

BETWEEN MEMORY AND MOVEMENT:  
A DANCING-WOMANIST-SCHOLAR IN, NOT OF, KINESIOLOGY

BY

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DISSERTATION

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## **ABSTRACT**

Because kinesiology is historically linked to physical education, two specific aspects of physical activity-exercise and sport-currently receive primary attention from kinesiologists (Charles, 1994). Consequently, kinesiology has not fully embraced dance, considered a non-exercise/non-sport based endeavor, with the same enthusiasm as its exercise and sport based counterparts. My dissertation re-introduces and (re) presents dance to the field of kinesiology, advocating that it and other humanistic, subjective movement receive equal consideration as viable movement practice. To accomplish this, I explore how memories of my lived experiences, from childhood to my years in the department of Kinesiology at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, have influenced and informed my current dance life and practice. I also show that the field of physical education-evolved-kinesiology has a rich history in dance, and use my personal experience as a dancer to inform the constructed notions of what physical cultural studies scholar David Andrews (2008) terms ‘epistemological hierarchies’ within the discipline’s movement practices.

**DEDICATION**

*To the joys of my heart, Kevin H. Scott and Jalen Amir Wallace*

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## PROEM

Excuse me Grenita...lil sister Grenita  
Why you acting so “fast”  
Shaking your hips, juking with sass?  
You know they are looking, waiting to tell yo mama  
How you rolled your eyes at Sister Howbrowski  
Questioning heaven and hell, and other church drama  
When you pop and shake, something that the others can’t do  
You know your rhythm is tight, and few have a clue  
As to what your movement represents, the meaning those foot stomps convey  
Channeling Ntozake, Maya and Pearle with a finger pop and a “heyyyy!!!”  
Am I fast or free, hot or hope, lost or love?  
What makes my Black Girl Dance the topic of such consternation and fight?  
I don’t know...  
Well you dance my dance and I’ll dance yours...  
We both can’t be wrong...right?  
(Written in spring 2008)

## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Dance as an expression and practice of the relations of power and protest, resistance and complicity, has been the subject of a number of historical and ethnographic analyses (Reed, 1998). Studying embodied practices, specifically dance, can help examine and interpret how dominant cultures perform the lives of marginalized groups, as well as how these groups define and perform their own lived experiences. Since the mid-1980s, there had been an upsurge in the study of dance and its politics in the context of culture (Reed, 1998). Jane Desmond (2007) in her text *Embodying Difference*, which investigates the ideological and social meanings of dance practices, performances and institutions, substantiates why it is important for scholars to develop a relationship between dance scholarship and cultural studies in an effort to investigate the operations of social power:

By placing dance research on the agenda of cultural studies, and enlarging our studies of bodily 'texts' to include dance in all of its forms- among them social dance, theatrical performance, and ritualized movement- we can further our understandings of how social identities are signaled, formed, and negotiated through bodily movement (p29).

This is of utmost importance to movement studies scholars like me who enter the existing dialogue through the medium of humanistic, subjective movement practices, specifically dance. I use dance as a vehicle of expression in my academic work to make a connection between movement and text. At times, when I can't find the words, I dance. But I must do much more. Scholars must take chances with heartfelt, sometimes messy conglomerations of emotional, descriptive texts to show that writing is not the only legitimate form of representation (Desmond, 1997; Markula & Denison 2000; Conguergood, 2002). This is necessary to blur the lines

between quantitative and qualitative research practices, the sciences and humanities, so that we can learn from each other through new eyes of appreciation, collaboration and respect. This evocative writing style I employ, coined ‘moving writing’ by sport sociologists Pirkko Markula and Jim Denison (2003) provides “a fleshed-out, embodied portrait of movement as a practice of living”, inviting the reader access to my reflexive, critical, intimate inquiries. Markula and Denison together (2000, 2003, 2005) and separately Denison (1996); Markula (2006, 2008, and 2011) speak in depth about the challenges they face translating their personal movement experiences into words, and search for the answer to the question, “How does one research movement?” Both agree there is more required than simply figuring a way to write about physical movement. Markula uses her passion for dance to debate the usefulness of performance for creating social change while Denison writes about, among other topics, what running means and how writing about his experiences as a retired runner have helped him satisfy questions about his identity. They advocate that in studying movement, “One must go beyond mere textual representations and explore the liberating possibilities of a more embodied form of scholarship” (Markula & Denison, 2006).

Desmond (1997) further acknowledges the bias in the academy for verbal text. She describes the hesitation of scholars within various disciplines to connect with each other in interdisciplinary efforts for a greater understanding of the human condition. Cultural theorist Angela McRobbie (1991) charges the field of cultural studies with being negligent concerning the issue of dance, failing to afford it the same detailed analysis that other expressive art forms have been given. She insightfully observes that, “...dance comes to us packaged in the messy social contexts of consumer capitalism, class culture, and gender and race relations” (p208). How can we be so fragmented in our analysis of such a wonderfully multidimensional subject?

Desmond (1997) encourages us to imagine new ways of living and performing dance, while recognizing the importance of analyzing the appropriation of power and the value of cultural agency. How, Desmond inquires, are dance and movement styles transmitted, in terms of class, ethnicity and nationality? Striving to understand the multifarious ways in which embodied practices lean into understanding can be a daunting task. Performance Studies scholar Dwight Conquergood (2002) confers that the dominant way of knowing in the academy is that of empirical observation and critical analysis from a distanced perspective. He extends the observation of prominent cultural theorist Michel de Certeau (1984) that “what the map cuts up, the story cuts across”, citing that what has originally been known as ‘place’ and/or ‘location’ has changed, based on “transnational narratives, diasporic affiliations and the movement and migrations of people, sometimes voluntary, but often economically propelled and politically coerced” (p145). Conquergood continues that this adage is applicable to the distinction between two domains of knowledge as well: one official, objective and abstract –‘the map’; and the other one practical, embodied and popular- ‘the story’ (p145).

As a dancing-womanist-scholar<sup>1</sup> in the field of kinesiology, this story, this knowledge that is “...embodied, ground level, anchored in practice and ephemeral” (Conquergood, 2002) is what I advocate for in contrast to the well-known backdrop of scientific knowledge systems. The field of kinesiology, like many academic disciplines, has strict parameters in regards to what is considered legitimate scholarship. Alan Ingham (1997), in his important essay *Toward a Department of Physical Cultural Studies and an End to Tribal Warfare*, suggests that there are

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<sup>1</sup>In acknowledgment of the multiple layers of my existence, I identify as a dancer, a womanist and a scholar. I find that all three are interconnected yet stand alone in very organic, intimate ways. I speak on this in length at chapter three, methodology.

three types of ‘tribes’ in the human movement studies discipline. Kinesiology, he suggests, is saturated by the *technocratic intelligentsia*:

I call this tribe technocratic because despite their objectivistic fantasy, there remains a value-free, pragmatic orientation to knowledge production. Its members tend to teach specialized, subdisciplinary classes. Moreover, because they are enamored with objectivistic pretensions and hard data, their work [is] typically ‘statistical neopositivist’ and subscribes to the ideology of ‘mastery’ and ‘control’ (p160).

This passage articulates the discipline’s position of objectivity and ‘scientific hegemony’ (Andrews, 2008) that is misleading, outdated and until the later part of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, rarely questioned. These tribe members have been influential in appropriating the structure of kinesiology, from the name change, to the appropriation of funds, and everything in between (Ingham, 1997; Anderson, 2002; Zelaznik & Harper, 2007; Andrews, 2008; Vertinsky, 2009; Silk & Andrews 2011; Giardina & Newman, 2011). Ingham asserts that as a result, kinesiologists who study humanities and/or the soft sciences, the *humanistic intellectuals*, have been marginalized in the field and in some cases, eliminated. The discipline has not eluded Western ideologies that define what constitutes knowledge, and how it is appropriated. In this space, embodied ways of knowing, like dance, with no words or data, remain on the periphery. Foucault (1980) coined this knowledge ‘subjugated knowledge’, and claimed it is “The low ‘other’ of science.” Certeau (1998) and Scott (1998) extend:

Subjugated knowledges have been erased because they are illegible; they exist, by and large, as active bodies of meaning, outside of books, eluding the forces of inscription that

would make them legible, and thereby legitimate (As cited in Conquergood, 2002, pg146).

Dance historian and Professor of English Amy Koritz (1996) advocates for us to take a few moments to step out of the “preordained disciplinary categories” mandated by the academy and “do our homework” to grasp a basic understanding of another field of study. I, also, am asking for the discipline of kinesiology to do our homework and remember other ways of knowing, at home within our own field; ways that have been a proud part of our disciplinary past, and need to be reconsidered to ensure our future.

### The ‘Humanity of Movement’ in Kinesiology

Because kinesiology is historically linked to physical education, two specific aspects of physical activity- exercise and sport- currently receive primary attention from kinesiologists (Charles, 1994). Consequently, kinesiology has not fully embraced dance, considered a non-exercise/non-sport based endeavor, with the same enthusiasm as its exercise and sport based counterparts. My dissertation re-introduces and (re) presents dance to the field of kinesiology, advocating that it and other humanistic, subjective movement receive equal consideration as viable movement practice. In the context of subjective movement practice in Kinesiology, how have ways of knowing, such as experiential and performative, been forgotten? How has/does the performance of race, gender and class, or the appropriation of such in this discipline affect(ed)/inform(ed)/influence(d) me in ways that express the importance of experiential, embodied knowledge and subjective movement?

To accomplish this, I explore how memories of my lived experiences, from childhood to my years in the department of Kinesiology at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, have

influenced and informed my current dance life and practice. I also show that the field of physical education-evolved-kinesiology has a rich history in dance, and use my personal experience as a dancer to inform the constructed notions of what physical cultural studies scholar David Andrews (2008) terms ‘epistemological hierarchies’ within the discipline’s movement practices. By remembering and attempting to understand the lived experiences of myself and those who have come before me, specifically the women in my family who I identify as ‘Black Church Women’<sup>2</sup>, I assert my place within the field to disrupt the hegemonic, patriarchal norms of kinesiology. Through this performative discourse, I begin to make sense of my place in the world and why the life I live and the dance (research) I do are important. I begin to decode how I and others enact cultural meaning into our lives (Denzin 2003), and what joys, injustices and new knowledge unfold as a result.

### Epiphanic Moments

These memories and moments I remember and analyze in the Department of Kinesiology at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign provide a starting point to decenter the belief that athletic endeavor and exercise are the most valid physical activity and movement practices in kinesiology. The following letter demonstrates one of many ‘epiphanic moments’ in my life. Prolific critical performance ethnography scholar Norman Denzin (2001) affirms that epiphanic moments thrust you into that moment of clarity: that single, scary moment when you are hyperaware of your race, gender, and or class:

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<sup>2</sup>The title I respectfully and lovingly bestow on Black women, in this dissertation the women in my matriarchal line, who align with a notion of thriving that consists of “putting God first and foremost” in one’s life. These women were/are very involved in their church ministries, and had a profound influence on my childhood experiences as a dancer and Black girl. I discuss their lives in detail in chapter 4.

Epiphanies are interactional moments and experiences which leave marks on people's lives. In them, personal character is manifested. They are often moments of crisis. They alter the fundamental meaning structures in a person's life (p70).

My letter to kinesiology embodies my passion and frustration with a discipline that claims to study the phenomenon of all movement, but the funding, accolades, and jobs continually land in very specific areas of the discipline such as exercise physiology, biomechanics and kinesmetrics; all science specific. In the tradition of Denzin (2003, 2008), my letter is part "memories, events, ethnography, history, personal experience, performance text and interpretation" (pgs 272, 16). It provides a point of entry into this journey that I have been afraid to take, but must be about the business of going...

#### Love Letter to Kinesiology

*Hi KIN, it's been a while. I don't know if you remember me, or even realize that I exist. I on the other hand, will never forget the first time we met...*

*It was in the fall of 1991. I was a freshman walk on (non-scholarship athlete) to U of I Coach Gary Winkler's Big Ten champion track team and was nervous and needy. You were athletic, smart, unabashedly male, and unmistakably White. I got injured during practice, and went to see one of your athletic training students for therapy. She told me how awesome you were, and that I should meet you to see what you were like. At your informational, you smiled at me and told me that you believed in the importance of the study and phenomenon of human movement. Your buddies, the AKAs (American Kinesiological Association), backed you up saying that you studied physical activity and its impact on health, human performance, society and quality of life. You got me all excited KIN; I thought that maybe I could combine something I*

loved, dance, with something I enjoyed, exercise, and become... well I didn't really know at age 18.

*You told me we had a lot in common, that you cared about the personal and the political; that you could see us together for a long time. Like me, you said that you possessed a holistic nature, believing in the interdependence of mind, emotions, body and spirit (Hoffman & Harris, 2000). Most of the girls you attracted were nothing like my dancing Black self, but by the time I figured that out, I was so in love with you I didn't care, and I was confident that despite our differences, we could make it work. Yeah, I heard the rumors of your overt racist history in physical education, and more subtly in kinesiology. I read about how you made it difficult for African-Americans to matriculate through physical education programs at PWIs (Predominantly White Institutions), find faculty positions after graduation, and hold offices in the governing associations such as the American Alliance of Health, Physical Education and Recreation (AAHPER). It was irrelevant; I was young and self-centered then, only caring about how you treated ME. Then... you dumped me just like that. No more experiencing the joy of our physical selves. My once confident self with the swinging hips and powerful jumps was replaced by a young woman searching for her voice through movement just to be heard. As an undergrad here at the University of Illinois with you, I found no such space...so I stopped talking. I became fragmented body parts to you KIN; just data. VO2 max tests, anaerobic threshold measurements...you made me and my qualitative ideas seem so unimportant and small. I didn't recognize you anymore, and the more you bellowed with intolerance and exclusivity in your voice, the less I understood you.*

*Yes KIN, you and I go way back...when everybody still called you Kines, and you judged me on a 5.0 scale.<sup>3</sup> I danced with you, remember? Initially you embraced me, proclaimed dance as a valid form of movement, and said I belonged with you. And...I wasn't the only one you said those things to. You deny it, but there were many others. You and Jeanette Carpenter (U of I director of physical training for women, 1898-1909) danced at the May Fete festival sponsored by the department of Physical Education for Women in 1898, and stayed together for 28 years. That's right KIN, I know where you came from, before Science caught your eye and brainwashed you into thinking embodied, subjective movement was less than. You coyly acknowledge your relationship to Physical Education, but the truth is that you two are historically linked, family in fact! The women's physical education department sponsored the Women's Sport and Dance Council, which housed Orchesis, a modern dance group, "striving to stimulate interest in dance as an art form, to foster standards of performance, appreciation and understanding of the art of dance in the University and the community" (University Archives, accessed May, 2011). These records start in 1932 and go well into the 60s! Dance was one of your majors until 1968 when it was moved to the newly created College of Fine and Applied Arts. Why on earth would you try to hide this KIN? My love for dance and its importance appeared to mean nothing to you. You offered minimal dance courses during my undergraduate career, and did not claim to have any affiliation with the dance department.*

*What did I do wrong... why didn't you want me? As a young girl, I needed you to tell me my ideas were good. Illinois has been heralded as one of the most prominent institutions for undergraduate and graduate studies in Physical Education and Kinesiology. Such high standards, yet it has been my experience here at Illinois that the fragmentation and*

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<sup>3</sup> The University of Illinois Department of Kinesiology was also known more informally as "KINES" during my undergraduate years, and the grading scale was on a 5.0 system instead of the 4.0 scale that is used presently.

*compartmentalization of Kinesiology has left us scholars (in particular qualitative graduate students) confused and combative in a desperate attempt to protect our research practice. After all this time, you continue to privilege exercise physiology and the study of sport in terms of performance and skill training. Coming into the department as an athlete, you appeared to accept me. After I quit the track team however, I was without affiliation to the jocks. It wasn't my goal to be a physical education teacher (though I did teach PE in later years), and the sub-discipline of socio-cultural kinesiology was not an option (that I knew of) for undergraduates at that time (1991-1995). All those good times we had line dancing, playing tennis, ice skating, enjoying and being authentically present in those activities and you still dare to still seem apologetic about your movement courses (Anderson, 2002). I've learned...I've learned so many things from those experiences... didn't you? Charles (2002), Azzarito (2010), Andrews (2008), and Anderson (2002) advocate that we explore the human experiences of meaning and meaningfulness in movement. Don't treat me like this KIN, please...*

*Your acquaintances, the sports sociologists, befriended me. They saw me, hurt and confused, and attempted to value my way of thinking. My friends Pirkko (Markula) and Susan (Oliver) get it. Markula (2006a, 2006b, 1995) theorizes about dance as performative research. She worked for you with a heart for both exercise-based movement and dance. You KIN, have lost sight of yourself (the discipline) to become socially relevant (Zelaznik, & Harper, 2007). In the last 50 years, you have struggled almost constantly with your own identity, and others (Zelaznik & Harper, 2007) agree:*

To make matters a bit more muddled, we are not a pure discipline. We are biochemists of exercise, neuroscientists of movement, psychologists of sport, or educational researchers.

Probably many of us think of ourselves as psychologists, and kinesiology is just a place

where we can get a lab and get tenured. It seems to us that what we need is some construct or endeavor that provides us with a constant, consistent center; and, this center provides us with intellectual stability and at the same time provides the stable structure for dynamic activity in research (p167).

*Not a 'pure discipline'? Sadly, this feels true. We have no central theme, no 'home' to go back to. With all the directions you have taken KIN, from being originally focused on the health of the nation and recreation to self-contained sub-disciplines too numerous to count...what are you...what are WE doing?*

*Good luck KIN. Whether you want me or not, I and others like me are here to stay; we are not going anywhere. We'll be working and creating our own experiences and inserting ourselves in your conversations, and dancing our dissertations and lectures. We will work to disrupt the notion that the most important type of movement exists within the confines of sport and/or exercise. There are those in kinesiology who, like me, believe that all movement practice is important and should be given equal consideration. The American Alliance for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance (AAHPERD), an organization who you recognize and endorse, publishes JOPERD, the Journal of Physical Education Recreation and Dance. The existence of this publication confirms that humanistic, holistic movement practice and all it represents-the beauty of performance, expression of relations of power, social/cultural identities and much more-are valuable and worthy of investigation. JOPERD's mission is "to advance the common goals and discrete roles of health, physical education, recreation and dance professionals who are committed to improving the quality of life through the movement arts and sciences, sport, and leisure"(JOPERD, 2012).*

*Dance is essentially tied to the senses, including the kinetic, with its dependence on vision, touch, sound and rhythm. But most significantly movement, as a bodily way-of-being is fundamentally connected to meaning, either on a personal/private or social/public level (Block & Kissel, 2001). If you KIN, are truly devoted to the study of human movement, then the meaning making of dance should also be on your agenda. Just think on it KIN; you may encourage scholars from other fields, specifically fields that are home to women of color, to engage in interdisciplinary work, being encouraged that your interests extend beyond that of the science of exercise or sport.*

*I don't know what happened to our relationship, but it simply cannot end this way...expect to hear from me soon...I'm not done dancing with you KIN. Not even close.*

### In, not of, Kinesiology

As a dancing womanist scholar, I am in, not of, Kinesiology... the Sister Outsider<sup>4</sup>... the dancing fool. I am within the walls of the Academy... registered in this program with my name on the roll, yet I feel many times as if I don't belong. The (unwritten) signs read that I should be somewhere else...Women and Gender studies, the Dance department, African American Studies...hell, anywhere but here in Kinesiology. All the women are White, all the Blacks are men (Hull, Bell-Scott, & Smith, 1982), and all of the movement is sport-related, or seemingly so. Wiggins and Wiggins (2011) compares the experiences of many African Americans in the field of physical education and kinesiology since the late 1850s to that of W.E.B Dubois who wrote, "I was in Harvard but not of it and realized all the irony of 'Fair Harvard' ", never establishing

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<sup>4</sup> *Sister Outsider (1984)* is a collection of essays and speeches from the poet and activist scholar Audre Lorde and stand as an iconic contribution to contemporary feminist theory. I use it here to compare my struggles and experiences of being Black and female in America and the Academy, and further reference this work as a tool for negotiation and empowerment as a result of these intersecting things.

close relationships with White classmates and feeling a sense of isolation on campus (Lewis, 1993 as cited in Wiggins & Wiggins 2011). In the field of kinesiology, movement practices of the Black body, more specifically the Black female body, are a peculiar quandary. We were/are here, yet portrayed in both tenuous, inadequate ways. These inaccurate portrayals most often occur within the context of sporting endeavors, in many cases refusing to give adequate acknowledgement of the many accomplishments of Black female athletes, as well as debasing our bodies as masculine, unattractive, and the polar opposite of White women (Verbrugge, 2012; Hobson, 2005; Cahn, 1994). Other portrayals of the moving Black female body are objectivistic, emotionless studies that ramble how Black women do not, will not and cannot care enough about their health and wellness to incorporate balanced, structured fitness practices into their lives (Freeman, 2011; Hall et al, 2013; Kanazawa, 2011; Freedman, 1998). The virtual non-existence of a documentable connection between Black women and the field of physical education and kinesiology is both appalling and lamentable. Black women contributed organically to the study of physical education and movement studies and are/were teachers, athletes, coaches and performing artists. I discuss in more detail the numerous contributions of Black female physical educators in chapter two.

### Purpose of this project

My purpose is to re-introduce dance to the field of Kinesiology. In doing so, I find it necessary to share the experiences and interactions in Kinesiology that have been some of the most life changing and enlightening moments I have encountered...

*“Why don’t you people (in the sociocultural Kinesiology sub discipline) think you have to take the required curriculum? You slackers try to petition out of everything!”*

*“Well, the funding that was originally discussed had to be allocated elsewhere. But we still need your face for this project (study focusing on Black women and Latina freshmen)...can’t you just do it for credit hours?”*

*“Quite honestly, Ms. Hall...you’re nothing but a social security number to me.”*

*“You are definitely a part of this team Grenita. Your contribution is great. Please don’t think otherwise...”*

*“Your proposal was so good...you are going to do amazing things in this department that no one has ever done. Keep writing about what’s important to you.”*

*“WORD! What up G!”*

As an undergraduate, I felt exclusion from the other students and ignored by many of the faculty. As a graduate student, I feel I have ‘disappeared’ and been marginalized as a woman of color who studies the woman of color moving. As Dillard (2006) noted, “It hurts to do this work” (p98), but working through it leads to self-affirmation, self-actualization and the beginnings of a conversation that should have started long ago. I get to say, “Here is my contribution to this department, this discourse, this world.” Here is my dance. Just be sure to watch closely, so you can remember it. Truth be told, I’m “calling the academy out”<sup>5</sup>, specifically the field of Kinesiology. We have retreated to our proverbial corners long enough, me as a woman of color with strong communal ties and subjective movement experiences, Kinesiology as the heteronormative, patriarchal super power...it’s time to be honest about our illustrious yet discriminating past, using those raw moments to develop a strategy of inclusiveness and

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<sup>5</sup> “Calling someone out” is basically challenging the thoughts, ideas and words they may have attempted to pass off as fact; a phrase often used in African American communities.

acceptance; a new found respect. It is my sincere hope and charge for my field of study that we become open to different ways of thinking and learning, albeit uncomfortable, strange, or divergent. Though I feel alone in this struggle, I am not. Since the 1980s, physical education and kinesiology scholars who study the humanistic aspect of movement have been fighting to keep their souls while having their lives and work acknowledged. Charles (2002), Anderson, (2002) and Twietmeyer (2012a, 2012b), emphasize the need to develop a stronger emphasis on and better integration of the humanistic and experiential side of movement with the scientific. Andersen (2002) poignantly asserts that science has a history of generalizing and giving reductionistic accounts of human existence, based on Western notions of normalcy, subsequently having a negative impact on the field:

Physical Education needed redemption in 1964 and gained some by way of its gradual transition to kinesiology [Transitioning from a field with a professional emphasis into one with a scientific base]. This is not merely window dressing; as a discipline and area of inquiry, kinesiology has genuinely progressed since 1964. This progress and the respect for the discipline it has earned among those outside kinesiology has come at a cost. If kinesiology has, from a lingering positivistic outlook, become primarily scientific in its practices and outlook, what has it done with the humanistic features of movement (p89)?

There are students and committed faculty who remind me that community, inclusive fellowship, and honoring another's cultural differences are indeed alive in the field of kinesiology. A fairly recent emergence in kinesiology is an ideology that "... deliberate[s] on an understanding of, and approach to, the corporal practices, discourses, and subjectivities through which active bodies become organized, represented and experienced in relation to operations of social power" (Silk & Andrews, 2011). Physical Cultural Studies (PCS) is an initiative by

kinesiology/sports studies scholars that is grounded in a commitment toward engaging expressions of active physicality, or how one experiences oneself physically (Mc Dermott, 1996), in contrast to the study and evaluation of only *physicalness*, which has been the topic of numerous inquiries regarding physical movement in the past. This emerging field of study informs and supports my arguments in multiple ways, and I find value in detailing its foundations as well as theoretical frameworks in chapter three.

### Overview

Chapter 2 begins with a historical literature review of physical education and kinesiology. I explain my understanding of subjective, humanistic movement practice and contextualize the current state of the field kinesiology within this understanding.

Chapter 3 discusses my research methodology. Under the umbrella of Physical Cultural Studies, I present narrative inquiry research as the grounding for analyzing my stories. I introduce Womanism, as theory and method, outlining how Black women and girls have used this ‘way of knowing’ to negotiate everyday life performance, and how I attempt to live my ‘womanist identity’ as a daughter, mother, dancer and graduate student.

Chapter 4 features six ‘epiphanic moments’ or memories/experiences that have influenced the dancing-womanist-scholar I am today. These moments include: 1) Growing up and dancing in a household where subjective movement practices were both frowned upon and encouraged; 2) The politics of public dance performance in a social setting with two of my grade school friends; 3) The experience of being called ‘colored’ in a Kinesiology class which I turned into a co-performance for Norm Denzin’s qualitative research methods class; 4) My experiences with SOLHOT (Saving Our Lives, Hear Our Truths), a movement dedicated to providing a safe

space for Black girls that I volunteered with for 5 years while matriculating through my doctoral program; 5) The negotiations of movement practice by the women in my family who identify as 'Black Church Women' and 6) A performance I created as a final project for a seminar entitled 'Commodifying Difference' taught by Professor Isabel Molina in 2007.

Chapter 5 concludes this dissertation first with a plea for my fellow scholars to authentically work towards interrupting the expectations of traditional kinesiology ideologies via collaboration within and outside of our sub-disciplines. I then acknowledge the efforts presently being made by my home department and the university at large to create a new set of definitions that will hopefully create a culture of inclusion and diversity. Lastly, I offer strategies for revitalizing the field of kinesiology, beginning locally in my home department, to eliminate the existing divide between the humanities and sciences.

## CHAPTER 2: 'INCOMPLETE' KINESIOLOGY

“To know the mechanics of hitting tennis balls effectively, but be ignorant of Arthur Ashe’s social battles, is to be an incomplete kinesiologist” (Anderson, 2002, p91).

Upon reflection of Anderson’s words, it seems commonplace and acceptable to be ‘incomplete’ in the field of kinesiology. Professors and graduate students hurry along, so absorbed in their research endeavors they barely acknowledge each other’s presence, knowing little of another’s contributions to the field outside of their own. I too, am guilty; sitting in the department-wide required colloquia, trying to interpret ‘Age-Related Differences in Force Production and Variability across Oral and Manual Effectors’, thinking “What could this possibly have to do with me and my research?” Intensified subdisciplinary specialization and fragmentation (Andrews, 2008) has many kinesiology scholars convinced that the whole is definitely NOT greater than the sum of its parts. Anderson’s above quote should remind us of the multifariousness of kinesiology. It is not just the sciences but philosophy, sociology, cultural studies, and pedagogy that are vital, flourishing parts of the discipline. “Without being made aware of the human dimensions of physical activity, students would emerge from their kinesiology concentration with a mechanistic, technical understanding of how the body works but with no comprehension of the human factors” (Charles, 2002).

The humanistic features of movement, including leisure, recreation and dance, are indeed a part of our history (Anderson, 2002; Kretchmar, 2007; Twietmeyer, 2012). The humanities “enable a holistic understanding of the humanistic dimensions of movement phenomena” (Charles, 2002). Twietmeyer (2012a) contends that despite the acceptance of the name ‘Kinesiology’ by a majority of academic departments, which should prove unification and

a common focus regarding the study of movement and physical activity, “our self-understanding is as contentious and fractured as ever” (p4). He does however offer that:

Even with this dissention, a review of the historical data shows that a vision of kinesiology that embraces a holistic and cross disciplinary understanding is possible. The often dominant materialistic understanding of the field of kinesiology is a choice; it is neither theoretically nor practically inevitable (p5).

Twietmeyer along with the aforementioned scholars’ declarations about the possibilities of kinesiology motivate this inquiry. As I reintroduce dance to the field of kinesiology, I ask for the discipline to remember ‘other ways of knowing’, which include forms of subjugated, embodied and authentic knowledge (Foucault, 1980; Hill-Collins, 1990; Conquergood, 2002; Denzin, 2003; Barbour, 2011). Additionally, these ways challenge what sport historian Alison Wrynn (2003) applies to kinesiology as the ‘grand narrative’, a patriarchal, traditional knowledge system that celebrates only selected parts of history. Despite the silences and gaps in our history, I illuminate aspects of the profession-evolved-discipline that validate holistic, humanistic movement practice as a foundational goal.

In reviewing the beginnings of physical education and kinesiology, I offer at times conflicting accounts as to who made the most vital and far reaching contributions to the field, as much of the current research is biased, based primarily on the researcher’s area of specialization. I include the shifts of trends in physical education based on historical climate and events. Wrynn (2003) contends that many memories in the field of physical education and kinesiology are honored while others are “pushed to the margins of our history” (p245) and asks, “How do we remember the past in the field of kinesiology?” She champions us to work harder to present an

accurate portrayal of the historical moments of physical education and kinesiology, to “uncover a misrepresentation of this particular narrative”, and concludes that most histories in our field examine physical education in conjunction with sport (p248). Though sport is intimately related to the field of physical education and kinesiology, it does not guide my research, and will be presented as auxiliary information in this thesis. Because of the untenable amount of substantial literature regarding African Americans in the field of physical education and kinesiology, I include a separate section calling attention to the unique struggles of African American physical educators. I also highlight the Illinois tradition of physical education and kinesiology as the University of Illinois has historically been viewed as a leader in our discipline, making it relevant to discuss the beginnings and traditions of my home department. This gives insight to how the historical climate formed and influences the department today, as well as establishing a point of entry to share and compare the history and memory of my experiences as a student. Finally, I offer a historical presence of dance within the field of kinesiology through the work of various physical educators and dance educators and performers who worked within departments of physical education.

### Early American Physical Education: A New Profession

Our beginnings stem from histories of medicine, education, health, dance, recreation and organized sport (Prusak et al 2011; Wrynn, 2003; Siedentop, 2009; Zieff, 2010). Physical education as a profession emerged in the late nineteenth century to address various social, pedagogical and medical concerns (Hoffman & Harris, 2000; Vertinsky, 1987). In the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, ideas from various religious and intellectual circles began to diverge from the constraining beliefs of mind-body dualism (the separateness of mind and body) to believing that a human being’s body, mind, and soul were an integrated whole (Mechikoff & Estes, 1998).

Because of this, it was of the utmost importance to have a healthy body in order to achieve the highest levels of mental functioning and morality (Hoffman & Harris, 2000). The religious ideal of ‘Muscular Christianity’ and a call among the middle class and social elites that [White] men engage in more robust physical activity ran parallel with Victorian ideologies. These philosophies focused on the value of being physically fit to help contain sexual energy, exude self-control, and develop moral character and manliness (Cahn, 1994; Hoffman & Harris, 2000).

Nineteenth century medical science characterized American women as the physiologically inferior sex, weakened and ruled by their reproductive systems. The belief that women were simply not strong enough to endure the demands of intellectual work, as well as limitations placed on their role in society in general was based on a discourse guided by the new discipline of physiology (Cahn, 1994; Park, 1987; Zieff, 2010). Moderate exercise was proposed for a woman’s “delicate condition”, designed to strengthen and regulate the female body. This medical rationale for female exercise enabled women educators to justify women’s pursuit of higher education, citing that physical education would prevent these potential traumas. (Cahn, 1994; Zieff, 2010).

### ‘Systems’ vs Holistic Physical Education

The profession of physical education was born to a group comprised mainly of medical doctors interested in understanding the role of physical training in health and who emphasized the benefits of exercise (Corbin, 1993; Zieff, 2010). Through most of the 1800s, structured exercise was often referred to as ‘physical culture’, ‘physical training’ or ‘hygiene’. (Siedentop, 2009; Verbrugge, 2012). As earlier stated, various are the histories as to who made the largest and initial contributions in American Physical Education. For example Siedentop (2009), claims

that there were no institutions that prepared physical educators, known then as ‘gymnastics teachers’ before 1885, while Mechikoff & Estes, (1998) and Welch (1994) provide information that suggest otherwise, namely that Diolclesian Lewis founded the Normal Institute of Physical Education in 1861, one of the earliest and most influential institutions in teacher training and preparation. Lewis combined ideas about physical exercise and hygiene to promote women’s rights (Mechikoff & Estes, 1998).

Though many individuals are remembered for contributions ranging from forming early professional organizations, to creating innovative non-traditional ways to practice physical education and beyond, one of the most influential pioneers in the early forming of the discipline was American educator Catherine Beecher. Miss Beecher is considered the first female physical educator in the United States (O’Connor, 2010). She founded the Hartford Seminary for Girls in 1824 and later the Western Female Institute (1831-1837). Miss Beecher is best known for developing her own system of calisthenics. Her system used ‘light exercises’ that were set to music and resembled modern day aerobics (Todd, 1998; Mechikoff & Estes, 1998).

Concerns for health, fitness and education through physical activity date back to ancient societies (Mechikoff & Estes, 1998), however, a large number of scholarship concurs that the beginnings of physical education as a profession began approximately around 1885<sup>6</sup> (Corbin, 1993; Cahn, 1994; Siedentop 2009; Zieff, 2010; Verbrugge, 2012). Dr. Dudley Allen Sargent, a 19th-century educator and inventor, was instrumental in the early beginnings of the discipline. A former boxer and circus performer, Sargent was originally thought to be the first director of physical education at Harvard in 1879 (La Pena, 2003), though that distinction actually belongs

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<sup>6</sup> For information on the beginnings of physical education from antiquity until the late 19<sup>th</sup> century please see Hackensmith, (1966).

to Aaron Molineaux Hewlett who was appointed to the post twenty years earlier in 1859 (Wiggins & Wiggins, 2011). Sargent built a reputation as a physical movement innovator by developing exercise machines that were used in universities as well as YMCAs nationwide (De La Pena, 2003).

Delphine Hanna, a medical doctor and social activist, was also a physical educator who worked for the rights of women in health and physical education. She is credited with developing the first four year curriculum for a bachelor's degree in physical education for women in 1885 (Oberlin Alumni Magazine, 1957; Siedentop, 2009). Wrynn (2003) brings to light the continued celebration of Delphine Hanna as the first female professor of physical education, which is incorrect; that distinction actually belongs to physician Eliza Mosher. Varying accounts such as these are why it is imperative for the scholars of kinesiology to reexamine history when it comes to identifying the authentic story of our discipline.

Most early American physical education programs were gymnastic systems imported from Europe. These systems were known as formal approaches to exercise, with movements being prescribed and performed in unison as a group (Mechikoff & Estes, 1998; Siedentop, 2009). Gulick, who was instrumental in the development of the YMCA Training Institute (now Springfield College), and founder of the Camp Fire Girls, labeled physical education a 'new' profession in 1885 (Guedes, 2007). This concept was built on the making of a physical education that was uniquely American, breaking from the rigid gymnastic methods previously used. Thomas Wood, director of Hygiene and Physical Training at Stanford University, emphasized educational goals through natural activities such as sports, games, dances, aquatics, arts, and recreation and co-authored *The New Physical Education* (1927) with another physical education

pioneer, Rosalind Cassidy. Jay B Nash, along with these scholars championed the nurturing of the whole person through recreation and leisure (National Academy of Kinesiology, 2003).

Gulick, Woods, Williams and Cassidy along with Clark Hetherington, a physical educator and advocate of play for both adults and children, argued for education through the physical to develop the entire child. They advocated for a program constructed to train children for ‘democratic citizenship’, and character development (Ennis, 2006). In 1885, the American Association for the Advancement of Physical Education (AAAPE)<sup>7</sup> was created under the guidance of William G. Anderson, who was one of the first to realize the need for a professional organization (Mechikoff & Estes, 1998,; Phillips & Roper, 2006). Dr. Anderson, the first secretary of AAPE, wanted to create a forum where people interested in physical training, physical education and various gymnastic systems could discuss, debate with, and learn from one another (Siedentop, 2009).

Throughout the early twentieth century there was a steady growth of physical education in the public schools, as a result of many states passing legislation. The 1893 International Congress on Education created a forum allowing over two thousand physical educators from America and Europe to meet as specialists for the first time, with physical activity being the topic of discussion. This was a result of the National Education Association now recognizing physical education as a school subject. Thereafter, the profession began to view education, rather than medicine, as its parent field (Siedentop, 2009). The conference also represented the end of gymnastics dominated physical education.

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<sup>7</sup> AAPE evolved into the American Alliance for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance (AAHPERD) and as of December 2013 is now called the Society of Health and Physical Educators.

During the years between the turn of the century and World War I, physical education blossomed into an umbrella profession, expanding to include other movement practices like dance, recreation, sport, outdoor education, and YMCA sponsored activities (Siedentop, 2009). World War I sparked major increases in teacher training and employment, professional development and recognition, resulting from a sudden national concern with fitness after one-third of US inductees failed the army physical (Cahn, 1994). The goals of physical education changed direction during the Great Depression in the 1930s to focus on social and recreational goals. Economic collapse and the resulting pervasive unemployment significantly decreased or ended many sport and physical education programs that had developed so vigorously after World War I (James, 2011, Siedentop, 2009). Spectator sports such as baseball suffered greatly, with a drop in attendance of 18 percent as during this time as few could afford the price of admission. Other sports however, such as dance marathons and roller derbies, became increasingly popular, and through their grueling displays of physical stamina and mental toughness “came to symbolize the entire ethos of a culture struggling to make sense of a world suddenly wracked by hardship, poverty, and insecurity” (Malnig, 1995). The trend toward social and recreational goals in physical education were emphasized, and people of all socioeconomic statuses began to participate in games and activities traditionally available only to a privileged class (Freeman, 2015).

World War II (1939-1945) had far reaching effects on sport, fitness and physical education. While activities such as recreation and leisure had gained importance through promotion of the “New Physical Education”, fitness again became an important issue when large numbers of men and women failed the military’s physical fitness test, having problems with the physical aspects of basic training (Siedentop, 2009). The War Fitness Conference of 1943

labeled school physical education a failure that could only be remedied with replacing sports and games with fitness programs. This idea of physical fitness for military preparedness and dominance of other nations mind set continued through the 1950s with the Korean War (1950-1953) and the ‘Cold War’<sup>8</sup> (Hoffman & Harris, 2000).

During this time in higher education, many schools expanded their programs in health and physical education and recreation (HPER) making their curriculum and degree requirements more rigorous (Verbrugge, 2012). The focus within physical education was on preparation of coaches and teachers of physical education, with a strong emphasis on coaching for men (Corbin, 1993; Kennard, 1977). In addition, schools were under a lot of pressure at this time to reassess and revitalize student’s academic levels, being criticized for having weak curricula compared to European nations, particularly in the areas of math and science (Ennis, 2006). Physical education began a process of self-legitimization, creating categories of ‘essential knowledge’ (Ennis, 2006) to maintain their place in the school curriculum. Despite physical educators and administrators advocating for the importance of physical education as an essential part of a child’s overall education, it was not enough. A California senate bill sought to delete physical education in the school system, citing that it had no academic discipline. Physical education scientist Franklin Henry was quick to stand up for the discipline, attempting to authenticate physical education by suggesting it become a discipline modeled on the sciences and mathematics (Henry, 1964; Anderson, 2002). Henry, who researched psychological aspects of sport and motor skill development at the University of California Berkley, is credited with being largely responsible for the scientific development of the discipline. Henry further asserted that in order for physical education to be considered an academic subject, it needed to be an organized body of knowledge that consisted of content that was theoretical and scholarly, rather than technical and

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<sup>8</sup> For a detailed discussion on the Cold War, see Jones, H. & Woods, R. (1991).

professional. This debate was the impetus for the birth of subdisciplinization in our field; the great divide between scientific and humanistic kinesiology.

### African Americans in Physical Education and Kinesiology

Most of us in kinesiology are familiar with, at the very least, the basic beginnings of the discipline and pioneers who led the way. Unfortunately, this history is again “incomplete”, or as my grandmother would say, “half-told”. Absent are the names and accounts of numerous African Americans<sup>9</sup> in the annals of physical education and kinesiology. The journeys of these professionals who were instrumental in the discipline were/are wrought with frustration and tenacity, and their stories need to be told. Most accounts of the African American experience relating to physical education and kinesiology fall within the realm of sport (Hoffman & Harris, 2000). Details about Black physical educators and instructors are far less available than that of White professionals (Verbrugge, 2012; Siedentop, 2009; Wiggins & Wiggins 2011). Physical education professors David and Brenda Wiggins (2011) recounted experiences of Black physical educators from the 1850s through the present and reveal tremendous obstacles faced as they matriculated through physical education programs at Predominately White Institutions (PWIs), found meaningful employment after graduating, and attempted to hold offices in associations such as the American Alliance for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance (AAHPERD). Numerous instances of racially discriminatory practices made it difficult for African Americans to become full participants in the profession of physical education (p320).

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<sup>9</sup> Although I recognize and acknowledge the numerous contributions of physical educators of color past and present, I focus specifically on African American physical education instructors in this dissertation. For more information on physical educators of color, please see Smith (1993).

They further posit that African Americans as a whole are on the margins of the profession, with fewer opportunities for leadership roles and public recognition in the field for their accomplishments. Though the scope of this literature review focuses on American Physical Education from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century to the present, I find it paramount to address the limited histories of African American physical educators who were present and working before that particular time.

The first person to hold an academic position in physical education at the university level was African American Aaron Molineaux Hewlett (Smith, 2003; Moore, 2010; Wiggins & Wiggins, 2011). A well-known and successful boxer, Hewlett opened his own sparring academy in Brooklyn around 1851. In 1855, he moved to Worcester, Massachusetts and opened the *Professor Molineaux Sparring and Athletic Academy*. In 1859, he was hired as director of physical education and culture at Harvard University. Hewlett was successful and well received at Harvard, with his appointment ending only with his death in 1871. Though two of his students became boxing instructors at Harvard for an unknown amount of time, no other African American was known to hold a full time academic position again until the 1950 appointment of Roscoe Brown at New York University (Wiggins & Wiggins 2011). Dr. Edwin Bancroft Henderson was a pioneer and key figure for Black youth in physical education in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Henderson, a prolific author and dedicated civil rights leader, began his teaching career in Washington DC in 1904, and was noted to be the first Black physical education instructor in the nation at that time (Wiggins, 1997; Wiggins & Miller, 2003). At the time of his appointment there was no formal physical education program of any kind being taught in Black schools. Henderson attended Dudley Sargent's School of Physical Education at Harvard University for three summers, where he was introduced to the game of basketball. Though his contributions to

the field of physical education are numerous, including instituting the first track meets for Black schools and colleges as well as African American athletic conferences and officiating groups, Dr. Henderson is best remembered for introducing basketball to Black youth and is known as the ‘Grandfather of Black Basketball’. He also authored the first scholarly published history about African Americans in sport entitled *The Negro in Sports* (1939) (Henderson II, 2007; Wiggins, 1997).

Black women’s entrance into the field of physical education was no less challenging, with many using athletic ability to secure training and jobs (Verbrugge, 2012). Despite limited resources and unrelenting racial discrimination, Black women physical educators with their male counterparts prepared African American girls and boys in the areas of public health, nutrition, recreation leadership and coaching among other courses (Cahn, 1994). Though few in number the first half of the century, Black female educators made their health and physical activity philosophies (which differed from White physical education leaders) known through the available conduits of African American newspapers, college publications and education journals. These beliefs included community well-being over individual health, and highly competitive athletics, although some middle class Blacks and college administrators often agreed with Whites concerning the question of vigorous female competition<sup>10</sup>. Notable was the signature philosophy of Mary Rose Allen, who led Howard University’s physical education program for forty-two years, promoting recreation and dance. Verbrugge (2012) compares how different the profession of physical education was for Ms. Allen compared to the influential White physical

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<sup>10</sup> Many White physical education instructors and administrators believed that strenuous athletic pursuits and competition was unladylike and dangerous to women’s health. For more information see Cahn, 1994,; Verbrugge, 2012,; & Boutilier & San Giovanni, 1983.

educator Ms. Mabel Lee, director of the University of Nebraska women's program, and the first female president of the American Physical Education Association (1931-32):

Allen exposed Whites' denigration of people of color and encouraged Black females to discover their all-encompassing beauty as both a possibility and a right. At the same time, she dignified racial difference. When a Howard woman learned to "walk in such beauty", she would attain not only White approval but also Black pride and authenticity. By addressing the interplay of race and gender in Black women's lives and their double consciousness as Americans of color, Allen engaged questions about active womanhood that Mabel Lee never contemplated (p91).

Other pioneers like Tuskegee physical education director Amelia Roberts and YMCA recreation leader Ruth Arnett had similar views, stressing the importance of women's physical education and the positive links between competitive sport and womanhood (Cahn, 1994).

### Dance in the Field of Physical Education

Dance in American physical education has taken a number of different forms. With the promotion of 'educating the whole child' advocated by Clark Hetherington, Luther Gulick and others, organizations such as the YMCA and German society clubs gave dance opportunities in the way of folk and ethnic dance, which allowed immigrants to preserve their dance traditions and working and lower class to participate in the art form. Elizabeth Burchenal, a graduate of the Sargent Normal School and the Gilbert Normal school of Dancing, was extremely influential in introducing folk dance to the field of physical education. She and Gulick established folk and 'national' dancing as part of the state of New York's physical education program (Burchenal, 1909). In 1911 Gulick introduced the manual 'The Healthful Art of Dancing' and stated, "In this

little book I aim to give a constructive treatment of one of the resources for the expression of the joy of life, a resource that is related to health, vigour, and beauty — dancing” (pxv).

There were of course, different opportunities for the upper and middle classes, specifically White women, to participate in dance activities. American dance in schools, colleges and recreational settings was significantly influenced by European artists Francois Delsarte and Emile Jaques-Dalcroze<sup>11</sup>, whose movement systems helped provide middle and upper class women with socially acceptable forms of expressive movement. These systems also sparked the development of various modern dance forms (Vertinsky, 2010).

The first acknowledged history of dance in American higher education begins in 1916 with Blanche Trilling, the director of women’s physical education at the University of Wisconsin at Madison (Vertinsky, 2010). Ms. Trilling was a certified dance educator, and prior to her tenure at Wisconsin contributed a chapter on ‘Folk and Gymnastic Dances’ in the “Manual of Exercises in Physical Education” for Chicago Public Schools in 1911. Upon her arrival at Wisconsin, Trilling met Margaret Newell H’Doubler, a new hire in the physical education department who specialized in team coaching. Ms. H’Doubler, who has been regarded as the founder of dance in the American university, developed the first dance classes in 1917 at Wisconsin at the request of Trilling to “find some dance worth a college woman’s time” (Ross, 2012). Ms. H’Doubler viewed dance as a means of self-expression and not performative, providing the field of dance with an intellectual element and educational influence not yet explored, embodied by her phrase "the thinking dancer" (Kirk, 2007; Vertinsky, 2010). H’Doubler believed that dance expression should be ‘personal, non-competitive and democratic’, which was in alignment with the view of

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<sup>11</sup> For additional information on Dalcroze and Delsarte movement systems see Findlay (1971) & Ruyter (2009).

most middle class White physical educators at that time. H'Doubler did in fact contradict, or perhaps make an exception to her philosophies in her development of the student dance group Orchesis. Initially created as a space for movement exploration rather than choreography and performance, Orchesis was extremely successful and inspired numerous universities, including the University of Illinois, to incorporate dance into their women's physical education programs (Ross, 2012).

### The Illinois Tradition in Physical Education

Dr. Mary Carlton details the historical accomplishments of the University of Illinois' department of Kinesiology in her booklet entitled *Illinois Kinesiology: 100 Years and Beyond*. As a professor in the department for 28 years, Mary Carlton's celebratory memoir of Illinois' Kinesiology is commendable and without question a laborious effort. She offers the disclaimer that "many significant people and events have escaped our mention" and further posits that a main goal of her booklet was to "capture the dreams and achievements of those individuals who impacted not only the destiny of a field of study but also the lives of thousands of students." Her efforts, however, to explain away the exclusion of very important aspects of our department's history reinforce the need for the discipline as a whole to do more to accurately rewrite this 'grand narrative'. Included in her work are letters from previous students about their individual experiences with Illinois' Physical education:

"My memories of my years at the University of Illinois were overwhelmingly positive." -

Michael Muskad, B.S, 1955

“Those were the best years of our lives. It’s fun to look back some forty-eight years and remember how much I enjoyed being at the University of Illinois School of Physical Education.” –Jean Arenberg, 1947

“Because we were a small department, I was able to go to the women’s gym and feel as if I was “going home”. I knew everyone in the department and felt the comforts of an extended family- a nice feeling in a university so large and overwhelming.” – Donna Honnors, 1966

While reading this text I kept returning to the same question “Whose history is this really...whose experience?” Not mine. Kelly Williamson and Donny Simmons, students in Dr. Carlton’s class with me in 1992, joke about it now. We recount the icy stares and being excluded subtly from group work. We acted as if those subjecting us to this treatment were the ones out of place when in reality, we were the displaced; we were on the outside. There was a prototype...White, small town folk with limited experiences of sharing space and interacting with people of color. We were a small group of Black kids with varying movement backgrounds, coloring outside the lines of the traditional kinesiology student. I also remained on the periphery because of my desire to incorporate dance into my undergraduate and graduate experiences. Beyond movement activities courses, worth only one credit hour and often seen as an “easy A”, the opportunities for dance in our department were virtually nonexistent, and we had no working relationship with the dance department. By detailing the happenings in the department from its inception, I present how Illinois showed both progress and the need for improvement in creating a ‘complete’ kinesiology program.

Illinois, whose Kinesiology doctoral program ranked 5th<sup>12</sup> in 2010 (Spirduso & Reeve, 2011) has been part of dynamic and global change since the inception of its first physical activity program in approximately 1872. Classes were first sponsored by the Department of Military Science and Engineering, and took place in the unheated armory known as the Drill Hall. The program consisted of strict regimens of exercise and military science skills, and though extremely demanding and physically grueling in addition to occurrences of colds and flu because of the unheated armory, were popular among male students and expanded over a period of twenty years, from 1875-1895 (Carlton, 1996).

Women were admitted to the university in 1870, three years after its founding. The Eighth Report of The Board of Trustees (1876) makes special claims regarding students' choice of study:

It has been a favorite aim of the University, from the outset, to allow as much freedom as possible in the selection of studies...but it is yet to be proved that compulsory scholarship is necessarily better, riper and more certain than that which is free and self-inspired (p28).

Despite this proclamation, the majority of women were enrolled in the College of Literature and Science, studying subjects such as English, modern and ancient languages as well as literature (p59). Only six of eighty three female students were enrolled in the school of Domestic Science and Art. The university Regent at that time, Dr. John Milton Gregory, was a proponent of liberal education for women, advancing that it should be geared toward their distinctive roles in society. Gregory's vision was to create a program that would "provide a full course of instruction in the arts of the household and the sciences relating thereto" (1876 Board of Trustees, University of

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<sup>12</sup> Ranking based on adjustment for size of faculty.

Illinois). This was consistent with Western societal views that women were most useful when domesticated. The School of Domestic Science was established in 1874, recruiting Miss Lou Catherine Allen as director. According to Ms. Allen, the goals of the program were as follows:

As set forth in the catalogue, it was the aim of the school to give to earnest and capable young women a liberal and practical education, which should fit them for their great duties and trusts, making them the equals of their educated husbands and associates, and enabling them to bring the aids of science and culture to the all-important labors and vocations of womanhood. (Allen as quoted in the US Bureau of Education, 1883, p279)

Ms. Allen believed that women should have their own diversified curriculum apart from men. She developed the first calisthenics program for women separately from the school. Although parents were initially apprehensive about their daughters participating in physical education, Miss Allen persevered, eventually winning the support of parents, students and school officials (Carlton, 1996). Despite these strong beginnings, the program experienced a thirteen year lapse when Miss Allen resigned to marry Dr. Gregory in 1880. Selim Hobart Peabody, who succeeded Gregory as university president from 1880-1891, condemned the program as “an experiment in darkness” and quickly abolished it (Treichler, 2004). In 1893, a new president, Thomas J. Burrill, recommended opening a new School of Domestic Science. Miss Anita Kellogg was hired, and under her supervision, a ‘physical culture’ program was initiated. Classes included light gymnastics, plain and fancy marching, apparatus work, and studies in expression, attitude, and pantomime. Ms. Kellogg claims that the students who successfully completed this ‘gymnastics drill’ would earn one or two credits toward graduation, though Carlton (1996) argues that credit for the program was not granted until 1895. This program, though under the

direction of Miss Kellogg for only two years, was the foundation of the physical education program for which the University of Illinois has come to be known.

U of I established official Departments of Physical Culture for Men and Women in 1895. The men's department was located in the New Drill Hall (currently Kenny Annex), and focused on topics such as the value of exercise, how to train properly for athletic contests, anatomy, physiology, the prevention of physical deformities, disease and personal hygiene (Carlton, 1996). The women's program, housed on the top floor of the Natural History building, was created, at least initially, under the familiar sexist parameters binding the majority of women at that time:

Each student comes under the personal observation of the instructor and is graded for work according to her physical condition. Special attention is given to defects of bodily carriage and movement, and prescriptions of exercise are given for the correction of round shoulders, uneven hips, drooping heads. The training has for its fundamental aims, health, strength, muscular flexibility and grace (Catalogue of the University of Illinois, 1893-94, p138).

Disease prevention, hygiene and nutrition were also part of the curriculum. Though faced with the obstacles of patriarchal bias and interference, the director at the time, Miss Ella Morrison fought to create a program that would give women the tools needed to successfully complete their academic studies. Women were trained in gymnastics, corrective exercises, anatomy, physiology and hygiene. Miss Morrison posted a quote by the English poet John Milton (1608-1674) on the women's gymnasium wall, "To Be Weak is Miserable" as a reminder to every female student of her responsibility to contribute in the struggle for a woman's right to an equal and complete education.

The late 19<sup>th</sup> century met Illinois' with the emergence of athletics on campus. The first Athletic Association was created in 1883 by students. One of those students, a successful baseball and football player named George Huff, would become one of the most influential leaders in the nation to impact men's athletics and coaching programs, positively affecting both the athletic and physical education departments for the next 36 years. (Carlton, 1996). After graduating first from Illinois and thereafter the Dartmouth School of Medicine, Huff returned to Illinois and was appointed assistant to Mr. Henry Everett, the director of the Department of Physical Training for men. Huff served under Everett from 1895 until 1901 when he became director of both the men's physical education department and athletics (Carlton, 1996; Hoddeson, 2004). George Huff believed that coaches of competitive sports should be trained in their field just as in any other profession and thusly founded the first summer course for athletic coaches in 1914 (Carlton, 1996). Despite Huff being an accomplished athlete, he did not believe in preferential treatment for athletics; facilities were shared evenly between the sports teams, physical education department, and other academic units. During his tenure at U of I, Huff created an environment where every male student participated in some physical activity program though interclass athletics, activity classes and intercollegiate varsity athletics. Huff also was largely responsible for the matriculation of the department's four year athletic coaching and physical education program, the first class of their kind to be graduated from any university, in 1923. (George Huff Papers, 1883-1947, University of Illinois Archives; Carlton, 1996)

The women's program was evolving as well. Miss Jeannette Carpenter Lincoln became the director in 1898. Miss Carpenter had a special interest in all dance forms, and among other significant accomplishments, is best known for her implementation of the well-known May Fete festivals (Lincoln, 1907, 1920). Also known as "May Day" festivals, these events were based on

the Anglo-Saxon traditions of revelry, extravagant floral design, and elaborate dance performances. The university was one of the first to establish this annual affair, which was directed and organized entirely by the Department of Physical Education for Women, and continued from 1898 until 1925 (Carlton, 1996). It was such a distinct part of university culture that the entire second semester of the physical education program was devoted to its planning. As the women's program grew under Ms. Carpenter, resources such as a larger space and more faculty were needed. Miss Gertrude Moulton was hired as Ms. Carpenter's assistant, and The Women's Building (presently the English building) was built in 1905. Sports activity courses in tennis, golf, basketball and hockey were then offered in conjunction with gymnastics courses. Above all, grace, proper conduct and carriage were the continued underlying themes of physical education and activity programs for women at the University of Illinois (Carlton, 1996, Lincoln, 1920).

Both the men's and women's departments continued to grow separately, as sport continued to grow and become a large part of university culture. Miss Carpenter left in 1905; leaving Miss Moulton to run the department until 1915. Miss Moulton, who would go on to be extremely influential in the field of physical education while directing the women's physical training program at the famous Oberlin College, helped the department progress even more by adding modern and folk dance, as well as play and games courses to the existing curriculum (University of Illinois Bulletin, 1917; Verbrugge, 2012). By 1920, four credit courses in 'interpretive' and 'natural' dance were offered. Dance began to develop as a program in 1948 when Margaret Erlanger, a graduate of the dance program at the University of Wisconsin, was hired. She executed a Bachelor of Science degree in physical education with a dance specialization that would prepare graduates to teach in colleges and the public school system. A

Master of Arts degree in dance was offered in 1959 (Knowles, 2007). Dance would remain a significant sphere in the Department of Physical Education for Women until 1968 when the program was moved to the College of Fine and Applied Arts.

World War I also impacted university life. The physical education department suffered a significant loss when a large number of male students had been called to fight, halting inter-class athletics (Carlton, 1996). Swim Coach and athletic instructor Edwin J. Manley devised an alternative system for sport to continue, recruiting participants from the various clubs on campus, thus creating a system of intramural athletics that continues at the university today (University of Illinois Report of the Board of Trustees, 1924).

Illinois' era of research began with the establishment of the Athletic Research Laboratory in 1925. Dr. Coleman Griffith, known as one of the most significant figures in sports psychology, was appointed director. Griffith is credited with being the first person to conduct systematic sports psychology research, with an emphasis on learning and personality (Dunning & Coakley, 2000). The lab tested and observed a variety of movement related issues and was the first of its kind in the United States. Athletes' psychomotor skills were tested in efforts to increase their skill level, and decrease errors made while performing. Although the lab was closed in 1932 due to a decline in enrollment and athletics and a subsequent lack of funding, the seed was planted. Illinois would go on to become a premier institution of kinesiological research.

I have offered insight on numerous 'firsts' that our illustrious department was key in implementing. The next thirty years in the Department of Physical Education at the University of Illinois continued to produce even more remarkable accomplishments in the way of research, teacher training, dance and athletics. Attempting to salute every scholar who made a significant

contribution to the Illinois legacy would be an endeavor ending in defeat. I do however commit to honoring a handful of scholars whose work in this field challenged physical education and kinesiology ideologies in ways that break free from normative views and who shaped my experiences in the department and personally influenced my research.

Louise Freer became the director of physical education after Miss Moulton opted to pursue her medical degree, which was a common practice among many who ran physical education programs at the time. Miss Freer was an advocate of active womanhood and championed for better facilities as well as a separate physical education department for women, which was constructed in 1930 and dedicated as Freer Hall in 1968 (Inside Illinois, 1995). Miss Freer was also a proponent of dance being an important part of physical education programs, claiming:

There has evolved however a type of dancing which is satisfying in its relation to our aims in physical education. The lack of artificiality, the opportunity for natural expression, muscular control, poise, lack of self-consciousness, and above all its creativeness recommends it to us (1922, p347).

Miss Freer held the role of the director of the women's physical education department for thirty-four years. During her many years of service, she also pushed for a professional degree for women, as a bachelor degree for the men's program had emerged. That became a reality in 1923.

TK Cureton, known affectionately as the 'father of physical fitness' greatly impacted not only the University of Illinois, but the field of physical education and Kinesiology at large. Berryman (1996) ascertains that Cureton "was the recognized leader and steward of America's fitness movement for half a century" (p1). Although George Huff initiated the first research lab

on Illinois' campus, TK Cureton put Illinois on the map through his research innovations. Cureton came to Illinois in 1941 after serving as Director of the Physical Sciences Curriculum at Springfield College for more than a decade (Berryman, 1996). The director of the Illinois physical education department at the time, Dr. Seward Staley, was very excited to have Cureton on board, envisioning his leadership in reviving research and developing the graduate program. In 1944, the Physical Fitness Research Laboratory, housed in Huff Gymnasium, was born and is said to be the most notable of its kind in the area of exercise physiology research (Berryman, 1996). This lab was dedicated to developing methods to test motor and cardiovascular fitness, evaluation of the physical body, and aquatic performance (Berryman, 1996; Carlton, 1996).

Though a skilled researcher, Cureton never forgot his roots as a teacher, coach and athlete and took pride in his “hands on” approach to fitness and exercise (Berryman, 1996). He believed “The true laboratories in physical education are the pools, playfields, gymnasiums and camps.” His extensive work with the YMCA as director of aquatics and personnel trainer for numerous summer camps reinforced this view. The research emphasis of Illinois physical education took to new heights, and the success of Physical Fitness Research Laboratory sparked a need for advanced levels of academic preparation. Cureton taught the first graduate research courses at Illinois. The first graduate degree offered was the Master of Science in Physical Education in 1942 and subsequently a doctoral program in 1948. Cureton was influential in the department's creation of two new programs, the Summer Sports Fitness Program in 1951 and the Adult Fitness Program in the early 1960s in an effort to promote health and wellness within the Champaign-Urbana community; these programs continue to this day and provide an opportunity to receive wellness programming and education at affordable costs. My son was a participant of the

Summer Sports Fitness Program for many years and gained invaluable knowledge by participating in sports and fitness activities he would not have had access to otherwise.

Professor Laura Huelster devoted 43 years to Illinois physical education. Her belief in and appreciation for the humanities and arts was evident in the programs she developed and promoted. In her article *The Physical Educator in Perspective* (1966) she writes:

Basic to the understanding of the origin of physical education and its relation to human behavior are the sciences, humanities, and arts. Specific elements in their content apply to the understanding of human movement as used in education (p62).

Among her numerous accomplishments was her role in implementing the first dance curriculum at Illinois in 1949. To accomplish this she hired the aforementioned Margaret Erlanger, a graduate of the University of Wisconsin dance program and protégé of Margaret H'Doubler, one of the first pioneers of dance in higher education' (Hagood, 2008; Knowles, 2007). Huelster, who served as department head from 1950-1966, and then again from 1970-1971, was instrumental in increasing the number of female faculty in the department and worked diligently as part of the steering committee appointed to advocate for the merging of the men's and women's physical education departments, which became a reality in 1957 (Laura J. Huelster Papers, 1914-86, University of Illinois Archives).

In 2012, as an attendee/presenter at the North American Society for Sports Sociologists Conference in New Orleans, I saw something amazing, and what I thought unbelievable. I witnessed Professor Susan Greendorfer, cofounder of NASSS, and pioneer in the field of sport sociology, cry as she gave an impassioned speech on the evolution of the field of Sport Sociology. My memories of Dr. Greendorfer were that of a formidable authority in the

department whom everyone feared, or at least avoided. She never smiled, and was always going somewhere in a hurry, no doubt attending to important business. As a student in her Social Scientific Bases of Sport class in 1992, I had no idea of who she was to the field and to women in general. Greendorfer was an Illinois' faculty member from 1975-2000 and the first woman to be promoted through the ranks from Assistant to Full Professor after the merger of the men's and women's physical education departments (Inside Illinois, 2000; Eaton, 2011). Her research boldly questioned assumptions about gender roles and offered sociological and feminist considerations against traditional philosophies and heteronormative approaches to sport and athletics roles (Greendorfer, 1978, 1987a, 1987b; Greendorfer & Bruce, 1991, 1994; O'Reily, 2007; Verbrugge, 2012; Zeigler, 2003).

Additionally, Greendorfer co-founded the North American Society for the Sociology of Sport with Andrew Yiannakis, its mission being "to promote, stimulate, and encourage the sociological study of play, games, sport and contemporary physical culture" (NASSS website, retrieved, 2014). Her work contributed to the foundation of the Physical Cultural Studies Initiative, and as unapproachable as I perceived Professor Greendorfer to be, her defiant attitude and efforts to change a broken system inspired me and numerous scholars to think outside the box as well.

The sociocultural tradition here at the University of Illinois is one of great diversity within the realm of sport. One common theme of many of these scholars is that we have had the magnanimous support of Dr. Synthia Sydnor. She has championed us to find our voices and challenge the dominant discourses of the department, thus privileging alternate ways of producing knowledge and one's world and one's life (Markula & Denison, 2003). Another theme

is that most were influenced in some way by Dr. Norman Denzin and the Denzinian style of methodology, one that moves people to action and/or reflection (Denzin, 2003).

Susan Oliver (1994) investigated western dance forms, and the cultural construction of dance. She was honest in saying that she wanted to question her own beliefs from her experiences in dance, “peeling away layers of culture that limit my awareness of possibilities”, and gives an intimate account of her personal life journey with/through dance. Andrews (1993) and Kusz (2003), deconstruct male bodies and their images in the media in the context of White masculinity. Jen Metz’s (2005) work deeply affected me, as she investigates women’s bodies and their representations in the context of working mothers, public motherhood, and women’s labor, all subjects that although I do not write specifically about, are very personal for me. Her critical ethnographic account gave me an inside look at possible ways I could go about this project. She shares, from her own life, how hard it is to do this type of work: “[critical ethnography] was not an easy position to take; it was one fraught with methodological choices, emotions and frustrations as I tried to tease out how I was going to position myself as a scholar and answer the question of where my work fits” (p15). Pirkko Markula has been a mentor and pioneer in the socio-cultural tradition where she dares to continually champion dance and dance making as a subject worthy of investigation. The first time I saw her present was at the Qualitative Inquiry Conference in 2009 where she danced while reading from her notes. I was inspired and motivated to learn how to ‘dance my research’ as well. Since then, I was blessed to present at the 2014 QI conference with her, dancing and reading from our notes, sharing space, energy and embodied understanding.

Robert Rinehart (1993) draws parallels between sport and art, positing the assumption that sport is a performance. He is quick witted and spunky, warm and kind, with his narratives

giving the reader a personal connection with his story. Michael Giardina's work is complicated, but so eloquently presented that it is well worth reading twice. He continuously writes himself into his text, and clearly stated during a round table discussion of a critique of Physical Cultural Studies that he "feels no need to apologize for being so completely enmeshed with such a tradition that some conclude that I write entirely in jargon." Giardina concludes that we need to get with the New School of Thought, Denzin's 'seventh moment' (2003), and that his text is no longer considered experimental or alternative. His words, and the words and work of sociocultural scholars who have come before me free my soul, abate my fear, and propel me forward to add my important contribution to this essential work already in progress.

Through showing a presence of dance, recreation and leisure throughout the history of American physical education, evident with the end of gymnastics dominated physical education in schools, the development of 'The New Physical Education', the expansion to include new movement practices as a result of War World I and the Great Depression and the evidence of dance programs offered in numerous physical education departments, I confirm that the beginnings of physical education and subsequently kinesiology are firmly grounded in the humanistic aspects of movement. Though the interest for investigation of the scientific aspects of the human body and its movement have always been present, science was not the initial driving force behind the discipline. Twietmeyer (2012b) advocates that we "move beyond a materialistic self-understanding of kinesiology and towards a more holistic self-conception", reminding us that kinesis engages the whole human being (p230). Anderson (2002) argues that the transition from physical education to kinesiology involved the development of the kinesiological sciences such that over the last 35 years, the discipline has been dominated by a scientific look, and that the cost is that the scientizing of the discipline has led to the marginalization of the humanistic

features of movement (p87). There needs to be a reawakening to the humanistic import of movement itself.

### CHAPTER 3: PHYSICAL CULTURAL STUDIES AND WOMANISM AS THEORY AND METHOD

As my ‘Letter to Kinesiology’ and introduction declared, my academic experiences in kinesiology led me to believe that I had to make some painful decisions; I could become the objective Exercise Physiologist recording data; the regimented pedagogue preparing students for service, or if I wanted to investigate and subjectively experience and perform dance, I could go somewhere else. I thought my spinning, crazy, self-reflexive auto-ethnographic stories had no place here, but I was wonderfully, incredibly wrong! There was somebody...some ‘bodies’, who felt as I did...

#### The inconvenience of Physical Cultural Studies

While drifting aimlessly as a graduate student, I got a message in a bottle. It was signed by David Andrews (2008), and atop the letter read *Kinesiology’s Inconvenient Truth and the Physical Cultural Studies Imperative*. This article changed both my academic and personal life; confirming what I knew to be true...movement speaks, thinks and feels; can be used to learn and teach, and is almost always enough, all by itself. In this article, Andrews expounds on what he considers an ‘inconvenient truth’<sup>13</sup> of the foundational crises in the field of kinesiology, namely “the instantiation of an epistemological hierarchy that privileges positivist over post-positivist, quantitative over qualitative and predictive over interpretive ways of knowing” (p46)<sup>14</sup>. Andrews remembers the enthusiasm he and his fellow Illinois graduate students had regarding Karl Newell’s argument (1990) to re-center kinesiology around a common focus to combat the negative effects of fragmentation and specialization:

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<sup>13</sup> The title of a 2006 documentary with former Vice President Al Gore cautioning about the consequences of global warming. Gore authored a book with the same title: *An Inconvenient Truth: The Planetary Emergency of Global Warming and What We Can Do About It* (Rodale Press).

<sup>14</sup> See also Andrews, Silk, Fracombe, & Bush, 2013).

The prevailing point evident in all I have discussed (the nature of the field of studies, professional and disciplinary training, disciplinary knowledge for professional training, the activity focus, and societies of the field), is that faculty in physical education have emphasized the differences rather than the similarities of the subject matter. To continue emphasizing the differences can only erode the momentum of the center of gravity of the field and consequently erode the future prospects of the field of study in both higher education and society (p241).

Andrews admits his fuel for making a difference in unifying the field diminished upon graduation and tenure, and how he as a newly minted professor fell into a ‘kinesiological slumber’ while pursuing his own academic interests. His “reawakening and new commitment toward a more integrative Kinesiology (p46)” moved him and other scholars to begin a project at the University of Maryland coined Physical Cultural Studies (PCS). Despite my clinging for dear life to every word of the definitional statement developed by the founding PCS scholars, for the sake of brevity, I will highlight the main tenets of the initiative (Andrews, 2008):

Physical Cultural Studies (PCS) advances the critical and theoretical analysis of physical culture in all its myriad forms... More specifically, PCS is dedicated to the contextually based understanding of the corporeal practices, discourses, and subjectivities through which active bodies become organized, represented, and experienced in relation to the operations of social power. PCS thus identifies the role played by physical culture in reproducing, and sometimes challenging, particular class, ethnic, gender, ability, generational, national, racial, and/or sexual norms and differences... PCS adopts a multi-method approach toward engaging the empirical (including ethnography and autoethnography, participant observation, discourse and media analysis, and contextual

analysis)... PCS advances an equally fluid theoretical vocabulary, utilizing concepts and theories from a variety of disciplines (including cultural studies, economics, history, media studies, philosophy, sociology, and urban studies) (p55).

Physical Cultural Studies is theory and method, thought and action, questions and proclamations spoken out loud. The PCS initiative calls on scholars to “focus on moments of practice in which important cultural physicalities emerge” (p37) and starts with the axes of politics and practice, situating the body as the center (Giardina & Newman, 2011). As I consider my actual dance practices and all that they could mean, I privilege PCS scholarship because it creates a space that allows persons to negotiate their subjective and embodied identities and experiences with a physical context and advocates research that means something to various communities (Markula & Silk, 2011). These other spaces, not just the lecture halls and laboratories, but the playgrounds, smoke-filled dancehalls, mama’s kitchen and church, are where PCS works to make physical events understandable.

The tenets and ideology of PCS, Andrews readily admits, were begun long before scholars at Maryland gave it a name and framework. Sports Sociologists and historians like Jennifer Hargreaves (1994, 2007); Patricia Vertinsky (2007, 2009), Alan Ingham (1997), Margaret Duncan (2007) and others, illuminated and challenged the privilege of science over humanities in the field of kinesiology and physical education and have called for both the acknowledgement and consideration for movement scholarship that also considers the spirit and soul and concepts other than body-as-machine. Andrews and Silk (2011) ask us to consider physical culturalization and thusly the PCS project as “a phenomenon occurring both within, and outside, the Sociology of Sport” (p2).

Various aspects of PCS are challenging to discern. Patricia Vertinsky admonished David Andrews at the 2012 North American Society for the Sociology of Sport (NASSS) conference, admitting that she was disappointed, as he and other founding PCS scholars did not do what they promised in offering an emancipatory addition to the sociology of sport. Andrews offers that the cultural turn of the 1980s within the field of the sociology of sport focused on rediscovering the body, thus creating the off shoot of PCS. He further believes that sport sociology cannot support the PCS initiative; it is too narrow in scope, as PCS scholars do not adhere to “an exclusive or limiting understanding of sport as their empirical focus” (Andrews & Silk, 2011). He suggests that sport sociologists acknowledge and embrace PCS as a complementary field of study for those who understand physical culture as, and he quotes Vertinsky herself “cultural practices in which the physical body-the way it moves, is represented, has meanings assigned to it, and is imbued with power-is central” (Vertinsky as quoted in Smishek, 2004, p1). Others have labeled PCS founding scholars self-imposed ‘gatekeepers’ of the initiative, possibly keeping scholars who lack complex or verbose jargon from being fully engaged in the conversation. Again, Andrews acknowledges that PCS “is not an established or widely accepted way of thinking or doing” and is “a field perpetually in process, constantly being made and remade in light of changing empirical, methodological, and theoretical environments” (Andrews & Silk, 2011, p2). He promotes that PCS is “diversely focused but has a common commitment toward engaging varied dimensions and expressions of active physicality”. That includes me and the everyday life and experiences I bring with me into the academy. However, if I am to take on the project of PCS, Silk and Andrews (2011) caution me:

We open this conclusion with a word of warning-this paper [regarding the tenets of PCS] should perhaps be discarded at this point if you are in any way faint of heart; the

comfortable, the tenured, the non/untentured, the graduate student, those who chip away at critical cultural analysis of sport within “science” dominated departments. All may well (or may well not) agree with our arguments, finding them dangerous, foolish, or discomfoting. For embracing the argument, congealing the intellectual project of PCS may very well require destabilizing self-reflexivity, having conversations with yet to be imagined parties, stepping outside the walls of the academe, and a leaving behind of all that is academically agreeable (p26).

I am not afraid Dr. Andrews; I began outside these walls.

### Narrative Inquiry

The migration by various PCS scholars from sport to physical culture represents a desire to experiment with alternative modes of inquiry (Andrews & Silk, 2011). These philosophers, anthropologists and sociologists began to challenge the concept of writer/author as the objective presenter of facts and authoritative provider of ‘truth’ (Markula & Silk, 2011). These actions manifested into new, ‘experimental’ writing forms, including narrative inquiry, also known as narrative analysis and/or storied research. Narrative inquiry, within Physical Cultural Studies, refers to research that openly celebrates both the researchers’ and participants’ voices (Silk & Markula, 2011). Connelly & Clandinin, (2006), define narrative inquiry further:

People shape their daily lives by stories of who they and others are and as they interpret their past in terms of these stories. Story, in the current idiom, is a portal through which a person enters the world and by which their experience of the world is interpreted and made personally meaningful. Narrative inquiry, the study of experience as story, then, is first and foremost a way of thinking about experience. Narrative inquiry as a

methodology entails a view of the phenomenon. To use narrative inquiry methodology is to adopt a particular view of experience as phenomenon under study (p375).

Everyday life stories give the audience a firsthand account of the day to day occurrences that make people who they are. They pull the reader in, asking “how does this relate to me? Do I feel this perspective, and/or understand what this person is experiencing?” Jim Denison (2003) articulates how we as qualitative movement researchers may feel:

Writing a story is the best way I can come up with to understand this world, this life; my world, my life. Thus, every day as I write my autoethnographies or ethnographic fictions, mixing theory with memory and imagination, I draw upon a variety of details and images in order to try and show and tell how a life is first lead and then understood (p203).

Mixing theory with memory and imagination has been most clearly recognized as a possibility. Chase (2005) defines life stories as “an extended story about a significant aspect of one’s life” (p625) and posits three distinct features of narrative inquiry that distinguishes it from other qualitative forms of research such as interviewing. First, narrative inquiry positions the self as its ‘protagonist’, hoping to communicate his or her view of what actually happened and the emotions, thoughts and interpretations involved. Second, narrative is always understood as a verbal action that performs a version of the participant’s self, experiences and reality (p138). The main concern then is listening to the researcher’s voice to understand how, where and in what way a particular event [or events] took place. Third, while the focus is on the individual’s self, the participant’s narrative is always understood to be constrained by social circumstances. In this way, a narrative is to be analyzed as socially situated, interactive performances of the individual self (p138).

There are numerous performance narrative forms, including but not limited to performance autoethnography, short stories, conversations, creative non-fiction, personal narrative of the self, critical auto-biography, co-constructed performance narratives and others, which blur the boundaries separating text, representation and criticism (Denzin, 2003; Phelan 1998). Ethnographer Arthur Bochner (2000), who highlights criteria regarding personal narratives of the self, advocates for structurally complex narratives, “stories told in the curve of time, weaving past and present together in the nonlinear spaces of memory work.” In the telling and recounting of life stories, it is imperative to call upon collective sights of memory. Denzin explains that in using collective sites of memory “Each writer re-creates, in her mind’s eye, a series of emotional moments and then retraces her life through these moments, writing about the past from the vantage point of the present”. The term ‘memory work’ is also used in describing a feminist research method developed by German researcher Frigga Haug to examine the social construction of identity (Haug & Others, 1987 as cited in Onyx and Small, 2001). Memory work as method is group based, and unlike other forms of narrative research, originally assumed a very specific framework (Markula & Silk, 2011; Onyx & Small, 2001). Memory is a powerful tool that is self-reflective, cleansing, and can help you flesh out realities. Powerful, personal things happen when you remember, reminding you of what is/was/could possibly be important. Halley (2002) confides as to how powerful memories can be and the importance of her own memories:

This is my history, my remembering. That is all. I guess I am choosing to remember, both to leave my history and return. I am only too aware that it will always be with me. To you, it may mean little, but my life, this story, is all I have. This is the story I was given. I have no choice; I will take it. So, I am remembering (p17).

Like Halley, I choose to remember.... However, I do claim to have a choice. I choose to face the meaning of my memories, the good and the bad, because it is from these memories that I will “...learn to write in a new way, to move from the scenes of memory to the present and back again, to reclaim a re-visioned present against a newly understood past” (Denzin, 2003, p141). I am exploring a nonlinear, repetitive kind of knowing (Halley, 2002), returning to early memories while engaging others throughout this project. Most importantly, by choosing narrative inquiry as method, I am employing one of the oldest traditions of communities of the African Diaspora – story-telling. Most every human culture uses stories (narratives) as a way of making sense of the world, thus serving important social and ethical purposes (Agatucci, 2010). “The story itself is a primary form of the oral tradition, primary as a mode of conveying culture, experience, and values and as a means of transmitting knowledge, wisdom, feelings and attitude in oral societies” (Obiechina, 1992, p197). Tutka & Seifried (2015) affirm storytelling as a legitimate form of inquiry as it “can be used within the identification and portrayal of human action to help with theorizing and knowledge acquisition” (p18). Through storytelling, questions are answered, history is conveyed and lifelong lessons are taught and learned (Wilson, 2002).

### Halleluiah and Hold Up!: The Blessing of Womanism

*Delving Deeper Shades of Purple* by Cheryl-Kirk-Duggan

And because they were, we are  
Because they were we must write  
And ruminare, and cogitate, and make inquiry  
About who they were and who we are and who we will be:  
Womanists, queens, priests; mothers, daughters, sisters, partners;  
Ordained to delve to research, probe, ask questions  
Posit theory, embody wholeness and wellness

Being outrageous: revolutionary women; not trapped by ugliness.

Anointed in many hues of purple: we give this volume as a testament of hope and faith

Royally, celebrating dignity, honor, love and possibility.

I brought lots of things with me when I first came to U of I as a freshman in 1990; two new sheet sets; a small color TV; several new outfits my aunt Margaret bought (she worked at Madigans clothing store), canned goods, toiletries and of course, new socks and underwear. Out of all my ‘stuff’ however, the most valuable and fragile were what my matriarchal line had packed for me; not in a suitcase, but deep within my spirit. I had been cloaked in a ‘womanist covering’, though my mama, grandmamma, aunts, and other influential women in my life would never refer to it as such. The prayers, admonitions, songs, praises, warnings and examples of how to navigate and conduct myself in order to “do real good” kept me from losing myself and my purpose in a place where it appeared that as a Black woman, I had little value. Sometimes this covering came in the form of a folded envelope with worn bills from Sister Larkin at First Baptist Church, or one of Aunt Tommie’s sweet potato pies to take back to school to share with my roommates. Other moments include weathered hands gently lain on my head before getting on the Greyhound bus for the return trip to school, or bible verses to commit to memory to “stay encouraged”. I carried all of these women with me...their lives and hopes rooted deeply as a tree. Womanist Layli Phillips (Phillips & McCaskill, 1995) expounds on this phenomenon of the ‘womanist idea’ when revealing the motivation for beginning her newsletter *The Womanist*:

When Black women enter the academy, they bring with them different kinds of lives-lives shaped by the ubiquitous and historically inescapable fact of triple oppression. It becomes inevitable then, that when Black women enter academe, they bring with them all of the knowledge and expertise that has accrued around this particular fact of their

existence. Black women also bring intergenerationally transmitted experiential and metatheoretical frameworks based on their ancient African origins and what it meant to be a woman in Black Africa (p1010).

Womanism has been labeled and identified as social theory, methodological framework, philosophy, social change perspective, ‘way of knowing’, epistemology and even nonsensical (Phillips, 2006; Floyd-Thomas, 2006; Cannon, 1995; Ogunyemi, 1985). Since being named, there has been a longstanding debate regarding the legitimacy and viability of the womanist idea (Phillips, 2006). The bringing of these frameworks and ways of knowing into the academy has been met with resistance, frustration and pure denial. There have been numerous attempts to label a Black woman epistemology unquantifiable, but it exists, unapologetically and defiantly. Numerous Black women, unable to live lives of their choosing, made a conscious, selfless decision to prepare, sustain and nurture future generations (Hayes, 2006). These ways were/are the life’s breath of so many Black girls and boys who journeyed both close to home as well as plane rides away in an effort to live full, useful lives. Hayes eloquently and beautifully expresses the way so many of us who came through a ‘womanist covering’ feel:

I, and my brothers and sisters in the Black community, owe our mothers, our grandmothers, our godmothers, our othermothers, our play mothers and our aunties, our foremothers stretching back through the centuries to Africa a great debt as we attempt in our daily lives to live up to their dreams and our own. They stand, a great cloud of witnesses, sending us forth, urging us forward, naming and claiming us as their own in whom they have great faith (p55).

Womanist theologian Stacey Floyd-Thomas (2006) describes womanism as a “paradigm shift wherein Black women no longer look to others for their liberation, but instead look to themselves”

(p1). She continues that womanism centers around a Black woman consciousness that embraces the experiences and the 'ways of knowing' of Black women as normal, and with this comes the reenvision of our history, our lives, and the lives of our community.

In the twenty plus years since its employment, womanism continues to flourish and articulate the unique history of Black women's thought and activism (Phillips, 2006). Although Pulitzer- Prize winning novelist and poet Alice Walker has been attributed with coining and defining the term womanism in 1983, her initial public use of the term was in 1979 in her short story *Coming Apart*:

The wife has never considered herself a feminist- though she is of course, a 'womanist.'

A 'womanist' is a feminist, only more common (p87).

Here, Walker encompasses 'feminist' in her womanist definition, but gives the notion that womanism is more available to the everyday woman of color than feminism, and continues that it has "a strong root in Black women's culture and comes (to me) from the word "womanish" (p11). She offers why the term 'womanist' is important to a Black women's epistemological standpoint:

An advantage of using "womanist" is that, because it is from my own culture, I needn't preface it with the word "Black" (an awkward necessity and a problem I have with the word "feminist"), since Blackness is implicit in the term; just as for white women there is apparently no need to preface "feminist" with the word "white," since the word "feminist" is accepted as coming out of white women's culture (p91).

Walker further articulates her definition of womanist in her 1981 book review essay *Gifts of Power: The Writings of Rebecca Jackson*, saying that womanist can describe 'wholly', 'holy' or

‘round’ women who love other women but are also concerned “for their fathers, brothers and sons, no matter how they feel about them as males” (p18). She believes ‘womanist’ to be spiritual, organic, having a connectedness to the entire community/world, and has the ability to be simply applied.

Walker’s most recognized and examined definition comes from her book *In Search of Our Mother’s Gardens: Womanist Prose* (1983). Walker gives four multidimensional definitions of womanist. The first describes a womanist as willful and womanish (a young girl acting like a woman) wanting to be grown up, serious and capable. The second definition implies that a womanist prefers women’s culture and strength, but is committed to the entire community and is a Universalist<sup>15</sup>. Walker’s third entry celebrates a womanist’s love of the arts, the universe, the Spirit, the hard work of survival, her people and herself. Walker’s final definition of womanism is that it is a deeper, more rich aspect of feminism stating “Womanist is to feminist as purple is to lavender” (p19). Womanist theologian Karen Baker-Fletcher (2006) writes “When I read Walker’s poetic coining of the term ‘womanist’...I saw myself and the Black women who raised me, my elders and ancestors, cousins and aunts, living and dead, in her definition” (p159). Womanist Ethicist Katie Cannon (1995) speaks of the responsibility we have to extend Walker’s (1983) definition:

Our objective is to use Walker’s four part definition as a critical, methodological framework for challenging inherited traditions for their collusion with androcentric patriarchy as well as a catalyst in overcoming oppressive situations through revolutionary acts of rebellion (p1).

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<sup>15</sup> Christians who believe in universal salvation, meaning that all people will eventually be reconciled with God (Unitarian Universalist Association, retrieved April, 2014). Also defined as a person advocating loyalty to and concern for others without regard to national or other allegiances (Oxforddictionaries.com, retrieved April, 2014).

Though Walker is most often associated with womanism, Phillips asserts there are two scholars who developed the 'womanist idea' independently of Walker. Nigerian literary critic and novelist Chikwenye Okonjo Ogunyemi published her important article *Womanism: The Dynamics of the Contemporary Black Female Novel in English* in 1985 and writes, "I arrived at the term 'womanism' independently and was pleasantly surprised to discover that my notion of its meaning overlaps with Alice Walker's" (p28). Ogunyemi presents womanism almost exclusively from the perspective of the Black female novelist, stating that the Black woman writer is more likely to identify as womanist, choosing to avoid confining categories and that:

She will recognize that, along with her consciousness of sexual issues, she must incorporate racial, cultural, national, economic and political considerations into her philosophy (p21).

She, like Walker, acknowledges the relationship of womanism to feminism yet highlights that Black women novelists "are not feminists in the way that their White counterparts are" and the importance of noting the differences between them (p21). Walker's 'Womanism' and Ogunyemi's 'African Womanism' definitions both include the evolution of Black girl to woman, is Black centered, celebrates Black roots and life, values relationships between Black women, men and children, and acknowledges acceptance of self as well as a concern and commitment to the needs of others (Ogunyemi, 1985, Walker, 1979, 1981, 1983).

Critical Culturist Clenora Hudson-Weems (1993) rejects any association with other feminist and womanist standpoints:

Neither an outgrowth nor addendum to feminism, *Africana Womanism* is not Black feminism, African feminism, or Walker's womanism that some Africana women have come to embrace. *Africana Womanism* is an ideology created and designed for all women

of African descent. It is grounded in African culture, and therefore, it necessarily focuses on the unique experiences, struggles, needs, and desires of Africana women. The conclusion is that *Africana Womanism* and its agenda are unique and separate from both White feminism and Black feminism, and moreover, to the extent of naming in particular, *Africana Womanism* differs from African Feminism (p145).

She further advocates for and references psychologist Julia Hare (1993), who expresses the need for Black women to have a standpoint that is theirs alone:

Women who are calling themselves Black feminists need another word that describes what their concerns are. Black Feminism is not a word that describes the plight of Black women. The white race has a woman problem because the women were oppressed. Black people have a man and woman problem because Black men are as oppressed as their women (p205, as cited in Hudson-Weems, 1987).

Hudson Weems reveals that she coined and defined the concept of Africana Womanism in 1987 “after nearly two years of publically debating the importance of self-naming for Africana women” (p143). She furthers that the name and definition addresses several crucial issues in establishing a Black woman’s epistemological standpoint. Hudson-Weems uses the term *Africana* to refer to “Continental Africans and Africans in the diaspora” (p140), thus immediately establishing cultural identity and ancestral connection. For her, the term *Womanism* holds a dual significance. First, it remembers, recalls and gives honor to Sojourner Truth’s speech *And Ain’t I a Woman* (Truth, 1851). Here, Hudson-Weems posits, Truth challenges what the oppressing majority considers the acceptable standard of womanhood, and proclaims that she too, is a woman. Lastly, Hudson-Weems believes that ‘woman’ and thus ‘womanism’ is a more

suitable name because only a female from the human race can be a woman, whereas the term female can refer to humans, plants, and/or animals (p143).

### Womanism In Action/The Promise of Womanism

Womanism, though identified by Walker, Ogunyemi, and Hudson-Weems, is not a new concept, “functioning below the academic and activist radar and outside dominant histories of consciousness” (Phillips, 2006, p23). Phillips delves deeper into the meaning of womanism in the introduction of *The Womanist Reader* (2006) in which she is the editor. Phillips offers that traditionally, more people have employed womanism than have described it, showing its tendency to be expressed and experienced more intuitively than analytically. While some problematize this, Phillips insists this is a plus, preserving the improvisational character of womanism, allowing it to “resist canonization, academic appropriation and ideological subsumption” (pxxi).

Phillips continues that womanism embodies five characteristics. It is: 1) Anti-oppressionist – supporting liberation from oppression for all humankind; 2) Vernacular - identifying with everyday people and everyday life, remembering and honoring the fact that we all have the same basic human needs; 3) Non-ideological – being strictly against lines of demarcation and promoting inclusiveness and positive interrelationship; 4) Communitarian – views the state of collective well-being of the community as the key to social change; and 5) Spiritualized – womanism openly acknowledges a spiritual connection to a higher power and the universe. These spiritual beliefs and practices are “rooted in the conviction that spiritual intercession and consideration of the transcendental or metaphysical dimension of life enhance or even undergird political action” (Keating, 2005, p241).

## Womanist Theology

In my continued study of the tenets of womanism, I have been introduced to the conceptual framework of womanist theology. I have chosen to inform my project with a womanist theology standpoint because of the close connection I and the women in my family have with growing up in the Black Christian Church. I was excited to discover beyond my initial discovery of the ‘womanist idea’, an extension of this stand point that centralizes Black women’s spirituality and that relationship with God could actually be applicable to life outside the church and within the academy. Additionally, I find it cathartic to dialogue about the status of Black women in the Black Church. Womanist theologian Delores Williams, the first to publically use the term ‘Womanist theology’, reflects upon the Black Church, as “the heart of hope in the black community’s experience of oppression, survival struggle and its historic efforts toward complete liberation” (1993, p205). She continues that womanist theology is informed by “female slave narratives, imaginative literature by black women, autobiographies, the work by black women in academic disciplines, and the testimonies of black church women” (1993, p205). Linda Thomas (1998) defines womanist theology as “critical reflection upon black women’s place in the world that God has created; it takes seriously black women’s experience as human beings who are made in the image of God; it affirms and critiques the positive and negative attributes of the church, the African American community, and the larger society” (p448).

Floyd-Thomas (2006) offers that the term ‘womanist’ was officially adopted in 1985 by Black women religious scholars, and thusly the concept of ‘womanism’ was introduced to the American Academy of Religion of Biblical Literature in the same year (p4). Floyd-Thomas furthers that “although Walker has defined what it means to be a womanist, womanist scholars of

religion, in turn, have defined what it means to practice *womanism*.” Womanist theology scholars have since reexamined and extended Walker’s definition:

Womanist epistemology, though inspired by the classical four-part definition, represents a shift from Walker’s original definition partly because the emphasis of “womanism as an academic enterprise” necessitates that womanist scholars construe its meaning for the work of theological and religious studies (p7).

Womanist theology openly confronts the ideological nature and function of patriarchy in the Black Church (Cannon, 1989) and seeks to evaluate as a primary theological source the faith, thought and life-struggle of African American women (Williams, 1993). Hayes (2006) claims that the first women to take Walker’s definition and use it for self-naming were Black female religious scholars. Womanist theology most importantly works to maintain a close relationship with Black women in the Black church community and considers this a revered dialogue as “it is not only from these women that we must learn, but it is also to these women that we are most accountable” (Douglas, 2006).

### My Womanism

Walker concludes her essay *Gifts of Power: The Writings of Rebecca Jackson* with a poignant observation:

I simply feel that naming our own experience after our own fashion (as well as rejecting whatever does not seem to suit) is the least we can do - and in this society may well be our only tangible sign of personal freedom (p18).

I imagine that Walker exists in a space that identifies with aspects of feminism while resisting

others because as she has discovered, until you understand that you can name yourself and your experiences, the tendency is to identify with those experiences that may have part or some piece of what you are needing. The idea that I can name my own experiences has been self-affirming in ways that I have never before encountered. I love and identify with the womanist idea because it chose me. It is the link between the academic scholar, the community activist, Grandmamma, Miss Jean and Sister So-and-So. This Black woman's epistemological standpoint was meant for me; I am included. Womanism is a lens through which I view my life; my work, people and my commitment to them. I practice womanism as a way to of thinking and being, a decoder in which I break down and disseminate information to further stay my course. I align every day, practical knowledge with my academic experiences, relying heavily on my unique position of having access in both the community and the Academy. I check in with myself daily, asking "what would mama do?" and letting the God-speak advice planted deep within me surface, which is applicable in most situations I encounter. The life lessons of Black women who came before me, who verbally name this thing, or silently express it in embodied ways is the most effective methodological framework there can be.

Using the foundation of the aforementioned methods, I share my stories with you in the next chapter. The following stories are a testament to my continued desire and struggle to write and dance my narratives. The narratives in this project are based on 'epiphanic moments' in my life, moments that "connect self-awareness with critical racial consciousness and the politics of identity" (Denzin, 2003, p41). I extend this notion to include the consciousness of being extremely aware of my femaleness and embodied-ness, and how it continues to inform/influence/affect me as a dancing-womanist-scholar in the field of kinesiology. These

stories were written during my time as a graduate student between the Fall of 2007 and Spring 2010, and include four narratives ranging from my childhood, undergraduate and graduate years. Although these stories were not constructed under the guidelines of narrative research, they will be critiqued as such. I have done my best to leave these stories in their original form as when written, to not try to make them better in terms of depth, grammatical reorganization or evolved thought. I was writing what and how I felt at that particular time, and it is important to honor and preserve those moments. These narratives proceed in a messy, disjointed, discontinuous manner, representing how I have negotiated my identity by a combination of divine intervention, fortitude, and trial by fire.

## CHAPTER 4: GET IT GIRL! EPIPHANIES

### *She Won't*

This vignette is of my earliest memories of dance, and the lessons I learned concerning the appropriation of moving bodies across race, gender and class...

Mama was always pushing the politics of respectability on me. “Wear panty-hose. No decent young woman goes to church bare legged.” Yes, Dorothy’s girls were going to be seen as young ladies; every hard-pressed hair and Vaseline smeared inch of us. My mama’s movements originated and stayed strictly in the sagittal plane – movements of preparing, fixing, and giving. Never did I see her perform any of the hip swaying, booty popping movements I loved to do. From the moment I could catch a beat, I loved and became proficient at rolling my hips. My six-year old self had never been in a club or juke joint, but you might wonder considering the precision and intensity I used when “shaking what my mama gave me”. Dorothy didn’t give that to me willingly though; she fought silently against my twirling, rolling movements while trying not to discourage me from loving dance. My mama would laugh at how my hips moved, sometimes watching intently. Her resolute refusal to dance with me, however, or proclaim “get it girl!”<sup>16</sup> as she did when I brought home a good grade pushed me to understand that her disapproval, though non-verbal, was far from silent. The ideology and appropriation of the Black body, dancing or otherwise, is a phenomenon I originally thought had been thrust upon me in my adulthood. Then my mind quiets; I see my mother’s face. Her eyes are pleading...they seem to be whispering “okay little girl, don’t shake so much...don’t...please don’t enjoy that movement

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<sup>16</sup> The phrase “get it girl” or “you go girl” is one of affirmation, acknowledgement, and support. The acknowledger is impressed, may be pleasantly surprised, or even shocked by the actions, attitudes, or words of the “girl” they are referring to. In these “get it girl” moments which I further deem epiphanies, I am both the acknowledger and the acknowledged.

too much!” What did my mom see when I performed in this way? What codes this movement of the hip and buttocks as subversive? Piedra (1997), while investigating the politics Afro-Cuban rumba, coined the term ‘hip poetics’, and encourages us to consider the movements of the hips and buttocks as something other than illicit:

... ‘hip poetics’, a form of feminist posturing of African origin that has historically allowed women (usually of color) to negotiate a public arena where sexism and racism might otherwise render them invisible and speechless (p165).

I moved the way I loved. As a child, I don’t remember associating the rolling of my hips as provocative or sensual; I simply liked the way it felt. My dad and his family had very different views on expressive dance. Holidays at my aunt’s house were showcase time. I would twist and sway to encouraging handclaps and yells of, “Get it, girl... where did she learn to pop like that?!” Much to the chagrin of my mother, we were wholly encouraged to dance as freely and uninhibitedly as we possibly could. I absolutely loved celebrations with my father’s side of the family. They were what my mama, maternal grandmamma and aunt referred to as ‘worldly’- the allowing of one’s thoughts, actions and lives to be ruled by the world’s secular standards. My brother and I, with our funky jazz choreography and fancy footwork received many a “watch out there now!” Spades and Bid Whist, rum and Coke, the Ohio Players and loud laughter were a part of this environment. Besides school, it was here that I learned to love social, Africanist dance.

As children, we were put into movement programs that carried positive messages. The dances we performed were safe: ballet, jazz, and modern technique. Our teachers, all White, attempted to combat the labels of ‘lascivious’ and ‘violent’ associated with Black bodies through light and lively step touches, pivot turns and big smiles. I began to think this was the way dance

was supposed to be; canned, cheerful and choreographed. I was the queen of stage presence, displaying my best acting and dancing technique to captivate the audience. As much as I thrived on being on stage, only in the secret space of my room or dancing with my friends did I feel completely free. Soon, ballet became stressful for me. I loved the look of the long lines created by extensions and the pretty pink toe shoes, but my body longed for something more free, full and dynamic. I grew tired of being a proper, neatly tucked little dancer. As a teen, I became interested in a funkier, more sensual style of moving, and a popular street style of dance called ‘jackin’<sup>17</sup>. These new dance styles felt right to my body; they felt good.

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Because commonplaces of temporality, sociality and place create a conceptual framework within narrative inquiry (Clandinin & Huber, in press), I begin with the time of this telling. It was winter 2008 in Jane Desmond’s Performance Studies Class. I met an ally, Angela Glaros, a single mom like me who felt comfortable in her own skin. We would sit in seminar and talk through the meanings of our required reading in everyday terms, not being intimidated by the analysis of some of the younger students trying to impress Jane. The goal of the course was to “provide a framework for thinking about the ways in which cultural meanings are constructed, negotiated and contested through embodied performative acts of representation” (Unit for Criticism and Interpretive Theory Course Descriptions, 2008). I was overwhelmed raising a five year old, teaching two kinesiology activity courses, and juggling an international long distance relationship. The above narrative documents the first time I put into writing my experiences of dancing as a young child. I don’t remember how I felt while writing it; I was probably trying to

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<sup>17</sup> One of the basic movements of urban Chicago dance culture during the 1980s was the "Jack," which is a movement of the torso in an almost rippling effect. Chicago is known for originating the Jack. For more information please see Reynolds (1999), [www.5chicago.com](http://www.5chicago.com) feature “Spin, Slide, and Jack: A History of House Dancing (2005).

hurriedly get the assignment done because I had papers to grade. I reread/relive this experience fondly; my brother and I were really close at that time, and dancing with him was something I enjoyed. What resonates with me is that as much as we both liked performing for family and elsewhere, it was our younger brother Craig, who never participated in the informal dance performances, who became a successful professional dancer. To this day, Craig just laughs as we bump and slide at mama's house during Christmas, only to jump up to perform a rond de jambe or other grandiose, balletic move and remind us who has the 'real' skill!

At an early age, I associated dance with praise. In social settings, the better I danced the more accolades and attention I received. In church, we used dance as a *form* of praise. Malone (1996) suggests that:

African American vernacular dance serves some of the same purposes as traditional dances in western and central African cultures: on both continents black dance is a source of energy, joy, and inspiration; a spiritual antidote to oppression; and a way to lighten work, teach social values, and strengthen institutions (p24).

Like many others in the Black community, my father's family wholeheartedly believed in celebrating and "letting your hair down". Most were working class folks who looked forward to coming together with good food, drinks, and music. My dad's people liked a good time, and didn't care who knew it. They were very vocal and expressive, with my daddy's mama, Grandma Velma, the most animated and vocal of all. She was beautiful; always superbly dressed with a powdered pressed face and hair perfectly coifed. Grandma Velma cursed; she smoke and drank; she danced and was flirty with Granddaddy...it was awesome! What I think was disquieting to other women in her community is how well she managed all other aspects of 'respectable

womanhood’, yet owned this discordant demeanor. Grandma Velma was a great cook; she raised seven children; she went to church regularly and was an educated woman. This amused and baffled women like my mama, who thought that following a strict set of societal norms and conducting yourself like a lady at all times was the best way to live. But Grandma Velma lived just fine thank you! She was happy, you could tell, and comfortable in whom she was, and would tell you so. Even though Grandma was raised in the south and did not migrate north until she was almost forty, she embodied what Collins (2005) terms a ‘Black Woman’s Blues’ culture, which entailed not just the love of blues music, but a working class woman’s consciousness, acceptance and definition of her sexuality and way of being that rejected adhering to the standards of White femininity (p72).

I found this view into other ways a woman could know and be appealing. I did want to be “a good Christian girl”, but I also wanted that freeing sensation, that part of the *womanist* definition that many ‘respectable’ women chose to ignore...loving yourself, regardless. That’s what I wanted. And I tried to get it, the best way I knew how. At the Rec Center in my neighborhood, I was front and center, popping my hips, dropping into the splits, rolling my shoulders and neck, with a look that said “don’t ya wish you could work it like me?” This is what I imagined freedom to be, unbridled, unrestricted movement. These were the spaces, few and far between, away from the gaze of professionally trained dance teachers and exacting parents, where it went down. The newest, raunchiest dance moves were the only ones that counted, combined with fantastic foot work and facial expressions. My older cousin DD would be hugged up in the corner with her boyfriend oblivious to what we younger kids were doing, and the security guard stayed just outside of the doors, so it was a free for all. My mama demanded that I stay in dance school until I left for college, which worked out great, as our small group of girls

who would practice our forbidden moves in code during water breaks. It was the beginning of my exodus from stringent parameters of acceptable dance and movement, and I was more than ready.

### ***I Want***

Friday nights were the best. I couldn't date- my daddy wasn't having it, but my mom convinced him to let us go to the basketball games at the local junior college on the weekends. And we were fly<sup>18</sup>... always with a theme, always color coordinated, and our pants/shorts/skirts were ALWAYS revealing. I had the track star legs, while my girl Cola and her twin sister Kisha had glorious large butts, "ignant asses" my friend Carolyn calls them; the kind you can sit a glass on. We had been dance school buddies since the first grade, performing together in everything from Disco Mickey Mouse to Prince's *U got the Look*. We walked in rhythm, always ready to stop at the drop of a dime and kick some practiced choreography for onlookers. The size or roundness of your butt was key, that's for sure, but I got a pass because I knew how to *move* my butt. Paramount to a girl keeping her Black card was her ability to roll, pop and shake her backside. It was a requirement that no one questioned, seemingly self-imposed. We internalized stereotypes and used them (we thought) to our advantage, arching our back to make our butts protrude as much as possible in conjunction with the swaying of our hips. Our crew couldn't be touched. I'm not sure if we were willingly reduced to our backsides, or duped into believing that this attribute was of the utmost importance. Dixon-Gottschild (2003) talks of this in regards to her early years before becoming a professional dancer:

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An African American Vernacular term popular in the 1980s used as slang. Denotes being current, cool and sexy (<http://pancocojams.blogspot.com/2013/01/fly-fly-girl-slang-definition-examples.html>, retrieved October, 2014).

How can I explain, or explain away, that backward but primal female desire to attract male attention...an attention that, scurrilous though it may seem from a position of critical distance, at a certain tender adolescent age seems to celebrate and affirm one's entry into the mysteries of womanhood (p145).

This is the part of us that longs for acceptance and authenticity. In the Black community, having big and/or round buttocks is considered a marker of belonging, just as the ability to dance. These abilities combined made us the go-to-girls and seemed to increase our popularity. Why are our butts, and the movement they create, always under scrutiny? Dixon-Gottschild (2003) contends that the female butt is part of a gendered discourse with sexually charged energy surrounding the fanny in general and the Black bottom in particular, not only in dance but also in daily living. She explains that the Black female buttocks represent the savage-versus- civilized binary between Africanist and Europeanist movement, informing us that the vertically aligned, erect spine is the first principle of Europeanist dance, while Africanist dance favors flexible, bent legged postures articulated forward, backward, and sideward or in circles as well as in different rhythms. The extreme opposites of these two dance forms create a discourse of assumed hierarchy among the dominant group. By Europeanist standards, Africanist dance was interpreted as vulgar, lewd, hypersexual, primitive and animalistic. By Africanist dance standards, Europeanist dance is seen as movement without feeling, inflexible and sterile.

Hobson (2005) extends Dixon-Gothchild's argument by what she terms the "ideology of deviant Black female bodies reiterated in contemporary popular culture" (p3). Television and print media, both in the Black community and outside, often position Black female bodies as hypersexual, grotesque, and abnormal. The complex discourse concerning the Black female body clearly begins in the context of slavery, and continues to saturate every aspect of African

American life. Queen Latifah's need for affirmation of having a 'big butt' in the movie *Beauty Shop*; Halle Berry winning an Oscar after an animalistic sex scene with a White man who helped murder her Black husband in *Monster's Ball*; four teenage boys ogling my friend's derriere at the bus stop on any given weekday, confirm the point that Hobson makes when she claims, "...Black female bodies are feared and found fascinating not only because of their so-called excessive traits but also due to their possible masculine characteristics" (p30).

Hobson (2003) also discusses the topic of contemporary Black males' contribution of devaluating Black women through their blatant obsession of the 'buttocks' in Hip Hop music. Rap group 2 Live Crew set the precedence that displayed women, mostly Black, shaking their nude rear ends within mainstream culture. Rapper Sir Mix-a-Lot's *Baby Got Back* video further complicates this obsession with the booty in that in his 'celebrating' the Black body/booty in performance "...reinforces the binary opposition between Whiteness and Blackness, while reducing Black women to one essential body part" (p97). Hall (1997) concurs when he comments on these traditional views of the White/Black binary:

This racialized discourse is structured by a set of binary oppositions. There is the powerful opposition between 'civilization' (White) and 'savagery' (Black). There is the opposition between the biological or bodily characteristics of the 'Black' and 'White' races, polarized into their extreme opposites-each the signifiers of an absolute difference between human 'types' or species. This traditional bias of many in both dominant and marginal communities makes the struggle to disqualify these pretenses that much harder (p334).

Although I still maintained a part of the confidence and energy I experienced as a girl playing rhythmic games, I bought into stereotypical propagandas as a teen because the messages flooded

my everyday environment. The posturing of my ‘assets’ was not from a place of self-naming and self-actualization, but of wanting to fit in and be accepted. It would be years later before I was able to develop and implement a womanist survival strategy that enabled me to express myself through dance in a way that was self-affirming and authentically my own.

### ***You Can’t***

This piece was written and performed in the fall of 2008 while participating in Norm Denzin’s Qualitative Inquiry Seminar. Denzin encouraged us to experiment with various forms of alternative, reflexive writing, but offered that he privileged co-performance narratives. The atmosphere in the class was very nurturing, with students from all disciplines, ages and ethnicities coming to “hear Norm speak”, and I decided to give co-performance a try. The results were substantial; resulting in me wanting to learn more about this way of writing and make it a regular part of how I conduct research. Denzin (2003) promises that “A co-performance story brings the audience back into the text, creating a field of shared emotional experience” (pxi). It was God’s truth; as fellow classmates read my words, they stepped into my life and willingly accepted my experiences as their own. Some students cried, other revealed after class that they were pissed about what happened, or that they had similar experiences. I titled this “You Can’t” as in “You can’t have my hope...” I was tired, of giving my hope away...the hope of being taken seriously as an artist and scholar; the hope of simply being seen. During my undergraduate years in the department of Kinesiology, I felt very different, that’s the best way I can describe it; ruefully different. I talked to almost no one, volunteered to do group work alone, and participated in virtually no department events. The department was very cliquish...everyone, including the faculty, had ‘people’. I found solace with two other African American students, Donny

Simmons, and Kelly Williams, who is my best friend to this day. What follows is a typical day for us, interrupted...

### MAIN CHARACTERS

**GRENITA:** 19 year old African American female undergraduate.

**INSTRUCTOR**

**OBLIVIOUS:** Longtime instructor in the department in charge of activity courses and undergraduate social activities.

**VOICES 1, 2, 3:** Narrators, all voices of Grenita

**DC TALK:** Christian rock group

(The setting is a classroom in the basement of the Department of Kinesiology and Community Health at the University of Illinois. The scene begins with Grenita giving herself a pep talk just outside the classroom entrance).

**Grenita:** “I can do this, it’s only 50 minutes”.

**Voice 1:** I take a deep breath as I fixed my skirt; I was ready... Kinesiology 222, Kick and Touch Your Toes, was proving to be a complicated, stressful addition to my complicated, stressful sophomore existence. As I walk into the classroom, I am seen through. The acknowledgement of my presence is too much effort for most of the students, while the distracted instructor gives an obligatory half-hearted...

**Instructor Oblivious:** “Hello, Grenita”

**Grenita:** Positive as usual, I will make very little contribution to today’s discussion. She will save that hope for her pony-tailed, lacrosse playing, pre-physical therapy, “Like-are-you-serious?” exclaiming apprentices that share the right corner of the room. The instructor knows the girls by name, with each lecture bullet on the overhead projector reiterating the connection between themselves and her.

**Instructor Oblivious:** “Becky, remember in K199 when we talked about the four basic principles of motor skill development in children?”... “Katie, what was that kid’s name who couldn’t throw a ball to save his life? You know... the strange one with the accent? (Katie answers)... That’s him!”

**Grenita:** I was safe in the back. The sunshine streaming through the window was a reminder of what was waiting for me outside that door – something bigger, something that mattered; the opposite of this. The only other student of color, my friend Kelly, was not in class today, leaving me feeling alone and again, on the outside.

**Voice 2:** “Black folks are not a monolithic group. I don’t like to fight, my brothers haven’t been to prison, and I am not a MC Hammer fan!”

**Grenita:** When it is my group’s turn for presentations, I was relieved. My preparation created an unusual confidence in me that was uncontainable. The other members in my group were a sorority girl who seemed unaware of what was happening in class, and a guy who could be the poster-child for White Patriarchy. Everything about this guy made me itch; the way he attempted to control our project, his disregard for collaboration, and the fact that when he needed a question answered he always addressed our other group member, never me. Whatever. I needed this grade, and I was going to give a stellar presentation today whether they helped or not- my test scores in this class were mediocre on a good day.

**Voice 3:** The task had been simple; observe and record motor development in three year olds from the child development lab on campus. We were to introduce ourselves to the kids, have them throw a ball, collect the data, and write a summary about it. We worked with six children, one Black and five White. After each child completed the task of throwing the ball, we

complimented them on their ability and thanked them for their participation. We greeted each child with the same reaction until we met with the Black child.

**Grenita:** Upon completion of his throw, Poster Child asked him to “slap me some skin dude. Give me five. What’s up home skillet?” The child’s wide-eyed, confused expression mirrored mine. What the hell was he talking about? What was he saying? What was he asking/assuming of the little boy? Of me?

**Voice 2:** My cheeks got hot and sweat formed on my upper lip as I searched for my voice to correct him, to check his ridiculous, ignorant behavior. I couldn’t find it; my voice was not there. Correcting him will do no good, I thought. That ignorance is home grown- he’s not worth it. I’ve dealt with these assumptions all my life... “Grenita, show us some moves girlfriend, I know you can dance!”... “Can I touch your hair?” The little boy returned to play and the innocence of boyhood, enjoying all that it offers before the stereotypes of hypersexuality, laziness, and violence are mapped onto his adult Black body.

**Voice 1:** The sharing of our data was uneventful, as most of the groups’ findings were similar. Then, in one second, the room changed from color to Black and White. Poster Child closed with, “Oh, and by the way, one of our subjects was colored”.

**Grenita:** Central Illinois. 1992. Colored. Twenty-three pairs of eyes met mine. They saw me now. Excruciatingly, they saw me.

**DC Talk:** Pardon me, your epidermis is showing, sir/I couldn’t help but note your shade of melanin...I tip my hat to the colorful arrangement/Cause I see the beauty in the tones of our skin (*Colored People*, 1995)

BREAKING NEWS...Reporter's Notebook: CNN Transcript February 3, 2001

News Correspondent: Let's go to the e-mail first, shall we? And I want to just dispense with this little -- I called it a tempest in a teapot earlier. I'm hoping that's what people perceive it to be. This one comes from Fred in North Carolina. "What does NAACP stand for? Why is there a dispute at the DNC?" And, "Why is it politically incorrect to refer to people as colored people when their own organization refers to themselves as such?" That comes from Tracy Young in Brandon, Manitoba.

And that sits squarely in your court, Mr. Franken.

FRANKEN: I was afraid of that. First of all, the title for the NAACP came at a time when it was considered politically correct to use the term "colored people." It stands, by the way, for National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. But as we know, our language evolves, and certain terms that were at one time considered acceptable become unacceptable, particularly when that was a term many people believe that reflected discrimination in the United States, when people of color, to use a very appropriate term today, people of color, in fact, were allowed to be discriminated against without any recriminations.

**Voice 1:** Before the nerve endings could trigger the yelp to acknowledge the injury, the instructor motioned for us to sit, and thanked us for our presentation. The next four or five presentations were a blur. My fury and my shame were frothing over, knowing that I would remain silent yet again.

**Grenita:** Again. With four minutes left to the bell, the instructor asked if there were any comments or questions. I was standing before I knew my knees had moved. "I'm tired of coming in here every day and dealing with the same stuff..."

**Voice 3:** My voice, staccato, and strained, barely reached the front row.

**Instructor Oblivious:** “Please speak up Grenita, we can barely hear you”.

**Grenita:** “Colored? Who uses the word colored? It’s 1992. I would never use words like redneck or cracker, because they come from hate. Every day, from group projects to studying for tests, I only get the outside. I GET THE OUTSIDE!”

**Voices 1 & 2:** Ika- Bika- Soda- Cracka- Ika- Bika- Boo-Ika-Bika-Soda-Cracka-Out-Goes-You!!!<sup>19</sup>

**Grenita:** Don’t assume anything about me. You don’t know me. If you want to know something, ask. YOU DON’T EVEN KNOW ME. And you (pointing wildly at Poster Child) are... ignorant for using colored to describe a human being in 1992!”

**Voice 1:** My tears are hitting the desk, and though the bell has rung, people are afraid to leave.

**Voice 2:** ‘Authentic gaze’: the act of looking deliberately into someone’s eyes and sharing a gaze with them for an indiscriminate amount of time.

**Grenita:** We all shared it now- Instructor Oblivious, the other students, and me. Three women come up to me after class, each one apologizing for unintentionally offending me. Their words don’t mean a thing... and neither do mine. But I find new words, voice, and resolve, albeit 13 years later.

\*\*\*2005\*\*\*

**Instructor Oblivious:** So Grenita, you did undergrad here? In Kines? I don’t remember you...

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<sup>19</sup> A childhood rhyming song used to eliminate participants when trying to choose a winner for a particular game.

**Grenita:** Sure you do. Imagine me with straight hair, and a bad attitude...

**Instructor Oblivious:** Oh my goodness, I remember ... you did have a bad attitude... what was the matter with you?

**Grenita:** Well, you thought I had a bad attitude... and I thought you were racist...

**Instructor Oblivious:** (Gasp). Now why on earth would you think that? I have had plenty of Black students. In Texas, I stood up for a Black kid when some guys on the football team were giving him an awful time...

**Grenita:** You didn't stand up for me; you didn't do anything. In class, a White boy used the term 'colored' and you said absolutely nothing.

**Instructor Oblivious:** (Pondering) I did? I guess I just didn't know what to say.

**Grenita:** I was upset because you didn't get angry, and that was wrong. Of course you didn't get mad; it didn't affect you- it wasn't your life. But it was your class. You let those kids say whatever, so I just shut down. I didn't give anyone another chance to push me out. I excluded all of you, no disrespect Instructor Oblivious.

**Instructor Oblivious:** Well, for the record, I'm sorry. Whew! I'm glad we cleared that up since we have to work together. Now we can move on and be the best of friends! Now you just come right on back tomorrow and we'll get started.

**Grenita:** I will definitely be back, Instructor Oblivious

*I See (You)*

This is a love story...one that makes me smile and cry upon every remembrance. From 2007

until 2011, I was, and still am, an ‘OG Home girl’ or original member of the labor of love and creative genius of Dr. Ruth Nicole Brown known as U of I’s SOLHOT (Saving Our Lives, Hear Our Truths). This narrative recalls how and why we began our weekly meetings and dialogue with song, dance, chants, sass, and love. Though we (both the girls and volunteers) in our time together wrote edifying, significant journal articles, presented didactic, soul gripping performances, created/challenged theory, and enlightened the masses about the complexities and brilliance of Black girlhood, that greeting, that rhythmic, knowing, I-See-You-Ma greeting, was all I ever needed...

So, we wanna teach the girls something right? Something ‘fresh’ - I know I sound completely out of date! We want to get them up, laughing, moving and talking. Dr. Brown asked me to create a dance, a Black Girl dance, specifically to target the deliberate energy and attitude of the SOLHOT space. SOLHOT (Saving Our Lives, Hear Our Truths), is a movement committed to the celebration of Black girls, and providing safe spaces for such celebration. Using call and response, self-proclamation, showcasing and inclusion, each participant (one at a time) prepares to ‘show’ her unique version of her dance, what came to be known as the Batty Dance. Batty Dance then becomes a vehicle for dynamic observer participation and the opportunity to display uniqueness in a supportive community environment. Although a handclap and chant initiate the movement, there are no specific moves for the Batty Dance. The Batty Dance was inspired from the performance piece Batty Moves (1995), created by Jawole Zollar in celebration of the female body. With a tone that is both defiant and celebratory, Batty Moves directly challenges the audience to question their own notions of physical attractiveness and appropriate movement (Zollar, 1995). Using this term does not come without a price; ‘batty’ is an informal Caribbean term for buttocks and has several contested meanings. A notable yet

derogatory manner in which “batty” is used is when referring to gay men, as in ‘batty boy’ (Forbes-Erickson, 2009). Hobson, in her essay *The “Batty” Politic: Toward an Aesthetic of the Black Female Body* (2003) claims that the term ‘batty’ can function as a site of resistance because the absolutely uninhibited movement of the female backside in the context of celebration “invite[s] a public discourse that challenges colonial constructs of ‘decency’ and ‘white supremacy’. Hence, ‘batty’ implies for me a more liberatory and unashamed view of the body” (p101). Womanist Nancy Westfield says that there is “power in naming, renaming, defining and redefining the spaces we inhabit” (p139). In this space, both Zollar through dance performance and Hobson via text do exactly this to exact freedom and defiance in choosing to use this term.

I had the opportunity to work with Zollar and the Urban Bush Women in 2006 at their Summer Institute. Urban Bush Women is a performance ensemble that seeks to bring the untold and under-told stories of disenfranchised people through dance, doing so from a woman-centered perspective as members of the African Diaspora community. The strategy of Urban Bush Women is to create learning communities where people, especially women and girls, can find their power through dance (UBW mission statement). I had just started volunteering with SOLHOT, and was frustrated as to what my role with girls would be. I was positive that these girls would no doubt benefit from my judgmental gaze, copious notes, and analysis. What I failed to incorporate in my work was their voices- the intelligence and insight of children capable of making decisions regarding their place in the world. Urban Bush Women refer to this as *Building Trust through Process*, claiming that the answers to many challenges and creative investigations can be found within a group of people who share a commitment of working together. Zollar also introduced us to what she called the authentic gaze. This is the act of

looking deliberately into someone's eyes and sharing a gaze with them for an indiscriminate amount of time. This practice incorporated another UBW core value entitled *Validating the Individual*, where it is felt that each person has a powerful contribution to make to society, hoping to make each participant realize the importance of their work and existence. I wanted to know how I could connect with the girls and get them to enjoy working with me. Zollar was very insightful. "It's the music that makes the difference. Change the music, change the perspective." She encouraged me to focus on having fun with the girls, and finding a commonality instead of telling them their dance movements were inappropriate, as well as their choice of music too sexual. It was with these suggestions and her encouragement that I created Batty Dance.

"Ba-tty dance, ba, ba-tty dance/Ba-tty dance, ba, ba-tty dance/My name's Grenita and  
here's my chance/to show my sistas the Batty Dance/Break it down!!!"

We are in the circle. We shake. Gyrate. Juke. Drop. Get low. More than just imitating the moves of our fellow home-girls, we understand them; live them. Most of us have seen women and girls like us, moving our bodies in this way to R&B, house music, and/or the sound of our own voices. In this space, we make the music; create our own song. In this circle, we define movement, with backs turned on those who are not participating in the circle with us. It was very important to separate ourselves from the 'gaze' of the audience (non-participant observers) and define our own terms of existence and representation, which we choose to do through the celebration of our backsides. It is now that we decide as a group how we will be defined, interpreted, and conveyed. Collectively, we give ourselves permission to be in awe of ourselves and each other, to praise and compliment, support and encourage. Embodied activist and dancer Jenny Macke (2007) believes, "Woman, in circle, in dance, is one of the oldest forms of gathering. We gather together to share our life stories, uncover new truths, dance our bodies

towards freedom, and to learn from each other's beautiful wisdom" (p1). Every one present is then able to use each other's energy, compassion, and experiences as support. In this space, there is no difference between the volunteers and the girls; we are ALL the girls. For many of us, moving in this way with our peers gives a vibe that says, "I see you. I see your style, your creativity. Do your thing Ma. Get it Girl!" Generational differences melt between me and the girls. We share the same energy, doubts, dreams and fears. It is difficult at times for Black girls to acknowledge each other when societal norms inundate us with so many negative and hurtful images; often times we swallow them as truth. Maybe to get noticed, to receive attention (positive or otherwise) we feel a need to be wilder, more flamboyant, and louder than our Black female counterparts. We continue to work through that in this space. Like a mother's prayer that is constant and steadfast, what never changes in SOLHOT is that there is room for every Black girl.

### ***They Pray***

My mama, aunts, and maternal granny did not dance in the worldly, secular sense, performing subjective movement only in religious and/or spiritual settings. I recall my grandmother's deafening hand claps commanding the attention of the sanctuary as she led Doctor Watts<sup>20</sup> songs during devotion at Sunday church services. In between her claps, she would wrap her arms around herself, as if to keep herself in, so as not to spill out or come untethered. My matriarchal line consisted of women of *adjustment*. It was as if they thought of themselves as crooked or off balance- constantly smoothing, straightening making things neater, cleaner, better. Between the four of them (Mama, Aunt Nessa, Aunt Tommie, Grandmama

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<sup>20</sup> A singing style used in worship originally by southern slaves, and characterized by a slow, syncopated melody and call and response method. Many of the spirituals used were written by Dr. Isaac Watts (1674-1748), a prominent English minister who wrote over 800 hymns. For more information see Lincoln, E. (1974).

Ceolia), I do not remember seeing movement without purpose, intention or goal. For them, there were movements of praise and preparation only. I recall witnessing only two occasions of bliss/freedom that my mama and grandmama experienced. One was when they came out of their restricting corsets and girdles after Sunday church service. I thought the satisfying grunts and proclamations of “Yes Lawd!” were hilarious and often wondered why anyone would put themselves through that much torture in order to be “properly” attired. The other time was when they prayed.

The women in my family came alive during prayer. They sweat, swayed and testified...spoke healing and halleluiahs into the universe, all on bended knee with head bowed and covered. They asked God to keep their children, community and church safe. They pleaded for mercy, thanked God for His grace, and begged for patience and self-control. As the music swelled, and responses from the congregation grew, my grandmother’s voice would expand into a great crescendo, deep and rich. With fists balled and body shaking, she would become more animated, more confident, more...*filled*:

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*Fatha! Beautiful Savior Jesus Christ! Alpha and Omega...ha!*  
*It is again we come to ya humble as we know how...*  
*Just thankful to be in the Land of the Living! Indeed!*  
*Lawd, you woke us up this morning with a gentle hand and lovin’ spirit!*  
*And we Thaaaaaaaaaaaaank ya! Glory!*  
*Let eeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeveryone in the sound of my weak voice*  
*Acknowledge you as the Everlasting Father and the Prince of Peace!*  
*Till the day that this backbreaking journey is over*  
*And we will see your glorious face again*

*Amen and Amen!!*

Black church women are a gift; they just are. The strength and fortitude in which they care for, embolden, accommodate and concede is nothing short of miraculous. Despite my spending an enormous amount of time growing up and participating in the Black church, I know that I am not a Black Church Woman nor will ever be, but I love and stand in awe of them. Douglas (2006) pays homage to Black Church Women in regards to Alice Walker's womanist definition:

This dialogue, first and foremost, reminds me from whom I receive my wisdom: from my mama and all of those other black women not necessarily in the academy – those everyday women who sit on pews of black churches on Sunday morning looking for the sustenance to carry on during the week...they are the resources of our knowledge of God and the meaning of God for black women and men in the struggle (p147).

The concept of the 'Black Church Woman' began shortly after the Reconstruction Era. The end of the Civil War solidified a chasm between White Baptists, and gave newly freed Blacks, many who identified as Baptist, a chance for unification and a forming of identity (Higginbotham, 1993). This population primarily consisted of descendants of enslaved Africans who had converted to various evangelical religions in the 1770s (Maffly-Kipp, 2001). Previously an "invisible institution" that secretly worshiped their own way, and openly worshiped according to their captors' standards, newly freed Blacks were now able to form independent religious institutions. These institutions would grow to not only serve as houses of worship, but also "as an agency of social control, forum of discussion and debate, promoter of education and economic cooperation, and arena for the development and assertion of leadership" (Higginbotham, 1993).

Higginbotham continues that there was a ‘woman’s movement’ in the black church between 1900 and 1920. During this time, Black women’s roles in the Black church were numerous and varied, including fundraising, teaching, domestic upkeep, and community involvement. These women hosted conventions, and discussed important topics concerned with constructing a new representation of themselves and all African Americans (p186). In attempting to advance the ideals of self-determination and self-empowerment, Black Church women aligned with the ideals of an American Identity and thus adhered to a ‘politics of respectability’ (p186).

Today’s Black churches share many of the same characteristics of the early churches begun the later part of the nineteenth century. Although there is no one formula for a ‘traditional Black church’ one steadfast remains: Black women make up the majority of the members. This was exactly the case of the church in which I grew up. There were men there, most of whom had leadership roles such as deacon, minister, Sunday school director, and Pastor. Women, with the exception of the pastor’s wife, were lay women. They held supportive roles that kept the church afloat. Black Church Women were almost always exquisitely dressed in proper ‘church clothes’: button up suit jackets with long matching skirts, or loose fitting dresses, complete with panty hose and dress shoes. Many wore resplendent hats with lace or flowers or beading, as bright, unique and beautiful as the one wearing it. These women were the very essence of the ‘politics of respectability’. These self-imposed ideals were based on American standards of White femininity that ignited conflict among middle class and working class Black women in the church. Women who believed in this mindset sought to impose these beliefs on working class women, who rejected these ideals as unrealistic and silencing of their needs and desires. My mother’s side of the family most certainly invested in this belief system. Behaviors of refinement and ‘lady-like’ behavior was promoted and expected. With this came an unquestionable spirituality that seemed

to be the focal point of a Black Church Woman's existence. With so much to consider, I now understand how the denial of selfhood was not only possible, but necessary. Living a life committed to serving others is a giant task that many church women accept, sometimes unwillingly. I saw this sacrifice and thought it too great. I hoped for another way in which to be a caring, compassionate woman who loves God without giving myself completely away.

### ***We Here***

I wrote this performance piece as a final assignment for the seminar *Consuming Racialized Beauty* taught by Isabela Molina in the fall of 2007. Students across disciplines were encouraged to “think through the ways beauty and the gendered and raced body are defined, disciplined and consumed by audiences” (University of Illinois Course Catalog, fall 2007). We created a culminating performance that was featured at the Krannert Art Museum. The goal of my art exhibit (*Re) Presenting the Black Female Body* was to present my ideas of self-representation as a counter narrative to the dominant discourses about the Black female body. Through the performance of taboo histories concerning the Black female body via spoken word and dance, it was my hope to begin conversations that would continue beyond the walls of the museum, and challenge people to reassess their own beliefs. After illuminating these controlling images, like that of the ‘Black Bitch’, I disassemble them, and create my own definitions.

### **Scene I: A Black Girl's Game**

(Grenita and friends play Double-Dutch, Hop Scotch, and “Little Sally Walker”)

**Mama:** Nita, get in here...it's time for you to get dressed!

**Grenita:** Be right there!!

(Grenita dances with/to/for/audience)

**Ntozake Shange:** “Knowing a woman’s mind & spirit had been allowed me, with dance I discovered my body more intimately than I had imagined possible. With the acceptance of the ethnicity of my thighs & backside, came a clearer understanding of my voice as a woman & as a poet. The freedom to move in space, to demand of my own sweat a perfection that could continually be approached, though never known, was poem for me, my body & mind ellipsing, probably for the first time in my life” (Shange, 1976, p48).

(Grenita goes inside and examines herself in her mirror)

End Scene

## **Scene II – American Imagination Exhibit**

This movement series highlights the intersectionality and societal views of the controlling images of Black women, specifically the Black Matriarch//Freak/Lady/Bitch (Collins, 2000, 2005; Stephens & Phillips, 2003).

**Curator 1:** Thank you, thank you for coming! (With the intonation of a ringmaster) “Step right up!” I’m mean... please step this way!

**Curator 2:** We are so very proud to bring you this fascinating display of Black Womanhood directly from Houston, Brooklyn, Maywood, Atlanta, Paducah, Vermont...

**Curator 1:** There are Black women in Vermont?

**Curator 2:** Ahem, let’s begin this fascinating show, shall we?

Our first exhibit is of the Black Matriarch. She is...

- Daughter of the Black Mammy...
- Takes on the responsibilities of the Black Community, her job and beyond...
- Seen as controlling, emasculating and contemptuous, only needing a man for procreation...
- Her image was created in the mid-1960s as a governmental response to uprisings and power struggles.
- Yes. Assistant secretary Daniel Patrick Moynihan's 1965 report The Negro Family: *The Case for National Action*, was instrumental in cementing this American image of the Black Woman.
- Interesting is the fact that while she is pathologized by White America, she is also ridiculed by members of her own community. Black men have been involved in her objectification via the media, domestic violence, and by their absence. Well... I've seen Black women caricatured by male comedians in their acts, depicting them as ugly and masculine...

**Curator 1:** The next exhibit we have is the Black Freak...

- She is also known by slut, ho, and hoochie...
- She is the daughter of the exotic, promiscuous Jezebel...

- Usually can be found working a pole, corner, or hip hop video, though she could be a co-worker, or your neighbor...
- The institutionalized rape of the enslaved Black woman spawned the controlling image of the Jezebel/Freak/sexually wanton Black woman. This representation redefined Black women's bodies as sites of wild, unrestrained sexuality that could be tamed but never completely subdued (Collins, 2000).
- The Black Freak appears to be the most popular portrayal of the Black Woman in popular culture, asserting that she is lascivious, without morals, and deviant.

**Curator 1 & Curator 2:** This is an exhibit we are really proud to present... the Black Lady!!!

**Curator 1:**

- Daughter of the Jezebel, though they have been estranged for years...
- Many Black ladies are middle class or close...

**Curator 2:**

- The Black Lady is obligated to teach the importance of religion, education and hard work.
- She works hard to adhere to a 'Politics of Respectability' that equates a commitment to refined manners and Victorian sexual morals for the advancement of African Americans as a group. This often forces her to suppress most aspects of her sexuality.

**Museum Director (interrupting and looking perplexed):**

Uh, excuse me ladies and gentlemen, but...uh...

I don't know if we will be able to show you the last exhibit... there appears to be a problem...wait a minute... (talking to the curators)...she appears to be angry, yeah, she's still angry...I don't know why...excuse us for just a moment. Okay, Okay. We can move forward. Our last exhibit for you today ladies and gentlemen, is the Black Bitch. We must warn you... she is not happy, and has a bit of an attitude, but, let's bring her out anyway...

**Curator 1:**

- The Black Bitch is a 'hybrid' if you will, of all of our Controlling Images in our exhibit today...
- We don't understand why she is so angry...
- She is aggressive, loud, rude, pushy and confrontational...
- Do you know this woman?

**Museum guest #1:** You know, I think she's a checker at Walmart.

**Museum guest #2:** No. That was just a woman who's check was short and customers had been rude to her all day.

**Museum guest #3:** Maybe she's that Baby Mama who lives two doors down from me.

**Museum guest #4:** Uh, Uh. That's a mother who hasn't received child support for sixteen months, and can't afford after school care so she takes her son to class with her.

**Curator 2:** Ummm. I have it in my notes here that Bitch wasn't always her name.

**Curator 1& Museum guest 1, 2, 3 &4:** Really?

**bell hooks:** Yes... in Africa she was addressed as Queen, Warrior, Elder, Beautiful One and even in America she has been known as Friend, Educator, Wife, Mother, Lover.

**Curators 1 & 2:** The question is... What does she call herself?

**Grenita:** Here

### **Scene III – The Circle**

(Scene begins with the SOLHOT sisterfriends and myself dancing freestyle all over the stage to *Private Party* by India Arie. We then form a circle in the middle of the stage. We hold hands, and I begin to speak).

**Grenita:** Women's Studies scholar Janell Hobson (2005) champions a strategy to begin to dispel problematic representations of the Black Woman and make right the disconnect: "We may need to recreate that circle of women-first enacted in childhood- who affirm that our bodies are fine, normal, capable and beautiful. We may also need to enlarge that circle to include men, who can challenge their own objectifying gazes, and non-blacks, who can overcome the equation of Blackness with deviance" (p11). Now...let's dance!

Women invite audience members on stage to dance, and the scene ends...

The act of using combinations of words and movement for an academic project was new to me. This was my first attempt at performance ethnography, though I was unaware of that fact. I had not yet been introduced to 'Nation 580', Norm Denzin's prolific Qualitative Research Methods Seminar, and had traditionally kept my writing and dancing endeavors separate. Denzin (2003) specifies that live performances, which have the potential to become a 'sociopolitical act' "...puts culture into motion. It examines, narrates, and performs the complex ways in which persons experience themselves within the shifting ethnoscares of today's global world economy" (p8). After spending a cathartic semester reviewing and critiquing evocative texts about Latina, Africana and Caribbean sexuality, consumption and commodification, I was inspired to create a work that would speak to the ways in which I, as a Black woman, am presented and received in Western society. I created this text knowing it would be incomplete without the undercurrent of movement. Dancing this piece was like dancing my life, and though I gave in to improvisation at times, my main concern was aligning purposeful movement to the words I had written. I so desperately needed this to be what performance studies scholar D. Soyini Madison (1998) titles a 'performance of possibility' in order to "...give voice to those on the margin, moving them for the moment to the political center" (p 284, as cited in Denzin, 2003).

I asked my sister friends from SOLHOT, also known as the OG Home girls, to perform with me. Just like always when we move together, with and for each other, it's amazing! Something great always happens when I share space with these women. I am reaffirmed every time - the work, the words, and the dance. In 2007 when I wrote this, the narrative moment

WAS that moment. I was being “fed” emotionally by my presence in SOLHOT, and learning to trust my own voice by writing my words and emotions instead of only dancing them. I was feeling whole, respected and included. We were a community of Black-women-artists-sister-scholars who believed in the power, protest and beauty of Black girls/women.

The vignette of Scene I was inspired by my experiences as a Black girl growing up and participating in various games and rites of passage. These active games, which included handclapping and finger snapping, hip twisting, loud proclamations to “introduce yoself!” as well as jumping Double-Dutch, and playing Hop Scotch, illuminate the rhythmic boldness and confidence that are an everyday part of Black girls’ existence. Ethnomusicologist Kyra Gaunt extends this perspective in her investigation into the “epistemology of musical blackness” (p3) in her book *The Games Black Girls Play* (2006). Gaunt posits that African American girls’ musical games “inherently teach an embodied discourse about appropriate and transgressive gender and racial roles (for both girls and boys) in African American communities” (p2). Next, my mama’s disruptive “Nita, get in here!” was/is a constant reminder of a recurrent theme throughout this inquiry that I am continually being monitored, encouraged and ordered to do more good, remember where I come from, and be careful.

At the time of this writing, I was deeply affected by seeing the American Playhouse television production of and then actually reading the chorepoem *For Colored Girls Who Have Considered Suicide When the Rainbow is Enuf* by Ntozake Shange (1976). Ntozake’s poem of how dance channeled the discovery of the magnificence of her body, and with the acceptance of her physical-ness and physicality she found her voice was very familiar and comforting to me. I also can attest to the dynamic power of your body moving in a way uniquely and authentically yours, which supplies confidence, affirmation and self-naming. Finally, examining myself in the

mirror marks a transition; I initially see my Black girl-self compared to how my multiple Black-woman selves will be perceived by observers in the next movement series *Black Matriarch//Freak/Lady/Bitch/Woman*.

This piece was inspired by a documentary Professor Molina showed in class titled “*The Couple in the Cage: A Guatinaui Odyssey*.” From 1992-1993, performance artists Guillermo Gómez-Peña and Coco Fusco toured museums all over the US as “undiscovered” Amerindians from a remote Island in the Gulf of Mexico. They were exhibited in a cage guarded by two fake security guards, being observed by curious onlookers. Their satirical and racist performance included being fed bananas, led by leashes, and speaking a made up language. Audience members posed for pictures with the ‘natives’, and at one venue, some paid money to see “authentic Guatinaui male genitals” (Ginsberg, 1994). Supposedly the ones being observed, Fusco and Gómez-Peña simultaneously documented the responses of the crowd while touring, recording them and compiling them into a documentary. They concluded that “the documentary presents the audience’s reactions as indirect proof that racist beliefs — non-Western people are primitive, inferior, and essentially different from Western people — permeate our postcolonial society” (Fusco, 1994). Black women and girls live the disturbing reality of being seen as ‘different’ daily, from subtle, rarely spoken aloud moments to aggressive, purposeful unabashed instances of hate. Hobson (2005) asserts that this ideology of the deviant Black female body is continually reinforced in societal norms and requires an ‘aesthetic of resistance’ to replace these ways of thinking with new concepts and definitions.

In examining the sociohistorical development of African American women’s sexual scripts, womanist scholars Stephens and Phillips (2003) reveal that an ideal womanhood, which consists of attributes such as innocence, goodness and virginity, is associated with White females

yet unattainable for African American females (p4). The idea of the African American female as promiscuous and amoral continued to be standardized and accepted as normal (hooks, 1992, Collins, 2005). Developing the characters for the performance piece was easy and familiar, as these stereotypical images are continually portrayed on television and other media channels. Hobson (2012) contributes that:

These controversial representations illuminate the ways that black bodies serve as difference...such displays remind us of how black bodies are still positioned as uncontrollable and unstable sites in need of control and surveillance (p50).

Ending the scene with the declaration that I am “Here” was for me, the most important part of the performance piece. I reminded all present, including myself, that I can withstand, persevere, and be an authentic creator of knowledge. Hall (1997) offers the strategy of substituting positive images of Black people and culture to contest the racialized struggle of representation. This effort, in conjunction with rediscovering forgotten traditions of positive Black cultural expression, can guide us toward a new definition of Black gender ideology. Disrupting these embedded definitions through mediums that begin dialog which include text, oral expression, art, and dance- is a small beginning in an attempt to present oneself in one’s own way, and make the connection between knowledge, power, and truth. Lastly, after affirming ourselves for ourselves, as I quoted Hobson above, we must welcome others into our circle, for it is only by that loving, open gesture that we can begin to tear down the monuments of fear and untruths and build a utopia of whatever we collectively decide.

## **CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION**

“If your friends don’t know it, then you don’t know it, and if you don’t know that, then you don’t know nothing. Now what else are you pretending not to know today Colored Gal?”

~Grandma Dorothy (Toni Cade Bambara, 2009)

This delightful admonishment from Grandma Dorothy, recounted from the childhood of the revered artist, author and activist Toni Cade Bambara is the perfect womanist adage to bring my inquiry full circle. NO sub-discipline is an island, not even in the illustrious field of kinesiology. Only knowing what you know is no longer enough! We as kinesiology humanists and scientists need to stop attaching the highest value of knowledge production to only the knowledge we produce. The purpose of this inquiry was to re-introduce and (re) present dance to the field of kinesiology, advocating that it and other humanistic, subjective movement receive equal consideration as viable movement practice. In the context of subjective, humanistic movement practice in Kinesiology, how have ways of knowing, such as experiential and performative, been forgotten? I wondered if a dancing-womanist-scholar like me could have a place in such a field of study and if so, how I could discover and understand exactly how me and the research I love fit in. The answer is a resounding yes! I have shown that there is a space for these types of movement experiences, just by my still being here to tell the story.

I am learning...to perform culture as I write it (Denzin, 2003), to experiment with movement and text, and to trust the sound of my own voice. To rename, reclaim, and represent my movement practices as a provocative epistemology I choose for my movements and moments to be emancipatory, to mean something, and that makes them so. Every day we are speaking truth to our lived experience and inviting others to do the same through challenging existing

ways of knowing in this world (Denzin, 2003). Denzin champions us further in his significant guide *Qualitative Manifesto: A Call to Arms*, to work diligently to unify as a global community because “today we are called to change the world” (p32). He and so many others considered throughout this inquiry have authentically influenced my coming-of-age as a dancing-womanist-scholar, and as Grandmamma Ceolia would say, “grewed me up”. This ‘family’ continues to write a new script, encouraging each one of us to be contributing authors. We can all pen this enduring story. Sister-friends and brothers, of color and not, all ‘Other’ in some way, together moving in different tempos to the same, pulsating, freeing djembe drum.

### Taking Care of Home

Despite my personal interpretations of the progress that has been made to correct the disconnect of support for a student like me, my home department of Kinesiology at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign has taken documentable strides to create a more inclusive environment for students to connect with other departments and the broader community. Of course there have always been individuals who have done their best to influence their corner of the planet in terms of acknowledging and even celebrating humanistic, subjective movement practices and their implications. My area of specialization, *Cultural, Pedagogical & Interpretive Studies*, which is defined as the “study of the interaction between physical activity and the individual from a variety of cultural, sociological and pedagogical perspectives” (Kinesiology Graduate Web page, retrieved 2014), is certainly an example. Though they may disagree, the sociocultural branch of that area, only two professors strong, are significantly overextended and in my opinion not given the same consideration to fully participate in the department. Even with this circumstance, substantial changes by the department have to be duly noted. One major step is the implementation of the seminar Kinesiology 591, which is listed as

“Lectures, discussions, and critiques on kinesiology and community health related subjects by faculty members and visiting professional leaders; presentation and criticism of student research (U of I Course Catalog, retrieved 2014). So finally, all kinesiology students and faculty are invited (perhaps, forced) to share the same space for fifty minutes and *listen* to one another! I fought this change at first; the time is inconvenient, and few of these topics interested me, but after attending a couple of classes, I began to see why this was so necessary. The presentations of the students and scholars show how much they believe in their particular subdisciplines, and made me feel their passion, appreciate their process, and believe in the importance of their research and its implications for the future of the field. I in turn, expect the same consideration.

Campus wide efforts, entitled “Inclusive Illinois: One Campus, Many Voices” have been even more visible, and a limitation of this study is not including an investigation as to the effectiveness of these efforts. The Office of Diversity, Equity, and Access, whose goal is to promote an inclusive community through diversity, education and outreach initiatives (Office of Diversity, Equity and Access website, retrieved January, 2015), explains a major initiative to increase diversity of campus faculty:

The University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign 2013-16 Strategic Plan sets forth the goal of rebuilding our faculty through 500 hires over the next five to seven years, with a particular emphasis on enhancing faculty diversity as defined in the Diversity Values Statement. As part of our broader effort to achieve this goal, Chancellor Wise and Provost Adesida commissioned the Diversity Realized at Illinois Visioning Excellence (DRIVE) working group in Fall 2013. Staffed by faculty from across our campus, DRIVE’s purpose is to support and accelerate department and college-level efforts to

recruit prospective faculty members from traditionally underrepresented populations (Office of Diversity, Equity and Access website, retrieved January, 2015).

Another dynamic addition to current initiatives at Illinois is the Office of Inclusion and Intercultural Relations, housed under the umbrella of the Office of Students Affairs. This campus unit administratively oversees the five cultural centers on campus, as well as the Gay, Bisexual, Transgender Resource Center; the Diversity & Social Justice Education; and the Women's Resources Center. The Office of Inclusion and Intercultural Relations (OIIR) "seeks to improve campus climate by providing transformative learning experiences to the Illinois community that result in an appreciation for diversity and cross-cultural engagement" and works to increase the number of underrepresented students on campus (OIIR website, retrieved, January 2015). These salient efforts may start exacting change that positively affects others and is the only way kinesiology departments and the field at large will attract and retain students and faculty whose research interests focus on humanistic, embodied movement practices. Ananya Chatterjea (2004), a choreographer and dance scholar who envisions her work in the field of dance as a "call to action", applies her version of the term *intervention* when used to define the choreographic project Batty Moves (Zollar, 1995):

By the term intervention here, I refer to the practice of interrupting or bending expectations in technical or choreographic structures, particularly so that other possibilities for meaning making are opened up (p180).

#### Interruptions/Interventions/Recommendations for the future

In interrupting the expectations of traditional kinesiology ideologies via collaboration within and outside of sub-disciplines, decision makers advocating on our behalf, and a unified commitment of placing humanistic, subjective movement to the forefront, decreasing or

eliminating the existing gap between the humanities and sciences in the field is inevitable.

Suggestions include:

1. Departmental funding for scholars and community folk who are performing this type of work, and access to space on campus in which to conduct focus groups, interviews, dance workshops and classes that are offered to the entire campus and community.
2. An implementation of a Cultural Kinesiology Student Association that attends to the socio-political and cultural needs of students in the department as well as addresses the concerns of these students' varying backgrounds.
3. Making kinesiology desirable/available to the artist. A virtual welcome packet detailing department happenings and programs that are available to those students who may not be in a larger area of concentration, such as exercise physiology, would contribute to a more welcoming climate.
4. Mandatory diversity training for all staff, including faculty. Leadership expert John Maxwell (2013) advises "people buy into the leader before they buy into the vision". Students need to know that the department, faculty and staff can be trusted. There is an urgent need for the faculty and staff to learn what is appropriate to say to and do for their students, as well as how to work with students who do not share their same cultural or racial backgrounds.
5. A Kinesiology Student Association that does more than just 'events'. Yes, 5k Walk/Runs and bake sales, notable, but providing space and opportunities for undergraduate students to express academic and personal issues that concern them is imperative for this organization to be effective.

6. Purposeful, strident efforts to develop formal collaborations with the Department of Dance which include cross-disciplinary opportunities such as permission to take high level dance classes, participate in independent projects with professors, as well as grant writing and publishing opportunities.

This will be the start in a long journey that if taken on with honest intention, can evolve into a beautiful story. Kinesiology's beginnings ensure that my knowledge production within these walls and this field have a place at the table. I was supposed to dance this dissertation, using my subjective, embodied experiences and as Norm Denzin and Syndy Sydnor enthusiastically encouraged, "dance your research right there on that table" during my oral defense. In this space and time, it was not possible, but it is my hope that through this work, a 'politics of possibility' can replace a 'politics of respectability', and someone will come along and do just that. Until then, I believe that if I dance long, hard and often enough in just my little corner of the room, the voyeurs will become willing participants, and my seemingly undecipherable hips will become a language that is at the very least recognizable, regardless of whether it is accepted or understood.

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