

**DANCE FOR LIFE:  
EXPLORING DANCE CHOREOGRAPHY AND PERFORMANCE  
AS A TOOL FOR EDUCATING THE UNIVERSITY COMMUNITY  
ABOUT COLLEGE STUDENT SUICIDE**

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Abstract

Looking for ways that dance could be used as a tool for health promotion, I sought to explore dance choreography and performance as an alternative medium for educating and increasing awareness about college student suicide. Suicide is the second leading cause of death amongst college students and while research suggests that suicide is decreasing, in terms of attempted suicides, the problem may be increasing. While attempts to understand, predict and prevent the loss of lives have resulted in extensive literature, there has been very little systematic research completed. Compounded by limited proposed models for addressing college student suicide, and lack of evidence there remains a growing need to find effective health communication practices and best health promotion practices.

This research study is an autobiographical case study that explores my embodied experience of choreographing and performing a dance about college student suicide. As a health promotion professional and a trained dance artist, I assumed the role of researcher and dance choreographer and I and my experience became the subject of this research study. I launched and conducted a six-week project on my university campus called “Dance For Life” and worked with a small group of three female undergraduate dancers to make the new dance piece. This dance

project was the case under investigation out of which I presented an autobiographical narrative in the findings and discussion section of this paper.

Reviewed health information, research findings, and data, as well as knowledge extracted from the dance group became in part material used to make the dance. As the choreographer, my role in the choreographic process spanned from expert to collaborator and rested on my vision for the story told that would be told through the dance. I collected m data in the form of:- video recordings; pictures; journal entries; field/ observational notes; video diaries; drawings; interviews with community-based artists; and memory recall. I then worked to sort, label, group, and analyze the data, piecing together my findings to write an autobiography that answered my research questions.

My exploration highlighted the importance of community involvement in community-based health programming. Through participation in this project the dancers' knowledge and awareness of college student suicide increased and positively affected their empathetic response toward members of the community. Using non professional dancers with varied dance skill levels did not inhibit creativity or diminish the quality of work produced. Instead it brought together real life people with diverse perspectives, creative solutions, and a passion for dance to produce a piece of art effective in its ability to 'touch' the audience and draw them in to a place of greater awareness.

Stigmas, and the lack of education and visibility about this particular health challenge, have resulted in a low community response to affecting change. The post performance discussion brought the greatest gains, in terms of educating the audience. They interacted with the project, asked questions, gave feedback and provided comments about what they experienced, learned,

and understood. The overall success of the project, points toward the possibility of dance as an art form playing a more significant role in educating communities about sensitive, and difficult to talk about, health challenges. Being able to affect the knowledge, attitudes, and empathetic response of communities is a beginning step towards overcoming the health challenge of college student suicide. Future research needs to focus on best choreographing techniques as it relates to audience interpretation.

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*I will not be shaken, for You are right beside me. (Psalm 16:8).*

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~All things are possible, Only believe.~

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## **CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION**

### **Introductory Narrative on College Student Suicide**

#### **Identifying the subject: “Universities home to high suicide rates”**

The headlines of the Collegiate Times dated Sep 21, 2007 reads, “Universities Home to High Suicide Rates” (O’Connor, 2007). I wonder if this surprised anyone as much as it did me. On that same headline page was an article entitled “Cho family will not benefit from memorial fund.” The headlines quickly drew me back to the events of April 16 on the Virginia Tech campus, the loss of lives, and my thoughts began to linger. There was yet another article entitled “McCloskeys sue Pierce,” an update on the outcome of the trial of the fellow student who had run over and killed Brian McCloskey”. Was it me or was the Collegiate Times having a bad day at the press? I began wondering if all these articles:- Suicide amongst college students, Cho, and the killing of a college student were all related- Up until that point I had not realized that in addition to 32 people being murdered on April 16, 2007, there was also a case of a college student suicide. I questioned the aims and efforts of the media. The reporting of the news and the stories the paper chose to feature on one day had already shaped the way in which I had begun to view the world. Fortunately, my mind quickly released from that depth of thinking as I began rejoicing because I had finally found the subject of my research- college student suicide.

Exactly one week prior to the printing of the article on college student suicide, I was in search of finding a “home” for my doctoral degree research. I had decided upon my research context, ironically, while reading another college’s press news review on dance. In it, Hoffman (2006) was commenting on the performance of a renowned American dance company who had performed on the Wesleyan University campus a week prior. The author stated that in an

audience post-performance discussion “one of the many topics discussed was how to use dance as a medium for positive social change” (p. 2). As a dance choreographer / dancer, with a heart for making dances that have depth and meaning, the idea of exploring a health challenge in the context of dance choreography and performance was intriguing.

In the three years prior to 2007 as a member of the Contemporary Dance Ensemble of Virginia Tech, I had the opportunity to begin creating a repertoire of dance work, while learning more about my own personal style, as a dancer and choreographer. While the dance pieces I choreographed were varied in form, music and purpose, I found that my style of choreography always lent itself to telling a story or having a specific theme in mind, around which I would build a story using more bodies than just myself. I recalled a conversation with a fellow dancer, in which she commented that she always enjoyed learning and dancing my pieces because, “there was always a story behind it.” Even the dances created for the sake of movement would begin that way. Then the music, the choreographer and the dancers would all have stories they told. Reflecting on this comment, relative to the work I was considering, I began to think about the past motivations for my dance making.

My experience of dance choreography had presented itself as a journey of piecing together ideas, feelings, and emotions into movement to create a final masterpiece. I believed that dance had the power to tell a story. My experience of dance choreography and performance, was also shaped by my background, culture, classical training, as well as exposure to other dance traditions was about to be further revolutionized as I began my research.

I moved forward and continued to pursue the study and exploration of dance, dance choreography and performance as a possible tool that to use in the area of health education. However, very early in the process, I found that the merger of dance choreography with suicide



prevention presented itself (and still does today), as a challenge to not only different academic schools of thought, but also to communities of hearers and thinkers that would in some ways resist a topic so sensitive and seldom talked about. Attempting to ‘take it on’ would still be my course of action.

When I began the project, I did not know how the dancers who would be members of the university community would respond to the idea of choreography and performance surrounding college student suicide. I also had my own reservations about investigating suicide as I began to read about student suicides at Cambridge and Oxford universities. One day in the midst of reading, I suddenly had an image of what college student suicide meant in reality and I froze with that thought. Later I understood that my reaction was not unique. The research would show that it was common for the idea of college student suicide to cause reactions of avoidance, change of conversations and high and low emotions. I discovered that part of the problem with college student suicide was that many people did not even want to broach the topic. I would take the subject head on and enter my investigation.

I moved forward to explore the use of dance choreography and performance as a new way to educate and increase awareness about college student suicide. I began to recognize that this study was not only going to potentially make a difference in the state of health on my university campus, but it would also potentially impact and shape my own approach to health education/health promotion, and possibly challenge my own ways of knowing, communicating and educating in the field. I also realized that by introspectively looking at my life (self), and reflecting on my embodied experience, meant that “I” who was a part of the health promotion community, the dance community, and the university community could also change.

### **Communicating About College Student Suicide Using the Arts**

As a medium, dance, on and off stage, has historically been used by, in, and through communities to entertain, as well as express ideas, tell stories, share experiences, and address subject matter related to culture, life events, political agendas, and sensitive health/social challenges. Some onlookers may view dance as simplistic in its purpose. However, the art of dancing carries great epistemological (ways of knowing and reasoning) value that makes it a viable medium of communication, method of inquiry, and mode of presenting and representing health information, research findings, and collected data.

Understanding the mechanics of communication through dance became important and relevant to this research study as I sought to find an alternative medium for educating the community about college student suicide. While I found that there was little research and writing on how dance aesthetics, choreography, and performance work to affect change, work done “on the ground” was showing dance to be a powerful tool to educate, increase awareness and change communities.

Using dance to educate the university community about college student suicide presented a creative and alternative medium for communicating health information, research findings, and data related to college student suicide. Using dance also provided a safe place for exploring and talking about sensitive health topics, such as college student suicide. The art/dance created needed to be both relevant to the community, and effective in communicating the major challenges surrounding this challenge, if the dance would potentially foster healthy change. Taking a closer look at the process of dance making and translating information and abstract ideas into movement, was my first step toward understanding how dance can be an effective tool in health education.

## **Purpose of the Study**

The overall purpose of the research study I conducted was to explore my embodied experience of using dance choreography and performance as a medium for educating the university community about college student suicide. This study specifically looked at my process of planning, choreographing, and performing a dance about college student suicide, through my own lens as dance choreographer and researcher.

## **Research Questions**

The research questions that framed the study were:-

1. What is my process of planning, choreographing, and performing a professional dance about college student suicide?
2. How can I translate health information, research findings, and data about college student suicide into my dance choreography and performance?
3. What knowledge, insight, and understanding can I gain regarding communicating about college student suicide through the embodied inquiry of choreographing and performing a dance about college student suicide?

## **Definition of Terms**

*Embodied Inquiry*: the exploration and description of the experience of self relative to what is going inside and outside of self.

*Ethnography*: Study of the culture of a group

*Case Study*: A study of an isolated incident, event, experience during a given time frame

*Autobiographical Case Study*: A study of one's own experience during a given time frame

*Health Promotion*: Study of the social, physical, emotional, spiritual well being of an individual

*Dance Choreography & Performance:* purposeful movement created to move the individual body with or without music. When performed it is presented before onlookers or an audience.

*Dance in the context of social awareness:* Dance in a community based setting designed to incorporate, involve and empower individuals and communities toward increased awareness, new ways of thinking that could possibly motivate them toward action that brings change.

*Translation:* Taking information in the form of text and explaining that information through movement using the body to dance/ move descriptively.

### **Significance of the Study**

As I began to research college student suicide, I found that all the reports and studies were saying the same thing. Suicide is the second leading cause of death among college students (O'Connor, 2007). Research also indicated that while the death rate of suicide had decreased from the 1980s to today, there were still increasing numbers of suicide attempts. Overall, I found that within the context of the university community, placing greater emphasis on three key areas would be necessary. First, there needed to be an increase in student awareness of the warning signs, risk factors, and protective factors of suicide through education. Second, efforts needed to focus on affecting student peers' empathetic response, because, they are in a sense the watchmen in the community who need to recognize their responsibility to act. Third, with the growing concern for the increased number of students with mental illness there needed to be an increased social and support network system throughout the community.

While there was little known about the most effective means for reducing suicide (Coggan et al., 1997), the research done indicated that focus groups, interviews, and surveys had so far been tools in providing some insight into the challenges confronting college students. More work still needed to be done to continue to explore and understand how communities can

effectively address and work to eliminate suicide amongst college students. My review of the literature on suicide prevention further confirmed that there was a need for the work I was proposing, especially in the area of health education and suicide prevention.

For the purpose of this study, I entered the discourse as a health professional wanting to explore, using dance as a medium to address a serious social/ health challenge in my own community. The study gave way to an opportunity to explore new and alternative ways of educating and increasing awareness in the area of health promotion using dance as both my method of inquiry, and the tool (subject) of investigation.

### **Limitations**

Time allotted to design and complete the choreography was a major limitation of the study. The study designed ran for a six-week project to facilitate learning and presenting a new piece using student volunteers who had limited time in their weekly schedules. Being the sole researcher collecting data in the form of video recordings, transcriptions, interviews, journal entries and any other relevant artifacts, consideration had to be given to the volume of data that would have to be reviewed, analyzed and written. Therefore, time restrictions and the amount of data collected for the purpose of this projected had to be limited.

Working as the sole researcher and dance choreographer, I chose to work with a small group of dancers in an effort to collect rich data and feedback from the dancers. Overall, the project had to be done on a smaller scale than would be ideal for reaching a large campus community. Also based upon time and resources, the project could only focus on one topic or health challenge. Knowing if this method would be applicable in the area of health education, would require more work and the completion of repeated projects using more students and reaching a larger body of the community.

For the purpose of this study, I chose one type of scenario that would be illustrated through the dance. Given a larger scaled project, it would be possible to represent other people, through showing diverse groups of people in various scenarios. By showing more circumstances, other people may be able to identify with what the portrayal on the stage. In the dance piece completed for this study, those looking on at women, may think of the situation as being more relevant to women and not to another specific group.

A final limitation of this study was its lack of ability to be generalizability. Doing case study research allows for finding patterns, and understanding one particular event, situation or experience. The description of any one event, situation or experience can be, but may not necessarily occur in all given similar circumstances. However, findings can point to potential trends, patterns and ideas that may need further investigation.

### **Summary**

The remaining four chapters of this paper include the literature review, methodology, findings and discussion, concluding with a summary/ recommendations. More specifically, chapter 2 is a comprehensive review of the literature on health promotion, college student suicide and dance. Chapter 3 describes the methodological design and plans for data collection and analysis. Chapter 4 shares the findings of the project including discussions in the form of analyses. Written as an autobiographical narrative, chapter 4 tells about:- (1) the process of designing, planning, and choreographing around the challenge of college suicide; (2) the translation of health information, research findings and data into dance performance; and (3) the new knowledge insight and understanding that was gained. Finally chapter five provides a summary of the study discussing relevant challenges related to health planning and policy, while give recommendations for future research and approaches to addressing health challenges on college campuses.

## **CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW**

Before beginning my study, I reviewed literature on health promotion as it relates to college student suicide as well as the literature on college student suicide and suicide prevention. I also searched the wealth of current literature and theory on dance, dance choreography, dance performance. This chapter summarizes some of the literature relevant to the work I proposed to do with the dance and college student suicide.

### **Health Promotion**

The National Center for Disease Prevention (as cited in Health Promotion and Disease Prevention: An Introductory Article, n.d.) recounts

The idea of Health Promotion dates back to Hippocrates, a Greek physician born in 460BC who went against the belief of his time to suggest that outside forces influence the body. He argued the need to consider environmental influences on health such as the role clean water plays in staying healthy. He also believed that physicians should build a patient's strength through diet and hygiene, resorting to more drastic treatment when necessary.

According to Hennekens and Buring, (as cited in Health Promotion and Disease Prevention, n.d.)

It would be almost 2000 years later before Hippocrates' ideas would be realized in improving health of populations. In the 19<sup>th</sup> Century Far and Snow would use insights similar to Hippocrates to improve the health of the people in their time, by observing the London drinking water that was causing death and sickness due to cholera. (p. 3).

## **Health Promotion Goals**

The overall goal of health promotion is to improve health – defined as a state of physical, mental and social well-being. The idea is that through education, individuals and communities may be able to control lifestyle choices that may affect their health and thereby change their health status. While this sounds simple and straightforward, when dealing with ideas, behavior and attitudes relevant to health it becomes more complex. In general, leaders and stakeholders in the field of health promotion attempt to view health from a broader view than just based upon the individual. Therefore, other factors that influence behavior such as an individual's families, their community and the circumstance they live in have to be considered. Health Promotion utilizes theories that address: (i) multiple levels of health, (ii) research done to understand communities and their health challenges and (iii) health promotion and disease prevention activities to achieve both positive changes in the health of individuals and communities. (Health Promotion and Disease Prevention, n.d.)

By conducting research to understand both the health challenges affecting communities and the circumstances that create them, and applying theories that address multiple levels of health, health promotion and disease prevention activities achieved positive changes in the health of individuals and communities. (Health Promotion and Disease Prevention, n.d.). Knowing the success of the efforts made by health promotion relies upon doing effective outcomes evaluations and follow-ups with individuals and in communities. Matching aims and objectives with outcomes is essential in knowing if the theories being used fit and if the programs being done do work. While no single theory dominates health promotion it does draw its strengths from a wide range of disciplines that include: - sociology, psychology, economics, geography and biology. (Why Theory Matters For Effective Health Promotion, 2009)



## A Theoretical Approach to Understanding Health in Communities

I found very little research on health promotion theoretical frameworks that specifically address college student suicide. Viewing the challenges as a community health concern, I explored different models of health that might address health in communities. I found that the social ecological multilevel approach facilitated understanding “the problems and factors that affect groups of people and influence health in communities.” (Health Promotion and Disease Prevention, n.d.). This ecological theory attempts to “link multiple levels of influences to people’s health” (Health Promotion and Disease Prevention, n.d.). Those levels include:- “(1) the individual (intrapersonal), (2) the people we interact with (interpersonal), (3) the groups or organizations we belong to, (4) the community we live in, (5) the media we are exposed to, and (6) the policies that shape our worlds (McLeroy et al., 1988)” (Health Promotion and Disease Prevention, n.d.). This approach to thinking about health suggests that these “six influences work in combination to affect an individual’s health” and “are linked in such a manner that a change in one can potentially cause a change in the others” (Health Promotion and Disease Prevention, n.d.). The model further suggests that “changes made on more than one level at a time will have a better chance of influencing health” (Health Promotion and Disease Prevention, n.d.). This means that all in community need to be involved and no effort made can be too big or too small. It is therefore important that we know and do what actually works.

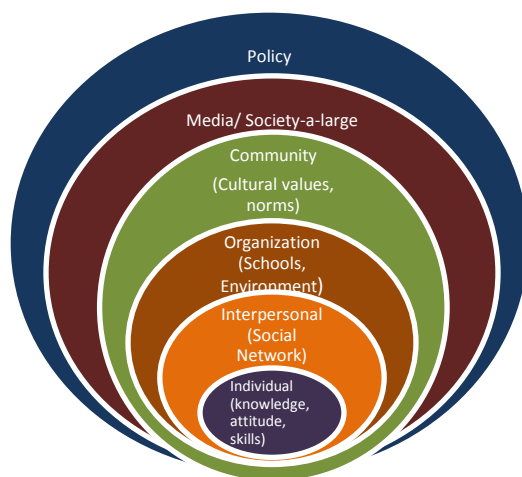


Figure 1 Social Ecological Multilevel Approach (Health Promotion & Disease Prevention, nd.) [Used under fair use, 2012.]

## **Moving from Research to Practice**

Research indicates that serious questions still need to be asked and answered about health promotion's success in moving from research to practice. Health promotion efficacy studies when carried out in controlled environments with confined variables have resulted in answers or successes that do not always translate into effective practice. As a result, Glasgow, Lichtenstein & Marcus (2003) question efficacy research done in health promotion, its generalizability and ability of findings to be used on a larger scale to address real-world health challenges. Glasgow et.al (2003) calls for new research and new solutions that seek to address the problem of health promotion's inability to address robust data and practical circumstances.

Glasgow et al (2003) also address another area of concern in health promotion. They point to the need for greater evaluations to be performed on what has already been done. They make the case that once research has moved to practice, it is necessary that steps be taken to evaluate what has been done and survey the successes and failures. In so doing, the research may be replicated even on a larger scale (Glasgow et.al, 2008) or not repeated at all.

Although the research conducted on effective methods of addressing college student suicide was limited in its scope, it was clear that understanding best practices was integral in making strides toward effectively eradicating this epidemic. Knowing what works best and how well it works at every level of the ecological model for individuals and communities were put forward as necessary. As I looked at the ecological model and thought about where my research study 'fits' and the level that I could impact, I was intrigued by the fact that it seemed to touch every level as I moved from research to practice. The health strategies that considered to meet the needs of the health challenge would need more study and further investigation.

## **Health Communication**

According to Nutbeam & Harris (1999), “The development of effective health promotion strategies involves engaging individuals and communities in the challenges” (p.46). That means that there needs to be “an understanding of the beliefs and knowledge that people have about a problem and their skills in addressing it, as well as broader community understanding of why the challenges is important and how it can most effectively be addressed” (Nutbeam et.al, 1999, p.46). I felt obliged to consider this as I made decisions about my research design. I will share this later in the methodology section.

It is essential that there is clear communication between health promotion practitioners and those that are being educated. As Nutbeam & Harris (1999) quite rightly state, “this communication can be at an individual level or through the development of mass communication strategies” (p.46). However there are barriers to communication.

According to Rowitz (2009) “There are many barriers to effective communication” (p.72). Communication can be blocked by both internal and external forces including: the participant’s state of mind, anxiety, lack of interest, concerns about what to say, dislike of the person who is speaking, desires to be elsewhere or injecting judgment related to the listening party. When we are thinking about health promotion and how we consider sending effective health messages, understanding how communication works is essential.

The idea of communicating ideas related to health (health communication) has been studied and is a field of its own with theories, models and ideas that are related to effectively communicating health messages. It focuses majorly on the mediums of communication. “In health communication, the target audience is typically the community population at risk, and the

long-term goal is to help people in the population increase control over and improve their health” (Rowitz, p. 307, 2009). According to the CDC (as cited in Rowitz, 1999) “Health Communication focuses on the “crafting and delivery of messages and strategies based on consumer research to promote the health of individuals and communities (p.2)” (p.312). The CDC has listed 10 guidelines for increasing the effectiveness of health communication:

1. Review the background information. (What is out there?)
2. Set communications objectives (What do we want to accomplish?)
3. Analyze and segment target audiences. (Whom do we want to reach?)
4. Develop and pretest message concepts. (What do we want to say?)
5. Select communication channels. (Where do we want to say it?)
6. Create and pretest messages and products. (How do we want to say it?)
7. Develop promotion plan/production. (How do we get it used?)
8. Implement communication strategies and conduct process evaluation. (Let’s do it!)
9. Conduct outcome and impact evaluation. (How well did we do?)
10. Feedback to improve communication. (Where do we go from here?) (Rowitz, p, 312. 2009).

The guidelines for increasing effective communication would later become key in my comparative analysis of the characteristics of dance and how that plays out in using dance as an art form as an alternative medium for educating and increasing awareness about college student in my own community.

### **College Student Suicide**

I reviewed literature on college student suicide to find out (1) how others were addressing this health challenge; (2) what the research was saying; (3) what current initiatives, and

interventions were in place; (4) the success and failures of those initiatives; and (5) the recommendations made to address the problem. The health information, research findings, and data I gathered served as content/ material to incorporate into the dance choreography and performance. From my review of the literature on college student suicide, three major themes emerged that I used to inform the dance choreography and performance. It was clear that there was a need for:-

- (i) increased awareness of the risk factors, warning signs, and protective factors of college student suicide (Coggan , Patterson & Fill,1997; Gencoz & Or, 2006; Haas, Hendin & Mann, 2003; McElroy, 2004 ).
- (ii) greater empathy amongst peers (Coggan et al., 1997; Mueller & Waas, 2002).
- (iii) increased social and support network systems throughout the community (Gencoz & Or, 2006; Haas et al.; 2006; Westfield, et al., 2006).

Few occurrences seem more disturbing or tragic than a college student's death by suicide (Haas, Hendin, & Mann, 2003) yet according to the American Association of Suicidology, suicide is the second leading cause of deaths in universities (O'Connor, 2007). Suicide on college campuses in the US has been a challenge of great concern for many years (Westfield, et al., 2006). It was in the 1980s to mid 1990s that suicide became the second leading cause of death among both college students and 20-24 year olds (Haas, et al., 2003), with some research indicating graduate students were at highest risk (Collins & Paykel, 2000). The death rate of suicide among college students has been found to ranging from 5.6/100,000 to 7.5/100,000—a decline from 13.6/100,000 in 1994 and 9.9/100,000 in 2002 (Westfield et al., 2006). While these numbers may indicate that we are headed in the right direction, there is something else to consider.

Suicide behavior falls along a continuum ranging from thoughts, to suicidal behavior, to suicide attempts to suicide (Coggan, Patterson, & Fill, 1997). This brings us to an even more alarming statistic. For every completed suicide there are 100 to 200 attempts (O'Connor, 2007). Westfield et al. (2005) found in a study of 1865 students, that 5% had attempted and 24% had thought about it. These results correlate with the claim that while research suggests that suicide is decreasing in terms of attempts the problem may be increasing. Mueller & Waas (2002) also refer to research findings that show: 43% of a college aged sample report some level of suicidal ideation, 39% told a peer of suicide ideation, and 90% had some type of suicidal experience. These are clear indications that suicide among this group of young adults is an ongoing public health concern (Mueller & Waas, 2002). Although attempts to understand, predict and prevent the loss of young lives that held so much promise and possibility have resulted in extensive literature, there has been very little systematic research (Haas et al., 2003).

***Risk factors, warning signs, and protective factors.***

Having knowledge about the risk factors, warning signs and protective factors of suicide will play a vital role in taking steps to prevent suicide and protect the student at risk. Research presents much evidence of the factors contributing to the mindset of the suicidal student. One major finding is that almost all completed suicides have a history of mental illness (Mc Elroy, 2004). Recent survey and media reports also point to significant mental health problems among college students (Haas et al., 2003). Gencoz & Or (2006) state:

Among psychological problems, the most frequent disorder that is observed in suicide is depression. Depression is a final common pathway on the road to suicide. There is a clear association between suicide and depression. Depression has been associated with increased risk of suicide in a variety of epidemiological and clinical studies. Researchers

argue that when the depressed patient believes there is no solution to their problems, they view suicide as a way to get rid of their problems (p. 2).

Depression can arise from a number of factors including pre-existing mental illness, inadequate coping methods and the stress of adapting to a new lifestyle (O'Connor, 2007). The American College Health Association recently conducted a study where they found that one-in-two students become severely depressed during their undergraduate years (O'Connor, 2007). This finding is an indication that these students may not be coping very well with the transition. According to Mueller & Waas (2002), when we consider the academic pressures, vocational choices, life goal decisions, isolation from family, and established networks of social support we can better understand how a student, especially with a previous history of mental illness, might find the burden too great to bear.

In a qualitative research study that utilized focus group interviews with youth as means of gaining insight into their thinking patterns, Coggan et al (1997) found that young people would cope alone or turn to a friend if they were feeling suicidal. This may be an indication that is not only important to know the mental health status of students but also to teach fellow students to look out for warning signs amongst their peers. Some of the warning signs of the suicidal student may include withdrawal from friends and family, inability to concentrate, talk of suicide, dramatic change in personal appearance, expressions of hopelessness and excess guilt, self-destructive behavior, preoccupation with death, and bequeathing favorite possessions. Other warning signs include impulsivity, inappropriate responses, frequent complaints about physical symptoms, and verbal hints (Suicide Prevention Guidelines, 1999).

Coggan et al. (1997) found that personality changes were identified as the most common warning sign of a suicidal friend (risk taking behavior and unusual action were also cited). Personality changes were described as shutting off, crying, constant mood swings, false fronts, rarely being happy over anything, being obsessed with their appearance, having withdrawal, and being disinterested in anything (Coggan et al., 1997).

Though research on suicidal risk has typically focused on factors that contribute to the likelihood that an individual will attempt and potentially complete suicide, less attention has been given to protective factors, which are adaptive characteristics that may inhibit suicidal behavior. One of the most important protective factors for college students is emotional connection to family, college/university, and friends. Other protective factors include reasons for living (responsibility to family and friends, survival and coping skills, future related concerns etc.). Finally 'no harm contracts' were also cited as protective factors used in therapy, where the individual would make an agreement not to harm him/herself (Westfield et al., 2006).

### *Peer empathy*

According to Mueller & Waas (2002), peer groups may be most effective in recognizing suicidal symptoms and taking steps to assist the at risk peers. It is therefore important to increase the awareness amongst college students so that they will be able to recognize when and if a peer is exhibiting suicidal behavior (Mueller & Waas, 2002). Beyond simply knowing and identifying warning signs, fellow students also need to act on promptings they receive, in an effort to save lives, including those not in their personal social circles. Some research indicates that the college student's response may be affected by a few factors including: lack of knowledge about the strategies to prevent suicide, late recognition of warning signs (Coggan et al., 1997),



empathy, responsiveness and sociocognitive factors that may influence perception of at risk behavior (Mueller & Waas, 2002).

Research has documented that generally empathy plays a significant role in mediating helpfulness behavior. It was found that women exhibited higher levels of empathy than men exhibited, and were more likely to assist distressed others. College students were also more sensitive to behavioral symptoms (social withdrawal, sleep disruptions, reckless self destructive acts) and less sensitive to affective symptoms (feelings of sadness, loss, hopelessness, anger) (Mueller & Waas, 2002, p. 326). One of the first steps to prevention is the ability to recognize the troubled student. Acting on the knowledge is the next most crucial step and this greatly relies on the perception and the empathetic response of the peers and individuals within the community.

### *Social and support networks*

Considering the present state of mind of the college student at risk of suicide, a few strategies have been outlined by the Board of Education to address the challenges of creating a supportive environment. Some of these strategies include:- fostering a climate that is safe and secure, training support staff members, improving accessibility of services, ongoing support groups and promotion of activities and extracurricular programs that are inviting and inclusive (Board of Education, 1999). In addition to providing on campus services, it is substantially important that mental health professionals are able to correctly assess suicidal risk factors (Gencoz & Or, 2006). That ability will be most influenced by the level of training received by staff, as well as their ability to provide both efficient and proficient outreach.

Current evidence points to a greater need for outreach programs that not only identify students but also encourage them into treatment (Haas et al., 2003). Research indicates that when students do seek counseling it is helpful, but a mechanism still needs to be identified to increase utilization on the campus (Westfield et al., 2006). Additionally with the increasing trend of severe mental health problems among college students, mental health services are actually more challenged to provide ever more extensive services (Haas et al., 2003). According to Coggan et al. (1997), a major barrier to youth using these existing services/ resources is a lack of knowledge of its existence. The stigma attached to using mental health services is also a barrier to students openly seeking help. A point of greater concern was that the research indicated that an alarming 38% of colleges did not offer psychiatric services. This fact renders the student completely helpless but highlights the priority or lack thereof of some institutions (Haas et al., 2003).

### ***Suicide prevention***

It is evident that prevention is always preferable to cure (Mc Elroy, 2004) when creating strategies to address this tragic waste of human life (Coggan et al., 1997). Little is known about the most effective means for reducing suicide, (Coggan et al., 1997), little has been done to identify at risk individuals prior to suicidal behavior, and little effort has been made to seek out the isolated at risk individual (Haas et al., 2003). However, we do know that there are three major areas to address when considering prevention approaches. They are: - (i) educating the community about the risk factors, warning signs and protective factors; (ii) building empathy amongst peers; and (iii) increasing and improving social support networks on campus.

According to Haas et al. (2003) most suicide prevention programs that do exist on American campuses tend to be essentially educational in nature. Most research supports the idea

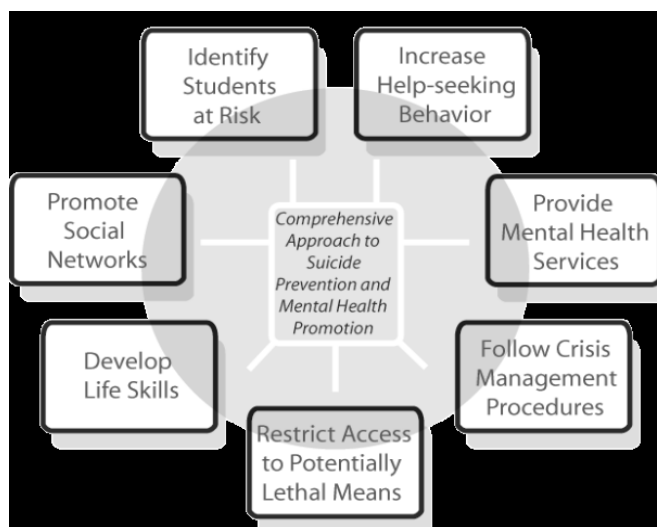
that an effective prevention strategy needs to educate participants about warning signs but furthermore point to which action to take and how to access social resources (Westfield et al., 2006) Coggan et al. (1997) suggest that these initiatives need to have a broad focus and incorporate real challenges rather than concentrating only on suicide. Prevention programs also need to pay special attention to symptoms such as depression and hopelessness, which college students were found to have a tendency to be less sensitive to (Mueller & Waas, 2002). We also need to encourage members of the community to engage in pleasant events to alleviate many depressive symptoms and stressful life circumstances (Gencoz & Or, 2006), and allow them to feel connected to their communities. Tasks like these might rely mostly on the empathetic response of the peer, an area that also needs to be addressed in suicide prevention programs.

Finally, in general, universities need to create programs that make students more aware of the support services available, make services more accessible, and provide more supportive activities (Westfield et al., 2006) that will potentially cause more students to seek support and become involved with their community. Beyond the staff and faculties at any university setting, the student body also needs to know the importance of them becoming more alert, caring, and support of their fellow students.

### **A comprehensive approach to suicide prevention and mental health promotion**

The JED Foundation provides a model of what a comprehensive approach to suicide prevention should look like., and is a good place to begin the conversation about what needs to be done, and who should get involved on the university campus. This model is an indicator of the need for that address a wide range of risk factors at different levels (Guo & Harstall, 2004) if we are to affect the health of the community. Unfortunately, research has not yet been able to determine if any single intervention is more effective than another is. That is in part due to lack

of evidence and because many widely used suicide prevention programs are in need of scientific assessment.



**Figure 2 Model For Comprehensive Suicide Prevention and Mental Health Promotion (Jed Foundation, 2008)**  
[Used under fair use, 2012.]

Essentially, the model is suggesting is that these seven areas are significant in suicide prevention. Identify, increase, provide, follow, restrict, develop and promote are all actions that need to be taken. These are all related to the three areas I categorized in the review of the literature of college student suicide. I would say the model could go a step further to identify and include the actors that would play key roles in fulfilling each area of the model. For the purpose of this study I entered the discourse as a health professional in the field of health promotion and I situated myself more specifically in the context of health communication as I explore my embodied experience of choreographing and performing a dance about college student suicide.

### **Dance: Art, Self, and Community**

As an artist and health professional, I recognize that my own background and the sum of my life experiences shaped and influenced my perspective on dance, dance choreography and performance. As such, looking at the works and theories of other artists, provided a backdrop for describing and reflecting on my own approach to dance as an art form and a medium for

communication. Reviewing research literature and writing on dance as an art form, dance choreography and the dancing body, used on stage and in communities, facilitated a deeper and more insightful exploration of my own embodied experience that my life experiences knowingly and unknowingly shaped.

### **All About Dance**

Dance simply stated is movement, which in Stolberg's (2006) opinion "forms the very basis of our ability to think about ourselves, our actions and how we make sense of things" (p. 431). It can also provide a means for expressing emotions and empathizing with other people's feelings, particularly as they are expressed in body language (Kuhlman & Lutz, 2000). While dance utilizes the body to speak (Loots, 2006), it is when the dancer performs what the choreographer has actually conceived, adding some of his/ her dynamic individuality (Arnold, 2000), that the dance takes on a new life of its own. Thus the dancer embodies the dance through his/her conscious perception of what is being communicated using his/her own body.

Dance can be classified into two genres, social dance and stage dance. Within social dance there is fashion dance (learned formally), and people's dance (learned informally), which is often used in communities and carry a weight of cultural tradition. Stage dances, which as the name implies, are danced on a stage, include styles such as: - ballet, jazz, modern and folk dances (Nilsson, 1991). It is important to note that both genres of dance are used within the context of the community.

Increasingly, dance is being used for more than just aesthetics. Authors have also written about dance from more than an artistic perspective. Giurchescu (2001) describes instances where dance is used to "package" political, ideological, educational, religious and economic messages" (p. 111) often with the aim of structuring or changing social systems in certain groups. In

Cohen's (1950) opinion, "dance as an art form should communicate social ideas valuable to contemporary life" (p. 114). Both these authors attempt to present dance in a similar light. It is not just an art form designed for aesthetics pleasure, but also an art form able to make significant contributions to the society in which we live.

Amongst ethnic cultures we find dance serving this purpose. This style of dance referred to as ethnic dance, is simply defined as dance performed in the social setting in which it was originated. One type of ethnic dance is African dance, which is an inherent function of the society. For Africans, dance is not merely entertaining but a significant part of the social cohesion of its people (Harper, 1967). In Hanna's (2005) research, she found that "Africans who grew up in traditional settings believed that dance was integral to life and thus it often had a communicative charisma" (p. 5). Hanna (1973) argues that "the dance itself is significant because it has powerful communication potential as it refers to things outside itself, evoking associations about ideas, feelings and physical things" (p.166).

The societal significance of African dance is well exemplified in the Nigerian culture where the women's power can be found in dance. They perform what is called the dance-play performance, which is composed of music, song or theme and dance and it is usually performed on occasions such as: births, deaths, harvests, markets, visiting dignitaries and religious celebrations. The Women's War amongst the Ubkalan women of Nigeria in 1929 is an apt illustration of both the power and significance of dance within the society. During the war, both miscommunication and mistreatment led to thousands of women gathering to protest in song and dance. When their voices went unheeded, tragic violence erupted and the result was the pulling down and destruction of the system of injustice they were fighting against (Hanna, 1981-1982).

In North America dance has undergone its own revolution that molded and changed it from an art form of spectacle to one of wider scope, expression and purpose. The significant works of choreographers like Doris Humphrey and Martha Graham, whose work gave rise to other revolutions marked this change. They influenced the development of a new type of dance that was “unconcerned with the inner personality and formal properties of movement but that used dance as a weapon to expose the harsh realities of society in the 1930s and the devastating social repercussions of the 1929 stock market crash” (Prickett, 1989, p.47). What came to be known as the “dance protest”, spread with the formation of a group called ‘the new dance group.’ During that time the words “the dance is a weapon in the class struggle” became a far-reaching slogan (Prickett, 1989, p. 47). In 1932 the Worker’s Dance League an organization of left-wing solo dancers and dance group was also formed (Prickett, 1989, p. 48). marking one of the major events in an era when dance was speaking out.

Their dance reflected attempts to “awaken the social conscience of the spectators through the message in the dance” (Prickett, 1989, p.48). While challenges addressed ranged from the weight dance could give to media propaganda to challenges related to the execution of dance prowess, much of the focus of the dance at this time was to “depict the oppression and the evils of the capitalist society” (Prickett, 1989, p. 50). Many groups since that time have gone on to use dance as a means of forging new territories, giving meaning to the art and affecting social change.

Today many dancers and choreographers use dance as a means of channeling raw emotion in a message aimed at affecting the audience. Mears (2003) describes it as “taking advantage of the stage as a space to communicate something beyond dance.’ “From Anna Sokolow and Lester Horton to Jawole Jo Zollar and Joe Goode, choreographers have addressed

challenges of justice and social responsibility shaping their perspectives into metaphors and abstractions” (Felciano, 2005, p.1). It is through this creative expression of both individual and group life (De Nobriga & Schwarzman, 1999), that it is possible for individuals to gain distinct and unique insights that can be experienced in no other way (Kleinman, 1969), and still have its own unique impact on the world around it.

### **Dance As Art**

Dance as an art form has been described as “incorporating non choreographic components such as pantomime, expressive or codified gestures, facial expressions, music, verbal utterances, text/ poetry, props, costumes, staging, proxemics and social rules” (Giurchescu, 2001, p.111). The body communicates through proximity, touch, eye gaze, facial expression, posture, physical appearance, smell and emotion in gesture and locomotion (Hanna, 2006). Hanna (1973) defines dance as being “composed of purposefully, intentionally rhythmical, and culturally patterned sequences of nonverbal body movements and gestures which are not ordinarily motor activities, the motion having inherent value” (p.165). In Dimondstein’s (1985) description of dance he says, “the body is moving in and through space... it is through varying combinations that the movements form images that are created and perceived through our visual kinesthetic senses’(p. 79). Essentially the movement created is a result of a “highly self conscious process” (Cohen, 1950, p.113) in which the choreographer creates, while “the dancer works to capture both specific action and the qualitative aspects of movement” (Dunagan, 2005, p. 32).

Dance may be defined as the interpretation of ideas, feelings, and sensory impressions expressed symbolically through the body (Dimondstein, 1985). It deals with emotions attitudes and ideas about facts and phenomena that become internalized and “known” through movement



(Dimondstein, 1985). The body moves in and through space, requires time, and uses energy as its forces. In varying combinations the movements form images that are created and perceived through our visual kinesthetic senses (Dimondstein, 1985). This expressive movement is a result of a highly self-conscious process of creation (Cohen, 1950).

While dance is not a universal language, it is language-like and expressive (Hanna, 2005) producing meaning each time it is performed (Giurchescu, 2001). It is an art of communication when it grows out of a human experience when individual movements are derived from individual emotions (Cohen, 1950). In the process of communication dance does not function in isolation but incorporates non choreographic components such as pantomime, expressive or codified gestures, facial expressions, music, verbal utterances, text/ poetry, props, costumes, staging, proxemics and social rules (Giurchescu, 2001). We can therefore say that the body talks, communicating content not easily communicated in verbal language, and people listen.

### **The Dancing Self**

Press (2002) says the dancer can be anyone. She says that “symbolically, everyone knows how to “dance”; unfortunately, not everyone knows that she/he knows how to “dance”” (Press, 2002, p. 15). According to Press (2002), the “dancing self” is “a metaphor for an individual who feels vitally alive and creatively engaged in the world” (p. 15). Moreover, Press (2002) claims that “the dancing self symbolizes the creative individual, supported by society and its educational enterprises, finding and expressing significant meaning, ‘to live life most meaningfully for our sense of self, others and culture, each person needs to find the dancing self within” (p. 15). That culture she defines as “the manifestations within a society that illustrate and reinforce subjective experiences of self and group self” (Press, p. 208, 2002). In other words, we are more than the body we see and the self we know that dances. We dance under constraints

beyond our vision and even own conscious thinking, however even these constraints are able to overcome, so that we can dance as our truest selves.

As we think about the “self” and situate it in the context of dance it is important to understand that beyond art, dance is “ a unique way of expressing our stories, beliefs, ideas, felling and traditions dance,” “ a unique expression of culture that is essential to artistic, aesthetic, social and cultural education” and integral to all cultures ” (Hong, 2002, p.1) . Hong (2002) further says that “as we create, perform, view, interpret, and investigate dance as a socio-cultural phenomenon we are engaged in transforming our ideas, communicating, and expressing who we are and our relationship to the world in and through dance” (p.1). Dancing, the dancer and dance choreography do not work in isolation but they work within the context of very specific cultures, traditions, environments and experiences that influence the dancer and the dancer’s body.

### **The Dancer**

Arnold (2000) suggests that there are two types of dancers, the passive dancer and the active dancer. “The passive dancer is perceived to be a willing and compliant vehicle in the hands of the choreographer, acting as a tool or an instrument to be manipulated” (p. 89). On the other hand, “the active dancer is perceived by the choreographer to be a person who is both interested in and capable of informed collaboration while being imaginative and contributive.” (Arnold, 2000, p. 89). Given the same choreography, for these two dancers, the essential difference would be application in performance. I think that several factors could possibly influence the type of dancer a choreographer would select to perform in a dance. In traditional dances such as ballet, that have repertoires that are set in their choreography, e.g. Lev Ivanov’s Swan Lake or Nutcracker, a passive dancer may well work to be manipulated into exact moves

and character. This classification, Arnold (2000) admits is 'simplistic.' I argue that the balance of the aims and goals of the dancer/choreographer is of greater significance to this discussion.

It is likely that for a modern dance choreographer whose emphasis may be on technique, style and the improvisational skills of the dancer, and active dancer may be well suited. It is possible that, the type of dancer selected to perform a dance designed communicate idea about a social challenges to an audience, will be highly dependent on the style of dance employed, more than the dancer. However when considering the role of expression and drama that often used for emphasis, it is the active dancer whose imaginative nature might bring more to the table. It is also not impossible to think that a dancer can be both active and passive depending on the style of dance being performed, their experience and the comfort level.

Entering the world of the dancer, who is often an object of gaze rather than a voice to be heard, is important as dance continues to be a vehicle for communicating various challenges today in society. Dancers do not come into the dance arena as a blank canvas. They have been written upon by their own histories that may influence so many aspects of their dance ranging from the style of dance they choose, their purpose for dancing to their exceptional dancing ability or poor dance performance. To better understand the dancer requires us to move from the audience into the dance studio, and may require us to go as far as removing the dancer from the studio and conversing with them. It is within the narrative of the dancer that we find out who they are, why they have chosen dance as a profession, hobby, or therapy.

In Risner's (2000) exploration of the construction of knowledge by dancers in the rehearsal process, he found that "by bringing the dancer's stories into conversation with one another, a wider perspective of the dancer in the choreography was revealed" (p. 168). Risner (2002) found that it was through the dancer's narrative, that particular stories often revealed

challenges previously hidden. This often led to more important questions rather than generalizable answers.

In literature and publicly, the voice heard the least is the voice of the young dancer (Stevens et al., 2007; Bracey, 2004). According to Stevens et al. (2007), this has implications in that development of one's voice is part of the development of one's mind and one's own self. These scholars seem to suggest that it is the voice of the dancer that is shaping how they think, and who they are both on and off the stage. Knowing and understanding what being a dancer means to the dancer and what dancers' future aspirations are, is important in the cultivation of talented artists who could potentially utilize their talents beyond the stage and into the future. However as Bracey (2004) rightly states, "for one's voice to be heard, some-one must listen" (p.7).

Bracey (2004) explored the dance technique class experience of students in a university dance program. One of the highlights of the findings of this study was that participants reached a deeper understanding of their relationship to dance as they spoke of it. Questions about their experience as a dancer had been either infrequent or superficial. They expressed that dancing and studying dance was at times a way for them to find their voices. Ultimately through speaking about dance, the dancers in the study were able to come to a better understanding of their own values in dance. This is important as many dancers take for granted their own abilities, and sometimes have even forgotten why they love dancing. It is however important that they understand the value of what they have invested their time and energy. Traditionally the dancer's career has had a limited life expectancy. However as we move in the direction of using dance to serve a greater purpose, dancers can potentially enjoy a lifetime of dance that is valuable to both themselves and their surrounding community.

Dance can be valuable not only to audiences but also to the dancers themselves. When Picard (2000) explored midlife women making meaning of how they viewed their health through creative movement. He found that these women “could identify meaning, evolving complexity, choice points, and shifts in awareness during the reflective process. And it was important for them to be known to others in expanding consciousness validating creative movement as a mode of self expression” (p. 156). It is through this experience that dancers had the opportunity to build and establish positive relationships while interacting with other dancers, something important to both their personal growth and development. These women were also able to establish potential social and support networks that may be needed in the future (Picard, 2000).

### **Dance Choreography**

Dance choreography can simply be defined as the act of putting dance steps together to create a sequence in motion. I would say dance choreography itself is its own art form. The choreographer conceives of ideas, and then begins to visualize movement to portray them. While choreographers can often imagine ways and means of portraying what they would like their audience to see, the end design is never truly fully imagined beforehand. Beiswanger (1962) describes this aspect of the choreographic process as “creative activity that is fraught with intention and design but fertilized by the spontaneous and uncalculated” (p.13). The final vision is ultimately realized through the process of creation.

Factors affecting the final creation to be presented can range from, feelings and emotion stirred up during the course of choreographing to the interaction with bodies with different personalities, technique and style to simply a personal shift in perspective. The choreographer has something he/she would like to communicate effectively to an audience and will seek to find the best means of facilitating this process. The choreographer may or may not use music, drama,

props, on stage narratives, freeze frames, special costuming, unexpected transition, and non-traditional movement. Regardless of whether the aim of the dance is simply for the sake of movement, for shedding light on a social challenges or educating an audience, the ultimate goal is to captivate the audience with the dance/ movement with which they have been presented

In general, much of the work of the choreographer is to “harness a web of personal narratives from the dancers and artists involved in the performance” (Loots, 2006, p. 455). Several types of relationships can exist between the dancer and the choreographer during the course of the choreographic process. Butterworth (2004) presents a paradigm for learning and teaching of choreography that describes this relationship as falling upon a continuum that ranges from the didactic (teaching by showing) to the democratic (working in a shared collaboration). In the Didactic-Democratic Spectrum three devising processes exist: “Dancers contributing to the concept of a choreographer; Dancers collaborating with the choreographer: Dancer-choreographer working together” (p. 53). The author further describes five distinct approaches to the choreographic process (See Appendix A). Each approach however implies a shift in ownership between one process and another that impacts the choreographer and dancer skills necessary, the type of social interaction that occurs, and the teaching method and learning approaches employed.

In Norris’ (2003) paper that documented some of the methods and processes involved in creating a new dance work, she claimed that the shape and the direction of a dance piece was molded by the communicative journey between the choreographer and the dancers who have their own prior histories and stories to tell. It was during this journey that histories became intertwined and conversations happened as dancers learned, danced, and discussed new material. While learning the choreographer’s movements, the dancers also “reveal information about their

own movement experience and readiness to integrate their embodied knowledge” (Norris, 2003, p.172 ) into new movement. The end result—the dance movement—thus becomes a manifestation of what the authors describes as “an imaginative self examination process” (p. 172). A relationship is developed between the dancers as well as with the choreographer, during the course of learning dance moves. Then the spirit of the relationship weaves its way into the choreography, affecting the quality of choreographic process and the final performance.

When Stolberg (2006) attempted to mesh choreography with science, his choice of dance group was influenced by the dance group’s style and thus ability to portray what he had envisioned. His aim as a scientist was to teach students about the Carbon Cycle by using dancing human bodies. The research explored dance as a medium for showing science’s ideas to a wider audience by posing the question: “What if the language of explanation were itself in motion?” His research questioned if dance could be used as an effective medium to communicate scientific ideas. The final research primarily looked at the collaboration between the artist and the scientist, and the use of the production as an educational vehicle was secondary. During the process the researcher realized that in order for the dance material to achieve the goal, the science story would have to be interpreted by the choreographer. Thus the choreographer had to “make the ideas meaningful to her in terms of her own conceptual references” (Stolberg, 2006, p.430 ). Ultimately for the successful collaboration between science and dance, subject matter danced had to have meaning for both the artist and the scientist. In so doing the choreography moved from simply re-telling the facts to an original artwork that was “a creative interpretation of the subject in motion” (Stolberg, 2006, p. 431).

Norris (2003) found through observing dancers’ interaction in the studio bears witness to the fact that the choreographer’s vision and the life experiences of the dancer, impacted

choreography and choreographing. Dancers have a contribution to make not only as physical bodies, but also as thinking, moving, emotional beings with potentially a wide variety of movement perspectives. What the dancer brings to the choreography will always impact what is in the final piece and the quality of the creation. Thus beyond the type of dancer choreographers select, knowing who the dancer is may be even more important when considering the future aim of the material to be presented. Stolberg's (2006) study of collaborating dance with science also illustrates how, who the dancer is, influences the meaning the dancer(s) give(s) to the subject matter and the dance work that is finally produced. In the dance discourse, choreography has often been described as being written on the body of the dancer; however it appears that the dancer also influences what we can and cannot write. If the choreographer aims to address social challenges through dance, and hopes that it will have a powerful impact on the audience/community, he/she may want to take more time deciding whom to choose, to literally 'bring the house down.'

### **The Dancing Body**

The dance and the dancer cannot be considered without considering the role of the body in dance. Cancienne & Snowber, (2003) state,

the body is, no doubt, informed and inscribed by many political, social, and cultural discourses, which have legitimized the body in its relationship to knowledge. How we conceptualize the body intellectually is different from how we experience through dance the living, breathing, pulsing body from the inside out. As dancers, it is our limbs, torsos, gestures, pelvis, hips, legs, and hands are the things that excavate the nexus of knowledge, insight, and understanding. Our dancing bodies become a place where we can cultivate a sense of embodiment in an age in which analysis and fragmentation often



thwart us in recognizing and exploring the meaning of the ordinary, bodily acts of our lives. (p. 238)

Block & Kissell (2001) add, “dance helps us to see in an extraordinarily effective way the meaning of embodiment” (p. 5).

In dance, the individual body and /corporate bodies move together in form and space to create images interpreted through our kinesthetic senses. The dance becomes its own language to interpret, as the bodies in motion tell a story /stories, communicate ideas, and perform content put forth by the dancers and the choreographer. The dancing body carries its embodied experiences and historical inscriptions, both of which can influence the resulting dance choreography and performance presented. As the body/bodies are moving, a profound discourse is also ensuing between the dancing body/bodies and the audience viewing the performance. In essence, the dancing body has the potential to communicate to, for and with the audience.

As a dancer working with, in and through the body, Foster (1997) says that she experiences her body as a body-of-ideas. She says that she knows the body only through the methods she used to cultivate it. Foster (1997) points to the idea that the training, the experiences, the disciplines that the body is exposed to shapes the body’s response when placed in familiar and unfamiliar situations. Her discourse describes in depth different trainings and techniques the body undergoes in studying of dance and how those memories or ways of thinking then transcends the dance studio even into everyday life. In other words she is saying that our body’s response is somewhat predictable based upon the sum of our life experiences and more specifically in this articles, the sum of the life training experiences of the dancers.

In Mans (2008) exploration of the body, she used art education to look at the ways in which the society’s histories and personal experiences were embodied in the women in South

Africa and how changes in the society had begun to impact change in the women's embodied experience of themselves. She used dance in Africa as a means of understanding body perceptions and images. As she explored how the contemporary transitional society of South African value systems had begun to erode, she began to ask herself the question, "How does this impact society and how are these changes embodied?" (Mans, 2008, p.77). She suggests that changes within our sociocultural and sociopolitical environment impact experiences of our own selves, and these experiences become embodied, and reveal themselves in what we say, what we do, how we think and even how we perceive and move our bodies.

Mans (2004) uses this understanding to look at "how women embody modernity, race, age, gender and beauty and how this is translated into dance" (p.77). Since dance is traditionally engrained into the culture, Mans observed the women's embodied experience of dance and their attitude toward their own bodies as indicators of the impact of a changing society. She describes the dancing body "as having the function to culturally mediate materiality" (p. 80). She describes the body as embodying "a display of the tensions and contradictions in society and its power structure of history and the painful story of race" (p. 80). For Mans (2004), "to understand the significance of the dancing body within a culture one must engage with a variety of discourses – the kinesthetic, somatic, visual, aesthetic and intellectual" (p. 88). It is her belief that "the body is one of the most important sites of identity construction, and in dance it is an explication of personal as well as cultural (or group) identity" (p. 91). She concludes that "dance can serve as an impetus for change by making a statement and thereby negotiating and constructing identity" (p. 91).

Foster (as cited in Markula & Denison, 2000), says, "the body is socially constructed and thus communicates social meanings" (p.423). She says, "it is important to consider the body's

unique ways of communicating through movement” (p. 423). In her discourse on kinesthetic sympathy, she argues, “we all have the ability, proprioceptively, to connect with another person’s bodily feelings. In this way, bodies can communicate their inner workings to each other” (p. 423).

“Approaching research kinesthetically”, Foster feels, “ensures that movement is not only read but that the body itself enacts meaning” (p. 423). Scholars ascertain that the body is written on and has the ability to write and both of these ideas inform dancing. According to Foster (as cited in Markula et.al, 2000), “the body can never act as a subject for research because it is always a product of its social markings and thus an object for a textual reading” (p. 423). Markula et.al (2000) referring to Foster, say that “in her own research, she maintains a dialogue between the body that writes (herself) and the other dancing and researching bodies that are written but at the same time also write. To create kinesthetic empathy with the reader, she includes in her research frequent descriptions of the act of writing, including the physical labor and bodily feelings:

Sitting in this chair, squirming away from the glitches, aches, low-grade tensions reverberating in neck and hip, staring unfocused at some space between here and the nearest objects, shifting again, listening to my stomach growl, to the clock ticking, shifting, stretching, settling, turning—I am a body writing. I am a bodily writing. (p. 3)

The reader can thus enter into a kinesthetic dialogue with Foster’s bodily writing process.” (p. 423-424).

As I continued to move through the didactic process of understanding dance and the dancer, it was both informative and interesting to see how these scholars view and write about dance and the body. Their views conjure up meanings of inescapability from both environment

and self. In my opinion their analysis of the body falls short of the inescapable reality that we are influenced by more than just the sum of our external and body experiences since we are a spirit living in a body and we have a soul. A fact that may in actuality be more influential on what we think and do than our bodily experiences in and of itself.

### **Dancing in Community**

Community dance movement in the reviewed literature refers to dance that emphasizes working with people from the community who may not see dance as a professional goal. Programs using community dance movement are usually seeking to serve the needs of those in the community. Community dance practitioners often attempt to ‘empower’ non-dancers through artistic expressions and provide a social advocacy role in their communities. Often the community projects are tied to the personal expression of social challenges and problems. Despite the embedded notion of the transformative power of the arts, evidence shows that it is difficult to categorize dance and specifically community dance as a transforming phenomenon (Houston, 2005).

According to Loot (2006), much of how we communicate as human beings is through language in the form of words, read, written or spoken. It is one of the prime means through which we give consent to the world around us (Loot, 2006). However language has increasingly come to mean any method of communication (Thompson, 1992, p. 496), spoken, written or otherwise. One medium that have become more widely accepted as a medium of communication are the arts (music, art, dance, drama, poetry etc.). According to Kleinman (1969),

William Arrowsmith pointed out that the function of the arts was once above all education..... From Homer to Greek tragedy to the Roman moralists to Plutarch to the church Fathers to Dante to Montaigne to Bunyan to Emerson, the single most pervasive

function of art has been precisely education. . . . . And there can be no doubt that art still does educate either with or without the help of colleges and universities (p. 53).

Kleinman (1969) further adds that “art should not be used as an intellectual sounding board but at as a valid and relevant activity” (p. 54.).

The use of dance in a community setting can be classified as community based art, “a creative expression that emerges from communities of people working together to improve their individual and collective circumstances” (de Nobriga & Schwarzman, p. 1, 1999). It is the community artist who uses their artistic powers of creation to harness creative ideas from those who are involved as well as those who are observing. As an art form dance is potentially a powerful instrument of change (Giurchescu, 2001) that transforms people, their patterns of interaction and the surrounding world (Giurchescu, 2001) while forwarding their social consciousness (Mears, 2003). The potential of dance to transform can however only truly be maximized by the creativity of the choreographer, and the talent and mastery of the dancers, who according to Giurchescu (2001), are the soul and body of the dance.

According to Houston (2005) “the moral imperative of transforming individuals and communities has been a part of perceptions of the value of art over the last 200 years” (p. 166). In other words art has always had a transformative power that can affect both the individual and the community. Communities have been thought of as a force mediating between the individual and the social (Campbell & Murray, 2004). Campbell & Murray (2004) describe them as being “profoundly structured by the social relations of the wider societies in which they are located and deeply implicated in the process whereby factors translate themselves into the most intimate areas of people’s lives” (p.189). Simply put, communities also have a significant transformative impact on the lives of the individuals living in it. If communities can potentially shape

individuals and art can potentially shape a community, it is possible that art has the power to potentially shape and change individuals within the community.

### **Summary**

Reviewing literature on health promotion, dance, choreography, and performance; talking with other experts; and reviewing current research, pointed me to one possible overlap between health promotion and my proposed use of dance choreography and performance. They both considered, the individual and the community and how they worked together to bring change. As health professional and dancer/ dance choreographer my challenge would be to explore, and detail my experience of attempting to find a common ground where the two schools of thought could possibly work together to accomplish one goal. Promote health education using choreography and performance.

## CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

Methodology, according to Schwandt (1997) is much more than methods of data collection and analysis. Schwandt (1997) defines methodology as, “a theory of how inquiry should proceed. It involves analysis of the principles and procedures in a particular field of inquiry (that, in turn, govern the use of particular methods)” (p. 93). In this chapter, I described autobiographical case study as the qualitative research methodology I used for research study. I also reviewed the work of other researchers who have used art/dance as an embodied way of exploring subject matter. I situated my “self” as researcher, choreographer and dancer, and described how I followed and recorded my experience throughout the process of planning, choreographing, and performing a dance about college student suicide. In describing the proposed “Dance For Life” project, the dance piece, and the plan for rehearsal, I outlined how the data were collected and used. Finally, I conclude this chapter with a description how the data were analyzed, interpreted and written as a personal narrative.

### **Restate of Research Questions**

The purpose of this study was to explore my embodied experience of choreographing and performing a dance about college student suicide. Through constant reflection and analysis, I sought to answer the research question that guided the study:

1. What is my process of planning, choreographing, and performing a professional dance about college student suicide?
2. How can I translate health information, research findings, and data about college student suicide into my dance choreography and performance?

3. What knowledge, insight, and understanding can I gain regarding communicating about college student suicide through the embodied inquiry of choreographing and performing a dance about college student suicide?

## **Qualitative Research Methods**

### **Autobiographical Case Study**

According to Clarke & Creswell (2010), in qualitative research a problem is studied that calls for an exploration; relies on the views of participants; asks broad, general questions; collects data consisting largely of words (or text) from participants; describes and analyzes these words for themes; and conducts the inquiry in a subjective and reflexive manner. (p.66)

Data collected in the form of interviews, journal writings, pictures, video recordings, emails, and all other relevant artifacts were used to recreate a rich description of what I experienced. Emerging themes were developed, and final interpretations of the new knowledge insight and understanding gained through this study were used to formulate answers to the research questions. Using a case study research design, I identified the Dance For Life project as the event happening in a specific location at a given time as my case. As this case was studied solely through the lens, experience and analysis of myself, as researcher. I identified the design as an autobiographical case study.

As an autobiography, the focus of my writing was to describe and recreate my embodied experience of planning, choreographing and performing a dance about college student suicide. Through my writings, I walk the reader through intimate details of my story in a way that would conjure up images and emotions in the reader. As the reader follows the story he/she is able to in part vicariously experience, this experience through the rich description of both my memories,



and my analytic review of the data collected. Working as the subject of the research, and the researcher, I uniquely re-present a picture of my process of self-discovery and the knowledge, insight and understanding I gain through the process. In my self-reflective analysis, I draw from these experiences write the narrative about a real life event, which is my own.

### **Art as a method of inquiry**

I was interested in using art, specifically dance, as a medium for educating and increasing awareness through the sharing of research findings. I also wanted to investigate the translation of research and findings into actual movement. Finally, I was also presenting my process (choreography) and products/ findings (dance piece) using the dance itself. Dance in my research study therefore became a multifaceted tool that served three major purposes. In this study it was (1) a tool representing research (health information, research findings and data about college student suicide); (2) a tool under for investigating, how the translation of research into movement actually occurs; and (3) the method for presenting the findings of the actual research (the choreography and performance).

Boydell (2011) touched on an aspect of the investigation I was proposing when she worked in collaboration with a dance choreographer and group of trained dancers , to create a dance piece that incorporated movements to illustrate and express the frustrations of the youth experiencing psychosis, and the steps they took in search of answers and help. Boydell's (2011) use of dance allowed her to reach a wider audience to disseminate findings, and gave a great voice to psychosis as a health challenge that exists in society. Using this medium of art and expression also shed light on a subject that was sensitive and that many knew little about. More importantly, it provoked and "moved" the audience to a place of emotional response and empathy that is often related to taking action. My goal was to disseminate research findings by

translating the research into movement. It was therefore distinct from that of other artists who used dance as a form of therapy or mainly for educating communities (Frasier, 2008).

Markula (2006) also studied the use of dance performance as a way of representing research. She documented her own experience choreographing and performing a solo contemporary dance piece. Based on her research, she found that dance performance had the potential to succeed as a research presentation. Markula (2006) also pointed to other scholars like Norman Denzin, Carolyn Ellis, Mary Gergen and Laurel Richardson, who also considered representing research not only through text but also through performance. In her study she fused herself as both dancer and academic to represent research related to feminine identity. Through her performance, Markula (2006) discovered that she “had the potential to reach a wider audience than a written text” (p. 20). Through her study she also discovered “how a dance performance can turn into a research presentation” and “how the very nature of dance movement can disseminate social science knowledge” (Markula, 2006, p.24). Scholars like Cancienne et al., (2003) add support to the belief that there is value in using dance/movement in qualitative inquiry. They say,

Our intent, then, in integrating dance/movement within qualitative inquiry is to provide a place for researchers to teach, perceive, and transform education in ways that are overlooked—for it is in the process of movement method research that bodily-based theoretical frameworks can enlarge educational research (p. 250).

Cancienne et al (2003) are letting us know that using dance in qualitative research provides an impetus for change and transformation of education in ways otherwise overlooked. I argue that using dance in the area of health research also has the potential to change and transform the ways the health profession thinks about communication and education. Using dance can provide

a new framework for theoretical and modular transformation in health as well as critically evaluate the way in which the field aims to reach and educate individuals and communities.

Like Markula (2006), I refer to Denzin's (2003) performance ethnography, which supports the need for complementing the "traditional" social science research texts with "live" performances that place performance as the grounding metaphor for the social science research. Performance ethnography then acts as "a form of kinesis, of motion, decentering of agency and person through movement, disruption, action" (Denzin, 2003, p. 10).

Its potential to be transformative and "create social change" (Denzin, 2003, p. 10) was of great interest to me. My discovery of performance ethnography helped me to understand and appreciate how change can be created when live performance is used as a social representation. Alexander (2005) "thinks that at the core of performance ethnography is the desire not only for an audience to see the performance of culture" (p. 423). As Ellis and Bochner (1996) suggest, that also means, "to engage on some level in a "self conscious reflexivity" on their own relation to experience (p. 28). This may be the antecedent to change.

I followed Markula's (2006) further discussion and explanation of how she understood dance to be transformative, based on Deleuze and Guattari's (1994) explanation of the kinetic power of art. Deleuze and Guattari (1994) argue that combining art with philosophy or science is actually a complicated process and they suggest that making art that claims to affect change requires presenting work that goes beyond the endosensations. Based on that argument Markula (2006) says that an individual's amazement of a piece does not equate with the transformative power of art. Instead, if art is to be potentially transformative there must be percepts ("the subjective perception of a moving body forming a further abstraction of "a nonhuman nature," beyond the physical body" (p. 357). There must also be affects ("the feeling of seeing a dance,

the affection, turning into a further abstraction beyond the movement, into a “nonhuman becoming,” into a gesture, into a dance” (p. 357). These affects and percepts work together to create a sensation, which is knowledge that has been understood in the aesthetic plane.

This aesthetic plane/ plane of composition becomes “the thought system through which art makes sense of the world, creates coherence to it, and aims to deterritorialize or take up territory from the dominant opinion to transform it” (p. 357). Therefore, the percepts and affects have the transformative potential and not the materials of art itself (Markula, 2006). Deleuze and Guattari (1994) argue for art that goes beyond the level of the audience’s feelings and instead takes the individual from the sensation, to the percepts to the affects of the work to affect change. (Markula, 2006)

In Fraser’s (2008) review of the work of Katherine Boydell (2011), which is addressed later in this paper she sums it up best saying,

At first glance, the art of dance has found an unlikely partner in health research. But upon reflection, one can see at least 2 points of commonality: both involve interpretation — of emotion and illness, respectively — through the physical body and both involve forms of communication. These commonalities are the starting point for a relatively new art variation: dance, accompanied by music, that provides a visual and aural vocabulary through which the subjective experiences of mental health and other patients can be demonstrated, and research results disseminated. (p. 450)

### **Approach to the Study**

Overall the data from this research study were collected in the form of interviews, field journals of self reflective and self observational data (Cancienne & Snowber, 2003, Chang, 2008) , diaries, audio recordings, video diaries, videotaped recordings of: choreographing,

teaching, learning, rehearsing and performing the dance; and any other personal artifacts that become relevant to this study (See Appendix X).

Doing an autobiographical case study and writing about my experience was a balancing act (Jones, 2005) . While carving a sculpture of my experience, the sculpture begins to take on a shape and form that looks a lot like myself and incorporates elements of my own idea of what the sculpture supposed to look like based upon who I am ( the sum of my life experiences). As I carved my sculpture, I incorporated elements myself hoping that the reader will be able to follow the unfolding of my life and the final image represented.

In some instances I followed a paper trail of journal entries, diary writings, field notes, and other writings throughout the process. In other instances I followed a video, audio and picture trail of material captured throughout the course of this study. Doing a studying that majorly looked at physical activity (movement, dance and interaction between the dance choreographer and the dancers) gave me the advantage of being able to capture most of my experiences audiovisually and pictorially. Upon reviewing the material, I was able to match field notes, diary entries, and self-observations with dated audiovisual material. This facilitated memory recall of weeks of data collection and provided artifacts for presentation in the final narrative.

Throughout the course of this study, I kept a journal and field notes in which I recorded details of my experience both inside and outside the studio. These notes will include rich detail on my thoughts, experiences, observations, and reflections, going through the process of planning and preparation, working with the dancers, selecting the music, creating the dance choreography (movement choices), performing, and using dance to address college student suicide.

The focus of the study was my experience of going through the process of planning, choreographing and performing a new dance piece about college student suicide. However, I also incorporated interviews with three artists working in the area of community based arts. These interviews served as material for reflecting upon my process, the art of choreography, and what we learn as artists by using dance choreography and performance as a medium for communication. I talk more about those interviews further in this chapter, and revisit the interviews in greater detail in chapter five. The voices of the dancers and descriptions of their experiences have also been included in this section to serve as a backdrop of the research study and project.

Overall the data from this research study were collected in the form of interviews, field journals of self reflective and self observational data (Cancienne & Snowber, 2003, Chang, 2008) , diaries, audio recordings, video diaries, videotaped recordings of: choreographing, teaching, learning, rehearsing and performing the dance; and any other personal artifacts that become relevant to this study (See Appendix X).

### **Data collection & procedures** (Putting the pieces together)

Throughout the course of this study, I kept a journal and field notes in which I recorded details of my experience both inside and outside the studio. Those notes will included rich detail on my thoughts, experiences, observations, and reflections, going through the process of planning and preparation, working with the dancers, selecting the music, creating the dance choreography (movement choices), performing, and using dance to address college student suicide. While the focus of the study was on my experience of going through the process of creating a new dance piece, I also incorporated - interviews with artists that I describe later in this paper.

## **The “Dance For Life” Project**

### **The Research Study**

As a doctoral student and member of the university community, I selected to use my own college campus as the site for this research study, as well as the site for presenting the research findings and performance. I have access to the primary resources needed for this study (studio, audiovisual equipment, sound system, meeting rooms), and I will be responsible for completing all reservations, bookings, and material preparation.

“Dance For Life” is the name I gave to the project I undertook with a group of dancers, to create a new dance piece about college student suicide. The project ran for six weeks and culminated with a dance presentation performed on the university campus. As a former member of a university dance organization, dance teacher, and student teacher, I used this network of community members as a resource for finding volunteers for this dance project. My goal was to have a group of 3-5 volunteer dancers who were also college students and members of this university community. I arranged interest meetings with individuals I had invited, as well as those that had responded to public invitations. I held open sessions with those interested sharing more information about the dance the study and the dance project.

At the interest meeting, I presented a description of the purpose of the study, and requirements (rehearsal times, choreographic process, session formats) for participation. The dancers had the opportunity to ask questions about the research protocol and decide if they were interested in committing to the study. I also discussed voluntary withdrawal, confidentiality, associated risks, expected benefits, and any other project related details. At the end of this meeting, I asked the dancers still wishing to participate to sign a consent form, and made a plan to set up a weekly rehearsal schedule based upon proposed times and the dancer’s availability.

I created a contact sheet that listed my contact information and the names, e-mail address and telephone numbers of the other dancers. Once I had given each person a copy of this list, I created a dance group listserv that connected all of us participating in the project. Via this listserv communicated about meetings, and updated each other. I primarily used the listserv, to keep the dancers up to date on rehearsal days, times and location, as well as to share new teaching videos. It connected us throughout the course of the week, gave me an avenue to encourage the dancers, and engage in building our relationship. The final group of dancers that worked on the Dance For Life Project were three female undergraduate students with a very diverse mix of cultural backgrounds, including myself. Ruby was of African descent, Mary Jane was of Filipino decent, Rosella was of Latin American decent, and I was of Caribbean decent.

Over the course of six weeks I worked together with the dancers choreographing, teaching, learning and rehearsing the dance piece. At the end of the six-week project, we held a dance performance at a dance studio on the university campus. Family, friends and members of the community were invited to attend the two performances in the afternoon and evening of December 15, 2012.

### **The Dance Piece**

The purpose of the dance choreographed was to educate the university community about college student suicide. Health information, research findings, and data related to college student suicide provided material/content that I incorporated into the dance piece. Working with the group members, their own feedback and choreography also provided material that was incorporated into the final dance piece. The dance depicted ideas related to stress, isolation, withdrawal, dark places, reaching out to touch another, community/ unity, saving lives, overcoming, persevering, light, joy, life, and hope. Throughout the process, a clear development



of character and roles that determined the movements and performance allotted to each dancer. The dance was not choreographed in any one genre of dance, but incorporated different styles of movement, resulting in a contemporary styled dance piece.

### **The Dance Rehearsal**

In my initial planning for this project, I had set days and times for rehearsal, which was a good start and gauge for completion. However working with student schedules, my work schedule, holidays, and other unexpected cancellations I had to incorporate make-up sessions, working one on one with dancers, and doing some catch up. In spite of any hiccups, by working around everyone's schedule we reserved weekends for the one day we would ensure that everyone was present, and we could rehearse to make sure we were all on the same page. Generally a dance rehearsal looked something like the outline written below.

Each session consists of five parts:

- (i) 15-20 min. introductory conversation, sharing ideas, experiences
- (ii) 15 min warm up
- (iii) 90 min teaching and learning of choreography (including 10 min break).
- (iv) 10 -15 min cool down
- (v) 10 min relax and rap session

### **Interviewing Other Artists**

The purpose of most traditional interviews is to draw out the life experiences of another; however, that was not goal of this research study. The interviews done in this study served to stimulate my own memory, fill in gaps in information, gather new information about myself, and validate my personal data. The three artists I interviewed were theater artist, Ann Kilkelly, and dance choreographers, Liz Lerman and Celeste Miller. They were all involved in art making in

the community, performing their work both on and off stage. Each of their biographies has been included in Appendix C-E, following the list of interview questions.

Including this element of the study contributed to critically looking at how I thought about: (1) dance choreography and performance; (2) using dance as a tool for educating communities; (3) translating information, research, and data into movement; and (4) addressing real life challenges using art. I then developed a list of interview questions based upon the research questions I was seeking to answer. (See Appendix B)

### *Using the Data*

I made field notes during the interview sessions as well as recorded and transcribed the conversations. Based upon these interviews, I was able to journal about the conversations I had with the participants, the questions answered, my thoughts, feelings, and experiences of interacting with each artist.

I first interviewed the three community based artists in week four of the research study. (See Appendix K and R ). While the focus of the research study was primarily on my own life, I used these interviews to “provide external data that can give contextual information that I could use, to confirm, complement, or reject introspectively gathered data”. (Chang, 2008, p. 104)

Instead of drawing out their life experiences, the interviews were essentially used “to stimulate my own memory, fill in gaps in information, gather new information about myself, validate my personal data, and/or gain others’ perspective on me.” (Chang, 2008)

I decided to use the interviews completed as a place for reflecting on my overall embodied experience once it was completed. As such, I interviewed the artists, Ann Kilkelly, Celeste Miller, and Liz Lerman at the beginning of the fourth week of the project, audio recording, video recording and taking field notes that would later be at the data analysis stage.

Once the interviews were over, I set them aside and waited to revisit them at the end of the project. During the course of the study I would recall bits and piece of our exchange and some things that we spoke about were confirmed. As I continued moving through the process, I moved forward with my research and later picked up the interviews again, to hear what these artists had to say. More of our conversations resonated now with my experience.

Transcriptions of portions of the interview that I write about in my reflection were included in the appendices. ( See Appendices, S, T, and U). I also incorporate quotes and reference each of these artists, as I analyzed and sought to answer my research questions.

### **Analysis and interpretation of the data**

#### **Taking a Closer Look and Telling the Story**

The qualitative research process is not a linear one as research steps overlapped one another, sometimes returning me to previous steps. This made data management key in facilitating the data analysis process. Once I collected and organized the data, I began to interpret and analyze the data for themes and write my report in a narrative format that best would show and tell my story. According to Chang (2008), I use my story from the past and interpret them in the context of the present, and the present I contextualize based upon the past. Presenting my research as a story also provided a creative way for describing my experience related to art making and dance so that the reader can vicariously see, hear, feel and touch what I did, while bringing meaningful explanation to the subject about which the art was created.

According to Cohen-Cruz (2005) personal storytelling expresses what people in different walks of life know from the authority of their experience and is appropriately the signature methodology of community based-performance (Cohen-Cruz, 2005). Storytelling is about the personal relationship to others and often articulates an underrepresented or counter point of view

(Cohen-Cruz, 2005). Furthermore “personal stories position even the least powerful individual in the subject position, 'the I', since everyone is an expert on his or her own life” (p.129). According to Cohen-Cruz (2005) “story telling as a traditional form of education passes on values, practices, experience, and knowledge that affirm the collective identity of the group” (p.138).

As an author, I recognized that the text that I produce also has the power to ‘do’ something (Bochner & Ellis, 2003). The words I wrote and spoke could have the power to change and transform. The narrative I was writing became both, about my life and part of my life (Bochner & Ellis, 2003) while remaining true to show and tell my experience.

### **Telling a story using narrative**

It is my ‘self,’ and my ‘self’ in relation to others that becomes the place of self-discovery and the source of my ‘data’ that helps to provide answers to my research questions. I choose to use storytelling as the way to communicate my embodied experience the research I conducted and my overall embodied experience. According to Cohen-Cruz (2005) personal storytelling is a way of expressing the sum of people’s life experiences and is very much characteristic of community based-performance (Cohen-Cruz, 2005) and storytelling as a traditional form of education passes on values, practices, experience, and knowledge that affirm the collective identity of the group” (p.138).

Storytelling tells about relationships between people and, reveals unique points of view personal to those that are telling their stories (Cohen-Cruz, 2005). Furthermore, “personal stories position even the least powerful individual in the subject position, the I, since everyone is an expert on his or her own life” (p. 129). “Presenting the research as a story not only provided me with a creative way for describing experiences related to art making and dance but also allowed

me to make room for the reader to vicariously see, hear, feel and touch what was done, while bringing meaningful explanation to the subject about which the art was created.

According to Piantanida & Garman (1999), “narrative – especially personal narrative is ideally suited for professionals who want to examine their own practice. My process of personal narrative inquiry, documentation, creating text from the documentation that tells my story, interpretation of the text, and the creation of “embedded meanings.” (Piantanida & Garman, 1999) The telling of my story as a narrative thus becomes the personification of my experience.

## CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The findings and discussion chapter of this dissertation is an autobiographical narrative that serves three major purposes. It tells about: (1) my experience of choreographing and performing a dance about college student suicide; (2) how the health information, data and research findings were incorporated into the dance; and (3) what new knowledge insight and understanding was gained about communicating using dance. Throughout this section of the paper, I also utilized ‘other’ voices to tell my story. I incorporated the voices of the dancers and audience members into the narrative by using words they spoke during the study and at the post performance discussion. Finally I included the voices of the artists into each of my analytic discourses using their responses that related to my findings on: (1) the process; (2) translation; and (3) the new knowledge, insight and understanding gained. These voices supported my narrative and provided me with insight into the ways in which members of the community were experiencing the research/dance process. Moreover, in the process I became aware of how the narratives of the artists both resonated with and challenged my findings.

Describing dance and doing dance are two very distinct tasks. To fully grasp what it means to do dance requires being involved in the act of creating the movement. To get a full grasp of the description that someone gives of their experience dancing requires the listeners to do it themselves, to see, feel, and know about what the dancer is actually talking about. Through a narrative, I re-present my experience using pictorial illustrations, words verbatim, memory recall, data review and analysis.

## MAKING ROOM FOR DANCE

### Prelude

Year: between 1991- 1992

Location: Trinidad and Tobago

Time: Early morning

Inside the car: My father and I

Outside the car: Slow traffic

(In conversation with my father about my life and studies, thinking about my future)

My Father: *If you could do anything in this world, what would it be?*

Jandelle: *Anything?*

My Father: *Yes... anything.*

At that moment when my father asked this question, it was as though I had been given, in an instant, an unforgettable freedom that was immeasurable. He had suddenly given me an opportunity to dream and dream without limitation. It was a life changing moment for me. If I could do anything in the world with my life, what would that be?

A sense of elation came over me, as I rested in my thoughts and reveled in the potential of doing what I saw as desirable and a part of my personality. What a peace to be able to dream and possibly do anything! I thought about it as the car slowly moved forward. Outside the car were all the other people heading to their destination. Inside the car, I was dreaming of my destiny. I was about to answer a question that would affect who I was and where I was headed. Even in my dreams. Finally, I had my answer, which was now mixed with emotion, careful thought and willingness to take first steps. I was about to answer one of my life's own questions. Therefore, I responded,

Jandelle: *Dance.... and..... drama.*

*(Pause, silence)*

My Father: *Ok....that's good.... but you don't need to go to school to do that; you can do that anytime... I mean a profession. What profession would you choose to have?*

He had heard the words that were coming out of my mouth, listened and gently responded with the wisdom of any parent listening to a 15 year old. I don't remember anything else we talked about in the car that day and at that time, but I do remember those words. In essence he was saying yes dance, and yes drama but "what else?"

It has been almost twenty years since we had that conversation and my life has taken me down many roads and literally through a few twists and turns in pursuit of my dreams and finding the "what else." Looking back, I would say I was young, and thought like a young person did. I am older now and I am grateful and appreciative that I was encouraged to move forward and to find the 'what else,' there was, and the more that I could be, but not at the cost of forsaking all the dreams and desires I had.

### **A Part of My Story**

I have had many different aspirations, some of which have been fulfilled, others not quite. One of those aspirations that I would today describe as innate, would be, that of becoming a dancer. The beginnings of my experience as a dancer dates back to 1979. I was a two year old and already dancing. However, this story could have been very different, if my mother had not just trusted that time would have taken care of all things.

As a young baby I did what all babies did, I lifted my head up, eventually sat up, could crawl, roll over and more. When I was crawling age, my mother said that I would crawl, but for some reason I would favor one leg more than the other. I do not know why. I was too young to



know then, and I am too old to know now. Regardless of why, all things work together for good. My parents took me to a doctor wanting to make sure that everything was ok. The story is that someone recommended that the leg could be broken and then would probably heal just fine and I would be as good as new.

I am thankful that I have a sensible mother who did not take that advice, but instead, waited it out to see what would happen. By the age of two when I was walking, I was already dancing. So I would say it worked out just fine. I went from crawling with one leg, probably eventually two, and then I was walking and by the terrific age of two, my mother said I could not stop dancing. I would stand up and begin dancing, and when I was able to, I would climb on top of the table to dance. I guess that was center stage. I am thankful, for a little patience, a little wisdom, and a little trust. Today I have two perfectly good legs and I have spent most of my life dancing.

At the age of four, my parents enrolled me into formal dance training at the Caribbean School of Dance, where I studied ballet. I would spend over ten years of my life in the dance studio, training, learning, completing examinations and performing on the 'big' stage. When I was just about fifteen, I stopped dancing to focus on my academics. From the age of sixteen to eighteen, I entered the world of fitness, and found a new joy in training and competing in school/university aerobic exercise and dance marathons. During my undergraduate studies I would return to the dance studio, dance for the university dance ensemble, and continue on a track of working in dance and fitness while pursuing advanced degrees in health promotion.

In my thirties it should have come as no surprise that I would be working on academic research in the areas related to health and the arts. While dance in my life, had been relegated to art and entertainment, my experience of the art form was about to be revolutionized. It was an

exciting time as I had an opportunity in my academic career to research the two areas of my life that I had been involved in and ‘doing’ for a long time. From a practical standpoint, they (dance and health) seemed very easily related and did not appear to be a complex marriage of thoughts and ideas. I had managed to merge these two fields within my ‘self’. From a theoretical standpoint, I still saw merger of these two fields as practical and possible. I later found that in the world of philosophy, art, science, research and independent thinkers, the concept appeared to create some strain, unexpected complexities, and even theoretical discord.

I would remain open to exploring and experimenting with new ways of approaching health, new ways of viewing art, and new concepts of how they could work together. My study made room for adjusting the lens through which art (dance) viewed health, and health viewed art (dance), with the hope that there would be an unmatched symbiosis. In the early stages of my research and contemplation, I spent a lot of time thinking about the similarities and differences between the two fields. As I thought I journalled, made notes and sketched ideas. In the process I began to see a picture through my own lens of the relationship I saw between the two as it pertained to my research study. Drawing a picture was my first in the process of gaining knowledge insight and understanding about using dance as a medium of communication in health promotion. (See Appendix C)

## **DANCE FOR LIFE: THE PROCESS**

### *“The Dance for Life Project”*

Hi,

*I am working on my dissertation project and seeking volunteer dancers who I can work with to create a dance. This study only requires some time and energy and a commitment of 2 days per week for six weeks of this semester. I am interested in looking more closely at how art can be merged with health and used as a medium to educate communities about a sensitive health challenge. Based upon my background, I am using the artistic medium of dance to educate the university about college student suicide.*

*In my study and review of literature, I found that suicide is the second leading cause of death on college campuses. It is an alarming statistic and greater efforts need to be made to educate our communities and students about this. My goal is to work in the community to bring people together to share this information and educate others about a few things. The warning signs, protective factors, and risk factors; the role that college students can play in supporting other peers; and the role the community can also play in encouraging, support and creating an atmosphere/ campus climate that is fit for students, especially those struggling with depression and mental illness.*

*I am planning an interest meeting within the next week to describe the study in greater detail and I would like to know if you would be interested in coming to hear a little more about the study, what it would entail, and the commitment that is required. I am looking for 3-5 volunteers that I can work with over the course of 6 weeks, at least twice per week. All scheduling and plans for dates will be finalized at that meeting based upon individual schedules. Would you be interested in participating in this study? (See Appendix A)*

The first time I used the script with which I began this chapter, it signified the start of a six-week journey working in, with, and as a part of my community on a project that would turn out to be everything I wanted, more than I could have expected.

### **The Choreographer**

My name is Jandelle Lu-Ann Fournillier and I am the choreographer of the Dance For Life Project that was held at Virginia Tech from Nov 1, 2011 to Dec 15 2011. I worked with a small group of college students to choreograph and perform a new dance piece that could be used

to educate and increase awareness about college student suicide on the university campus. This is my story.

### **The Research Study**

“Dance For Life” was the name I gave to the dance project I would use to explore communication about college student suicide. I had established, named and written a proposal for the idea since 2007. It was now 2011, and my vision was finally coming to fruition.

My plan was simple. I was going to spend just about six weeks, with two 3hr. rehearsals each week, working with a small group of dancers to share in the process of creating and performing a new dance piece to members of our community. It sounded simple enough, but it would be almost 7 weeks, 19 rehearsals, and a sore body running on supernatural energy later, before the piece would finally be presented.

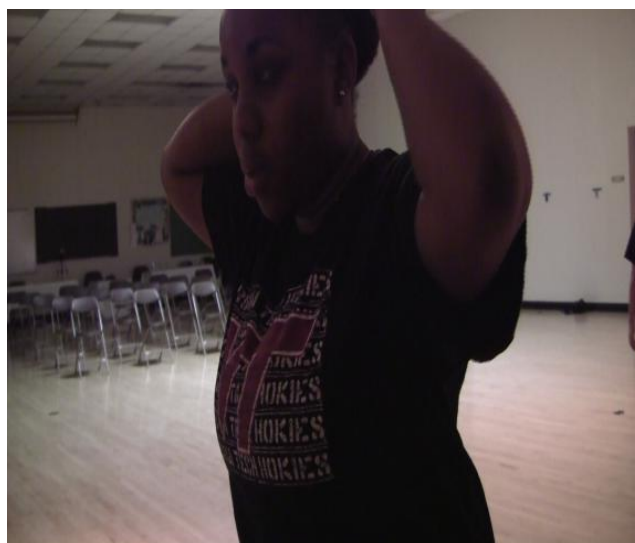


Figure 3 Jandelle, getting ready for the final presentation

For the most part, what I envisioned in terms of the logistics of this project happened. My exploration of dance however became something new. Each dance session was video recorded, audio and Logitech recorded, either all at one time or other times using two or three pieces of equipment. Ensuring that video/ audio had been recorded at each session was imperative, for preserving the data and the memory of the moment. I reviewed every video and audio recording, searching for answers to my questions, and finding themes around which I built my narrative.

Everything I recorded I saved to an external hard drive with the intention of posting the recorded sessions these videos on a blog. In conversation with the dancers I learned that they preferred to have teaching videos of the work we had completed. I worked in studio to record portions of the dance that had already been learnt, directed all dancers to sign up for a video sharing account, and uploaded teaching videos online at vimeo.com.

Throughout this journey, I also kept a daily log of my activities, took field notes, journaled my experiences, recorded audiovisual material and kept a close eye on my data. I also created a few video journals that recorded ideas, thoughts and experiences, as they were fresh in my head. At times, it was also a lot easier to talk to the camera at the end of a long day of moving, working and dancing.

There was an assortment of journals dedicated to ideas for choreography, my thoughts on the process, the materials (music, costume, props etc.) I was selecting for the project, and then there were loose page journals with random writings that would come to mind at unexpected times. Over time, my journaling crossed covers and pages as individual writings began spilling over into other journal's pages. At times 'the process' material became a part of 'translation material,' and the translation material became a part of the 'new knowledge material,' as isolated ideas and elements of the study began blending together.

Ultimately, my most important consideration was that my writings allowed me to review significant experiential material and tell my story.

### **Creating Something New**

There were a few key elements of this project that were involved in the planning, choreography and performance of the final dance piece. These were the core elements involved in my process of creating something new.

## Planning The Dance

### *The Beginning*



Figure 4 Preparing the room and testing the equipment on the first day 11/1/11.

Looking back, I could see that my very first day getting into the studio/ workspace, was indicative of the way in which the project would consistently run. I began planning my day, from the night before, anticipated working with the dancers, and was excited about what we would accomplish. From the very start of the project, I already had my eye on the span of time I had. I thought about the date I was beginning, the day I was ending, and what I had hoped to accomplish from start to finish. On day one, I began with a time of preparation. I organized the room, and started thinking about the movements I could use in the choreography while testing the camera's recording ability (See Figure 12). I had a beginning vision for the direction I wanted to go in, but how it would develop would be determined by the weeks that followed.

That first day, as I began practicing moves in front the camera, I found myself practicing all too familiar dance vocabulary. As I turned and tilted, and pirouetted before the camera, I recalled memories of growing up learning to do dance and being taught a new move. The process was transforming my dance vocabulary. I recognized the one thing I had in common

with all the dancers was that this experience was going to be something new. We went through the period of getting to know each other, becoming acquainted with movement, and gradually we began to share thoughts and ideas about the work we were doing. Studio interaction facilitated team building. The more familiar the group as whole became with one another, the more relaxed and fun the environment became. I noticed there was an unspoken the dancers had for each other. Their respect and willingness, showed itself through the smooth flow and fast advancement of the work we created, and our development as a micro community.

### ***Advertising, Recruiting, Coming Together***

Advertising this study simply meant that I networked within my community to create an opportunity for members of my own community to come together to use their time, energy and talent to serve in their own community. I reached out to those that I those that thought might be interested. I reached out to students who might know someone that might be interested. I reached out to members of the community that were in my close-knit circle, and I reached out to students I crossed paths with on the campus. I compiled a list of those that I had spoken to and then began sending out email invitations to attend an interest meeting. Working with each possible participant's schedule, I discussed best possible times for meeting, confirmed a day, time, and location to meet and we proceeded from there. With room space secured, I began getting both my PowerPoint presentations ready, participant paperwork to ready. (See Appendix G).

### *Interest Meetings*

One of the first requirements of a student interested in participating in the Dance For Life Project was their attendance at an interest meeting. At that initial meeting, they would my power point presentation that gave more details about the study. At the end of each presentation, I showed the attendees a dance clip that I felt powerfully exemplified the use of movement to communicate specific ideas, thoughts and themes. One day at the end of an interest meeting, I found a girl that attended almost frozen at the end of viewing the piece. Moved by the dance piece she commented, “I felt chills watching that dance.” She signed up to join the project that day. At the end of all the meetings, the total number of people invited by an informal verbal invitation, word of mouth, email, or online invitation, was just around twenty. The number of people that actually attended the interest meetings was nine. The final group that worked with me on this dance project was three.

Rosella: Exactly.. Jandelle helped to enlighten us on this issue, which is a common issue that I didn't know how serious it was before she told me about the project she was doing in her research.

### *The Dance Team*

The final group that participated, choreographed, and danced in the final performance Ruby B. Johnson, Mary Jane Riguera and Rosella Harris in order of recruiting.



Figure 5 Left to right, Rosella Harris, Mary Jane Riguera and Ruby B. Johnson



### *The Meeting place (Space)*

As a team, we danced in several meeting spaces in the graduate student center and the main dance studio of the Virginia Tech campus. Using the center's service to graduate students, I made advanced weekly room bookings, as well as walk in bookings, for impromptu meetings, and make up rehearsals. Utilizing one of the university's dance studios, I also worked with the dancer schedules, to secure dance space with mirrors. This dance studio was used for morning rehearsals, dress rehearsals, and the final presentation.



Figure 6 Room Space

Making this an on campus project provided convenience for both my work schedule, as well as the schedules of the dancers, who usually had to move quickly between rehearsal and other commitments (class, meetings, jobs). Our graduate center locations provided more than ample space, as well as audiovisual connections for presentations, music, and viewing our video as were being recorded.



Figure 7 Room Space



Figure 8 Room Space



Figure 9 Room Space

Having a good space for moving was one of the most important elements needed to have a productive rehearsal. Being able to access space is even more important. Working on a campus with few rehearsal room spaces was a limitation that we managed to overcome. I arranged the rehearsal schedule around the space available and the dancer's availability. The space that I secured for the purpose of this study worked well for: - (1) space needed for the dancers to move; (2) audio and video recording; (3) discussion and interest meetings; and (4) the recording of teaching videos. One major benefit that came out of using the campus facilities turned out to be the cost effectiveness of not having to rent space or purchase equipment. The setting for rehearsals became somewhat like the setting for in class learning, as I used the blackboards for show and tell, and the dancers used the space for creative teaching and learning.

### *Capturing the moment*

Audio recording, Video recording, Pictures

Project Equipment: Video cameras (Cannon HVx0, Cannon HF20), a still camera, an audio recorder, tripod stand and a Logitech 300 camera (attached to the computer)

All of our rehearsals as well as the final performance were snapshot, audio recorded and video recorded, and using owned or borrowed equipment. In addition to the savings on cost, the university equipment facilitated capturing the data that would be added to my journals, field notes, and all other collected artifacts.

### *Staying Connected*

As a group, we stayed connected via phone, email, or text usually for updating on rehearsal times, locations and cancellations. A blog site created specifically for this study with regular updated with posts that kept us in touch with one another. While text messaging tended

to become a very informal, kind of communication, it was one of the more regular modes of short and quick communications. At times, I found it to be impersonal however; quickly recognizing the generational gap of just about 10 years, I respected this as the normal everyday communication for the undergraduate student.

## **Choreographing The Dance**

### *The Music*

As I thought about the music I would use my initial thought was to not overwhelm the dance piece with music that contained too many words. Less or no words I thought would be better, giving space for the exploration of movement not necessarily dictated by lyrics. I also thought about using music that would be appealing to the audience I was trying to reach: young college students. Right at the start of the project, I found an amazing instrumental in which I heard shades of light and dark that appealed to the sense of setting the tone of the story that would unfold. The music was the instrumental of a song entitled Background, written and sung up and coming hip-hop artist named *Lecrae*. This became the music for the first part of the dance that we called “The Troubled Student.”

The second piece was set to communicate peers reaching out to help the troubled student. I was looking for music that would accompany us in our portrayal of peers supporting peers, picking another person up, and saving the life of the troubled student. After I reviewed and studied several songs and their lyrics, I picked “It’s gonna be alright” by Sara Groves, to go forward. The Song “It’s gonna be alright” turned out to be the best choice. By the end of the study and after the study was complete, I continued to received feedback about the impact the song had had on other people. The most significant feedback I received was from one of the

members of the dance group she shared with me the feeling of comfort that the song had brought to her.

Ruby: For me also I shared this with Janelle a few days ago. I've been personally stressed lately with academics and stuff so I was actually sharing with Janelle that the second song, actually I... used to, when I was, even when I wasn't practicing, when I was home, I would play it... the "It's gonna be Alright" one, because the message, is what was, is very powerful in that song, so it's just like, I was personally playing it for myself. I wasn't even being the troubled student or practicing it was just, it was becoming... I was beginning to get myself into the mood of the song and just listen to the words and just going through day by day academically with that, yeh so in general this whole procedure, I can't say I will go out there and be troubled but it definitely got me thinking and aware that this is serious, it happens among our peers and we should be always on the lookout for it.

The third and final piece in the dance was a celebration of life. This dance represented the recovery of the troubled student and the role that the community had played in supporting and restoring one student almost back to life. The song of choice was an upbeat drum based song entitled "My soul sings by Brian and Cheryl Hardy." The first time the dancers heard the song they stopped in their tracks, became filled with excitement, and jumped to their feet already dancing. The song spoke of joy, liberty and laughter and gave room for our portrayal of movements that signified joy, love, friendship, laughter and freedom. This piece was diametrically opposed in emotion, expression and type of movement from the dance of the "Troubled Student." An audience member fittingly described what looked like a journey from darkness to light as the progression of the entire dance piece.

By the time the choreography was complete several other sound effects had been added: the emergency alarm, the blowing wind and the ringing school bell. Each sound effect moved us into different phases of the three dances.

### *Working In Studio*

“Make it your own.” I would say repeatedly through the process of choreographing. “Do what works for you.” “Make it your own.” From the very beginning, I had told the dancers that they would get out of this dance as much as they put into. They would be required to take the material and work with it, and in different areas, they would have to make it their own. Parts of the dance would require the dancers dramatizing. The dancers would be required to not only use their skills for dancing, but also would also have to dramatize, partake in the process and become a part of the piece.

Drawing movement out of the dancers, I gave them an opportunity to make a significant contribution to the dance so that they could personalize their movement. It was important especially at points of improvisation for the dancers to make it their own so that it gave them elements of freedom. Letting them know what the mood of the dance was important, but the expression beyond that point became their own. Working together allowed the dancers not only to have ownership of their movement and role in the dance but also played an important role in their beginning able to understand who they were as dancers and creators of movement.

Opportunities working with the dancers one on one made a difference to the process. Each dancer was unique having different personalities, cultural backgrounds, academic interests, and future goals. One thing they all had in common was their love for dance.

### *Working With The Dancers*

Ruby

One rehearsal day, Ruby and I met in the corridor of the student center building, hoping to run through some moves. By the time, she got there, and we were ready to rehearse, I decided to book a room instead. It was just the two of us in rehearsal that day. I could tell from

her enthusiasm, questions and conversation, which she was keenly interested in the work we were doing with the dance. We also talked about some of the struggles she had been having with school, with a professor and transitioning to a new major. I recognized her as a very strong character, with a lot of vision, and dream inside. It was Ruby, who had risen to the occasion and jumped at the opportunity to become the dancer who would play the role of the “The Troubled Student.” Throughout the course of the project, she took the role and grew with it.

That evening we began with a quiet ballet warm up and center practice. When we were finished Ruby commented, “That feels good.” There is something refreshing about doing a slow quiet ballet stretch. Not only are your limbs becoming stretched and elongated, but you are also moving fluidly with grace and poise, in a way that feels innately beautiful. Once the warm up was over, we headed into practicing turns and kicks in preparation for working on more choreography. For the extent of that rehearsal, I focused on getting her to a place of comfort and confidence in what she was doing. I found myself continuously saying, “turn how you would turn naturally,” “Do it the way you feel comfortable.” With each turn and each kick, she began to establish the way she felt comfortable doing the movement. She began to make it her own. I kept my eye on her, and gave her tips for turning and directions for kicking and maintaining good posture. We worked hard that evening and one on one we accomplished a lot.

### Mary Jane

In my first rehearsal with Mary Jane, it was also just the two of us. With everyone’s schedules varying, it worked in our favor that there were regular rehearsals that we all attended but then there were other rehearsals where I just go to work with each individual dancer one on one. It was good especially at the start of their coming into the project. When Mary Jane and I

first began to work together, we spent time talking, about herself, her plans for school and her interest in dance. Mary Jane had a great love for and desire to dance, and one thing I noticed about her was that she followed the learned and followed choreography very easily. When I would explain different concepts to her, or describe what I would like to see her do more of, she would just get it. She paid keen attention when I would break steps down and explain the dance. It helped that we spent time talking about research findings and data I wanted to incorporate into the dance.

Jandelle: “ How was that. You got it didn’t you?” “You don’t have to dance alone if you don’t want to.”

Mary Jane: “ I can... so you can tell me what I’m doing wrong.”

As she connected with the choreography and began to master her steps, then we worked more on her expression. When her movements were light hearted, breezy and, soft, I would encourage her to put more ‘struggle’ into her movement, to make sure that we were communicating the harshness of the experience of the troubled student. At first, it appeared as if she wanted to move in the way that she herself felt. She was enjoying dancing. As we discussed the meaning of the movements in further detail, and the energy and showmanship that was needed at specific points in the choreography, her gestures began to change. She began to take exemplify the mode of the dance in a way unique to her own self.

Rosella

One day at the end of an evening rehearsal, we were packing up and Mary Jane shared that her roommate was interested in participating in the study. Her roommate had definitely wanted to dance and Mary Jane volunteered to teach her and catch her up to speed.

For this study, I wanted to make sure that all the dancers were able to go through similar steps, beginning with the interest meeting, discussion about the study and my getting to know them. I also felt that it was important that all new teaching of the choreography be done in studio, and recorded, to ensure that the all the dancers were having at least a similar experience, and their process, learning choreography, talking about meaning making, while recorded and in group.

I decide to use Rosella to introduce another element of the dance I had been pondering. I wanted to create a background silhouette of movement that depicted the inner struggle or the intangible emotion of the troubled student. I decided to work through the beginning of the dance with her as the silhouette. Rosella was later choreographed into the dance as an observer of, a counterpart to, and the displayed support for the troubled student.

### *Working On The Dance*

Having a vision for the dance did not necessarily mean the product looked exactly like I expected. My vision and ideas for the dance were general. What it would look like in completion it was impossible to know from the very beginning. The process of choreography became more than just putting steps together and pitching completed sequences to the dancers to learn. As choreographer and dancer, I had to go through the same process as the dance participants. I also explored movements and dance choreography at other times outside the studio, and much of the work I taught them, became my contribution to the choreography and the shaping of the vision for the dance. My role as choreographer was to teach, facilitate learning and creating, contribute and shape the final choreography performed before the community.

As I worked with the dancers, I kept the process open to the dancers putting their own expression into the movement, and experimenting with how they would dance different portions



of the dance. Once they had ‘gotten’ the choreography, I encouraged them to stay connected to the choreography, be aware of the dancers around them and what was going on stage, but to allow themselves, to at times add more struggle, more emotion, and add their interpretation to the movement. I believe this gave them the opportunity to challenge their own selves each time they rehearsed. They enjoyed mastering the choreography, and I stayed as choreographer in a place of encouraging what was being done well, and correcting steps and movements that had veered off what we had learned. Accuracy in terms of the final product was important; but they were free to make their improvisations. Very early in the process I had explained to them that as much as they put into the process is what they would get out of it. While we were having ‘fun’ and enjoying the movement, it was also important for me to bring us back to the purpose of the study and the choreography and the importance of maintaining a level of professionalism in the process.

### ***Taking Risks***

When I came to the end of working on the “Troubled Student” piece, I wanted a transition into the next piece, and I had already included the sound effect of the wind blowing over the situation. However, I wanted to choreograph an incident that represented an attempted suicide. I was initially going to work the movement into the wind sound effect, but I wanted the incident to create a sense of alarm without being too graphic. I worked with Ruby on a stagger and fall to the floor. At the same time, I had found the sound effect of a siren or emergency alarm. When I heard it, it fit. When I thought about it, I considered the emotional stirring it could bring to members of my own community because of the campus climate.

Just two weeks prior to the presentation of the study, there was a shooting on campus. A college student from another campus had shot and killed a police officer, and then turned the gun on himself and committed suicide. In 2007, we had experienced as a community the greatest

mass shooting on a university campus in America, after which the gunman had turned the gun on himself and taken his life. One thing is reminiscent of both those two incidents, and that is the sound of the ambulance siren. Experiencing both those incidents has left a few things but especially sights, sounds and emotion. Today, when I hear the sound of loud sirens, for an extended period, I still remember April 16, 2007. If the sirens persist and I am in my office or on the campus, there is a sense of alarm, memory and concern that revisits. I begin to wonder, what is happening and I wait for the sound to stop.

If that was my experience, I felt I had to be sensitive to the sound of the alarm, but I had to also be honest that that this is our reality and we have to face it. For each emergency that passed and for each emergency that might come again, there would inevitably be the sound of the alarm. The day I introduced the sound, it was just Ruby and I in rehearsal together and we listened to it, and we thought about it, we talked about it and listened to it again, and then we decided we would use it. It was a risk that seemed to be difficult. However once I made the decision to use the sound, it became evident that it leaving it out was not an option. In a sense, I had to sound the alarm, on something we were representing, that was the urgent and in need of immediate attention. The urgency was the challenge of college student suicide that we were facing daily as a community.

In that time I got to sit back and view the choreography, observe the dancers working with piece, and continue to shape the choreography, I paid attention to the little details, the transitions, the expression, the tone, the songs, the bodies in motion, and I saw that we as dancers had grown together through the process. I saw that the dance had matured into something very special and unique, because of the role each person was playing in the coming together.

### *Improvisational Add Ons*

As we rehearsed and completed sections, we would also go back and forth, between what we had completed and touching on the improvisational piece that was set for the beginning of the dance. One evening after rehearsing the first section of the dance, I decided to take us back to the beginning and work on the opening piece, “Time is running out.” We would each be doing a different activity seated in chairs facing the audience. It would represent us in different places doing our own thing, before we got read to individually head to the studio where we would dance together. In the midst of showing an activity, we were each going to show some haste, and frustration with either what we were doing or ourselves. We would each recover and find an ease and joy in our activity. The ‘troubled student’ would be a little different. She would begin to slowly break down and expose her emotion in the midst of her activity.

I had planned that each person would do their activity for a few seconds and freeze maybe with a clap, to alert the next dancer to begin. Something interesting happened. In the fourth week of my study, I was scheduled to interview three community-based artists who had worked with theater and dance. I talk more about them in Chapter 5. One of those artists was Liz Lerman, who while being interviewed described a technique that she used with her dancers to get them to do an activity for a specific duration. She would have them spell their names, and then they would change positions, collapse, or do whatever the choreography had called for at that moment. I thought this idea was interesting, and I made a mental note of it.

When I got back to the place of working on the opening piece, I decided to share this with the dancers, that we would spell our names as we did our everyday activity (getting makeup and hair ready, reading the newspaper, painting, and dancing.) As we were practicing spelling

our names, the act of doing the two things at once took on an artistic representation of audible voice and movement, in a very unique way. It looked and sounded interesting and it fit, so I decided we would work the spelling of our names out loud into the choreography.

The day we began to work with spelling our names while doing our activity turned out to be fun for all of us. With each rehearsal, it called for us to give more of our selves over to the improvisation.

Jandelle: “What is your activity? Choose an activity and I want you to go deeper. I want you to think fully about what you are going to be doing. Forget about spelling your name for a second. I want you to have a full activity that you’re going to do. Don’t just move around. If you think of a real activity to improvise, when you come to do the activity you will be more fully engaged, if it is real to you. Otherwise while you are improvising you might end up just repeating yourself.”

Jandelle: What activity are you doing?

Mary Jane: “Make up and getting ready”

Jandelle: When you are getting ready, what are you doing to your hair?

Mary Jane: “brushing it.”

Jandelle: What kind of brush are you using?

Mary Jane: One of those big fluffy brushes

Ruby: One thing I definitely loved about the whole process was that she, ...it was also a learning process for us as well. It wasn't just like, you guys come and you this or you do that, but she was like, here's why I'm making you do this so you can really put emotions into it as well. It's like you're gonna do this because, she explained each and everything for us...

Jandelle: What else are you going to do besides brushing your hair?

Mary Jane: “Makeup”

Jandelle: “What kind of makeup...”

Mary Jane: Mascara

Jandelle: And

Mary Jane: Lipstick

Jandelle: And

Mary Jane: Eye shadow

Jandelle: What brand? Choose a real brand, so that when you’re doing the activity you can think of it, and remained engaged, think it through so that you don’t end up running out of things to do.

The spelling of the name while doing an activity had brought an interesting element at the start of the piece that incorporated introducing yourself, while identifying the roles we would be playing. It became a part of each of our individual characters and story.

## **Performing The Dance**

### ***Preparation***

As we learned movements in the dance, we also showed what we learned and had opportunities to perform for each other. This was important for the dancers, especially those that had not performed before an audience before. They quickly need to gain confidence and get comfortable with the idea of presenting for others to see. Each of us became the other’s first

audience. We danced and we discussed, and I paid close attention to their expression, as she paid close attention to her steps.

By week six, we had completed all the sections of the piece and we were practicing sections of the dance, working in more detail on the choreography and the steps. I talked with the dancers about putting their strength into the dance, and exaggerating their moves for performance. We talked about stage awareness, stage presence, and not coming out of character. We began putting the pieces together, and rehearsing different part of the dance, and then the dance in its entirety. We adjusted the choreography, where I felt they needed to give more of themselves over to their character, and other elements of the choreography that needed them to hold back on their audible presentation so as not to give the audience the story before it unfolded. It was an ebb and flow of movement, expression, and dance and drama being created before our very eyes.

As we moved our rehearsals over into the performance room, the dancers got a sense of their spacing, in the studio and, relative to another. We stood in the mirror, watched our reflections, and danced together, moving in one accord. Everyone knew where she was, and what she was supposed to be doing. As I looked at the dancers, I was proud of the work we had accomplished and I stood back and observed how the dance had taken on a life and expression of its own. What we had accomplished as a group was unique, and we had each changed in the process. Later I would learn more from the dancers themselves, what their experience of going through the process had personally meant to them. For now, we were preparing to work hard to affect our community. We headed out into the community to ‘make a difference.’

## Bringing The Community Together

Bringing the community together to share ideas, educate, and increase awareness was integral in our process of beginning to affect the environment that is home to challenging health and social challenges. By bringing together leaders and members of the community, it provided the base for beginning to create social and support networks in the community amongst people that those that could make a difference.



Figure 10 Introducing The Dance Presentation

In attendance (12:30pm): Dr. Kerry Redican, Dr. Tilley-Lubbs, Dr. Ann Kilkelly, Dr. Josiah Tlou, Dr. George Davis (Virginia Tech faculty). Also in attendance was Bogdan Lischinsky. As I introduce the presentation, I got a pleasant surprise. My mother, Dr. Janice Fournillier attended. Dean DePauw attended at the evening presentation held at 6:30pm.

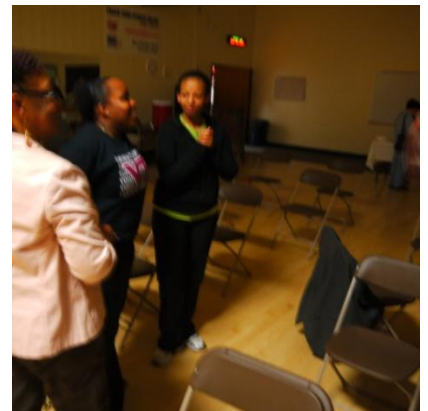


Figure 11 Bringing the community together



## The Performance

The dance began...with each of us seated in our own space and place.... Each of us was holding or wearing our individual props to be used at the start of the piece.



Figure 12 Our chairs for sitting



Figure 13 Seated getting ready

The order of use of props:

1. The Newspaper. Rosella's gesture is reading the newspaper. It represented the place I first learned about the challenges



Figure 14 The Newspaper

2. Dance Shoes. I wear them. My gesture is repeated moves of dance steps used in the piece. I represent the dance choreographer working on choreography for the final piece.



Figure 15: The dance shoes

3. The mirror. Mary Jane is getting ready to go to dance and is using the mirror to do her face, hair and makeup.



Figure 16: The mirror

4. The artist pallet. Ruby's gesture is painting. Making art. She is the troubled student, and her story/ struggle is being turned into a work of art.



Figure 17: The artist palette

5. Behind us is the netted veil that was used to create a silhouette played by Rosella She was representing the inner turmoil that exists in the mid of the troubled student.



Figure 18 The Netted Veil

As the music begins, we are prepared and ready to present the new dance. We move through the just about 20 minute piece, repeating the steps that had now become part of us. There

was an initial racing of energy as we took our steps. Out in the audience was a surprise waiting for me. My mother had flown from Atlanta, GA to see the final performance.

Moving arms, moving legs, changing mode, music and expressions carried us through the dance. The dancers were very excited about this day. They didn't know what it was going to be like, but they were ready. Looking on was a small audience of family, friends and members of the community, as they observed our movement, heard the sound of the music and felt the changing atmosphere.



Figure 19 Bodies in Motion in the community

## Post Performance

As we ended the dance, we received a wonderful round of applause and we each returned on stage to introduce ourselves. At that point, we, the dancers, each pulled up chairs, got a drink and began talking, sharing and interacting with our audience. The dancers were eloquent in their speech and I was impressed by how well each of them was able to articulate their experience of being a part of the Dance For Life Project. I continued to take mental notes of everything that was going on, while the video camera and audio recorder also continued to capture the moment.



Figure. 20 Seated before our audience

At the end of the night, we were presented with roses sent to us long distance from my brother Orson, c/o my mother Dr. Janice B. Fournillier who attended.



Figure 21: The dance team receives roses

The Dance For Life Team 12/15/2011

## **ANALYSIS (THE PROCESS)**

### **The Vision for the Dance**

Much like having a goal in health promotion, having a vision for the dance was key in the process of planning, choreographing and performing a dance about college student suicide. The start of the vision for this project began and continued to grow as I explored the idea, reviewed the literature, outlined the research questions and designed the dance project. During the course of the study, various other factors shaped the vision including: - later formed thoughts and suggestions, the dancers involved in the project; the selected music, and the setting and location for the final presentation.

Working with my knowledge base of the health information, research findings and data, I began with an idea, then concept and later a story for the dance. I then searched for music that resonated with what I was slowly envisioning with regard to the bigger picture of communicating about college student suicide. Constantly revisiting the purpose, the vision for the art work and my personal writings (journal, field notes, and general writings about the project) ensured that I stayed on track with the overall objective of the research study. There was no substitute for the time spent planning, preparing, and piloting the idea for this project. I was going to do something valuable to add to the field of health promotion and arts based inquiry.

### **Working in Community**

My role interchanged back and forth between choreographer and researcher. At times I worked in the very traditional sense as choreographer; creating movement phrases and ordering

Rosella: Well I came kind of later in the dance but when Janelle told me her ideas and how she planned to put it together, it was really interesting how she thought of every detail and how to express it through dance and so for me it was just really uh, a different way of thinking which I hadn't thought of expressing myself through dance...

steps for the piece. At other times I facilitated and made room for the creative ideas and choreography being birthed through the dancers in studio. We spent time as a group, and one on one, sharing our ideas, thoughts and experiences with regard to college student suicide. These thoughts, ideas and experiences were personified in: - the way we allowed our bodies to move; the gesture phrases we created; our individual improvisational movements; and our portrayal of emotions through our bodies. As we worked together, I closely observed and recorded the movements of the dancers, their comfort level with specific types of movement, their dance skills, and how their individual personalities affected played into the art making process. I then began to integrate and assemble the ideas, movements, and dance vocabulary created into the dance story and the final dance choreography.

There were two major advantages to working with college students who were also members of the community. First, I discovered that their feedback provided invaluable insight into the possible knowledge and attitudes of other college students, and members of the university community with regard to college student suicide. The second advantage was that my work to educate and increase awareness about college student suicide began sooner than I expected. I later realized that the day I began recruiting in my own community was actually the day that I began disseminating health information, research findings and data about college student suicide. In addition to the final presentation, both the recruiting process and the interest meetings became platforms for sharing the research I had done and what I had found. As the dancers began telling their friends, family, and others about the project, what they were doing and learning, they were also creating platforms and becoming agents of change in their own circles of influence. I was touching my micro and macro community simultaneously.

In health promotion as we have tried to reach both out and into the community to address different health challenges, there has been a move away from focusing entirely on the individual when trying to impact behavior change that leads to risky taking behavior. Instead as highlighted in the use of the social-ecological model discussed earlier, a broader approach encompasses the social and environmental aspects of health in communities. This has resulted in what are called community- based health promotion programs. According to D’Affitti and Merzel(2003),

“Key elements of community based health promotion programs include the following: mobilizing communities to actively participate in achieving Program goals; implementing interventions in multiple community settings, including workplaces, places of worship, health care facilities, and schools; using multiple individual level intervention strategies, including contest and completions, self help programs, mass media, and screen programs; and developing environments interventions.”

While this approach to health promotion has opened the door to working in communities and with communities there has been only modest impact. One of the reasons there has been modest impacts has been as a result of limitations of the intervention which are factors such as: - interventions being too short, a greater need for reflecting the community and reaching ‘different segments of community,’ and an inability to change ‘policies and regulations that can affect an entire population.” As I considered the work I had done, I recognized that I could not have addressed challenges pertaining to the length of project, or the immediate impact on policies and regulations. However by working in close proximity with my community, I had begun to address the challenge of ‘the tailoring of the intervention to suit the community’ by incorporating the ideas and works of cross cultural segments of my community.



## **The Product of Art Making**

As I lead the work with the group I found that it was important that focus not be given solely to the work being produced, but just as much time and attention had to be given to the dancers as individuals. Staying in touch and connecting with the members of the group facilitated building relationships inside and outside of the studio. Taking the time to learn more about their lives, personal interests, work, commitments, and responsibilities outside of the project meant there were less unmet expectations if a rehearsal had to be missed, if they were delayed in getting to a rehearsal, or if they did not immediately respond to sent communication. Genuinely connecting with members of my community meant I also shared aspects of my own life with the dancers, and continued to maintain communication with the dancers after the project was completed. As we progressed through the project the ties between members of the groups were strengthened, as we hugged to greet one another, played and danced in studio together and the excitement and willingness to work hard, sacrifice more time, and support each other in the process continued to grow.

Kilkelly addresses an interesting idea. She talks about what she does not like, when she thinks about art making and the outcome or product. That is when the process creates a product that looks like ‘wrote repetition’ when there are no ‘exciting developments.’

***[ Kilkelly: “... there is this thing that actors will do or say that ...(snap of fingers) “I got it” and that’s all it is, they’re done and they don’t stay open to what might happen.. and you’ll see it in any dress rehearsal process when an actor or performer has decided they know what it is and they’re all through exploring... that’s really hard for me because then the product looks.. it looks a bit flimsy..”]***

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In this project I would say most of us probably had just the opposite experience. The project seemed to bring us through a greater process of self discovery and learning that manifested itself in the form of experimenting with new movements, and new ways of moving and expressing

ourselves. This may have been attributable to the fact that the presentation was less based upon our skill or ability to dance and more on the requirement for us to work, to build and to create. In spite of my former experiencing, dancing, choreographing and teaching, this process was unlike anything I had done or accomplished before. This was the first time each of the dancers had participated in a project of this nature, or even danced/ performed before an audience. The newness of the experience facilitated a humble approach on all of our parts to the contributions we made to the art making process. Having the freedom to explore without no one person acting as expert rendered the dancers more open to explore ‘whatever’ movement came to their minds.

Finally the improvisational nature of elements of the dance also created an expectation for the dancers ‘to give it their all,’ incorporating new dramatizations with each presentation. As their confidence with the choreography increased, their work to add greater emotion and dramatization had increased. As their memory of the choreography increased, it also facilitated a greater desire to learn more quickly and rehearse repetitively. Over time, the excitement seemed to grow as we neared the end of learning new choreography. The dancers attached themselves physically and emotionally to the choreography as well as the roles they played in the dance piece. As a choreographer I saw that the dance was new yet the same each time, because of the risk the dancers increasingly took to become the dance.

At the end of the project I recognized how important the work was on the front end (designing, planning and preparation), throughout the project (the process) and the back end (rehearsal, set up and presentation). The final product was not determined by the single effort of the choreographer, but by the participating dancers, by the support of those in the community that gathered around us, and those that came to assist with the final presentation. At the end of our presentation we incorporated a post performance discussion that facilitated getting feedback

from the audience and answering a question that I often asked myself. “Did I do what I said I would do?”

### Making It Your Own

One of the goals of health promotion, beyond educating communities and disseminating information, is to empower members of the community to maintain positive change and ultimately healthy lifestyles. As I looked back at the recordings of the dancers in studio, and listened to their feedback during our post performance discussion, I heard them repeatedly say that they felt as though ‘they had owned the dance.’ They were able to be themselves in the studio setting and significantly contribute to the art making process. I considered that this might have been one of the reasons they had such a vested interest in the process.

Rosella: ... Janelle was working with me and she would say “you’re expressing this emotion, so make sure you try to do that or do this and it did make me think how I would express it myself?”

This idea of owning the work done becomes significant when I think about targeting members of the community to get involved and maintain suicide prevention efforts. It is possible that as members of the community begin to understand, connect and contribute to health challenges in their own community, they can also grow in empathy towards ‘the other’ and desire to engage in a way work impacts the social and support networks in that community.

In conversation with Miller, she talked about the importance of the involvement of ‘the other’ and the significance of what and whom we represent.

**[Celeste Miller: “I think that my work in.. community and questions of whose voice is it..um who gets to be represented, who chooses who gets to be represented.. all that kind of deep community work..um really made me as an artist uncomfortable working with a community of people and being the authoritarian figure who said these are the movements that I want you to do, these movements of mine and not that that’s not an ok way to work.. I mean I feel like it’s completely a personal journey that**

**I've decide to make... I'm fascinated watching people move.. I'm more interested in moves that other people make than what I make."]**

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As the researcher incorporating health information, data and research findings, I carried some of the knowledge to be shared and took the leadership as choreographer in shaping the final piece. The use of the dancer's personal knowledge, life experiences and stories, served as an additional resource for material incorporated into the dance choreography and performance. All of the knowledge whether, shared, brainstormed or learned between us ultimately provided us with a 'rich pool' that each of us also accessed during our moments of improvisational dance.

Considering the community as a resource for knowledge becomes significant as we make attempts to go into new communities as outsiders to addressing different health challenges. The information provided, and the ways in which it is communicated has to be considered relative to each community since not every approach to disseminating will be relevant to every community. Instead consideration has to be given to the demographics, norms and culture of different communities. Building relationships and utilizing the communities' own knowledge and experience as a resource could be a stepping stone toward greater acceptance of health intervention introduced to new communities. Without taking steps to tailor interventions and health related work done in communities we run the risk misunderstandings and miscommunications rather than positive healthful change.

**Accomplishing The Vision**

During the evening presentation one of the advisory committee members for my doctoral research asked the girls, "How have you changed?" For days after that I kept thinking about that question. How had they and I changed? Their responses pointed toward becoming more aware, being educated and having an increased sensitivity and empathetic response to the challenges of college student suicide. Their reactions during the audience post performance discussion at both

the morning and evening presentation signaled to me that the effect I had hoped to find in the community after viewing dance choreography and performance had been more evident in the dance participants. It was clear that it was their community involvement that began to transform their perspectives.

In conversation with the dancers, they described becoming more empathetic to those in their immediate surroundings, and beginning to be more on the lookout for individuals exhibiting signs and symptoms of being at risk for suicidal behavior. One of the dancers also confessed to feeling guilty and convicted of the attitude she had had prior to being a part of the project. In the past she had ignored individuals who may have been depressed, by resigning them to just wanting a lot of attention.

In my literature review on college student suicide I mentioned that there were three key areas that would have to be addressed if any successful were going to be made in curbing the incidence of college student suicide. There need to be:-

- (i) increased awareness of the risk factors, warning signs, and protective factors of college student suicide (Coggan , Patterson & Fill,1997; Gencoz & Or, 2006; Haas, Hendin & Mann, 2003; McElroy, 2004 ).
- (ii) greater empathy amongst peers (Coggan et al., 1997; Mueller & Waas, 2002).
- (iii) increased social and support network systems throughout the community (Gencoz & Or, 2006; Haas et al.;2006; Westfield, et al., 2006).

I concluded that the work I had been doing had already impacted two areas related suicide prevention; (i) increasing awareness, and (ii) greater empathy amongst peers.

When I talked with Lerman about the power of communicating through dance, her ideas corroborated with what I had experienced and heard the dancers talk about when they described

how they had changed. Liz attributes the power of communication through dance to the use of the body, but goes further to emphasize the importance of participation.

**[Liz: Well, what I would say is when you add the body it's much more visceral, it's so much more visceral. So um.. people remember.. you touch people in a different way. When people are actually doing it, as opposed to sitting and watching, it's even deeper and when people are making it up , it's even deeper. So it's already better if you add the body....better still if people participate and... I believe that makes a huge difference.."]**

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One of my committee members asked an interesting question about “how working with such a sensitive topic had affected the dancers psychologically and emotionally.” I shared with the audience that the rehearsals did not solely focus on suicide for the full length of each rehearsal. There were conversations, sometimes between the dancers and myself. There was always food and drink at the start, during and at the end of each of our rehearsals. The sharing of food and talking together made it a comfortable, relaxed and fun environment.

Outside of working on the actual dance I also chose upbeat dance music for our warm up. When the music began, especially songs they had become familiar with, the dancers would sing dance and laugh, sometimes all at once. Other times I chose slower, more quiet music to accompany our stretching session, or we did a ballet, warm up, dance in the center of the floor, and cool down. Overall we came together to work, talk, spend time, dance, share ideas, feast on food and laugh – something we did a lot of – all in community. Finally I chose to create a piece



Figure 22 Laughing in studio

of art that addressed college student suicide but did not focus on death by suicide. The focus of the dance was on the warnings signs, the attitudes and beliefs of others, and the role of the community in saving lives.

At the end of the project, I was more confident that dance could be a viable and usable health education tool that could be used in my own community. Given the opportunity to address a health challenge, I would begin by assessing the challenge, considering the demographics and cultures of the community affected, and then repeat the process of building, choreographing and performing a new dance. This could be done on a small scale or on a much larger scale incorporating a greater number of community members.

One of the most evident and unexpected changes that I observed within myself was related to my body movements and range of motion. It was not uncommon that in my free time, I would play music and enjoy a time of 'free' dancing, moving as my body leads. After the study was over, I found myself again turning the music on and beginning to dance. In a very interesting and unexpected way I found that the range of form, shapes, and positions that my body was making had expanded. I felt my hands, legs and feet moving in a new way, as if I had broken out of an invisible mold. I observed that my own dance vocabulary had diversified and I had added great attention to detail I put in simple movements. I attributed that change to the challenge of placing a demand on creating movement as a thoughtful artistic process, 'having to' create within a set time, and working with choreography that had an emphasis on engaging through presentation rather than entertaining through performance. My own dance vocabulary was changing and I was now giving greater consideration to other opportunities for using dance to address hard to talk about/ sensitive health challenges.

Ruby: For me, I think it was just more of an awareness thing for me... it just got me so .. like I said , it got me thinking a lot, it's more...it's not like I could really, I can say I can be in the shoes of the troubled student or anything else but it just got me thinking a lot and being aware of it and not say, you know what, maybe they're just bored and they're acting depressed, they're not really depressed. Like this is a real issue, these are things that we have to be on the lookout for among our friends, so it just got me thinking a lot and it helped out with

## **A NEW DANCE: TRANSLATING TEXT INTO MOVEMENT**

### **The Translation**

As we progressed through the dance choreography, I shifted the focus of our discussion about the choreography, moreover unto the significance of the movements we were doing, and also to the importance of attaching meaning to the movement. For example, as we danced a movement that illustrated a collapse, I would describe that as a motion of the body that gave the impression of getting a punch to the stomach, resulting in a collapse. This explanation fit with the meaning of the movement since the collapse was illustrating the reaction we had after having been hit hard with different circumstances. I would then explain to the dances that it was possibly to do that movement simply by falling over, but it was important to our full expression that we each attached some meaning to the movement we were doing. As we worked on the movement I prompted the dancers by asking questions like:-

“What emotion are you going to attach to that movement?”

“How are you going to bring that movement and position to life.?”

“What will you say with your body when you do that particular movement.?”

“Does the movement have emotion or know emotion,?”

“What facial expression will you have?”

“Tell me what you want to say here.”

“When you are moving, what are you going to say with your body?”



Asking those types of questions became key in getting the dancers to move from simply hearing/talking about the movement while creating a position or sequence of steps to physically executing those steps while making an emotional connection to the positions, movement and gestures.

In the dance “The Troubled Student,” elements of ‘emotionlessness,’ and trying to ‘break free’ were excellent examples of the work we did to attaching meaning to movement as we told a story. As we discussed some of the emotions and feeling of the troubled student we came across the idea of the student being ‘emotionlessness.’ We then began to work of gestures that would best illustrate what that meant to the troubled student. The girls would walk like robots marching, turn around, and walk back, appearing to have a blank stare. The thought behind the movement was that they were numb and felt no emotion. Understanding why they were doing what they were doing and giving voice to it, impacted the way in which they performed the movement. I found that prompting them to speak in terms of emotion, meaning and movement, led them to ask questions about movement in a similar way. Their vocabulary when describing an idea for movement quickly became descriptions of emotion and the attached meaning relative to the shapes, positions and motion they were showing.

When we came to working on illustrating ‘breaking free’ we went through a similar process. For a particular kick through gesture in the dance, I encouraged the dancers to think about the movement in terms of the emotion they would feel, if they were trapped in a box and trying to kick their way out or through their entrapment. This symbolized different situations related to a person fighting to get out of a difficult circumstance that caused him/ her stress and frustration. As we went through the choreography, I would I call out the meaning of the movement we were dancing. Instead of counting numerically, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5..., I called out the



knowledge, ideas and experience relative to college student suicide and responding to the health challenge. The information we gathered from our discussion then became an additional resource for creating new dance choreography.

I maintained the vision for the dance and the choreography. I led the dancers into the exploration of their own process of self-discovery as we created individual and group movement. We constantly revisited the descriptive that arose through the brainstorming exercises and staying with the vision I began incorporating movements and ideas into the dance choreography. What we were ultimately doing was a work in what I would describe as constructive dance, illustrating emotions, displaying, paying attention to the contribution each member was bringing to the dance floor. On one of the days of choreographing, I took the dancers by surprise. We started our session with a discussion about college student suicide, I question and talked to them about the ‘dark life’ of a threatened student, and the importance of the work we doing to ultimately support preventing suicide and save lives. Then we warmed up, stretched and I told them to shake it off (the heaviness of the discussion), then came the surprise.

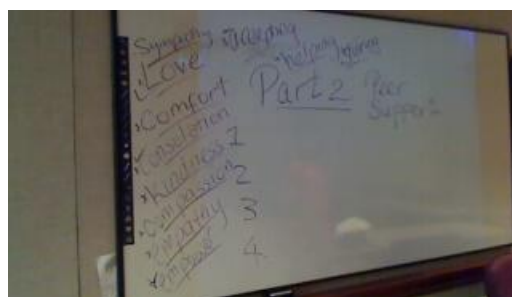


Figure 23B Whiteboard brainstorming

Jandelle : “Guess what....( everyone was stopped and looking at me with eager eyes)... You’re going to be coming up with some moves of your own today! So... you might as well get your body alive- shake it out and stretch.” They were surprised. I continued.. “so you know that your body can do anything right?? (they were a little anxious at being in the spotlight, but I knew they were ready). All right, you can get some water if you want.. and then let’s get started!”

### **The Hard Conversation**

“Let’s talk about what the first part of this dance is supposed to mean,” I said. Then we continued to talk through the dance and came up with different adjectives, and ways to describe what a person who is suicidal might be going through. It was on that day, as we worked through the exercise, that I saw the dancers step into their roles as dance creators understanding the meaning of dance making. While they were still surprised and apprehensive at times, they were always cooperative and willing to push through to explore what was ‘in them.’ The more involved they became in the process, was the greater their contribution became to the process of creating, showing, teaching and learning. As they were being educated they were also educating others.

“What are different ways that we can describe someone who might be depressed?” I said. As they answered, I wrote their responses on the board. As a dance member of the group, I also included my own responses and completed the exercise of exploration with them. No one person had an advantaged knowledge over the other as we were all creating together. I waited on their response. Their voices were all so soft when they give they give their responses. It almost seemed as if, to speak any louder would be to trample upon the sacred lost. We were entering into a new territory that placed a bit of a challenge on us, as the topic of college student suicide we were facing head on and it was becoming more real. Much of the movement the dancers had learned so far was an introduction to the dance and to the topic. What we were now doing was a little different and I sensed an increased awareness of the fact that we were now talking about ‘real people.’ This caused us to think about the ‘real people’ we knew, the ‘real people’ we ignored, and maybe even the ‘real people’ that were parts of ourselves.

We began to discuss in a more intimate way than before the subject. This also pointed to why we were here. Suddenly it felt like an officiating ceremony. If you had made it this far, you would probably now go all the way and make it to the finish. I listened to their responses and as they answered I wrote. As I wrote, I encouraged them to give more responses. We all together began to list:

Anguish

Angry

Confused

“What else?” I said...

Hopeless

Anxious

Fearful

Seeking attention (cry for help)

Worthless

Lonely

Lost

Weary and Tired

Distressed

Burdened

Sad

Betrayal

Rejected....

Mary Jane: ...when we would come in for rehearsal there were times when she would write down or she would ask us depending on the dance, because it's a process where first there is the direction toward the troubled student and then, the community and not wanting to see it or hear about it or talk about it so it makes it worse...

“Yes” I said. “Ok, one more....” then there was a pause.

It felt like there was one more we could not leave out, so we would wait and think and we were all very quiet. By this time, the mood of the entire room had become quite somber and it seemed as if the last answer would be the hardest response to find. We waited. Then the answer came... “unwanted.” Maybe that was the theme of the dance.

“Can we think about some of the experiences that they might have had or be having” I retorted breaking the silence. “What are some reasons people might commit suicide?” I said. I was referring to incidents, and happenings in people’s lives. This information would be valuable, as it would shape the story we told, the direction the piece would take and the types of movements we would do. We were telling a story, and that story would center on a difficult incident that had occurred in the life of a college-aged student.

We all responded and I wrote:-

1. Trauma/ history
2. Death of Family of Loved One
3. Interaction with Community
4. School Overbearing
5. Abuse (very soft voice)

Mary Jane: Depending on the dance she would try to evoke certain emotions, say certain things like, “as a depressed person or someone who is going through a troubled time, what emotions do you think you go through? So first we would have those feelings, evoke those feelings and then we would put those, express them as if ,if you were in that situation, how would you react to that, what would you do would you curl up in a ball?.....

“What are some things a person might do or not do to affect their situation?” I said. We all responded and I wrote:-

Release (talking, expressing, how they feel)	Expressing themselves
Positive and negative release (cutting themselves)	“What would help these people?”
Support Groups	Family Members
Friends	Having someone to come to them instead of having to go to someone

I added, “we want to be thinking about these things while we portray / perform the dance. We are depicting these things. Whether we are dancing about the trouble student, the student peers or the work of community, our challenge is to try thinking about how best we can show what we have discussed using the dance.” Systematically we began to talk more about positions, and study how we would illustrate the movements using our bodies. At the end, we selected just a few movements that would be appropriate for what each dance was saying within the context of the full choreography.

As we worked together using words to prompt our choreography, I also notice that we began to speak in a language related to our vision. The phrases most commonly used were “what I see is and what I saw was.” This implied to me that the prompted word had trigger a vision or picture of some type of movement in the mind of the dancer. Each of them worked on the movement based on what they saw and then shared and taught their individual dance movements to the group. What I discovered for all of us was that we were having a thought process that began with a picture of movement in our mind that we then experimented with our bodies, to produce movement that were shared with the dance group. At times, our movement or gesture phrases were similar, other times each dancer saw and had their own unique movements and interpretations.

## The Movement

The dance begins...we enter stage left.

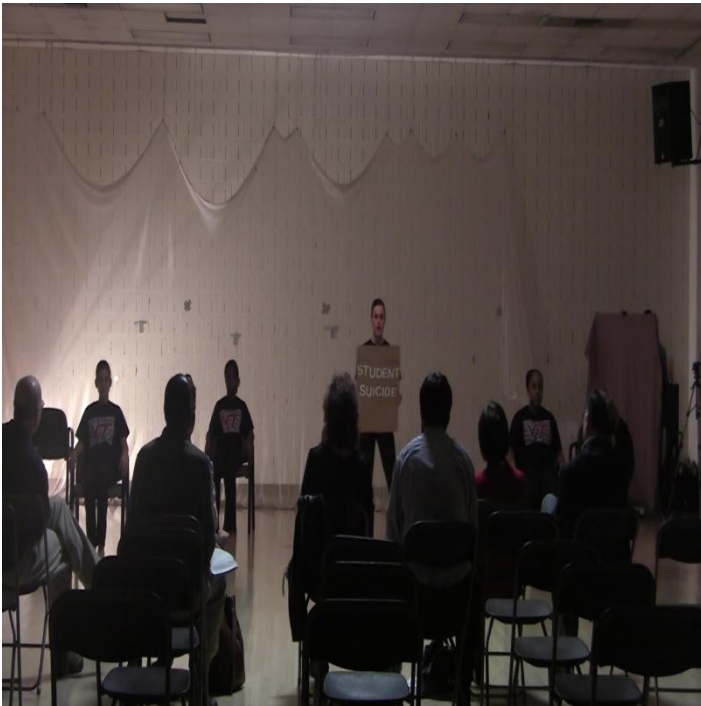


### *1. Time is Running Out*



Seated in position we are ready to begin. The clock begins ticking and one by one we begin moving. One by one we each spell our name while we do an introductory gesture representative of everyday activity that we all do in our separate spaces. We each move the length of time that we spell our full name, announce our name and then freeze.



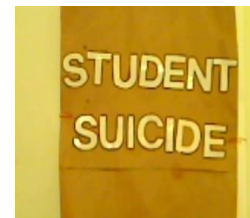


Rosella first begins her gesture of reading the paper. The headline facing the audience reads

“Student Suicide” She keeps reading... while

she is spelling her full name

“R...O...S...E....My name is.....”



She continues reading and eventually

flips the paper to be met with the

surprising headline. She has now

come face to face with the headline

Student Suicide... The other side of

the paper facing the audience

reads... VT Dance

For Life.





I begin to gesture dance positions representing dance choreography, I move from distress with my moves, to enjoying happy movement. All the while spelling and stating my full name “ J..A N...D....E....L.....My name is Jandelle Lu-Ann Fournillier.”



Mary Jane begins the gesture of getting ready, looking at her reflection in the mirror. She is at first displeased then happy with how she looks. All the while spelling her name “ M...A...R....Y.....My name is...”



Ruby begins the gesture of painting a picture all the while spelling her name “R... U...B...My name is ...” As she is painting and spelling her name.. she begins crying, and her voice breaks getting increasingly louder and filled with pain, as she begins moving into her role of the “Troubled Student.”



Finally we all begin to gesture simultaneously as the sound of the clock continues to tick at a fast past. Time is running out.

## 2. *The Foreboding*

Suddenly there is a clap of thunder! The sounds of the storm begins... This signals that we all rise move our seated spaces off to the side, and act out getting dressed to head out into the rain.



We are all headed to one meeting place – where we will come together to dance...



Each of us travels out into the storm walking, driving, being picked up, but we are all traveling separately yet together. We all have the same goal of getting to our destination where the body of the dance will begin. The storm sets a foreboding atmosphere for what is to come...

As we travel to our destination.. Rosella has her eye on Ruby (the troubled student). She has been curious about the girl walking alone, crying and sobbing in the rain...She is going around in circles...



She bumps into the trouble student and looking back at her she immediately takes on the demeanor of the troubled student.



She assumes her place as the silhouette representing the inner turmoil of the troubled student. It is emotion, the intangible that which we cannot see.



In the meantime, Mary Jane and I have arrived to our destination, and we are center stage doing choreographed and improvisational movement through the sound of the storm. Our movements exhibit reach and collapsing, looking left and right, looking out, looking up, waiting...holding ourselves, a sense of forlornness and waiting is over us... We wait for Ruby to arrive...



Ruby enters, we greet, but as she touches us we too take on the demeanor of the troubled student, we get into line and the dance of the troubled student begins.



The two sections, time is running out and the foreboding was the dance introduction to the first piece entitled “The troubled student.”

### 3. *The Troubled Student*

The dance of the Troubled student begins center looking out in either direction...



We start the dance with movement portraying an imprisonment of the mind.



We reach up for help...



However, we feel  
constantly pressed  
down.



We try to kick  
our way out.

However, we try to push back.





Like robots, we march out.



Then we march back in.



Finally we spin out of control...



...to collapse.



Hunched over collapsed,



we open up in hope,



only to collapsing again.



We reach our arms

side to side

for help.



Instead we are weighed down .



(represented by a limbo lean back with arms  
outstretched)



Tired and frustrated ...

we walk like robots emotionless to  
our ends.



We lean over, as if to jump arms  
swinging forward...



as if falling.



Before we could jump, we  
roll back on our heels, as if  
suddenly being pulled back.  
We stretch forward while,  
step by step, we move back,  
away from the edge.



Our bodies speak of hope...

But nothing changes...



As we throw off the things that burden us (left and right) the trouble student begins to walk sway.

We point her out.



She remains imprisoned in her mind...





As she comes to us for help what she finds is..



she is ignored by one,  
and pushed away,



and left abandoned.



Finally she is left standing alone.

#### *4. The Emergency.*

It was as if we were back to square one, we had begun repeating moves from the beginning of the dance, and the trouble student remained imprisoned.. ....we all finally spun out into a collapse.





And then suddenly the sound of the emergency began.

The sound effect of an ambulance siren screams aloud through our space...



Startled we all realize something is happening.



but we do not know what to do.



and so we begin to run.

(stage left and stage right)



(back stage and front stage)



As she  
begins  
to fall  
to the  
floor.

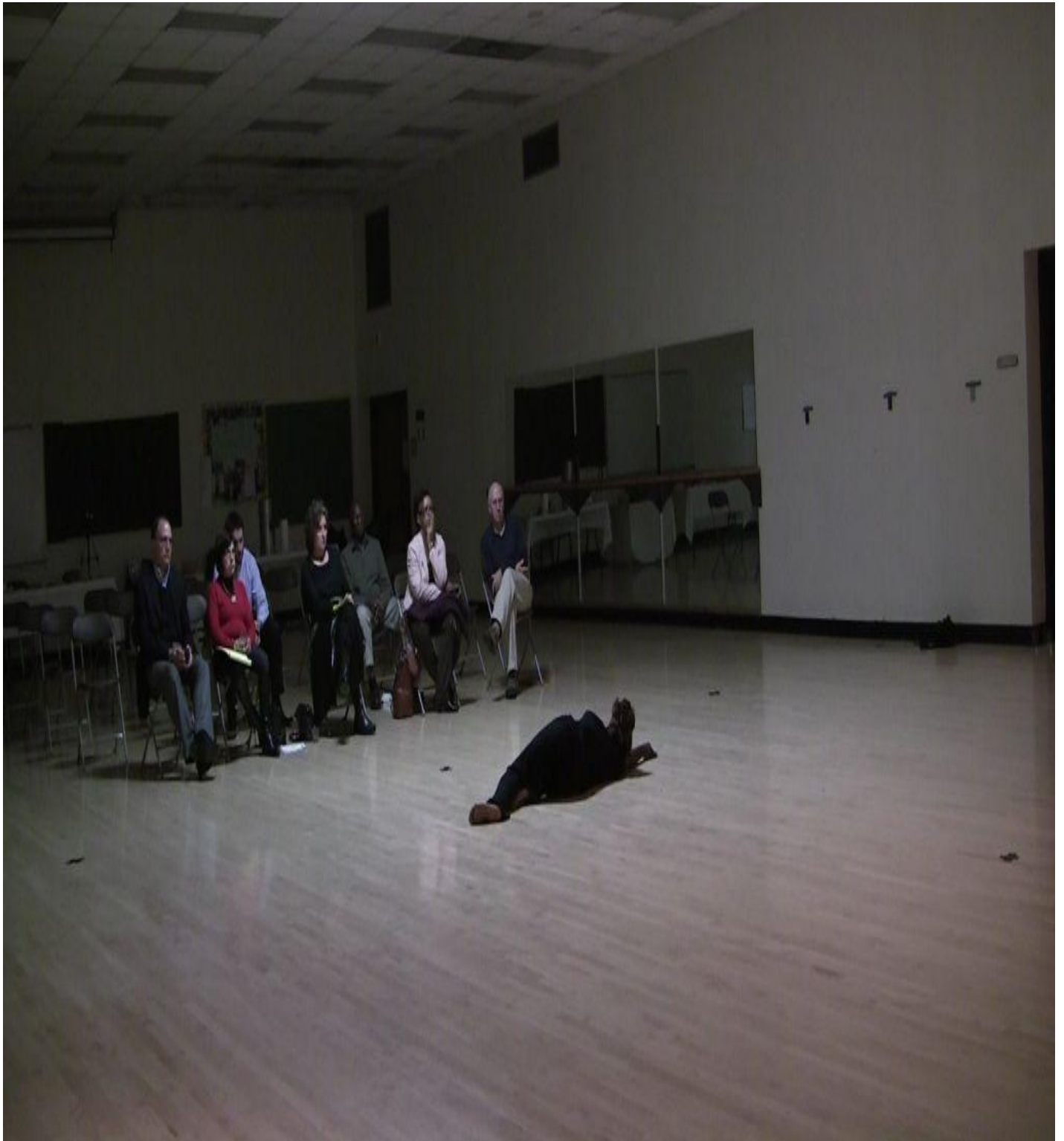


We run center together... in shock looking on ...



as she falls...

We did not see this coming. The emergency sound ends and the sound of a wind begins to blow.



## 5. *Winds of Change*

The wind blows over the scene, blow over us, and blow over the situation. The wind is blowing .



We are left torn, hurt and confused..





We are blown and tossed back and forth. In disbelief, we cover our eyes, our ears and our mouths, as we stagger through the wind in the midst of this scene.





### ***6. It's Gonna Be Alright.***

The second piece depicts movements that represent denial, acceptance, and support.

This is a challenge that we do not want to look at, hear of, or talk about. Instead we want to look away.

The beginning of the piece illustrates the dancers with eyes covered, ears covered and looking away.



Trying to pick ourselves up,



and collapsing deeper into our circumstances.



We move together as a group during the chorus, introducing the theme of believing that, 'it is going to be alright.' We step left and right in unison. arms outstretched...



We turn and move in unison right and left with arms outstretched.





Then we coming closer to the scene, and we still cover our eyes, cover our ears, cover our mouths and look away....



In a line, one by one we begin to fall back, as each person behind catches us. It is a gesture symbolizing trust and support.



We put our right hand one by one on the shoulder of the one in front,



with the other hand on each other's shoulder.



As we travel through time, we move around the body of the troubled student on the floor.



As we surround her tiptoe as if to look over into water to see our reflection. What we do see is her.



We repeat...the movement that symbolized that we believe that it's going to be alright...



We dance to represent those that come to offer clichés, pretending to know your pain...



As the song says that we will be the one told hold out “faith for you”, when you have fallen...

we put our hands on our heart and reach the other up to the sky symbolizing our faith..





Using each other we symbolize in our movement that we will help to raise each other up...



We look at our lost  
friend on the floor..



We look away..



We look again for  
change



We rock gently to symbolize love and care,



One of the dancers leaves the group and gestures that she believes ‘it’s gonna be alright.’

She reaches one hand up to the sky; she places the other hand on her heart...



she moves to the place of doing something, taking action and goes to help to pick Ruby up...



In the meantime Mary Jane and I begin the action of pulling a rope, climbing up, then pulling the rope as if symbolizing the strength we use to draw the fallen student back in...

Rosella then gestures to pick her up.



She reaches down.



She picks her up  
and begins to comfort her.

They begin walking together.



Ruby falls and Rosella picks her up.





They continuing walking together.

Ruby falls again, and then Rosella picks her back up again.



....and they continue walking together.





We again  
represent moves  
of pulling our  
way up and then,



sinking deep...





only to..

rise again...



The trouble student steps out and raises her hand gesturing,

“ I believe” too ...It’s gonna be alright.”

She reaches one hand up to the sky, then places the other hand on her heart...



The rest of us reach both hands up and then part our hands in the air,

to represent the skies opening wide.. It's new day!

It is going to be alright.



The troubles students clasps her hands together signaling again that she believes.



We begin to move dancing around her. Hand move left and right, up and down, almost creating movements that look like wicks of a flame...



Her arms open wide as she looks up in hope



Moving in a circle around her, we lead her out.

As she joins us, we walk together as one group to the back of the stage, as we draw closer and closer together.



We end with our arms over each other embracing one another in support...



Mary Jane: .. the great thing about this dance is that even though you're evoking those emotions. Like in the beginning it is that way.. it's kind of like healing and recuperating because in the end we all seem to come together and we're happy....



*7. Saved by the bell.*

The school bell rings. We all get into position, putting our hands on our heads as we get ready to move into the closing piece.



8. *My Soul Sings.*



And the final song  
rings out

“My soul sings...”

We reach our hands  
up to the sky



glory God,

“your love sings” we reach our hands out to the side...



“and sets us free”

we sway left and right.



“My soul sings..”



“glory God...”





“you bring us laughter..” We place our hands on our stomachs.



“And liberty..” we roll our heads anticlockwise and back to center.



When we repeat the sequence, there is a deep drum rhythm over the acapella of voices, and we begin moving forward with our arms lifted high, feet chipping forward, like a marching band.

The lyrics are beautiful and powerful and symbolize being set free to laugh and to live again. Two dancers begin a celebratory jumping step, while the other two repeat the beginning movements.

As the first chorus ends, the other two dancers join in doing the same celebratory jump!

The four dance in unison.



Moving together in a circle, we step forward pushing our hands together into the middle of the circle.



We move to symbolize, the destruction of prison around our minds, as we drop our right hands, then drop our left hands. It is a symbol of the walls coming down.

We begin to celebrate as...



we stomp...



we jump...



and yell.. ‘hey hey!!’ and clap, clap, clap, clap, shouting ‘hey hey!!!’ .

Arms linked in arms, we skip in a circle, and dancing through exchanging arms, we loop through each other and each other’s arms, each time meeting a new dancer,



Until facing one direction we are all together..

and we jump and jump...





and clap, clap,  
clap!



And we shout  
“...hey hey!!”

We close with the music quieting down to just  
accapella voices

... “ My soul sings”...all our hands are lifted.



“glory God... your love sings... and sets us free...”



“My soul sings!... Glory God.”



“you bring us laughter ...”

Arm outstretched right,

then left ...

“...and liberty.” Our arms raise slowly to a ‘V’ as we look upward...



...signaling the dance's end and the victory.



We bow. The crowd applauds and we are offstage. We come back in one by one bowing and introducing ourselves. The dance is complete. The mission has been accomplished.

## The Post Performance Discussion



Figure 24. The dancers share their experiences



## Audience Feedback

As we came to the close of the performance and sat before our audience, there was a buzzing of conversation, a sense of excitement among the dancers, and then a calm as everyone anticipated what was next. I could sense from the expressions that the audience had enjoyed the performance but I was curious to hear their questions and comments. Had we accomplished what we had set out to? How had the work presented impacted the onlookers? I had carried out the dual role of researcher



Figure 25 Jandelle speaking to the audience

and choreographer all throughout this project. Once again I sat in a dual seat of participant and observer at the same time. I felt a sense of relief mixed with satisfaction, knowing we had made it to the finish. The audience comprised of our family, community members, and friends, made it a very comfortable and engaging group to talk to. The atmosphere shifted from one of attentive observation to one a more serious inquiry as members of my committee began to ask both the dancers and myself in depth questions about the process.

I had used E-vite, an online electronic invitation program, to send out invitations to a few families, friends, student, faculty ,staff and others in community, requesting their attendance at one of the two presentations we had scheduled for December 15, 2012. One at 12:30pm, and the other at 6:00pm. Overall 21 people were in attendance. Nine had attended the 12:30pm presentation and twelve others had attended the 6:00pm presentation. Having a small group of people set the atmosphere for an open and intimate conversation with our audience. Leaving ample time at the end we were able to have an opportunity to share our heart, answer questions and talk with our audience.

The purpose of the project had been to educate and increase awareness about college student suicide on the university campus. The small audience we had in attendance, represented our community, those that we intended to reach. It was important that they had the opportunity to ask questions as well as give us feedback. It also gave me an opportunity to gain some insight what the audience had experienced, and the thoughts they were having in the aftermath of the presentation. The highlight of the first presentation was when one of my committee members, Dr. Kris Tilley-Lubbs commented on her experience watching the piece.

*[Dr. Tilley-Lubbs: “Well and I was thinking of your reply to my question and I .. you really must have been really good because you took me down to that space with you, a space of ... that was very dark but then it was ok, you know and you lifted me out of that space and so all this makes great sense and powerful.”]*

My professor had somehow managed to travelled through the piece with us. When I heard her, I was amazed, and I thought about how she got it.. she really got it.. she had understood. I remember thinking over and over for days after the show that she had basically said, “you took me from a dark place into the light.” I couldn’t help but think about how many other people had had a similar experience. She painted a picture of what we had hoped for. To touch our audience in a way that would cause them to begin to think, respond, speak, and be moved emotionally. That was the first sign that an effort such as the “Dance For Life Project” had the potential for bringing change.



Figure 26 Victory

## **ANALYSIS (TRANSLATING TEXT INTO MOVEMENT)**

The translation of the health information, research findings and data into movement, became for me, a mastering of the art of illustration. The Webster's Standard dictionary indicates, that to illustrate, means to clarify or explain; as by example. It also defines an illustration as: - an example or explanation or a picture. In this research study I used the dance project to create a work of art attempted to explain college student suicide using elements such as: - (i) body language; (ii) dance steps; (iii) interpretive/ intuitive dance movement; (iv) shape/ group formations; (v) props; (vi) voice; (vii) music and sound; (viii) facial expressions; (ix) hand signals and (x) acting. Putting all of these elements together resulted in dance choreography that illustrated the life of a troubled student (at risk for being suicidal), the importance of recognizing the problem of college students suicide, what acting as peer support looks like, and the value of coming together as a community to support each other.

### **Us In The Dance, The Dance In Us**

We all tell stories. We tell stories through our bodies, the language we speak, our choice of dress, and even the way we 'carry ourselves.' Whether we are aware of it or not we are telling a story to the world around us. We tell what I define as the internal or inside story. It is the story about who we are, where we came from, and what has happened to us. Until we speak that inside story others will never know. When we do share our inside story, we give others the opportunity to enter into our own world and reality. Then there is what I define as the external or outside story. It is the story that the world constantly sees when they see us. That story is created based upon visible factors such as the color of our skin, eyes, and hair, our

Mary Jane: Similar, as somebody that's witnessing someone struggling. Initially it's really hard to approach something like that. And you know in that dance, the first dance, I kinda had ownership over the fact that we wanna stay ignorant, we wanna pretend like nothing's wrong and even just taking that next step and putting it out there in the community and actually reaching out and being more aware, I think that helped me to process that as well.

height, body frame, and stature i.e. our physical appearance, or even the sound of our voice. Other things like, the uniforms we wear, whether we wear glasses or not, the car we drive, the house we live in, and the type of people we associate ourselves with, can also possibly tell a part of our external story. As dancer these inside and outside stories can be influential in both the story we stories we choose to tell through dance choreography, and the stories we as bodies tell while we are dancing. As such I would say that the overall experience of a story told through dance is not confined solely to the movement or steps being viewed by the audience. The story may also interweave elements of our past, present and future, as well as who we are inside and outside.

Though our group of dancers, including myself, was four in number, we represented heritage from four different regions: - Africa, the Caribbean, the Philippines, and Latin America. We also had backgrounds in very different fields of study: - mining engineering, health promotion, psychology, and animal/poultry science respectively. It was clear that as a group of dancers, we were women with very different cultural backgrounds and academic interests. However after meeting each of these women it was evident that there was a common thread running between each of us. We all had a passion and love for dance, and we all wanted to make a difference in our community.

As I got to know the dancers it came as no surprise that we all had inside and outside stories, that were in some instances similar, and in other instances very different. Thinking on this, I began to consider that our own stories could have possibly impacted more than just our dance choreography and the dance story we were trying to tell. I was thinking about the thoughts and impressions of those on the receiving end of our dance presentation and wondering if they 'got it.' Had they understood what we were trying to say?

We all observe and experience life through our own lenses, and either that which is familiar, or we understand and relate to, can oftentimes capture our attention and interest. It was therefore possible that what we were trying to communicate differed from person to person. I considered that an audience member, who identified with a character in the presentation, either based on the role of the character or even the character's physical appearance, may have paid more attention to the details thereby achieving greater understanding. Could I then go so far as to speculate that if an audience member didn't identify with a character that there would have been greater room for misinterpretation/ misunderstanding. To answer that definitively would require further research working with larger groups of people, possibly varied by gender, race and age. Based on my theory of character identification, I also thought that incorporating various scenarios that depicted people from all walks of life being brought to the same place of struggle, would also have to be considered if we wanted to reach larger diverse audiences.

Knowing that not all text could necessarily literally be translated into choreography, the emphasis was on ensuring that the viewer could recognize concepts or emotional signals such as:- being trapped, anger, abandonment, helping someone up, coming together, rescue, compassion, empathy, and ignorance. Through the use of gestures, dance steps, bodies in motion, and other elements, we illustrated these concepts and emotional signals using a language that replaces words with dance/movement of the body. Similar to the spoken word, the language of dance also relied upon clear communication to facilitate each audience member's individual interpretation. Whether what was being communicate was received with understanding or as a foreign language was possible because of : - the viewer's dance experience; the quality of the dance choreography; each individual's value of dance as an art form, or even the viewer's level of interest. I relied upon audience feedback to evaluate the effect of the work we had done.

## **Creating A New Dance Vocabulary**

### **The Choreographic Process**

As the choreographer I played interchangeable roles in the choreographic process. At times that role functioned on the spectrum from expert and collaborator (author, facilitator, and expert) (See Appendix A). The final choreography however became a shaping and structuring of the dance in terms of the dance story being told, incorporating moves from the dancers, allowing for them to use their own vision to tune into ways and means of expression. When the dancers had difficulty with 'coming up' with dance vocabulary we would talk about it, then I would give them time and space to freely explore and create their bodies' own movement illustrations. Finally I worked with arranging of bodies in motion, individual dancer's movement, acting, and prop additions, always having in mind that my vision and goal was to use dance choreography and performance to educate and increasing awareness about college student suicide.

In Miller's approach to dance choreography, she makes a clear distinction between her role in solo work and the work that she did with groups. She also takes the approach of entering her work with a blank canvas, and allowing the art making to "come forth." Her work in groups then becomes a weaving together of many stories and the movement that comes out of working in collaboration becomes shared material that she can then borrow from to create her own choreography. She begins by first defining what dance is in the physical by taking them through an exercise of movement. For her, the dance becomes more than just 'steps', more than just 'rhythm', more than just the ability to find the 'beat' or 'have a body that looks a certain way.' She works through the process of choreography and translation as a facilitator while keeping everyone on track of the process of art making and ensuring everyone is 'on the same page'.

As I reflected on this approach I thought about what it was that united us as a group in this project. I also thought about how I had approached the ‘other’ in the process of choreographing and performing, translating information into movement, and overall art making. The work I was doing was a little bit different since I was working as a choreographer/dancer doing art making in the community, but also working as a health promotion professional completing a research project for my doctoral dissertation. The focus of my work was for the expressed purpose of educating and increasing awareness about college student suicide using a dance choreography and performance. To get this work done however I still had to ‘get everyone on the same page, as well as make provisions for time, space and the creative process for both myself and the dancers.

I would later identify our getting on the same page moment as something that began from the very first day of recruiting, while beginning to share the findings and plan for the project. I then continued all the way through the stages of working as group, talking about what we were doing, sharing in choreographing and always making mention/ coming back to the purpose of the dance being created. In the end, I attributed the final success of the completed work to the initial sharing of information, the exchange of knowledge amongst the group, our own processes of self discovery, a growing empathy towards the subject matter, and our commitment and willingness to working together to see the project through to its end.

### **Creative Techniques**

One of the tools we used as we began to dig deeper and try to understand the challenge of college student suicide, was what I refer to in this project as ‘brainstorming.’ We spent time generating ideas and thoughts in a freewheeling session of finding words and descriptions related to what we were trying to illustrate in each of the sections of the dance. After centering their thoughts on themes and words they used to describe different aspects of college student suicide. We then demonstrated movements to portray and express some of the words and descriptions.

This exercise of reflecting on college student suicide, and finding demonstrational movement, helped us to begin to formulate new dance vocabulary that would be incorporated into the choreography. As choreographer it was essential to get the dancer to move from thoughts and ideas to a picture of movement, to the actual movement that became a part of our shared choreography.

For example, I would assign an emotion to either all or individual dancers, and ask them to ‘come up’ with movement that could possibly illustrate that particular emotion. I called out ‘ABANDONMENT’. The dancers would begin to walk and contemplate, always stopping to look up, down or tilting their head to the side, in movement that displayed they were thinking. There was a moment when I could tell that they had thought of something. They would then either experiment with a few movements or go right into what they appeared to see in their minds. That word ‘ABANDONMENT’ was then quickly transformed into a frown, a looking around to see who was there motion, a dropped head, a hugging of one’s own body while lowering the knees to the floor and so on, depending a hop, an outstretched arm, a smile or a on how the dancer decided to complete her process. A common phrase I heard amongst the dancers as they got ready to share and illustrate their new movement was, “what I see is....” That sight appeared to refer to what they had just seen in their mind as a step, a pose, and a specific set of movements.

### **Creative Dance Communication**

#### **Representing the Intangible**

As I continued to reflect and write about this concept of translating text into movement, as it pertained to college student suicide, I identified the translating process in part as ‘making representations of the intangible.’ Much of what the depressed college student, who is either entertaining suicidal thoughts and or attempting to commit suicide, is experiencing is connected



to what is going on his/ her mind. I am referring to their thoughts. From the research, as well as the ideas expressed through brainstorming, I found that many of the descriptive we used to describe what the student was experiencing were abstract concepts, and therefore intangible. Those are thoughts and sometimes emotions, that as an outsider, you cannot necessarily see or feel because it is happening in the mind of the 'troubled' individual. However those same thoughts and emotions cans sometimes manifests itself externally in ways that use the body and are visible.

When I am sad I cry, when I am angry I might pout or look upset, when I am stressed I might frown, when I am nervous I am fidget. Similarly:-when I am cold I tremble; when I am hot I sweat; when I am scared my heartbeat races; when I am happy I laugh; when I am tired I might sigh; when I don't know something can't really answer I might shrug and so on. I observed that an emotional shift or a change in a person's state of mind, which is something intangible, could be visible through the actions we do with our bodies (making facial expressions, physically moving the body). We can also have physiological reactions in our bodies (shivering, the making of tears, and sweating) that expose what might be going internally and environmentally.

As we were finding portrayals of different emotions and thoughts especially we were attempting to make the intangible, tangible, through using our bodies. By giving a physical representation of what we wanted say, the audience members were being given an opportunity to identify, interpret, and understand information about college student suicide. If there was understanding, I hoped that it meant that they were educated or their awareness and sensitivity toward college student suicide had increased. I would only be able to gauge what had happened from the audience's perspective through the post performance discussion. Two audience members wondered where we would go from here and how we would begin to continue to build

on the work they had seen presented in the studio. I discuss more about ‘where we would go from here’ in the final chapter of this paper. Another audience member was in agreement about the choice of art, more specifically dance as a good starting place for affecting change in communities. Finally one audience member concluded that starting more conversations much like the one we were having in the post performance discussion was a good place for educating and bringing awareness to the community.

### *The Silhouette*

When I began to work on the first part of the dance, “The Troubled Student,” I wanted to show the turmoil and struggle that was afflicting the student ‘in trouble.’ To express and represent that emotional and mental struggle that we do not always see when it is in the mind, I decided to incorporate a large netted prop that represented the veiled / hidden aspects of what was in the mind of the student. The idea behind the silhouette was to represent the conscious concealed state of mind often associated with someone who might be stressed, depressed and on the verge of suicide. Dancing as the silhouette Rosella would intermittently imitate the movements, expressions and gestures that were being portrayed by the other dancers on stage, who were dancing the dance of the troubled student. Behind the silhouette I worked with Rosella to create improvisational dance positions that symbolized a person in pain, a person crying out for help, a person on the verge of giving up, ‘in their mind.’

Audience member response: *I'm really intrigued about this whole concept of using art. When you think of what this topic is. It's so graphic. It's a tough topic, and sometimes when you deliver stuff with just facts. Intuitively you're think that by just stating the facts that people are going to do the right thing...but it's often when you are moved emotionally about something that people tend to pay a little more attention and yeh you can take action..and I think that very beautifully that by using the arts and dance....it has a lot of token because it invokes that part of the emotion that often is linked to helping people to make decisions.*

### **Diametrically Opposed Movement**

Another dance element that was integral in the portrayal of ideas from one section of the dance piece to the next was the use of diametrically opposed movement. Webster's Standard dictionary defines diametrically opposed as "completely different or incompatible, as at the opposite ends of a diameter." As we transitioned through the dance, our range of shapes, type and mode of movement, body and stage positioning, group formations and facial expressions as well as the music used were dramatically contrasted looking at the dance from beginning to end. This was also evidenced by the ways in which the bodies interacted on stage, the pace and speed of the dance movements and the change in the rhythm, mood and tone of the music/ sounds.

The use of diametrically opposed movements along with drama, suspense and unexpected twists and turns in the dance choreography served to: - (i) capture the attention of the audience; (ii) move the audience emotionally; and (ii) create a space of vulnerability as we addressed a topic as sensitive as life and death. There were a few things that I wanted the audience members to experience while and after viewing the dance piece. I wanted them to see, feel, empathize and possibly identify with the emotions of the troubled student. I wanted them to also see and experience the 'hope' that could come from a helping hand given by those connected to the troubled student. I wanted them see the joy come from being in community with others in a way that could potentially save a life. If

the audience could have come to a place of recognizing the role that he/ she could in community, and affirm within him/her to be an agent for change, I would have accomplished a lot.

### Affecting My Community

Having a post performance discussion and audience feedback actually became the cornerstone to knowing how this work had affected the audience members from our community. That effect was represented through the response of the dancers, and by the feedback we received from our audience. Knowing what they thought was important since the work I had completed with and in my community was never one-sided, but it involved the participating dancers, the audience members, community facilities, the community resources, and me, working as the researcher and choreographer/dancer. At the end of the presentation as we opened up the floor for questions, comments and discussion, I began to hear and see the results of the work I had completed, in the audience applause, the smiles and buzz of excitement, and the eagerness to enter into conversation.

Lerman talks about this type of conversation as creating a space for people to realize that they had an experience.

*Audience member: I think what's more important is the conversation, how do we start to talk about that so I see opportunities in small groups, classes.. to talk about it...and people will be become less afraid to talk about it. So I think we need stimuli for people to start to say, it's ok to talk about it.*

**[Liz: ....because I think sometimes people don't even know they've had it...so you have to give them a chance to understand they've had it because if they can't... they don't even have the language for describing their sensory experience, and then they think pretty soon it didn't even happen to them.....So they're used to going from word to word but when you've had an experience and you have to try to explain that in words...it's hard to do if you're not practiced. So we've got to get people a lot more practice in that I think.]**

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One evening in December at a Christmas dinner with a group of friends in my inner circle (all of whom had attended the dance presentation); I had a surprising less serious response to the dance presentation completed one week prior. I heard a friend of mine, known for his humor, spooning out his food and spelling his name. He was reenacting the very beginning of the dance, when we (the dancers) started doing an activity, while spelling our name and introducing ourselves. He thought it quite funny to catch me off guard. So as he prepared his dinner plate, he began spelling his name with each scoop. "T O D ...My name is...." Suddenly that sparked a burst of excitement as three other friends jumped up, and got in a line and began dancing and singing part of the closing piece dance choreography. With their hands stretched up to the ceiling they began singing, "my soul sings..." while marching forward. They continued dancing, (surprisingly well for just viewing the dance), laughing and singing.

Impressed by their recall, I noticed that the parts of the dance they had re-presented were the beginning, and the end of the choreographed piece. I marveled at how their spontaneous response was also filled with a great sense of fun, joy, and excitement. I was curious about different parts of the dance that seemed to resonate and leave a lasting impression on these viewers. Somehow, there was an observable transfer of information (actual dance choreography), not expressed verbally prior to this moment. Expressed in a more intimate setting amongst friends I reflected on the importance of following up with the audience. I also thought more about the beginning and ending of an art piece or dance work, and how much weight I should give to the areas that people might be more likely to remember. I thought about the importance of first thing and last thing the audience sees, hears and experiences, in a dance performance and how those factors might affect information transmission. There were many more questions to still answer, which meant that there was much more work in the field to be done.

## **EMBRACING DANCE: KNOWLEDGE, INSIGHT, AND UNDERSTANDING**

The work done in health promotion generally begins with an assessment of a particular health challenge within a community. The next step is to design or create a program to address that particular health challenge. This designed program is the intervention introduced, and implemented in the community to address the particular health challenge. I found the steps I would take to establish a health program/ intervention to be very similar to the process of choreographing and performing a new dance to educate and increase awareness about college student suicide in my community.

In this research study my data collection and review of relevant health information, research findings and data, represented the assessment of the health challenge, college student suicide. The choreographing and performing of the new dance piece before members of my community, represented the creating/designing of an intervention and its introduction and implementation into a community. Overall using very similar steps to those that used in health education, I created what I would call from a health promotion perspective, an arts-based health intervention. The purpose of that intervention was to educate and increase awareness about college student suicide in my community.

This study showed dance to be a viable medium for sharing ideas and concepts related to college student suicide. Based on community involvement, and the characteristic nature of dance, the art form also showed itself to be an effective alternative medium to reach into communities to bring understanding about the challenge of college student suicide. The knowledge, insight and understanding I gained through my exploration of dance as a medium for communicating about college student suicide has now provided the basis for its inclusion in my future explorations of addressing the same and other health challenges in communities.

As I worked in community to educate others, I was also educated. The knowledge, insights, and understanding I gained has not only helped me to add to the body of literature on college student suicide, dance, health promotion and health communication, but it has also prepared me to make a greater contribution to the field of arts-based health promotion on college campuses. Coming in as the researcher, I had a wealth of knowledge that informed the design and completion of this study. In the process of educating others, I gained new knowledge, insight and understanding, and was educated myself. Further research based on the work that was done through this project will play a major role, in further promotion art as a viable dance medium. Future research can continue our getting further understanding about using dance as tool and method of inquiry in the research of health promotion and educational strategies. According to Lerman that is why we do the work we do.

***/ Lerman: I don't know and I hope I'm gonna learn something by doing it and all kinds of things happen that way... I mean you have to believe that's gonna happen otherwise why do it.. I'm not going to bother making something I already know. If I already know then what's the point in my doing it?/***

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The detailed account of the process of planning, choreographing and performing a dance about college student, and the steps taken to translate text into movement, became significant as I sought to explore the use of dance as a medium for communicating about college student suicide. I found that an integral part of being able to effectively educate and increase awareness in members of the community was to ensure that I understood how to communicate with my audience, and that they understood the information communicated. Gaining understanding on both our parts would then directly how I communicated about college student suicide and what they learned about college student suicide.

When we think about communication, we usually think about verbal exchanges or the use of language. Without words the question becomes, ‘can we clearly communicate in a way that is understandable to the receiver?’ In health promotion it is already important that when using text and words to communicate or educate a community about specific health challenges, consideration be given to things such as : - (i) relevance of the intervention to the community; (ii) tailoring of programs for diverse populations; and (iii) the medium / channel being used to communicate with any given population. Using dance that may or may not utilize words to support overcoming a health challenge in my community, meant that even greater attention has to be paid to the medium of communication (dance) and the information being communicated (health information, research findings, data and the knowledge extracted from the dance group). What I was looking for through this exploration was to find the best way of communicating so that our audience and community could interpret the body language, the movement, the acting, and the overall experience. In the process of completing this work, dance became a new language that used the body as the voice, and the movement as the words. The dance choreography and performance then became a visual illustration of what we were trying to say.

While it would appear that, it would take a high level of skill and technique to communicate health information, research findings and data using dance. My experience showed the contrary. During the preparation for this study, the idea of using untrained or non-professionals to do professional work arose with questions attached. The questions was if using a ‘lay’ person to do dance and drama would affect the aesthetic quality of the work and the meaning making that the audience would be able to grasp. In my work with the dancers from my community, that had varying levels of expertise and training, I found that the quality of work put forth was enhanced rather than diminished by the use of ‘real people’ dancing in community with



one another. There was a unique sense of passion for portraying honest movement and emotion that could not be masked by any particular style of training. I do not question the value of the use of trained dancers from the community, which I believe would also add its own unique essence to the work completed. However I found that what was needed for the dance was not necessarily individuals with more training and higher skill levels, but those in community that were willing to sacrifice time and energy to facilitate creating realistic work that was aimed at helping another. According to Liz and I found this also to be true:

*[ Lerman: There are lots and lots of ways in which untrained people, can participate in a deep way functionally. (breathes a sigh) and in no way threaten the capacity of the experts. It's not a threat, and why the experts feel it's a threat I'll never understand.]*

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In this dance project, I found that using the non-professional dancers harnessed creativity from a resource that had much to offer. It took the emphasis off creating a picture, product or work of art simply designed to enthruse the audience based upon skill level and technique. What we presented instead were real people, who each worked through their own self exploratory process to make art that was going to make a difference in their own communities. The final product has less to do with the skill level of the participants, and more to do with their love for dance, their eagerness to work in community and their commitment to finishing the work we began.

Community involvement in this project meant that I had access to the dancers and myself as resources for knowledge and experiences unique to my own community. Solely I as the expert, or the research shared about college student suicide did not shape the thoughts, ideas and expression represented through this dance. Instead I was able to tap into diverse perspectives and pictures of the health challenge, and diverse representations of thought and experience related to

college student suicide. I view that as advantageous to reaching different types of people that may think and hold a variety of views on the subject. The ultimate goal was to mediate between health information, research findings and data about college student suicide and members in the community, friends and family.

At the end of the project it was important that I received feedback from the audience and dance participants to gain further insight into what had happened from the 'other's' perspective . In my interview with Lerman, she highlighted the importance of the other needing to know that they have had an experience and giving voice to those experiences. She says that oftentimes people do not even know they have had an experience until they begin to describe what 'happened' to them. Their feedback added to my understanding of how the work's intention matched the receiver's actual experience. I think that future exploration of the actual interpretations made by the audience; understanding gained by the audience; and the overall effect of the dance choreography and performance, will become significant as health promotion tries to gauge and the effectiveness of using dance as a medium/ tool for health education.

Dance projects much like the one completed through this research study can be applicable to the young generation of students. Both music and dance can have a unique appeal on young students, and such may be a possible way of non-abrasively reaching into college student communities using them as the educators and those being educated. Through this project I found that using dance and a dance project as an invitation to members of the community to get involved in supporting suicide prevention affected the dancers that participated in the project. It opened their eyes to the warning signs of college student suicide, increased their empathy toward other college students who might be at risk, and it encourage them as a community to think about further can be done in community. On a small scale this project was able to touch a

fraction of this community, producing members who can then become agents of change by educating those in their sphere of influence. Being educated about college student suicide through this project, as well as participating in accessing personal knowledge and experiences related to college student suicide, was an effective way of educating and increasing awareness about college student through community involvement. Working with dance/movement to communicate concepts can further solidify college student participants' deeper understanding as he/ she explores her own feelings and emotions and expresses it in what can be a more memorable way, through the body.

At the end of this study one of the most valuable things I understood was that addressing the health challenge of college students suicide was not only about education and increasing awareness, but it was also related to understanding the importance and power of human interaction on a physical, emotional , psychological, and social level. The presentation of the piece to an audience highlighted the importance of creating opportunities for beginning a conversation about college student suicide.

The Dance For Life Project's final presentation opened the door of opportunity to talk about something that for many is brand new, and for others a possibly painful recollection of identifiable pain and emotions. This project also highlighted the importance of giving voice to:- (i) college student's real life experiences (ii) college student's daily existence, and (iii) the lives of college students affected by depression, mental illness and pressing circumstances, all which are often silent, hidden or go unnoticed. I concluded that the work I started was a stepping-stone toward further study and exploration about college student suicide, understanding effective ways and means of educating my community about college student suicide, and understanding the significance of using dance as an alternative medium in the work of health promotion.

## **CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **Summary**

Through this research study, I explored the possibility of using dance as an alternative medium for educating and increasing awareness about college student suicide. Assuming the role of both the researcher and the dance choreographer, I traced my steps through the process of : - (i) planning, choreographing, and performing a new dance piece, and (ii) translating text (health information, research findings, data and knowledge extracted from the dance group) into movement. Over the course of six weeks, I gained unique insights into the knowledge and attitudes of community members with regard to college student suicide. I also learned how dance as an art form could act as a tool to aid in educating and increasing awareness about college student suicide in my community. This study also helped to give a more clear understanding of the role of student peers, the community, and social and support networks in suicide prevention, and the importance of community involvement in health promotion efforts introduced into the community.

Working on a continuum from expert to dance collaborator, I choreographed, arranged, and facilitated the art making process, along with three other dancers from my community. Using the body, I explored attaching meaning to movement to illustrate a picture of the complexity of college student suicide. As we performed an interpretive dance, we created shapes, signals, group formations, and creative movement and I explored how our bodies in motion could serve as a tool transferring information about college student suicide. I found that the project had effects on both the dancers and audience who were members of the community, in areas related to their knowledge and awareness of college student suicide, and attitude toward affecting change.

The Dance For Life Project opened the eyes of the dancers to see the warning signs, risk factors and protective factors of college student suicide. It also increased their empathy toward their own peers and other college students who might be at risk. They also began to ask questions of themselves and their responsibilities as members of the community. I attribute some of their experience to the fact that their involvement with this project brought them in close proximity with health information we were disseminating. They worked with and embodied the new knowledge they gained through the practice of dance making. They had opportunities to reflect and discuss the significance of college student suicide to their own lives. As a result somewhere during the course of the dance project, their attitudes and beliefs began to shift and change. The evidence that the dance choreography and performance had affected my community, came from the audience post-performance discussion and the testimony of the dance participants

What I learned by observing the dance participants was that the process of affecting change in them began with increased awareness through education. Their participation in the creating the dance and performing the dance further solidified the concepts and understanding they had gained. When they had voiced their change in attitudes and consciousness towards members of their community and the subject of college student suicide, then I knew there had been some type of transformation that occurred in the dancers.

### **Conclusion**

While community-based arts and health are distantly situated fields, evidence is beginning to point towards the gains of using art as a medium for reaching out to communities and distributing health information. We know that art has the ability to work as a resource for creative communication, which could be an especially effective tool in the realm of health promotion. When we consider the particular sensitivity of different health challenges such as

college student suicide, we see how the use of art can be valuable because of its seemingly limitless ability to communicate and evoke human emotion. The work I completed contributes to the scope of research and practice we are doing with art as it relates to health communication. It also presents dance as a method for finding out and describing the present and changeable knowledge and attitudes of a community toward college student suicide.

Future research still needs to explore similar projects on a larger scale, using populations that are more diverse. Our next steps should also include exploring the capability of text/ words translated into choreography and performance to affect audience interpretation, meaning making and understanding of the subject about which the art is being made. Finding out the strengths and limitations of using dance choreography and performance, will also help us to understand how we can be more effective in the work we do as artists and the approach we take as health professionals when incorporating dance as an art form into health related community outreach efforts. Overall, my embodied enquiry supported my proposal for using dance as a viable medium to aid with health promotion efforts to prevent college student suicide.

### **Recommendations**

Health promotion recognizes that people do not make choices solely on their own and that we must consider each individual's social environment such as: - their family, friends, community, culture, economic situation, and political forces. Promoting health also requires understanding how social policy (such as laws and rules concerning government functioning) and community structures (such as families, churches, and schools) can be changed or used to support positive health in communities. As such, as a community we need to not only have a humanitarian response to this challenge, but also explore ways and means of responding at the governance and political level.

The challenge of college suicide is critical and that means that as a social and health challenges it should be a place of top priority on both university and local community agenda. Rallying around these agendas, stakeholders need to be sought that would support the work being done while implementing and establishing new regulations and policies that support suicide prevention efforts. Support for these policies need to come not only from the communities and the institutional leadership, but also from larger organizations such as the World Health Organization (WHO). When large organizational support is possible, the policies we propose and create will not only affect local communities but also our nation and global communities at large. Building interest in and renewed support for seeking solutions to college student suicide as a community, nation and world, should be a short and long term goal for affecting change in a way that save lives.

While there is still a question of evaluation, more integration of the arts into health research can result in the addition of more dynamic projects, with other purposes and goals that will potentially provide evidence for the value of institutionalizing arts-based health education programs into schools, colleges and universities. Continued projects that facilitate longer-term mergers, can be the impetus for further conversations and confirmations about the value of using dance as an art form in community-based health promotion programming. Overall more visibility needs to be given to challenges of college student suicide. Even though colleges and universities are affected by this health challenge, the word 'suicide' has still managed to remain invisible and with much stigma attached to it. The work completed through this project has opened a door for beginning the conversation about college student suicide, however there are still many more doors that we still need to open for other people to hear about the challenge we face as a community.

One of the ways that we can begin to address the stigma and ignorance about college student suicide would be to incorporate the health information into education curriculums in general. The work produced out of the Dance For Life Project and similar projects would be resourceful in the production of audiovisual material copyrighted for educating students across the university. As education material, the artwork would become mandatory viewing for freshman orientation classes. Including the media into select class curriculums at each level of higher learning, including the graduate level would also ensure that more students have an opportunity to be educated. Working through the campus health and wellness centers, and the student dining and residential programs would be another opportunity to incorporate this type of educational tool in a more pervasive manner throughout academia, potentially affecting thousands of students coming into college each year.

Community-based health programs that incorporate the arts are important, because these programs can also facilitate the incorporation of life sustaining activities that help to forge human connections in and throughout the community. Those connections can then support the empowering and ‘building up’ the community in a healthful way, socially, physically, emotionally, and psychologically. Various sectors of the campus community and its leadership need to be informed and involved in the process of planning and implementing healthful goals. Involving local institutions like the YMCA could also create opportunities to reach further out into community, by engaging citizens who may be unaware of sensitive health challenges that are affecting other members of their own community. Working with community-based health programs that utilize art forms such as dance to address community health challenges extends itself beyond the borders of college student suicide into a variety of difficult health challenges



that face the university community. The work I have becomes a possible model for future experimentation.

This study was a good starting point in my exploration of the potential of using dance as a medium for communicating about health challenges. Out of this and similar projects I envision the development of student, community, institutional and in the future nonprofit organizations that rally around the community in support of continuing to educate and increase awareness about college student suicide. The focus of their efforts would be to affect: - (i) the empathetic response of students toward their peers; (ii) increased community involvement in community-based health programs, and (iii) the establishment of caring social and support networks in ways that could positively impact the long term health and well being of communities.

### **Closing Narrative**

#### **“ When Words Are Not Enough”**

Sometimes words are not enough to express all that you want to say about how you feel. There are many phrases used in the English language to depict/ communicate the feeling we have, when there is something that happens that you don't know how to put into words. The fact that you don't have the words to describe what you want to say does not change the fact that there is a feeling/ experience inside that is very real and at any given moment may come out, whether it be in tears, laughter, screams, a snide remark or a withdrawal of self from surroundings. We all want and need to be heard. When no one hears us, and we cannot communicate, we continue to speak anyway. We speak as we withdraw from relationships, we speak as we no longer want, we speak as we don't show up or give up. We speak as we cry. We still speak even as we don't speak. We speak as we suffer silently inside with no words to express how we feel.

In the wake of April 16, 2007, we suffered a great tragedy that left many speechless. For many there were no words to express what was felt that day and for days to come. There is an element of silence even as people attempt to communicate what their experiences were. How do you describe the indescribable? You can say the obvious but there are still some things that you don't even know how to put into words. Many still don't know how to communicate the remembrance of that day and of the things that were done. Many have not known and still don't know how to make sense of their fear, their hurt or their pain. Without a place to express, or to communicate, these things remain bottled up inside and some people collapse, some breakdown, some sit on the verge of explosion. Some in the wake of the tragedy continue to suffer silently.

They have often called suicide a silent cry for help. There is also a theory that hurting people hurt other people. I wonder if silent people make other people silent. As this student (April 16) was silently suffering, he left many now with the mark of silently suffering. The victim becomes the victimizer. The perpetrated becomes the perpetrator. Have we now contracted the disease of suffering in silence not knowing what to say and who to turn to? When one hurts all hurt. When one suffers all suffer. On April 16, 2007, there was death, and a little part of all of us died too and for many there are still no words to express this.

The challenge of suicide is a sensitive one and increased awareness and potential efforts have been made that to date has brought some change; still any loss of life is too much. We want to eradicate suicide. We want to be in the business of preventing loss of life and exploring what else we can do. We need to do what we can do to save lives, especially when there are those who at risk of dying because they could not communicate and chose to take matters into their own hands.

As health professionals, I see that we need to have more ways than words to communicate the importance of this matter. We may need to combat silence with silence. An issue of internal feelings that is wordless we should consider addressing with a message that touches not only the brain but also the soul. A form of communication, not necessarily without words, that can address some internal deeper challenges. How can we say a lot of words to a person who can't speak, while part of their struggle is being silent. We need to communicate with them in a way that they understand. There is a way to communicate not necessarily with words that can touch the mind and the emotions of the person who struggles to speak. We can use music, we can use art, we can use dance – as a way of communicating when words are not enough. Considering the wordless forms of communication to reach a silent challenges/ group could be a good starting place. There is power in using art to communicate, helping people to express themselves, helping people to heal.

As we consider communicating in a new way I have only just begun to scratch the surface and take on some responsibility to address what is happening. Dance was elected for this study to be the burden bearer and to break the silence in the room. It was the dance that went forth, presented itself and spoke on our behalf. The dance said many of the things that we could not say. The dance acted as the voice to the people and of the people speaking in a way that only dance could speak. The dance communicated meaning that was open for the viewer to perceive, understand and appreciate. The dance showed on the outside what for many goes on, on the inside. Using dance, we spoke those things that are sometimes unspeakable.

As a community, we need to care for those that are suffering. As a community we need to explore how to change our approach to those things that are sometime swept under the rug.

When we take the time and energy to speak the words that need to be spoken and reach out to those that are suffering, it is only then that we begin to show the community that we care. We will often never know those that are suffering around us, however it is by our actions as a community that they will identify that we care. When we act, we are saying to the college student and the community that we know they are there, and we are responding to their silent cries for help.

When we act we are saying to the college student and community that we have not forgotten them and though words are not always enough to express how we truly feel/ they truly feel, this time we chose the dance to speak on our and their behalf.

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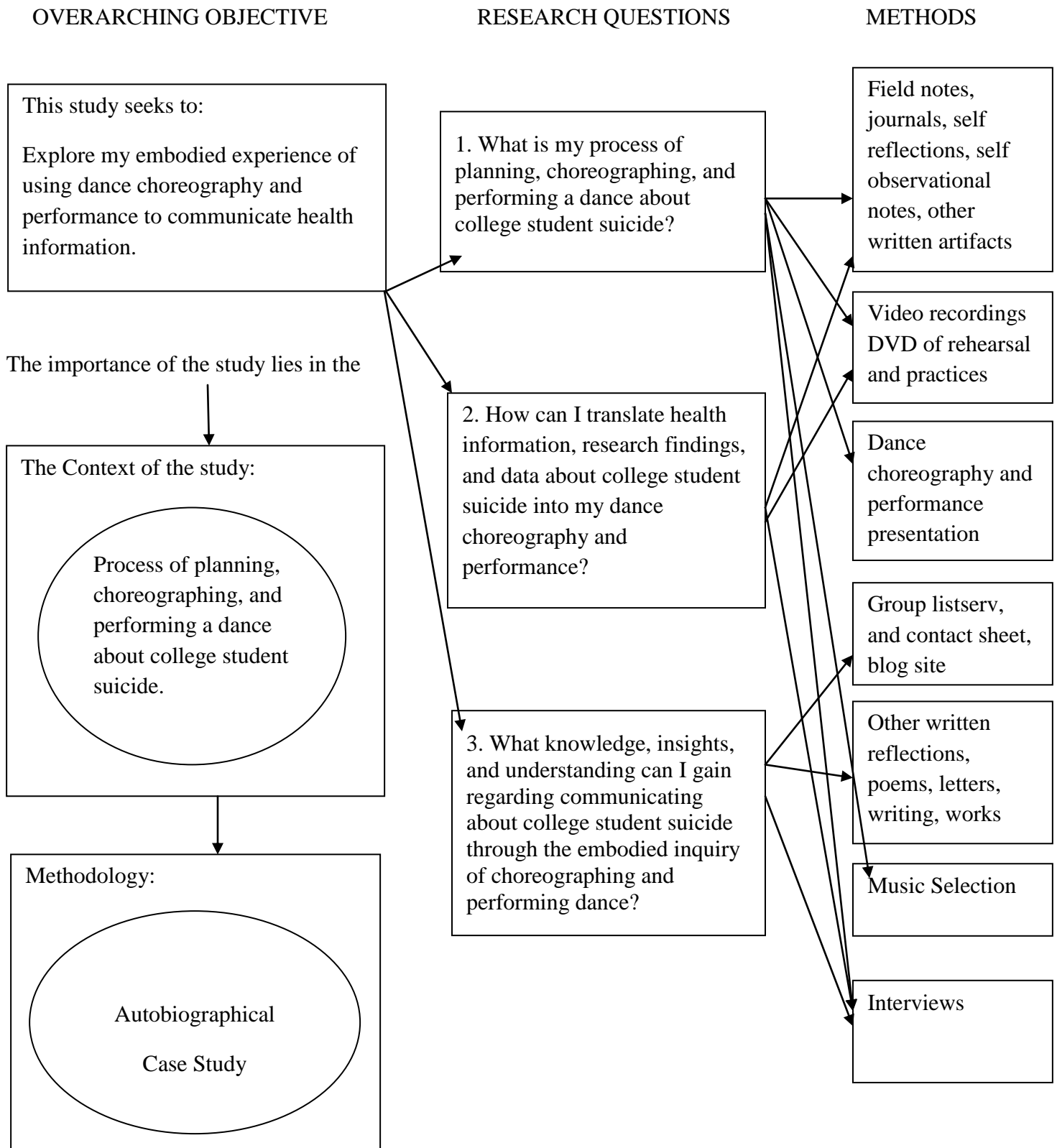
## APPENDIX A

## Choreographic Process Model

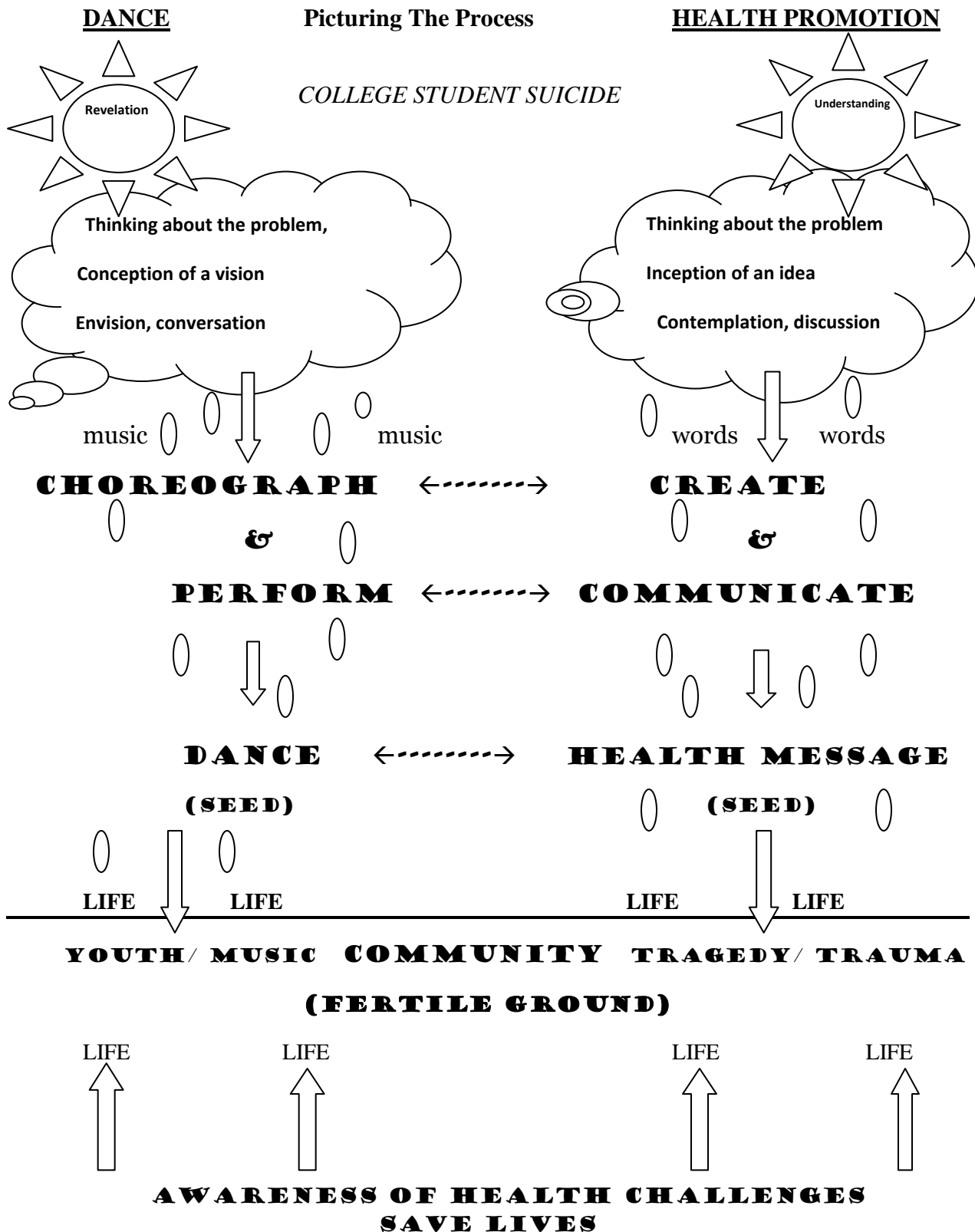
<b>Didactic -Democratic Spectrum Process 1</b>	<b>Didactic-Democratic Spectrum Process 2</b>	<b>Didactic- Democratic spectrum Process 3</b>	<b>Didactic-Democratic Spectrum Process 4</b>	<b>Didactic-Democratic Spectrum Process 5</b>
<b>Tutor Role</b> Choreographer as Expert	<b>Tutor Role</b> Choreographer as Author	<b>Tutor Role</b> Choreographer as Pilot	<b>Tutor Role</b> Choreographer as Facilitator	<b>Tutor Role</b> Choreographer as Collaborator
<b>Student Role</b> Dancer as Instrument	<b>Student Role</b> Dancer as Interpreter	<b>Student Role</b> Dancer as Contributor	<b>Student Role</b> Dancer as Creator	<b>Student Role</b> Dancer as Co-owner
<b>Choreographer Skills</b> Control of concept, style, content, structure and interpretation. Generation of all material	<b>Choreographer Skills</b> Control of concept, style, content, structure and interpretation in relation to capabilities/ qualities of dancers	<b>Choreographer Skills</b> Initiation of concept, able to direct, set and develop tasks though improvisation or imagery, shape the material that ensues	<b>Choreographer Skills</b> Provide leadership, negotiate process, intention, concept. Contribute methods to provide stimulus, facilitates process from content generation to macrostructure	<b>Choreographer Skills</b> Share with others research, negotiation and decision-making about concept, intention and style, develop/share/ adapt dance content and structures of the work
<b>Dancer Skills</b> Convergent: imitation, replication	<b>Dancer Skills</b> Convergent: imitation, replication, interpretation	<b>Dancer Skills</b> Divergent: replication, content, Development, content creation, (improvisation and responding to tasks)	<b>Dancer Skills</b> Divergent: content and creation development (improvisation and responding to tasks)	<b>Dancer Skills</b> Divergent: content creation and development (improvisation, setting and responding to tasks), shared decision-making on aspects of intention and structure
<b>Social Interaction</b> Passive but receptive, can be impersonal	<b>Social Interaction</b> Separate activities, but receptive, with personal performance qualities stressed	<b>Social Interaction</b> Active participation from both parties, interpersonal relationship	<b>Social Interaction</b> Interactive	<b>Social Interaction</b> Interactive
<b>Teaching Methods</b> Authoritarian	<b>Teaching Methods</b> Directorial	<b>Teaching Methods</b> Leading, guiding	<b>Teaching Methods</b> Nurturing, mentorial	<b>Teaching Methods</b> Share authorship
<b>Learning Approaches</b> Conform, receive and process instruction	<b>Learning Approaches</b> Receive and process instruction and utilize own experience as performer	<b>Learning Approaches</b> Respond to tasks, contribute to guided discovery, replicate material from others, etc.	<b>Learning Approaches</b> Respond to tasks, problem solve, contribute to guided discovery, actively participate	<b>Learning Approaches</b> Experiential. Contribute fully to concept, dance content, form, style, process, discovery

**APPENDIX B**

**Scope of the Research Study**



APPENDIX C



## APPENDIX D

### **Brief Informal Introduction to the Study & Invitation to the Interest Meeting**

Hi ...,

I am working on my dissertation project and seeking volunteer dancers who I can work with to create a dance. This study only requires some time and energy and a commitment of 2 days per week for six weeks of this semester. I am interested in looking more closely at how art can be merged with health and used as a medium to educated communities about a sensitive health challenge. Based upon my background, I am using the artistic medium of dance to educate the university about college student suicide.

In my study and review of literature, I found that suicide is the second leading cause of death on college campuses. It is an alarming statistic and greater efforts need to be made to educate our communities and students about this. My goal is to work in the community to bring people together to share this information and educated others about a few things. The warning signs, protective factors, and risk factors; the role that college students can play in supporting other peers; and the role the community can also play in encouraging, support and creating an atmosphere/ campus climate that is fit for students, especially those struggling with depression and mental illness.

I am planning an interest meeting within the next week to describe the study in greater detail and I would like to know if you would be interested in coming to hear a little more about the study, what it would entail, and the commitment that is required. I am looking for 3-5 volunteers that I can work with over the course of 6 weeks, once per week. All scheduling and plans for dates will be finalized at that meeting based upon individual schedules. Would you be interested in participating in this study?

## APPENDIX E

### The “*Dance For Life*” Dance Project Interest Meeting email Invitation

With Choreographer/ Researcher: Janelle L. Fournillier

Hello Virginia Tech Student:

Currently I am working on a dance related research study, part of which involves a dance project called "Dance For Life." I have invited just a few people to be a part of this project however I am looking to recruit just about 4 - 5 more people. You are not required to be a dancer, however the major criteria is that you must be a college student here at Virginia Tech, have a heart for your community, and be able to commit to this project from start to finish.

If you are interested I would like to extend an invitation for you to attend an interest meeting tomorrow, Saturday November 5, 2011 from 12:00 - 1:00pm.

Email me to schedule an appointment to talk within that hour.

So far we have had one informal rehearsal to begin to talk about the idea behind the dance, however we are scheduled to begin formal rehearsals tomorrow Saturday November 5, 2011 from 2-5pm. While this dance project aims to be fun, it will require some effort and heart to achieve the goals set forth.

The project is called Dance For Life. The background of the project is related to health promotion and communicating health information, research and data to the university community to educate them about serious challenges surrounding college students.

The overall study is focused on using the arts, more specifically dance as a medium for educating the community about a health challenges. I will be choreographing and teaching a dance to a few college students and working on this project as both the choreographer and the researcher.

We will be working in the studio/ room reserved as a group on the selected days and will have rehearsals just about twice a week based upon everyone's schedule. The rehearsals will last around 2 1/2 - 3 hrs. including conversation discussion, relaxing time and food. For the most part there will be rehearsals 1 day in the week and 1 day on the weekend. A few more rehearsals will be added in as we go along. From the schedules we have finalized so far, we will probably be rehearsing for the most part on Tuesdays and Saturdays beginning in November and ending in the 1st week of December. There will be a total of 12 rehearsals to complete the project. At the end of the project there will be one major performance of the piece within our community as well as a few minor performances here on campus.

There are more details about the project and the study that I would like to share with you in person. If this sounds like something you might be interested in participating in and you would like to know more about the study, feel free to contact me via email me at \*\*\*\*\*@vt.edu OR call (540)\*\*\*\_\*\*\*\*

Sincerely,  
Janelle L. Fournillier  
Choreographer/ Research Coordinator  
The Dance For Life Project  
Virginia Polytechnic Institute & State University  
Blacksburg, VA, 2406

## APPENDIX F

### Dance For Life Project Invitation Letter

Study Title: Dance For Life: exploring dance choreography and performance as a tool for educating the university community about college student suicide.

Dear \_\_\_\_\_:

My name is Janelle L. Fournillier. I am a doctoral candidate in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University (Virginia Tech). I am conducting a research study as part of the requirements of my degree in Health Promotion, and I would like to invite you to participate.

I am studying the use of dance as a medium for communicating health information, research findings, and data about sensitive health challenges, which in this study is college student suicide. I serve as the researcher/health professional and dance choreographer/ dancer. I will be working with a group of 3-5 volunteer dancers and planning, choreographing and performing this new piece. I have also incorporated an interview portion of the study. The interview will serve to help me think critically about the process of creating a new dance to address a sensitive health challenge, as well as reflect on what other artists are doing in the community. I have selected three artists/ dance choreographers involved in art making that addresses sensitive challenges/ health challenges.

If you decide to participate, you will be asked to meet with me for an interview about art making in the community. In particular, we will discuss (1) the art making process, the art that you make; (2) how your life influences your art; (3) the content of your art; (4) how you translate ideas and information into art; (5) the knowledge, insights and understanding you gain about your art in the process of making a new work of art; and (6) using art as a medium for communication.

The meeting will take place at a mutually agreed upon time and place (via phone), and should last about 45 minutes. The interview will be audio (*or*) videotaped so that I can accurately reflect on what is discussed. The tapes will only be reviewed by me, and members of the research committee, if necessary, for the purpose of verification, transcription and analysis. You will be asked all questions on the interview sheet, however you do not have to answer any questions that you do not wish to.

Although there is not a monetary benefit from participating in this study, we hope that others in the community/society in general will benefit by learning about how art/dance can be used to educate/ increase awareness in communities about sensitive health/social challenges. Participation is confidential. Study information will be kept in a secure location at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University. The results of the study may be published or presented at professional meetings, and if necessary your identity can be revealed or remain anonymous. Taking part in the study is your decision. You do not have to be in this study if you do not want to. You may also quit being in the study at any time or decide not to answer any question you are not comfortable answering.

I will be happy to answer any questions you have about the study. You may contact me at (540) \*\*\*-\*\*\*\* and \*\*\*\*\*@vt.edu, or my faculty advisor, Dr. Kerry Redican, (540) 231-\*\*\*\*, and \*\*\*\*\*@vt.edu, if you have study related questions or problems. If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the Office of Research Compliance at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University at 540-231-4991/1835.

Thank you for your consideration. If you would like to participate, please contact me at the number listed below to discuss participating or email me at \*\*\*\*\*@vt.edu. I will also call you within the next week to see whether you are willing to participate.

With kind regards,  
Signature



## APPENDIX G

### Informed Consent Form For Participants (Dancers)

VIRGINIA POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE AND STATE UNIVERSITY  
Informed Consent for Participants (Dancers)  
in Research Projects Involving Human Subjects

Title of Project: Dance For Life: exploring dance choreography and performance as a tool for educating the university community about college student suicide.

Investigator(s) : Jandelle L. Fournillier (Doctoral Student), Kerry J. Redican, PhD (Advisor)

#### I. Purpose of this Research/Project

The purpose of this autobiographical case study is to explore my embodied experience of using dance choreography and performance as a medium for educating the university community about college student suicide. I will be following, recording, and writing about my experience in the process of planning, choreographing, and performing a new dance. The study will include (i) a dance project called “Dance For Life,” and (ii) interviews with three dance/ theater artists in the community. The research done will contribute to the writing of a final dissertation. This is a research study being conducted on behalf of Virginia Tech in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the completion of a doctoral degree in Curriculum and Instruction (Health Promotion).

#### II. Procedures

The dance project, entitled “Dance For Life,” is a six-week project that involves the choreography and performance of a new dance piece that will be performed publicly upon completion. The project will involve a small group of 3-5 volunteer college student dancers who will work with the dance choreographer/ researcher over the course of six weeks, to create a new dance. The purpose of the dance will be to educate/ increase awareness in the community about college student suicide.

Two (3hr long) rehearsals will be held each week in a dance studio on campus. The days and times of those rehearsals will be decided upon at the start of the project, based upon proposed dates and times and the dancers’ schedules. The rehearsal will involve teaching of movements, practicing parts of the dance, discussion about the dance/ dance moves and what is being represented at different stages of the dance, open dialogue, and resting to eat/drink.

Each session of the rehearsal will be video recorded and uploaded/ burnt to a DVD for use by the dancers to practice. Rehearsals recordings will be uploaded to a private space online for viewing by only the participating dancers. This will serve as an aid for practicing the dance piece outside of rehearsal. All video recordings will be collected as data.

All dancers will be expected to attend each of the 12 rehearsals as well as perform in the final presentation. Informal meetings, discussions, and dialogue that occur in studio will also be video recorded. The data being collected will serve as material for the choreographer/ researcher to review and reflect upon, to write about the process of creating a new dance.

Providing all space, equipment, music, props, costuming, will be the responsibility of the choreographer/ researcher. Material used for the choreography will include, research findings, data, health information, and interview reflections, which will be shared and discussed with the dancers. Dancers will actively participate in discussions and give input/ feedback/ contribute ideas throughout the process, however the choreographing of the dance will be the primary role of the dance choreographer/ researcher. The final performance will be video recorded and made into a short DVD movie which and included with the final dissertation written by the researcher. This DVD will be made publicly available with the final dissertation.

### III. Risks

This study has minimal risks to the volunteer dancers involved. Open and ongoing conversation will provide a place for all dancers to share their thoughts and views about the study, the dance, and the process. All dancers are also free to withdraw from the dance project at any time during the course of this study.

### IV. Benefits

While there are no direct benefits made to encourage you to to the participate, the indirect benefit is that your participation will contribute to finding better ways and means of educating university communities about college student suicide. Your participation will contribute to helping both the field of arts and health understand how dance can be used to communicate health information, research findings and data especially pertaining to sensitive subject matter which are often difficult to speak about. Your participation will also make a difference in the lives of the college students and the people in the community as we try to shed light on a subject that needs urgent address.

### V. Extent of Anonymity and Confidentiality

The data collected in this study will include video recording. The video-recorded dance rehearsals/ discussions/ meetings will not be made available publicly. The material will only be available for review by the volunteer dancers, the researcher/ dance choreographer, and members of the research committee if necessary. The final DVD presentation will be available publicly with the doctoral dissertation, however if requested the names of the dancers can remain anonymous/ be aliased in the credits. All dancers will be identified in the dissertation prose by their initials/ alias/ pseudo name. The IRB at Virginia Tech is responsible for the oversight of the protection of all human subjects involved in research. Therefore, the Institutional Review Board of Virginia Tech, may view this study's collected data for auditing purposes.

All data with identifying information on the participants (log in sheets, contact information etc.) will be stored in a private file system. All other audio/ video recorded/ digital data will be stored on a password sensitive USB/ data/ file system and kept by the researcher.

All transcriptions of conversations/ discussion will be done by the researcher/ choreographer and also stored on a password sensitive USB/data/ file system and kept by the researcher for data analysis. Data may be used for future writing and research conducted by the researcher/ choreographer and only with the permission of the dancers/ participants.

If at any time, you, as a participant, are believed to be a threat to yourself or others during/ after the course of this study/interview, confidentiality will be broken and the appropriate authorities will be identified and contacted on your behalf.

#### VI. Compensation

There will be no compensation made for participation in this research. Participation is voluntary. If any injuries are incurred by the participant during the course of this study, all financial costs are the responsibility of the participant and not this study.

#### VII. Freedom to Withdraw

At any time during the course of this study, you are free to withdraw without consequence. If you are injured or become ill, you are also free to withdraw from this study. You are also not required to answer any questions or speak on any subject that you are not comfortable speaking on.

#### VIII. Subject's Responsibilities

I voluntarily agree to participate in this study. I have the following responsibilities:  
(List any medical conditions, limitation that may render you incapable of participating/ completing this research study)

---

#### IX. Subject's Permission

I have read the Consent Form and conditions of this project. I have had all my questions answered. I hereby acknowledge the above and give my voluntary consent:

\_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
Subject signature

\_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
Witness (Optional except for certain classes of subjects)

Should I have any pertinent questions about this research or its conduct, and research subjects' rights, and whom to contact in the event of a research-related injury to the subject, I may contact:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Telephone/e-mail

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Telephone/e-mail

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Telephone/e-mail

David M. Moore

540-231-4991/ [moored@vt.edu](mailto:moored@vt.edu)

Chair, Virginia Tech Institutional Review  
Board for the Protection of Human Subjects  
Office of Research Compliance  
2000 Kraft Drive, Suite 2000 (0497)  
Blacksburg, VA 24060

Telephone/e-mail

**APPENDIX H**

**The “*Dance For Life*” Dance Project Contact Information Sheet**



Please fill out the contact information below

Name                      Email                      Mailing Address  
Telephone #

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

4. \_\_\_\_\_

5. \_\_\_\_\_

6. \_\_\_\_\_

7. \_\_\_\_\_

Sincerely:

Signature

**APPENDIX I**

**The “*Dance For Life*” Dance Project Sign in Sheet**



Date

Location

Please sign and print your name below. Thanks!

Print Name

Sign Name

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

4. \_\_\_\_\_

5. \_\_\_\_\_

6. \_\_\_\_\_

7. \_\_\_\_\_

Sincerely:

Signature

## APPENDIX J

### Informed Consent For Participants (Interviewees)

VIRGINIA POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE AND STATE UNIVERSITY  
Informed Consent for Participants (Interviewees)  
in Research Projects Involving Human Subjects

Title of Project: Dance For Life: exploring dance choreography and performance as a tool for educating the university community about college student suicide.

Investigator(s) : Jandelle L. Fournillier (Doctoral Student), Kerry J. Redican, PhD (Advisor)

#### I. Purpose of this Research/Project

The purpose of this autobiographical case study is to explore my embodied experience of using dance choreography and performance as a medium for educating the university community about college student suicide. I will be following, recording, and writing about my experience in the process of planning, choreographing, and performing a new dance about college student suicide. The study will include (i) a dance project called “Dance For Life,” and (ii) interviews with three dance/ theater artists in the community. The research done will contribute to the writing of a final dissertation that will recount in a narrative format, my experience exploring the process of planning, choreographing, and performing a dance about college student suicide. This is a research study being conducted on behalf of Virginia Tech in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the completion of a doctoral degree in Curriculum and Instruction (Health Promotion).

#### II. Procedures

As part of this research study I will be interviewing three artists that have worked extensively in the context of community to create art that addresses sensitive social/ health related subject matter. The three artists I have elected are Ann Kilkelly, Liz Lerman and Celeste Miller. All of whom have had extensive experience in the are of art making in the community.

This is an autobiographical case study explores my own embodied experience of art making as I go through the process of planning, choreographing and performing a dance about college student suicide. I will be working with a group of 3-5 volunteer dancers on a six week dance project entitled “Dance For Life.” The project will culminate in a final production that will be presented on the university campus. The interviews will take place early in the research study, or at the soonest convenience of the artists.

While the interview is not usually associated with autoethnographic study, I have chosen to incorporate this element of the study for several reasons. I will use the data collected in the interviews to gain some insight about the ways other artists think about and approach art making when addressing sensitive subject matter. I will introspectively be gathering data, stimulating my memory, gathering new information about myself, and validating/question my own personal data while gaining contextual information that I can use. I will also use these interviews to critically think about/ reflect upon my own approach to dance choreography and performance

and how I view/ experience using dance as a tool for educating communities. Material used for the choreography will incorporate, research findings, data, health information, dancer feedback and interview reflections.

I have developed a list of nine interview questions that are relevant to helping me answer my research questions. The questions are related to (i) the process of planning, choreographing/ making and performing dance/ art that addresses sensitive subject matter; (ii) translating information, research and data (material) into dance/art that makes a difference; (iii) knowledge, insight and understanding that is/has been gained about communicating using dance/ art, in the process of making /performing art about sensitive subject matter.

Each Interview will last approximately 30-45mins and will be held either in person or via phone depending on the location of the artist. All interviews will be audio/ video recorded and transcribed.

### III. Risks

This study has minimal risks to you as a participant.

### IV. Benefits

While there are no direct benefits made to encourage you to to the participate, the indirect benefit is that your participation will contribute toward understanding how art can be to educated communities about sensitive subject matter. Your participation will contribute to gaining a better understanding of how health information, research and data can be translated into dance/ art and used to educate communities/ promote health on college campuses. Your participation will also indirectly contribute to shedding light on a crucial mental health challenge facing universities all across the US today.

### V. Extent of Anonymity and Confidentiality

The data collected in this study will include video/audio recording. The material will only be available for review by the researcher/ dance choreographer, and members of the research committee if necessary. The IRB at Virginia Tech is responsible for the oversight of the protection of all human subjects involved in research. Therefore, the Institutional Review Board of Virginia Tech, may view this study's collected data for auditing purposes.

All data with identifying information on the participants will be stored in a private file system. All other audio/ video recorded/ digital data will be stored on a password sensitive USB/ data/ file system and kept by the researcher.

All transcriptions of conversations/ discussion/ interviews will be done by the researcher/ choreographer and also stored on a password sensitive USB/data/ file system and kept by the researcher for data analysis. Data may be used for future writing and research conducted by the researcher/ choreographer, only with the permission of the participants.

You are also not required to answer any questions or speak on any subject that you are not comfortable speaking on.

If at any time, you, as a participant, are believed to be a threat to yourself or others during/ after the course of this study/interview, confidentiality will be broken and the appropriate authorities identified and contacted on your behalf.

### VI. Compensation

There will be no compensation made for participation in this research. Participation is voluntary. If any injuries are incurred by the participant during the course of this study, all financial costs are the responsibility of the participant and not this study.

### VII. Freedom to Withdraw

At any time during the course of this study, you are free to withdraw without consequence. If you are injured or become ill, you are also free to withdraw from this study.

### VIII. Subject's Responsibilities

I voluntarily agree to participate in this study. I have the following responsibilities:  
(List any medical conditions, limitation that may render you incapable of participating/  
completing this research study)

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### IX. Subject's Permission

I have read the Consent Form and conditions of this project. I have had all my questions answered. I hereby acknowledge the above and give my voluntary consent:

\_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
Subject signature

\_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
Witness (Optional except for certain classes of subjects)

Should I have any pertinent questions about this research or its conduct, and research subjects' rights, and whom to contact in the event of a research-related injury to the subject, I may contact:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Investigator(s) Telephone/e-mail

\_\_\_\_\_  
Faculty Advisor Telephone/e-mail

\_\_\_\_\_  
Reviewer/Department Head Telephone/e-mail

David M. Moore

Chair, Virginia Tech Institutional Review  
Board for the Protection of Human Subjects  
Office of Research Compliance  
2000 Kraft Drive, Suite 2000 (0497)  
Blacksburg, VA 24060

\_\_\_\_\_  
Telephone/e-mail



## APPENDIX K

### Rehearsal/ Project Schedule

REHEARSAL/ PROJECT SCHEDULE			
Interest Meeting	Friday, October 28, 2011	12:00pm	GLC
Interest Meeting	Monday, October 31, 2011	5:30pm	GLC
Interest Meeting	Tuesday, November 01, 2011	5:30pm	GLC
WEEK 1			
#1	Tuesday, November 01, 2011	6:00pm	GLC
#2	Saturday, November 05, 2011	2:00pm	Squires Student Center
WEEK 2			
#3	Tuesday, November 08, 2011	9:30am	GLC
dancers out of town	Saturday November 12, 2011	2:00pm	TBD
WEEK 3			
#4	Monday, November 14, 2011	5:30pm	Squires Student Center
#5	Tuesday, November 15, 2011	9:30am	GLC/War Memorial Dance Room
Interest Meeting	Wednesday, November 16, 2011	5:30pm	GLC
dancers out of town	Saturday November 18, 2011	2:00pm	TBD
WEEK 4 (THANKSGIVING BREAK)			
#6	Monday, November 21, 2011	5:30pm	GLC
#7	Tuesday, November 22, 2011	8:30am	GLC
Interview # 1	Wednesday, November 23, 2011	10:00am	Henderson Hall
Interview # 1 cont'd	Saturday, November 26, 2011	9:30am	via phone
Interview #2	Saturday, November 26, 2011	11:00am	via phone
dancers out of town	Saturday, November 26, 2011	2:00pm	TBD
WEEK 5			
Interview #3	Monday, November 28, 2011	8:30am	via phone
#8	Tuesday, November 29, 2011	9:30am	GLC/War Memorial Dance Room
#9	Wednesday, November 30, 2011	5:30pm	Squires Student Center
Interest Meeting	Thursday, December 01, 2011	5:30pm	GLC/ War Memorial Dance Room
#10	Thursday, December 01, 2011	6:00pm	GLC
#11	Friday, December 02, 2011	6:30pm	GLC
#12	Saturday, December 03, 2011	12:00pm	GLC
WEEK 6			
#13	Monday, December 05, 2011	5:30pm	GLC
#14	Tuesday, December 06, 2011	9:30am	GLC/War Memorial Dance Room
#15	Friday, December 09, 2011	5:30pm	GLC
#16	Saturday, December 10, 2011	4:00pm	GLC
WEEK 7			
#17	Tuesday, December 13, 2011	10:00am	GLC
#18	Tuesday, December 13, 2011	6:00pm	War Memorial Dance Room
#19 (dress rehearsal)	Wednesday, December 14, 2011	6:00pm	War Memorial Dance Room
Presentation Day	Thursday, December 15, 2011	12:30pm	War Memorial Dance Room
Presentation Day	Thursday, December 15, 2011	6:00pm	War Memorial Dance Room

## APPENDIX L

### Interview Questions

1. Could you tell me a little about yourself/background as an artist, the type of art you make, and what inspires you to make art?

*[RQ 1. What is my process of planning, choreographing, and performing a professional dance about college student suicide?]*

2. Talk to me about what the process of making new art looks like and the major factors that you consider as you move through that process.

3. Talk to me about the product of art making and how the product relates to the process.

4. What role does who you are and your life history play in your art making?

*[RQ 2. How can I translate health information, research findings, and data about college student suicide into my dance choreography and performance?]*

5. What generally influences the content of your artwork and where do you get the material to create your art?

6. How do you incorporate information, research, data, and material external to yourself into your artwork?

7. How do you view translating information/ research/data into art? What lead you to incorporate specific material into art?

*[RQ3. What knowledge, insight, and understanding can I gain regarding communicating about college student suicide through the embodied inquiry of choreographing and performing a dance about college student suicide?]*

8. What new knowledge, insights, or understanding have you gained about the process, the product, or the subject matter about which you are creating during the process of creating a new art work? Can you give examples of how that works or when that has happened?

9. Talk to me about your ideas about using art as a medium for communication. How is important is it for others to understand you art? What do you think is the connection between good art and interpretation/meaning making.

## APPENDIX M

### Interviewee # 1 Biography

Ann Kilkelly is a Professor of Theatre Arts and Women's Studies at Virginia Tech (Blacksburg, VA). She teaches a variety of performance and theater classes, women's studies seminars and undergraduate courses about community and culture, and tap classes and workshops in Blacksburg and at a number of festivals around the Southeast. She also writes, directs, and choreographs original performance work. She has written about jazz-tap dancing and history, performance studies and interactive performance technique and has published widely about performance and dance. Kilkelly is recognized nationally as an expert in performance studies and interactive performance techniques. She has received Smithsonian Senior Fellowships and a National Endowment for the Humanities Collaborative Research Grant, and has co-authored and directed several plays based on science and technology challenges. She is a co-creator of the Community Arts Network ([communityarts.net](http://communityarts.net)); and with Robert H. Leonard, co-authored *Performing Communities: A Study of Eight U.S. Grassroots Theatre Ensembles and Their Communities*. She was the recipient of the College of Liberal Arts and Human Sciences Outreach Award in 2007. She is also a nationally recognized scholar and performer who created the Diversity Training Laboratory that uses performance techniques to examine diversity challenges. In Blacksburg, Ann directs multi-disciplinary works that feature rhythm and stories. FLAP! A Community Commotion and Return Addresses were recent examples. As a member of artists organization, Alternate ROOTS, she sees art connected to community and social change. As a writer, Ann publishes poetry, fiction, and scholarly articles in a variety of venues and publications which include: *Women and Performance Journal*, *the American Voice*, *The Community Arts Network*([communityarts.net](http://communityarts.net)), and, of course, ITA.

## APPENDIX N

### Interviewee # 2 Biography

Celeste Miller is a multi-faceted dance artist whose career includes solo performance, choreography, arts activism and animator of community art projects. Her unique performance style is a combination of spoken word and movement that plumbs narrative for physical imagery in juxtaposed connections with words. Often called the dance whisperer, Miller investigates dance as a powerful tool for art-making, research and activism. Miller's work has been recognized by numerous grants, fellowships and commissions including Choreography Fellowship from the National Endowment for the Arts, Individual Artist Award for Solo Theatrical Performance by the Maryland State Arts Council, Massachusetts New Playwrights Fellowship; as well as awards from the Rockefeller Foundation, Atlanta Circle of Drama Critics, Mayor of the City of Atlanta and arts councils in Georgia, Massachusetts and Maryland. Commissions for her work have come from the High Museum of Art, Atlanta; Augusta Museum of Art, Grinnell College, Emory University, American Festival Project, Smithsonian's Discovery Theatre, Boston Dance Umbrella, American Festival Project, Columbia College New Orleans Ballet Dance Collective, Florida Dance Festival and more.

As a solo touring artist from 1983-2003, her work has been produced from coast to coast in venues ranging from concert halls and museums; rock clubs and grange halls. Her most recent production, *The Annunciation... sort of*, was performed by an intergenerational and interdisciplinary cast of 31 performers and musicians. She is the co-author and choreographer from the national touring production of *Women + War* and guest collaborating artist for the one-year *Living Darwin* project at Virginia Tech. Miller has been the director of the Choreographer's Lab at Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival since 1995. She holds a Masters in Fine Arts from Hollins University/American Dance Festival.

## APPENDIX O

### Interviewee #3 Biography

Liz Lerman is a choreographer, performer, writer, educator and speaker. Described by the *Washington Post* as “the source of an epochal revolution in the scope and purposes of dance art,” her dance/theater works have been seen throughout the United States and abroad. Her aesthetic approach spans the range from abstract to personal to political, while her working process emphasizes research, translation between artistic media and intensive collaboration with dancers, communities and thinkers from diverse disciplines. She founded the Liz Lerman Dance Exchange in 1976 and cultivated the company’s unique multi-generational ensemble into a leading force in contemporary dance. Recently, she handed the artistic leadership of the company over to the next generation of Dance Exchange artists and will be pursuing many new projects with fresh partnerships, the first of which is acting as artist-in-residence at Harvard University for Fall 2011. Liz has been the recipient of numerous honors, including the American Choreographer Award, *Washingtonian Magazine*’s 1988 Washingtonian of the Year, and a 2002 MacArthur “Genius Grant” Fellowship. Liz’s work has been commissioned by Lincoln Center, American Dance Festival, BalletMet, the Kennedy Center and Harvard Law School, among many others. From 1994 to 1996, in collaboration with the Music Hall of Portsmouth, New Hampshire, Liz directed the Shipyard Project, which has been widely noted as an example of the power of art to enhance such values as social capital and civic dialogue. From 1999 to 2002 she led *Hallelujah*, which engaged people in 15 cities throughout the United States in the creation of a series of dances “in praise of” topics vital to their communities. She created *Ferocious Beauty: Genome*, which premiered in 2006, with the participation of more than 30 scientists and has toured it to sites throughout North America, including the Mayo Clinic and the Ontario Genomics Institute. Co-commissioned by the

University of Maryland and Montclair State University, her newest critically acclaimed work, *The Matter of Origins*, examines the question of beginnings through dance, media and innovative formats for conversation.

Liz addresses arts, community and business organizations both nationally and internationally. Sites of recent speaking engagements include the Abbey Theatre in Dublin, the Big Intensive at Sadler's Wells in London, and Harvard University. *Hiking the Horizontal: Field Notes from a Choreographer*, her new collection of essays, was recently published by Wesleyan University Press. She is also the author of *Teaching Dance to Senior Adults* (1983) and *Liz Lerman's Critical Response Process* (2003), and has written articles and reviews for such publications as *Faith and Form*, *Movement Research* and *Washington Post Book World*.

Born in Los Angeles and raised in Milwaukee, Liz attended Bennington College and Brandeis University, received her BA in dance from the University of Maryland, and an MA in dance from George Washington University. She is married to storyteller Jon Spelman.

## APPENDIX P

### Project Spending

THE DANCE FOR LIFE PROJECT ESTIMATED SPENDING			
Rehearsal Date	Spending	Vendor	Notes
10/28/2011	\$8.39	Donaldson Brown Café	Interest Meeting - food
10/31/2011	\$6.49	Donaldson Brown Café	Interest Meeting - food
11/1/2011	\$7.95	Donaldson Brown Café	Interest Meeting/Rehearsal - food
11/5/2011	\$20.53	Kroger	food
11/8/2011	\$11.31	VT Aubon Pain	food
11/14/2011	\$10.68	VT Aubon Pain	food
11/15/2011	\$13.04	Donaldson Brown Café	food
11/16/2011	\$5.75	Donaldson Brown Café	Interest Meeting -food
11/21/2011	\$0.00	missing receipt	
11/22/2011	\$5.63	Kroger	food
11/29/2011	\$11.15	Donaldson Brown Café	food
11/30/2011	\$0.00	missing receipt	
12/1/2011	\$5.65	VT Aubon Pain	Interest Meeting/Rehearsal - food
12/2/2011	\$15.39	Donaldson Brown Café	food
12/3/2011	\$18.67	Pizza Hut	food
12/3/2011	\$1.98	Amazon.com digital purchase	music
12/5/2011	\$9.59	VT Aubon Pain	food
12/6/2011	\$26.84	Donaldson Brown Café	food
12/9/2011	\$8.06	VT Aubon Pain	food
12/10/2011	\$8.72	Owens Food Court	food
12/13/2011	\$0.00	missing receipt	morning rehearsal
12/13/2011	\$8.82	Owens Food Court	evening rehearsal - food
12/14/2011	\$20.95	Donaldson Brown Café	dress rehearsal - food
12/14/2011	\$15.34	University Bookstore purchase	performance wear
12/14/2011	\$6.54	Makeup	performance wear
12/15/2011	\$39.99	Real Player	Updated features for adjusting sound
12/15/2011	\$6.73	Amazon.com digital purchase	music
12/15/2011	\$15.00	Dollar Store & Kroger	Miscellaneous Items
<b>TOTAL SPENDING ESTIMATE</b>	<b>\$309.19</b>	<b>VT DANCE FOR LIFE PROJECT</b>	

## APPENDIX Q

### Dance Presentation Evite Invitation

Dance For Life (12:30pm /6:00pm)

- HOST: Jandelle Fournillier
- WHEN: Thursday, December 15 from 12:30 PM to 1:30 PM
- WHERE: War Memorial Dance Room Virginia Polytechnic Institute & State University  
Blacksburg, VA 24061

#### *MESSAGE FROM HOST*

Updated  
Hello:

I am writing to invite you to attend Dance For Life, a final presentation of choreography I have been working on with a group of students here at Virginia Tech.

This dance project is a part of the dissertation research study being completed in fulfillment of my doctoral degree requirements.

In this study, I proposed exploring the use of dance as an alternative medium for educating and increasing awareness about college student suicide on the university campus.

Over the course of 6 weeks, I worked with a small group of volunteer students from the Virginia Tech community to create a new dance piece that we will be presenting to a few invited faculty, student, staff, members of our community, family and friends.

The first official presentation of the piece will be on Thursday December 15th, 2011 at 12:30pm and again at 6:00pm.

It is a short presentation so we do ask that you arrive at least 10mins early to be seated to view the entire piece. The event will be completed within an hour.

When you respond to this invitation, please add a comment to let us know the time of the presentation you will be attending (12:30pm OR 6:00pm).

Please be advised:- There will be a short instance of a light blink during the performance.

Thank you for your support and we look forward to seeing you soon!

Details

Event: Dance For Life

Date: Thursday December 15, 2011

Time: 12:30pm & 6:00pm

Location: War Memorial Hall Dance Room

(on the basement floor beyond the entrance to the gym)

Additional: light refreshments will be served

Jandelle Fournillier

Updated 52 days ago

Evite Sample



**APPENDIX R**  
**Interview Schedule**

<b>Participants</b>	<b>Interview time</b>	<b>Place</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Comments</b>
Ann Kilkelly	35:51	Part I  Hall  Virginia Polytechnic Institute & State University, Blacksburg VA, 24061	11/23/2011	Ann Kilkelly is a Professor at Virginia Tech and also the co-chair of my committee. She was interviewed as a community-based artist in the area of theater and dance for the purpose of this study.  The interview held in two parts was audio recorded, with myself being on screen video recorded during the interview.
	49:47	Part II	11/26/2011	
		Via telephone		
Celeste Miller	1:33:47	Via telephone to  Grinnell College, IA	11/26/2011	Celeste Miller is an instructor at Grinnell College. For the purpose of this study, she was interviewed as a community-based artist in the area of dance.  The interview held conducted via telephone was audio recorded, with myself being on screen video recorded during the interview.
Liz Lerman	1:02:58	Via telephone to  Harvard University, MA	11/28/2011	Liz Lerman is a visiting scholar at Harvard University. For the purpose of this study, she was interviewed as a community-based artist in the area of dance, and dance.  The interview conducted via telephone was audio recorded, with myself being on screen video recorded during the interview.
Total # of hours	4:02:23			

## APPENDIX S

### Interview # 1 Transcript

Tuesday November 23, 2011

( 9:45am )Virginia Tech - on site interview

Ann Kilkelly (on the process of planning, choreographing, and performing art)

*[RQ 1. What is my process of planning, choreographing, and performing a professional dance about college student suicide?]*

Interview Questions:

*2. Talk to me about what the process of making new art looks like and the major factors that you consider as you move through that process.*

*3. Talk to me about the product of art making and how the product relates to the process.*

*4. What role does who you are and your life history play in your art making?*

Jandelle: So um I'm gonna go to three different sections of questions and the first question is gonna be connected to my first research question

Jandelle: And so I'm looking at my process of planning, choreographing and performing a professional dance or a dance about college student suicide. So in this section, we're gonna talk about your process of creating these products of art. So talk to me about the process of what making new art looks like and the major factors that you consider as you move through that process. So when you come to make a new work of art, what does that process look like and what are the major factors that you consider as you go through the process?

Ann: Good question, really good question. Uh..Specifically in dance or in general?

Jandelle: In art or in theater and in dance...

Ann: Ok, yeh, uh..

Jandelle: Anywhere, anywhere actually

Ann: Let's talk about art that has movement and text which might or might not be dance. But I'm really interested in the first instance of working with people, of what they will create themselves. I would rather than.. and I might have a piece of music in mind, probably not...I might have.. because I think music should be generated in a somewhat similar way or found for work rather than that the choreographer find a piece of music and say, I'm gonna do a dance to that.. then you have foreclosed a lot of choices when you do that so I would go in to a practice saying, here's an idea we're gonna work on.. say it's uh.. right now I'm working on sustainable food in culture. And say alright, now what are some of the challenges that you think there are people would say ..something like.. hunger, poverty, waste,...things like that.. and I would say, alright now let's build a gesture phrase based on your choice of words that you just said.. so they might take five words out of that and then they.. this is very much a liz lerman, celeste miller and that genre of work. They would create a gesture phrase based on their words. Again this is a celeste thing..she likes to go shopping, that's what she calls it. She likes to go shopping amongst a group of people for moves and gestures she likes and choose that, that, that and that..

Jandelle: I see

Ann: and then she would often..have a part where people perform their own gestural sequences and then other things come in to it late.. including her shaping... or editing you know her creating her own stuff but it's all, it's done.. I do this.. I assume that I don't actually know what it's going to be until I start working with the dancers, actors. I know much about the subject you know like I would have when I did the Darwin project. I must have read 400 books on Darwin and I had really clear ideas about the ideas I wanted to

Jandelle: incorporate

Ann: convey.. but not meaning sort of not message but just the ideas that were fascinating like geological time, like the fact that we can't comprehend that, that to me was a fascinating idea. I took it to the cast and said what would it look like if we, you know if we were thinking in terms of 14 billion years instead of our lifespan.. What would that do to movement? And people would have various responses to that and they were so beautiful cause I think that people would, dancers would create things that were much more powerful than I could imagine. Sometimes not though sometimes...What it is, is like almost like being an arranger as well as a creator..

Jandelle: Arranger

Ann: I mean in jazz cause I know jazz dancer or musician too..in that the creator you know it's like an assemblage of input you are getting from other people as well as what you're putting in, and your job as author/ creator of this piece is not assumed to be just from your head. It's a, it's really a collaborative thing. So the first thing I do is, is play in that way with people and hear their stories and get their experience of the subject and then have them working on creating movement phrases that either go with or are done with the spoken text or separate from it and then that.. you get this pool of really rich material that.. and then you put.. then I put my own in it and pick something and then I say we're going to go three repetitions of this and then face upstage you know.. and so it becomes more honed and more you know it settles in.. it can be improvisational but when I work on non actors I find that using... a kind of spontaneous creation initially with them and then, setting things so that they're repeatable actually works better than, to ask people to create things in the performance setting. My work with more like.. my work with tap dancers...which is one of the things I do and they're really really good tap dancers they know how to improvise and they create things that are really interesting. If they're not and they're struggling to get steps, they don't improvise cause they don't have the vocabulary

Jandelle: Vocabulary

Ann: So I give them vocabulary but a lot of the vocabulary still would come from them so that we're arranging something and creating something together. Does that answer that? Is there a part of it that you want me to..

Jandelle: I think that you touched on.. what about..I think you did, because you talked about the planning, this part is the planning.. or sorry.. (mumbling and laughing)..I'm somewhere else. Um, you did talk about the process of making the new art and the major factors you consider. You talked about the participants or the dancers and actors and you talked about the process.. how you think about it coming in.. and then what you do when you're in there. So that's it... ummm

Ann: And let me say one thing that I think you'll understand from what you're doing. It takes longer to work this way. It's really. I don't just go and say.. you know you're going to do 5 shuffle sequences

Jandelle (chuckling)

Ann: with you know three or four leaps across the floor and then come down in a deep swooping bow. I can't just say, tell them to do something and they are little automatized that will do it...and that's way harder to me, on the front end like the research phase is like wwwuuuuuuuu (sound) but I love that too.. I love the engagement with that, with that lengthiness... Also you know I perform things like that..too myself with other people in improvisation but to work this way in art opens it up to a lot of different realms of knowledge and you know.. cause you're laughing.. you know that the front end is enormous and I have gotten to love the front end you know.. when you start actually working in the studio with all those ideas and all those texts then its like.. oh yeh.. you know.. it's things drop together in a different way.

Jandelle: yeh... So the second question in this section is.. kind of answered a little bit but talk to me about the product of art making.. and how the product relates to the process. So you actually just talked about the front end.. so this is like the back end... what the product and how that relates to the process.. what do you see that is related to what you went through. Does it really look like what you thought or you know.. what changes in the process... but its more focused on the product.

Ann: I can give you a.. an example of when I don't like it. If it gets... whatever the product is, or the outcome.. say you have like five days of a performance that takes place in a particular space and time...and it looks more or less the same as you perform it each night then its dead.. its very frustrating to me about this kind of process if it ends up as a kind of wrote repetition if there's not..something.. some exciting developments. Most performances do develop but there's a thing that actors will do or say that...(snap of the fingers) "I got it" and that's all it is,they're done and they don't stay open to what might happen...and you'll see it in any rehearsal process when an actor or performer has decided they know what is is and they're all through exploring..that's really hard for me because then the product looks it looks a little bit flimsy sometimes...because it doesn't because it.. especially working with a variety of...people with a variety of skills...then you see them performing as if they were professional, it seems like an imitation of something else and it doesn't have the freshness but when it does work... I can think of several moments, in different pieces that I've done this way, where I just have this " yes, that's it" and I have never could have gotten there without this broader awareness and this research so the product um.. adds the intensity and the discipline of having a lot of.. the experience with the material and the understanding in the performance that comes from it and whether or not it looks different in the end..other kinds of art.. I don't know and that's to me that's something that really needs to be

looked at...carefully because...very very often performances that are made this way...or even the idea of community based art to people in.. those disciplines, art disciplines.. they often turn their noses up at it because what they're looking at is people who don't really know how to perform.. so there's a judgement about the technical aspect of it.. I've experienced that a lot..whereas a more general audience or an audience that aren't professionals in the field will go.. they just love it... they will enter into it in a different way and they ask questions and they are motivated to tell their own stories and there's all kinds of... and I've experienced that so many times.. where I'll have an audience standing up on their feet and laughing and applauds.. applause isn't the only measure.. but people were really engaged.. they want to stay in the theater.. they want to talk to you.. they want to have you come and do something for them.. or with them so...the project.. the product I think is something that excites people and makes them want to know more.. and um.. it also is something that makes.. them.. I think it needs to be a little difficult for them.. I think it needs to be a little not difficult in the sense of complex but it needs to raise some discomfort... as well as pleasure..I think there has to be an edge where there's some risk involved.. I don't mean physical risk.. I mean emotional risk..that it isn't really safe...it's not just a celebration of aren't we great because we're doing this thing about..x y z yuh know..because we're.. you can't assume that it works just because you're doing it to help somebody. This is a very deep challenges and you certainly want to have it solved... you know.."Am I going to prevent sexual harassment by showing people how it works?" I don't know.. but one thing I can say is we're going to identify some things about it that people might not see otherwise... but to make claims about its efficacy is the hardest thing.. and that's why we need a lot of people doing these things to, you know to try to figure out..how this thing works. Cause I believe that these arts are capable of changing people's lives.. on a much smaller scale than the grand cultural schema..

but that they really do.. I believe that..profoundly..and an awful lot of the artists that I work with.. at least most of them I think, in this field of community based art making believe that...passionately and our lives revolve around it, but none of us know for sure that it works in a way that science could test it..but we, we get a sense of knowing that it works.. from.. more from what the audience feedback is and what is created as a result of it..

Jandelle: That's good.

Ann: That's gonna be important..for you...

Jandelle: What role does who you are and your life history play in your art making...(laughing as Ann is looking and listening)... Can separate the artist from the art...

Ann: Nor the dancer from the dance...yeh

Jandelle:mmhhhh

Ann: Everything.. is the simple answer..but there's, there's some pretty key challenges... I always wanted to be a more conventional dancer for example.. but conventional in the sense that ballet is the model that's held up to young girls..and while I was pretty good at that..I .. really what I loved was the much more earthy forms..like the folk forms and the popular forms.. and tap of course which I had as a young person and also music ....you know dance that is about itself making music and rythm..so I would say that...in my life what I get the most pleasure from is dance that is based on rythm.. whether or not..I got metal plates on my foot.. it's you know it's..swing dance, you know it's afrocentric dance..it's you know all kinds of rythm based stuff.. because I think rythm

Jandelle: That's good..

Ann: is necessary..absolutely necessary for health.. and I know it is for mine.. that's how I got through with my PhD.. I tapped danced you know.. and that was my advice...to people... to



students who.. they asked me, my committee asked me...,what I would offer to other grad students because they thought I was very successful.. and I said well they should learn to tap dance.. and everybody laughed... and I said.. I am serious....

Jandelle: It's true..

Ann: I'd be insane if I didn't dance. So for me ok..there's mental health... (jokingly) (laughing)

Jandelle: (laughing)

Ann: Talk about health, but physical health too..I mean people don't move their bodies.. so..I've always been deeply, deeply...physical athletic..I come from a family of people who..were swimmers and fighters and wrestlers and divers very poor people very but very into physical, physical strength and.. discipline..

Jandelle: mmmhhh

Ann:.. but not a.. discipline that was sort of natural, just the sense that health required that you do physically hard work and difficult activity and the enjoyment of it...that's where I come from..my Irish and cocknee English roots I guess.. you know really, really about...if I can't do.. if I can't become rich...or wildly successful...being a star in a ballet or being a CEO of some company because I'm here. I'm working class...I have this ethnicity.. um you know...I grew up as..sort of.. they call us Shanti Irish..

Jandelle: Oh ok

Ann: sort of poor Irish although all that all changed.. but I have this real strong sense that doing stuff with my body is stuff that was free to me.. I could do it...so could other people.. So I got my nose a little out of joint...always about people who, who have class pretensions in art..although I love it.. I also have an attitude about it.. a chip on my shoulder..One of my mother's favorite, favorite saying was um.. "even a cat can look at a king" and I always thought about that cat

looking at you know..that that kind of sneaky..supple, highly performance oriented little critter could be a fast retreat or could fool somebody... I tell my students a lot of times that they need to understand tap dancing as that.. as dazzling with fancy footwork is also excellent evasion technique.. like literally people danced as a way to send encoded dangerous messages of course in post slavery dance in our part of the world...I 'm just making an analogy there. I know that it was a way to imagine an escape from poverty.. it was a way where.. I felt free..to imitate whatever.. I felt free to walk with my tap shoes on the side walk and pretend they were horses or have a show in my garage...and I know now I have a PhD and I belong to this upper middle class thing you know..I can't claim that heritage in the same way..The fact I am a woman of a working class background..that didn't have a lot of privilege going to school but went through school on scholarships..and all that.. where do I fit in the dance world...of high art..I don't I don't.. but the work and I prefer not to fit too.. so the work I do is deeply about who I am as a woman... and the idea that there are lots of people out there that say..that we shouldn't.. women shouldn't...including in the tap world... they say that women don't have the expression..they don't have that ability to do gymnastics..and all this stuff. Well I always have this.." Well I can prove to you that I can do that..." kind of attitude..

Jandelle: mmmhhhhmmhh

Ann: It is from that upbringing so..that.. my upbringing and my early experience and then later being very highly educated...and starting to reflect on these very things...is part of what I make my solo performances out of.. is that..stuff, You know.. I tap and talk..

Jandelle: (nodding my head)

Ann: You understand that.

End of section

## APPENDIX T

### Interview #2 Transcript

Saturday November 26, 2011

(11:30am) Grinnell College - telephone interview

Celeste Miller (on translation information, research, and data into dance choreography)

*[RQ 2. How can I translate health information, research findings, and data about college student suicide into my dance choreography and performance?]*

Interview Questions

*5. What generally influences the content of your artwork and where do you get the material to create your art?*

*6. How do you incorporate information, research, data, and material external to yourself into your artwork?*

*7. How do you view translating information/ research/data into art? What lead you to incorporate specific material into art?*

Jandelle: Let's go into the second section and this addresses translating information, specific research findings and data about any subject to art and in your case, I think.. I keep saying dance but...from what you've said its also dance and kind of theater as well, right?

Celeste: Yes

Jandelle: And so what generally influences the content of your artwork and where do you get the material to create your art? And you would have touched on it a little bit before, you know when you talk about different things, you might go into research and, but when you come to make a

piece what do you find that generally influences the content of your artwork and where do you get the actual material to create the art?

Celeste: Um well like I said before all the research stuff and you can look back on that

Jandelle: Yes

Celeste: All those things.. and once I have that um I write um..and I work on crafting the text um when I'm working with the stories from other people um, I don't .. I don't write down interviews, um I jot down notes

Jandelle: Yes

Celeste: and I do ask permission, and I let people know that um.. I talk to them a lot.. in the way actually that we've been talking and I talk about um that I'm interested in.. um images, I'm interested in um...summaries of ideas.. I'm interested in finding ways that we can weave many stories together... um.. and um so I feel like that gathering stories from other people is a a very delicate balance and it's never..I don't do it in a formalized way.. I do it informally building relationship. In workshop.. situations I often work in workshop situations like the nurses project in particular where I am leading people through.. my text and movement workshops...um and using as my point of investigation. That becomes the subject matter that we're all working on, and one of the things I like to say to people is...This is part of my research and what's created in the workshop, I might borrow from..um.. but that they also are creating their own works and I empower each of them as artists to go out and continue to explore what they began making in that workshop for their own intents and how they would like to shape it and what they think about it... um...

Jandelle: Yes..

Celeste: So it becomes shared material that we have..but that I'm only borrowing it because as an artists I have sort of a particular sort of track that I want to go down.

Jandelle: mmmhhhhmmm That's very good..... When you think about incorporating different information, research and data um external to yourself, into your artwork, how do you incorporate it.. and that.. it looks more like.. when you were describing your style as an artist you kind of touched on it..I'm thinking about translating the information into actual movement., and probably because I can't see you, you probably might be able to describe it...but umm if you have a piece of data and if you have some information, some material and you want to incorporate it into the artwork, how do you move that into a movement.. how do you make that a movement?

Celeste: ummhh, yeh I have actually uh.. several processes that I use and they're all pretty ummm I always think of them as kind of scientific or mathematical in a way ummm.. in one technique I do is.. um taking..uh a series of words or some...use specific numerical data and taking it apart finding.. like for each single word finding an individual movement. So for instance if was doing um.. oh.. uh..... certain ingredients of cereal for whatever reason (laughing).. so uh...so let's say my overall piece was about you know the additives in food and say that had caught me lately... so then my brain would sort go ok, a good place for data would be say the ingredients . Um and then I might look at the box and it says, saturated fat 2.5 g ...13%. I actually try to look at that, like I would take the word saturated and I would probably spend a bunch of time just exploring with movements that meant to saturate. Can I saturate my shoulder into my side? can I saturate my feet into the floor? Can I saturate my feet into my belly? and then I just explore that concept really physically as movement and come up with a little phrase.. so I would say.. ok here's my saturated phrase. No can I do that phrase at 13.5% of the original intensity and what does that look like.. so so really that kind of exploration.. and then I would go

back and so then I have this movement phrase. And then I would go back to my original text, maybe is saying yuh know um...uh.. Obesity in the united states is primarily caused by a saturated diet.. uh....I'm making something completely up right now...(chuckling)

Jandelle: Yeh Yeh Yeh...

Celeste: And then, then then I would try to speak those words on that whole movement thing that I had done about being saturated into my foot, into my belly, and at 13%. See how those, how they work together...

Jandelle: Yeh...

Celeste: So that's I mean that's hugely part of my process. I feel like I go into this very unemotional very fact based uh.. technical place to create movement and then I go back to source text, or my source language, um and layer the two together.. and see what happens. And I find that if I am really honest with the movement and I say words as I am doing the movement honestly, there is a difference between doing it um as an actor and as a dancer I think...theater people are going to hate me...

Jandelle: (laugh)

Celeste: (laugh) but I feel like as an actor, I let the words sit on top of the movement. As a dancer try to let the words sit inside of me so..let's say I say the word 'the' as my foot is digging into the ground.

Jandelle: Yes

Celeste: Well I have to really understand that as 'the' and it might change the way I say it. I might find myself digging into the word so it becomes "Thuuuhhhh." I might find it has breath to it if I do that..and then if I go back to saying my statement..let's say my statement was..."The reason for obesity..." but if I have to go.."Thhuuuhhhh reason...." It changes the meaning of the text.

Jandelle: Yes

Celeste: Combined to the word. So that's really deeply about my process. and um.. I feel like I just have six trillion little scientific lab experiments that I do (laughing).....

Jandelle: As you're talking...

Celeste: (muffled short word as I speak)

Jandelle: Sorry...oh sorry, let me let you finish.

Celeste: No that was it...

Jandelle: Ok, as you're talking it it um brings me to something I was thinking about when I was reading your artist statement, and that's the idea of vocabulary, movement vocaublary.. and let me see what did I write here.. um...There's a big difference between you working as a solo artist and when you're working with a group...cause you've done such intense, uh years of work in that process of translating if I can use that word information into movement.. it's a very unique technique..so as a solo artist it's gonna be.. you know how you work and you know..how you communicate. When you come to work with a group of people who may not necessarily be familiar with... that style of breaking things down and turning into movement..How is it different? There is something else I'm gonna ask you about vocabulary.. but how is it different? How do you make it work when you already have a way which works.. then you come to a group. You kind of might share with them that idea and concept, how do you work in community and get there style to fit with what you already do?

Celeste: I have a colluege in a company called Balanced Dance.. which is in Idaho and um.. I finished doing a project with them.. so a group of teenaged women uh.. and we did a collaboration with a group of um.. dancers with different abilities, um...wheelchairs and um various things...and anyhow.. just to say that Leah called me a dance whisperer which I thought

was.. I was very pleased with that term..I thought that's funny I'm a dance whisperer...When I work in community the first thing I do is,I have all these methods I use to sort of strip down our notions of what we think dance is..

Jandelle:Yes

Celeste:Um...and one of the things that I do with people is I do this very simple exercise where we're all standing in the circle..because I always believe we all start in a circle, we're always in a circle..um..and I ask them uh... just to put one arm up in the air and bring it down again and they do.. they just take their arm up..and bring it down and then I aks them to, breathe and I talk abotu that breathing is a ..we do it all the time or we would not be able to breathe and sometimes we can focus on our breath and then it changes..and so we just do some breathing together.. and then I say and our bodies are also moving all the time... our heart is beating... our um.. blood is going through our bodies... our organs are doing what they do as organs, our cells are doing their mitosis thing.. all this stuff is happening all the time.. We are in this constant state of movement..this constant state of motion, and then we can focus our attention to it and become aware..and then I say...we're gonna.. we're gonna move that arm again...but this time.. what I want you to do it before we move it again.. I want you to just take a breath, take a deep breath, a light breath whatever kind you want to take.. but a breath and you're paying attention to that breath...and then when you're ready bring your arm up again and bring it down and be aware of what you're doing... Are you leading with the shoulder? Are you gonna go fast or slow? Is your hand open or closed? Do you have an emotional intent behind it? Is it jus the mechanics of moving the arm? and just make that choice before we go..and then I let everyone get quiet, we take a breath and everyone moves their arm up and brings it down. And then I say, in that moment in my book, we all just danced.



Jandelle: mmmhhmmmm

Celeste: And I define dance as movement aware of itself practiced with intent.

Jandelle: mmmhhmmmm

Celeste: And I continue as I work with people to come back to that definition to remind us that when I'm talking about dance.. that's what I'm talking about. I'm not talking about steps, I'm not talking about whether you do or don't have rhythm, can find the beat...um have a body that looks a certain way..um it doesn't say you have to have two feet.. and you know, it's movement aware of itself practiced with intent. And I find that when I ground my community in that definition and I do it very consistently and we're always coming back to it.. then..what they can tap into it finding movement for them.. that speaks of who they are..what their histories are where they stand and who they plan to be....

Jandelle mmmhhmmmm, ok.. So when you walk them through that process, would you say that.. you're bringing them to an awareness..of your definition of dance so that they can be free to move but at the same time..., if you had not first given that definition, what.. would there have been any other way for you to.. be able to work with a group without doing that first? Or... I mean if an artist is not doing that for example an artist is not bringing the person into awareness of the whole idea of... yuh know.. their own movement. Would that be, just be another style?...In your opinion, would that just be another style for a different artist?

But that's just not how you approach it?

Celeste: Exactly, I think that everybody needs to come into it in their own way..

Jandelle: Yes

Celeste: If we go back to my idea of selling it to the highest bidder..

Jandelle: Yes

Celeste: I just feel like I need to..set, I need to set..an environment for the way that we can do.... the best possible work.. we can do.... in um.. within the sort of basket, what will make it all work for the fact.. I'm the person...facil... I'm the facilitator

Jandelle: Facilitating.. yes...

Celeste: Um..because if I don't do that..I feel like people don't .. they don;t kow what I want...so they start giving me what they think I want...and thereofre if somebody gives me...say I have a ball...someone who's trained in ballet in the room...and what they start giving me..is a series of arabesques.. and pas dechatsand those things..

Jandelle: Yes (laughing)

Celeste: Well I'm not...happy, but then how do they... how do they knwo that tat was not gonna make me happy. (chuckle) you know cause I wasn't honest..

Jandelle:Yes..

Celeste: you know..uh..I also feel like..because what I'm most interested in..is people tapping in to really who they are and not what their training is..including the fact that I really love people, working with people who don't have a traditional training...

Jandelle: Yes

Celeste: You know who...who are just movers in the world...um... so it makes a playing ground for me that everybody can be in that circle...and can contribute and yet I've been honest about..what I'm looking for..Where I'm going to lead us..and how I'm going to lead us there..

Jandelle: Ok.. That brings me to.. this is heavy stuff..Then that brings me to could you define.. for you what is a facilitator? Cause some people might think when they're working, working with the community... you know.. I like the idea that you said..from up front you're honest.. so you're

sharing with them what you're looking for.. um I don't know if everyone sees it that way or if.. some people might think.. You know.. you not supposed to shape their ideas or their thinking.. so I really wanna know what is a facilitator for you?

Celeste: mmmmmhhhhh.. that's a great question. I think because primarily..what I'm facilitating is an art making experience of which I'm going to direct the outcome.

Jandelle: Good..

Celeste: um right... that that's why we need to.. what I call.. all get on the same page.. um I'm very clear in my own head that the work that I do...um in community isn't for a project..that's going to end up with a performance..um that uh... the outcome I'm looking for is the art making.. If I'm the director of it.. that you know..I will shape it.. I will take.. I will take that responsibility...for shaping what ends up on stage.um if I'm doing a workshop.. where at the end of the experience, it's about that I've invited people into understanding the way I like to work on things and they have their..entire choices about what they...get to take out of it except that always our goal is art making..

Jandelle: Yes

Celeste: I know that there are therapeutic benefits that come out of it sometimes for people.. you know that they have really wonderful..experiences.. they have life changing experiences they have life affirmation experiences, but that's not what I'm trying to do...I'm not a social worker.. and I'm not...a therapist..I have to keep us on track..of making art. I had this wonderful experience when I was young.. I guess I was in my ealry thirties.. and I was working in Atlanta, and I used to do this Saturday morning text and movement class and it was when I was really beginnigng to explore my ideas....of what this meant.. and at the time.. I was getting a lot of funding from the city and the county and the state and I felt like it was sort of a way of my giving

back to the community...(dog barking in the background) So interestingly enough the majority of people who used to come every Saturday morning were these middle class women, white women from the suburbs..

Jandelle: Yes

Celeste: Um..which I found.. so they were.. at that time I was in my thirties, they were like in their mid forties, um what I thought was very interesting..this group of people I had.. I said from the beginning, the only cost this workshop is that I ask you to come at the beginning and not leave till the end. I said because I'm working out ideas. I don't really know what I'm doing um and some days we might have a really great time, sometimes I might miss my mark as a teacher as a facilitator as we are in this situation...so I'm just asking you to hang in there with me. So anyhow we had a really wonderful group of people..but I had this one woman..who no matter what we did..when we got to the writing section of it..um she would cry..um and uh so I would be all stressed about it..and I would go home and I would go ok.. I made that one too intense, I made people cry.. I made that one too intense and I would come back the next week and she would cry..at one point I said to her, I said.. I am so sorry, I really don't mean to make you cry..and her tears.. like sort of froze..on her face.. and she looked over at me and she said... oh no no.. " that's why I come." I love this. (laughing)

Jandell

Celeste: And she went back to her writing and started crying again.

Jandelle (laughing)

Celeste: I thought it was great.. and I learned so much in that moment...it was like, let people take what they need.

Jandelle: Yes

Celeste: but don't force them to what they need...

Jandelle: Yes

Celeste: My goal had been to let everybody have.. a.. yuh know a..cataclysmic moment..that they went to tears.. that would be a different goal. That was not my goal.

Jandelle: Yes

Celeste: Yuh know my goal was to.. to have people use art to go where they need to go..

Jandelle: Yes, I'm really glad that you distinguish between you seeing the end goal as performance on stage vs. the end being the workshop. It's gonna be very different in terms of how you direct it..that's very good...and so when I read the site before I started asking you all of these questions about how exactly you go about the process..What I was thinking about was your vocabulary. Does your vocabulary in terms of movement change over time, based upon working with people..because you might have a phrase and the way you.. you put the phrase together based upon your introspection, your thoughts.. the process you went through.. You have this phrase of movements. Well if you're working with a group of people.. I think you answered it by saying that each person is going to have their own movement anyway.. but would your vocabulary change if somebody said well I saw the movement more like this. You already have a phrase in mind.. for how you would like to see a certain movement.. but somebody says you know "I see the movement more like falling to the floor versus rolling.." Does your vocabulary change over time.. Do you allow their idea about how the movement should be to change.. would your vocabulary change in terms of movement based upon your interaction with other people?

Celeste: That's great. Yeh, the way that I work with people is I never bring movement to a group of people um I create these improvisational structures. and also create..so if I'm working with a group of people we explore things through improvisation..and then we also explore through

people who individually or in small groups create movement scores..um and then we share those.. we look at everything that's been created..and I browse through them.. and I borrow things.. and I say ooo let's Sharone.. let's take that that jump that you did that then collides into the floor and while you're doing that um. Maurice, could you take the movement that you have that really ran forward really fast..

Jandelle: mmmhhmmm

Celeste: and I think that could we look at those two together and see if that will really work...so it's really about. I feel like the pallette that I am so blessed to work with.. is that people generate movement and then I can borrow and arrange from the stuff that they've brought.

Jandelle: Yes.. ok..

Celeste: Now the problem with that is, I can never recreate my my group work..right..

Jandelle: Yes...

Celeste: Because I can't take what somebody else created and then bring it to an entirely new group of people and put it on their bodies, because it was so original and it was so personal, and I really feel like it was the process that we went through that came up with the movement is why the movement is so rich... So instead of resetting a work by teaching the movement.. I can only reset a work by recreating the process..

Jandelle: ooooohhhhhhh mmmhhmmm.. So have you actually had the experience of doing a completed choreography that you wanted to teach a group that you wanted to carry with you. I know you've had so many different types of experiences but have you worked with that in particular. like the traditional idea of having a piece created and you know carrying it with you?

Celeste: Um I used to do that in my early career.. that's absolutely..what I did..I had a small group of dancers and I taught them the movement and then I could reteach that movement on on

anyone else um.. My solo work is all highly choreographed. I mean if you look at video of a work um the same piece done 10 different times. It always looks exactly the same..

Jandelle: I see...

Celeste: So the movement is highly.. is set.. is highly choreographed..

Jandelle: I see...

Celeste: but I just.. I think that my work in..community and questions of whose voice is it.. um who gets to be represented who chooses how who gets to be represented.. all that kind of deep community work..um really made me as an artist uncomfortable working with a community of people and being the authoritarian figure who said these are the movements that I want you to do these movements of mine.. and not that that's not an ok way to work...I mean I feel like its completely, a personal journey that I've decided to make..um.. and it also from.. it's just what I am fascinated in.. I mean I'm just..I'm fascinated watching people move.. I'm more interested in moves that other people make than what I make... you know (chuckle)

Jandelle: Yes yes yes.. So before we come out of this section...the last part and we've been talking on many different things which already might be answering some questions.. but this is more.. of a value question. How do you view translating, more specifically information, research, data into art? How do you.? Like some peopel might question.. that's even possible and some people might say well is it a literal translation? Are you actually taking the exact information...and translating it into a movement.. is that possible? to take you know 'sadness' and make a movement out of it.. How do you value it, or how do you view even the concept in general.. of translating..

Celeste: Um, I look at it as a process of discovering metaphor

Jandelle: mmmhhhhmm

Celeste: Um...and uh..If we go back to Aristotle.. a metaphor is like the hardest hardest thing to capture... so rather than a direct translation of say 'sadness' into a movement.. because I think the problem in any abstract art form..is that um...if I decide the movement for sadness is a forward roll of my shoulders..um that comes from so much personal information that comes from my cultural background.. that comes from my age... it just comes from so many things. I can't expect somebody to read..I can't expect somebody to read.. I don't want.. uh I'll say it this way.. I can't expect that someone would directly read that movement sadness...cause that roll in the shoulder might mean something entirely else in their experience. I can't let my success, or not success as a dance artist rely on whether somebody can do a direct read, a charades.. um that not where I am interesting in going. I think that's why for me...that's why for me the investigation has to be so deep..I think that's why I'm sort of interested in...that sort of what I call the sort of scientific exploration. Can I take an emotional place and really uh, dissect it...I have to really do a deconstruction on a lot of different places so I get this subtext.. that I am trusting that my body if I allow it to really go deeply in the subtext.. um will come up with something that my mind, my sort of terrible thinking, word oriented mind.. would not have come up with...

Jandelle: mmmhhmmmm

Celeste: And that's a really rich place that I am interested in..

Jandelle: mmmhhmmmm

Celeste: As an artists

Jandelle: mmmhhmmmm

Celeste: And when I work with groups of people too I'm really... I work a lot too say... like when they share the movement scores they've made.. I say our job when we views these is not to say.. is not to look at it as charades, we're not trying to guess what um.. who was the sun...(chuckling)



Jandelle: Yeh yeh yeh..

Celeste: Yuh know..We're just trying to look and investigate and reflect back on.. when you did that roll to the floor, I felt a drop in my heart beat. When you ran forward at me, I felt my pulse quicken so we're really trying to give that kind of feedback to people as we're seeing there movement and.. I think as a choreographer.. that's what I'm fascinated with..too.. how can I um instead of wanting an audience member to feel sad can I .. do I want them to catch their breath, do I want their heart rate to , pulse to quicken..do I want them to cock their head to one side because they're curious about this is going to go to next..umm....so...

Jandelle: Yes.. wonderful....

End of section.

## APPENDIX U

### Interview # 3 Transcript

Monday November 26, 2012

8:30am

Harvard University

Telephone interview

Liz Lerman

*[RQ3. What knowledge, insight, and understanding can I gain regarding communicating about college student suicide through the embodied inquiry of choreographing and performing a dance about college student suicide?]*

#### Interview Questions

*8. What new knowledge, insights, or understanding have you gained about the process, the product, or the subject matter about which you are creating during the process of creating a new art work? Can you give examples of how that works or when that has happened?*

*9. Talk to me about your ideas about using art as a medium for communication. How is important is it for others to understand you art? What do you think is the connection between good art and interpretation/meaning making*

Jandelle: We're heading into the last section which looks at, what knowledge insights and understanding that you gain, regarding a specific subject matter as you go through that embodied inquiry of choreographing and performing.. so you might start off working on a piece but you have information that you gathered from your research and your reading, and as you go through you'll find... you can find that you gain new knowledge, insight and understanding about that

subject, about the process, about what you're making.. so that's what this section is about so the actual question is... what new knowledge, insights or understanding have you gained about the process or the product or the subject matter about which you are creating during the process of creating a new art work, and can you give examples of how that..... (Liz starts to talk.. muffled in background) I don't know and I hope I'm gonna learn something by doing it and all kinds of things happen that way. Like I can start this project on medicine and war, in which I was interested in women in the civil war Liz: ... I mean you have to believe that's gonna happen otherwise why do it.. I'm not going to bother making something I already know. If I already know then what's the point in my doing it? I wanna do it because who became soldiers but they dressed as boys um.. and what happened to them and I'm also looking at women in the Iraq war and I'm playing around now with that relationship in the research and I'm being to explore it and it's pointing out to me things I just didn't see in the script.. it was embedded in the material. I can't.. mostly about woman and stress and how we handle performance stress..uh post traumatic stress both in the civil war and now.. that's not a good description, but it's just endless, endless versions of where you get taken down a path that you didn't know was there

Jandelle: Yes

Liz: and then you know you fix it... and sometimes I .. I mean you have to drop things that you thought you were doing because they no longer fit..

Jandelle: Yes

Liz: And you get them to fit because you change how they you know.. how they work with each other. Yeh so it's um..a very rich process...very rich

Jandelle: And can you give any specific example of how that has worked or when it worked that you went into something and maybe you were even surprised at what came out at the end?

Liz: Oh.. I tell you Jandelle, all of it is like.. (I laugh) muffled.. and I can only tell you just go read the book (hiking the horizontal by Liz Lerman), I might be able to ...let me some stuff, let me see what comes up right now. Let me see if I can pull something up from the last project. Let's see.. Well sometimes.. this isn't exactly it but.. I was in a section in this war piece. The boys.. you know in the civil war there was just carnage.. these people just walked...I mean, they just walked to their deaths basically row after row and uh.. I wanted to figure out a way to demonstrate this but I didn't want to.... ..well when you looked at it in the rehearsal it just looked like a lot of boys falling down and I thought that was pretty clichéd and then I, and then I developed this idea of a score to the boys. You fall down.. you stay down as long as your name is... you count as many seconds as your name is long then you can get up...if you hear two bullets while you're on the floor.. you stay down and count to sixteen then you can get up... I started making all these rules for they could get up and fall down again.. and then I started realizing this could be a way I could.. because the game is rigged anyway. So uh.. I started doing things like... uh.. you'll fall down and if you hear a bugle you can get up but then you'll go home and kill yourself.

Jandelle: Yeh..

Liz: and I started realizing now I had come up...because at first I was worried about a cliché, now I had come up with a structure that would allow me to uh.. put in some statistics. Statistics for the number of men actually.. you know I forget the number right now...it's an enormous. I think it's like sixteen people per day are killing themselves now...

Jandelle: Yes..

Liz: Right, so um.. what started as a way to break cliché turned out to give way to a way in which I could give information that helps me break the cliché.

Jandelle: Yes

Liz: That would be an example, I think.

Jandelle: oh yes.. (deep breath..) pause. The last question has three parts and the first part is a general um.. your general perspective on using art as a medium for communication. Talk to meet about your idea about using art as a medium for communication.

Liz: Uh.. well...Jandelle what do you mean by communication

Jandelle: Um... (pause) in the case of my study..

Liz: You mean, you mean...like.. are you talking about art as a means of a specific....

(break in interview answer).. Jandelle I'm gonna move because somebody's vacuuming.

Jandelle: okay.. okay..

Liz: I'm at the dance building here at Harvard..

Jandelle: Yes

Liz: It has the ... (Liz talks little about her surroundings, some muffled.. describes her surrounds, using card to get into the building.. someone comes before her and lets her in...I'm waiting on her..apologizes to me.. till she gets to a place that's more quiet.. explains some of her morning and that she had to come in to the office rather than at home.)

Liz: ok, here we go..

Jandelle: So um when I'm talking about art as a medium for communication, based on how I proposed the study, I was trying to explain to, let's say the health field or health profession, that we have many different way so of sharing ideas or educating communities and o their medium for communication may be using a workshop, talking, you know, using words um.. you know, bringing people together and explaining stuff but in our case dance is also another way of communicating, another way of sharing ideas, another way of..of telling an audience or telling

people something so...you know in general how you do view art as a medium for communication? So I don't know if that's clear...

Liz: Well what I would say is when you add the body it's much more visceral.. it's so much more visceral. So..um.. people remember.. people..you touch people in a different way.. when people are actually doing it, as opposed to sitting and watching it's even deeper and when people are making it up it's even deeper so...it's already better if you add the body.(chuckle)

Jandelle: Yes... yes...

Liz: Better still when people participate and uh I believe that makes a huge difference.. and or if people have a chance to reflect on what they have heard. The last piece I did, Act 1 was in the theater and Act II was tea and you sit around and have tea and you have people at every table helping...and you have discussions about what you just saw and more dancing happens around the tables and it's just a fantastic way for people to realize they had an experience.. because I think sometimes people don't even know they've had it...

Jandelle: oooohhhhh

Liz: So you have to give them a chance to understand they've had it because if they can't... they don't even have the language for describing their sensory experience, and then they think pretty soon it didn't even happen to them.

Jandelle: Yeh.

Liz: So they're used to going from word to word but when you've had an experience and you have to try to explain that in words...it's hard to do if you're not practiced. So we've got to get people a lot more practice in that I think.

Jandelle: Yeh, that's pretty powerful that concept of them even realizing that they had an experience because people could be watching unconsciously not, you know, not recording that

something is happening to them as they're watching it.. but as you interact with them afterwards you bring them.. into that consciousness..

Liz: Yes.

Jandelle:..of being able to see that something happened to them.. they actually had a thought.. maybe tears came to their eyes, maybe they reflected upon a past experience similar to what they saw..so I like that idea that you said, so they actually interact afterwards and are able to communicate.

Liz: Yes.

Jandelle: Ok. So the second part to this last question is .. “how important is it for others to understand your art?”

(pause)

Liz: Um...(pause) I wish that people wouldn't worry so much about fitting it into a specific place but would be open to having an experience with it and mainly it in some ways for themselves.

Jandelle: mmhhmmm

Liz: What I find is that the public is pretty willing... but that the more professional and more knowledgeable people are the more likely they are to narrow their experiences out..which I think is unfortunate.. so I don't feel that.. I don't feel misunderstood by the general public..I feel misunderstood by the professional world.. only because its quick to its quick to judge.

Jandelle: Yes

Liz: and uh.. and the categories it holds.. it tries to uphold are generally not about the work in front of them..it's about a larger political sense about the way the art world should be organized. So the misunderstanding doesn't come from most people who come upon my work...mostly they get really excited about it .....if they, if they are able to get in the order but they don't always let

themselves come in the door because they've been led to believe they won't understand it... which is ridiculous..

Jandelle: Yes..

Liz: So. um.. but I think you get people in and in to a workshop or into some kind of experience.. and generally speaking you treat them well...you treat them with respect you maintain that the audience and the participants have something to give and offer...it's usually terrific.

Jandelle: Yes, very good... and the last part of this last question is.. "what do you think is the connection between good art and interpretation or meaning making?" And when I say good art, it's because of read a little bit about aesthetics and some people question you know.. the ability for a trained person versus a nonprofessional to be able to communicate as well as a professional and how that might affect interpretation of what you trying to say or meaning making. So is there a connection between good art, and you can even blow that phrase out the water, but between good art and interpretation or meaning making?

Liz: Well.. you know I think uh.. I think you know what I'm going to say (laughing.. we both start laughing)... It's um.. not just the arts that struggles with this.. I mean all professions. One of the aspects of professional is that they have to defend their profession and the way they defend that profession is by making it a rarity.. and saying that there's a very few people who can actually accomplish it. My experience is that when you look at all the functions, the profession is accountable to. The profession of dance is accountable to many functions... There are lots and lots of ways in which untrained people, can participate in a deep way functionally. (breathes a sigh) and in no way threaten the capacity of the experts.

Jandelle: Yes

Liz: It's not a threat, and why the experts feel it's a threat I'll never understand.



Jandelle: Yes

Liz: but I do think that there is a very particular role for exp..not.. for professionals and that's the role of people who have made it their whole life. I was talking to somebody recently and they said to me.. oh...I was talking about my work in the religious community and they said.. oh....you think everybody can be a rabbi.

Jandelle: mmhhmm

Liz: and I said.. no not really...I only think my rabbi can be my rabbi

Jandelle : Yeh

Liz: look at all the things rabbis do, they comfort the sick, they they uh.. they give talks during the services, they give their sermons..they uh.. recite very beautiful words over.. uh...yeh that kind of thing. I think lots of people can do that. I can do a lot of what I just said.. but that doesn't make me a rabbi. It makes me in that moment share a function with something that my rabbi does but my rabbi is a rabbi by virtue of his commitment.. long millions and millions of hours of what he does and it's because I trust him beyond most people in very very difficult situations. Well I would say the same about art making. The beauty of an old person on stage making a particular movement that makes you weak. It's not less than, it's cause they're old or untrained. It's important that they are able to.. but they can't do everything that I can do.. and they..they don't want to (chuckling). They don't want to be an artist. So I ..I feel like the notion that only a few can express the depth of our human experience is wrong... that only.. I don't believe that, I think lots of people can do that. But what I do also know to be true from my work years and years in community is just that..one of the things about good professional dancers is that they have enormous range..

Jandelle: Yes

Liz: and that people who are new to dance, don't have that same range. You can find the one or two movements that they can do well, but they don't have the same range. On the other hand, some professional dancers can't touch you anymore.. they don't move you because they're overly trained. There's a guy here at Harvard, a very interesting art historian who talked about something called.. um "deskilling." Deskilling is the purposeful act of taking away someone skills in order to make it authentic and I was thinking for example my work with adult people... I was very interested in deskilling contemporary dance which I thought had gotten overly technical and by bringing the old people out, I was thinking an extremely purposeful commitment to having the audience see that dance can be so much more than just the technology of it...like how high your leg could go..and I think the old people were just incredibly effective in that. Helping the audience broaden their sense of what's possible and on their own..

Jandelle: Well we are just about at the end and as you are speaking, I know we have a limited time but I have two things I am thinking about. Um..when you are working in communities, and you talked about being commissioned to do pieces. How much is it doing community based art where ..you might have a different style... and you work with people where you let the movement come from the people as well as you choreographing specific parts to complete the work you plan to complete. How much weight is given to you choreographing as authoritarian and you using your dancers and the people that are participating in the piece and you allowing the movement to come out of them?

Liz: Well even when I'm working with professional dancers, I let the movement come from them, my whole choreographic way of working is to give people assignments but also tools to fulfill them, so a lot my contribution to the field has not been the specific movement but rather the kinds of tools for getting people to make movement some of which is on the toolbox for the

dance exchange website, and some of which is in the book, and some of which hasn't been recorded yet... but I became a master of that only because I myself.. I didn't like my own movement that much, and I could get much better stuff from other people than anything I could make up, but I still called that choreography..

Jandelle: Oh, I see...

Liz: so...I think that there's a little confusion with the language, however there is a new word that emerged in the theater world called "devised work" D E V I S E D.. devised work.. and I think choreographers, they began to pick that up to and talk about the kind of work I have been doing as devised work as opposed to choreographic and thereby use the term choreography to imply that I'm giving you the actual movement not just tools for creating movement, but if you read my stuff..and go look at my stuff, you will see that my definition for choreography is someone who is shaping it all

Jandelle: Yes

Liz: not the person who is coming up with the actual steps. No, I'll take the steps from anything..

Jandelle: And then the last thing is when you come to make a piece how do you recruit participants?

Liz: Well you know, that depends on every project.

Jandelle: Ok

Liz: That really depends on, and also, on you know... how we design a community-based project is very.. uh.. each one is its own special thing.

Jandelle: Yes

Liz: and um...thinking of a design for a piece I just completed here in Harvard..It has some Harvard students, and it has some professional dancers from my world and it has a film master from Hollywood, it has just an incredible cast.

Jandelle: Yes..

Liz: but each one is its own thing

Jandelle: Yes, good..

Liz: (break in interview.. pause off phone.. arrangements for her next meeting being made.)

Liz: So take a look and see if I answered all that you need and if I haven't, take a look in the book (hiking the horizontal) and then call me.

Jandelle: Yes and you have (chuckling).. We're at the end.

Liz: Yes

Jandelle: Thank you so much.

Liz: Thank you, I hope it was useful. It was beyond useful. I appreciate it I know that you have a hectic schedule so I'm not going to keep but thank you so much.....(closing conversation exchanging information, last comments, plans...)

End of section.