interpretive dance in general.

This study was a small scale study to investigate the possible meaning - form connections in dance. When I started this investigation I had opinions about what I thought dance could and could not represent. After completing this study my thinking has changed. This will be discussed further in the conclusion, chapter five.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### Towards a Theory of Meaning-Form Connections

*“Becoming a writer is about becoming conscious. When you’re conscious and writing from a place of insight and simplicity and real caring about the truth, you have the ability to throw the lights on for your reader.”*

*Lamont (1994, p.24)*

#### OBJECTIVES OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT

The main objective of this study was to investigate the communicative properties of a non-verbal medium which is Modern Dance. Through hermeneutic phenomenology, constructivism, multiliteracies/multimodality, inductive reasoning, a grammar for visual design, dance analysis, an ‘ecology of meanings’ communication model and several other concepts, I have acquired a better understanding of modern dance and its communicative properties. In this project, Grounded Theory was essential in the initial data analysis period due to its ability to allow ideas and insights, as well as directions for further study and developmental stages, to emerge from the data. However, it was the educational notions of constructivism and communication which gave the project its concrete form.

#### A General Inference

Languages across the world have similarities in structure and form. These similarities allow them to be related to and help in the function of communication. When we think of a grammar of a language we think of so much more than its rules and regulations; we think of a common structure which makes the language both accessible and practical to the users. Does this apply to any form of communication, or is it exclusively a language concern? We see that the idea of communication begins with a common purpose and awareness of a situation. This ought to be the case for any structure

in all modes of communication. Kress and van Leeuwen (1996) postulated a grammar for visual design which relies on a common awareness and understanding. Grammars and grammar-like structures for other areas like dance have been worked on yet seem inconclusive (Humphrey, 1959; Laban, 1966; Hutchinson, 1970, 2005; Hanna, 1979, 1983; Adshead et.al. 1988; Foster, 1986, 1995, 1997; Farnell, 1995a, 1995b; Williams, 1995, 2004; Smith-Autard, 2005) specifically with regards to the meaning component. Most of the work on meanings in dance has been implied and still the implication revolves around common areas of understanding and function.

So if these common areas are understanding and function, does this make modern dance a language? For the sake of argument, let us call modern dance a language. It contains and expresses meaning. It has structure and codes. However, modern dance lacks a common syntax structure. Dancers find it easy to communicate with one another due to the common knowledge they obtain through experience and studies in the field, and not due exclusively to exposure to dance. This does not mean that exposure may not help in comprehension, but it cannot allow for complete mastering of the *langue* [the system or code which allocates comprehension or deciphering of the messages (Barthes, 1977)] of dance. However, this also does not mean that a spectator will not understand a modern dance simply because he/she is not a dancer. This is similar in verbal language systems. For example, I have not formally studied French though I can comprehend a lot of what is said in French due to my exposure to the language since I was a child. In addition, French uses the same alphabet and similar linguistic structures as English which is my native language. Thus, I find it easy to decipher meaning from a conversation in French based on my social, cultural and educational experience. The line of reasoning I

an attempting to emphasize is that in order for dance (in general, and modern dance specifically) to be an easily accessible and practical method of communication, it should have more accessible and practical meaning-form structures.

### Discovering a Dance Communicative Structure

Hutchinson (1970) made a bold attempt at defining a structure by classifying movement features into formal grammar units. However, her main objective was to construct a system of notation. In her attempt, she neglected the most important area in communication which is 'meaning'. Her primary focus was on developing a system of signs and symbols which could help in notating movement, in other words an alphabet of movement. Hutchinson also neglected to categorize movements themselves. Without movements and meaning dance ceases to be communicative and therefore not accessible.

Hanna (1979) on the other hand, focused primarily on meaning and left the neglected field of syntax to be covered in other studies. Hanna's primary focus was to clarify and highlight how dance is a natural human communicative behavior. If we use a combination of Hutchinson and Hanna's work and add to it the needed meaning-form components, maybe a dance grammar could be designed. As a starting point, dance movements must be categorized as part of the syntax and meaning must be integral in formulating these categories. Another point of establishment could be the quality of gesticulation of a movement, for example: flexion/extension; contract/release; sharp/flow; angular/circular; etc. Individual movements could then be placed in each category. This could be a basis for lexical structure. Movements could be grouped together into types for example, the above list of gesticulation contains contrasts (each is the opposite of the other). This could be a starting point for developing the syntagmatic

and paradigmatic axes of dance. Such a development could answer questions such as: What kind of movements can be substituted for each other (paradigm), and in what order do the movements occur (syntax) so that they convey a meaning?

Foster and Adshead et.al had similarities in their pioneering studies on how to analyze dance. Movement syntax and vocabulary in Foster's text resemble Adshead's movement components and form (Foster 1986, 88-97; Adshead, 1988, 21-59). Both approaches focused on the need to explain the meaning in dance. In that regard I believe they were very successful; however, as a choreographer, I would like to know 'how' this meaning is produced. With this thesis study, I believe that I have taken a step in that direction. Further study needs to be done and more effort could be placed towards developing a theory in dance language similar to Chomsky's theory of Deep Structures (1957). Thus, based on implications, movement situations could be arranged to fit within categories of deep meaning. These categories could help to define the pragmatics of dance. In the pragmatic domain of communication, we see that semantics and syntax are interdependent and I posit that the same concept could exist in dance when we focus on its communicative properties.

According to Morris, dance is considered meaningful behavior in three domains: pragmatics, semantics, and syntax (1955). However not enough research has been done to substantiate the form dance syntax might have. With this thesis, I have attempted to take a step in the direction of rectifying this situation. As already mentioned, in the beginning I had very set opinions about what dance is and what its functions are. Some of these opinions changed radically through the course of this study.

When I began this project, I felt strongly that dance had specific meaning-form connections. Even though it seems very culture blind, I believed that any movement would be deciphered in the same way by any viewer. This study has shown that, on the contrary, any movement can be deciphered in a great variety of ways depending on who is viewing and what their background is. A second blind spot I had was the belief that all choreographers approach a task in the same manner. I assumed that because we (i.e. choreographers) belong to the same community (dance/choreography) we function the same. I do not mean that I expected the dances to be the same, on the contrary. However, I did expect the approach to the task to be the same. This study indicates that even within communal situations, there is an amount of individuality which cannot be ignored. Despite all this individual variation, which makes analysis challenging, the study has managed to reveal certain meaning categories which can be useful in future studies, as well as some tentative findings of meaning – form relationships in dance. While this study has not been able to provide all the answers I had hoped for, it has at least provided some valuable insights and has begun the work toward developing a possible theory of communicative properties of dance.

### Emerging Possibilities and Limitations

At the onset of the research project I hoped to highlight the effect that comprehension (both of the sender and receiver) has on receiving and transmitting a message using dance. I claimed that the combination of comprehension and the ability to express what is comprehended would help in creating an approach for meaning-form relationships in dance. Through the course of the project implementation and analysis I found that despite a great deal of individual variation (with respect to interpretation and

creation of movement), there are certain meaning categories in dance which help in clarifying how audiences decipher meaning from dance and how choreographers code meaning in dance. These categories are a beginning but they are not sufficient to build a theory on how spectators decipher meaning in dance. This study is merely a stepping stone in the scheme of investigating modes of meaning-form relationships in dance/movement. I see the work I have done in the project as a beginning, and as I said above, it is a step towards a more complete and thorough theory building.

My research project was a small scale project. It was limited in several areas. The number of people who participated in the survey (211), the number of choreographers (4), the poem, and the location (limited to places within the same region/area) were all limitations. These limitations make it difficult to be able to generalize the results but the results can be considered a starting place. The limitations affect the validity of the results as well. I realize that it is difficult to make generalizations based on a small group study. However, I would like to emphasize the importance of doing larger studies in this field. I would like to carry out similar studies on larger groups of people and on groups of people from different cultures. I believe that such projects could lead to reliable and worthy results. What I would ultimately be looking for is the ability to find categories which are transparent enough to be used by anyone and their application be uniform across the research field.

Some questions which arose during the analysis were:

How does age factor in the dancer's ability to express the message?

How can other areas of education benefit from a more transparent means of body movement deciphering?

How can we make body awareness more accessible to non-dancers?

What is it in nature that determines meaning-form relationships in dance (spatial dimensions, time, bodies)?

How can a better understanding of meaning-form connections help in other forms of life (politics, gender studies)?

These questions could also lead to further research in meaning-form connections thus enhancing the communicative properties of a non-verbal medium.

### Conclusions from the Research

I suggest that meaning-form relationships are dependent not only on the creator of the message (the choreographer) but also on the interpreter (the dancer) and the spectator (audience member). One without the other cannot give a full meaning-form connection.

I suggest that factors of innate nature as well as those which are acquired through learning, affect the meaning-form relationship from the perspective of the interpreter (and that could be the dancer from the perspective of receiving the choreography, or the spectator from the perspective of watching the dance).

I suggest that issues such as the dancer's physical comfort level and the choreographer's attitude towards the theme also affect the meaning-form relationship from the perspective of the sender's encoding of the message.

I suggest that there is no 'one complete and universal' means through which to interpret dance/movement. Cultural factors have a large impact on how the spectator and the dancer decode the message which the choreographer is communicating.

I suggest that issues of space be considered in the scheme of meaning-form connections in dance. No longer can the dancer consider movement in isolation from the

rest of the components. I think research in dance needs to have a more comprehensive look at what elements are involved in dance. Movement alone is not sufficient. In this small scale study it was apparent that movement alone did not suffice to explain the ideas which were understood. Factors such as audience preconceptions, choreographer's fore-notions, and elements of spacing all factored into the equation which was called the dance message.

I suggest that matters concerning meaning-form decoding not be limited to the dance culture/community only. I think dancers and dance teachers would benefit from allowing themselves to realize that dance is not exclusively theirs. Expression is important to a dancer/choreographer and if this is true then the person who is decoding the message must also be significant. The spectator should not be considered a cultural outsider where dance is concerned. In fact, I suggest that the dance community find means with which to make dance more accessible and transparent to all. The most blatant common factor between the spectator and the dancer is that they both have bodies and knowledge of these bodies and how they function.

I suggest that with a more transparent means of deciphering dance, dance students and teachers will benefit from a multi-discipline curriculum. Dance education may develop new strands of foci or interdisciplinary studies for example. By illuminating this process, I suggest that dance and communication experts will enhance their educational procedure thus enhancing the field of research in dance by allowing dance to be incorporated in the theme of communication. This will enhance the education and training of dancers and choreographers.

Finally, I suggest that with body awareness and visual design becoming more and more predominate in the world we live in, we need to have an approach which will allow us to be more fluent in both usage and comprehension of alternative methods of communication. As educators we must develop innovative methods and techniques which will both enrich and empower the new generation to meet the challenges of tomorrow. If we do not develop our methods and configurations of communication such a goal may be harder to achieve.

To end this chapter I would like to reflect back to the beginning chapter where I used a quote by Isadora Duncan, she says: “If I Could Tell You What It Meant, There Would Be No Point in Dancing It.” I said in the beginning that I do not agree with her, and after this research project, I still do not. However, I would like to say, *I can tell you what it means and that is why I dance it.*

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# Appendix A: The Informed Consent Form

## The Informed Consent Form Used in the Research Project

### Informed Consent

My name is Nadra Majeed Assaf. I am conducting research on the use of movement in communication. My study will be a part of my doctoral thesis which is titled: *The Meanings of Dance: An Investigation into the Communicative Properties of a Non-Verbal Medium*.

The following movement questionnaire will be one of my methods of data collection. I will be collecting them personally. All participants' performances will be kept strictly confidential. No names will be revealed for any purpose; however **specific responses** may be used in the paper for clarification.

If you have any questions, you may call me at: 09-547254 Ext 2226. Or email me at [nassaf@lau.edu.lb](mailto:nassaf@lau.edu.lb)

Thank you in advance for your time and effort.

-----  
I, \_\_\_\_\_ (*please print your name so it is legible*), have read and understood the above description of this research project. I hereby allow Nadra Assaf to use the responses that I report on the Movement Questionnaire for purposes of the research described above.

Your signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Your Printed Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix B: Survey Questionnaire

### SHORT ANSWER QUESTIONS

Answer the following in as much detail as you find necessary:

4. What is the general message you received/understood from watching the dance performance?

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5. Consider yourself the “voice” of the dancer; write a paragraph which illustrates the movements the dancer expressed. If you believe part one and part two to be the same, write “the same” below part two.

**Part One (without music):**

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**Part Two (with music):**

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6. Consider the dance as an essay; what title would you give it?

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7. Write two sentences below, one which you think can be easily expressed in movement, and one which you think would be difficult to express in movement.

**Easy to express:** \_\_\_\_\_

---

**Difficult to express:** \_\_\_\_\_

---

8. How can a movement be the equivalent of a word? Consider the parts of speech of language: Verbs, Adjectives, Adverbs, and Nouns and the dance you have just seen, then fill in the blanks below. See the example for help.

**Example:**

**The movement representation of a verb is:** *a run*

**The verbal equivalent could be:** *going quickly home*

The movement representation of a verb: \_\_\_\_\_

The verbal equivalent could be: \_\_\_\_\_

The movement representation of a noun: \_\_\_\_\_

The verbal equivalent could be: \_\_\_\_\_

The movement representation of an adverb: \_\_\_\_\_

The verbal equivalent could be: \_\_\_\_\_

The movement representation of an adjective: \_\_\_\_\_

The verbal representation could be: \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix C: The Poem Used in the Research Project

### The Wait

She sits alone in her room at night.

In the day, she puts on her smile that does not reach her eyes!

In the day she pretends to laugh, and suppresses the tears.....she does this to make them all happy.

She thrives in the night, she does not sleep. The pain and the anger keep her awake!

This is the only way she knows that she is alive for sure!

Her energy is sustained by the pain, she goes on day after day.....trying to feed the flame.

Only few stop to notice, only few can get in.....she is covered with skin!

Skin which is too tight, she pulls at herself with all her might.

“Help me!” she screams. But no one hears her tears, no one hears her fears.....

Through it all, her love for life never dies, it simply never dies.

So she sits quietly in her room, in the dark.

She hugs herself and tries to get out of her skin.....

No one is going to get in!

## Appendix D: Choreography Floor Plans (Fig 4.2-4.6) plus Movement Choreography Tables 4.10-4.12

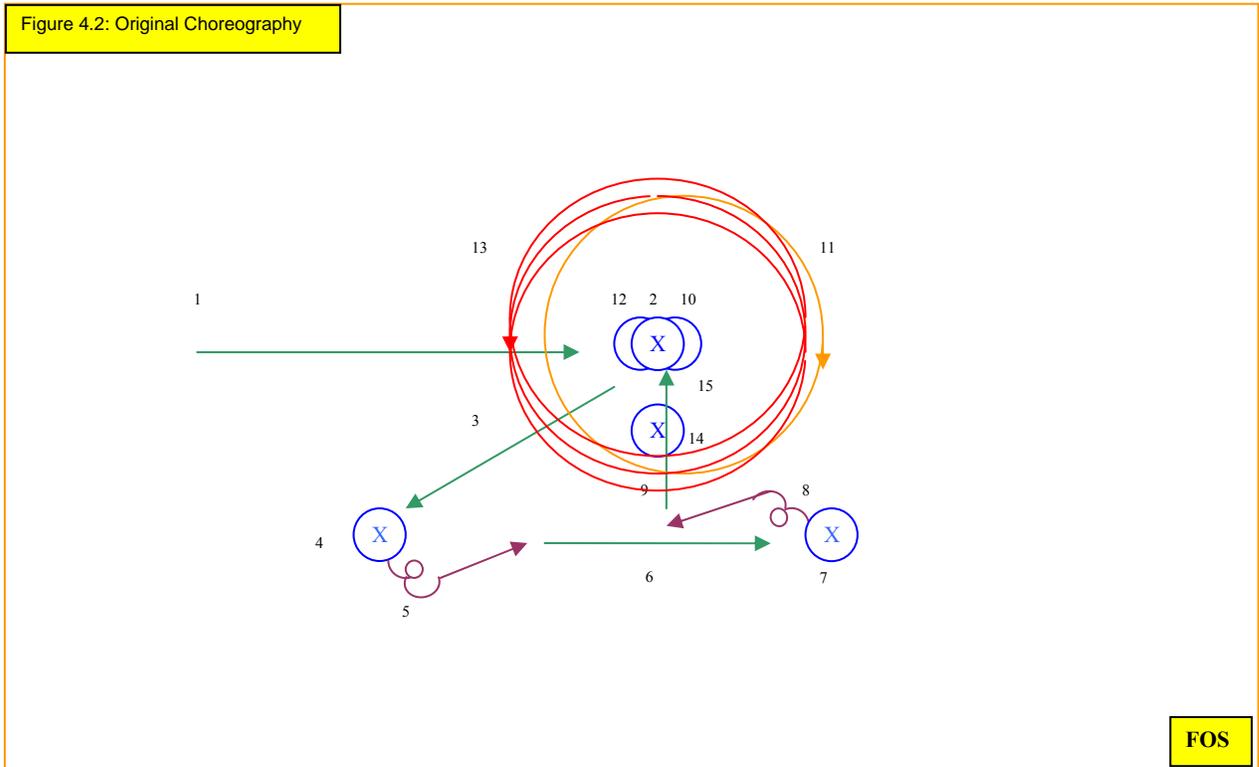


Figure 4.7: Legend of Symbol/Movement in Plans (4.8-4.12)

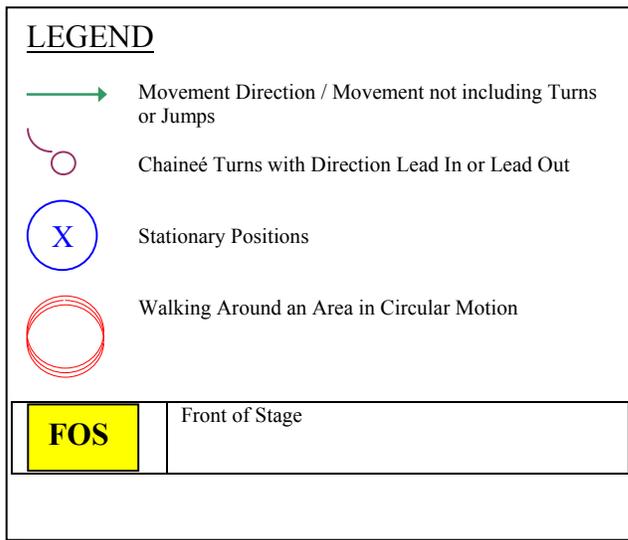
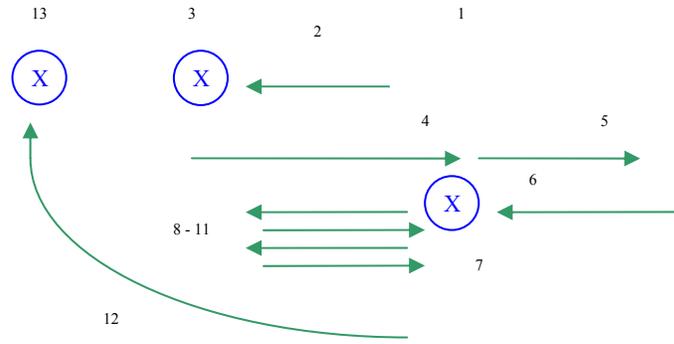
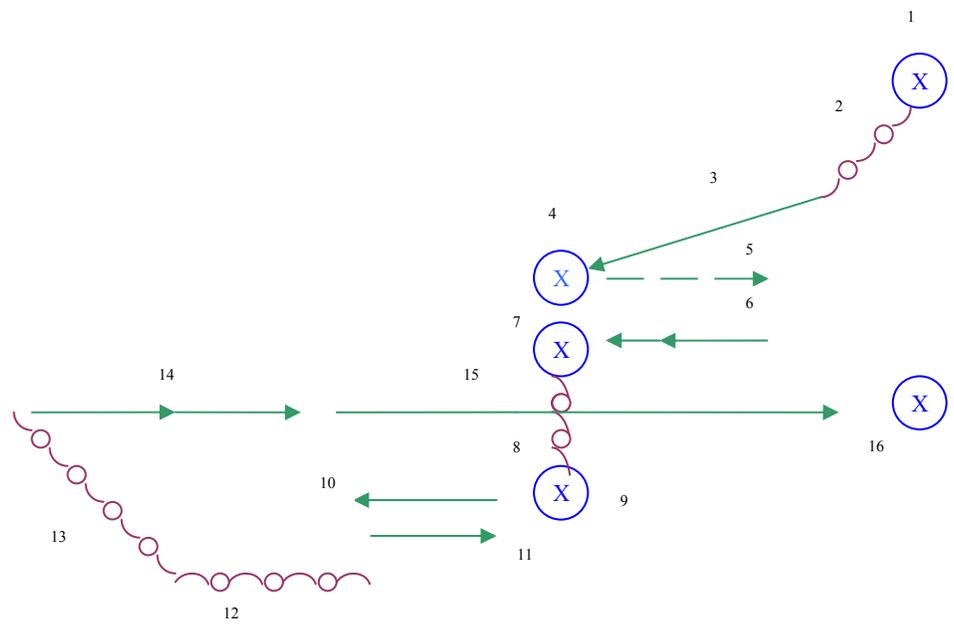


Figure 4.3: Choreographer 1



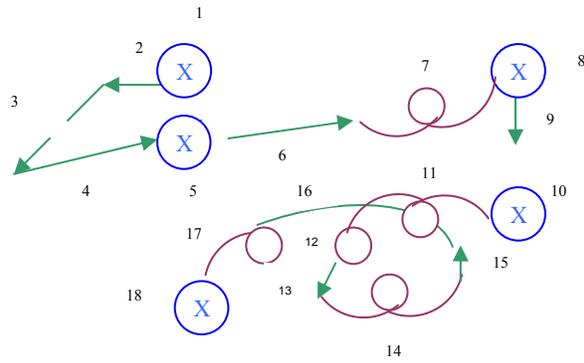
FOS

Figure 4.4: Choreographer Two



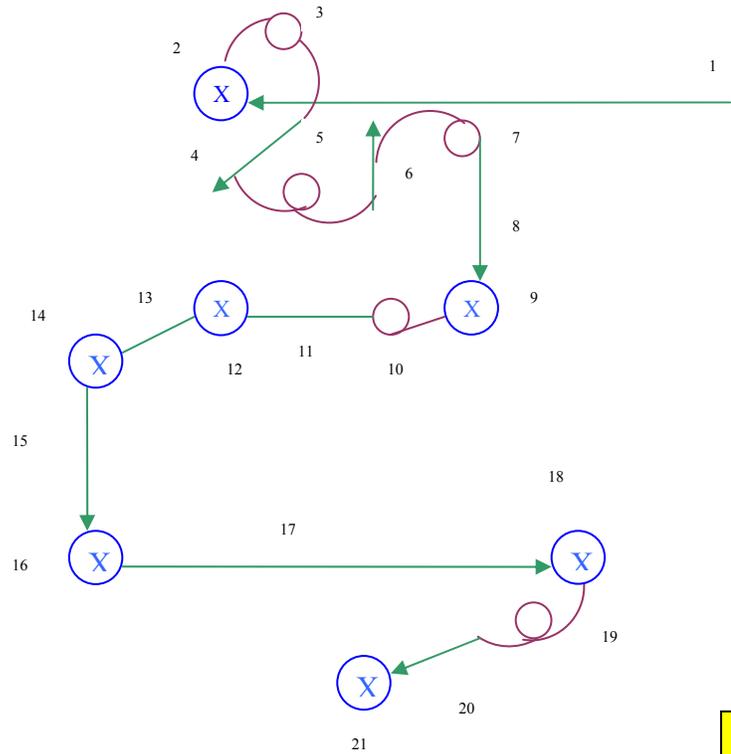
FOS

Figure 4.5: Choreographer 3



FOS

Figure 4.6: Choreographer 4



FOS

Table 4.9: Movement Choreography Corresponding to Floor Plan Choreographer #1 (2:03)

| #  | Movement Details   | Poem Equivalent   |
|----|--|---|
| 1  | Seated upstage-side view- feet towards stage right-arms hugging knees- head released on knees  | She sits alone in her room at night.  |
| 1  | Three rocks up (so that feet leave the ground)- no change in upper body or seated position   |   |
| 1  | Feet walking (still seated) to stage right- four steps w/crossovers- step left- cross over right   |   |
| 1  | Feet walking (still seated) to stage left- four steps w/crossovers- step right- cross over left  |   |
| 1  | Two footsteps while seated- right- crossover left  |   |
| 1  | Release upper body to swastika kneel position- right arm reaching stage right  |   |
| 1  | Step up right leg (second position)- back to front   | In the day she puts on her smile that does not reach her eyes!                              |
| 1  | Dip down release upper body- ½ turn swing- face front- parallel position upright   |   |
| 1  | Collapse front over knees- bent upper body   |   |
| 1  | Heels pop up- arms pull back- knees bent- head still forward- repeat three times   | In the day she pretends to laugh, and suppress the tears....                                |
| 1  | Collapse front over knees- bent upper body   |   |
| 2  | Side step walk stage right- hands/fingers facing palms out- circular arms (first position)- arms move to the side and down in sequence with the walk- repeat three times | she does this to  |
| 3  | Collapse front over knees- bent upper body   | make them all happy.  |
| 3  | Upper body swings up- hands grab face- head falls backward- plié   | She thrives in the night, she does not sleep.   |
| 3  | Body comes to upright position and arms slide down to rest at sides-   |   |
| 3  | Releve in second position- release into deep second position plié- arms move to center and release   |   |
| 3  | Scarecrow release (side attitude) no jump- four times starting right side  | The pain  |
| 3  | Left arm moves overhead and reaches to stage left-   |   |
| 3  | Weight shift low arabesque- each left shoulder to stage left- weight on left leg   |   |
| 4  | Quick change of direction- backwards stage left  | and the anger keep her awake!   |
| 4  | Plié walk fast backwards- four steps starting right- arms motions 'come' -   |   |
| 5  | Plié walk fast backwards- four steps starting right- arms motions 'come' -   |   |
| 5  | Plié walk fast backwards- four steps starting right- arms motions 'come' -(slower than above)  |   |
| 6  | Walk forward from position (facing stage left and towards stage left)- four steps starting right- release upper body over legs while walking                             | This is the only way she knows that she is alive for sure!                                  |
| 7  | Roll up to stand position- parallel arms up to parallel passé  | Her energy is sustained by the pain, she goes on day after day....trying to feed the flame. |
| 7  | Three steps in same direction- leg comes up to passé parallel- hand move up and down shin- right starts  |   |
| 7  | Contract over knees position   | Skin which is too tight, she pulls at herself with all her might.                           |
| 8  | Run stage right- reach left arm to left- arabesque (right leg support)   | "Help me!" she screams.   |
| 9  | Run stage left- reach right arm to right- arabesque (left leg support)   |   |
| 10 | Four steps stage right- starting right   | But no one hears her tears,   |
| 11 | Walk three steps- arabesque- loose upper body- stage left  | no one hears her fears....  |
| 12 | Walk four steps up stage (in a half circle)  | Through it all,   |
| 13 | Collapse on floor- half swastika- right leg extended-right arm extended overhead   | her love for life never dies,   |
| 13 | Sit up- right leg half bent up- foot on floor- left leg bent underneath- arms push from both sides to forward- then back- body follows                                   | it simply never dies.   |
| 13 | Backwards rock- hands on floor at sides- legs come up to sits position   | So she sits quietly in her room, in the dark.   |
| 13 | Hand under knees-hug legs (like beginning position)- rock backwards two times- hands and upper body remain the same  | She hugs herself  |
| 13 | While seated walk legs towards body- right foot first- two walks-arms around shins- head on knees  | and tries to get out of her skin....  |
| 13 | Arms wrap around knees, one at a time- end in beginning position with different spacing  | No one is going to get in!  |

Table 4.10: Movement Choreography Corresponding to Floor Plan Choreographer #2 (0:56)

| #  | Movement Details   | Poem Equivalent   |
|----|--|---|
| 1  | Seated on knees facing downstage diagonal left- rocking move with swinging arms at side- two times                                   | She sits alone in her room at night.                              |
| 2  | Coming up- chainé turn   | In the day, she puts on her smile that does not reach her eyes!   |
| 3  | Hip pull right- open jeté arabesque right- move direction stage left-  |   |
| 4  | Land in kneeling lunge position- left knee on floor  | In the day she pretends to laugh, and suppresses the tears....    |
| 4  | Reach up with right arm  | In the day she pretends to laugh and suppresses the tears....     |
| 4  | ½ sit spin- switch knees   |   |
| 4  | Reach and stand- low arabesque- support on left leg  | she does this to make them all happy.                             |
| 4  | Body weight shift to right- reach right with right arm- no position change   |   |
| 4  | Three leg swings- in and out twist- arms in low second position  |   |
| 5  | Step right (jeté stamp jump)- step left (jeté stamp jump)- contract parallel   |   |
| 6  | Shuffle back four steps starting right   |   |
| 7  | Right leg passé jump in place  | She thrives in the night,   |
| 7  | Fall back roll- passé parallel legs (left passé)   | she does not sleep.   |
| 7  | Reach with right arm- extended right leg- two times- releasing to the floor in between the two times- facing stage left              | The pain and the anger keep her awake!                            |
| 7  | Swastika (right leg front)- facing front- hands on floor- body swings 1 ½ towards center- head emphasis and looking up--> 'for sure' | This is the only way she knows she is alive for sure!             |
| 8  | Step up with right leg- soutenu around- arms at side   | Her energy is sustained by the pain,                              |
| 9  | Four kick-back steps (low)- starting with right foot- arms at sides  | she goes on day after day....                                     |
| 9  | Arms wave down sides of body- body worm side- waving into second position demi plié  | trying to feed the flame.   |
| 10 | Three step walk diagonal stage right- look over shoulder- arms at sides  | Only few stop to notice,  |
| 11 | Three step walk diagonal stage left- look over shoulder- arms at sides   | only few can get in....   |
| 11 | Contract- wrap arms around body  | She is covered in skin!   |
| 12 | Three chainé turns with upper body circling  | Skin which is too tight, she pulls at herself with all her might. |
| 12 | End position: push arms--> hands down- flex palms facing the floor- low arabesque legs- weight on right leg                          | "Help me!" she screams.   |
| 13 | Four chainé turns with upper body circling- arms wrapped around upper body   | But no one hears her tears, no one hears her fears....            |
| 14 | Snake stage left- look to opposite side  | Through it all,   |
| 14 | Four small steps (shuffle back) while in ½ contract position- backwards direction- stage left  | her love for life never dies,                                     |
| 15 | Pull walk backwards- arrow arms- three times starting left- extended arm with extended leg   | it simply never dies.   |
| 16 | Kneel down in beginning position but staring at opposite corner-   | So she sits quietly in her room, in the dark.                     |
| 16 | Wrap arms around upper body  | She hugs herself and tries to get out of her skin....             |
| 16 | Sit weight on left hip.  | No one is going to get in!  |

Table 4.11: Movement Choreography Corresponding to Floor Plan Choreographer #3 (1:12)

| #     | Movement Details  | Poem Equivalent   |
|-------|---|---|
| 1     | Seated in twist sit position- left leg over right- arms wrapped around body and raised leg- rocking   | She sits alone in her room at night.  |
| 1     | Three rocks- stand up on third- right hand extended across body to stage left   |   |
| 2     | Passé left leg- right arm circle from push to overhead fifth-   | In the day, she puts on her smile that does not reach her eyes!                             |
| 3     | Throw jeté jump (down stage diagonal stage right)   | {N.B. this move represents the 'fake smile'} In the day she pretends to laugh,              |
| 4     | One chaineé back to beginning position seated   | and suppresses the tears....she does this to make them all happy.                           |
| 5     | Twist sit- left leg over right leg  | She thrives in the night,<br>she does not sleep.  |
| 5     | Rock three times  |   |
| 5     | Extend left arm and left leg- right hand on floor (1/2 push up position)  |   |
| 5     | Contract extend limbs to kneeling position-facing stage left- profile to audience   |   |
| 5     | Kneeling- reach right arms upwards  |   |
| 5     | Collapse down into swastika- right leg in front- reach back (stretch) on the floor  | The pain and the anger  |
| 5     | Repeat the preceding 3 times  | keep her awake!   |
| 5     | Right arm extended towards ceiling- kneeling- left arm slides up the outside of the right arm and then down- both arms move down                              | Her energy is sustained by the pain,  |
| 6     | Step up with left leg- walking stage left- lunge drag walk- five steps- opposite arm to leg extends   | she goes on day after day....trying to feed the flame.                                      |
| 7     | Reach back with right arm- inside soutenué- both arms cutting in from overhead- end in parallel plié facing front stage left of center- contract 'C' position | Only few stop to notice, only few can get in....  |
| 8+9   | Contract down- walking forward with accentuated foot work (left-right-left)- hands climbing up leg from ankle to knee- upper body relaxed                     | she is covered with skin! Skin which is too tight, she pulls at herself with all her might. |
| 10    | Move down to floor in kneeling position- high release upper body back- contract to fetal position- arms work in unison  | "Help me!" she screams.   |
| 10    | Arms wrap around stomach  | But no one hears her tears, no one hears her fears....                                      |
| 10    | Body swing to the left and around- complete the half circle- arms around stomach  |   |
| 10    | End in contracted prayer position- arms around stomach-   |   |
| 10    | Start to come up slowly to kneeling position  |   |
| 10    | Abrupt move to straight kneeling position   | Through it all, her love for life never dies,   |
| 11-17 | Chaineé turn- chaineé turn downstage diagonal left, repeat three times  | It simply never dies.   |
| 18    | Three soutenué in place   | So she sits quietly in her room, in the dark.   |
| 18    | Melt down to knees  | She hugs herself and tries to get out of her skin....                                       |
| 18    | Side slide down (right)- slowly lie down on ground on left side- use right arm and hand to support the slide. Left arm ends around stomach                    | No one is going to get in!  |

Table 4.12: Movement Choreography Corresponding to Floor Plan Choreographer #4 (2:04)

| #  | Movement Details  | Poem Equivalent  |
|----|---|--|
| 1  | Walking in from stage right   | <b>{Introduction}</b>                                    |
| 2  | Parallel- facing front- plié contract- arms forward in circle- head down  | She sits alone in her room at night.                     |
| 2  | Sit to ground- knees bent upwards- arms loosely wrapped around legs- head leaning forward between knees                                     |  |
| 2  | Rocking upper body- tapping feet (right left right left)  |  |
| 2  | Arms release from legs and move out to side- hands rub eyes- stretching (as if waking up)   | In the day   |
| 3  | From seated position turn to stage left- stand up with right leg  | she pretends to laugh and suppresses the tears....       |
| 4  | Three step walk down stage right diagonal (left right left)- lunge release- arms forward- upper body undulating                             |  |
| 5  | Back soutenu turn- end facing stage left- hands on face   |  |
| 6  | Moving upstage center- Three step walk down stage right diagonal (left right left)- lunge release- arms forward- upper body undulating-     |  |
| 6  | Back soutenu turn- end facing stage left diagonal- hands on face  |  |
| 7  | Three step walk down stage right diagonal (left right left)- lunge release- arms forward- upper body undulating                             |  |
| 7  | Back soutenu turn- end facing stage left- hands on face   |  |
| 8  | Three steps downstage (off center left)   | she does this to make them all happy.                    |
| 9  | Parallel- facing front- plié contract- arms forward in circle- head down  | She thrives in the night,                                |
| 9  | Sit to ground- knees bent upwards- arms loosely wrapped around legs- head leaning forward between knees                                     |  |
| 9  | Lay back (knees remain bent)  |  |
| 9  | Reach up with upper body (abdominal muscles)-hands on head  | she does not sleep.                                      |
| 9  | Lay back and roll side to side (right-left)- knees remain bent  |  |
| 9  | Reach up with half open arm- roll right   | The pain and the anger keep her awake!                   |
| 9  | Reach up all the way- right arm- lay back   |  |
| 9  | Reach up- both arms bent  |  |
| 9  | Contract backwards (not touching ground)- three beats (like heart beating)- both hands over heart- right hand under left- repeat four times | This is the only way she knows she is alive for sure!    |
| 10 | Reach over right and step up with right leg- and soutenu turn   | Her energy is  |
| 11 | While facing stage left take one step with left leg- followed by three heavy labored steps- upper body undulating (right left right)        | sustained by the pain,                                   |
| 11 | Left step into lunge right to stage right diagonal (low)  | She goes on day after day..... trying to feed the flame. |
| 11 | Right step towards stage front- close left- arms and hands together in front of chest- head lowered   | Only few stop to notice,                                 |
| 12 | Hands run down body from chest to shins   | only few can get in...she is covered with skin!          |
| 12 | Contract (still standing in parallel first position)- arms and hands on chest   | Skin which is too tight,                                 |
| 13 | Reach upwards with ½ extended left arm- repeat with right arm- while moving to stage right  | she pulls at herself with all her might.                 |
| 14 | Both arms open in second position (high)- feet open to second position- X stance  | “Help me!” she screams.                                  |
| 15 | Twist upper body (right-left- right) slowly moving down stage   | But no one hears her tears, no one hears her fears....   |
| 16 | Standing position facing front- stare   |  |
| 17 | Walking stage left- four steps in ½ drag walk while looking over shoulder on every step- head in opposition to leg                          |  |
| 18 | Parallel- facing front- plié contract- arms forward in circle- head down  | Through it all,  |
| 18 | Sit to ground- knees bent upwards- arms loosely wrapped around legs- head leaning forward between knees                                     | her love for life never dies, it simply never dies.      |
| 18 | Contract forward holding shoulders and upper body- knees relaxed to the side (<>)   | So she sits quietly in her room in the dark.             |
| 18 | Come back to knees bent upwards- arms loosely wrapped around legs- head leaning forward between knees                                       | She hugs herself   |
| 19 | From seated position turn to stage left- stand up with right leg  | and tries to get out of her skin....                     |
| 20 | Three step walk down stage right diagonal (left right left)- lunge release- arms forward- upper body undulating                             |  |
| 21 | Standing position (open fourth)- arms crossed over chest- head slightly bowed- protection stance  | No one is going to get in!                               |

