

DANCE AS COMMUNICATION:
HOW HUMANS COMMUNICATE THROUGH DANCE AND
PERCEIVE DANCE AS COMMUNICATION

by

SAMANTHA ROUNDS

A THESIS

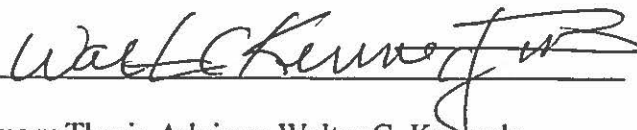
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AS COMMUNICATION IN THE NATURAL WORLD

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This thesis is an offspring of the question: What is dance? Consideration of this question prompts the task of first defining dance. *What Is Dance? : Readings in Theory and Criticism* by Roger Copeland and Marshall Cohen lends insight into developing a definition for dance that works well for this thesis which embraces the focus of how dance serves as a means of communication. Since dance involves gesture, defining “gesture” becomes the first step in developing a working definition of dance. Susanne K. Langer in *What Is Dance?* refers to “gesture” as “vital movement” and suggests that “dance motion is gesture, or an element in the exhibition of gesture” (28). Tossing in his theory on what defines dance a few more pages later in the book, Paul Valery observes that St Augustine once pondered the concept of “dance” and defined dance in terms of time. According to St. Augustine, dance is inseparable from the concept of time; he theorizes, “the dance after all is merely a form of time, the creation of a kind of time, or of a very distinct and singular species of time” (59). Grafting the two theories of dance, a definition of dance starts to evolve: Dance is time dedicated to meaningful gesture.

However, dance communicates meaning, too. Roger Copeland even suggests that “the soul is *in* the body” (518). Therefore, for the purpose of this thesis, dance is defined by this definition: Dance is time dedicated to meaningful gesture stemming from the soul’s need to reach out and express itself in an energy force beyond words. This definition encapsulates the aspects of dance as communication, not simply as entertainment.

Needless to say, dance has traditionally been viewed as a form of entertainment. Certainly, dancers have received accolades, and dance is credited as a means of artistic expression which involves technique, stamina, discipline, and creativity. However, dance is much more than one of the celebrated performing arts. It is a significant means of communication—communication in which the soul expresses itself through meaningful gesture—ubiquitous and important. Dance as communication is not always linked with music. Communication through dance is not music driven but rather body and soul driven. Dance involves the entire body, and the body can be a powerful agent of communication. Copeland even maintains that dance is “the conversion of bodily energy into something more spiritual, something worthy of the soul” (518). The soul of the dancer is inevitably tied to the expression communicated through the dancer’s movement.

French painter, Edgar Degas who dedicated much of his career to drawing and painting dancers eloquently observes, “It is the movement of people and things which consoles us. If the leaves on the trees didn’t move, how sad the trees would be—and so should we.” Therefore, this thesis will focus on dance as a means of communication and will explore how dance has been essential to human societies throughout history and into the present day. This thesis will acknowledge the concept of dance as a means of

communication in order to prove that dance is pervasive and vital in its presence in human societies throughout the world.

As a means of communication, dance is used to lure and keep mates; define and perpetuate gender roles; form and cultivate social and cultural bonds; and even express societal and political expectations and preferences. It can also be used as a weapon for rebellion. Additionally, dance can be a means of improving cognitive abilities which allows for greater communication in especially older adults. Dance is indeed not confined to simply a component of the performing arts even though that in and of itself is a method of communication. Significantly, dance plays a bigger role in communication; it is communication through physical movements not reliant on vocal elements and sounds. The soul is a powerful force. The soul sometimes has something really big to say—something that cannot be conveyed through the limitations of mere words alone. That is when dance steps in and allows the soul to speak through the body. Perhaps this is what is meant by the expression “Dance from the Heart.”

In the preface to their book, *No Fixed Points: Dance in the Twentieth Century*, Nancy Reynolds and Malcolm McCormick recognize the importance of dance in the human experience. They state, “In the past hundred years, dance has emerged both as an independent art to be reckoned with and a new humanistic discipline” (Reynolds & McCormick xiii). Today, interest in dance may be due to television shows like “Dancing with the Stars” and “So You Think You Can Dance.” Dance shows such as these reach large audiences and even invite the public to weigh in and judge the dancers via a voting process. Dance, as a result, has evolved into a popular form of entertainment for the masses. One does not have to buy a ticket to see phenomenal

dancing; one can do so from the comfort of a living room sofa via a remote device.

Televised dancing has kept dance more in the public eye and accessible. However, the importance of dance goes well beyond challenging choreography and glitzy costumes.

This thesis will focus on dance as it pertains to humanism and the need for humans to communicate. Therefore, dance will not be relegated to simply a music-driven performance genre; it will be treated as an essential ingredient to life itself.

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Chapter 1: Introduction / Background/ Literature Review

Dance is a method of communication which is not fettered to verbal sounds or acquisition of spoken languages. Dance is communication through physical movements not reliant on vocal elements or linguistics, and it is vital to human communication. Therefore, it is important to investigate the significant ways that dance is used as communication by humans. There is much literature to support the concept of dance as communication. This thesis will link evidence from a variety of sources to show that communicating through dance has historical roots. One such source is Clement Crisp and Edward Thorpe's *The Colourful World of Ballet* in which the authors credit dance as historically significant:

Mankind has always danced. He expresses himself through movement and when he shows his emotions it is often gestures rather than words that tell what he feels. There are cave paintings from prehistory that suggest how those very first artists were trying to capture the excitement of movement as they hunted for food, and in primitive communities today tribes dance to invoke rain, to placate their gods or celebrate some festival. In Ancient Egypt and in classical Greece the dance was in very early times a way of worshipping the gods, and from these rituals there developed the basic elements of all our present theatre. (6)

The central textual sources for this thesis are *Dancing in the Streets* by Barbara Ehrenreich and *What Is Dance?: Readings in Theory and Criticism* by Roger Copeland and Marshall Cohen. Ehrenreich delves into anthropology and history to find evidence that dancing is grounded in the ability to communicate, to bond, to celebrate, and even

to rebel. Ehrenreich acknowledges that the need to dance is a foundation of human societies, and she provides evidence of archeological findings that supports the fact that dance was important as far back as the Paleolithic era or Stone Age and theorizes, “So well before people had a written language, and possibly before they took up a settled lifestyle, they danced and understood dancing as an activity important enough to record on stone” (Ehrenreich 22).

Furthermore, Ehrenreich elaborates on the various ways that dance has historically been a means of communication. In particular, she describes dance as powerful in its ability to bond:

Go back ten thousand years and you will find humans tolling away at the many mundane activities required for survival: hunting, food gathering, making weapons and garments, beginning to experiment with agriculture. But if you land on the right moonlit night or seasonal turning point, you might also find them engaged in what seems, by comparison, to be a gratuitous waste of energy: dancing in lines or circles, sometimes wearing masks or what appear to be costumes, often waving branches or sticks. Most likely, both sexes would be dancing, each in its separate line or circle. Their faces and bodies might be painted with red ochre, or so archaeologists guess from the widespread presence of that colored ore in the sites of human settlements. (21)

Copeland and Cohen invite varied thoughts on dance philosophy and compile essays and lectures which address the concept of dance through theories and critical analysis central to the question: *What is dance?* Their book helps define “dance” for the

purpose of this thesis. It examines both the spiritual and physical aspects of dance as it seeks to establish itself as an important means of communication. This thesis will explore the idea of dance as communication through synthesis of a variety of literature which is based on theory, research and observation.

Chapter 2: Methodology/ Research Questions

Methodology:

This thesis will develop through a means of sound theory, my own dance experience, and the many and varied writings on the nature of communication through dance. My research will involve articles as well as books. I will also examine photos, drawings, paintings, and contemporary media in order to thoroughly investigate the history and many facets of communication through dance. As with any research-based thesis, much inquiry into sources resulted in an information-driven overview and a deeper understanding of a wide spectrum of views that may or may not be included in the final product. However, even “dead ends” in research are often worthwhile for they direct focus to unintended pathways that end up being quite worthy of further examination and analysis. Gaining knowledge is, after all, never a meaningless endeavor.

Research Question 1: What is dance?

Hypothesis 1: Before any investigation into how dance is used as a method of communication can evolve a working definition of “dance” needs to be established. It is evident that dance involves movement or gestures, and it certainly involves time. However, dance arises out of the soul’s need to communicate. Therefore, dance may be defined as time dedicated to meaningful gesture stemming from the soul’s need to reach out and express itself in an energy force beyond words. This definition is certainly befitting of the communication need that most humans have.

Research Question 2: Why are humans able to communicate through dance?

Hypothesis 2: Humans have a connection to music and rhythms that allow them to dance. Humans have an innate need to dance as a form of communication. The soul, the driving force behind the need to dance, is quite powerful. Also, there is an innate need in humans to communicate in order to work both independently and collectively. Collaboration allows humans to solve problems, to create, and to bond. Dance can play a role in the collaboration process.

Research Question 3: What are the ways that dance has served as a means of communication for humans?

Hypothesis 3: Dance has been used to select mates, bond, protest/rebel, celebrate, and even alleviate emotional impediments that discourage or limit communication.

Chapter 3: The Ability to Dance

Most humans possess the ability to dance. Through her interview with Aniruddh Patel, a cognitive neuroscientist and neurobiologist, Dingfelder found that science has uncovered reasons humans (and even some birds) have this unique talent—the talent to dance to the beat of music. Patel explains, “Dance requires a brain that’s been wired up to reproduce complex sounds” (qtd. in Dingfelder 1). To this end, Dingfelder adds that even some birds such as cockatoos, macaws, and parrots are, like humans, “well-established vocal learners” (Dingfelder 1). This human characteristic is important to the ability to dance. Patel theorizes, “The reason that cockatoos and humans can dance, while monkeys and dogs can’t is that we are vocal learners. That is, we hear sounds and mimic them—a skill that requires close connections between our auditory and motor circuits” (qtd. in Dingfelder 1).

In her blog “Why Do Animals Dance?,” Anna Newby discusses the significant scientific research surrounding the investigation into dance as it relates to humans. There is evidence to connect the rhythms in music with the effects such rhythms have on the ability to dance and especially to synchronize movements to specific rhythmic patterns. Newby observes that the “ability to sense rhythm could help animals distinguish among sounds from different sources and help them synchronize their movements” (Newby np). Citing evidence from brain research that indicates that “[s]tructures like the basal ganglia are known to be important for timing, and areas of the parietal cortex are thought to help coordinate different cerebral regions,” Newby maintains that brain research supports the concept that humans are gifted with the ability to dance.

Daniel Lord Smail, in his book, *On Deep History and the Brain*, acknowledges that humans are equipped to produce an array of sounds. By pointing out this fact, Smail lends support to a significant connection between the ability to dance and the ability to produce complex vocalizations—sounds. This, of course, fuels the notion that dance is a vital means of human communication. Erich Jarvis, PhD, a neuroscientist at Duke University, reasons that humans have “brain wiring that allows them to mimic sound” and that “the basal ganglia—a deep brain structure involved in motor control—is important to vocal learning” (qtd. in Dingfelder 2). Describing humans as vocal learners, Smail observes, “Our bodies, by virtue of the genomes they carry, are capable of providing us with a whole palette of sounds. But it is our own life histories, the variations between the alleles we carry, and perhaps above all, the cultures we live in that write the actual music” (Smail 158). In other words, humans are naturally vocal learners who have evolved via mutation of genes (alleles) to also become composers of music.

In terms of the human experience, dance and music are often linked. Although dance does not need music in order to provide a means of communication, the two can work in tandem especially within the scope of performing arts. Dance, as an art form, is quite often used to physically illustrate (communicate) musical messages to an audience. However, as Susanne K. Langer points out in Roger Copeland and Marshall Cohen’s book *What Is Dance?: Readings in Theory and Criticism*, dance performance is not necessarily a means of communicating real, heartfelt emotion. Describing dance as performance, Langer points out that it is “*imagined feeling* that governs the dance, not real emotional conditions” (Langer qtd. in Copeland & Cohen 31). The dance

performer's goal is to communicate emotion through movement—oftentimes movement choreographed to musical passages. Dance gestures align with the music and are, more than likely, carefully designed to promote a desired emotional experience for observers or members of an audience. For example, if the music and choreography require a dancer to portray anger, joy, fear, or some other emotion, the dancer would execute gestures that convey that emotion to an audience. The dancer's soul would not initiate the movements though because the performance elements would drive the display of emotion, not the dancer's need to express what he or she truly feels. These dance movements are what Langer calls "virtual gestures." They are gestures that are real enough to appear genuine, and therefore can affect the emotional experience of an audience if not always the dancer communicating them.

Considering the notion that "gesture" is vital and expressive movement and that "virtual" means "almost" or "nearly," it can thus be assumed that "virtual gesture" is gesture that is nearly as expressive as "actual" gesture. It gives the appearance of being genuine without necessarily stemming from the dancer's soul. Virtual gesture befittingly serves dance performance by humans as a means of expression. It is worthwhile to note that movement itself is more straightforward than the emotional façade communicated through virtual gesture. Within the realm of dance, movement brings about changes in physical shape, location, or both. Langer maintains, "Dance gesture is not real gesture, but virtual" (31). Humans can be particularly adept at "virtual" dance gesture. In other words, dance gesture expresses emotions that are not necessarily genuine but that still communicate emotions. Langer notes that dance performance is sometimes dance gesture which "is *actual movement*, but *virtual self-*

expression” (31). To this end, Langer suggests, “Virtual gesture may create the semblance of self-expression without anchoring it in the actual personality...” (33).

Here, Langer elaborates on the virtual aspect of dance:

In the dance, the actual and virtual aspects of gesture are mingled in complex ways. The movements, of course, are actual; they spring from an intention, and are in this sense actual gestures; but they are not the gestures they seem to be, because they seem to spring from feeling, as indeed they do not. The dancer’s actual gestures are used to create a semblance of self-expression, and are thereby transformed into virtual spontaneous movement, or virtual gesture. (33)

Notably, Smail stresses that ability to engage in music composition is unique to the human experience. Furthermore, specific characteristics of the voice have equipped humans with a level of creativity which exceeds that of other species of vocal learners. To this end, Smail notes, “A great deal of evidence, ranging from artistic patterns to the shape of the palate and the position of the voice box, now points to the idea of a creative explosion” (195). Even though many species use movements to indicate responses, it seems only a few can use dance as a venue for artistic expression. The notion of dance constituting artistic expression is anecdotal. Furthermore, only humans can actually write music, and then dance (specifically choreographed or not) to the rhythms of the musical compositions. It is important to note that as a distinct means of communication, however, dance is not fettered to music. Dance can facilitate communicative expression with or without the involvement of music.

This link between the human ability to write music and then choreograph movements to fit music is somewhat important when examining ways that various human societies have constructed dances to communicate important aspects of their unique cultures. Music does have real significance for many humans. In fact, according to Michael D. Lemonick in his piece “Why Your Brain Craves Music,” music powerfully affects the human brain and empowers humans to exercise a degree of dominance over other animals. To this point, Lemonick says, “Music may, in other words, tap into brain mechanism that was key to our evolutionary progress. The ability to recognize patterns and generalize from experience, to predict what’s likely to happen in the future—in short, the ability to imagine—is something that humans do far better than any other animals. It’s what allowed us...to take over the world” (Lemonick np). The fact that music and dance are often linked (even though dance as communication is not always music driven) makes the two a significant force in terms of communication.

Chapter 4: Dance and Mate Selection

Dance, along with dancing behaviors or movements, has a special place in the lives of humans. In Roger Copeland and Marshall Cohen's book, *What Is Dance?: Readings in Theory and Criticism*, John Martin discusses dance as a means of communication. Martin notes, "Because of the inherent contagion of bodily movement, which makes the onlooker feel sympathetically in his own musculature the exertions he sees in somebody else's musculature, the dancer is able to convey through movement the most intangible emotional experience" (Martin qtd. in Copeland & Cohen 22). Martin goes on to observe that dance is a means of not only communicating but of transferring "emotional experiences" through movement. Here Martin seems to support the concept that dance, when used to communicate, is fueled and energized by the soul. He goes on to conclude that a purpose of dance is in "the communication of emotional experiences—intuitive perceptions, elusive truths—which cannot be communicated in reasoned terms or reduced to mere statement of fact" (22). Since dance can be a means of communication simmering in a wide range of emotions, it is easy to see how it is used to both lure and keep mates. After all, mating is an emotionally charged experience—one in which dance is a perfect conduit for desire, passion, lust, and, perhaps, even love and affection.

Because it requires a degree of physical prowess, dancing provides a way to test whether or not a mate is sufficiently robust. The survival of a species often depends on the physical adeptness of its progeny. Mates who can both protect and produce in superior fashion are most desirable. Interestingly, the maypole has been connected with human festivities involving dance. However, the use of the maypole with these dances

has also been known as “a signal of defiance and a call to action” (Ehrenreich 105). Throughout history, humans have categorized the maypole in its “traditional role as a signal for public festivity” (Ehrenreich 110). Thus, the use of the maypole enhanced human dancing to communicate both sexual desire and feelings of defiance.

Within human societies, the maypole has long been associated with sexual celebrations. According to Moe in “May Day, the Maypole and the Illuminati,” many world cultures have engaged in festivities that feature the maypole as a phallic symbol. Moe elaborates, “In addition to the music, singing and dancing, there are also climbing contests to see who can climb the king’s phallus the fastest...” (Moe np). The phallic symbol nature of the maypole is believed to have originated with the ancient Egyptian story of Osiris who was dismembered—his body cut into fourteen pieces and then scattered over Egypt. Moe explains that Isis, wife of Osiris, was able to find all of his remains “except one, his penis, which was swallowed by a fish” (np). Therefore, the maypole has a strong connection to sexual vitality and fertility. Moe confirms, “The Maypole is actually an ancient symbol of fertility and also the Egyptian God and King Osiris’ phallus. The Maypole is a modern-day portable ancient phallic symbol that is meant to represent the male generative powers in the phallus, which is really just an idol or image of an erect penis” (np). Humans have danced around maypoles—women often carrying flowers and wreaths—in order to celebrate and communicate sexual urges.

Humans have also long connected dance with mating. Theories suggest that those who excel at dancing attract mates easier than those who do not. Some theories even suggest that good dancing is sometimes associated with having good genes for

superior progeny. Ehrenreich notes that historically there has been an underlying connection between adeptness in dancing and success in luring mates:

There may even have been what evolutionary biologists call sexual selection for the ability to dance well, or at least make a good appearance at the dance—just as there appears to have been sexual selection for males with deep voices and females with hourglass figures. The ability to dance or make music is not confined to a single sex, but we are often attracted to individuals who excel at these activities, and this could have given them a definite reproductive advantage. (27).

During the human mating process, dance often serves as a means of conveying gender roles. Notably, however, the underlying message of gender roles in human dance styles does not always align with the concept of *gender neutrality* promoted by current societal and political trends. Human men and women, by in large, dance differently as dictated by sexual impulses and deep-seated gender roles. Dingfelder shares the view of William Michael Brown, PhD, a psychologist and dance researcher at Queen Mary University of London and the University of East London. Connecting dance to the human mating process, Brown offers, “In Western societies, we go to nightclubs and dance, and it seems very much linked to sex” (qtd. in Dingfelder 2). Many humans seem to use dance as a means of applying the “good-gene model” to mate selection. Brown reasons, “In particular, people may use dance to spot genetically robust mates” (qtd. Dingfelder 2).

Furthermore, the evolution of dance may indeed be linked to survival. Good and strong dancers show stamina and the ability to provide for families—traits which have

been historically necessary for the survival of a species. Acknowledging research that points to this concept, Brown notes, “Preliminary data suggest that good dancers cover more ground without burning as much energy. Those who have the ability to move efficiently would definitely reap survival and mating benefits. Dance which is connected with mating (or at least with luring mates) is highly competitive. Mating, after all, involves the survival of the species and is generally not taken lightly. For males, the ability to dance with a sense of vigor is imperative. Ehrenreich points out that to be “‘outdanced’ is to risk reproductive failure, probably for the deeper evolutionary reason that the ‘girls’ will, at some unconscious level, judge you less capable of participating in group defense” (28).

Interestingly, humans tend to be more attracted to symmetrical mates rather than to ones that are asymmetrical. Potential mates who are symmetrical tend to be more coordinated when they dance; those who are asymmetrical typically demonstrate less coordination. Brown explains how dance is used as a means for spotting asymmetries by humans:

Past research suggests that people and other animals prefer symmetrical mates, and scientists believe this is because small differences in the two halves of the body reveal developmental snafus, disease and perhaps even defective genes. However, without whipping out a ruler on a date, it’s pretty tough to tell whether a person’s left ear is a millimeter longer than the right. So perhaps we use dance to make asymmetries—and the developmental and genetic problems they indicate—more apparent. (qtd. in Dingfelder 2)

Therefore, dance can be seen as a popular means of communicating sexual tension (urges or longings) in the mating process. Dance can, choreographically, exploit gender differences in order to simulate mating rituals and put sexual desire center stage on the dance floor. If the soul has a need to summon a mate for sexual companionship, dance is indeed a conduit for expressing that need and, thereby, eventually satisfying that need.

Chapter 5: Mood-Altering and Gender Roles in Dance

Another important characteristic of dance is its mood-altering nature which often contributes to its ability to communicate sexual desire. On this aspect of dance, Smail notes that there are actually many animals who “engage in mood-altering activities” and that early human societies (Paleolithic) “added a new range of mood-altering practices, including song, dance, ritual, and a variety of mood-altering substances” (160). The mood-altering nature of courtship dances ultimately invites mating. Many humans find some forms of dance mood-altering preludes to sexual intimacy. Particularly within the human societies, the consumption of alcohol or of mind-altering drugs is often part of the recreational dance experience.

Additionally, many human females (testing the “good-gene” theory) seem to gravitate to males who present themselves as physically strong through dance. Dance is a conduit for gender role display. Some human males, however, choose not to dance because they feel dancing makes them appear vulnerable. Females though are usually attracted to males who demonstrate stamina and an ability to display robust movements through dance. Male stamina and upper-body strength is vital to the execution of strength moves such as partnering lifts. Dingfelder points to research by Bernhard Fink, PhD. Fink is a psychology professor at the University of Goettingen in Germany. In addition to using dance as a mood-altering experience and a way of finding symmetrical men, Fink also maintains that “women also prefer the dances of stronger men and those who had high exposure to testosterone in the womb” (qtd. in Dingfelder 2). Dance which communicates male vigor can be particularly appealing to females who innately may prefer mates that are physically strong.

It is not surprising that dance communicates gender roles. Typically, in partner dancing, the male leads and the female follows. Considering the famous dancing team of Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers, it has been noted that Ginger Rogers did everything Fred Astaire did—only backwards and in heels. Initially too, the practice of ballerinas dancing on pointe captured an essence of femininity.

In Copeland and Cohen’s book *What Is Dance?: Readings in Theory and Criticism*, Selma Jeanne Cohen acknowledges this aspect of the female gender role and ballet dancing.¹ Cohen states, “The advent of women’s dancing on point was stimulated by the tastes of the Romantics for ethereal, ghost-like maidens” (Cohen 18). Or



course, this characterization of female dancers as “ghost-like maidens” is historically connected to the Romantic view of females and what those females depicted while dancing on their toes. The Chinese culture, for example, did not see femininity as enhanced by standing aloft blocks on toes. Their preference was to instead bind the toes of females to create the illusion of smaller feet.²



Oddly enough, there is at least

one dance theorist who maintains that the striptease, a dance in which dancers (in large

¹ Figure 1: Early Picture (Romantic’s view) of female ballet dancer (ballerina) on point. Lithograph by Chalon and Lane of Marie Taglioni as Flora in Didelot’s *Zéphire et Flore*. London, 1831 (Victoria and Albert Museum/Sergeyev Collection) <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marie-Taglioni>

² Figure 2: Chinese Foot Binding www.theguardian.com Unbound: China’s last ‘lotus feet’ in pictures . 15 June 2015

part female) take off their clothes is not an overt display of erotic femininity. Roland Barthes, in Copeland and Cohen's book of dance theories and criticisms, analyzes the art of striptease as not so much a dance to simply communicate sexual desire, but rather a dance submerged in much more complexity. There is a voyeuristic aspect to striptease, and the audience of voyeurs is privy to a variety of messages—messages that characterize striptease as a means of ritual and messages that expose striptease as a dance emerging out of a deep sense of fear. Barthes claims there is much contradiction in striptease, and in fact, the contradictions of striptease make it a complex means of dance communication:

Woman is desexualized at the very moment when she is stripped naked. We may therefore say that we are dealing in a sense with a spectacle based on fear, or rather on the pretense of fear, as if eroticism here went no further than a sort of delicious terror, whose ritual signs have only to be announced to evoke at once the idea of sex and its conjuration. (512)

Furthermore, Barthes suggests, "Contrary to the common prejudice, the dance which accompanies the striptease from beginning to end is in no way an erotic element. It is probably quite the reverse; the faintly rhythmical undulation in this case exorcizes the fear of immobility" (513). What is involved in the striptease is the shedding of covering. However, it is the means by which garments are "stripped away" that calls upon the power of dance to communicate that the dancer is merely returning to a natural state. After all, humans are not born clothed in garments. To have nothing covering the body is completely natural. Barthes theorizes, "The end of the striptease is then no longer to drag into the light a hidden depth, but to signify, through the shedding of an

incongruous and artificial clothing, nakedness as a natural vesture of woman, which amounts in the end to regaining a perfectly chaste state of the flesh” (512). It is essential to note, however, that Barthes’ theory of the female striptease dancer stems from a male perspective of female striptease.

Adding to the complexity of striptease as communication is the notion that those who practice striptease as a profession may actually send mixed messages to their viewers. After all, striptease dancers are in a profession which relies on their ultimately revealing themselves in their most vulnerable state—nudity. As the striptease dancer slowly reveals her naked body, she invites her audience to see her as a sexual object. At the same time, however, she is not actually looking for potential sexual partners; she is, in fact, just doing her job. She is a working, professional striptease artist, and her soul is not actually seeking to communicate a need to satisfy sexual longing or to reproduce. To this end, Barthes acknowledges the fact that the dance of striptease is not actually a means of communication for sexual engagement:

Thus we see the professionals of striptease wrap themselves in the miraculous ease which constantly clothes them, makes them remove, gives them the icy indifference of skillful practitioners, haughtily taking refuge in the sureness of their technique: their science clothes them like a garment. (513)

Dance icon and entertainment artist, Josephine Baker was no stranger to the power ironically embedded in the nude dances of females. As an African American of the 1930s, Baker knew all too well how racism and prejudice could diminish the self-esteem of entertainers of color. Therefore, she used both her dancing and her gender to

create a world in which she was in control and in which she had a sense of power.

Bennetta Jules-Rosette, in the book *Josephine Baker in Art and Life: The Icon and the Image*, describes how Baker used nudity as a means of controlling her own destiny and of communicating the image of herself she chose to the world. Concerning Baker's view of nudity, Jules-Rosette clarifies, "As a means of breaking through conventional barriers, nudity in stage performance is also a source of empowerment, Josephine further complicates the matter by her pan-sexuality and private love of nudity as a youth" (Jules-Rosette 67).

It seems that, for Baker, the shock value of females unabashedly appearing in public in the nude added to her confidence (driven perhaps by her soul's spirit of defiance) and her sense of empowerment. Jules-Rosette further explains that Baker "was not above using her nude swimming as a strategy to surprise and disarm stuffy journalists and intrusive tourists. In her gender politics, Josephine vacillated between extremes in establishing an identity discourse of destabilization and female empowerment," and that Baker's strategies "are evident in both her alternating styles of dress and her moralistic yet seductive music" (67-68).

As a black woman, Baker approached nude dancing with the confident understanding that the two sides of her identity—her race and her gender—were on public display in their most vulnerable form. Even so, she let her soul communicate through her body in the fashion she chose. Baker was in control, not the audiences (primarily men) who watched her. To this end, Jules-Rosette explains, "Baker manipulated the male gaze and patriarchal fantasies as features of her performances" (282). Jules-Rosette also concludes that Baker's dancing had broader implications and

that she “used her changing theatrical roles as a basis for forming alternative communities, performing politics, and setting new agendas of cultural possibility in the representation of self” (283). Baker used her nudity in tandem with her dancing to communicate the sense of power she felt in her soul. She did this despite the conventions of the time period in which she lived.

In their book, *No Fixed Points: Dance in the Twentieth Century*, Nancy Reynolds and Malcolm McCormick bring up an interesting point about women and physical exercise. They discuss the fact that around the late nineteenth-century dance became fused with the practice of vigorous exercise. As the popularity of staying physically fit swept society, women discovered that dance allowed them to express themselves creatively, and they gained self-confidence. Feminism found roots in especially free style and modern dance. Discussing the impact of modern dance on American women, Reynolds and McCormick note that “American modern dance offered the opportunity for real expression” to American women who “possessed the most important attributes: a disquieted mind, irrepressible enthusiasm, and strong supple bodies” (3). Women were primed and ready to expand their roles in society beyond the boundaries of domesticity and submissiveness. Using dance to move in expressive and unconventional ways helped women to see themselves as not just the biblical Adam’s rib but as strong, capable individuals who could engage in and enjoy dance without being led by a male partner.

Here too, modern dance pioneer Isadora Duncan projected the liberating effects that dance would have on women.³ She had a sense that dance would free the soul to express itself in ways that went beyond the limitations of speech. Duncan herself was a bold advocate for the rights of women to overcome expectations of gender which confined women to only certain roles—roles that often were submissive to the will of men. Citing the thoughts of Duncan, Reynolds and McCormick state that Duncan “promised that ‘the dancer of the future will be one whose body and soul have grown so harmoniously together that the natural language of that soul will have become the movement of the body...She will not dance in the form of a nymph, nor fairy, nor coquette, but in the form of woman in its greatest and purest expression’” (14). These are powerful words supporting the connection between the soul and its ability to express itself through the energy of dance. Even as early as 1903, Duncan saw the bond between the soul and dance as liberating for women. She would go on to say women would eventually recognize that they can find a sense of freedom through dance. Reynolds and McCormick note that Duncan felt strongly that dance could empower women by unshackling them from the fetters of social constructs of what their gender could and could not do when she claims, “‘She will dance the freedom of women;...she will dance the body emerging again from centuries of



³ Figure 3: Isadora Duncan
www.pinterest.com Isadora with scarves.

civilized forgetfulness,...no longer at war with spirituality and intelligence, but joining them in a glorious harmony” (14)

Over the course of history, women began to recognize dance as a way of freeing their souls to engage in a means of expression powerful and creative. Along the way, too, men found that dance would allow them to move beyond the boundaries of their perceived gender roles. Men discovered that dance enables their souls to communicate through the distinct physical nature of their bodies—their muscles and their



testosterone. Like Isadora Duncan, Ted Shawn was a notable pioneer of modern dance who saw dance as a way to expand gender roles.⁴ Shawn wanted to give men the chance to use dance to sever itself from the tradition that categorized dance as effeminate and perhaps even beneath the dominant role men were assigned in society. It seems that Shawn virtually exploited masculinity to make his point.

According to Reynolds and McCormick, Shawn, from 1933 to 1940, gathered together a troupe of male dancers in order to illustrate that dance was a worthy endeavor even of men. Shawn wanted to expose the artistry of male dancing with vigor and with

⁴ Figure 4: Ted Shawn and his male dancers
Ted Shawn and His Men Dancers performing “Olympiad” at Jacob’s Pillow near Lee, Massachusetts, summer 1932 www.pinterest.com

male athleticism:

Still in his performing prime, he [Shawn] directed a company of male dancers from 1933 to 1940 with the aim of making dancing for men respectable in a country hidebound by puritanism that only a generation previously had considered all dancing on a level with prostitution.

Shawn's dancers were muscular athletes, and the repertory was laced with war dances, labor dances, and sports dances. (29)

Both Josephine Baker and Ted Shawn seemed to embrace the notion that gender could be celebrated through dance. Baker removed her clothes, at times, and let the world see her dance unfettered to garments that masked her gender in any way. Shawn welcomed the display of masculinity in his male dancers. Neither Baker nor Shawn shied away from what they wanted to express regarding gender through the means of dance.

Chapter 6: Bonding Through Dance

Dance is not only credited as a means of getting a mate, it may also play an important role in keeping a mate. To this end, Brown explains, “Dance doesn’t just help you attract a mate; it also may help you keep one. Swans, for example, paddle circles around lakes in perfect sync with their mates, a movement that seems to deter potential interlopers” (qtd. in Dingfelder 3). Brown also acknowledges that “the same may be true for humans” and adds that couples who dance together “in tightly coordinated ways” quite often “signal that they are highly bonded and committed to one another” (qtd. in Dingfelder 3). It is highly likely that human couples communicate trust and loyalty—trust and loyalty which stem from their very souls—to each other through dance.

The bonding nature of dance, however, goes well beyond its role in unifying mating couples. According to sexologist and social theorist, Havelock Ellis, dance is pervasive in human life. In Copeland and Cohen’s *What Is Dance? : Readings in Theory and Criticism*, Ellis explains that “dance functions in all the major manifestations of human life: religions, love, art, morals” and that in the modern world “dancing is known mainly as a profession, an amusement, and an art. But at all times dancing has been customary and has influenced the socializing and moralizing of the species” (Ellis 473-474). Dance provides a means of social communication that transcends words. The entire body works to strengthen bonds between participants. Ellis goes on to note that “apart from war, dancing is the chief factor making for social solidarity in primitive life” (474).

Dancing can strengthen communities and cultural identities by creating a common bond of shared movement. As Greek philosopher Plato stated, “You can discover more about a person in an hour of play than in a year of conversation.” When humans dance together in groups, they inevitably form bonds that foster a spirit of community. Individuals who take part in group dances find that they connect both to themselves as well as to others since the group is a synchronized entity. Michael Hove, PhD, and a psychologist at the Max Planck Institute for Human and Cognitive Brain Sciences in Germany, observes that “[s]ynchrony seems to blur the distinction between self and other” (qtd. in Dingfelder 3). Acknowledging the benefits of synchrony, Brown points out how armies and cultures have “long capitalized on this phenomenon” and how “Japanese corporations, for example, often have employees do calisthenics together in the morning to boost feelings of group membership” (qtd. in Dingfelder 3). Perhaps, these corporations have learned that individuals perform at higher production levels when they feel they belong to a group—that they are working toward similar goals along like-minded co-workers. Dancelike movements often communicate a sense of belonging and invite individuals to be part of a group.

The feeling of being part of a team is especially significant to humans. The human experience places importance on the notion of collaboration and working “for the good of society.” Dance is a means of bringing individuals together and finding commonalities. Folk dances, which are part of many cultures, give large groups of people the chance to dance and relate to others. These dances create the perfect venue for individuals to bask in the sense of belonging. Smail maintains that the sense of belonging to a group is important to many humans. He observes, “Our susceptibility to

psychotropic mechanisms ultimately lies in the fact that we are social creatures” (163). This aspect of dance also helps strengthen cultures and communities. Therefore, it is easy to see why large group dances, such as folk dances have become a part of so many cultures.

Dance indeed provides a way to meet the human need to belong to a group.⁵ As a result of the human urge to bond in social groups, dances



have emerged that give humans the ability to connect with their unique societies. The bonding nature of dance indeed opens channels of communication in ways that words alone or engagement of various forms of ritual sometimes cannot. Examining this aspect of dance, Ehrenreich concurs that dance provides a unique way for individuals to bond:

To submit, bodily, to the music through dance is to be incorporated into the community in a way far deeper than shared myth of common custom can achieve. In synchronous movement to music or changing voices, the petty rivalries and factional differences that might divide a group could be transmuted into harmless competition over one’s prowess as a dancer, or forgotten. (24)

⁵ Figure 5: Folk Dance
Original sketch done by Samantha Rounds

Belonging to a group gives one a chance to also demonstrate caring and concern for others in the group. Dance is an outlet for human empathy and understanding, and it is even way to practice patience and trust. Groups of individuals that dance together learn to wait for partners to complete choreographic movements; some partnering moves (such as lifts) are based not only on strength and balance but also on partnering trust. Scientists have long noted that geese, like humans, tend to perform most optimally when they function as a team. In his article “5 Things Geese Can Teach Us About Teamwork,” Len Wilson discusses five movement traits that wild geese exhibit that can also benefit humans. Wilson observes that when geese fly as a team, “each goose provides additional lift and reduces air resistance for the goose flying behind” and that when “a goose drops out of the v-formation, it quickly discovers that it requires a great deal more effort and energy to fly” because of the “advantage of the lifting power that comes from flying together” (Wilson 1). Studies of this aspect of geese using movement for communication have been examined and linked to improvements in human communication.

The need to bond seems to be prevalent in human societies. Of course, there are many ways to bond, and not everything or everyone embraces dance as a means of bonding. Perhaps, there may certainly be a majority of those who do not use dance to bond. Even so, dance does have the ability to bring individuals together. It does have the ability to create and strengthen bonds. Therefore, any investigation into how dance serves as a means of communication should note the bonding nature of dance. After all, being able to share common interests and strive for common goals is an important aspect of communication.

Chapter 7: Dance as Rebellion

History is riddled with protests. Typically, subjugated people want to advance their rights, and those in power want to suppress alternative voices. Means of protest and rebellion have run the litany from passive (such as peaceful protest marches and hunger strikes) to aggressive (such as street fighting and war), and dance has been a part of the history of protest and rebellion. The maypole, for example, is a historical motif for political unrest. Dancers frolicked around maypoles to protest what they deemed as social and political injustices. Observing this, Ehrenreich maintains that even the Catholic Church could not quell festive protests involving dancing and maypoles. She notes, “Although traditional festivities had been largely vitiated or expunged by the Church by the end of the eighteenth century, rural people were still in the habit of announcing their political intentions by setting up a maypole. Such maypoles served a political purpose...” (109-110). It is therefore important to consider the aspects of dance that make it an important means of protest and rebellion—a way of communicating a need for change or a refusal to conform to the status quo. Protest dance definitely springs unabashedly from the soul of the dancer.

Humans have always found ways to incorporate dance and dance-like movements into energizing rituals that summon the courage to rebel. Noting the historical context of dance as a form of rebellion throughout Europe, Ehrenreich observes that “[c]olonized peoples might use their rituals to mock the European intruders, or as the Europeans usually suspected, to whip up armed resistance” (159). Those who relied on the forced labor of enslaved workers would indeed be extremely cautious of gatherings in which their subjugated workers engaged in dance and dancing

rituals—religious or not. After all, dance has the power to connect souls and steer the passions of these souls to do whatever it takes to survive. Ehrenreich points out that those who owned slaves and “colonial administrators may have cared little what gods, if any, their slaves and subjects worshipped, but they shuddered at the collective strength such rituals invoked and represented” (163). To this end, Ehrenreich maintains that even those intent on spreading religious messages feared the power of rituals which involved collective dancing; she adds, “And while individual missionaries may have had little concerns for the profits of their fellow countrymen, they shared their dismay at the group unity so powerfully embodied in native ritual” (163). Dancing continued, decade after decade, to be the physical voice of protest.

Over the years, filmmakers have captured the notion that dance can be a way of fighting for what one believes is important. One such film is *Breakin’* produced in 1984. In his piece, “Beyond Boogaloo: The Weird, Wild and Wonderful World of Cannon’s *Breakin’* Movies,” Nathan Rabin describes how dance is used by street dancers to challenge inequities in society. In the film, according to Rabin, there is a group of “passionate street dancers” who “challenge the high-low culture divide” and use their dancing to rebel against white dominance by “putting on a big breakdancing show to save the youth rec center from being torn down to make space for an evil (i.e. white people-engineered) shopping center” (Rabin np). These street dancers use breakdancing to communicate, loudly and vehemently, that they want their needs met—that they count as members of society. Breakdancing empowers them to be persuasive; it is the way their souls express their heartfelt desires through the physicality of dance.

Perhaps the film most associated with how dance can be a form of protest is Paramount Pictures' *Footloose*. Also produced in 1984, *Footloose* is the quintessential dance-as-rebellion film. It is rife with youthful angst fueled by religious zealots who want to suppress their youthful desire (and, yes, need) to dance. To this end, Ehrenreich observes, "What has been repressed, no matter how forcibly and thoroughly, often finds a way of resurfacing" (207). It certainly does so in "Footloose." In the film, Ren McCormack, played by actor Kevin Bacon, challenges the suppression of dance by a small, rural town which has pronounced dance as evil and sinful and has, therefore, forbidden its citizens to dance. (Even though the film is fictional and produced for entertainment purposes, it does mirror the real events of Elmore, Oklahoma—a town which did actually ban dancing.)

More recent films such as *Step Up* (2006), *Stomp the Yard* (2007), and *Step Up 2: The Streets* (2008) have all illustrated how dance can lend voice to those who have otherwise had their voices stifled. *Rize*, a 2005 documentary film by photographer David LaChapelle, exposed how Clown Dancing and Krumping offered a creative remedy to the gang violence and racial tensions that lingered in South Central Los Angeles after the 1992 Rodney King trial in which white police officers were acquitted of beating black motorist Rodney King. In the film, Clown Dancing, invented by Thomas (Tommy the Clown) Johnson, and Krumping are used to try to quell the anger brewing and centered on racial differences in South Central Los Angeles.

In *TimeOut New York*, David Fear comments on the way that dancing is used as a means of social protest in this documentary. He explains that dance is used to expose

and advocate cultures whose voices have often been disregarded as unimportant or even dangerous:

Photographer David LaChapelle's documentary *Rize* follows South Central L.A.'s hyperkinetic underground cultures of 'clowning,'—gymnastic dance routines complete with, yes, traditional whiteface and red-nose getups—and 'krumping'—an offshoot that combines African tribal movement, old-school breaking and punk-rock aggressiveness. The movie mixes music-video-like sequences with fly-on-the-wall movements and has all the garish color of LaChapelle's cover shoots, but you'd be hard pressed to find a better slice of cultural anthropology or a more vibrant portrait of inner-city life. You want 'hood?' *Rize* has it, in all its ragged glory... (np)

Music, it should be noted, has traditionally had a strong influence on and a definite connection with dance. The body tends to gravitate naturally to moving to the rhythms of the beats. Even some animals, besides humans, naturally or not, easily synchronize physical movements to musical rhythms. Considering the concept that *dance is time dedicated to meaningful gesture stemming from the soul's need to reach out and express itself in an energy force beyond words*, it is not unrealistic to believe that music helps the body express what the soul feels. Therefore, any attempt to try and stifle or deny the connection between music and dance is virtually futile. The two will find a way to come together.

Even so, for many years, dictates of society required passivity while listening to music. Audiences were supposed to listen only; they were expected to squash the urge

to move to the music and simply be passive listeners. However, an understanding of the connection between music and movement proves this was an unrealistic expectation. The onslaught of rock music in the late 1950s and early 1960s buried the practice of passive listening once and for all and instead urged the souls of the counterculture to express themselves through unabashed movement and soul-driven dancing.

Years before Hip Hop and Rap became vehicles for rebellion and protest, rock music shocked societal norms and turned languid audiences into energized participants. Ehrenreich refers to this phenomenon as the “rock rebellion.” Describing the beginnings of the rock rebellion, Ehrenreich observes that “the rock rebellion manifested itself as a simple refusal to sit still or to respect anyone who insisted that one do so” (207). The natural urge to move and express oneself through movement is powerful. This urge originates in the soul and cannot be easily suppressed. Religious organizations (churches) and political rulers (via mandates) may attempt to prohibit people from expressing themselves through dance; however, they will ultimately fail. Dance has a way of prevailing.

Once the “rock rebellion” began, audiences found they wanted to join in the celebration and not simply listen to the music. When the music began, young people broke the fetters of restraint and decorum and freely danced. To this end, music worked alongside dance to empower protest through means for artistic expression. Dancers interpreted music through movement that was not accepted and definitely not encouraged by the norms of society. Dance and music were the weapons of the rebels, and Ehrenreich says the “rock rebellion” gave audiences the chance to let their souls run

free through the empowerment of dance thereby shocking those who sought to quell such behaviors:

In the late 1950s and early 1960s, Anglo-American culture was struck by an outbreak of “hysteria” or “mania” described by alarmed observers as obscene, disruptive, and even criminal. Neither the United States nor English was, in the mid-twentieth century, a likely site for such unrestrained behavior. Both societies were heavily burdened by the puritanical legacy of the sixteenth century: each had contributed to the suppression of festive and ecstatic traditions among colonized—or, in the case of the Americans, enslaved—peoples. But it may be that their very success in expunging “foreign” ecstatic traditions heightened their vulnerability to the call, when it call, when it came, to get up and move and dance and shout. (207)

As the years passed, dance evolved to be the voice of rebellion after rebellion. Originating in the 1970s, Hip Hop dancing became a means of protesting injustices, inequalities, and prejudices by interpreting the blunt lyrics of Rap music. Considered by some to be the music and dance of the streets—the urban ghettos—Rap music and Hip Hop dance spread beyond the boundaries of the inner-city and unleashed messages of protest that could not and would not be silenced. The power behind Hip Hop dancing is that it is fueled by the authenticity of the soul. In his blog “The spirit and philosophy of Hip Hop,” Anthony Thomas explains that the “[n]otions of authenticity are central to the spirit of Hip Hop. A Hip Hop driven life is about striving to be authentic, to find an

original voice and express the reality of your situation. Hip Hop wants you to listen to that inner voice, that inner self and be yourself at all costs” (Thomas np).

Hip Hop dancing is a means of telling the truth through movement. The truth may not be easy to face, and it may make society uncomfortable. But it is the message of the soul. Thomas maintains that Hip Hop is not only about telling the truth, it is also about using irreverence as rebellion:

The need to tell the truth is fundamental to Hip Hop. Telling the truth is the element that gets Hip Hop into the most controversy but it also serves to highlight the nature of life for the streetz [sic] and the poor. It tells the stories through rap music that others are afraid to touch. The stories of inner city life, crack addition, prostitution, cocaine, gansterism, violence, police brutality and the effect of policy wonks 'disconnected policy [sic]. Hip Hoppas [sic] consider those that want to silence Hip Hop as enemies of the truth. Hip Hop is a revolutionary culture that revels in its irreverence. A Hip Hop driven life has no time for tradition. Hip Hop is a culture of permanent rebellion, a constant challenge to the status quo making it a culture of outsiders. Hence Hip Hop is in a constant state of flux and becoming. As soon as Hip Hop appears to be fixed it shifts. (np)

Another example of how dancelike movement can give physical voice to protest and rebellion can be observed in the hand gestures/signals of the Occupy protestors. Those



protesting via Occupy Wall Street and Occupy Boston, for instance, used a special signal language to communicate.⁶ Ian Crouch, in “What’s behind those Occupy hand signals: The power of a gesture language,” explains, “Occupy has its own signal language, a way of talking that doesn’t involve talking at all” (Crouch np). These protestors are driven to speak through their bodies and use their hands to express soul-driven emotions. Acknowledging the importance of communicating through the body (not the voice), Crouch says that the Occupy protestors brought the historical significance of “collective movements” into current society:

In their use of hand signals, however, the Occupy protestors are part of a long tradition—one with roots in other collective movements, and which also extends back through human history. Gesture systems, when they arise, can galvanize their users with a directness that speech doesn’t always share, and they have become interesting to researchers for their social effects, their mysterious origins, and their often remarkable staying power. (np)

All in all, dance is a powerful form of social protest. It allows the soul of passionate protestors to speak dynamically and meaningfully. In her blog, “Dance as Social Protest,” Lindsey Golden contends, “Universally, dance has been wielded to uncover the true beliefs of the individual spirit” (Golden np). Golden here seems to acknowledge that dance enables the soul to communicate. Continuing this train of thought, Golden goes on to say that the use of dance to communicate needs and desires is ubiquitous:

⁶ Figure 7: Occupy Hand Signals
oupy.pbworks.com

Dance as a form of social protest is a vast and unending exploration. Dance can convey messages that are universally relatable. Creating an assigning it a meaning that speaks deeply to the social condition of a community, a gender, a nation, or the world is an important expression that will continue for generations to come. (np)

Chapter 8: Dance and Cognitive Abilities

For dancers, maintaining a healthy regimen of good diet and exercise along with solid dance training is crucial for success in a career that is often short lived. Age and injury can easily terminate dance-performance careers. In addition to the demands that dance makes on the human body, the professional dancer often deals with the emotional strain of performance. Oftentimes, dancers feel pressure to communicate (albeit through virtual gesture) an array of emotions to an audience. They must do so with their bodies

and not their voices. It is, therefore, not uncommon for dancers to obsess on body image, stage fright, and other factors that impede their self-confidence. For some dancers, engaging in cognitive-behavioral therapy helps alleviate negative factors that impact their careers. In her book, *The Dancer's Way*, Linda H. Hamilton looks at ways that cognitive-behavioral therapy is helping dancers overcome inhibitions and negative thoughts that affect their success. Discussing the nature of cognitive-behavioral therapy, Hamilton says, "This form of psychotherapy is especially attractive for dancers, as well as athletes, given that thoughts and behavior have a profound effect on performance. Research shows that it helps combat a negative body image, reduce stage fright, and improve physical skills" (Hamilton 146).

Since cognitive-behavior therapy can positively affect dancers, it is easy to see that there is a link between the two—cognitive abilities and dance. According to her research, Ehrenreich finds a link between various emotional states and the experience of dancing. Dancing during certain rituals has the ability to positively impact the effects of depression and emotional trauma. Delving into the history of ritualistic dance and its connection to emotions, Ehrenreich observes, "The ecstatic rituals of non-Western peoples often have healing, as well as religious, functions (if the two kinds of functions can even be reliably distinguished), and one of the conditions they appear to heal seems to be what we know as depression" (150). Ehrenreich specifically notes how "danced rituals" have been "used to help rehabilitate severely withdrawn children" who were "traumatized by their experience as captives" in Christian Uganda in the 1900s (151). It seems that dance (and forms of dance such as that used in certain rituals) provides a way for emotionally distressed people to make unimpeded the lines of communication.

Beyond the benefits of finding and keeping mates and establishing and strengthening community and cultural bonds, dance may also be an intervention essential to improving cognitive abilities in humans. Dance research has partnered with neuroscience to explore ways that dance can help older adults physically and mentally. Those who suffer from neurological diseases such as Parkinson's disease may also benefit from therapy which involves some type of creative movement or dance. Dance may essentially help those afflicted with neurological diseases better communicate and therefore better function in society. Ahalya Hejmadi, PhD, is a psychology professor at the University of Maryland University College who studies the connection between dance and cognitive improvements. Hejmadi maintains that "a new wave of dance research...is helping scientists understand the way the brain coordinates movement" and this type of "dance research could even lead to new therapies for people with movement disorders" (qtd. in Dingfelder 1). Interestingly, some people who have Parkinson's disease are actually able to keep time to music.

After studying the impact that dance/movement therapy has on the elderly, Marcia Spindell, a Brown University Long-Term Care Quality Advisor, insists that dance improves the quality of life for aging adults who are trying to maintain the ability to communicate and to express themselves effectively. In her article, "Dance/Movement Therapy Opens Communication Pathways," Spindell explains, "Dancing is an experience that stimulates many of the senses and satisfies a fundamental human need for emotional expression through [sic] rhythm and movement. For the elderly, rediscovering this basic form of expression often reveals and rejuvenates important feelings and connections..." (Spindell 1). Moreover, Spindell goes on to describe the

various benefits and goals of dance/movement therapy such as establishing a safe environment and promoting improved overall well-being. According to Spindell, one important goal of dance/movement therapy is opening the “pathways for expression” for aging adults. Elaborating on this aspect, Spindell notes that it is vital to give the elderly a variety of ways to communicate with others by setting in place an essential goal:

...to develop the ability of participants to communicate both verbally and non-verbally. With the elderly, this may involve using creative, improvisational movement to inspire different pathways for express. An elder’s ability to articulate sounds and words, to see and hear clearly and to engage in social discourse are often enhanced when moving with others in synchrony. This can help to transcend limitations and affirm the need to reach out to others, be connected and receive needed support. (2)

In other studies of how dance impacts aging humans, neuroscientists have some conclusive evidence that indicates that older adults who dance achieve better balance and gait than those who do not. Daniel E. Lieberman of Harvard University studied the impacts of dance on the elderly, particularly those with suffering from debilitating neurological diseases and disorders, at the Puget Sound Regional Movement and Motility Disorder Clinic in Tacoma, Washington. Lieberman observed the practices of neurologist Patrick Hogan, DO, who serves as the facility’s director. In his article, “More Evidence on the Value of Dance,” Lieberman describes the efforts of Hogan who “works extensively with Parkinson’s patients and people who suffer from dystonia, a neurological disorder characterized by involuntary, debilitating muscle contractions”

and who claims that “[o]ne of the most remarkably effective therapies for movement disorders he has discovered in his long career is dancing” (Lieberman np). Likewise, in his article “Cognitive And Mobility Profile Of Older Social Dancers,” Joe Verghese, MD, notes the improvements that social dance has on aging adults. Verghese even recommends, “The long-term effects of regular social dancing on adverse outcomes such as mobility, falls, and cognitive decline in older adults should be addressed in the context of future clinical trials and longitudinal studies “(Verghese 5).

It may be that dance becomes even more significant for humans in the near future. Dance has already been observed as essential to preserving cognitive abilities in the aging. The preservation of cognitive abilities would allow these individuals to participate better and communicate more effectively in their world. Such communication through dance would give voice to their very souls. Using dance as a way to attempt to cure illness, mental or physical, is grounded in history. Ehrenreich notes, “As early as the fifth century BCE, men called *orpheotelestae* traveled through Greece offering to cure illnesses, including mental ones, by dancing around the sick person...” (40). The healing properties of dance make dance a unique way of opening channels of communication when they get clogged with the muck and mire of mental distress or physical impediments. Therefore, it is a worthwhile endeavor to continue studying the effects that dance have on human cognitive abilities. In terms of communication, dance has been able to improve cognitive abilities in older adults and give them a pathway to connect to their world.

Chapter 9: Conclusion

Dance can be defined as time dedicated to meaningful gesture stemming from the soul's need to reach out and express itself in an energy force beyond words. In other words, dance is a way of communicating. Dance is, of course, not the only means humans use to communicate; however, dance is an important one—it always has been. According to Havelock Ellis in Copeland and Cohen's *What Is Dance?: Readings in Theory and Criticism*, dance is historically significant. Ellis stresses, "Dancing is the primitive expression alike of religion and of love—of religion from the earliest human times we know of and of love from a period long anterior to the coming of man" (478). Dance is a vital means of communication on many levels. Ellis also adds, "The art of dancing, moreover, is intimately entwined with all human tradition of war, of labour, of pleasure, of education, while some of the wisest philosophers and the most ancient civilisations have regarded the dance as the pattern in accordance with which the moral life of men must be woven" (478-479).

However, pondering what exactly constitutes "dance," if indeed it is a series of meaningful gestures, is interesting. If dance is a series of "movements," then are all movements tiny "dances"? Who determines whether or not the movements are meaningful? Humans have an "ancient impulse to move to a beat" (Dingfelder 2). The ability to manipulate the body is powerful. It can lure a mate, keep a mate, and even strengthen community and cultural bonds. Dance can be used to protest social norms and rebel against prejudices. Dance often gives those who dance a conquering spirit and a sense of conquest through confidence, ability, and determination—empowering them to turn fear into victory. Reflecting on the history of dance in this regard, Ehrenreich

maintains, “The joy of the rhythmic activity would have helped overcome the fear of confronting predators and other threats, just as marching music has pumped up soldiers in historical times (26).

It is important to note that dancing has a way of reinventing itself to maintain its significance and relevance. This characteristic of dance keeps it a vital means of communication. Dance captures expression in a way not limited by words or vocal utterances, the need for music, or even for rehearsed choreography. Dance as communication is not dance that is necessarily music driven. It is also not reliant on specifically choreographed movements. Dance as communication springs from a deep, inner desire to connect with others. Ellis observes, “Dancing as an art, we may be sure, cannot die out, but will always be undergoing a rebirth. Not merely as an art, but also as a social custom, it perpetually emerges afresh from the soul of the people” (491). When dance is credited as soul-driven communication, it takes on a relevancy not usually associated with dance as simply one of the performing arts. Therefore, dance should not be diminished or ignored. Indeed, dance is a way of communicating needs and desires in order to thrive, in order to unleash the feelings of the heart, and most importantly, in order to truly live.

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Annotated Bibliography

Borgia, Gerald. "Why Do Bowerbirds Build Bowers?" American Scientist, Vol. 83, No. 6 (November-December 1995), pp. 542-547. Sigma Xi, The Scientific Research Society. <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/29775558>.>

Borgia provides insight into the way humans perceive the dancing movements of the bowerbirds. His research on the courtship and mating rituals of bowerbirds is extensive and includes the "good-genes hypothesis" in which dance is used by female bowerbirds to find the best and most vigorous male mate. Borgia also explains the various kinds of dances and other dance-like movements that bowerbirds perform in their courtship rituals. His theories relate to ways that humans use dance as a tool for finding mates.

Copeland, Roger., and Marshall Cohen, eds. What Is Dance? Readings in Theory and Criticism. New York: Oxford University Press, 1983. Print.

Copeland and Cohen compile a number of critical essays and lectures devoted to the philosophy behind dance. Their contributors define dance in terms of gesture being "vital movement" which initiates the concept of dance as then "meaningful gesture." The writings in this book examine dance through its many unique attributes, properties, and characteristics.

Crisp, Clement and Edward Thorpe. The Colourful World of Ballet. London: Octopus Books Limited, 1977. Print.

These authors provide an overview of dance, specifically ballet, from its foundations to suggestions on how to preserve important ballets. Their book delves into the nature of Romanticism and the classics to ballet and modern dance since the 1930s. It discusses the challenges of world changes and dance's response to those changes through, for example, the work of Serge Diaghilev and the Ballet Russe. Beyond the text, the book provides a colorful array of pictures which beautifully illustrate and capture the history of dance.

Crouch, Ian. "What's behind those Occupy hand signals: The power of a gesture language." The Boston Globe.com. 25 Nov. 2011.

<<https://www.bostonglobe.com/ideas/2011/11/25/what-behind-those>.> (18 April 2016).

The Occupy movement used a lot of hand gestures and signals. They were used by the protesters to communicate in a physical language not limited by words and vocal sounds. Crouch explores the nature of this kind of protest and explains how the use of hand signals empowered the communication of the Occupy protestors.

Dingfelder, Sadie F. "Dance, dance evolution." *Monitor*, Vol. 41, No 4. 2010.

<<http://www.apa.org/monitor/2010/04/dance.aspx>.>

Dingfelder's article is through the American Psychological Association, and its focus is on reasons that humans perceive that some animals dance and other do not. Through interviews with various esteemed experts in the field of dance evolution, Dingfelder provides insights on the "good gene theory," cultural significance, and vocal complexities which are linked to dance as a means of communication. Additionally, Dingfelder specifically discusses animals credited with the ability to dance and what characteristics separate them from animals that are not able to dance. Again, she offers not only her own sound theories but discusses the research of others on the subject.

Ehrenreich, Barbara. *Dancing in the Streets*. New York: Picador, 2006. Print

Ehrenreich provides insight into the history behind communal dancing in celebrations, rituals, rites, and festivities. Her sources are from anthropology, history, and religion. Ehrenreich argues throughout the book that dancing is innately a part of human nature, and that dancing has been a vital means of communication throughout human history.

Fear, David. *TimeOut New York*. 20 Feb. 2005.

<http://www.lachapellestudio.com/film/rize>. (30 April 2016).

Fear reviews the 2005 documentary film *Rize* in terms of its significance in exploring the way that dance is used as a means of portraying "cultural anthropology." This documentary film was important to the concept that dance serves as a means of protest and rebellion. The film also exposes dance as a venue for paving the way for social change.

Golden, Lindsey. "Dance as Social Protest." 17 August 2013.

<<http://lindseygolden.com/content/dance-social-protest-lindsey-golden>.> (18 April 2016).

In her blog, Golden describes the ways that dance has been historically and traditionally used as a means of social protest. She explains the power behind gesture and dancing in terms of rebellion and in terms of fighting for what one believes. Throughout her blog, Golden also uses many examples of those who have used dance as a means of social protest.

Hamilton, Linda H. *The Dancer's Way*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 2008. Print

Hamilton's book is an informational guide for professional dancers. She is a wellness consultant for the New York City Ballet. Hamilton's book offers her advice and expertise on ways for dancers to stay physically and emotionally healthy and ready for successful careers in dance performance.

Jules-Rosette, Bennetta. Josephine Baker in Art and Life: The Icon and the Image. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2007. Print.
Jules-Rosetta provides a thorough biography into the life, times, and art of dancer of entertainment icon Josephine Baker. This book is based on research and gives analysis of the style and career of Josephine Baker. It provides insight into the meaning and intent behind the sexuality imbued in Baker's dance performances.

Lieberman, Daniel E. "More Evidence on the Value of Dance."
<<http://www.fas.harvard.edu/~skeleton/danlhome.html>> (19 Jan. 2016).
Lieberman, Harvard University, studies the work of Patrick Hogan, director of the Puget Sound Regional Movement and Motility Disorder Clinic, in order to observe the effects of dance on the elderly and particularly those suffering from debilitating neurological disorders. His research shows that dance has positive outcomes on those encumbered with movement disorders and the negative neurological effects of the aging process.

Lemonick, Michael D. "Why Your Brain Craves Music: Our highest and lowest processing Regions explain the irresistible appeal of a song." Time.com. 15 April 2013.
<<http://science.time.com/2013/04/15/music/>> (13 April 2016).
Lemonick sheds light on the effects of music on the human brain. He discusses the evolutionary connection between the desire that humans have for music in their lives and the way that music deeply impacts the brain. Lemonick looks at the evolutionary aspect of music and human survival.

Moe. "May Day, the Maypole and the Illuminati." GnosticWarrior.com. 1 May 2015.
<<http://gnosticwarrior.com/maypole.html>> (24 April 2016).
Moe elaborates on the traditional and historical significance of the maypole as a phallic symbol and as a fertility symbol in various human societies and cultures. Moe also explains the Egyptian myth behind the maypole. The maypole has not only been used by human societies, it is also used by male bowerbirds when engaging in mating rituals.

Newby, Anna. "Why Do Animals Dance?" Wild Things Slate's Animal Blog. 18 Feb. 2014.
<http://www.slate.com/blogs/wild_things/2014/02/18/dancing_animals> (13 April 2016).
In her blog, Newby delves into the science behind the fact that some animals seem to have a sense of rhythm and can move with a sense of synchronicity to music. Newby references the research of Aniruddh Patel who has explored the connection between the ability to dance and the ability to produce complex vocal sounds.

Rabin, Nathan. "Beyond Boogaloo: The Weird, Wild and Wonderful World of Cannon's *Breakin'* movies." *Esquire.com*. 29 May 2015.
<<http://www.esquire.com/entertainment/movies/a35339/breakin.>> (24 April 2016).

Dance has been used by film makers to demonstrate a way of engaging in social protest. The film 1984 *Breakin* was one such example. Rabin describes how dance, specifically breakdance, is used by street dancers to protest social injustice in the film.

Reynolds, Nancy and Malcolm McCormick. No Fixed Points: Dance in the Twentieth Century. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003. Print.

Reynolds and McCormick provide an intelligent reference focusing on the history of dance as it developed during the Twentieth Century. The two authors connect the techniques of important and prominent dancers and choreographers and provide insight into the reasons dance evolved and reinvented itself as decades progressed. This source is rich in research and commentary pertaining to the history of dance.

Smail, Daniel Lord. On Deep History and the Brain. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008. Print.

Smail focuses on the complexities of the human brain and analyzes these complexities as they progressed through history. Regarding dance, Smail offers insights on the human connection of dance to music composition. His observations support the fact that humans are characterized as vocal learners and therefore are inherently inclined to dance to specific beats and rhythms of music. Furthermore, Smail delves into aspects of dance that, in humans, are associated with mind-altering substances.

Spindell, Marcia. "Dance/Movement Therapy Opens Communication Pathways." 10951083. np. (15 July 1996)

<<http://web.danc/movement/therapyopenscommunication>> (19 Jan. 2016).

Spindell is a Long-Term Care Quality Advisor for Brown University whose article describes the various advantages of dance/movement therapy in terms of helping aging adult preserve vital communication skills. Spindell discusses the aims of the various goals of dance/movement therapy which include enhanced cognitive abilities, improved abilities for expressions, and overall promotion of well-being in the elderly.

Thomas, Anthony. "The spirit and philosophy of Hip Hop." *New Statesmen*. 12 Sept. 2007. <<http://www.newstatesmen.com/blogs/the-faith-column/2007/09/hip-hop/>> (2 April 2016).

In this blog, Thomas defines Hip Hop dance and discusses the philosophy behind this type of dance. He explains how this dance form is a rebellion against the injustices in society. Thomas also characterizes Hip Hop dance as a means of telling the truth through irreverence. He observes the ever-changing nature of Hip Hop dancing as a means of protest.

Vergheze, Joe. "Cognitive And Mobility Profile Of Older Social Dancers." 21 Aug. 2006. <<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1550765/>>

Vergheze is a medical doctor whose article discusses the neurological implications of dance on older human adults. Vergheze's research shows that dancing has positive effects on older adults in terms of "better balance and gait." The primary focus of Vergheze's work is on social dances in which older adults show improvement in cognitive abilities when they regularly participate in these types of dances. This allows these individuals to communicate better in society. The insights provided in this article are supported by a "neuropsychological test battery" and population studies.

Wilson, Len. "5 Things Geese Can Teach Us About Teamwork."

<<http://lenwilson.us/5-thing-geese-can-teach-us-about-teamwork/>>

Wilson discusses the positive social traits that wild geese exhibit through naturally choreographed flying movements. Specifically, he lists and examines movements which illustrate that geese have adopted dancelike aerial movements. He then links these movements to the concept of teamwork which is important for humans. Wilson's "extensive studies" show that geese are successful when the teamwork aspect of their movements serves the greater good. This concept can also be applied to human societies and the use of social dances to inspire a sense of community and team support.