Children’s Dance-Making: An Autoethnographic Path Towards Transformative Critical Pedagogy

Dissertation

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Abstract

My dissertation, a self-reflective autoethnography, examines, analyzes, and interprets children’s dances created by seventeen nine-11 year olds attending a Midwestern, urban elementary school. The significance of this longitudinal study is in the offering of a fresh perspective on children’s dance-making as a mode of embodied understanding and as a process for personal transformation in life. As a reflective practitioner, I observe and write data reflexively using dance narratives. I describe instances where child dance-makers construct personally relevant meanings that embody personal transformations not dependent solely on outside events or codified dance portraitures.

Children negotiate inner experience with multifaceted sensory-play, feelings, ideas, themes, images, and structures through personally relevant dances that are created and interpreted within particular learning communities. This transformative act is at the center of why and how each dance made is an embodied act of knowledge-making and a result of preparation that is cultivated and defended privately by each person. It calls for pedagogical change in elementary school dance education practice to insure that spaces for this multimodal educational endeavor are embedded into educational policy, curriculum, and instructional practice.
Dedication

Dedicated to all of my students worldwide.  
For it is they who continue to inspire me.
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No graduate student completes a dissertation on his or her own. Every Ph.D. is the collective sum of experience and collaboration between the student’s family, friends, colleagues, faculty mentors, and spiritual advisors.

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With deep appreciation, I thank all who unselfishly offered their experience, wisdom, and courage. I remain in your debt.
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Chapter 1: Introduction

This dissertation has, at its foundation, my long-held passion to critically examine how children’s dance-making practices illuminate personal choice and critical and creative inquiry in meaningful constructions for oneself, others, and the world.

As a reflexive practitioner, I am particularly interested in discovering children’s dance-making practices that represent personal transformations not dependent solely on outside events or codified dance portraiture, but rather how each individual or group of dancers created, performed, reflected, and understood themselves, one another, and the real world in which he or she lives. In my teaching practice, I have become increasingly fascinated with the many ways that children shape their inner experience as dances that are created and interpreted within particular learning communities. The transformative act is at the nexus of why and how each dance made is an embodied act of knowledge-making and a result of preparation that is cultivated and defended privately by each person.

Without a doubt, the dance educator’s capacity to create and define spaces for such children’s dance-making practices is essential, but precisely what this interaction is or how it unfolds needs additional examination. Learning more about the interrelationship
between children’s dance-making practices and my own pedagogical practices will help me to find connections that lead to deeper understanding and influence my practice.

As a result of this investigation, I hope to make a critical difference in the lives of anyone who chooses to engage in children’s dance-making practice—child or teacher. As each one comes to understand that knowledge comes in many different representations (e.g., words, numbers, color, sound, or movement), children’s dance-making may be more likely to find its rightful place in K-12 education and beyond. As a result of this study, I plan to challenge current children’s dance-making\textsuperscript{1} practices in the broader dance education and educational policy and leadership circles to narrow the gap and advocate for dance being taught alongside reading/English/language arts, math, science, and social studies in K-12 schools across the United States of America.

Problem Statement

The purpose of this dissertation is to describe instances where children’s dance-making constructs meaning that embodies understanding. “Having knowledge is to know things. Understanding is to know things differently. Art [dance] making helps us to understand things differently” (Sullivan, 2011). Embodied understanding is nurtured by the dance educator and involves critical and creative inquiry, choice making, and interpretation of oneself, others, and the world. For this study, I examine selected child-made dances (live and recorded) with autoethnographic methods in order to unpack

\textsuperscript{1} Children’s dance making is defined as the dances that children and teens make alone and with others. For this dissertation, I use the \textit{Dance and the Child International} definition of children as 0 to 18 years old.
instances that reflect the children’s experience through multifaceted sensory-play, feelings, ideas, themes, images, and structures. Moreover, I look for relationships between the dances they make and my pedagogical practice. Evidence culled from this study supports the need for pedagogical change in intermediate elementary school dance education practice and insures that spaces for this multimodal educational endeavor is embedded into educational policy, curriculum, and instructional practice.

The problem of my dissertation is driven by changes in the cultural and political landscapes that impact grade 3-5 education. By 2014, the ratio of English Language Learners (ELL) going to school in Ohio will be 1:4, and high school and college graduates educated under No Child Left Behind legislation have failed largely to compete in a global marketplace. Most Americans have limited education in dance, and few studies have substantiated claims that recognize children’s cognition and the role of dance in human growth and development. Without finding ways to help American citizens understand the relationships between children’s dance-making and cognition, elementary schools across the USA will continue down an exclusionary and marginalized path, resulting in an inequitable policy and practice. With my current work on the National Coalition for Core Art (Dance) Standards Writing Team, I have hope that the arts (dance, drama/theatre, media arts, music and the visual arts) can move forward in articulating their place in K-12 education in a way unheard of five years ago. At the beginning of the 21st century, K-5 dance education in the United States remains marginalized. When implementation discussions regarding school reform and national standards occur, the study of dance as basic and integral to a child’s education remains
peripheral at best. The 1994 document, *National Standards in Arts Education*, argues that all children in the United States should experientially know about dancing, creating dances, and responding to dances that consist of natural movement and codified dance forms. Yet K-5 dance education— as a curriculum entity unto itself— continues to be excluded in mandated national, state, and local discourse. When it is discussed, curriculum guidelines are written for state department compliance but are seldom implemented or assessed. This is not surprising since most Americans have limited experience with dance as a performing art and as part of their own education. Consequently, few studies have substantiated claims that recognize the role of children’s dance-making in the development of cognition and identity. With a few exceptions, not many dance education scholars have studied this problem (Bashaw, 2011; Bond, 2009; Bond & Stinson, 2009, 2008; Lynch Frasier, 1991; Rose, 1999; Stinson, 1994; Valance 1989; Priddle, 1989; Ayob, 1986; Disanto-Rose 1986; Stinson, 1986; and Boorman, 1980, 1982, 1991).

*Midwestern City School District and K-5 Dance Education*

In this mid-central part of the United States that includes Ohio, most K-5 dance education practices have paralleled music and visual art education by modeling themselves primarily on Western European tradition. The view that dance learned by children is primarily through a performance lens, as a form of entertainment, and often only accessible to the talented few or the elite is widely accepted. This position remains the status quo and is mostly unchallenged as children seek and receive parental, teacher, or peer approval by imitating— through rote learning—the steps, movements, and overall
shape of adult dance forms (e.g., ballet, modern, tap, jazz, ethnic, and vernacular) with increasing accuracy.

Few children represented in the above dance classes could be heard saying, "I really like the dance that I just made. Would you like to see it? I invented it myself with the help of my friend, Felicia. My dance is about the way I feel when I have a fight with my best friend." Most American children taking dance classes in diverse community settings, including K-5 school settings, are systematically taught to suppress their own natural dance-making voice. Even the most progressive dance studio programs offering creative movement and pre-ballet classes for very young children stop these classes by the age six, replacing them with more conventional dance instruction.

Likewise, the miniaturization of adult dance forms and direct focus on skill development is celebrated and perpetuated by adults and peers on television shows including Dancing with the Stars, American Idol, and So You Think You Can Dance. Each program symbolizes societal codes, beliefs, and values as they intersect with a child’s or teen’s emergent identity. In contrast, the choreographer’s artistic practice remains mysterious, unexplained, and mostly outside the elementary school-age dance student’s experience. The practice of imitating dance forms and styles addresses solely the "see it, do it" or physical aspects of dance. Imitation, by itself, does not begin to challenge or require critical inquiry, higher order thinking skills, or connectivity with the environment that emerges in and through dance movement exploration, improvisation, and informal and formal composition frameworks. Heightening perception, engaging the
imagination, using movement for expressive purposes, and developing problem finding/solving strategies alone or in collaboration contribute to individual and group movement invention and originality.

In dance studio changing rooms, we might view children practicing learned dance movement vocabulary. As steps and gestures are repeated, children perfect, embellish, exaggerate, or abstract what was originally learned. Kinesthetic memory encodes the child's sensory perception of the learned movement as individual idiosyncrasies and personal movement expressions emerge through codified forms. If we could "read" children's minds, their expressive actions might reflect their needs, desires, and relationships as developed with, against, and because of others. In word form, the child might say, "If I do the movements and steps exactly the way he/she tells me to, then I will get that part in the dance recital" (external approval–teacher), or "Watch this!! If I do the movements and steps the way that I am shown, then I'll make mommy and daddy happy" (external approval–parents), or "Look at me!! If I do the movements and steps just like this, then I'll be the prettiest one on the stage" (egocentrism; narcissism). Children studying dance from this educational perspective return to dance class daily or weekly to submissively allow the teacher to fashion their external selves towards a more unified and singularly accepted movement vocabulary (e.g. ballet, modern, African, or tap). Children are rewarded for obedience, acceptance of historic gender-specific roles, and perfected imitations of shapes, steps, and movements already conceived by someone else. Regrettably, a child perceives his or her greatest reward through audience applause from mostly unknown spectators and critics more willingly than from an internalized "felt-
sense” of accomplishment and personal meaning. This socially accepted mindset of what does and does not constitute dance is internalized by the child at an early age, perpetuating traditions without reflective examination.

Has adult convention superseded the authentic and emerging voice of the dancing child? Children can and do make dances that have personal meaning. Children have an innate capacity and, if nurtured, a natural ability to make and perform dances that symbolically (re)present their experience in the world. These dances invite the observer into children's thinking and feeling realms as revealed in and through their dances.

Finding out more about the choices nine- through eleven-year-olds make while engaged in the dance-making process helps me to better understand the child's dance voice. I choose to do this study on behalf of all the children who might not otherwise be recognized for their thoughtful expressions by those people looking only at the “miniature adult dancer.” This study is also for the children who think, feel, and understand themselves, others, and their world in and through the dance-making experience. Finally, I do this study to further adult understanding of the complexities of children’s dance-making and to challenge my scholarly community in critical discourse as we can, together, design ways to insure that children’s dance-making pedagogy and practice is embedded into innovative 21st century educational policy and leadership praxis for our United States youth.

The purpose of this dissertation is to illustrate instances where movement is self-selected, shaped and reshaped to express personal understanding and, in some cases,
reveals personal transformation. This study examines an array of child-made dances that reflect lived experience through multifaceted sensory-play, feelings, ideas, themes, images, and structures. Moreover, I investigate relationships between the dances children make and my pedagogical practice to better understand that the kind of dance instruction children receive directly affects how and why they make dances and what dances they choose to make.

Significance of the Study

The significance of the study is twofold—personal and professional. Over the past twenty-five years, I have worked across many layers of dance education. I began as a dance educator in an urban public school and eventually emerged as a nationally recognized dance education leader in the mid-nineties. In this role, I was afforded many opportunities to influence significant federal level policy decisions related to K-12 dance education and worked on the National Coalition for Core Arts Standards writing team (2011-2012); Research Priorities in Dance Education: A Report to the Nation (2004), Goals 2000: Educate America Act (1994), and the National Dance Standards (1996). At the state level, I co-authored several state dance curriculum frameworks (New York, Ohio, and Minnesota).

I have been fortunate to work on higher education teacher education policy and join university faculties (Art Education, Dance, College of Education) in both full-time and part-time capacities at The Ohio State University, Otterbein University, Antioch University, and University of Rio Grande in Ohio; Teachers College, Columbia University in New York City; the University of Regina in Saskatchewan, Canada; University of Baioji
in the People’s Republic of China; and the Taiwan Women’s University for Arts, Education and Technology.

In the professional dance artist world, I have worked on professional studies policy and instruction for professional dance, teaching artists in Ohio with OhioDance, BalletMet, and the Ohio Arts Council; in New York City with the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theatre, City Center, Dance Notation Bureau, New York Foundation for the Arts, Lincoln Center Institute, Ballet Hispanico, New York City Ballet, Joffery Ballet, Metropolitan Opera Ballet, 92nd Street Y’s Dance Education Laboratory; the Phoenix Dance Theatre in Great Britain; the National Korean Dance Theatre in Seoul, South Korea; and the National University for the Arts in Taipei, Taiwan.

Since that time, I have been withdrawing slowly from the professional life I had come to know in higher education in order to reflect on work accomplished thus far and to conduct research in the cognitive and sociocultural dimensions of children’s dance-making. I continue to reflect deeply on specific questions that have evolved through the work itself, particularly as I learned how to begin to negotiate and articulate such insights through an autoethnographic lens and in relation to understanding the artistic practices of children who make dances amidst social change and school reform. I believe that with this formal investigation I have fulfilled this professional goal.

At the professional level, the significance of this study is the offering of a fresh perspective on children’s dance-making as a mode of embodied understanding and as a process for personal transformation in life. The findings from this study serve as an
example of how studying children’s dance-making as artistic practice – when afforded a comprehensive conceptually framed paradigm within an interdisciplinary educational school context – can be used as learning processes to shape critical and creative dimensions of human understanding.

Furthermore, the findings are presented to challenge the usefulness of the current guiding principles fostered in contemporary children’s dance pedagogy as it is taught and practiced and call for a (re)envisioning of children’s dance-making practice to reframe children’s dance pedagogical practice in the early part of the 21st century. Since little research exists in this area, findings presented in this study invite further discussion, especially from people who have never been afforded such study and to others who chose dance as a way to understand and transform themselves and the world in which they live.

Personal Statement

My own position on children’s dance-making practice has evolved over a period of twenty-five years and is informed by my formal education and life history, beginning with my earliest childhood experiences. Several self-made children’s dances have had a profound impact on me as I continue to refine my understanding of the nature and significance of children’s dance-making experiences, particularly as children use these experiences as mediums for transformation and as tools through which identity is shaped, and vice versa. Each example that I share below suggests that some children direct their thoughtfulness to “thinking about and synthesizing” actual life experience in self-made dances that have little attention directed to the construction of the dance canon’s stylistic characteristics. What purpose these self-constructed dances serve in the children’s lives
or in my own life required my critical attention and reflection, thus forming the basis of my dissertation.

Throughout this study, I use bold face print to give focus to my thinking as I probed related theory and storyline reflexivity on the dances made by the children in this study. Moreover, I used this graphic strategy to organize and reflect on my thoughts critically. I also employ different fonts to differentiate constructed children’s dance-making narratives labeled herewithin as intertexts and interludes from the study’s theoretical arguments. Finally, a third font is used with the label, revisions, to describe changes in my thinking over time.

*Intertext/Interlude: For the Love of Wind Against My Cheeks*

I grew up in the small town of Vestal in upstate New York. Born to working class parents, I became the first person of my generation on either side of my family, male or female, to graduate from college. When I was still quite young, I remember my dad accompanying me to dance class on Saturday mornings, then practicing the steps and body positions with me at home. At weddings we whirled on the dance floor with polka steps – a one and two, a one and two, a one and two, etc. I loved the wind on my face and the feeling of my body in motion. Oh, how I loved to dance! And, dance I did! I felt happiest when I was dancing and still remember sensing a personal power, believing that I could do or be anything or anyone that I could imagine when I danced.

*Intertext/Interlude: Sensing, Feeling, Dancing*

My mom always said that I talked and walked at nine months, and as a preschooer I remember spontaneously shuffling my feet on the red and black-tiled kitchen floor at my home. I tapped out whole conversations with myself as the rhythms spilled from my feet. When my feet “answered” it seemed as though I understood things better. I continued this pattern of behavior on the kitchen
floor until I left home for college at age eighteen. And even after that time, I would sometimes catch myself tapping the floor when I returned for periodic visits.

**REVISION**

Over the years, I remember experiencing a multitude of emotion while I tapped. Through my rhythms I voiced my opinion, took a stance, and solved whatever problem plagued my heart or head. Most of all, I would come to a place of resolve, feeling at peace within myself, as I tapped out whatever the "it" represented and, in a very personal way, defined, made sense of, responded to, or resolved through the dance I performed spontaneously. Tapping on the kitchen floor at my parent’s home was my “place” or sanctuary.

I considered the impact of these vivid memories plus other reminiscences of adolescence and adulthood as they have contributed to life-giving and life-threatening ways of living in the world, and as they continue to inform and shape my life and praxis (Marx, 1975, 439). It is through this reflexive process that I make a compelling argument that the guiding principles fostered in children’s dance pedagogy as taught and practiced today have outlived their usefulness in a world that is changed and that a (re)envisioning of children’s dance pedagogical theory is necessary to reframe children’s dance-making practice.

As a reflective educational practitioner making sense of my own lived experience, I am profoundly connected to my critical, artistic, and pedagogical perspectives (Sullivan, 2011; Bond, 2010, 2009; Bond & Stinson, 2009; Neumann & Peterson, 2000; Richardson, 1997; Van Manen, 1990; Greene, 1988). Interpretative descriptions of dances made by selected elementary-school-age children illustrate aspects of the
dissertation’s *purpose*—to give voice and promise to children’s dance-making practice—as inquiry-framed, socially constructed cognitive processes and cultural moments through which artistic modes are revealed, thinking is embodied, and experience heralded. My interpretive reflections led me to take into account multilayered dimensions of children’s dance-making experience. This includes life experience situated in and outside of the school. It also includes school site’s student population demographics and educational philosophy which has a school culture that privileges children’s daily experience over time. I have become increasingly fascinated in the many ways that children shape their inner experiences as dances that are created and interpreted among peers within a particular learning community.

The goals of the research study are to: (1) describe children’s dance making—whether alone or in groups and within or outside codified dance portraiture—as narratives of personally relevant transformations; (2) better understand the how and why of each dance created as a negotiated, embodied act of knowledge-making, understood as a necessary dimension of personal expression and communication in an increasingly technological universe; (3) reveal that how and why children’s dance-making endeavors are experienced is the result of preparation that is cultivated and defended privately by each person; (4) determine how well one learns to control his or her inner experience in and through dance-making experience; (5) understand what children thought and felt about their dances; and (6) understand my role as a facilitator of cornerstone artistic practices—including [re]presented inquiry, choice making, and interpretation—that make space for meaningful children’s dance-making pursuits.
This has been a long and arduous process and up until now I have resisted mightily the separation of my dancing, choreographing, teaching, and scholarly selves. To be sure, I am well aware that this analysis exists for the purposes of this study and is a moment in a lifelong process of what’s going on with children who make dances by a dance educator who participated in habit-of-mind nurturance during children’s dance-making practices.

**Research Framework, Methods, and Practices**

**Autoethnographic Framework**

In this dissertation, I assume the positions of feminist oral historian (Reinharz, 1992), “researcher-as-bricoleur” (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994, 2), and autoethnographer (Ellis, 2009, 2004; Richardson, 1998). I examine how the complexity of an idea emerges in and through children’s dance-making and select autoethnographic methods because they allow me to tell the story of my experience and to use multiple forms of data collection and analyses. Within the qualitative research canon that Ellis, (2009, 2004), Goodall (2008, 2000); Lather (1999, 1991); Richardson (1998,1997), and Richardson and St. Pierre (2005) champion, I employ a qualitative research framework and use autoethnographic practices. I use documentation and content analysis of DVDs, personal and pedagogical journals, report cards, lesson plans, and interviews; storytelling; narrative analysis; story reflexivity; meta-autoethnography; collective story; documenting immersion; experiential layering; and crystallization as both data and method in what I hope are compelling ways to describe, interrogate, and bring about change related to
children’s dance-making. I use this research paradigm “as a tool for documenting history and generating theory” (174), which called upon my experience teaching dance-making to children and from deliberations with respected colleagues. By doing so, I break with the convention of generalizability used in the social sciences to instead look for specificity, exceptions, and completeness (Reinharz, 1992; Lather, 1998).

In this dissertation I examine data collected from dance-making experiences at one elementary school site over a twenty-five-year period. Doing so afforded me ample time to observe, reflect, and share salient models and their anomalies that saw far-reaching changes in US educational policies. To show the complexity of these changes, I employ autoethnographic methods including intertexts, interludes and revisions to describe the changing conditions. I raise and respond to questions that position and [re]position power, multiple literacies, and child development as critical inquiry and socially-constructed, transformative education to trouble children’s dance-making as a mediator of understanding self, others, and the world in which we live, an observable and transformational fact.

In this autoethnographic study, I share how I resonate with, or shape-shift away from, personalizing each named theoretical paradigm as the sole influence and move towards a broader, more reflexive ideal embodied as multilayered, complex, negotiated, and, at times, uncertain. Appreciative of this, I accept the premise that “written and spoken language is inextricably bound to the social and the ideological” (Lather, 1991, 89) and I understand that rethinking either is to be anticipated and desired in this
dissertation process. As I shape my personal story and begin to understand my role as a facilitator of foundational artistic practices, I find it natural to make spaces for meaningful children’s dance-making pursuits. By deliberately moving my pedagogy towards socially critical discourse, I “situate the ways we [I] talk and write [understand, learn, teach, and research in dance education and the larger domain of education] within social practices, the historical conditions of meaning, and the positions from which texts are both produced and received” (Lather, 1991, 89).

Furthermore, I describe children’s dance-making as artistic practice and as a way of learning, living, and transforming. I engage critical discourse regarding this observable fact and deliberately pose a compelling argument for curricular inclusion. This study is conducted through the lens and agreed upon norms of qualitative research paradigms in order to “tell my own evolving autobiography” (Reinhartz, 1992,130). As a result, I do so “to tell the story of a particular group of children engaged in a common phenomena in a particular context” because “all data relevant to the case are gathered and all available data are organized in terms of the case” (Reinharz, 1992,165).

It is through this reflexive process that I make the case that the guiding principles fostering children’s dance pedagogy as taught and practiced today have outlived their usefulness in a world that has changed. Ideologies that support individual expression primarily utilizing Laban’s movement analysis paradigm, guided discovery and problem solving strategies, lack the socialcultural dimensions of both the child dance-maker and the myriad subjects of sociocultural and historical value. A [re]envisioning of children’s
dance-making pedagogical theory is necessary to reframe children’s dance-making practice and to effectively use its power in designing programming to insure its place in every child’s education. “It is through the critical process of reflecting upon ‘lived experiences’ that [my] students [and I] can interpret the individual and social relationships in which they [I] interact and can begin to understand their [my own biases] and power to reshape and recreate relationships, hence their [my] own lived world” (Greene, 1988, 8).

Location

My study involves Midwestern urban elementary public school boys and girls between the ages of nine through 11 years old. At this school site, these students are afforded opportunities to participate in a school culture whose dance curriculum is embedded in an interdisciplinary educational paradigm.

Questions

My study is framed by the overarching question—How does children’s dance-making deepen understanding? This study shows that children make dances that reflect their lived experience. Moreover, the study reveals that my dance teaching practice directly affects how and why the children made dances.

The following sub-questions guide my inquiry:

- Why do children make dances in school? What feelings, themes, topics, or ideas do children choose to make dances about while in school?
- How are children’s inner worlds negotiated within dance itself?
• How are the artistic practices of dance making meaningfully organized?
• How does child-made dance shape, reflect, and inform school culture and life experience?

Delimitations of this study are:

• Children's dance-making constructed by children reflects lived experience.
• Dances children make are meaningful for them.
• Nine to eleven-year-old children make dances about things through sensori-play, feelings, ideas, images, and structures.
• The kind of dance instruction these children received affected how and why they made the dances that they made.
• The kind of dance instruction children receive partially affects the themes or topics they choose when dance making.
• Dance-making is a cognitive event that occurs on a socially constructed stage.

Summary

In summary, Chapter One was an introduction to the study that included its problem statement; my position as a scholar with regard to the problem introduced; research methods used; an explanation of how the study was constructed, implemented, and analyzed; and a review of pertinent literature to support the research.

In Chapter Two, I describe this study’s research design, my role as researcher, researcher bias, data collection processes, dance analysis procedures, and verification methods. Chapter Three features a review of literature on children’s dance, cognitive
development, artistic and aesthetic development, integrated and interdisciplinary
curriculum, and social theory that shaped my thinking in relation to this study.

In Chapter Four, I present data about dances made by a selected group of nine to
11-year-old children using documentation and content analysis of DVDs, personal and
pedagogical journals, report cards, lesson plans, and interviews. I share stories (Ellis,
2009, 2004) and recount partial tales of cultural translation (Stuhr, Krug, and Scott, 1995)
and present reflections of my own dance-making experience with children and those
dances created by particular children.

In Chapter Five, I analyze data using autoethnographic methods (e.g. storytelling,
narrative analysis, story reflexivity, meta-autoethnography, collective story, documenting
immersion, experiential layering, and crystalization) to describe children’s dance-making
experience as personal narratives and relevant transformations; to better understand
dance-making processes used to negotiate personal understanding of self, others, and
their world; and to elucidate how my pedagogical role informs their artistic practices.
Bias formed around class, race, gender, and ability serve as cultural lenses to inform my
observations, analyses, and interpretations and to consider multilayered dimensions of
children’s dance-making experience, including life experience, the school’s educational
philosophy, and culture as it is situated and mediated in the child dance-makers’ daily
lives.

In Chapter Six, I conclude this dissertation by sharing personal and professional
insights garnered from this study, including how children’s dance-making originates,
negotiates, and coexists in sociocultural conditions that emerge in informal and formal instructional contexts and blend together in substantial ways to support the evolving tapestry of individuality.
Chapter 2: Methods

In Chapter Two, I describe the study’s research design, my role as a researcher, and my research bias. I share the study’s participant roles and location and provide the readers with data collection processes, dance analysis procedures, and verification methods.

Description of Research Design

Qualitative research is an interdisciplinary, trans-disciplinary, and sometimes counter-disciplinary field. It crosscuts the humanities and the physical sciences. Qualitative research is many things at the same time. It is multi-paradigmatic in focus. Its practitioners are sensitive to the value of the multi-method approach. They are committed to the naturalistic perspective, and the interpretive understanding of human experience. At the same time, the field is inherently political and shaped by multiple ethical and political positions. Qualitative research embraces two tensions at the same time. On the one hand, it is drawn to a broad, interpretive, post-modern, feminist, and critical sensibility. On the other hand, it is drawn to more narrowly defined positivist, post-positivist, humanistic, and naturalistic conceptions of human experience and its analyses. (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, 3-4)

In this dissertation, I follow the qualitative research canon to support my own experience and scholarly inquiry and to take a stance that children’s dance-making at
one Midwestern urban public elementary school immeasurably refutes Kozol’s (1990) description of urban public schools as “large, extraordinarily unhappy places” that remind him of “garrisons or outposts in a foreign nation.” Even though Kozol evokes a strong response as he vividly describes urban public schools as decrepit and isolated places, I find that in this school children continue to author their own understandings, judgments, and longings in ways that are far more interesting and perceptive of their day-to-day realities of school life than they are credited for. This qualitative research approach is the opposite of theory-driven, hypothesis-testing research methods that are heralded in positivist research. By using a qualitative approach, I am able to break down dualistic barriers that exist between the researcher and the researched, objectivity and subjectivity, process and product, self and others, art and science, and the personal and the political in other research prototypes.

In this multilayered examination, I retain Howard Gardner’s (1983) developmental theory of multiple intelligences. The day that I first read Gardner’s theory changed my life. Gardner posits that all people possess cognitive capacity that may be understood from any of eight “intelligences” or symbolic representations—bodily-kinesthetic, interpersonal, intrapersonal, linguistic, logical-mathematical, musical, naturalist, and spatial. Gardner also suggests a ninth intelligence that he refers to as ‘existentialist’. I immediately connect-ed with this theoretical way of knowing through my own dance choreography, performance and teaching experiences. To me, dance was a cognitive tool, and to be able to study it in children’s dance-making lives I had to find the “right” qualitative research design. I had experienced children’s dance-making as a
cognitive tool firsthand and witnessed it in others as an embodiment of Gardner’s theory. What I hadn’t realized at the time was that what I learned and how I came to know dance were also cultural constructions, with firmly established beliefs and values that often disregarded other ways of being in the world. It is this socio-cultural context dimension that is missing in children’s dance, creative dance, or dance for children’s literature.

I also embrace Thomas Armstrong’s (2009) list of “genius” qualities found in every person—curiosity, playfulness, imagination, creativity, wonder, wisdom, inventiveness, vitality, sensitivity, flexibility, humor, and joy. I add additional qualities, too—cooperation, perseverance, resilience, trustworthiness, and risk taking—that also align with developing human potential and capability. When these precepts are nurtured in the classroom the “genius” qualities flourish, especially when the school culture cares for its students and teachers, individually and as a community, to inspire them to attempt worthwhile projects. Again, finding a methodology to support these precepts would take some investigation.

I, like Kozol (2005, 2000), believe that even in the most unforgiving surroundings students can make and perform dances to illustrate their own understandings, judgments, and longings, thus making sense of their real world. Doing so sheds light on personal experience and prepares for life’s joys, challenges, sorrows, and responsibilities. It is here that I offer a review of relevant literature and background information on my experience to clarify my position and to explain the influences that shaped this scholarly work.
From Constructivist to Autoethnographer

I struggled with the idea of weaving the constructivist theory into this research but instead decided to include it only in this chapter because it was a cornerstone of my daily pedagogy practice for many years. Constructivist theory has as its core the notion that knowledge is interpreted. This knowledge can be shaped, changed, advanced, or destroyed by people—individually or as a group—as they interact with themselves or with other people or situations in which they find themselves. The “constructivist paradigm assumes a reality—there is more than one reality—where meaning is created and understandings re-examined through a naturalistic set of methodological procedures” (Guba and Lincoln, 1985, 14). Though constructivist theory is tied to choice making, it does not define who gets to make those choices and who does not. It is directly connected to the idea of power, or who has access to power. It is tied to those who have power (the teacher) and those who do not (the students) because of issues of race, gender, class, sexual orientation, age, and ability.

At first, I looked to constructive, critical, and feminist theories described in The Handbook for Qualitative Research edited by Denzin and Lincoln (2005, 1994) to guide me as I struggled to negotiate and integrate constructivist paradigm in relation to my study. What was lacking was my ability to move my own thinking across disciplines in a search for multiple methods that would allow me to examine (1) my own dance education pedagogy over time and (2) my children’s dance-making observations.
In my quest to tell the stories of children who make dances, I looked to my New York City-based philosopher, colleague, and friend Maxine Greene for wisdom. While living in New York City, I often gathered with other colleagues at Maxine’s Upper East Side apartment on Sunday afternoons (1992-97, 2005). At her “salon” she would tell all of us that the “imagination opens up worlds of possibility” and that we must be “wide-awake” to receive what is offered and that what was offered was going to be messy. Maxine would challenge us as social scientists-in-training, imploring us to investigate critical inquiry as a lens through which to conduct our own research. She insisted that a form of inquiry was needed to foster enlightened self-knowledge and effective social-political action. She argued that it was critical inquiry that integrated theory and practice in such a way that individuals and groups would become aware of the contradictions and distortions in their belief systems and social practices.

Maxine reasoned that this, in turn, would inspire us to make changes in those beliefs and practices—acting as social change agents—by showing us that these practices do not measure up to their own standards and are internally inconsistent, hypocritical, and incoherent, hence comprising a false consciousness. It was at this intersection that I realized that I enjoyed the intellectual exercises that came with questioning and negotiating modernist and postmodernist traditions across the arts and in education, developmental theory, and political discourse.

**REFLECTION**

I was fortunate to engage some very good thinkers. When I needed to learn more about something that I was interested in, e.g., a new theoretical
construct or pedagogical paradigm, I created or co-created an artist residency, workshop series, conference, festival, curriculum or policymaking situation where I would invite people to participate. This served as embedded professional development for me.

Maxine promised us that as we thought through the implications of thinking critically about our topic and how new ideas might activate social-political change, our thinking and actions would not be in vain. She invited us to continue to believe in the power of human reason as it affects individual and social transformation. It is this statement that changed my worldview about children and the dances that they make. Despite children’s daily living conditions they still come to school, enter the dance studio, and make dances that (re)present personal feelings, thoughts, and ideas in and through dance. And at times, it is the interplay of a person’s internal landscape and the movement that results from that interplay that transforms the person, the situation, or both.

At the end of a session, Maxine would remind us to support a kind of reasoning that is practical, moral, and ethically and politically informed (not just descriptive; definitely not an instrumental means-to-an-end reasoning) and to remain self-reflexive. In my research efforts over the years, I have strived to remember and practice these philosophies, mostly because they resonate with my own beliefs, particularly about children, the dances that they make, and the personal resilience that exists in insurmountable life situations. Though I enjoyed embodying these ideas in urban public school classroom laboratories, I couldn’t really fully accept the constructivist research
paradigm as my own, mainly because it wasn’t messy enough and it didn’t critically examine the external sociocultural forces that seek to disengage and marginalize human thinking and action.

Nell Noddings and Carol Witherell (1991) remind me “we learn from our stories”. More important, we come to understand—ourselves, others and even the subjects we teach and learn and that

Stories are powerful researcher tools. Stories provide us with a picture of real people in real situations, struggling with real problems. They banish indifference often generated by samples, treatments and faceless subjects. They invite us to speculate on what might be changes and with what effect. And, of course, they remind us of our persistent fallibility. Most important, they invite us to remember that we are in the business of teaching, learning and researching to improve the human condition. Telling and listening to stories can be a powerful sign of regard—caring—for one another. (Noddings & Witherell, 1991, 280)

So trying to (re)tell the stories or partial tales of myself as a dance educator/reflexive practitioner and the child-made dances as completely as possible kept me from giving up the research.

For more than 20 years I searched for a social science research methodology that embodied my thinking and pedagogical practice to express my deepening understanding of children’s dance-making practice. Throughout this time period, I was often stymied when it came to adhering to one specific research methodology. Though I tried to
embrace ethnographic methods, action research, case study, and feminist methods, none of these methods, alone, addressed the complexities of my experience.

Finally, I selected an autoethnographic research approach because the research, writing, storytelling, and methodologies and analysis tools connected to the autobiographical and personal parts of myself and, in turn, to the cultural, social, and political parts of myself (Ellis, 2004, xix) in relation to children and meaning making in and through dance-making.

Stacy Holman Jones (2005) defined authoethnography as “a personal text as critical invention in social, politic and cultural life” and writes that “autoethnography can be used to make the personal political” (645). Denzin and Lincoln (2005) understand Holman Jones’ explanation of authoethnology as “a radical democratic practice intended to create a space for dialogue and debate about issues of injustice.” Injustice exists for children and teens particularly in the ways that children’s dance-making affords opportunities to show-what-you-know and give voice to experience. Injustice exists for teachers who can see something is going on but do not yet know how to articulate it or make it a part of daily instructional practice.

By making this research design choice, the autoethnographic research approach allows me to embrace my subjectivity. I am able to “play” with [in] multiple layers of consciousness and to bring a back and forth [ness] to “focus outwardly on social and cultural aspects of my personal experience, then look inwardly, to explore a vulnerable part of myself. In this way, I am able to think through, reflect and sometimes resist
prescribed cultural interpretations (Ellis, 2004, 37).” I use this research methodology to illuminate action, dialogue, emotion, embodiment, spirituality, and self-consciousness in the study. I have come to believe, just as Ellis (42) believes, that I am “as interested in the creative, artistic possibilities of what I am doing as I am in the scientific ones.”

As the autoethnographer of this study, I am the primary participant/subject of the research in the process of writing personal stories and narratives about the children and their dances. By embracing the personal thoughts, feelings, stories, and observations of the children and their dance-making process at the school site, I find that I can better understand the school culture that I am studying and be able to shed light on the overall interaction with each story told by making each emotion and thought visible to whomever chooses to read this study.

Denzin and Lincoln (2005) point out that in authoethnological research, “the researcher becomes the research topic” (645). In some ways I think that I move in and out of this role throughout the study. Perhaps this occurs because for a long time I did not acknowledge that my personal pedagogy in teaching dance-making was a factor in how children went about making dances. In fact, at first I left my contributions to children’s dance-making through my daily dance teaching practice unexamined and completely out of this study.

**Researcher’s Role**

As I begin to understand the autoethnographic research model, I write in first person because doing so “emphasizes my own narrative action.” By embedding the
children’s dance-making stories into my daily life I am also able to “advance a social change agenda” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, 642) as I teach dance educators-in-training and pre-service elementary education majors. In these courses, I teach a children’s dance education pedagogy that is child-centered, inquiry-based, relevant, and personal to the dance maker/dancer and contextualized within/outside of a variety of sociocultural frameworks. This social change agenda was advanced again and again over the last twenty-five years when I co-wrote National Common Core Dance Standards, state curriculum K-12 dance frameworks; co-produced and/or co-presented at national conferences (e.g., Congress on Research in Dance’s Special Topics Conference: Doris Humphrey’s 100th Birthday Celebration (1995), Dancing in the Millennium (2000), and the National Dance Education Organization’s “Merging Worlds: Dance, Education, Politics & Society” (2004), and facilitated professional development sessions across the country and abroad (1991-2006) or directed M.A. and M. Ed. programs at Teachers College Columbia University and the University of Rio Grande, respectively.

Now I have come to understand that authoethnology “challenges us to create texts that unfold in the life of the writer while embodying tactics that enact a progressive politics of resistance (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, 645).” Throughout this study, I use intertexts or interludes and revisions to reflexively share my fieldwork observations (Bucek, 1995, 1994a, 1994b, 1993b) to illustrate theory. The children’s dance-making narratives, when performed (and writing is a form of performance), “enact a politics of possibility (2005, 645)”. Knowing that my collection of children’s dance-making narratives are powerful sources of inquiry that exist as “socially constrained forms of
action, socially situated performances, and as ways of acting in and making sense of the world” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, 641), my research “can form the basis of a social movement (642)”. This is particularly true for people who seek exemplar opportunities for their students to learn and express their understanding as they grow and shape-shift in the world.

I fully embrace the idea of “a politics of possibility’ as today’s political climate has sadly moved away from such options in the wake of federal legislation implementation known as the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, or No Child Left Behind. “Telling the stories of a marginalized people – nine to eleven year old children – can help to create a public space requiring others to hear what they do not want to hear (2005, 642)”. I choose this autoethnographic research method to illustrate the complexity of children’s dance-making, specifically as a meditator of feeling, thought, and action beyond play and entertainment. The children in this study have something important to share and through the making of their dances they are able to do so. Presentation of data will be shared in detail in Chapter Four.

Researcher Bias

As I reflect on my multiple roles of teacher, observer, and researcher, I become increasingly aware that I am a product of my time—maturing in experience in the midst of sociocultural, political, and personal change. I am also reminded that I deliberately choose large urban public school cultures in Columbus, Ohio, and in New York City, for my career employment. Here, I am not merely a visitor that comes to study a cultural
group for a relatively short period or time, then leaves. Instead, I fully embrace that this is my urban anthropological space and in it children’s dance-making is studied from three strands: personal interest, curriculum, and artist-in-residence. For this research study, I take the stance of a post-positivist inquirer struggling to articulate the complexity of knowledge construction in and through children’s dance-making found in large Midwest urban public schools.

To this end, I work critically to capture partial stories told by the child dance-makers. I analyze data for bits, pieces, patterns, and interruptions, looking for something that has the power to reshape dance’s current position as a disenfranchised entity in the American educational system. Clearly there is incongruence here, especially as government and corporate leaders planning for tomorrow are calling for educational systems that embed creativity and innovation across subjects.

There are two distinct ways that people construct worldviews are termed positivist and post-positivist. I align myself with post-positivists, who generally view the world with ambiguity through values-laden inquiry and specific cases that are not generalizable to a larger population. As an inquirer in this research study, I seek to interpret and understand particular children’s dance-making contexts and challenge a dominant social reality in terms of race, class, or gender in order to create social change through the inquiry process.

Lincoln and Guba (1994) argue that reality is constructed according to our cultural and social experiences, so the inquirer cannot know ahead of the actual
experience involved in the inquiry process what constructions will be introduced and shaped during the investigation. Moreover, the post-positivist inquirer believes that outcome prediction cannot be achieved beforehand because of claims, concerns, and “naturalistic inquiry,” which articulate the idea (83).

As a post-positivist I believe that in a socially constructed world, peoples’ beliefs differ and that we tell partial or realist tales of who we are. These tales may be inconsistent and unreliable in the positivist sense of requiring error- and bias-free findings. The positivist notions of reliability and validity are just as foreign as objectivity and ideality to a post-positivist, therefore providing little to no use (Richardson, 1998; Lather, 1991; Noddings & Witherell, 1991; Van Maanen, 1988).

Today there exist, side-by-side, many diverse approaches to knowing and telling. At the center of postmodernism is the doubt that any method or theory, any discourse or genre, or any tradition or novelty has a universal and general claim as the “right” or privileged form of authoritative knowledge (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005, 961). The postmodernist context of doubt distrusts all methods equally and does not privilege one method over another (2005, 961). “Inquiries are generally collaborative in nature and embody multiple strategies for data collection, analysis and interpretation. The world is viewed generally as messy, incongruous, with ambiguity, and ever-changing and likened with those that work in art making” (Stinson, 1996, 1994).

Post-positivist researchers are not objective, authoritative, politically neutral observers standing outside and above the text (Bruner, 1993, 1). They are historically
positioned and locally situated [as] an all too human [observer] of the human condition (Bruner, 1993, 1). To a post-positivist researcher, meaning is “radically plural, always open, and … there are politics in every account” (Bruner, 1993, 1).

I have come to reject the concept of social research as an objective and neutral knowledge produced by scientific methods and refute the idea that a researcher has to remain detached from his or her own study. My ability to study children's dance-making is in some ways the result of a long campaign, by like-minded colleagues, to affirm creative and critical embodiment as opposed to rote physicality as fundamental to children’s dance and myself. My own growth in dance education is illustrative of the development of the field itself, from an early emphasis on teaching arts practices borrowed from adults, to a broader definition of the dance discipline, to appreciating dance as learning, to situating dance as a means of understanding, and changing, social and cultural worlds. I believe that it is this tension between my studies in modernist and postmodernist canons that informs my worldview and my interdisciplinary teaching practice, which in turn contributes to this dissertation.

Participants/Location of Research

This study critically examines 17 fourth and fifth grade children attending a Midwestern urban public elementary school. Through the privilege of location and access, all K-5 students are afforded weekly instruction in a school culture whose dance curriculum is embedded in an arts (dance, drama/theatre, music, and the visual arts) integrated, interdisciplinary educational paradigm.
Arts Elementary School

From 1982-1990, this school consistently enrolled between 350 and 400 children (50% male, 50% female, 60% African-American, 62% received free or reduced lunch) and maintained a waiting list of about 500 students. Over the past thirty years the student population declined to 300 students yet has reflected major demographics found in a large urban city, with more than 68% female, 32% male, 92% African American, and 91% on free or reduced breakfast and lunch today. The school opened as an Arts IMPACT (Interdisciplinary Model Program in the Arts for Children and Teachers) magnet elementary school in 1982. I was a cofounder and the first dance educator. In essence, the educational philosophy was three-fold—first, to teach all children and teachers about the arts (dance, drama/theatre, music, and the visual arts) as separate subjects from a personally relevant perspective; second, to study the arts as they relate to one another; and third, that all children and teachers study the arts critically through integrated and interdisciplinary studies. Between 1985 and 1995, the Arts Elementary School ranked at the top of the city school district in student achievement and received many distinctive local, state, and national recognitions and awards.

From its inception, I found numerous ways to plan, facilitate, evaluate, and observe critically the artistic practices of children’s dance-making, children dancing, and children responding to dance viewed, especially those that follow the school district, state, and national dance content standards, benchmarks, and grade level indicators. During that nine-year period, I often videotaped dances made by the children, ages 5-11 years old. For this
research study, I collected 48 videotapes—288 hours or 17,280 minutes of child-made dances and dance-making processes—in addition to hundreds of lesson plans and narrative statements on report cards. From these primary source materials, I selected dances made by children ages nine to 11 years old. This allowed me to focus on the dance-making practice, which at times took place over several weeks. It also enabled me to observe brainstorming ideas that inspired children to make structured movement improvisations, which when practiced, edited, and viewed for feedback became short repeatable dance phrases and small dance vignettes. Sometimes these dance studies became fully realized choreographic works that were formally shared with classmates, teachers, parents, and the community.

Data Collection Methods

I wanted to make my writing biographical for this research. I also chose to explore the role of autoethnography in reflexive ethnography. Ellis (2004, 37) describes this as the nexus “where authors focus on a group or culture and use their own experiences in the culture reflexively to bend back on themselves and look more deeply at interactions between self and other.”

I used multiple methods of data collection as identified in qualitative research design for this study. These include autobiographical journaling and introspection (Ellis, 2009, 2004; Olsen, 2005; Reinharz, 1992; Lather, 1991), participant observation (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2005; Reinharz, 1992; Spradley, 1980), interviews (Ellis, 2004; Daiute & Lightfoot, 2004; Kvale, 1996; Reinharz, 1992; Spradley, 1979), field notes (Ellis, 2009, 2004; Van Maanen, 1988), videotaped dance-making sessions (1983-2000),

**Videotape /DVD Documentation**

Between 1989 and 1997, I lived in New York City, and worked as Dance and Dance Education Program Coordinator at Teachers College, Columbia University. During this time I returned to the Arts Elementary School five different times to conduct pilot studies with fourth and fifth graders. This yielded 12 more videotapes—72 hours or 4,320 minutes of children’s dance-making processes and products, reflective interviews, and field notes that I later analyzed to partially capture the dance stories offered by the children. These videotapes are integral to this study. Over the years since this intensive data-gathering period, I reviewed 60 videotapes (now DVDs) again and again and became especially interested in the fact that many of the children had attended the Arts Elementary School since kindergarten.

**Pilot Studies and Documentation**

Over the years in pilot studies (1999, 1997, 1996, 1995, 1994b 1990, 1986) I coded the dances in many different ways (e.g., repetition of movement motifs, spatial patterns and formations, rhythmic structure and nuance, and movement dynamics) but did not think
doing this form of movement analysis was getting to the heart of meaning making. Looking at the selected dances again I decided to focus on the ideas that were shaped into movement and body shape. I looked for instances of movement metaphor, abstraction in time, and space, size, relationship, and movement dynamics.

Field Notes and Transcriptions

I wrote field notes and transcribed a sampling of videotape descriptive texts and movement analysis language to illustrate the dance-making processes observed. As a result, I became increasingly skilled at deliberately shifting my gaze from participant-observer to observer participant, discovering my own role as a facilitator of learning. Prior to this crystallizing moment, my focus had been exclusively on the results of the children’s dance-making experience, as though it manifested itself magically into existence. At that point in my research I had not yet realized that my role as dance educator was also a factor. That realization came much later.

Interviews

Even after examining these choreographic devices, the children’s dances revealed much more, but strictly looking at the dances wasn’t the only data gathered. I interviewed the dance-makers and asked what made them think of the dances, what movement motifs they selected, why they thought the movements represented their ideas best, etc. It was at this juncture that the layering of meaning began to take shape.
Permissions: Parents/Guardians/Choreographers in Residence

To preserve the participants’ anonymity, all identities have been changed in this account. After gathering the children’s dance-making data, I requested and received written permission from Susan Van Pelt a professional dance choreographer who worked with the student dance-makers in an artist residency at the school. These videotapes documented the collaborative nature of Van Pelt’s dance residency, especially the children’s dances. I refined my interviewing skills and asked the student dance-makers to share their thoughts on how and why they made the dance-making decisions that they made (Josh, 1990; Lauren, 1988). I asked them what various dance movements meant to them. These comments are woven into the narratives in Chapter Four, Presentation of Data and Chapter Five: Data Analysis.

As a researcher/classroom teacher I routinely gather permissions to study student work. Data collection from multiple sources offers me numerous ways to view the complexity and ambiguity of the case with the purpose of “permit[ing] analysis as well as [thick] description” (Reinharz, 1992, 172).

Methods of Data Analysis

Content Analysis to Narrative Analysis

exposed me to a computer-assisted qualitative analysis software program (NUDIST, 2000) to help me to manage large amounts of data, code, and categorize data into patterns, themes, and metaphors. This data analysis method offered patterns of analysis and introduced lines of thinking that I might not have discovered without it. Yet as I moved through this series of data analysis approaches, I found that I preferred the tactile, hands-on data coding content analysis with colored pencils method.

I employed this technique during the last two pilot studies (1999, 1997) instead of the computer-assisted program. What emerged were snippets of narrative analysis, but the structure or format was all wrong. I discussed this problem with Dr. Deborah Smith-Shank, Chairperson of The Ohio State University Department of Arts Administration, Education, and Policy (2011). She stated that perhaps I was using a less-than-helpful methodology for analyzing my data and pointed to Carolyn Ellis’ autoethnographic work (2009, 2004). Dr. Smith-Shank also gave me copies of her own autoethnographic research (2007) for my review and study. After much reading about autoethnographic research practice and methods I began to understand that my previous studies in the emergent field of autoethnography (with Lather, 1998 and Richardson 1999) were now standard practice among scholars, including Ellis (2009, 2004), Savage, (2009) and Goodall (2005). Good interpretations that used and revealed my biases and assumptions could now be incorporated into relevant literature to support my findings.

I use documentation and content analysis of DVDs, personal and pedagogical journals, report cards, lesson plans, and interviews; storytelling, narrative analysis, story
reflexivity, meta-autoethnography, collective story, documenting immersion, experiential layering, and crystallization as both data and method, in what I hope are compelling ways, to describe, interrogate, and bring about change related to children’s dance-making.

Verification Methods

Autoethnographical research methodology uses collaborative analysis or conversation relation in place of traditional verification methods. Real fourth and fifth grade dance-makers selected from the research study or invented, realistic characters are incorporated through manufactured dialogue to serve as witnesses to the struggles, negotiations, and transformations that come with engaging in children’s dance-making at the Arts Elementary School. It is through these multiple lenses that varying perspectives or interpretations of experience grow and ultimately provide a thicker analysis of the human experience that took place. Validating experience together in and outside of a group gives way to the complexity of the situation in a larger framework. I use factoids about dance education history, dance choreographer’s notes, and lesson plans to further situate my experience and make connections to current events in the dance education field and I education broadly.
Though data analysis is discussed more completely in Chapter 5, I think that it is a combination of six consecutive years of dance-making experience, individual and group artistic choices made, original student dance choreography produced, and the personally relevant reflections of the fourth and fifth grade children that serve as the artifacts of remarkably constructed dance-making episodes in this school’s culture.
Chapter 3: Review of Literature

In chapter 3, I frame a review of literature for this research and discuss pertinent literature related to the sociocultural cognitive sciences and developmental psychology, artistic and aesthetic development in and outside the visual arts and in children’s dance, creativity, and language development that shape my thinking throughout this study.

Framing the Literature Review (1987-2013)

For most of my professional life I have enjoyed reading and participating in seed planting endeavors that affect daily instruction in the arts, especially dance education and the K-8 education, higher education, and cultural institution sectors. The literature review in this chapter reflects an amalgam of my graduate studies and independent reading praxis across disciplines of visual arts education, cognitive sciences, dance education, educational reform and critical theory, and personal and professional experiences with some of the best thinkers in our country and around the world. It also includes intertexts/interludes and revisions of observations and field notes. From my predecessors I look to theories, principles, concepts, and practices that support my reasoning and experience as I discover distinctive features about children’s dance-making in today’s urban public schools.
John Dewey and Experiential Learning

Conceived in the time when the industrial revolution strongly influenced schooling, philosopher and school reform leader John Dewey set forth a radically different perspective of what schooling should be. In *The Child and the Curriculum* (1902), Dewey argues that two dichotomous dimensions exist—the child and the academic curriculum. He describes the lifeworld of a child as integrated, emotional, and having a capacity to perceive, conceive, and develop intellectually in a holistic manner. As active learners, children learn and achieve best through child-centered, personally unified “real world” experiences that are “fluid and moving” (15). "It is the continuous reconstruction, moving from the child's present experience out into that represented by the organized bodies of truth that we call studies” (11).

In contrast to a child’s life, Dewey states that school curriculum primarily exists as subject-centered, abstract, and impersonal. The teaching of “subjects” involve conscious and deliberate acts to widen and deepen the child's worldview. Furthermore, Dewey points out that “subject matter furnishes the end and it determines method” (9).

Dewey then sets forth a logical solution—to integrate the child's life with school curricula. He asserts, "to see the outcome is to know in what direction the present experience is moving, provided it move normally and soundly (13)." He calls for active, experiential learning and teaching and a school curriculum that is personal, meaningful, and relevant to the child. Dewey suggests that knowledge is a context-embedded experience and that attention be given equally to the child's learning process and subsequent
academic outcome. Moreover, he employs a “map” metaphor to illustrate an ordering of individual experience that connects interest, alive memory, assisted observation, and directed reasoning (20). Dewey views the “map” as the potential curricular journey taken. The teacher navigates and guides the child as she/he explores, interprets, and makes sense of the world. Dewey’s educational philosophy grounds my professional education practice and scholarly research.

In the next section of this chapter, I shift away from Dewey’s general K-12 educational reform ideology to focus narrowly on the emergence of the nation’s innovative dance education literature and research descriptive index. It is here that I am able to demonstrate the need for my research on children’s dance-making as a transformative path in human development.

**Dance Education Research Project (2001-2004)**

Until the U.S. Department of Education—Office of Education Research and Improvement granted the National Dance Education Organization a 3-year Research Grant for U.S. Dance Education, there had been no descriptive index that revealed patterns, trends, and gaps in dance/movement education literature and research of this scope in a 76-year period. In 2001, I was invited to join the Research in Dance Education (RDE) research team as coordinator of published literature in dance education. I worked with 10 field researchers across the country to “identify existing research in the field of dance education in its many contexts and to learn how research addresses education issues in the United States” (NDEO, 2004).
Findings resulted in the coauthored publication, *Research Priorities for Dance Education: A Report to the Nation* (2004). Initially, data from more than 2,800 documents were collected and reported in three categories: unpublished documents, published literature in dance education, and published literature in other disciplines. Themes included “student achievement, kinesthetic learning/brain research, creative process, integrated arts/interdisciplinary education, multi-cultural infusion, children-at-risk, equity issues, policy, certification and teaching standards, national and state standards, assessments, etc. (NDEO, 2004)”. Moreover, the document “determined research priorities for dance education, initiated new research, built national and 14 state networks to effect change in policy and practice, and established two Research Centers for Dance Education” (NDEO website, 2013).

Today the index name has changed to Dance Education Literature and Research index (DELRdi) and comprises more than 4,500 literary works including theses, dissertations, journal articles, conference proceedings, and other reports from more than 200 publications and organizations and 147 university dance programs. The DELRdi is a milestone in dance education at a time when extensive databases and indexes are taken for granted in other disciplines.

My firsthand experience with the data proved beneficial to my own research interests and as I worked as a dance educator of school-age children ages five to fourteen years old. When I think about children’s dance-making as a part of child development in the late 1980s, the body of scholarly literature about children’s dance-making and

Though recent research shows a renewed interest in children and dance-making from authors such as Bashaw (2011), Giguere (2011, 2006), Bond & Richard (2005), and Bond & Stinson (2007, 2009) and Parrish (2000), little is known about the child’s natural capacity to self-select themes, organize action, engage feeling and thought, and use the imagination when engaged in dance-making practice. More importantly, few studies address the sociocultural dimension of elementary school-age children’s dance-making. The K-12 dance education field continues to lag far behind research found in arts education disciplines, especially in the visual arts and in music.

Pertinent Dance Education Literature

Boorman’s Theory of Symbolic Representation and Meaning Making in Dance

It is important to remind ourselves that the child, in the generation of symbolic representation in dance, is powerfully involved in bringing meaning to his world, of knowing it and shaping it through an act of the intellect.

Joyce Boorman (1982)

One particular research dissertation stands out as an important contribution to children’s dance-making. Canadian dance education theorist Joyce Boorman (1980) developed ideas about symbolic representation in children’s dance by applying Rudolf Arnheim’s (1969) theory of perception as a medium of thinking or solving problems
visually to children’s dance-making. Boorman was highly influenced by Arnheim (1969) and Piaget’s (1962) research in developmental stage theory and visual arts stage theory development. She devised her own stage theory for children’s dance (1982, 1980). It features four distinctive benchmarks of symbolic representation in children’s dance: intrinsic satisfaction, open sense making, fixed meaning, and conscious distancing.

Boorman describes each stage of movement, the first stage beginning as early as toddlerhood, when young children move with full-bodied movements as simultaneous acts of body action, feeling, and thought. The movements appear in short duration and are pleasurable physical acts requiring repetition with little variation. Three separate direct observation descriptions of young children engaged in intrinsic satisfaction follow.

**Intertext/Interlude: Toddler Dances during a Yugoslavian Relief Benefit Dinner and Dance (May, 15, 1998)**

I attended a fundraiser dinner/dance for the Yugoslavian Relief Fund and members of ZIVILI, the company I had performed with, served as the musical accompaniment for the evening. The dancing space was always filled with people of all ages, including a very young 19-month-old girl and men and women in their mid-eighties. The Yugoslavian-Americans—Croatians, Macedonians, and Serbians—had banded together to raise funds to help those now experiencing the horrors of Bosnian war. The occasion was both festive and gloomy, not unlike a funeral celebration. I mention this because of the following extraordinary phenomena juxtaposed against this inconsistent background.

As the dancers whirled through the space dancing—czardas, waltzes, schottisches, mazurkas, čěsts, and polkas—one nineteen-month girl, Alex, planted her two feet securely onto the floor below her and bounced to the live music. No one stopped to encourage her. In fact, no one stopped what they were doing at all. Musicians played, dancers danced, and Alex bounced. She
bounced to the beat of the music. Her arms flailed gingerly at her sides. She watched the musicians play. She was totally “present” and “in the moment” – “spontaneous”. She never saw nor reacted to the dancers flying around her. I could imagine that in a way, it was as if the world had stopped and through all of this frenzy, Alex just bounced. She did not leave the space, nor break out of her hypnotic trance until the music stopped at the end of the song. Then she sped away to find her mother, who was watching her on the side of the dance space.

**Intertext/Interlude: Red Tam Hats, Blue Jeans, and Spontaneous Dancing (May 23, 1993)**

Two women were walking side by side with a very small two-year-old girl walking between them on the corner of Broadway and W. 113th Street today. The little girl in the red tam hat and blue jeans held one of the hands of each woman, tripping along to a beat that was solely her own. She bounced along in a natural walking manner. She never skipped a beat. Instead she accented the bouncy walk with a strong downbeat. Eventually she let go of the women’s hands and continued to bob up and down in this canyon-like street space. No radios were present. In fact, there was no music anywhere, just the sounds of the cars driving on Broadway.

Young children between the ages of three-and-one-half and four-and-one-half years old move with lots of stomping and slashing actions and often in circular spatial patterns. Boorman also referred to this stage as intrinsic satisfaction. The children move in what Piaget refers to as "collective monologue" (Boorman, 1980, 106) but do not yet socialize. From direct observation, a descriptive example of children dancing during the intrinsic satisfaction stage follows.

**Intertext/Interlude: Pre-symbolic and Emergent Symbolic Children's Dance (Date Unknown)**

In a San Francisco, California, home two sisters, three and four years of age, dance to an excerpt from a very popular musical score from the classical ballet, *The Nutcracker*, the “Dance of the Snowflakes.” One three-year-old sister continuously runs in a circle that is defined by the perimeter of the living room rug. She flaps her hands at each side of her body. Her mouse hat, used as a
prop, may have helped her to engage her imagination, to 'become' or 'embody' the mouse. Her external movements are running in circles with hands flapping at her sides, but her internal mind-world depicts 'mouseness'. Likewise, her four-year-old sister wears a crown, a skirt, and fairy-like wings. These props symbolize concretely the Sugar Plum Fairy and may have helped to engage her imagination as she 'becomes' or 'embodies' her character in movement.

In both cases, the girls are sensing, feeling, and thinking-in-motion as the music and movement take them on a dance journey. Different, however, is the older girl's ability to dance her version of 'steps'. She appears to imagine the most salient features of the Sugar Plum Fairy by using a more detailed and somewhat codified ballet movement vocabulary. It is her previous experience and her emerging ability to perceive symbolic movements that play a role in her movement choices. She has understood that dance has 'steps' and that in order for her to 'become' or 'embody' the Sugar Plum Fairy she must dance her memory of the steps she's seen—whether it was through attendance at a live performance of The Nutcracker ballet or viewing a videotape of the dance.

This is known as the sensori-logic stage of human development (Burton, 1982, 1980; Smith 1972). The girl's younger sister has not yet made this cognitive connection; rather she dances her mouse dance just because it feels good.

**REFLECTION**

*Neither child uttered words. The older sister appeared to embellish the already known ballet movement repertoire that she had acquired for expressive purposes. She appeared to embody the Sugar Plum Fairy character with tiptoe walking, arms extended as though she held a dress, and step-side-kicks with alternating leg gestures. Big sister was the dance itself. With mouse hat perched on top of her head, the younger sister ran in well-defined circular pathways. She gazed downward and inwardly as her arms flapped at the sides of her body. Little sister appeared to embody what she believed was 'mouseness' as she whirled around and around the dance space. She, too, was the dance itself.*
Someplace between five and six years old, children may announce, but not necessarily state in complete sentences, that they are 'water', 'a mountain', or 'thunder!' while using the same stomping sequence. Here, open-sense making or sensori-logic (Burton, 1982) is taking place and can be observed as many actions receiving multiple meanings. Below is an example of Boorman’s sensori-logic stage development as observed directly and described in my reflective journal (1993).

Intertext/Interlude: Water Dancing: Embodiment One Afternoon on Pompano Beach (1993)

On a bright, sunny afternoon at the beach, my eyes were glued to a young boy, approximately four or five years old. He was in and out of the water with the surf bumping up on him throughout. He played with the water. He frolicked in and through the water—running, splashing, twirling, flopping, leaping over the waves as they rolled in. He stayed virtually in one place since the water's current undermined any forward motion he sought. And this child expressed ecstasy on his face! He appeared to be having the time of his life! I couldn't help but wonder what he might have been thinking at this moment. I watched him for over ten minutes. He was relentless. He had developed his repertoire of running, flopping, ducking, popping up, splashing, twirling, and leaping, with many variations of sequence. He did not vary the form of the actual action, however. It was wonderful to be a part of his pleasurable experience. He was the water dancing.

Reflection

Thinking back, did he ever vary the sequence? What was the relationship between what the water was doing and what the child was doing? Be specific. He ran as the wave came in, flopped down and ducked as the waves swelled up and over him. He popped up, splashed, and twirled as the waves washed back out. How was this varied? Was just the last part varied?
Intertext/Interlude: Otis Reading Inspires Tim’s Dancing (Spring 1985)

Tim is a student at the Arts Elementary School. The night before he shares his dance, Tim practices his dance at home—replaying the music over and over and over again. His mother, recognizing the dance’s importance to her son, stopped by my classroom during lunch the next day so that he could share his dance with me. I notice Tim’s ability to concentrate over a period of five minutes. This is a very long time for a five-year-old to be ‘in the state of dancing.’ He has created his own form and style of movement. His dance has elements of contemporary social dance (e.g., a break dance movement called the Tic). Tim may have seen a friend doing the movement or he may have watched it on television. Tim’s repetitive foot pattern has a step-step-stepping action to it and maintains a consistent, 4/4 meter rhythm. The patterning is both intricate and systematic. Tim repeats this singular phrase over and over and over and over. He appears to have integrated his joyous and pleasurable feeling with his movement expression. Tim appears to have shaped his ideas into dance. He practiced his movements as dance.

Reflection
Notice Tim’s internal gaze. He exhibits pure pleasure during this highly rhythmic dance episode. I count the number of times he moves his feet in a one-two-three-four pattern. There are 226 weight transfers. This foot pattern does not change. The upper body holds a different, undulating arm gesture that sequentially moves from the middle finger of the right hand through the elbow, shoulder, other shoulder, elbow on the other side, and through the middle finger of the left side and back again. This repeatable arm gesture continues until Tim just stops and shakes his head, looking at his mom. The head shake indicates to mom that the dance is now over. Unless Tim tells us about his dance, we might never know what it meant to him. Moreover, he may have been so connected to the music’s rhythmic beat that he understood the music and the movement to be one complete and integrated expressive action.
The seven- or eight-year-old child creates movements or series of movements that are chained, repeated or patterned, in more or less the same way (e.g. a sequence of stomp, fall, slither, roll, and pause). At this time, the child dance-maker refers to the movements as having the same meaning each time the sequence is repeated. This observable movement behavior is known as having a fixed meaning (Boorman, 1980).

Piaget (1969) argued that, “Up until the age of seven or eight years of age, children make no effort to stick to one opinion on any given subject. They do not indeed believe what is self-contradictory, but they adopt successively, opinions that, if they were compared, would contradict one another” (91).

Finally, Boorman describes developmental stage features for eight and nine year olds. She calls this conscious distancing, or a young child’s deliberate choice of body action, body shape, and relationship to the environment to deliberately transform thought about feeling, idea, or concept for the expressed purpose of (re)presentation. A descriptive example of a dance having a conscious distancing follows. Laban movement analysis and analytic descriptors illustrate the dancers’ actions as their bodies move in time, relation to one another, the dancing space, and with a variety of movement dynamics.

Intertext/Interlude: Danny, Greg, and Gary As Robots in Space (March 10, 1988)

This dance is inspired by original poetry written by the three boys in language arts classes.

Robots in Space
There were some robots in space.
They went from place to place.
They went a certain pattern.
And were finally killed on Saturn.


**Beginning:** At stage right center, a tall boy named Danny is seated on the floor, curled into a little ball. His head is down. Twelve inches to his left is a smaller boy named Greg. Greg is standing with his back turned away from Danny. His torso is slightly tilted forward. Greg’s right arm is fully extended; his feet are slightly apart, with eyes downcast to the floor in front of him. About eight feet to Greg’s left is Gary. Gary is Greg’s twin brother. Gary is also standing with his feet slightly apart. His right arm is raised forward with elbow bent. Gary’s head is slightly tilted, eyes downcast. The dance begins in stillness.

**First Section:** Danny begins to walk in a stiff and restrained manner towards Gary. He lifts up his right knee as he walks. As Greg arrives diagonally in front of Gary there is an exchange of swinging arm gestures between Greg and Gary. Gary looks directly into Greg’s eyes. Using pantomime gestures to convey stepping up and into something, both Greg and Gary march in place until they stop. Right arms are then raised and meet together above their own heads forming a V or a point. Greg and Gary pause and hold these shapes in stillness.

After a two- to three-second pause, the two boys jolt backwards, falling back onto their feet. They stiffly march to Danny. Both boys raise their hands in front of their faces and with very small fluttering finger gestures they say, “Olly, olly, olly, olly”. Danny rolls onto his left side, legs bent at the hip and legs fully extended. Greg and Gary walk stiffly away from Danny. They walk to the same spot they were in at the beginning of the dance.

**Second Section:** Greg and Gary raise their arms slowly and make the same pointy shapes above their own heads. They pause, holding these shapes for three or four seconds. Both boys jolt backwards, falling back onto their feet.

Greg and Gary cast their eyes forward towards Danny again. This time Danny crouches down low on the floor and hops in place on both feet. Gary and Greg stiffly march to Danny and surround him, one on each side. Both boys raise their hands in front of their faces and with very small fluttery finger gestures they say, “Olly, olly, olly, olly”. Next, Danny stands up abruptly. He and
Gary fully extend their right arms, then, one at a time, they extend their arm into an imagined circle directly in front of one another. Danny drops back down into the same crouched shape in which he began the dance and hops away toward the pointy arms gesture spot. Danny ends just a little downstage of the original spot.

**Third Section:** Greg and Gary walk stiffly away from Danny. Then they walk to the same spot they were in before. Here they raise their arms, make the same pointy shape above their heads, and pause, holding these shapes for three to four seconds. Both boys jolt backwards, falling back onto their feet.

Greg and Gary then cast their eyes forward towards Danny. Danny is directly downstage of them. This time, Danny stands with his arms fully extended to each side of his body. Greg and Gary stiffly march to Danny. They surround him, one on each side. Danny turns towards Gary and with an extended arm, slaps Gary on the face. In reaction, Gary falls to the floor, pauses, and begins to recover to a standing shape. While Gary recovers, Danny twists his torso so that his left arm catches the back of Greg’s shoulder girdle. Danny then walks a few steps into Greg’s space. He pushes Greg to the ground with an extended left-arm gesture.

**Fourth Section:** At this point in the dance, Gary has stood up and stiffly walks to Greg. Gary helps Greg up with an extended arm gesture that grabs Greg’s hand and pulls him to his feet. They hold one another’s extended arms and begin to twirl around and around and around, using so much force that their hands break free, sending both boys flinging away to opposite corners of the dance space.

**Fifth Section:** Danny walks matter-of-factly over to Gary, who is lying on the floor in a clump. Gary is the furthest away from the spot where the point shapes took place. Danny drags Gary on the floor, crossing to the other side of the dance space, and lets go of his arm. Now Greg and Gary are lying face down next to one another on their stomachs.
Sixth Section: Danny, who is standing in between Greg and Gary, bends over and crouches down to the backs of each boy. Danny then grabs the space over Greg’s scapula and grabs the space over Gary’s scapula. Holding clasped hands, Danny stands again. He places his clasped hands together again. Danny’s whole body begins to vibrate. Greg and Gary’s bodies also vibrate. Altogether they vibrate three to four seconds in unison. Danny falls headlong directly to the floor between Gary and Greg. Then there is stillness.

The dance ends. Danny stands up to read the poem.

Robots in Space
There were some robots in space.
They went from place to place.
They went a certain pattern.
And were finally killed on Saturn.
Danny, Greg, and Gary (1988)

Reflection
The original poem that inspired dance-making is written as a couplet, (e.g., first two verses - space and place; last two verses - pattern and Saturn). The poem’s theme is robots traveling in outer space and violence.

The choreographic form appeared to follow a narrative or story line structure. There were many instances of pantomimic gestures. The choreographic structure is $A, B, A, B', A, C, D, E, F, G$. Movement motifs or particular gestures helped to fix the meaning of the dance. They include pointy arm gestures overhead, three- to four-second pauses between each A theme, raising Greg and Gary’s hands in front of their faces, very small fluttering finger gestures and saying, “Olly, olly, olly, olly”, jolting backwards then falling back onto their feet, and Greg and Gary’s stiff and restrained marches and walks. It appeared that the content of the poem directly influenced the content of the dance. Any movement in any dance form or style is shaped or colored by what is set up from the poetry.
There appeared to be a high correlation between the poem's meaning and the selected and repeated movement vocabulary.

Revision

This is what Danny, Greg, and Gary told me, when I asked the question, “Tell me about your dance”. (1) Beginning tableau directly corresponds to first line of poem. (2) Section 1 and Section 3 actions directly correspond to second line of poem. (3) Section 6 actions directly correspond to fourth line of poem. (4) Dancers used several movement vocabulary motifs: a stiff and restrained march or walk, very small fluttering hand gestures in front of face, pointy arm gestures. (5) The movement vocabulary motifs had meaning for Danny, Greg, and Gary. They used this movement vocabulary to represent their idea of what it means to be a robot.

(6) In section 1, the exchange of swinging arm gestures referred to a secret code greeting. (7) The pointy arm motif referred to the spaceship. (8) Stillness for three to four seconds referred to space travel. (9) The jolt backwards, or falling back onto feet movement, referred to landing at a new place, possibly a new planet. (10) Danny danced three variations. First, rolling over onto his left side with legs bent at hips, legs fully extended. Second, hopping away to the pointy arms gesture spot. Last, slapping Gary on the face and twisting his torso so that his left arm catches the back of Greg's shoulder, pushing him to the ground. (11) Greg and Gary raise both hands in front of their faces and with very small fluttering finger gestures they say, Olly, olly, olly, olly. This referred to the robots taking photographs of the alien robot, Danny.

(12) The third poem line corresponds to the fourth dance section. “They went a certain pattern.” This referred to the new movement ideas introduced at this point in the dance (e.g., twirling around and
around and around in a circle). Twirling referred to Saturn’s rings. (13) Flinging away to opposite corners of the dance space referred to the event that kills the robots. (14) Danny, also known as the alien robot, bends over and crouches down next to Greg and Gary. (15) Next, he grasps the air space over Greg’s scapula, then does the same with Gary. Holding his hands clasped, Danny stands again. (16) Danny places both hands together and begins to vibrate with his whole body. Greg and Gary’s bodies also vibrate. This occurs in unison for three to four seconds. The boys told me that this sequence of movement referred to the electrical current flowing between all three robots.

(17) Danny falls headlong to the floor, landing between Greg and Gary. This movement referred to an electrical power overload that led to a power failure. (18) Stillness. Stillness referred to the fourth line of the poem, “And were finally killed on Saturn.” (19) The space where the twirling occurred referred to the planet Saturn.

The one-to-one correspondence between the poem’s meaning and the dance’s meaning illustrated one way that 9-year-olds think about robots in space as it was conveyed in and through dance-making. The *Robots in Space* dance generated insightful results for these children and those watching the dance and discussing it afterwards. I learned about Danny, Greg, and Gary’s intentions and attention given to self-created movement vocabulary. Indeed, anyone experiencing difficulty conveying their understanding through other modes of expression (e.g., writing, speaking, or drawing) can be successful through this dance-making mode of learning, dance-making.

In the next section of this chapter I discuss my ongoing research as it relates to Boorman’s stage development theory of children’s dance-making practice. I add additional literature from sociocultural cognitive development, artistic development in the
visual arts, creativity, aesthetics, and language development to build conceptual connections between children’s dance-making and other art-making enterprises.

Towards an Integrated Theory of Cognition in K-5 Classrooms

One thing that I did not have a way to navigate to or from was my own pedagogical philosophy—the way that I facilitated daily dance classes with elementary school-age children. Undeniably, I evolved through my own life experience, but until I read Efland’s ideas about the arts and cognitive development, I didn’t place myself in the discourse. Throughout this study, I found it essential to inject my pedagogical stance as a means of clarifying the parameters children encountered while making dances in school.

In his book, Integrating Art and Cognition: Integrating the Visual Arts in the Curriculum (2002), Efland calls for an integrated theory of cognition (78) to explain learning in the arts. Foundational to his theory is something he defines as cognitive flexibility: “a quality of mind that enables learners to use their knowledge in relevant ways in real world situations. Moreover, it involves a capacity on the part of the learner to represent knowledge (concepts, ideas) in multiple ways. It is multidimensional and involves the formation of multiple perspectives” (82). language, number, or works of art.

When I think about my pedagogical practice in relation to Efland’s integrative theory of cognition, I wonder how anyone can really know when a child understands what he or she sets out to understand. To this question, Efland replies, “Meaning is found when learners integrate knowledge into their lifeworlds” (81). This space can
definitely be created, or facilitated into being, through rich dance-making texts and personal experiences to inform children’s dance-making practice.

**Children’s Dance-Making and Motif Notation: Bucek’s Application of Boorman’s Developmental Stage Theory**

Between 1994 and 1998, Lucy Venable, Ann Kipling Brown and I co-taught an integrated series of dance education pedagogy courses, titled, Integrating Motif Notation into Children’s Dance at Teachers College Columbia University, The Ohio State University and the University of Saskatchewan for dance educators, dance teaching artists and elementary school classroom teachers. In conjunction with these week-long intensives we offered Children’s Dance Classes for boys and girls ages eight-10 years living in our respective communities. The living laboratories allowed us to collaboratively think and (re)think our pedagogical practice to support the use of Motif Notation in children’s dance-making.

I published “Developing Dance Literacy: Integrating Motif Writing into Theme-based Children's Dance Classes” (1998) in the *Journal of Physical Education, Recreation and Dance*. This article builds on Boorman’s stage development theory. It describes three theoretical aspects of children’s dance-making as symbolic representation—the authentic use of movement to express feelings, thoughts, and ideas; how children make dances; and Motif Notation, a literacy tool that shapes and reshapes dance thinking in a feel-move-think cognitive capacity. I experienced this phenomenon again and again while teaching dance in urban public schools in grades 3-8.
Motif Notation is a way to “sequence movement activity; symbolize movement ideas; and structure feeling, thought and motion. Motif Notation, used as a tool in creating, analyzing, documenting and reflecting, illuminates the most salient features of a movement or a dance. Integrated intentionally with dance-making, motif notation can break down literacy boundaries enabling children to (re)present their physical intellect in written form and vice versa as the written form is (re)presented in and through the dance itself” (Bucek, 1998, 29). Emergent children’s dance-making forms consist of three interrelated dimensions—spontaneous and loosely fashioned, informally shaped, and intentionally composed. “Spontaneous and loosely-fashioned dance forms may be thought of as the children’s current movement repertoire. Individual movements and movement episodes are explored joyously, freely and casually oftentimes mastered through lengthy periods of repetition” (Bucek, 30). Informally shaped dance forms can be “distinguished by the children’s ability to master an unprompted movement repertoire plus short occurrences of organized and repeated patterns that sustain varied meanings” (Bucek, 30).

Finally, “intentionally composed dance forms (re)present the full integration of children’s physically felt intellect and seeks to intentionally express ideas and feelings in fundamental artistic form. Intentionally composed dance studies (re)present a child’s well-developed ideas in physically-composed form. When Motif Notation symbols and movement vocabulary are used together, they are deliberately selected and incorporated into larger, multi-dancer scores. When children reflect on their written notation scores they notice movement properties, edit choreographed phrases, and interpret possible meanings” (Bucek, 30).
I have observed that children with prior dance and motif notation experience can identify and recall motif symbols and extemporaneously perform movements with clarity and variation. Of their own initiative, these children often begin ordering symbols or ordering movements into simple and complex patterns. “This dance-making act is fluid and highly personal. Each individual seeks, selects and utilizes varying entry points—moving first, then writing, or writing or reading first, then moving. With their imaginations fully engaged, children move, read, write and interpret— creating multiple meanings with each varied repetition” (Bucek, 30).

These primary ways of dance knowing provide rudimentary, web-like cognitive structures that become visible with the children’s increasing ability to perceive, conceive, and organize meaning in a variety of symbolic modalities—numbers, letters, words, sounds, movement, or colors signifying 'this stands for that' symbolic activities. Dance-making and Motif Notation help children to find their own voices by discovering personal meaning as it is embodied in their own dance movements. It is a form of dance thinking that connects them to everyday living.

Efland’s Model of Integrated Theory of Cognition Applied to Children’s Dance-Making

Efland (2002) invites us to consider combining what we know from symbol processing (Perkins & Simmons, 1988) with sociocultural cognition (Lave & Wenger, 1991), especially when considering “school practices that try to teach concepts independently of authentic situations” (71). Efland (2002, 78) echoes Dewey’s ideas about children and experiential learning and calls for an integrated theory of cognition to explain learning in the arts. It is multidimensional and involves the formation of multiple
perspectives.” (82). In this model, Efland states that it is the individual who constructs his/her own understanding, which is acquired through the use of cultural tools such as language, number, or works of art. Learning to understand is designed around a learner’s interests and needs.

Intertext/Interlude: Classic Choreography Inspires Thoughtful Engagement

Fifth grade students attended a live dance performance of German choreographer Kurt Jooss’ 1932 masterpiece, The Green Table performed by the Ohio State University Dance Company at Mershon Auditorium (March 1986.)

This classic work juxtaposes distinctive universal characters: politicians, everyday people, young soldiers, an old mother, a young lover, a profiteer and Death. After a roundtable conference, the politicians vote to engage in war. Death exhibits its ultimate power throughout the choreography as each character inevitably succumbs in the war game. (Bucek, 1992, 40).

After attending the performance the fifth graders were invited to reflect on the choreography and record their reactions in their dance journals. Ingrid’s journal entry (1988) stated, “My dad was shot when I was four years old. I still remember the violent way that it happened. Death can mean so many things to so many people. My heart still aches” (Ingrid, 1988 in Bucek, 40).
Reflection

This ten-year-old girl constructed authentically personal meaning by shaping words into prose. Her thoughts and feelings were revealed and translated from dance to words. Ingrid’s words represent her ‘real world’ experience and her feelings about what she has come to understand about her world. I think that the emergence of an integrated theory of cognition as a way of questioning cognitive play during reflective writing may also occur in children’s dance-making practice.

Efland maintains that strategies for learning through an integrated theory of cognition may be guided by metacognitive strategies and facilitated by interventions of knowledgeable adults who provide the prompts that form effective forms of scaffolding (2002,81). In Ingrid’s case seeing The Green Table performance may have expanded her visceral sense and deepened understanding of the world in which she lives. How does one know when one has understood what one set out to understand in Efland’s integrative theory of cognition? I am again reminded of his words, “Meaning is found when learners integrate knowledge into their lifeworlds (81).” I think that it is here that space can be created to inform children’s dance-making practice.

Efland contends that social cognition avoids symbolic dualisms “by binding knowledge construction closely to its embedding context” (71). This idea continues to influence me because the educational philosophy of the school culture cited in this study allows for meaningful connections to take place during children’s dance-making sessions. Without this infrastructure, a different symbolic play might take place.
New Ways of Thinking about Children and Meaning Making: Artistic Development in the Visual Arts and Developmental Psychology Intersect

*Concept Formation and Symbolic Representation*

The symbolic world of humans has been described and debated by many scholars, including Smith-Shank (2007), Efland (2002), Eisner (1978, 1991, 1999), Perkins (1994), Gardner (1982, 2009), Best (1978, 1984), Wilson and Wilson (1982), Boorman (1980, 1982), Burton (1980, 1981), Goodman (1978), Bruner and Anglin (1973), Smith, (1972), Piaget, (1956, 1973), and Vygotsky (1962). Humans form, organize, and (re)present experience conceptually through different symbolic forms or representations (e.g., words, numbers, sound, movement, and color). Over time children come to symbolize their ideas and feelings to make meaning in multiple (re)presentations. It follows then that one particular symbol system may be more useful for some types of information than for others.

An idea or feeling may be conceptualized in one mode of representation but expressed through another; for instance, the poet may visualize ideas but choose to communicate these ideas through words. Likewise, a dancer may hear ideas in music but choose to communicate those ideas in movement. Best (1978) tells us that a concept cannot be explained meaningfully by written composition. To know the meaning of a word [dance] is to be able to use it correctly in a variety of contexts, but to have a grasp of the relevant *concepts* is more a matter of knowing the logical consequences of the use of the words [movement] and its relation to other concepts (13). My research attempts to
layer a child’s intrinsic meaning-making features alongside critical inquiry of other concepts in and across existing disciplines during dance-making. Symbols are not a mere substitute for an object but are the instruments of thought (Gardner, 1982; Burton, 1981). Instead, symbolizing, as a medium of representation, “creates different forms of awareness and makes different modes of understanding possible” (Eisner, 1978, 617).

Bringing these ideas into the real world of elementary school teachers, Blatt and Cunningham (1981) point out that after reading a poem or story in class, children need to express how they feel, as well as what they understand. This is often illustrated through children’s drawings, singing, or writing and viewed as an expansion of language. Lynch-Frasier (1991), Piaget (1973), and Dewey (1934) argue that children must “play in order to learn”. That, “knowledge is derived from action”; and “to learn an object is to act on it and transform it”. Blatt and Cunningham (1981) agree, stating that, “children that interpret literary selections through expressive movements are, in fact, transforming selections from a verbal form to preverbal experiences” (11). This is known as a literature extension. Moreover, in their experience, children who listen to or independently read literary selections later respond through movement, symbolizing the meaning, rhythm, or mood of the story.

*Symbol Processing, Sensory Embodiment, and Child’s Play*

Initially, children are involved primarily in establishing the relationship between experience, feeling, and action (Dewey, 1934). Rugg called it felt thought (1963). Piaget (1973), researched structures and processes by which knowledge is acquired and outlined
the course of intellectual development as having four stages: sensori-motor, pre-operational, concrete operations, and formal operations. He did not consider these structures as innate rather they emerged through interaction between the individual and his/her environment. At each benchmark—physical, psychological, emotional, and social—structures permitted individual discovery; practice and mastery of physical, social emotional, and logical knowledge that could not have been performed previously. The acquisitions of these structures result in the ability to perform certain intellectual operations or schema but do not tell what these intellectual operations are or who has access to them.

Others have shown that children first understand the meaning of objects through movement and sensory experiences (Boorman, 1980; Burton, 1980; Smith, 1972, Bruner & Goodnow, 1956). In play, children begin to differentiate what child psychologist Margery Franklin (1973) notes as two distinctive gestures—*depictive*, which means to show or illustrate something, and *enactive*, which means to ‘represent’ or embody’ something. These gestures appear as kinesthetic rudiments of meaning making in early child symbol use, yet from many years of observation I have seen these two movement strands in early child dance-making regardless of age. The ability to move towards or away from these distinct gestural forms is partially dependent on experiential play with the forms themselves.
Social Cultural Cognition and Visual (Re)presentation

Bruner and Goodnow (1956) invite us to think about cognitive theory scaffolds embedded in the experiences of school-age children as they begin school and make new friends, expanding their interactions with the world. They point out that children organize their thoughts-ideas-feelings in the form of ‘symbolic language’ enabling them to refer to experiences at some distance through the development of memory and recall. Children develop complex webs of mind-body-spirit activity that are capable of transforming information about the ‘real’ world into the mind. In doing so, children begin to organize and use information selectively in finding or solving problems. These principle sources (physical, social emotional, and logical knowledge) can be observed in the multiple stages of children’s play that result in an expanding repertory of actions; sets of actions (schemas); multiple responses; forms of habituation (habits of mind); increased memory; increased attention-giving; embodiment of something or someone; use of the imagination in narrative structures; and increased tolerance for ambiguity. Intellectual growth results from the interaction of maturation and experience.

As children grow, their responses to personal experience are encapsulated in a variety of symbolic forms. In concert with these forms are sociocultural or situated cognitive understandings (Efland, 2002) that are constructed through social interaction that, during school age years, may be scaffolded by parents/guardians, peers, and knowledgeable adults. This in turn opens zones of proximal development (Vygotsky,
allowing a child to increase mastery that prior to assistance would not have taken place. It is through these two cognitive domains that new mental operations are challenged to come into being. Likewise, Boorman (1982) implores us to think that, “the root of all imaginative activity is viewed in relation to the perceptual-images, action-images and verbal-images. Thus, the emergence and subsequent shaping of symbolic representation specifically in dance-like behavior may be viewed in relation to the availability of the symbolic systems with which children have to express themselves” (v).”

These symbol systems in turn modify children’s perceptions of the world, especially as these worlds merge. The children’s imaginations are symbolically cast in a variety of illustrative mediums that provide important information in problem solving and meaning making. Yet Wilson and Wilson (1982) found a way to ground all of this symbolic play with their idea of art-making as a cultural response or product of living in the world. What the child dance-maker makes is singular, and through engagement with the world higher levels of consciousness are achieved. Boorman (1982) considered the importance of dance as non-verbal “language” to the child’s ability to express and communicate, stating that, “It becomes apparent that there are meanings that a child can convey and receive only through dance. These are ideas, images and feelings that can be expressed and communicated in dance that cannot be rendered in verbal language, be it spoken or written, music, the visual arts or any other idiom” (2). Through continued acknowledgment of and interaction with the physical world, school-age children continue to explore and experience what Piaget identified as the content of physical knowledge.
The representation of physical knowledge content can be viewed directly in the ways children invent, select, organize, and repeat meaningful movements—particularly those that increasingly integrate the spatial, temporal, and dynamic dimensions of dance within a given context.

Lessons in Aesthetics: Maxine Greene’s Studies in Existentialism and Phenomenology

Between 1990 and 2000, I had the privilege of studying aesthetics with existentialist philosopher and mentor Maxine Greene in tiny study groups at Teachers College, at salons in Greene’s home, and through individual chats. As a result, I began thinking about aesthetic dimensions as a complement to the artistic dimensions of children’s dance-making experience. Greene often discussed her interpretations of Merleau-Ponty’s (1945) lived body, stating that dance has intersubjective attributes, or the ability to reach backwards and forwards in time to trace significance of one’s life, which in turn informs deep human understanding. Greene (1995a, 2001) asserts that aesthetics involves a person’s propensity to be fully present at any given moment. Furthermore, Greene maintains that deliberately engaging the imagination invites an evolving scaffolding of possibility. This evolving scaffolding lives in an individual’s natural capacity to imagine the world differently, which in turn can set into play deepening perception and a place of opportunity. Viewing the world this way can profoundly impact living a good life as the facility for personal exploration and questioning arises through art-making that deepens reflective practice. One way this occurs is through art[s]-making. Greene maintains that it is within the realms of possibility that full imaginative engagement can be reached.
Our conversations focused on interrelationships of personal worldview, subjective reality, and use of the imagination. With some reflection and additional reading, I learned that Sondra Horton Fraleigh (1987), one of my former undergraduate dance teachers, had written about this in her book, *Dance and the Lived Body: A Descriptive Aesthetics*. Fraleigh asked the questions, “When do dancers experience subjectivity? Why is experiencing subjectivity important to a dancer?”

*When do children begin to experience subjectivity? Why might it be relevant in children’s dance-making practice?*

As a proponent of the arts as a vehicle for social change, Greene (1995a) asserts that the arts can work holistically to bring what she perceives is a fragmented society towards a cohesive and enlightened one. *How can children’s dance-making practice work to bring about experiences of community?* What's more, Greene argues compellingly for deep engagement with the dance discipline so as to lead to critical inquiry. Greene asks that we respectfully challenge individual perception and reminds us of the invitation of John Dewey, the father of progressive education, to shape experience that “encourages free and informed choosing within a social context where ideas could be developed” (Green, 1995a, 6). Dewey (1934) strongly advocated for a place for arts in a child’s development as a natural bridge to connect and deepen visible and seemingly disparate understandings. Highly influential Brazilian progressive educator Paolo Freire (1985) encourages us to move away from a social condition he calls *cultural silence* and towards a social construct that supports the development of a socially conscious action-oriented community to build social capital that leads us to act in ways that make for
justice and human flourishing. This deepening consciousness to transform reality, in turn, leads towards alternative ways to sensing, feeling, reflecting, rebelling, or supporting, but never giving into acceptance without thinking. **What might empowerment look like in children’s dance-making practice? How does a child access his/her voice in dance-making practice?**

Greene (1995b) maintains that what distinguishes dance knowing from other modes of inquiry is the layered thinking involved in selecting, shaping, and interpreting art [dance] making’s raw movement materials in relation to one’s curiosity, imagination, and evolving perception. She refers to this ability as an artist’s *double vision* or the intersection of expertise in discipline content knowledge and awareness of contradictions that prevail in life. **When can children perceive double vision? How do they use double vision in dance-making practice?**

In Greene’s view, art- [dance] making engages the senses for the sole purpose of seeking clarity, coherence, enlargement, and intensity. This results in both an expansion of lived experience and service to a broader spectrum of human possibility. Art [dance]-making poses questions to engage people in their own projects and life experiences. **What questions guide inquiry in children’s dance-making practice?**

Greene (1988) often reflected on the work and life of John Dewey and his contributions to active, experiential learning. She continues to argue that deep understanding is known through *actual* not *virtual* experience. Greene advocates for people to engage in myriad opportunities to seize a full range of meanings open to
interpretation in the world, especially in these challenging socio-political times. She calls for a re-envisioning of curriculum theory that is based on constant shifts in context of differing peoples, biographies, and locations. Greene insists that our teaching should enable our students to interpret their experience in order to free themselves [emancipate] and to be able to reflect upon the full range of cognitive styles available, in order to live passionately. I agree with her ideas.

While my reflective practice at Maxine Greene’s salons focused on pedagogical application, my studies in Penelope Hanstein’s (1991) curriculum design course supported reflective practice in my own artistic development. This in turn, supported my pedagogical ponderings. Hanstein is a consummate artist/scholar/educator who listens well and engages in critical discourse just for fun. Throughout these studies, I revisited an important developmental principle discussed earlier in this chapter, that perception is a cognitive event and that the senses and cognition cannot be separated. Moreover, I thought more about the idea of a place, or environment, where one wants to create and needs to be safe and conducive to memory and recall, which in turn allows manipulation in the realm of the imagination. According to Hanstein (1991), this environmental feature can give way to the formation of mental images, or metaphors constructed as dance movement. Hanstein shared her perspective on the working processes of artists and scholars, asserting that both artists and scholars operate within a heuristic process, a variety of entities working together to provide assistance or direction towards the solution of the problem defined. In other words, heuristic processes are conscious (purposeful/mindful) engagements that are there when you need them and disappear
when their work is complete. **What might we observe as heuristic processes in children’s dance making? How might these processes assist meaning making?**

**Creativity: Howard Gruber’s Perspective**

Gruber’s (1991) approach to the development of creativity is **constructivist**. He believes that the creator [dance-maker] participates in choosing and shaping the surroundings within which the work proceeds and the skills needed for the work, defining both as the *ensemble of tasks*. Gruber encouraged me to view the creator [children’s dance-maker] as both the doer of the work and as a person in the world who possesses emotions and aesthetic feelings. The creator [children’s dance-maker] is thought to possess social consciousness and reacts to his or her work in relation to the world’s work, its needs and feelings. I found Gruber’s basic premise of creative activity in humans to be useful up to a point and describe it here as a way to discuss cognitive change. Armed with this renewed way of thinking, I set out to observe creative development, as described by Gruber (1991), in children who made dances. See previous intertexts/interludes in this chapter. It was only after I had studied post-positivist research design with Lather (1998) that I began to understand constructivist reality as a partial knowing. I didn’t yet have language to articulate what I knew then, but I wanted to emancipate the oppressive systems that both “othered” and prevented the child dance-maker from making a significant mark on his or her world.
Lois Bloom’s Theory of Representation in Child Language Research

Lois Bloom (1993) invites us to think about ‘representation’ differently from its use in child language research. Instead of representation meaning acquisition of knowledge or development of the thought process, Bloom suggests that there exists another focus—one that comes from theories of intentionality in philosophy. She states that, “Intentional states are the representations in consciousness we construct for ordinary, everyday actions – including acts of expressing and acts of interpreting the expressions of others. These representations are ephemeral states of mind without material substances, but they can be made manifest by expressing them. Expressions are material properties or embodiments, because they have substance – like a drawing, action, speech, or a display of emotion” (23).

In children’s dance-making what they choose to give attention to and intentionally develop is an expression of personal understanding in a complex and ever-changing world. From thought to idea to feeling through to the physical activity of writing or dancing, expression leaps onto the page or the dance. “Whatever the medium, an expression takes the internal, personal representation of an intentional state and makes it external and public” (Bloom, 1993, 230).

Empowerment: Finding Voice and Exercising “I” Words (Imagining, Imagination)

As the children dance, make dances, and reflect on dances viewed, the imagination plays a central role in forming self-identity (Witherell, 1991; Bruner, 1986). This natural ability is a way that children “see possible formal connections before one is
able to prove them in a formal way” (Bruner, 13). “Activating the imagination enables us to ask “what if”, ‘as if’ and ‘how does’ questions to guide our explorations of human events and actions of the past, present and our sense of possibilities for the present and future” (Witherell, 1991, 88).

After learning a dance phrase with verbal text to identify the major bones of the human body, a fourth-grade class pondered these guiding questions: “What if the body’s skeletal system was arranged in a different order? For instance, what if the head were where the feet now are and the buttocks were where the feet now exist? How might you move, given a different order, from top to bottom?” These guiding questions help the child dance-maker to shape a movement response based on experimentation, as does creating a list that shows a different arrangement of the body’s skeletal system. Imagine the movement that might occur if the toes were where the ears go and the nose was where the feet are? Try to move as though this was you in a new bodily form.

Lather’s (1991) social theory lens, or the idea of setting up a network of social practices that allows for shifting of subjects, content, and locations, helps me to see how children’s dance-making moves towards a more complex understanding of identity and citizenship. “Context and meaning in everyday life are posited as co-constructions, multiple, complex, open and changing, neither pre-given nor explainable by large scale causal theories, but made and remade across a multiplicity of minor scattered practices” (42).
Taken together context and meaning offer multiple lenses through which interrelationships between and among subjects, especially children’s dance-making, can be explained and shaped. The resultant child-made dances illustrate individual and group identity, multiple literacies, expanding worldviews, social interactions, and vivid descriptive language (Bucek 1994, 1998, 2000, 2004, 2006). French feminist theorist Hélène Cixous (1994), emphatically argued that a woman must write herself “into the text – as into the work and into history – by her own movement (573)”. For me, writing myself into the text—the work and the history—has been a challenging endeavor.
Chapter 4: Presentation of Data

What we can experience and how we make sense of what we experience depend on the kinds of bodies we have and the ways we interact with the various environments we inhabit. It is through our embodied interactions that we inhabit a world, and it is through our bodies that we are able to understand and act within this world with varying degrees of success (Johnson, 1999, 81).

Like a masterful choreographer grappling with movement, time, space, energy, relationship selection, image making, choreographic device manipulation, and artistic decision making, Valerie Janesick (1994) relates the use of multiple research methods to choreographic practice:

A good choreographer refuses to be limited to just one approach or one technique from dance history. Likewise, the qualitative researcher refuses to be limited; as Flick (1998) has recently observed, the qualitative researcher uses various techniques and rigorous and tested procedures in working to capture the nuance and complexity of the social situation under study (49).

In chapter four, I present the data collection methods featured in this autoethnographic research. The data collected reflects children’s dance-making processes and practices, the dances themselves, personal and pedagogical reflections,
historical contextualizing, and other pertinent information to situate the children and their dance-making experiences.

Narratives describe the conditions that situate the dance-making experience and the dances made by elementary school-age children over a twenty-five-year period. The nine child-made dances discussed in this thesis were created in and outside of the dance class experience or through a dance artist-in-residence program. The 17 children in the study represent the diversity found in a large Midwest urban school district—black, white, Latino/a, poor, American Indian, or middle class. They share a common bond—dance making—a privilege afforded by school choice.

Throughout this chapter I recount stories and partial tales. I offer pertinent reflections of my own dance-teaching experience and insights garnered from pilot studies (Bucek, 1997, 1998, 1999), curriculum writing (Ohio Department of Education, 2006-08), and published articles (Bucek, 1988, 1992, 1998, 2000, 2004). I illustrate instances where children have “organize[d] experience [s] into temporally meaningful episodes” (Polkinghorne, 1988, 1 in Richardson, 1997, 27) to intensify the significance of children’s dance-making, “noting that something is a ‘part’ of a whole and that something is a ‘cause’ of something else” (Polkinghorne, 6 in Richardson, 27). Ultimately, it is understanding or the ability to think and act flexibly with what one knows that drives this investigation.

As you read this chapter consider the children. Who are they? What is important to them? How do children choose to share their feelings, thoughts, and ideas in and
through dance? What kinds of spaces were afforded to these children as they pursued
dance-making individually or in collaboration? Look beyond what we think we believe
about children and dance-making experience. “Look through the multiplication of layers
of meaning that trouble what we [have] come to understand” (Lather & Smithies, 1997,
xvii) and consider the purpose and possibility before us. In chapter 5, I will use multiple
data analysis methods to analyze and interpret the data presented here in chapter 4.

Collecting Data: Theory into Practice

I look to my predecessors for guidance as I ponder how to best communicate my
experience of observing, facilitating, and reflecting on children’s dance-making practice
to deepen my understanding and next course of action. For this research study, I wrote
narratives, stories, and creative nonfiction pieces to document dance-making experiences
that produced personal meaning, relevance, and, in some cases, transformation. In doing
so, I struggled with finding ways to share the individual and collective children’s dance-
making voice, my own pedagogical practice in relation to the dances that the children
made, and the historical influences that shape-shifted their experiences. First, I reviewed
literature that supports my data collection and presentation decisions for the study.

Using Narrative Storytelling As Inquiry

One data collection approach is storytelling. Narratives, stories, partial tales of
cultural translation (Taylor & Ballangee Morris, 2005, 2013; Ellis, 2004, 2009; Goodall,
2008; Lather, 1997; Stuhr, Krug, & Scott, 1995); creative nonfiction (Gutkind, 2012),
collective story (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005), children’s narratives (Faulkner &
Coates, 2011), and protocol writing (Van Manen, 1990) are terms used to interpret experience or when people try to make sense of their lives in terms of specific events. Ellis (2004) states that stories “are essential to human understanding. They come from Homeric literature, oral traditions, narrative analysis and fairy tales” (32). Moreover, writers always have an agenda. “Their stories are not written to seek balance, or objectivity” (Gutkind, 2012, 34). Stories, narratives, collective story, partial tales, creative nonfiction, or writing protocols take sides, “have a point of view and demonstrate independent thinking. Writers capture events to summarize, evaluate and persuade within the boundaries of accuracy, truth and good taste. Humans have the capacity to see or interpret all aspects of life as a story. In our attempt to understand and relate to the world we weigh characters, and situations, imagine multiple conflicting endings and recreate alternative scenarios” (34).

Autoethnographers use narrative, collective story, and creative nonfiction deliberately to write and to help us to see “how sociological categories including e.g., race, class, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, have shaped their lives or how the larger historical processes have affected them” (Richardson, 1997, 14-15). These stories are constructed, value-laden, compelling, and memorable and cannot be eradicated over time (Gutkind, 2012; Goodall, 2008; Lather, 1991b). Stories describe personal experience that is “socially-constructed and written as a way to connect and to make sense of a larger complicated world” (Richardson, 1997). They can be written “evocatively, descriptively or dramatically to show rather than tell” (Goodhall, 2008, 36). McAdams (2005) uses narrative because “people remember facts longer and more completely when they are part
of the story. People are also persuaded more quickly and effectively when information and idea are presented in story form” (92). Now that I have decided to use narrative storytelling to present my data I need to frame it.

Carol Witherell and Nel Noddings (1991) tell us “we learn from our stories” (279). More important, we come to understand—ourselves, others, and even the subjects we teach and learn. Witherell and Noddings continue, “Stories are powerful researcher tools. They provide us with a picture of real people in real situations, struggling with real problems. They banish indifference often generated by samples, treatments and faceless subjects. They invite us to speculate on what might be changed and with what effect. And, of course, they remind us of our persistent fallibility. Most important, they invite us to remember that we are in the business of teaching, learning and researching to improve the human condition. Telling and listening to stories can be a powerful sign of regard—caring—for one another”(280). So trying to [re]tell the stories or partial tales of the child-made dances as completely as possible is my aim.

Choosing a Framing Device

Goodall (2008) states that when considering a framing device for a story, “what is crafted must attract attention without taking away from the content of the work, and yet it must also be understood as part of the work” (34). A central decision point then is, “how to place the real life story within a larger social, political or institutional issue or research question” (34). Be sure to state the connection between your personal experiences and the larger research issue or question. Moreover, assert the point of
telling/revealing, provide the intended audience, and show how the story connects with the ongoing scholarly conversation. Finally, work your ideas through all four possibilities—“a single word, an image that serves a metaphor, a literacy allusion or a personal experience” (Goodall, 2008, 36-37).

Documenting Immersion

Over a twenty-five-year period I studied children’s dance-making phenomena. For this research, I reviewed more than 250 videotaped child-dances and dance studies made by elementary school age children. I reviewed reflective notes from my personal and pedagogical journals and dance lesson plans; dance content descriptors written on report cards and curriculum framework documents across fourth and fifth grade subjects, especially dance curriculum; published articles—including my own, interviews culled from the dancers themselves, parents, community leaders, and dance education colleagues; and dance concert program notes, essays, poems, student journals, and motif notation scores. Each artifact provides a different entry point for thoughtful analysis and interpretation.

I wove the collective stories into my own experience as an educator and researcher (Ellis, 2004) and used intertexts (Lather, 1997) to frame social, cultural, historical, and educational issues that arose during the time period when these children had access to multi-year dance education experience. The stories are intended to both connect the children’s real, lived experience and to trouble the widely accepted absence of dance-making found in education in the United States today. During this
investigation, I manufactured dialogue (Gutkind, 2012). The subtext includes one dance-maker, as he or she narrates a recent change or provides a counter story. This study also includes small dance-making groups that through collaboration narrate deeper understanding of the concept or historical event they were creating. These narratives are represented in different fonts. Dialogue represents people expressing themselves and communicating to understand their interactions with other people (123).

**Interviews**

Viewed today as a “conversational partnership” (Goodall, 2008, 48), interviewing—highly structured or semi-structured—invites the researcher to ask questions, probe answers to gain access to patterns of thinking, and acquire an appreciation for the interviewer’s perspective. Van Manen (1990) suggests that interviewing for a personal life story is about “gathering experiential narrative materials that may serve as a resource for developing a richer and deeper understanding of a human phenomenon (66).” Throughout this research process, I engaged three colleagues in conversational relation (Van Manen, 1990) to check the validity of my own thinking about the meaning of the children’s dance-making experience. Doing so helped me to “see the forest for the trees” and to look deeper at the sociocultural forces at play during the study’s time period.

**Document Analysis**

For the past twenty-five years I kept videotapes, report cards, planning books, lesson plans, monthly arts schedules, and personal and pedagogical journals that support
my research study. As I reread each one, I marvel at what was experienced. Taken day-by-day the amount of material is manageable, but taken all together it is overwhelming.

*Lesson Plan Books*

I looked at children’s dance-making practice over a six-year time period, K-5, noting that students who engaged in dance instruction one day per week over the entire time period minimally engaged in 210 distinct sessions. Add 10 days annually for informal dance-sharing rehearsals and sharings, plus participation in dance artist residencies, and that time jumps to 275 hours of dance instruction.

*Report Cards*

I reviewed the dance curriculum narratives that I wrote for student report cards at the Elementary Arts School, 1982 through 1990. At that time, dance, drama, music, and the visual arts provided a report card narrative for each grade level to inform parents of discipline-specific, integrated, and interdisciplinary content, choreographic dance literature, and a listing of the artists that visited our school each quarter.

*Videotapes*

Over a rather lengthy data collection time period, I reviewed all 250 children’s dance-making videotapes, eventually converting them all to DVDs. I had written down all of the names of the child dance-makers, the titles of the dances, and the context in which the dances were made (e.g., dance club, in class, during a dance residency, for a grade level sharing, as the result of a cultural experience outside of school). The pattern was to look at the videotape, think about its value in relation to the research questions,
make a decision as to whether the dance would become a part of this study, reflect on the most salient features of the dance, record this, and repeat.

\textit{Personal and Pedagogical Journals}

I offer an autobiographical account related to the pedagogical and scholarly practices of the Elementary Arts School to strongly refute Kozol’s (1991) description of urban public schools as “large, extraordinarily unhappy places” that reminded him of garrisons or outposts in a foreign nation. As I reflect on my role of participant observer (Spradley, 1980), I become increasingly aware that as a product of my time I also experienced sociocultural, political, and personal change. I am also reminded that I deliberately choose to work in large urban public school cultures in Columbus, Ohio, and in New York City. For as long as I can remember, I had always wanted to teach in places with the greatest need.

\textbf{The Elementary Arts School: School Culture Context}

Dance instruction at the Arts Elementary School is guided by Arts IMPACT principles, which privileges movement as a primary vehicle for expressing feelings and ideas; demonstrating multiple solutions, engaging in cooperative and collaboration human interaction, and attending to details that complete a larger worldview that fosters the emergence of empathy, tolerance towards ambiguity, and personal and group empowerment in every child and teacher. At Arts Elementary School, the teachers and the children work together to facilitate/mediate learning. Teachers and children
deliberately co-construct nontrivial teaching and learning experiences that foster a plethora of meaningful interactions within the world of ideas.

Children develop in relation to their ever-increasing and exercised understanding of self-respect, respect for others, and the world in which they live. The growth of empathy is paramount in this school’s culture. In his book *Emotional Intelligence— Why It Can Matter More Than IQ*, psychologist Daniel Goleman (1995) tells us that the roots of empathy are found in the

(1) the ability to know how another feels

(2) that it builds out of self awareness

(3) that the more open we are to our own emotion, the more skilled we will be in reading feelings.

In a world of rapid technological advancement, I celebrate the Arts Elementary Schools’ ability to sustain direct, human engagement of the senses in relation to study of subject knowledge content, including dance. Through instructional design, children spend more time exploring dance content in a wide variety of relationships in order to later apply that integrated understanding in new situations. Empathy is grown at this school. Students develop their own interpersonal intelligence (Gardner, 1982), which entails a person’s ability to (1) organize groups, (2) negotiate solutions, (3) make personal connections, and (4) conduct meaningful social analyses.
At the Arts Elementary School children and teachers wrestle with life’s savage inequalities on a daily basis. Multiple strengths of this school culture, or ‘the way we do things here,’ reveal a complex web whose elements include

- a way of being that supports individual and group inquiry and the use of the imagination to consider other possibilities.

- the teacher’s deliberate selection of relevant subject content from a comprehensive understanding of his or her own discipline(s).

- the conscious construction of teaching/learning experiences that celebrate diversity, wed multiple perspectives, and encapsulate an enlarging worldview.

At the Arts Elementary School, feelings matter. Acknowledging one another as full persons matters. Acknowledging one’s gifts and contributions matters. The importance of each person to the bigger idea matters. And big ideas are important. Dance rests significantly inside of this place, “A place where people want to be.” (The Arts Elementary School brochure, 1982)

A Brief Description of the Children’s Dance-Makers

Children ages 9-11 years old systematically begin to analyze and define all within their grasp. They are becoming more serious and calculated in nature, they are inventors and game players and group coordinators. They enjoy creating secret codes and personal languages. They are thoughtful and attentive as they (re)present their views of the world, weaving factual information, previous experience and speculation through storytelling, dance, creative writing and
poetry, music and visual and media arts. Current fads and fashions, heroes and heroines greatly influence this age group. Most of these children appear to be steady, confident, forthright and social, not yet affected by the vicissitudes of puberty. Same gender friendships occur.

Minnesota Dance Initiative Curriculum Guide

A Collection of Stories and Partial Tales about Children and Dance-Making

The stories and partial tales presented are my interpretive descriptions of real-life experiences of urban community elementary school-age children engaged in a variety of dance-making practices. While these dances were created through spontaneous and loosely fashioned, informally shaped, or intentionally composed (Bucek, 1998) choreographic processes, my primary inquiry focuses on the interdependent connection embodied in the dances as they each (re)present life histories found in and outside of dance-making—the heart and soul of experience. Dance stories illustrate aspects of the study’s purpose—to find out how dance-making gives voice and purpose to children’s lives.

Moreover, how does children’s dance-making practice look when framed as inquiry, socially constructed, and understood as a cognitive process through which artistic modes are revealed, thinking is embodied, and experience heralded. Campbell and Moyers (1988) say it best: “the best things cannot be told, they are often misunderstood and transcendent: what cannot be shown and what is felt offers the soul, happiness” (43).
In the next section of chapter 4 I organized the stories and partial tales of children’s dance-making experience that feature independently inspired dances, dance-curriculum aligned and artist-in-residence inspired. Over a six-year period, students in grades K-5 integrated these features at the Arts Elementary School. Each dance partially describes a larger, integrated educational philosophy shaped by the school’s Arts IMPACT curriculum, the school district’s K-12 dance curriculum, and my pedagogical practice. You can view these videoclips at: http://vimeo.com/lorenbucek.

I. Independently-Inspired Dance-Making

Hair and Heroes
Partial Dance Tale #1: Jeni’s Fantasy Hair Dance to the Pop Song “Sherri Don’t Go”

On Monday morning, I saw a choreographed piece with specific movement vocabulary that reflected Jeni’s movement experiences, phrasing, and sequencing that incorporated ballet steps including grande jétés, pirouettes, step hops, chassés, and gymnastics movements from ballet and gymnastics classes. The most prominent movement motif was Jeni swaying her upper body and tossing her long brown hair. She used these two movements throughout the dance to punctuate specific moments of joy. Jeni’s form, physicality, and phrasing were breathtaking. Her lyricism was mature and eloquent. Jeni performed her own dance elegantly and with each repetition the dance’s intention, personal movement vocabulary, and expression were shaped and refined.
Partial Dance Tale #2: Heroes – A Pop Culture Icon Embodies Jamilah Twice

I remember Jamilah and his dances at ages five and ten years old and again at twenty-three years old. As a kindergartner, Jamilah strutted, moon walked, and back spun into school daily in a pair of black jeans, a red leather studded jacket, one white glove with silver sequins, and dark sunglasses. When hearing the music, ‘Off The Wall’, sung on an MTV video by pop icon, Michael Jackson Jamilah moved with such performance precision that he could easily be mistaken for Michael Jackson himself. In fact, many classroom teachers remarked that Jamilah danced Michael better than Michael.

Three years ago, I had the good fortune of meeting Jamilah again. Now age twenty-three, I asked him if he was still dancing. His response was one of surprise. “Well, Ms. Bucek, of course I still dance!” “Where?” I probed. “In the clubs mostly. But I was on the wrestling team in high school and I choreographed for the cheerleaders, and for our school play.” I then asked him if he remembered his “Michael Jackson dance days.” Without a moment’s hesitation, Jamilah immediately spun around and moon walked away from me while simultaneously exclaiming, “Wow, you remember that!!!” I then asked him what that dance had meant to him. After a very long pause, Jamilah remarked, “I didn’t know then, of course, but those dances probably saved my life…” “Why?” “I loved moving that way. I felt like I could do anything, be anything. I could escape my ‘real’ life for a while.” (Bucek, 2000)
Interlude/Intertext: [Feeling Like] I Can Do Anything! Not!

I began studying dance formally (pre-ballet and folk dance, later ballet and Russian character dance) at the age of four. At that time, my mom believed that I was growing increasingly shy and did not wish for me to experience the feelings she had negatively experienced herself when she was young. As a voracious reader, my mom read somewhere that studying dance would offer poise, self-confidence, and self-discipline. She was not a stage mother, nor someone who wanted me to be a star. I remember being really happy when I pretended to be a violet and a bluebird in the *Alice In Wonderland* ballet, a snowflake in *The Nutcracker* ballet, Russian royalty in character dance class, a Mexican villager dancing the traditional hat dance, talking lips to an original score by jazz musician Slam Stewart, an Italian peasant at harvest time, a swan in the *Swan Lake* ballet, and a rooster in the *Carnival of the Animals* ballet.

From the time I was four years old, both of my parents supported my love of dance. While my father worked the night shift in a neighborhood factory, my mother maintained a flexible work schedule, as a real estate salesperson, to accommodate my dance class schedule and to carpool my sister, other members of my dance class, and me to ballet classes held Mondays through Thursdays and again on Saturdays. This arrangement occurred until I went to college at age eighteen.

A valuable lesson, for sure, learning to pretend, to imagine, and to create possible worlds with the support, safety, and loving presence of my parents. I remember feeling the tension between the disciplined physicality involved in crafting an image in someone else’s vision and how the actual vision appeared to others, but I had no words to describe my experience. To ease this anxiety I would go home and spontaneously tap my own versions of the dances learned on the
kitchen floor, making sense of my experience in the safety of my home. I was given entrée to worlds other than my own, never realizing at the time that what was becoming a significant dimension of my identity was absent from many of my peer’s life adventures.

*Violence and War through Children’s Dance-Making*

Partial Dance Tale #3: Fathers Troubling Their Children: Break’ in Outta Jail at 2:45 am

High above Anthony’s head, Rashay stands balancing himself on top of Anthony’s shoulders. He suddenly presses his feet into Anthony’s shoulders and leaps to the ground below. Making like a prisoner escaping out of a jail, he falls and slinks away, pausing to look in every possible direction. Stephan, Peter, and Michael leap high into the air, crossing the space to capture Anthony, who resists with increasingly frenetic twisting, jerking, and pulling away movements. Stephan lays over the top of Anthony, pinning him to the ground. Michael and Peter race onto the dance space. Galloping, turning, spinning, and leaping towards a skulking Rashay stopping him in his tracks. Both escapees are manhandled and forced to take body positions that make it look as though they will be body searched. The dance ends officially here, but there is an epilogue. The five boys now stand in a 'kick' line and with a rap rhythm sing:

Golly, oh gee.
Golly, oh God.
We're break'in outta jail
at 2:45.

I love pizza.
I love pie.
I hate Campbell's soup.
Oh me, oh my!

The cops came and got us,
One got away
But he caught us
Ooot, ooot, ooot, ooot
And saved the day!
(Bucek, 1988)

Partial Dance Tale #4: Fathers Troubling Their Children: Frenetic Will

One day, nine-year-old Laurel asked if she could eat lunch with me in the dance studio. She ate quickly and then whirled onto the dance space, running back and forth. Laurel’s spontaneous movements were accented with a rhythmic structure that kept changing. Leaping and spinning wildly through the space she flailed her arms spastically about her body. They contorted angularly. Laurel then collapsed onto the ground in a clump, heaving deeply. Then there was stillness. (Bucek, 1994)

After catching her breath, I asked her to tell me about her dance. Laurel replied pensively, "I'm searching for my dad. I haven't seen him in a long time. I look everywhere. I don't know if he is dead or alive. I miss him very much. Maybe he was kidnapped by the government [sic]. The war [in Liberia] is so cruel to my mom, brother and me" (Flemister, 1990).
II. Academic Curriculum Integrated Within A Comprehensive Dance Education Curriculum

Partial Dance Tale #5: Katie’s Spelling Words: Place, Motif Notation and Dance-Making

Fifth grader Katie came to the dance studio on her ‘choice’ time and developed a dance that integrated her understanding of the week’s super spelling words, the idea of geographic location, her interpretation of a ‘place’ and how she felt at any given location. She made a visual image or mind map of her spelling word ideas and previously learned Laban-based movement analysis, motif notation symbols, and dance composition (making) organizational strategies to show her invented place and her feelings about each segment on her travels.

Partial Dance Tale #6: Chris’s Poetry and Dance-Making

In May 1990, Elementary Arts School fifth-grader Chris engaged in dance-making instruction during a language arts unit of study on poetry. During this time, his classroom teacher read many poems and taught a variety of poetic forms (e.g., haiku, senses, What If, cinquain, pyramid) to inspire personal writing. In dance class, Chris was challenged to embody his ideas poetically and in dance.

As each structured improvisation clarified his intent, the words on the paper shaped and merged with the dance. One requirement of the dance-making study was to integrate the poem into the final project. Students could simultaneously select to say the poem as they danced the poem as a sound score for the dance; read the poem prior to
performing the dance inspired by it; or dance the dance, then read the poem that emerged from it. In the end, Chris recited his poem, then he danced it.

Leaping forwards and jumping back
I hit the ground with a smack.
One foot in front of the other
Jump and spin – do another.
Falling and laying on the ground
Like a log, I roll around
Roll backward and push off the floor
Kick up my feet – do some more.

Get up from here, not in pain
Do this whole part once again!
Feeling good in my heart
I’m ready to do the second part.

Running forwards and going back
Stand up straight do a jumping jack
Spin around and let my arms fly
Fall to the ground – I hope I don’t die
Crawl along this dirty floor
Do it again what a bore.
Yah, I’m done - No more.

Partial Dance Tale #7: Dance, Power, and Dominance: Jamilah’s Slavery Reenactment

At the end of a series of facilitated fifth-grade dance-making sessions, Jamilah made another dance study. In social studies class, the children were encouraged to deliberately link ‘big ideas’ and ‘key concepts’ learned from the theme of freedom and slavery. In dance, the
students were invited to explore pertinent ideas initially through selected poetic forms and to make a dance study to synthesize what became dissimilar ideas and feelings in motion. This was done through a sharing of individual and small-group dance compositions. The guiding question, “What might it have been like to be a slave in the United States of America during the 1850s?” served as impetus for his inquiry. Jamilah titled his poem *Slaves*.

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Slaves

They are treated as dogs.

Dogs [is] what they are.

To some people. (Jamilah, 1988)
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Jamilah made his dance study in collaboration with his fifth-grade classroom teacher. He selected gestures and movement qualities that depicted his feelings and knowledge of the plight of a slave living in America in the 1850s. The dance begins with Jamilah’s tall, rather robust Caucasian male teacher standing above him. He presses his large open hands down towards Jamilah. Jamilah, very muscular but small for his age, African American male, sinks ever so slowly to a long, fully extended prone shape on the floor. Suddenly and without notice, his teacher claps his hands sharply two times. Jamilah stiffens his whole body to attention. Then, pulling himself up to standing, he cowers in compliance—head bowed low, eyes piercing. His teacher turns away quickly, jerking his head high in impudence. Jamilah, still bent in two, trudges heavily, following his teacher off of the dance space. The text is read slowly and simultaneously during the dance. The vocalized tonal quality in conjunction with the dance sharing reflects the weight of the words, which in turn compels us to understand the gravity of the situation.
“Slaves.” “They are treated as dogs.” “Dogs is what they are.” “To some people.”

(Bucek, 1995)

Partial Dance Tale #8: Just Create!

Five 10 year-old girls shared their dance, Just Create! These girls shaped a highly structured piece of choreography around the idea of the writing process. They selected a concrete poem format. A concrete poem is a selection of words that depict the intention. For example, if the girls say, "jump," then they jump. If they say, "spin," then they spin. The girls selected a movement vocabulary based on everyday movements including jump, turn, fall, etc.; movements they do while cheerleading or at gymnastics and movements that demonstrate their understanding of selected dance elements, including changing pathways, tempo, levels. The structure is theme and variations.

III. Inspired by a Dance Artist-in-Residence

Partial Dance Tale #9: Josh's Volcano Dance Inspired By Susan Van Pelt’s Choreography, A Riddle In Time

After approximately 5 minutes, Josh moved so delicately one might believe him to be in stillness—first he moved his fingers, then hands, capturing the basic movement ideas; later he adds his head. He then said, "I'm ready." Josh then showed his dance in full-bodied form. He repeated the dance a second time. Afterwards, I asked Josh if he could tell me about the dance as he was dancing. He paused for 20 seconds, then said, 'Sure.'
Melted rock
Going down a lava stream.
Rumble. He looks around.
The rock looks around.
Rumble.
The current starts to pick up.
He tries to fight it.
The volcano erupts and it rolls down the hill.

The nine dances presented in chapter 4 illustrate three strands in which children’s dance-making took place—independedly inspired dance-making, curriculum integrated dance-making, and dance artist-inspired dance-making. There were other dances that were omitted, and I regret that they could not be included. In chapter 5, I employ narrative analysis to describe and interrogate the nine dance stories both as data and method.
Chapter 5: Data Analysis

Within the qualitative research canon, H. L Goodall, Jr., Carolyn Ellis, Laurel Richardson, and Patti Lather have all employed autoethnographic data analysis procedures in compelling ways to describe, interrogate, and bring about change related to their own research. Their collective use of narrative analysis—particularly the use of story as both data and method—has furthered many fields, including my own research on meaning making and children’s dance-making.

In this chapter, I describe selected narrative data analysis methods championed by Richardson, Lather, Goodall, Jr., and Ellis. These methods include Richardson’s creative analytic process (CAP), narrative, collective storytelling, experiential layering, storyline reflexivity, crystallization, and collaborative analysis or conversational relation. I analyze children’s dance-making narratives through the autoethnographic lenses currently being shaped in my own research. Deliberately noticing feelings and ideas embedded in movement, multiple solutions, cooperation, collaboration, human interaction, attention to details, and giving attention to a larger picture foster the emergence of empathy and tolerance towards ambiguity and personal and group empowerment. I find myself particularly drawn to the sociopolitical conditions that continue marginalize or completely decimate children’s dance-making in our nations’ elementary schools.
In the process of deciding which narrative will come first in this paper I am guided by Lather’s (1998) provocative statement, “The line between fiction and fact is fuzzy. So, I edit, paste and recombine. I decide on whose story is to be first, build the narrative towards climax and deliver denouement.” This narrative-building process refers to “the textual staging of knowledge” (Lather, 1999). What follow are my first attempts at framing children’s dance-making as textual knowledge – the foundation of embodied meaning. Throughout this chapter, I employ multiple typography strategies and descriptors, (e.g., boldface and different fonts) to help me organize major themes and give voice to the children who make dances.

Creating Autoethnographic Space: Creative and Analytic Processes (CAP) Ethnography

Creative and Analytic Processes (CAP)

Over the past twenty years autoethnographer Laurel Richardson has shaped, challenged, and reshaped traditional ethnographical research within the qualitative research canon. Her major contribution to the field is the development of an idea called “creative and analytic processes” (CAP). It is found in personal experience and can be inscribed in autoethnographic research. Richardson and St. Pierre (2005) point out that when creative analytic processes (CAP) are used, we learn about the topics and about ourselves in ways that were previously unknowable and unimaginable within conventional analytical procedures, metaphors, and writing formats (962-963).
**Personal Narrative, Storytelling**

Narrative is another form of data that “refers to the stories that people tell – the way they organize their experiences into temporally meaningful episodes. Narrative can be both a mode of reasoning and a mode of representation. As a mode of representation, narrative uses literary conventions such as plot, character development and scene setting” (Ellis, 2004, 195). These dances may be viewed at: http://vimeo.com/lorenbucek.

**Internext/Interlude: Jeni’s Hair Fantasy Dance Inspired by the Pop Song, Sherri Don’t Go**

On a beautiful Monday morning, first grade teacher Ilene told me that I had to see her daughter Jeni’s dance as soon as possible. When I pressed her for the urgency of this, Ilene emphatically stated that Jeni had played the Letterman 60s song, *Sherri Don’t Go* over and over again for the entire weekend and if she heard the song one more time … She would go crazy! Jeni, a fourth grade dance major, had indeed played the song *Sherri Don’t Go* over and over on her stereo in the family’s living room from Friday night after school until Sunday night when she went to bed. From her mother’s description, Jeni danced and danced a dance that only she knew. Ilene told me that, at first, Jeni had improvised movements from her ballet classes and from gymnastics, but by the time Jeni got to school on Monday morning, I saw a choreographed piece with specific movement vocabulary that reflected her movement experiences, phrasing, and sequencing and incorporated ballet steps including grandè jètés, pirouèttes, step-hops, and chassés and gymnastics movements.

The dance was well thought out and performed consistently with great musicality and phrasing. The most prominent movement motif was her upper body swaying side to side finding numerous ways to toss her long brown hair back over her head. She used these two movements throughout the dance to punctuate specific moments that depicted great joy. Jeni’s form, physicality, and phrasing were breathtaking. Her lyricism was mature and eloquent. Jeni performed her own
dance elegantly and with each repetition the dance’s intention, personal movement vocabulary, and expression were shaped and refined.

Over the next month Jeni practiced and practiced this dance and performed it formally at the 5th grade dance majors’ spring dance concert. I really didn’t give her any performance notes or coaching. From its inception, this dance was all about Jeni’s identity—her interests, expressiveness, and choreographic know-how. Sherri Don’t Go was a byproduct of Jeni’s access to movement experiences in and outside of school over a six-year period—first as a K-5 student at the Arts Elementary School and later through weekly ballet and gymnastics classes in the community.

REFLECTION

A year after Jeni left the Arts Elementary School, her adolescent body began to develop and the ballet ideal and her body did not match. She became discouraged and danced far less frequently throughout middle and high school, only to find dance again in college. In a recent Facebook entry, Jeni recalled making this dance. Jeni insisted that though Sherri Don’t Go almost drove her mom crazy, it was one of the most important moments in her elementary school life. What I didn’t know at that time was that her mom and dad were divorcing, and the song and dance Sherri Don’t Go helped Jeni to ‘stay sane’ and ‘stay grounded’ (in her words) during that time. Today, Jeni lives in northern California and works as a lawyer. She continues her love of dance and shares this love with her husband and young daughter (Personal Communication on Facebook with Jeni, 2013)

Intertext/Interlude: Chris’ Poetry and Dance-Making

Chris, a fifth grader at Arts Elementary School, engaged in dance-making instruction during a language arts unit on poetry. During this time, his classroom teacher read many poems and taught
a variety of poetic forms (e.g., haiku, senses, What If, cinquain, and pyramid) to inspire personal writing. In dance class, Chris was challenged to embody his ideas poetically and in dance.

With each class session details emerged as the written poem, the dancer’s interpretation of this poem, and the dance choreographed became one complete idea. Throughout this process, Chris showed evidence of a ‘back and forth[ness]’ between two distinctive forms of representation—writing and dance-making. In Chris’s case he moved fluidly between his dance-making process and his poem-making process. On some days, Chris began with pencil and paper in hand, jotting down several ideas then trying them out in movement sequences.

As a result Chris kept some of the movement patterns, while others fell by the wayside. As each structured improvisation clarified his intent, the words on the paper shaped and merged with the dance. One requirement of the dance-making study was to integrate the poem into the final project. Students could simultaneously select to say the poem as they danced the poem as a sound score for the dance; read the poem prior to performing the dance inspired by it; or dance the dance, then read the poem that emerged from it. In the end, Chris recited his poem, then he danced it.

Leaping forwards and jumping back
I hit the ground with a smack.
One foot in front of the other
Jump and spin – do another.
Falling and laying on the ground
Like a log, I roll around
Roll backward and push off the floor
Kick up my feet – do some more.

Get up from here, not in pain
Do this whole part once again!
Feeling good in my heart
I’m ready to do the second part.

Running forwards and going back
Stand up straight do a jumping jack
Spin around and let my arms fly
Fall to the ground – I hope I don’t die
Crawl along this dirty floor
Do it again what a bore.
Yah, I’m done - No more.

REFLECTION

The ABA’ dance structure is shaped around four big ideas—moving forward, moving backward, falling down, and getting up. Leaping, jumping, spinning, running, doing jumping jacks, and letting his arms fly took Chris into the air space while gravity brought Chris to the ground with images including falling, hitting, and laying on the ground, rolling backward, pushing the floor, kicking his feet, and crawling.

Using the descriptive language including ‘smack’ stirs up a sound bite and movement quality as the dancer falls to the ground. ‘Falling and laying on the ground like a log’ is a simile or comparison of two or more things using like or as. Much of the poem is written in declarative statements. For example, ‘Get up from here, not in pain and do this part again – what a bore’. Moreover, using the language ‘crawl along this dirty floor or spin around and let my arms fly’ gives the reader/observer another way to experience the performance context. Chris as a fatalist states, “fall to the
ground – I hope I don’t die”. Finally, a juxtaposition between stanzas one, two, and three and the dancer’s intent to repeat then complete is clear through declarative statements—“do some more, do this whole part once again, do it again what a bore, Yah, I’m done – no more”.

Intertext/Interlude: Creating Collaborative Space in Just Create! (1988)

A quintet of 10-year-old girls made the dance Just Create! Working collaboratively, these girls shaped a highly structured piece of choreography around the idea of the language arts writing process. They selected a concrete poem format. A concrete poem is a selection of words that depict the intention. For example, if the girls say, "jump," then they jump. If they say, "spin," then they spin. The girls selected a movement vocabulary based on everyday movements including jump, turn, fall, etc.; movements they do while cheerleading or at gymnastics and movements that demonstrate their understanding of selected dance elements, such as changing levels. The structure is theme and variation.

The dance begins with four girls—Betsy, Adrienne, Lynnette, and Jeni—walking to their places. They form a circle, facing into the center point of the circle. Roberta, the fifth girl, stands down stage center announcing, “This is a dance that is a concrete poem.” She turns away from the audience and walks forward to the circle, joining the others.

Beginning Frozen Shape: Five girls face the circle’s center point. Arms are raised to eye level at the sides of their bodies. Hands touch, whole hand to whole hand. Dancers placement on the circle pattern – u.
Upstage center is 12 o’clock, and then the dancer order around the circle is as follows: Roberta at 11:00; Adrienne at 1:00; Lynnette at 4:00; Jeni at 6:00; and Betsy at 8:00.

**First Section:** Dancers are standing in shape in stillness, arms low at the sides of their bodies. Roberta whispers counts: 5, 6, 7, and 8. All dancers make a half turn in unison to face away to the outside of the circle. They turn a cartwheel away from the center of the circle point, making a larger circle, saying aloud in unison, “Cartwheel”. Again, all make a half turn and march four times, right, left, right, left into the circle, saying aloud in unison, “March”. Hands connect as they return to the beginning shape of the dance. All make a half turn to face the outside of the circle again. Two dancers slightly jump their half turns while the others smoothly step turn to the outside edge of the circle line.

Roberta is the first in the sequence of five dancers to leave the circle line. She leaps stage left one time then sharply turns back on herself with a set hop right into a cartwheel back to her original spot on the circle line. She then slides down to the floor, finishing with her head facing stage left, laid out on the floor. She says the following word sequence, mirroring the movement she does simultaneously, “Leap, cartwheel, slide.” In sequence the other dancers follow.

Adrienne is the second of five dancers to leave the circle line. She does a series of three sissónès (two feet to one foot aerial movement)—turn kicks on the upstage left diagonal, away from the group circle. These jump-turn-kicks have a strong, thrusting, whipping energy as the whole leg is extended forward middle level. Adrienne then spirals herself down to the low level onto one knee, arms at side middle. As she does the movement sequence, she says,” Jump, kick, fall.”
Lynette is the third of five dancers to leave the circle line. She takes two turns on the balls of her feet, traveling upstage center. Lynnette’s arms are bent with hands in front of her body, elbows bent, and fists high in front of her eyes. She then spirals herself to the floor, remaining seated with legs fully extended towards stage left. Lynnette looks outwards at Adrienne. As Lynnette does this movement sequence, she says, “Swirl”.

Jeni, the fourth dancer to leave the circle line, reaches into the backspace with her legs fully extended. As she takes huge smooth walks backwards, her arms remain reaching forward in front of her body. These full leg extensions cause her to move backwards in the middle to low middle level space. Jeni then crouches momentarily. Springing upward into a full body jump with one knee then the other knee picked up to her waist, Jeni continues to turn upstage. She finishes between Lynnette and Roberta, jumping downward to land in a small ball. While doing the movement sequence Jeni says, “Backward,” and make two high-pitched, barely audible sounds (words, perhaps).

Betsy, the fifth dancer to leave the circle line, makes one cartwheel moving stage left. Betsy takes a run and a large leap (grande jèté) high into the air. Her legs are fully extended forward and back at the height of the leap. She continues a half turn with her left leg reaching long and backwards down to the floor and onto her knee. Her momentum, plus the torso spiraling, allow her upper body to sweep the floor, sliding her into her final shape—long right leg, back with left leg bent underneath herself, torso forward. As she does this movement sequence, Betsy says, “Cartwheel, leap, slide”.

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Next, Roberta, with a huge burst of energy, stands up and takes three runs towards her beginning place on the circle line. She cartwheels, directly springing into a standing shape with legs wide and arms open on the diagonal high level. She says, “Cartwheel”.

Betsy changes her spiraled, spread-out floor shape into a closed, narrow, ball-like shape. Using her hands, she pushes herself onto her feet and stands up. Betsy now kicks her left leg side high, and then step kicks her right leg side high. Both of her arms open outwards from the body to side middle level. Betsy then steps forward in a large step to get back to her original place on the circle line. She then takes the same shape as Roberta, legs wide and arms diagonal side high. Betsy faces stage right.

Adrienne stands up, frozen in her frozen shape. She jumps three times. The first two times she sends her legs out to the sides of her body, splitting them wide in each direction. The third jump is with both legs fully extended and in front of her body, like a pike jump in gymnastics. Her torso slightly moves forward at the height of the jump. She steps right then kicks her left leg forward. This movement brings her to her original beginning shape, with legs wide and arms on the diagonal high level.

Lynnette jumps up from her frozen shape and step hops right, and she hops left. Then there is a quick series of walking steps as she moves into her original place on the circle line in the original shape. Lynnette says, “Hop, hop, hop, hop.” (Although she says hop four times, she only does two hops. The rest of the movements are a combination of walking and running.)

Jeni crawls forward towards her downstage center beginning place and takes her original shape. Then she takes one step hop to the highest possible elevation. Her back leg is fully extended. Next, Jeni steps with wide legs and arms diagonal high level to her original place and shape on the group circle.
Second Section: Beginning with Roberta, then Adrienne, Lynnette, Jeni, and Betsy, each person in succession bends her torso forward to her waist ... with the exception of Lynnette, who crouches very low on her feet with arms fully extended from. They say, in unison, “Down, down, down, down.” This pattern is then reversed or retrograded. Betsy, Jeni, Lynnette, Adrienne, and Roberta stand back up, again in succession, finishing with legs wide and arms diagonal high level. In unison, they say, “Up, up, up up.”

Now simultaneously the group makes two duets and one solo. The two duets mirror one another in their movement sequences while the solo dancer does something completely different. Two dancers in each group form duets. The partners are Roberta and Lynnette and Jeni and Betsy. Roberta runs behind the circle to stage left, meeting Lynnette, while Lynnette turns towards upstage center, meeting Roberta.

Lynnette quickly walks behind Roberta, taking hold of her arms. Lynnette clasps her hands on Roberta’s elbows, lifting her off the floor in a turning, twirling spin. Lynnette and Roberta spin clockwise. Jeni and Betsy do the exact same thing, only spinning counterclockwise. During the movement, the four dancers say aloud in unison, “Twirl, lift, spin” as one girl in each pair lifts, twirls and spins her partner.

**REFLECTION**

Perseverance. These five girls worked every day at lunch hour for several weeks and during dance club every Thursday afternoon. They perfected their movements, each coming to the group with additional movement vocabularies from community classes in ballet, gymnastics, cheerleading, and ice skating. The results were magnificent! The movement vocabulary that depicted the concrete poem was
executed with intention and attention to body shape, movement dynamics, spatial pathways and whole group relationships. I still marvel that so much thought, experimentation, and refinement went into the making of this dance. The integration of poetry and dance illustrated the cognitive resourcefulness needed to bring into being a new way of thinking. After sharing the dance Just Create! with the entire school’s K-5 student body, parents, and community partners, the quintet was invited to perform at a school board meeting, in which they had to respond spontaneously to the new performing space and reflexively adapt spatial patterns and timing to accommodate the new environment.

REVISION
I reviewed this early content analysis exemplar and began to think that this descriptive/analytic script was too tedious and not as effective a method as I thought it could be. “It did not really capture the intensity of the dancers’ performance. I wrote language that was structurally accurate, but dry. This is one of the first times I transcribed a videotape like this and will try to find different ways to make the descriptions read more lively” (Bucek’s reflective journal, Summer 1989).

Narrative analysis assumes that a good story itself is theoretical. The stories told help to make sense of experience while the reader of the story determines their validity if the stories speak to them about their experience or about the lives of others they know (Ellis, 2004, 195).
Long before people had written language, we told our narratives through stories, poems, song, drawings, and dance. Stories not only convey information, they have the power to change. The practice of storytelling is key because it requires one to name one’s reality. Such stories can be healing to the teller and can help listeners realize their own participation in the process of oppression (Ballengee Morris, 2013, 43-47).

Creating Safe Spaces for Risk Taking Inquiry: Mining the Memories of Neighborhood Violence and Wars in Faraway Places through Children’s Dance-Making

The works of social historians, and by dance writers in a number of fields that currently use strategies from performance studies, gender studies, social and cultural history, ethnography, and education expand and inform the dance field in important ways, suggesting that dance be viewed not only as an “art”, but as a medium of social exchange. This broader emphasis allows dance educators, artists and scholars to investigate the meanings of choreographic works, but also the experiences of and exchanges between choreographers, dancers and dance observers; educators and students; and dancers and their practices, traditions and institutions. The ideas that the body is socially constructed and inscribed – that we learn and display our genders, sexualities, economic class, and so on – and the idea that motion is a means of reshaping who we are, how we are represented, and the meanings those representations hold for others is central to the work of contemporary dance scholars. Might these ideas be useful to deliberations about the educational worth of dancing as it is enacted in schools? To contemporary dance scholarship done in other fields, historians add the possibility of looking to the past to see individual lives moving alongside others, and in concert with changes in social practices and beliefs, communities and institutions. Ultimately, the long lens of history helps us
think about how dancing contributes to what and how we know and to our constructions of culture and society (Dils, 2007, 115).

What do children think about when they think about violence and war? How do we know? How are these memories (feelings, thoughts, dreams) made public? In this section of chapter 5, I critically examine how and in what ways children’s memories and/or visions of violence and war acquire a public character in and through children’s dance-making. The power of children’s memory as lived or created, sustained, and destabilized work(ings) of power is addressed. At the heart of this discussion is the how and why these dances are felt, remembered, (re)imagined, or created for the first time.

Two short dance-making stories that partially describe the dance-makers’ thinking are told in Fathers Troubling Their Children: Frenetic Will and Fathers Troubling Their Children: Break’in Outta Jail at 2:45 am. These two stories serve as an introduction to nine- to 11-year-old children in this study—their thinking and their dance-making—and as a way to capture the essence of CAP in action.

Internext/Interlude: Fathers Troubling their Children: Frenetic Will

One day nine-year-old Laurel asked if she could eat lunch with me in the dance studio. She ate quickly and then whirled onto the dance space, running back and forth. Laurel’s spontaneous movements were accented with a rhythmic structure that kept changing. Leaping and spinning wildly through the space she flailed her arms spastically about her body. They contorted angularly. Laurel then collapsed onto the ground in a clump, heaving deeply. Then there was stillness (Bucek, 1994).
After catching her breath, I asked her to tell me about her dance. Laurel replied pensively, "I'm searching for my dad. I haven't seen him in a long time. I look everywhere. I don't know if he is dead or alive. I miss him very much. Maybe he was kidnapped by the government [sic]. The war [in Liberia] is so cruel to my mom, brother and me" (Fleming, 1990).

**REFLECTION**

Laurel’s dance provides us with a glimpse of her inner turmoil as she tries to make sense of a horrifying reality over which she has no control. “Truly moral conduct in difficult situations requires creative effort especially in the face of a seemingly unsolvable problem” (Gruber, 1989, 26-27). The *Inventor’s Paradigm*, as credited to cognitive psychologist Howard Gruber, encourages study of the conditions through which synthesis of feeling and experience “cultivates multiple ways of seeing and multiple dialogues in a world where nothing stays the same” (Greene, 1995a, 16).

Laurel’s dance also marks a disruption in Maslow’s hierarchical theory of self-actualization in which he asserted that to actualize individual potentials, capacities, and talents one must have secured an inner life whereby physiological, safety, belongingness, love, and self-esteem needs have already been met. After seeing Laurel’s dance and talking about its intent afterwards, I can no longer adhere to the assumption that Laurel and others who participate in dance-making have achieved all five of the preceding levels of actualization theory prior to engaging their potential, capacities, and talents in and through dance-making practice. In Laurel’s case, a father that had gone missing was challenging her senses of feeling safe, belonging, and loved.
Narrative Analysis

Goodall (2008) reminds me that we learn from our stories. We come to understand the complexities of oneself, others, and the experiences that we live. Stories are powerful researcher tools. They provide a picture of real people in real situations struggling with real problems. At the root of the creative analytic process is personal narrative or storytelling stories that banish indifference often generated by samples, treatments, and faceless subjects. Stories invite us to speculate on what might be changed and with what effect. And, of course, they remind us of our persistent fallibility.

Intertext/Interlude: Fathers Troubling Their Children, Part II: Break’in Outta Jail at 2:45 am

High above Anthony’s head, Rashay stands balancing himself on top of Anthony’s shoulders. He suddenly presses his feet into Anthony’s shoulders and leaps to the ground below. Making like a prisoner escaping out of a jail, he falls and slinks away, pausing to look in every possible direction. Stephan, Peter, and Michael leap high into the air, crossing the space to capture Anthony, who resists with increasingly frenetic twisting, jerking, and pulling away movements. Stephan lays over the top of Anthony, pinning him to the ground. Michael and Peter race onto the dance space, galloping, turning, spinning, and leaping towards a skulking Rashay, stopping him in his tracks. Both escapees are manhandled and forced to take body positions that make it look as though they will be body searched. The dance ends officially here, but there is an epilogue. The five boys now stand in a 'kick' line and with a rap rhythm sing:

Golly, oh gee.
Golly, oh God.
We're break'in outta jail at 2:45.
I love pizza.
I love pie.
I hate Campbell’s soup.
Oh me, oh my!

The cops came and got us,
One got away
But he caught us
Ooot, ooot, ooot, ooot
And saved the day! (Bucek, 1988)

REFLECTION
This dance depicts a true story. One boy’s father was in jail at the time this dance was made. Michael was a “kidder,” always trying to make others laugh. At the first day of the dance group’s rehearsal he told the boys about his father’s arrest. Upon hearing the story, the boys jumped up and ran vigorously through the dance space, pantomiming guns, shooting at one another with arms raised high. Afterwards, the boys slowed things down and sat together at one side of the room to talk.

I don’t know what was said among them, but at the end of the first dance-making session the boys had decided that they would not only reenact the events leading up to Michael’s dad’s imprisonment but would also change the ending so that Michael and his father could be reunited. The boys that made the dance with Michael appeared to get caught up in the joviality of the ideas and events, making deliberate decisions to lighten up reality a bit, thus the rap epilogue.
The stories told help to make sense of experience while the readers of the story determine its validity if the story speaks to them about their experiences or about the lives of others they know (Ellis, 2004, 195). Autoethnographers use narrative or story as an instrument in narrative analysis. These narratives or stories are constructed, value-laden, compelling, and memorable and cannot be eradicated over time (Goodall, 2008; Gutkind, 2012; Lather, 1991). Richardson argues, “Stories describe personal experience that is socially-constructed and written as a way to connect and to make sense of a larger complicated world” (1997). They can be written “evocatively, descriptively or dramatically to show rather than tell (Goodall, 2008, 36).” McAdams (2005) uses narrative because “people remember facts longer and more completely when they are part of the story. People are also persuaded more quickly and effectively when information and idea are represented in story form” (92).

REFLECTION

In retrospect, it is important to remember that the children in this study made dances out of personal interest, curriculum integration or ideas founded in a dance artist residency. It is equally important to acknowledge that this sampling of children’s dancemaking does not fully capture each theme, topic, issue or concern of every of the 4th and 5th grade children at the Elementary Arts School, or at other schools – urban, suburban or rural. This study partially captures selected moments in dancemaking time by this particular group of children and that’s all. There is no attempt to generalize these dances to all children everywhere.
Yet, elements of narrative analysis are woven together over time (Ellis, 2009; and Goodall, 2008; Lather, 1999; Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005) and comprise alternative ways of thinking about the data collected. In Richardson's *Analyzing Qualitative Data* course (Spring, 1999), I remember making a list to remind me of the main qualitative data analysis concepts we explored and practiced that quarter. Here is the list. When engaging in qualitative data analysis remember to (1) Decenter—look beyond your own perspective; (2) View the data from multiple perspectives. Ask myself, “Am I an insider or an outsider here? A historian? Pedagogue? Teacher? Dancer? Choreographer? Scholar? What might the conversation be like from different perspectives: (3) Remember that analyzing data is a process and you will be shaping and reshaping data a lot! (4) Make the personal public; (5) Consider the teacher-student relationship; (6) Develop an open and fluid perception; (7) Hone memory; (8) Organize field notes; (9) Be mindful of subject selection and grouping; (10) Use document immersion; (11) Pass time; (12) Capture physicality in written form; (13) Experience reflexivity; (14) Employ crystallization; (15) Notice states of anxiety; (16) Be mindful that there is no objectivity in autoethnography; (17) Frame your data deliberately; (18) Write intertexts or interludes; (19) Manufacture dialogue; (20) Write composites and/ or compressions related to original or revised narrative.

**REVISION**

I have come to think that thick analysis and interpretation emerges from the choreographing of varying sets of narrative
Creating Spaces for Dance Literacies

Laban’s Motif Notation

In my dance-making classes, I present an approach to studying diverse dance forms that sets up a dialogue between the teacher (participant observer), the dance form, students, and other sources of artistic, cultural, or scholarly information. The centerpieces of the dance-making classes are practical: the use of critical inquiry through philosophical, historical, cultural, social, artistic and aesthetic lenses and a motif notation as ways of assessing the stylistic features of a dance work. Motif Notation is used as an inroad to studying dance forms from unrelated traditions, along with its emphasis as a movement-centered starting place that inspires a larger investigation. I structure various sessions on responding to the dances made or viewed and use stylistic information to assess the existing work and then to build new dances. Dancers working alone or in small groups employ inquiry-based strategies, plus dance improvisation and composition concepts and skills, to support and deepen their own cultural inquiry (Bucek, 2007). I have distinguished contextual integration as a vehicle for interpreting personal experience and embodiment in physically pervasive and emotionally meaningful dance forms. These dances are the real influences of children’s lives.
Intertext/Interlude: Katie’s Spelling Words Dance: Integrating Geographic Location, Motif Notation, and Dance-Making

Katie, a ten-year-old dance student, came to the dance studio on her ‘choice’ time towards the end of reading class. There she developed a dance that integrated her understanding of the week’s super spelling words, the idea of geographic location, and her interpretation of a ‘place’ and how she felt at any given location. She charted out her ideas and previously learned Laban-based movement analysis, Motif Notation symbols, and dance-making organizational strategies on paper to show her invented place and her feelings about each segment on her travels.

![Figure 1. Katie’s Spelling Words Dance. May 1990.](image)

**REFLECTION**
Katie embodied concepts in language development and expressed her personal understanding and feelings through her growing knowledge of the dance elements (pathways, levels, shape, and movement vocabulary; Motif notation
symbols, descriptive words including synonyms, and other visual images to depict her super spelling words dance adventure). Katie included a mind map key for the readers should they not be able to figure out which symbol meant to her.

Creating Space for the Embodied Study of Significant People in History

The next dance stories are about Jamilah, who believes that the heroes and historical figures he embodied in and through dance saved his life.

InterText/Interlude: Heroes — A Pop Culture Icon Jamilah Embodies Twice

I remember Jamilah and his dances at ages five and ten years old and again at twenty-three years old. As a kindergartner, Jamilah strutted, moon walked, and back spun into school daily in a pair of black jeans, a red leather studded jacket, one white glove with silver sequins, and dark sunglasses. When hearing the music, ‘Off The Wall’, sung on an MTV video by pop icon Michael Jackson, Jamilah moved with such performance precision that he could easily be mistaken for Michael Jackson himself. In fact, many classroom teachers remarked that Jamilah danced Michael better than Michael.

Three years ago, I had the good fortune of meeting Jamilah again. Now age twenty-three, I asked him if he was still dancing. His response was one of surprise. “Well, Ms. Bucek, of course I still dance!” “Where?” I probed. “In the clubs mostly. But I was on the wrestling team in high school and I choreographed for the cheerleaders, and for our school play.” I then asked him if he remembered his “Michael Jackson dance days.” Without a moment’s hesitation, Jamilah immediately spun around and moon walked away from me while simultaneously exclaiming, “Wow,
you remember that!!!!” I then asked him what that dance had meant to him. After a very long pause, Jamilah remarked, “I didn’t know then, of course, but those dances probably saved my life…” “Why?” “I loved moving that way. I felt like I could do anything, be anything. I could escape my ‘real’ life for a while.” (Bucek, 2000)

REFLECTION
Jamilah had fully embodied his hero at the time both in contemporary thought and again as memory. Jamilah transformed to another place and time as he spontaneously whirled around and moon walked backwards. He appeared to be carefree and alive. Jamilah’s five-year-old and twenty-three-year-old dances also suggested a mimetic approach to dance inscription, and the overall improvisation of both dances offered artistic and aesthetic features that appeared more like exact replicas of popular culture adult-made dances seen previously vis-a-vis live concert dance performance or more often in vernacular forms that embody contemporary social traditions and cultural heritage via mass media. Through oral tradition, Jamilah embodied the backslide or moon walk movement that Michael Jackson had appropriated from earlier dance innovators, including Cab Calloway (Big Band-era jazz singer and bandleader), Bill Bailey (American tap dancer), Sammy Davis, Jr. (vaudevillian, singer, and dancer); Fred Astaire (Broadway stage dancer) and Jeff Daniels (jazz, popping, and locking dancer on Soul Train) as seen in minstrel shows, vaudeville, film, and television, making them inseparable from his name.

Children’s dance education scholar Joyce Boorman (1982) once stated that, “It is important to remind ourselves that the child, in the generation of
symbolic re-presentation in dance making, is powerfully involved in bringing meaning to his world of knowing it and shaping it through an act of intellect” (47). At Jamilah’s school, dance is studied in years kindergarten through fifth grade and follows the school district’s graded course of study and benchmarks for learning in all subjects. The Elementary Art School’s educational philosophy embeds interdisciplinary curriculum, instruction, and assessment in all subjects, including the arts (dance, drama/theatre, music, and the visual arts). Each subject is studied as a discrete body of knowledge, in relation to another, and as it may be integrated among one or more subjects.

Intertext/Interlude: Dance, Power, and Dominance—Jamilah’s Historical Slavery Reenactment

At the end of a series of facilitated fifth grade dance-making sessions, Jamilah made another dance study. In social studies class, the children were encouraged to deliberately link ‘big ideas’ and ‘key concepts’ learned from the theme of freedom and slavery in social studies. In dance, the students were invited to explore pertinent ideas initially through selected poetic forms and to make a dance study to synthesize what became dissimilar ideas and feelings in motion. This was done through a sharing of individual and small-group dance compositions. The guiding question, “What might it have been like to be a slave in the United States of America during the 1850s?” served as impetus for his inquiry. Jamilah titled his poem “Slaves.”

Slaves
They are treated as dogs.
Dogs [is] what they are.
To some people. (Jamilah, 1988)
REFLECTION
Jamilah made his dance study in collaboration with his fifth-grade classroom teacher. He selected gestures and movement qualities that depicted his feelings and knowledge of the plight of a slave living in America in the 1850s. The dance begins with Jamilah’s tall, rather robust Caucasian male teacher standing above him. He presses his large open hands down towards Jamilah. Jamilah, very muscular but small for his age, African American male, sinks ever so slowly to a long, fully extended prone shape on the floor.

Suddenly and without notice, his teacher claps his hands sharply two times. Jamilah stiffens his whole body to attention. Then, pulling himself up to standing, he cowers in compliance—head bowed low, eyes piercing. His teacher turns away quickly, jerking his head high in impudence. Jamilah, still bent in two, trudges heavily, following his teacher off of the dance space.

The text is read slowly and simultaneously during the dance. The vocalized tonal quality in conjunction with the dance sharing reflects the weight of the words, which in turn compels us to understand the gravity of the situation. "Slaves." "They are treated as dogs." "Dogs is what they are." "To some people." (Bucek, 1995)

REVISION
I remember the reactions of Jamilah’s peers as they reflected on the dance. They appeared to ‘read’ the dance as an embodiment of
history in physical form. It evoked strong emotional responses—anger, sadness, despair—great empathy for the ‘slave,’ and intense anger towards the depicted slave owner. As the discussion wound down Jamilah asked if he and his teacher could repeat the dance.

This time, as a spontaneous act of intuition, I asked them to take a few moments and teach their roles to one another. Jamilah was to dance the role of the slave owner while his teacher danced the role of the slave. The first viewing of Slaves appeared to embody a powerful duality of dominance and oppression in traditional fashion (e.g. Caucasian male adult and African-American male child; older and younger; larger and smaller; teacher and student). When viewed and then discussed a second time, the visual and felt impact was even more powerfully understood as who has the power and authority—the small, young, male child of African-American descent or the large, older, male Caucasian adult.

Jamiah’s dance, Slaves, at ten years old, appeared to offer a differing set of artistic and aesthetic characteristics from the earlier dances shared. Hunt (1991) states that dance can generate symbols that engender social change and provide experiences for personal transformation, thus serving as a translator or a
language for communicating physical body or kinesthetic understanding (132).

*Emancipatory Inquiry*

Emancipatory inquiry by and large “rejects inequality, the oppression of disenfranchised groups, the silencing of marginalized voices and authoritarian social structures (Green & Stinson, 2000, 105). Lather (1991) attests that emancipatory inquirers and their texts [writing, dance, paintings, plays, musical scores, etc.], “assume underlying determining structures for how power shapes the social world. Such structures are posited as largely invisible to common sense ways of meaning but visible to those who probe below hegemonic meaning systems to produce counter hegemonic knowledge, knowledge intended to challenge dominant meaning systems” (128-29 in Green & Stinson, 105). Lather, Green, and Stinson affirm that those persons participating in emancipatory inquiry projects inherently are those participating in the same pedagogical projects; the inquirer and the teacher are one in the same (106).

**REFLECTION**

As I analyze and interpret my data, I realize that I am entering into the realm of social change agent, as both teacher and scholar, realizing that social change is made possible by changes in how people understand their situations and how they perceive their options for altering their situations.

*Storyline Reflexivity*

Employing reflexivity into my autoethnographic research practice could be considered dangerous. Detractors believe that to do so is narcissistic, non-theory-driven
navel gazing (Goodall, 2008, 38). Yet reflection also means careful thought, especially the process of reconsidering past actions, events, or decisions (Encarta World Dictionary, 2004). Goodall cautions us to be sure to that ”careful thought is informed by existing scholarly thinking in addition to whatever personal or “self-reflexive passages are folded into the reflective passage” (39). So as I weave my reflections on children’s dance-making, I must also weave scholarly thinking on children’s dance-making, too.

Two types of reflexivity exist—personal and epistemological. For the purposes of this study, I chose personal reflexivity to “reflect my own values, experience, interests, beliefs political commitments, wide aims in life and social identities” (Goodall, 2008, 40). Epistemological reflexivity is found in social science research and raises questions that make assumptions about the world and about knowledge, in limited instances. I try to make connections in my daily pedagogy practice. These written reflections are sometimes found as a break between narratives (a cause for reflection) or as an integral aspect of it. Choosing where to place the entry is personal, but in any case I want to be sure that the reader knows how to read it. So, for this study, my reflective practice is written as “fleeting thoughts, important questions, profound insights and punctuated moments (41).”

Intertext/Interlude: Creating Space for Enduring Understandings: Josh’s Volcano Dance (1990)

This is a partial tale of nine-year-old Josh and his lunchtime dance. After more than a year's absence, I visited the Arts Elementary School. I found Josh and asked if he might come to the dance studio during lunch hour and help me with an assignment I had at the university. He readily
agreed. Upon arrival he wanted to get right down to business. Josh had an uncanny ability to understand almost everything through dance-making. He had previously made dances to retell fairy tales, communities depicting harmony and chaos, the pain of losing a loved one, and life cycles of butterflies. I asked Josh to make a dance about anything he wanted. I placed my video camera on a tripod to record the process and final product. Though it placed parameters on the dance space, he took it in stride. The camera rolled. For more than seven minutes, Josh just stood on the dance space. After approximately five of those seven minutes, Josh moved so minutely that you might think he was still. First, he moved his fingers, then hands, capturing the basic movement ideas. A short while later, Josh added his head by flicking it backward slightly. Next, Josh stated, "I'm ready." He showed his dance in full-bodied form. I asked him to repeat the dance a second time and he did it precisely like the first time.

Afterwards, I asked Josh if he could tell me about the dance as he was dancing. He paused for 20 seconds then said, 'Sure.' In stream-of-conscious fashion Josh spoke poetically as he danced his dance. A powerful and deliberate integration of purposeful movement and lyrical, descriptive language emerged as he danced about volcanoes and their life cycle.

The melted rock flowing down a lava stream.
Rumble.
He looks around. The rock looks around.
Rumble.
The current starts to pick up.
He tries to fight it.
The volcano starts to erupt.
And it rolls down the hillside.

Directly after performing his dance, I interviewed Josh in order to better understand his thinking.
I wanted to hear, in his own words, how he came up with his dance-making ideas, making movement selections and shaping the entire dance first in his head and then in a fully embodied artistic expression. My questions and his answers are transcribed exactly as follows:

(1) Tell me a little about your dance.

Well, my dance. A melted piece of rock. Is a volcano and it’s going down a stream of lava. And the volcano starts to rumble and it rolls down hillside.

(2) What made you think of it?

Well, in dance Susan Van Pelt (a dance artist in residence last year), did a big volcano unit and taught us how to make volcano dances.

Susan Van Pelt’s choreography, A Riddle in Time, focused on the theme of time – it’s changes and cycles. Nowhere in her dance did she depict volcanoes, but Josh applied her use of time to a study in science that he was currently engaged in.

(3) How long ago was this?

Uhm. 1989-90 school year.

(4) How did you know how the dance would begin?

Uhm, well. When you--it starts when the lava... it begins when the lava is going down the hill and that usually happens before a volcano erupts.

(5) How did you know what would come next?

Well, uhm, the current starts to pick up on the volcano stream. We did a big unit about them in the classroom, too.
(6) At that time or now?
About that time (1989-90).

(7) How did you know when the dance would end?
Uhm-- the lava, after it erupts, the lava starts overflowing the
volcano and it starts rolling down the hill and uhm, then it usually
hits the water and cools off.

REFLECTIONS
Later, I made a written movement analysis transcription of Josh’s volcano
dance to describe the dance movement vocabulary.

Josh entered on a straight path leaping forward high, running, step-hopping
in full bodily form. The pattern is leap, step hop, run, run, leap.
He pauses, looks around. A quick half turn, into step-hop-forward, fall
(tombé) into the back space, step, leap and fall (tombé) into the back space.

Next, Josh throws his arms, turning half way around.
He then collapses to the floor while his eyes follow his arm gesture.
Now, he pauses. (timing/phrasing)
From a low, kneeling shape, Josh flings his whole body sideways; it
fully extends, then retreats on the low level.
This gesture is repeated as he gradually ascends to the middle level.
His arm gestures add to the driving force.
Josh takes a large step forward, into a step that immediately falls to the
floor, accelerating to a log roll that stops abruptly.
Josh's movement choices and sense of phrasing challenged my perception of what children could create in dance choreography. What grew from this experience was a deep respect for Josh's ability to shape kinetic images that represented his initial ideas about volcanoes. I also observed his deftness in organizing the movement ideas that led to an artistic work about volcanoes. He had danced his dance the way that volcanoes behave.

REVISIONS
After watching this video clip more than one hundred times I am still fascinated with the spontaneity of a fully conceived, intentionally composed dance. In one imaginative moment Josh embodied the rock, the lava, the stream, the dancer, the choreographer, and the dance. He expressed his ideas and thoughts through the dance movement vocabulary itself. He shared his cognition (thinking) kinesthetically in an invented form. He shared his ability to first perceive the relationship between his thought and action, then conceive a visual-spatial-kinetic representation that symbolically shaped this spatial, temporal, and kinetic experience through gestures about volcanoes, rock, and lava. Through live dance performance, this example
illustrates a nine year old’s ability to use the artistic process in order to create an original dance.

Josh
(1) found an idea to develop conceptually
(2) improvised and explored his ideas in action/gesture
(3) selected body actions/gestures that evoked the mental construct (idea or image) and/or physical sensation (feeling)
(4) organized body action/gesture that depicted memory and conceptual understanding, perhaps in a mime-like way at first, of the idea, image, or feeling conceived
(5) used his imagination to mentally/physically construct an idea that symbolically transformed into a meaningful kinetic construct
(6) expressed the idea through body movement/gesture and verbal language, creating a kinetic construct or dance in poetic (metaphoric) fashion.

In retrospect, I learned that it is harder to do content analysis than you might first think. Each time I reviewed the video transcription I looked for emergent themes, patterns, and possible codes. I looked for frequency or repetition of any one component and clusters of components, which was not particularly evidenced in this dance.
I’m beginning to notice features—use of narrative structure or the embodiment of this boy’s ideas in a movement story; beginning sequencing of events; embellishing particular gestures, for example, hurling, to see the same material differently. When I think of possible themes I’m opening my mind to consider socioeconomic, game-like structures, movement for movement’s sake, and narrative frames. I’m sure there are many other lenses to consider (Bucek, 1999b).

Today, I noticed that when the words were spoken simultaneously with the movement, the movement diminishes its full range and expression. It’s as if both modalities of expressions haven’t been ‘exercised’ alongside the other one. I seem to wear two or more ‘hats’ simultaneously when I see/reflect on this boy’s dance. I notice that my overall dance viewing mode tends to be rather multimodal. My ‘trained’ eye kicks in and negates other possible noticings in favor of viewing dances from a movement analysis perspective, which is not altogether helpful.
I wonder if I asked another child to make another dance the way I had asked Josh if it would be successful or if Josh’s experience was atypical or unique (Bucek, 1999c).

**Meta-Autoethnography**

One feature that Ellis (2009) uses in data analysis is meta-autoethnography. Ellis describes this new practice as “occasions in which I revisit my original representation, consider responses and write an autoethnographic account about autoethnography” (13). Set against a backdrop of a conceptual “text in motion,” Ellis explains that meta-autoethnography allows me to alter the frame question in which I wrote the original story, ask questions I didn’t ask then, consider other responses to the original story, and include vignettes of related experiences that have happened since I experienced and wrote the story and now affect the way I look back at the story (13). I can also reflect on my previous analyses, question how I think and feel now many years after I’d written the original stories. Another characteristic is what Ellis and Bochner (Ellis, 2000) emphasize as the empathic resonance within the reader as an indicator of validity.

**Collective Story**

Another feature that Richardson (1997) makes central to her analytic and interpretive writing is collective story. This idea resonates with me. She describes a collective story in this way—“it tells the experience of a sociologically constructed category of people in the context of larger sociocultural and historical forces” and as it does people begin to make sense of their lives, for the most part, in terms of specific
events. She also notes that most people do not articulate how these sociological
categories (e.g., race, gender, class, and ethnicity) have shaped their lives or how the
larger historical processes have affected them (14-15). For those who do recognize the
collective story’s significance, especially from a cultural studies paradigm, they
understand that when used strategically, these methods serve as resources for
understanding and for producing resistances to local constructions of power.

Intertexts/Interludes: The Price of Freedom

Reprinted from the 1983 program of The Arts Elementary School’s Spring arts sharing: The Price
of Freedom suggests that “To be free, or, more importantly, to stay free challenges the very
essence of humanity. As a group of people who desire freedom, we face formidable responsibility
in our journey to understand, retain, or seek change in a world that our ancestors lived, fought for,
sacrificed and died for as artifacts of heritage. Tonight our fifth grade dancers, choreographers and
musicians come together to celebrate freedom and share their dance choreography, Simple Gifts,
inspired by the music of the same title, by composer, Aaron Copland. Simple Gifts is a music and
dance collaboration that shares sound and movement images of a utopian community that is kind,
gentle and loving. It is offered to our viewers in hope that one may experience a moment of
transcendence and deep understanding of Joy and Happiness as ultimate goals of Freedom”.

REFLECTION

Ariel reflects, “In a world where there are so many complications, so many
different ways to interpret and understand everything, it is a gift to be able
to step back from that and not to question every little thing. To be content
with what you have, and enjoy the simplicity that life can have if we only let it, that's freedom to me.” (Personal Communication, 1983)

REVISION

Children’s thinking is embodied in movement organization, and in many instances that organization is decided collectively. Children’s dance-making is a learning process and instructional practice through which (1) sensory experience can be mediated (Jamilah's dances), (2) thinking embodied (Josh’s volcano dance), (3) artistic practice revealed (Josh’s or Jeni’s dances), and (4) literacy achieved (the concrete poem/dance Just Create!). Children’s dance-making practice gives voice to children and serves as an agent of identify formation, observed as a transformational act of experience.

In Critical Race, Multicultural Art Education (2013), Ballengee Morris invites teachers to “help their students to investigate how events do or do not impact their lives and to deal responsibly with the emotions they engender” (49). As I reflect, I see myself as a compassionate guide. I plan and facilitate dance-making experiences and habits of mind problems with and for my students as each one seeks to make meaning out of a complex and ambiguous world. I search for ways to awaken the voices of each one, to help them make sense of their less than idyllic lives. I deliberately make plans that
facilitate dance-making experiences that support, interrogate, disrupt, and reveal purposeful embodiments in negotiated worlds of possibility.

If I can help my students to make deeper connections and not merely “see subjects or people” in isolated, unrelated ways then I have helped them to obtain a lifelong skill that is vital to human growth. In my pedagogy, I pose a question related to an issue. Students then engage with the question in movement explorations, structured improvisations, small dance studies, and finally fully realized dances that ultimately propel and shape the direction of the interaction, which in turn makes meaningful connections in and outside of the dance-making experience itself. The dances that are created are the result of a thicker response to the initial question posed. They are, based on students’ collective stories, a culmination of knowledge and experience in any geographical location.

From experience, I have come to believe that dance can be perceived of and understood as a fundamental medium of human transformation. Children make dances to feel, explain, consider, imagine, dream, organize, share, and try to understand themselves, others, and the ever-changing world in which they live. What do our children feel? Understand? Dream about? Consider? Explain? How do they present their voices through dance-making experience? What learning environments offer sustenance to support this sort of children’s dance-making practice?

REVISION
As I summarize the extent to which narrative analysis is used in
autoethnographic research, I turn to critical race theory. Some of these data analysis procedures have been incorporated into critical race theory. In the book *Transforming City Schools Through Arts* (2012), Whitehead focused my attention on Delgado and Stefanić and Desai’s claim that writing counter-narratives supports the destruction of institutionalized racism as it is experienced in many urban schools. Moreover, critical race theory scholars maintain that it is “essential for marginalized students to tell their ways of understanding and experiencing the world” (35).

It is my aim to tell the stories and counter-stories of our urban public school dance-makers. I am using autoethnographic data analysis strategies (such as varying typography, factoid boxes, manufactured dialogue, creative nonfiction, member checks) in my research study—conceptually and graphically—to illustrate the complexity of reflexivity sought, struggled with, and negotiated. There were times over the course of twenty-five years that the dance-makers and I experienced states of flow. We both also experienced a kind of ‘stuckness’, the antithesis of flow that led to discontent, a primary factor in understanding why we—you and I—can become depressed, stressed out, and not living happily (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990, 8–9).
Csikszentmihalyi presents the notion that when our children live in chaos they disconnect—they feel afraid and may be hungry, cold, neglected, or uncared for. These same children and teens seem to face life with great amounts of certainty. Though we cannot change their personal circumstance, creating spaces for children to make dances creates a safe haven, or a place that they can call home. Laurel and Anthony wanted their dads to come home. Both dance-making groups, individually and in a small group, created unique movements and movement patterns that depicted their feelings about their dads and loss.

The cumulative results of this study indicate to me that when children have access to dance-making experience it can make a difference in their lives. Being able to consider alternative possibilities, to dance with all the power and speed of an Olympian, or the tenderness of a kiss, or transform a bully into a buddy, insures that children have access to dance-making practice that is fundamental to growing one’s sense of being in the world. Heidegger (1971) called this finding an inner sanctity, or place where you go to be what you are. While Van Manen (1990, 103) points out that after spending time somewhere, we get up to ‘go home’.

In my experience, children ‘go home’ when they are making dances. They spend time connecting experience in and through their
bodies. In a state of flow, the children in this study experienced peace, productivity, and a voice, perhaps for the first time. By making dances, children invite us into their worlds. They make dances to learn about themselves, their families and heritage, their interests, concerns, and joys. I have come to realize that individuals and collaborative dance-making practitioners (re)present themselves as purposeful, courageous, resilient, inquisitive, reflective, smart, cooperative, and full of life whether we are paying attention or not.

My life seems relatively idyllic compared to the environment of today’s young people. Today, a barrage of technological advancements and the terrorist attacks on the United States on September 11, 2001 have forever altered our view of living in a peaceful, safe, and free society. The federal government, in the name of homeland security, now challenges the personal freedoms that we once took for granted. Increased governmental control appears to heighten levels of anxiousness and fear as mass media faces off in our homes, in our workplaces, and on our streets, twenty-four hours per day seven days per week.

It is from this place and from the many observations that I have reflected on that I have come to distinguish contextual integration as one lens compatible for interpreting a child’s personal experience as it is embodied through physically pervasive and emotionally meaningful dances. These dances are the real influences of children’s lives
regardless of race, gender or class. My ultimate, real-world aim is to listen intently to the varying and changing needs of children, teens, and adults participating in a world that prizes ever-increasing suppression of human potential and individual thought. In doing so I aspire to find appropriate and apparent ways to aid creative and critical inquiry that both frees and focuses individuals and communities towards self-sustaining inquiry, discovery, and life nurturing experience.

These partial tales provide further illustrations of elementary school age children’s dance-making practices and portray dances made about their ideas about loss, heroes, and oppression. Moreover, these renderings offer details to support each child’s increasing ability to give meaning to life events that develop their individual artistic and aesthetic responses dialectically in light of their immediate personal, local, national, or global views.

**Documenting Immersion**

Over a twenty-five year period I studied children’s dance-making phenomena, I was fully immersed in the work at that time. I later experienced “detachment (relocation back to one’s terrain) and re-immersion (after a sufficient length of time) to check on the accuracy of the original observations and any changes that have taken place” (Goodall, 2008, 46). I join Goodall in agreement with Malinswski, who asserts that immersion in a culture provides the basis for knowledge construction out of reflective personal experience and detailed interviews and observations of others (47), During this time, I made a deliberate choice to use interests or interludes throughout this chapter. I wove the
collective stories into my own experiences as an educator and researcher and employed interludes (Ellis, 2004) or intertexts (Lather, 1997) to frame social, cultural, historical, and educational issues that arose during the time period when these children had access to multi-year dance education experience. The intertexts are intended to both connect the children’s real, lived experience and to trouble the widely accepted absence of dance-making found in the United States today.

Embedded in this chapter is various typographic commentary regarding my practice in telling about children’s dance-making experiences and moving among autoethnographic research methods and a theoretical framework paradigm. During this investigation, I manufactured dialogue (Gutkind, 2012). The subtext includes one of the dance-makers, as he or she narrates a recent change, or provides a counter story. This is represented in a different font. Gutkind (2012) suggests that using several fonts and quotes replicates dialogue as vividly as possible to mirror memory (122-123). Dialogue represents people expressing themselves and communicating to understand realist manner (122) to capture peoples as spontaneous, sometimes unaware, real and authentic.
Observe them . . . listen to them talk; study their interactions with other people (123).

**Experiential Layering**

In a critical review of Ellis’s book, *Revision: Authethnographic Reflections on Life and Work* (2008), Camille Sutton-Brown (2010) uses the term *experiential layering*, or “the practice of new experiences being juxtaposed upon, beneath, beside and within former experiences, which then influence the ways in which we remember and re-tell our
stories” (1307) as a way to describe Ellis’ revisioning of the stories that she presented in The Ethnographic I. Here, Ellis makes a distinction between original stories found in the Ethnographer I book and the revised stories found in Revisions and discusses time and distance as two factors that influence her reflective (re)entry, which in turn raise more insights and questions.

Furthermore, Summit-Brown (2010) states that, “the malleability of the ways in which we tell stories, the ways we perceive, and the ways we reflect, suggest that, though events may be situated in a specific time and pace, our experience and the ways in which we make meaning of particular events are fluid across time and space” (1306). Thus, we continually re-create and re-imagine our former elves into our current selves (1037).”

Validity: Crystallization Not Triangularization

Creative analytic processes occur in opposition of logical-scientific modes of representation. They are not generalizable. Moreover, when employing CAP (Richardson & St. Pierre 2005, 963) argue there is no triangularization. Instead, the data moves through a process of crystallization because we “(1) reject the domain assumption that there are only three methods. (2) believe that there are far more than 3 sides by which to approach the world” (963). In using the crystallization image the data is combined and recombined and understood as “symmetry and substance with an infinite variety of shapes, substances, transmutations, multi-dimensionality, and angles of approach” (963).
Richardson makes a strong statement with regard to validity and crystallization, arguing that crystallization allows us to see in many different ways “depending on our angle of repose” (963). Moreover, crystallization without losing structure deconstructs the traditional idea of validity. Somehow we feel how there is no single truth and we see how texts validate themselves. This has been key to my previous research study, particularly when I have been asked to facilitate a member check, a review of the study by selected readers. In essence, analyzing and interpreting data from a crystallization perspective “provides us with a deepened, complex and thoroughly partial understanding of the topic. Paradoxically, we know more and doubt what we know” (963).

**REFLECTION**

*Until I began to focus on autoethnographic methods for my research study, I found that validity viewed as a significant factor was troublesome and not authentic to my way of thinking.*

*Collaborative Analysis or Conversational Relation*

Likewise, autoethnographers Patti Lather and Chris Smithies (1997) and Ellis (2009) use collaborative analysis or conversational relation via the research/seminar group model (Van Manen, 1990) in their autoethnographies, *Troubling the Angels: Women Living with HIV/AIDS* and *Revision: Autoethnographic Reflections on Life and Work*. In both instances, they gather together real people or invent realistic characters through the use of manufactured dialogue that serves as witness to the struggles,
negotiations, and transformations that come with experiencing catastrophic disease and
the failing health of loved ones in your midst. It is through these multiple lenses that
varying perspectives or interpretations of experience grew and ultimately a thicker
analysis of human experience took place. In Revision, “Ellis invites her readers to
oscillate back and forth and within multiple variations of her current and former self”
(Sutton-Brown, 2010, 1307).

Validating experience together in and outside of a group gave way to the
complexity of the situation in a larger framework. Lather used factoids about the
historical and metaphoric nature of angels and about the history, demography, and
research involving women living with HIV/AIDS. She also split each page of her book
into two parts—the top two thirds of each page contains the narrative complete with
dialogue and the lower third of each page carves out the author’s reflexivity.

**REFLECTION**

At this point in my research, I have been unable to work to the level of
complexity that my mentors have. I can point out that my graduate dance
education pedagogy students at Teachers College, Columbia University served
as a research/seminar group when I brought my videotapes of children
making dances to our Children’s Dance Methods course. Twelve students who
represent a diverse international community actively shared their own
perspectives as they observed, critically engaged in, and reflected on my
detailed descriptions that did or did not resonate with their own experiences.
In this case, collaborative analysis served as a source of validity.
Over the years, other colleagues in and outside of dance education often met to share their insights on my work and continue to serve as a method of seeking validity—one that resembles the Socratic dialogic method or "friends talking with friends." It is through these informal conversations that these friends sought to bring out the strength of my inquiry by asking questions that at times stumped me. Because of their own stance, my data was questioned critically from both Afrocentric and feminist dance historian perspectives. Over time there have been many crystallizations to support my story.

REFLECTION

One challenge that I have had: time. Why has it taken me so long to write this research? I have recently read Lee Gutkind's (2012) book, *You Can’t Make This Stuff Up: The Complete Guide to Writing Creative Nonfiction from Memoir to Literary Journalism*. Gutkind states that "not learning to develop a targeted focus" may be one reason why it has taken so long to complete this academic adventure. In truth, I have devoted weeks, months, and years to bringing this study to fruition. It has taken me a long time to NOT go off on tangents, but to consider that life gets in the way, so just do it anyway.

In the past seven months I have immersed myself—willed myself—to move forward; to bring this research and life chapter to close with the anticipation of beginning a new research and life chapter. I have tried to focus on the meaning of my research, my ideas and my student-participants.
I have tried to write good creative nonfiction to reveal the essence of children’s dance-making—its scope and range of vision. Moreover, I have tried with this study to “translate and communicate complicated ideas with compact specificity because they are informative and dramatic” (12).

REVISION
It is a fact the people exist in their bodies and experience the world through their bodies. Time spent in the dance-making process can turn into flow (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). Children’s dance-making practice and flow experience as described by Csikzentmihalyi (1990) have much in common. Csikzentmihalyi describes flow as a process of achieving happiness through control of your inner life.

Perhaps the children in this study lived dance-making as flow experience even as other outside influences and experiences made it difficult to experience control. In semi-focused interviews conducted during dance-making and rehearsal sessions or after the dance was shared, Lauren, Anthony, Rashay, Peter, Steven, and Michael would tell me that, “They didn’t want to stop because they had much more to dance”. In a sense the dances acted as mediators in the children’s trial and error quest to navigate experience resulting in conscious wisdom. Flow “requires intelligence and a commitment to emotion and will”
(Csikszentmihalyi, 1990, 21). It is experienced through practice and results are often slow to emerge.

Summary

In this chapter, I shared the data analysis techniques culled from children’s dance-making narratives and counter-narratives. These examples were extracted from data collected and recorded in chapter four of my dissertation. The children that created or [re]presented the dances for this study represent the diversity found in a large Midwest urban school district—black, white, Latino/a, poor, American Indian, or middle class. They share a common bond—dance-making—a privilege afforded by school choice, school culture, aligned curriculum, and my teaching experience. In Chapter 6, I share personal and professional insights gained for this research study and discuss implications of this study in future work – scholarly and clinical.
Enduring Influences

In my formative years I believed in the positivist perspective as the way to live in the world. I shared passion equally for the disciplines of mathematics, physics, and ballet as abstract vehicles used to produce understanding in a world of absolutes. I lived in a supportive family structure that required of me to “always do my very best,” which translated into overachieving, perfectionist behavior. While in college, I began to believe in another equally compelling way to live, as an inquirer in the world. I began several professional life chapters as a dance artist—as a performer, choreographer, and teacher. During this time, I learned that no performing experience was ever reproduced exactly the same, which contradicted the earlier non-achievable goal taught in ballet.

In performance I experienced dance as the “art of the moment,” viscerally forming and reforming meaning according to conditions related to human interaction in geographical time and space. I discovered the nature of dance-making as one of continual inquiry, experimentation, and reflexivity, noting that many ideas were tried but few came to fruition. In teaching, I learned that the thoughtfully constructed lesson, unit, or curriculum is often modified as the teaching and learning experience and new
information unfold. I understood, in theory, that there were multiple solutions to
everything. Tensions within social constructs focusing on race, class, and gender
prevailed; they always do. During this highly productive time, I simultaneously found
my speaking voice and my nonspeaking but kinetically articulate voice.

Most of my personal and professional life has been spent in women-identified
positions in the arts and in education—as a dancer, teacher, and caregiver. In woman-
identified sensibilities everyone’s voice is heard in circles, round (kiva) meeting
structures instead of rows or lines that connote hierarchy and ranks of patriarchal space
design. Consensus is important, whether informed by men or women, and has
dramatically shaped my life. Because dancing, dance teaching, and teaching in general
are all thought of as women’s work, I was able to move in, through, and between the
traditional hegemony. In fact, I excelled outside it at times. In a world that seemingly
thwarts the efforts of women, I found my voice in and through my own dance-making
experiences and teaching dance-making to others.

Constructing oneself is dependent on one’s sense of being in the world (Lather &
Smithies, 1997; Wallace & Gruber, 1989) and how the world is generally perceived. I
have come to think that the processes of identity formation are multifaceted and life long;
sometimes fluid, sometimes fixed and readily observed or masked as experiences of
becoming a person that ‘lives-out-loud’. For me, living-out-loud is defined as the
passionate play of personal feeling, thought, and action in an ever-changing world where
social constructions of race, class, and gender reside in or outside hi[her]tories of
dominant cultural experience. To make educational change at both microscopic and macroscopic levels, I looked for pieces, patterns, and congruencies of patterns to interpret data collected in order to expose a worldview of dance education that has the power to reshape its currently disenfranchised place in American educational system.

I imagine a community of learners that embodies life’s complexities and seeks more equitable distribution of power to challenge dominant cultures that threaten freedom, choice, democracy, and joyous lives for all. I seek opportunities to mobilize change simultaneously at the microcosmic and macrocosmic levels in order to liberate fixed thinking about children’s dance-making and its contribution to the development of humans living in our socially constructed world.

Experience has taught when it is and when it is not safe to reveal my Othernesses, and as a performing artist on the stage or in the academic classroom, I learned the “performative act” well. For many years, I heard Adrienne Rich’s words ringing inside myself as if shouting in defiance of women’s oppression, “The personal is political!” (Rich, 1979, 215), but until now I did not feel empowered to voice myself in this highly personal way. Rich explains, “to try to understand what has been labeled personal as part of a greater political reality, has been a critical process for feminism, more critical probably for feminism that any other movement against oppression”. For fundamental to women’s oppression is the assumption that we are a group that belongs to the private “sphere of the home, the hearth, the family, the sexual, and the emotional out
of which they return for mothering, for access to female forms of intimacy, affection, and solace unavailable in the realm of the male struggle and competition” (215).

As with any research study, things must come to an end, right? I had great difficulty closing this chapter of my life. Over the past seven months, I have tried to focus on the meaning of my research, my ideas, and my student-participants and place this study into a broader educational context. I sought to write good creative nonfiction to reveal the essence of children’s dance-making—its scope and range of vision. Moreover, I pursued this study to “translate and communicate complicated ideas with compact specificity because they are informative and dramatic” (Gutkind, 2012, 12). I wanted to think about each partial dance tale again and again, trying to find another layer to better understand the children’s dance-making phenomena. Within the autoethnographic canon, I continued to struggle to find ways to analyze and interpret my data. I asked, how does personal meaning emerge through the organization, construction, and presentation of dance experience? How do experiences the children have outside of the dance-making context affect the elements of dance-making inquiry and interpretation? How does understanding the dance thinking of nine- to eleven-year-olds support and amplify the development of cognitive capacities of school-age children in dance and in other domains?

Dance-making seeks clarity, coherence, enlargement, and intensity and results in an expanded lived experience. Children’s dance-making poses questions to engage people in their own projects and life experiences and works towards service to a broader
spectrum of human possibility. How has my personal dance education pedagogy influenced the children and the dances that they make? Colleague Susan Petry asserted,

Autoethnography is the frame you have nurtured many students over the years; hence it is a ‘fit’ for your own thesis construction. You have (I observe) repeatedly asked/supported children to tell their stories within the structures of choreographic discipline—Much like the call to frame or support self-reflexive practice in some external ‘discipline’. Therefore your dissertation writing structure can embrace, reflect and be parallel to the very subject matter of your ‘research’. Your construction of ‘elements’ in your writing — the boxes, the different fonts and various structures feels very much like choreography to me. Your strengths in non-linear narrative are a reflection of your choreographic and pedagogical use of intuition and rapidly vacillating focus on micro and macro. You can deal with a student and his/her jump and gesture, and at the same time reflect on how that gesture resonates against all kinds of socio/political/historical frames of reference. (2012)

Dance-making sessions that I facilitated at the Arts Elementary School between 1982-1988 were guided by learning and teaching principles that embed movement as the primary vehicle for expressing feelings and ideas; multiple solutions; cooperative, collaborative human interaction; attention to details; attention to a larger picture fostering emergence of empathy; tolerance towards ambiguity; and personal and group
empowerment. I presented an approach to studying diverse dance forms that set up dialogues between the teacher (teacher/researcher), the dance form, students, and other sources of sentient, artistic, cultural, practical, spiritual, or scholarly information.

The centerpieces of the dance-making classes are practical: the use of critical inquiry through historical, cultural, social, and aesthetic lenses, Laban movement analysis and other forms of non-western movement analysis, and Motif Notation as ways of creating and assessing the stylistic features of a dance work. Motif Notation, used as an inroad to studying dance forms from unrelated traditions, emphasizes a movement-centered starting place that inspires a larger investigation. I structure various sessions on responding to the dances made or viewed and use stylistic information to assess the existing work and then to build new dances. Dancers working alone or in small groups employ inquiry-based strategies, plus dance improvisation and composition concepts and skills to support and deepen their own cultural inquiry (Bucek, 2007). In retrospect, I think that I deliberately asked my dance students to notice feelings and ideas embedded in movement; find multiple solutions; work together cooperatively; invent collaboratively; seek pleasurable human interaction; and pay attention to details, especially to a larger picture that fosters the emergence of empathy, tolerance towards ambiguity, and personal and group empowerment.

School cultures that offer teachers and children opportunities to mediate learning deliberately co-construct nontrivial teaching and learning experiences that foster a plethora of meaningful interaction within the world of ideas. Children develop in relation
to their ever-increasing and exercised understanding of self-respect, respect for others, and the world in which they live. The growth of empathy is paramount in this school culture. In his 1995 book, *Emotional Intelligence: Why It Can Matter More Than IQ*, psychologist Daniel Goldman tells us that the roots of empathy are found in the (1) ability to know how another feels, (2) that it builds out of self awareness, and (3) that the more open we are to our own emotion, the more skilled we will be in reading feelings. Moreover, “children’s emotions are rarely put into words”. They are more often expressed through other cues, including – (1) gestures, (2) tone of voice, (3) facial and overall body expression, (4) and dynamic choices in order to acquire the ability to “intuit another’s feelings and to read non-verbal channels” (34).

I have enjoyed the pleasures and toiled with the challenges of facilitating K-5 student learning comprised of inquiry-based, active, project-oriented instruction deeply embedded in the study of dance. Rich content inspired students as they profoundly engaged their minds, bodies, and hearts to reverse what are now the current trends toward passive learning with a heavy emphasis on the use of textbooks, worksheets, tests, labeling, tracking, and tedium. I am troubled by our children’s increased lack of self-awareness and by their general inability to maintain focus, self-discipline, and self-control and solve problems through critical and creative solutions in ways that are independently inspired, artist envisioned, and integrated into the curriculum.

From experience, I have come to believe that dance can be perceived of and understood as a fundamental medium of human transformation. Children make dances to
feel, explain, consider, imagine, dream, organize, share, and try to understand themselves, others, and the ever-changing world in which they live. What do our children feel? Understand? Dream about? Consider? Explain? How do they present their voices through dance-making experience? What learning environments offer sustenance to support this sort of children’s dance-making practice? This is something that I will continue to think about.

If I can help my students to make deeper connections and not merely “see subjects or people” in isolated, unrelated ways then I have helped them to obtain a lifelong skill that is vital to human growth. Questions related to an issue are posed. Students then engage with the question in movement explorations, structured improvisations, small dance studies, and finally fully realized dances that ultimately propel and shape the direction of the interaction that makes meaningful connections in and outside of the dance-making experience itself. The dances that are created are the result of a thicker response to the initial question posed. They are, based on students’ collective stories, a culmination of accumulated knowledge and experience.

Future Work: Theoretical and Clinical

After many years of observing children’s dance-making, I have come to distinguish *contextual integration* as one lens compatible for interpreting a child’s personal experience as it is embodied through physically pervasive and emotionally meaningful dances. These dances *are* the real influences of children’s lives. My ultimate, real-world aim is to listen intently to the varying and changing needs of
children, teens, and adults participating in a world that prizes ever-increasing suppression of human potential and individual thought. In doing so I aspire to find appropriate and apparent ways to aid creative and critical inquiry that both frees and focuses individuals and communities towards self-sustaining inquiry, discovery, and life-nurturing experience, particularly in the face of poverty, social injustice, violence, and great despair. I am troubled by teaching colleagues who penalize their students when they can not meet their academic expectations because they are hungry, cold, worried, exhausted, or abandoned. Maslow’s hierarchical theory of self-actualization asserts that to realize individual potentials, capacities, and talents one must have secured an inner life whereby physiological, safety, belongingness, love, and self-esteem needs have already been met. Children’s dance-making can offer a sanctuary from life’s trials, even if it is only for a little while.

I appreciate that the day-to-day instructional environment has the potential to break down or build up a love for learning and, in a world increasingly devoid of real people making real physical (not virtual) contact with one another, to inspire dance learning that breaks this cycle to restore one element of the human condition that is increasingly diminishing. Knowing that the genius dynamic intersects with ‘real-life’ factors at home and in community cultures and affects emotional health, economic well-being, and varying ideologies and lifestyles, I choose to awaken the learning abilities that directly impact elementary school-age children.
I search for ways to awaken each child’s voice, and to help each one make sense of their less-than-idyllic lives. I deliberately make plans that facilitate dance-making experiences that support, interrogate, disrupt, and reveal purposeful embodiments in negotiated worlds of possibility. I believe that it is this tension between my beliefs in modernist and postmodernist canons that informs my worldview and my interdisciplinary teaching practice – beginning with learning/ then teaching dance borrowed from adults, to a broader definition of the dance discipline, to appreciating dance as learning, to situating dance as a means of understanding and transforming social and cultural worlds.

Though approaching instruction through child-appropriate learning experiences is not “en vogue” right now, it should be recast for today’s learners. Today, curriculum and instruction that is “child appropriate” or “developmentally appropriate” is left out of the educational policy-making discourse, despite the increasing education gap that is occurring globally. Increasing the rigor of what students are taught, tested, and accountable for is now at the forefront, and from my 30+ years experience in the urban public school education world, the time it takes to test diminishes instructional time that inadvertently has become the antithesis of President Lyndon B. Johnson’s “War on Poverty” intention, which was to provide “equal access to education that was vital to a child’s ability to lead a productive life” (1968).

Today, Title I funding purports to allocate considerable resources to meet the needs of educationally deprived children, especially through compensatory programs for the poor. Yet the education gap in this country continues to widen. Schools focus way
too much on testing and too little on sustaining school environments that support experientially-based curriculum and instruction to meet the developing needs of all of our 21st century learners, regardless of gender, race, or class.

The implications are great, particularly with regard to what I believe is a direct correlation setting many urban students apart from their peers in suburban neighborhoods – specifically when they do not get access to similar educational programs, technologies, materials, and resources that widen the gap between them and increase institutional classism, racism, and gender discrimination. Proficiency testing is one institutionalized way to increase these -isms and take down the middle and lower class. Another way is the increase of in-school suspensions, out-of-school suspensions, removals, and expulsions. In some cases removal or suspension was warranted, but upon return the behaviors are repeated and the cycle begins again. In my current setting I observe African American and Latino boys and girls, at all ages and cognitive abilities, being targets for exclusion.

Yet the Catch-22 of it is that the majority of these children have transferred into the school by the No Child Left Behind (the oppressing institution at the federal level) clause that states that any parent whose child attends a school deemed non-functional by the state (the oppressing instruction at the state level) can move to a school that is deemed functional, regardless of interest or belief in its educational philosophy. Moreover, it is these very children that have been passed academically from grade level to grade level
and can no longer ‘pass’ or function in even instructional settings where the arts play the role of a non-traditional instructional setting.

My research study attempted to layer a child’s intrinsic meaning-making features alongside critical inquiry of other concepts in and across existing disciplines during dance-making. Symbols are not a mere substitute for an object but are the instruments of thought (Giguere, 2011, Burton, 1981; Gardner, 1982, Boorman, 1980). Symbolizing, as a medium of representation, “creates different forms of awareness and makes different modes of understanding possible” (Eisner, 1978, 617). This “double vision” is what distinguishes dance knowing from other modes of inquiry and is the layered thinking involved in selecting, shaping, and interpreting raw movement materials in relation to one’s curiosity, imagination, and evolving perceptions (Greene, 1995b).

During long periods of reflexive silence, I have thought about the day-to-day living conditions of the child dance-makers and their ability to make choreographic decisions, sometimes to overcome their real-life situations. During the process of writing this dissertation, I became interested in counter-narrative story collections as a means of illuminating dance-making experience associated with marginalized and possible worlds remembered, questioned, or reimagined. In doing so, I have struggled mightily at this point to find ways to share the importance of children’s dance-making in these children’s lives. I continue to be mindful that the child-made dances in this study go far beyond the stereotypical views held by some people that urban children only make dances about violence, loss and slavery. Perhaps I erred in the selection of the dances shared. There
were other dances with equally compelling themes left out of this paper. Certainly, the
dances are temporal – held as a moment in time – and tell only part of each person’s life
story. Nonetheless, I argue that regardless of class, gender or race, children make
dances that have meaning for them and that I only offered a glimpse into their personal worlds in
this study. With reflexivity, I continue to revise my own pedagogical practice and look
for the sociocultural influences that shape-shift experience.

I find myself particularly drawn to the socio-political conditions that continue to
marginalize or completely decimate children’s dance-making in our nation’s elementary
schools. How, in the current dire political and economic climate, can the results of my
research study find their way into the public schools, where school culture emphasis has
dramatically shifted away from developmentally appropriate, intellectually stimulating,
and purposefully enacted teaching and learning to a test-taking abyss? How do the dances
made by children resonate with identity development? I passionately hold onto Greene’s
words, “that our teaching should enable our students to interpret their experience in order
to free themselves [emancipate] and to be able to reflect upon a full range of cognitive
styles available, in order to live passionately” (personal conversation with Maxine
Greene, 1995).

I am concerned that our urban children do not play much—indoors or outside—
unless it is in front of a screen or with a handheld device. Living in fear cannot be
helpful to growing to one’s fullest potential. I worry that these children are losing
experiences that capture ways of accessing knowledge. Is this advancement? As human
beings in development, what have we lost? What have we gained? Is there balance? Should there be? How did all of this get so complicated and not about the human potential born in all of us? What happened to children making dances that are personally relevant?

Ultimately, I want my research to matter. I want it to serve as a counter-narrative to current educational trends and work to eliminate institutionalized racism as it is experienced in many urban schools. I join fellow critical race theory scholars (Ballengee Morris, 2013; Whitehead, 2012) by telling collective stories that are essential for marginalized children as they negotiate their experiences and find meaningful and personally relevant ways of understanding and experiencing their world (Whitehead, 2012, 35). In my experience, children ‘go home’ when they are making dances. They spend time connecting experience in and through their bodies. In a state of flow, the children in this study experienced peace, productivity, and a voice, perhaps for the first time. By making dances, children invite us into their worlds. They make dances to learn about themselves, their families and heritage, and their interests, concerns, and joys. Through children’s dance-making experience individuals and collaborative groups regard themselves as purposeful, courageous, resilient, inquisitive, reflective, smart, cooperative, and full of life whether we are paying attention or not.

Dreaming: Future Endeavors

I would like to become involved in a reflective yet action-oriented think tank with a broad constituency of stakeholders to revisit interdisciplinary education principles,
paradigms, and practices to find, reposition and take action that embeds features within the Common Core Standards paradigm in, across, and through all subjects. I would like to see our higher education educational community abolish the practice of nonintentional exclusion. I would like to come together with my colleagues to interrogate and reframe theories, principles, paradigms, practices, and politics of experiential learning in an through the arts (dance, drama/theatre, media, music, literary, and the visual arts) to refocus our attention on actively engaging art-makers rather than passive “picture box, handheld device” voyeurs. Beneficial to all would be opportunities to come together to explore different ways of educating one another and to develop habits of mind and pedagogical practices that envisions the needs of tomorrow’s constituents living today in the beginning to mid- 21st century.

At one time, I was afraid to take a stance on matters of the heart—sentimental, emotional feeling. Instead, I focused on matters of the mind. I thought that if I focused on our feelings and our heartfelt world that no one would take me seriously. But I firmly believe that our under-intellectualized, dumbed down, test-driven world is losing sight of human attributes that can expressively embody feeling, empathy, outrage, wonder, flexibility, optimism, curiosity, resiliency, peacefulness, strength, and happiness. I want to make kinesthetic connections with the natural world I long for. I cannot remember the last time I walked in the woods to sense everything that it has to offer. When was the last time you spent time away from any number of your electronic devices? A day? An hour? When was the last time you touched or held another person in tender, loving, and caring ways that were not sexual in nature? I want to find many ways to (re)engage the
feelings and ideas of people of all ages through dance-making. I want to facilitate movement experiences that render the immediacy of dance-making to potentially bring humans together in real time. I don’t know where this will lead, but I feel an urgency to try. What is becoming of our society when real human interaction fades away right before our eyes?

Finally, I began this study with the purpose of coming to understand how children might cognize in and through dance-making only to leave with the understanding that matters of the heart and spirit are more essential than even the mind/intellect. Perhaps finding ways to balance these dimensions of humanity is what I am seeking. I leave this process with a mission to create situations that build habits of mind and active physical practice that embeds the affective and cognitive dimensions of humanity. Based on my research, I implore our teaching profession – especially dance educators and child-focused educators – to not only support but to inspire our children to be storytellers in and through dance-making experiences. I challenge our educators to embrace the essence of the Common Core Standards. They offer many curricular spaces for children’s dance-making be embedded instruction. In John Powell’s (2003) words, “The real goal is to disrupt and change the hierarchy regarding social justice issues. It is wrong and wasteful and we want people to be uncomfortable about that regardless of their position.” (11)

Now more than at any other time in the past twenty-five years, it is time to make dances with our children. Our future may depend on it.
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Appendix A: Glossary of Terms

The following terms are defined in many different ways. For the purpose of this dissertation:

- **Children** refers to the Dance and the Child International’s definition of 0-18 years old.

- **Dance** refers to “the art of in which human movement is the medium for sensing, understanding and communicating”. Dance is seen as a “vehicle for understanding life experience” (Bucek, White, Mirus, Paulsen, 1996, 2). The art of dance involves the dancer’s varied use of space, time and movement quality and in relation to self, others and the dancing environment.

- **Dance Movement** refers to “any human movement included in the act of dancing” (Bucek, White, Mirus, Paulsen, 1996, 3).

- **Children’s Dance** refers to the dances and dance like movement invented spontaneously or through conception through rehearsal to performance. It also refers to the dances that children learn from peers, adults and media.

- **Choreographer**: a person who makes dances.

- **Choreographic Devices** refers to basic movement motifs that are choreographically manipulated using formal and informal compositional devices including, but not limited to: changes in body shape, spatial pathway, tempo or meter, dynamics or movement qualities, physical relationships to one another, form, e.g., A.B.A; costume, prop, lighting, setting changes, musicality; retrograde, augmentation.

- **Choreographic Process**, refers to a series of steps taken by the dance maker as she develops and shapes her ideas as embodied in physical form. This process is parallel to the writing process, yet has its own distinct features. As with the writing process, the individual begins in a reflective state, giving attention to a particular thought, idea, feeling or structure.

  The dance maker then improvises directly through movement, selecting movement and practicing it as a repeatable sequence of movements that will later be considered for development. Movements are then practiced for physical sense making and fluidity. Editing and revision occurs through each repetition and a first draft, or work-in-progress is shared with trusted colleagues for review and feedback.

  Reworking ideas and or structures is considered for development and practiced or rehearsed again. This process is repeated several times. A final version is directed and
rehearsed to performance quality level. Dance is performed receiving critical feedback. At this time several choices are made – the dance is performed in a variety of touring contexts, the dance returns to rehearsal for revisions or it is completely dropped from the repertoire. In any case, a reflective period occurs and the process begins its next cycle.

• **Choreography:** A dance.

• **Composition:** A dance or dance study.

• **Creative Movement** refers to a dance form taught to children. Based on natural movements that children do, e.g., skip, leap, jump, balance, tip toe; and structures from Laban movement analysis in theory and practice. Does not include indigenous or vernacular dances learned from peers, adults and media. I don’t use this term because it seems to be an oxymoron: if one is using the term creative movement and movement is referred as ‘dance’, then how can it not be creative? I don’t know when dance and dance making doesn’t involve creativity and movement.

• **Dance-Making:** The embodiment of thinking, feeling and physical action that is both intended to be a dance and composed as dance.

• **Dance Maker:** A person that makes dances.

• **Laban Movement Analysis** refers to a system of observing, analyzing and recording movement.

• **Movement Motif** refers to a movement pattern or body shape that is viewed throughout a dance or dance study.

• **Motif Notation** a descriptive tool used to make (think through) and record (in writing) dance.