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A Study on the Confluence of Resilience Skill Building and Contact Improvisation on Collegiate Dancers

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Senning, Connor Bryce

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A Study on the Confluence of Resilience Skill Building and  
Contact Improvisation on Collegiate Dancers

THESIS

Submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF FINE ARTS

In Dance

By Connor B. Senning

Thesis Committee:  
Dr. Kelli Sharp, Chair  
Dr. Lisa Naugle  
Assistant Professor Lindsay Gilmour

2020





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## **ABSTRACT OF THESIS**

A Study on the Confluence of Resilience Skill Building and  
Contact Improvisation on Collegiate Dancers

BY:

Connor B. Senning

Master of Fine Arts in Dance

University of California, Irvine 2020

Dr. Kelli Sharp, Chair

This thesis examines five resilience-building skills and their application towards contact improvisation (CI). CI draws upon a mind/body connection while two or more dancers interact spontaneously to effortlessly execute momentum-based partnering. The resilience related skills were applied during three workshops in Fall of 2019 working with ten undergraduate participants. The methodology for this study was qualitative and quantitative to include three main components: literature review, workshops and surveys. Research was conducted by reading printed and electronic texts, as well as by observing CI related documentaries, teachings and performances.

The five resilience components researched were self-awareness, self-regulation, mental agility, connection and optimism. In preparation for a professional dance career, participants were asked if the components were useful when applied through the utility of contact improvisation to enhance resiliency. The participants provided responses through surveys as well as verbal feedback to the researcher. The results reveal that resilience practice (through the medium of CI) is practical to an undergraduate community of dancers as well as effective within an undergraduate curriculum. In addition, this multimodal research has informed elements of the

students integration with CI as a resilience aid while creating a foundation for myself as an educator and choreographer.

## INTRODUCTION

My initial research question explores the undeniable connection between the mind and body through momentum-based movements as a form of preparation for the trials and tribulations within a professional environment. In order to find a clear description, I looked to Steve Paxton, the originator of CI. The following quote by Paxton reflects the complex, yet simple nature of a CI duet:

As a basic focus, the dancers remain in physical touch, mutually supportive and innovative, meditating upon the physical laws relating to their masses: gravity, momentum, inertia and friction. They do not strive to achieve results but rather, to meet the constantly changing physical reality with appropriate placement and energy (Contact Quarterly, 1978-79 Vol. 4).

While CI continues to innovate ways for dancers to move together as a shared entity, this research is meant to explore how CI can be used as a form of resilience practice. Early CI practitioners, like Paxton, “criticize[d] rigid establishment traditions” (Banes 62) and “focus[ed] on the phenomenon rather than the presentation” (Banes 67). The research is a phenomenological study into CI practice for developing resilience that hopes to challenge traditional CI and resilience practices.

The key aim for this research is to tune into skills backed by resilience analysis and expand in a direction geared towards practicing within CI. The following thesis questions serve as a footprint for the work: 1) How can resilience practice (through the medium of CI) be useful to an undergraduate community of dancers? 2) Is resilience important to incorporate into an undergraduate curriculum?

Resilience is tested or evaluated by the capacity to withstand or recover from significant challenges or adversities (Kaye-Tzadok, Davidson-Arad 5). Exposure to CI fundamental

practices is meant to efficiently test a dancer's capacity to endure challenges while creating a more resilient mind, body and spirit.

In contrast, embodying the components to facilitate the workshops in accordance with the Penn Resilience Program assists in defining resilience further. The development of resilience can increase well-being and optimism, improve physical health, reduce anxiety and depression (Penn Resilience Program). The program at University of Pennsylvania Arts and Sciences Positive Psychology Center introduces some of the skills that build cognitive and emotional fitness, which serve as a basis for the CI fundamental exercises and resilience skill building developed in the research. More specifically the research explores, the use of five resilience skill sets. The five skill sets are practices of self-awareness, self-regulation, mental agility, optimism and connection, which together became the key components that facilitated the movement. In order to create the relationship between each skill set, the exercises correlated to a movement experience within the CI practice. The participants in the workshop study provided physical and emotional feedback to improve the class design. In the words of CI practitioner and teacher Ann Cooper Albright who discusses in her book, *Engaging Bodies: The Politics and Poetics of Corporeality*:

...contact improvisation encourages us to approach feeling as a process—a verb, rather than a noun. Framed as an ongoing practice instead of an emotional state, this sense of “feeling” can keep us from getting stuck in a personal psychology where feelings, once articulated as “mine,” can get in the way of really feeling what is going on between two people (Albright 211).

The research improves the innate ability of the collegiate dancer as they prepare physically and mentally to enhance all parts of their lives. Gaining insight into the participants emotional states of well-being through feedback was critical to the success of this research. The following

chapters illuminate the research exploring the five resilience skill sets embodied in CI workshops.

## CHAPTER ONE

### **Contact Improvisation and the Relationship to Self-Awareness**

In this chapter I am going to begin with a brief discussion of the historical foundation of CI. Since the inception of CI in the early 1970s, practitioners have been part of a global effort towards developing training and awareness. Within CI the development of self-awareness as a tool for encouraging resilience already exists. The exploration of CI has been broken down, codified, recreated and retranslated to students in many different settings and performances. CI pioneer, Nancy Stark Smith argued in *Caught Falling*,

Without a set pedagogy to follow, Contact teachers adopt and adapt what they were taught, invent their own CI teaching methods, and also bring in materials from their disciplines to serve the needs of the class. (Koteen, Smith 38)

However, this chapter illuminates that at the heart of any practice in CI, self-awareness must come first to create a successful, satisfying and multidimensional frame of mind in which to experience oneself authentically.

### **Deepening the Practice of Contact Improvisation**

Although there are many definitions of CI, in Cynthia Novack's book *Sharing the Dance* one can get an idea as to how CI is defined. "Contact Improvisation is most frequently performed as a duet, in silence, with dancers supporting each other's weight while in motion" (Novack 8). The collective dialogues of practitioners and researchers from CI's early development, cultivates a common thread that is fundamental to the physical practice. Pallant outlines some of these CI fundamental principles that reflect some resilience principles in *Contact Improvisation: An Introduction to a Vitalizing Dance Form* which include touch, present improvisation, listening, safety, vulnerability, connection, understanding self-awareness, and having a common goal to unify all of these aspects (Pallant 21-43).

Daniel Lepkoff, who does not consider himself a “founder,” of CI but danced in the first performance directed by Steve Paxton at Oberlin College in 1972, states in his article “Contact Improvisation: A Question,” that CI “looks like a duet when viewed from the outside, but for the person inside of the dance, it is a solo” (38). This conscious awareness of one’s own internal space allows movers to develop a connection and physical engagement with each other. Without increased self-awareness within the solo that Lepkoff describes, how can there be space for another mover to inhabit it?

Practitioners often gain their experience through a CI jam, which Pallant describes as “...weekly informal gatherings for dancers that include a warm-up and rotating in duets, trios, quartets...in the center of the room...while others look on from the periphery” (14). A CI jam is not a class but a self-directed opportunity to improvise with a language that is common with other bodies in a shared space. However, it takes more than jumping into a CI jam, declaring that one is aware or qualified, to dance with another mover. One must have a subtle sense of gravity, sensation and present awareness in the mass of their bodies to be self-aware. Ensuring everyone is open and engaged with their relationship to gravity, sensation and present awareness, making adjustments is part of the dialogue in a CI duet. Developing these skills for the safety of others may be different for everyone.

Moving through “states” is a way of training the body to experience the senses and body in space. Smith in *Caught Falling* describes moving through physical states as “a particular experience of body/mind generated by engaging in a particular physical activity, usually for a sustained period of time” (Koteen, Smith 16). The states within movement, “generate a condition in the dancer” which requires several minutes, or hours of practice. Prioritizing moving through



these states with self-awareness as the first embodied state is what this research views to support resiliency in dancers.

### **How Self-Awareness is Experienced**

A continuous point of contact through improvisational touch upon which everything else is built is an essential foundation of a CI practice. What makes a CI practice different from other forms of dance, is that awareness is essential for safety and deep presence embedded within the form. One must be aware of the external space one is moving and in contact with, as well as the space inside sometimes thought of as “internal space”. CI practitioner Rita Roberto, provides a definition of self-awareness,

‘What one is’ is not static, and the awareness I am referring to is not passive. Becoming aware is a creative process: self-awareness is not an external and neutral analysis of oneself, but rather a work from the inside, a work of refinement (Roberto 67).

In her article “Self-Awareness and the Vehicle Air,” Roberto comments that self-awareness is not constant and that it takes a certain amount of effort for being “in” the experience. This effort is a process of deepening awareness which can be done through various methods.

Authentic Movement is a method overlapping with CI due to its relationship to presence, authenticity and awareness. Authentic Movement is an improvisational movement exchange between two or more people for developing “authenticity” which is an aspect of self-awareness. Developed in the United States in the 1950s by dance therapy pioneer, Mary Stark Whitehouse as a therapeutic modality that requires both a mover and a witness to be in an authentic experience but from two perspectives; moving and being seen. Witnessing is literally seeing the mover and this act of observing allows for a kinesthetic empathy with the associated mover. Daphne Lowell in *Authentic Movement: Moving the Body, Moving the Self, Being Moved* states that “Authentic Movement may be used as creative exploration, artistic resource, and as a

ritualized form of moving meditation,” (Lowell 323). Authentic Movement was used in the workshops as a creative tool for exploring both self-awareness and presence for witnessing others.

In *How to Land: Finding Ground in an Unstable World* Albright, refers to “The Small Dance” which is a practice in awareness developed by Paxton as a “proprioceptive tuning [that] gives us an awareness of the physical location in which the body is both grounded and open to moving in any direction” (Albright 147). Albright believes her students need to be informed by “intentional physical practices”, such as exercises in grounding, in order to become more “*reactive* to the inevitable shifts in the balance of our lives” (Albright 16). In an attempt to reach students in an existential and more embodied way, feeling grounded is necessary to connect with a disconnected world. In “Training Bodies to Matter,” Albright states that gravity alone “can activate the mid and lower brains, the more bodily and less symbolic areas of the brain that connect to the parasympathetic systems of our being,” (Albright 147). Students seeking to obtain a calmer mindset that assists self-awareness development requires bringing attention from the abundance of distractions to a single-minded focus.

### **Why Self-Awareness First?**

Smith believes that attention to presence, will and focus to the present situation in a room is considered “arriving” (Koteen, Smith 91). Arriving both energetically and physically, is a practice of getting in tune, which provides dancers with attention to physical sensations, textures and locations of sensation in the self before engaging with another body (91). The difference between arriving energetically and physically is the arriving into “*body time*” as Smith articulates in “The Underscore”. “The Underscore,” is an archived framework developed for practicing and researching dance improvisation to “guide dancers through a series of changing

states” (Koteen, Smith 91). Smith discusses how receptive awareness in the present moment can provide a heightened experience of whatever one is doing. In workshops led by Smith, she would often begin with exercises she referred to as “Skinesphere” and “Bonding with the Earth” to create initial awareness of self before exploring further with others (Koteen, Smith 93). While discussing the navigations of the self and giving attention to the embodied experience of self-sensing, bodies become more capable for connections with another dancer.

A critical aspect toward the development of self-awareness is the ability to decode one’s own body and allow the self to be transparent during developmental training. The practitioner can then remain aware and attuned to the space within the body. Novack states, “the key to be a good partner rests on one’s movement awareness within the parameters of the form,” (Novack 151). Self-awareness outside the dance studio assists dancers in engaging, developing, and influencing resolution within the body to create space for presence. Presence can then be utilized to overcome the challenges of unpredictability, change, and disappointments in life.

## CHAPTER TWO

### Self-Regulation + Mental Agility

Practitioners of CI require experiential learning to grasp how to respond to the interplay between thoughts, emotions and behaviors. According to CI teacher and practitioner Stephanie Cohen, “in interplays of bodies in and out of physical contact with one another, movers can observe their emotional, physical, interpersonal and intellectual patterns” (Cohen 107). Through embodied experimental learning, these patterns involve self-regulation and mental agility development which are communicated within a CI practice. Self-regulation and mental agility are resilience skills applied to the undergraduate dance students practice in CI to build resilience.

#### Self-Regulating within Practice

“With every lift and fall, CI tests definitions, comfort levels, preconceptions, and boundaries—essentially the stories we believe about ourselves and the world” (Pallant 64). The continuing exploration of exercises in CI that address these emotional reactions are a part of developing this project. “The Small Dance,” created by Steve Paxton, is an exercise that requires one to attend to somatic information. This research relates to the micromovements of the body and how they correspond to negative emotional reactions. “The Small Dance” gives insight into self-awareness initially but also illuminates self-regulation as a tool for dealing with the body’s emotional response. From the *Handbook of Self-Regulation of Learning and Performance*, “self-regulation refers to the process whereby learners personally activate and sustain cognitions, affects, and behaviors that are systematically oriented toward the attainment of learning goals” (Zimmerman, Schunk 10). “The Small Dance” requires minimal movement which heightens

attention to what the body is experiencing within the space in order to navigate ways one could activate and sustain behaviors of emotional regulation during a self-awareness practice.

“Dancers learn through trials when support is excessive and turns into unhelpful control and when giving up responsibility frees the dance” (Pallant 41). Pallant’s thoughts encouraged the idea that the “The Small Dance” could relinquish the emotional response the dancers in the workshops would need to complete a task, while observing emotional behavior. In fundamental CI exercises, such as tables or bridges, where bodies are stacked on top of one another in order to share centers of gravity, one must relinquish unhelpful control. Smith says,

...subtle sensing-- of gravity, balance, sensation, falling, muscle firings, joint limits— seems to be the major factor enabling the dancer to steer clear of trouble in enough time to avoid injury and keep dancing (Koteen, Smith 39).

The ability to release fear or stress allows for a more successful practice. Smith is suggesting that rather than giving attention to pressures of achieving successful movements dancers should, “motivate their movement through their curiosity and desire to learn” (Koteen, Smith 40). As body surfaces press beyond their physical limitations, one begins to foster immersion into overlapping kinespheres. “Overlapping kinespheres” refers to the practice of stimulating the movement and attention from one dancer to another by moving past or through someone’s space (Koteen, Smith 93). Smith introduces this type of exploration within her CI workshops in order to prime dancers for further connections. This is where bodies are asked to share touch, body surface, or sweat – and dancers support bodies in elevating off the floor. Communication between dancers may become increasingly necessary to maintain the practice of self-regulation. “The best one can hope for is honest, instantaneous, and direct communication” (Koteen, Smith 14).

### **Shifting into Mental Agility**

In order to regulate emotionally throughout this research process, the participants were asked to view the material from different perspectives when approaching new or challenging movement. Researchers at the Penn Resilience Program have determined that mental agility is the ability to look at situations from multiple perspectives, think creatively or flexibly (“Resilience Skill Set”). Mental agility in this project highlighted the limitations of the participants improvisatory and physical dialogue. Limitations included the dancer’s approach to fear when elevating lifts higher off the floor. Pallant describes, “within the dance responsibility lies primarily with oneself” (Pallant 40). This sense of heightened responsibility to trust for and take care of one another threatened the emotional response due to elevated anxiety.

The experience of failure or success of an exercise cannot determine the experience of a CI practice. In order to change the course of an experience, the language and certain thematic practices can be restructured to include the resilience building factors. For teachers like Albright, who epitomizes the needs of her students, she reflects on how to intervene in similar situations.

By attending to the actual sensation of our physical experience rather than the presumptive damage to our psyches, we can learn how to intervene in these somatic histories in order to rework their narrative endings (144).

In order to attend to the actual sensation of the experience, creative use of language enhances the coping strategies; and in turn resilience. The sensation of the experience calls for multiple ideas on how to communicate and therefore solutions in order to augment resilience (Thompson and Jaque 262).

Positive affirmations are a way of helping movers to feel capable, in terms of seeking creative control, within the given practice. In order to bring an experience, literally to new heights, risk is needed to take the dance off of the floor. In order to approach the fear of lifts, using a type of embodied affirmation may help to reduce some of the anxieties. Consider the

following example when approaching lifting another mover: *I trust in my body. I am more than capable and have the exact strength/training I need to successfully complete this task.* Some teachers like Pallant, see an unwillingness of dancers to take risks in their inability to lift collaborating dancers off the floor (140). Using positive affirmations, instead of viewing the process as impossible, allows one to seek solutions and consistently encourage oneself to stay engaged with a task. Through the use of creative thinking and attention to emotional response, these resilience skills seek to further motivate the use of self-regulation and mental agility within a CI practice. Through these types of practices, one may be able to gain a stable path after adversity.

## CHAPTER THREE

### Connection & Optimism

The act of touching often brings attention to the place on the body that is giving or receiving the sensation. Dancing that includes touch allows movers to become more aware and sensitive so that each partner is responsible for his or her own movement and safety (Pallant 36). This chapter explores the benefits of connection practice during various CI exercises, in order to establish a foundation for community building skills. In addition, this chapter explores the importance of optimism in individuals. Through connection and optimism in dance, a correlation between the two demonstrates how CI can promote resilience.

#### Touch and Voice as Connection

Mutual support characterized in a CI duet allows for new possibilities of movement to be explored, that would not be possible if points of contact through touch were not part of the dance in the first place. As Paxton reflects in a 2018 interview in *Dance Research Journal* “proprioceptive inputs have the potential to access new planes for support available in the contact duet,” (Paxton 7). Through physical contact with a partner who is experiencing connection with the floor, both dancers share that connection through mutual support for discovery. This specific attention to connection (touching another body) is a communication between two people, nonverbally, which requires that the body and the brain function together (7).

The intention Paxton has for CI is a way for movement to arise among different groups of people without controlling them verbally or through suggestion (Novack 54). In CI, to dance safely with abandon dancers need to find a harmony physically and energetically (Koteen, Smith



5). Albright's thoughts that "togetherness" in the practice is living and breathing; that which must remain grounded in our flesh and bones (*How to Land* 171).

I believe that the skills fostered by this practice of meeting another person across the intimacy of physical touch and trust offer critical opportunities to think seriously and *in the flesh* about forms of embodiment that can productively revise conventional notions of autonomy, identity, and community (*How To Land* 178).

During a CI duet, the dancers who are participating attempt to remain sensitive to the reaction of the other, harvesting information from the connection. This information which then can be communicated promotes wellbeing of the partnership.

When connections to another mover are lost, verbal suggestions by teachers and dancers may be given to fix any obvious issues of imbalance. In the documentary *Contact Improvisation at 36* Smith states, "The fact that there must be the two people that bring their own experience or assumptions about the practice, which then need to mediate, to find connection." Through all of the tangled limbs and serendipitous interactions in a CI duet, there must be connection between the two or more movers. The mediation of emotional response of the movers to connection and interaction with the environment, must find a way to become balanced. Even though the idea of a CI practice is to arise without these suggestions, communication can allow practitioners to become fully engrossed in the tasks of their connections while filtering out anything irrelevant or distracting.

### **CI as a Way to Encounter the Future**

Encountering a career in dance may include battling for jobs or discovering how to sustain an income through freelancing. This can be arduous and grueling at times, after many years of in studio training and self-practice. Albright believes the encounters in this generation are, "being defined by individuals who have difficulties sustaining interpersonal relationships, or

even being present in the world in a fully embodied manner,” (*How to Land* 170). Introducing CI as a method of dealing with these difficult encounters in order to direct the mind of the dancer back into one’s body, requires a methodical and somatic based practice as well as finding sources to help support one’s individual career development.

In *Contact Improvisation at 36*, Smith remarks how CI is a community that is stretched through time and is an empty form in which anyone can fit into. CI provides safe spaces for dancers to come participate and rely on one another in trying times. Throughout its history CI has pockets springing up around the world, with various approaches (Smith, CI36). Sources available, such as *Contact Quarterly*, that serve as a vehicle for promoting and holding together a social network across the world, provide spaces for shared ideas and connection. CI “...creates alternative organizations for dance, both socially and artistically, in the midst of a society that generally rewards people only for individual action” (Novack 232). The inherent sense of community holds space to rely on other people that engage in the form, through all periods of a dancer’s life.

### **Entertaining Optimism**

CI is a dance form that emphasizes spontaneous movement and connections during physical communication with partners. These are the tools that may be useful to create the more resilient body through CI for a dancer’s sometimes challenging career.

In *Bodies on the Line*, researcher Danielle Goldman observes that, “at its’ core, contact improvisation is a practice of making oneself ready for a range of shifting constraints,” (Goldman 97). In order to be ready for such “shifting constraints,” one would need to alter how one approaches fear. Movement execution for tasks such as shoulder lifts, are seen in many CI improviser’s practices. Shoulder lifts involve a marriage of many aspects such as timing, strength

and deep trust in order to come together and fulfill the movements successfully. Fear dampens creative engagement and creative output (Thompson and Jaque 280). In order to manage stress directly related to creative output requires a shift of the mind to overcome fear. Engaging in elevated material such as shoulder lifts in CI vocabulary can present space for fear to block creative solutions. When this happens, bodies may become rigid and fear may reside throughout the space. Studies have demonstrated that activating more positive emotions can be cultivated via choosing a positive view on situations (Thompson and Jaque 288). Reintroducing positive affirmations such as “I can” or “I will” can become the motivational tool incorporated into CI related lifts. Choosing to say the words out loud or to oneself is optional, but the affirmations can be repeated until the lift begins. The idea is to encourage feet to become seamlessly lifted off of the floor and attitudes to shift to an optimistic view. Interactions of optimism and hope begin to foster newfound self-agency and boost creative acts of courage (Thompson and Jaque 289).

A career in dance for those who want to perform, create or collaborate will always demonstrate a continual struggle full of ebbs and flows. These motivational practices of connection and optimism are meant to be used when fear or feelings of self-doubt approach. Through movement, motivation of self and encouragement of others these practices can be incorporated through dance or CI practice specifically. Resilience is all about recovering when you have fallen down whether that be physically, mentally or emotionally. In order to have the ability to rebound or recover; the practice of community building and regaining yourself through optimistic approaches may be the solution for a successful practice.

## CHAPTER FOUR: METHODS

### Basic Methods<sup>1</sup>

In order to recruit dancers for this study, flyers were emailed through the UCI Dance Department to all dance majors. *See Appendix A for Workshop Flyer.* Word of mouth interactions were used as an additional method to recruit additional subjects. After recruiting ten undergraduate dance students, three workshops were conducted at the University of California Irvine, in the Claire Trevor School of the Arts. The first two workshops were held on Tuesday and Thursday of Week Three from 6-8pm of the Fall 2019 Quarter. The third workshop occurred on Tuesday of Week Six from 6-8pm of the Fall 2019 Quarter. *See Appendices B-C-D for Workshop Lesson Plans.*

### Screening

Participants were recruited during the 2019 Fall Quarter in October. Through email verification all participants were screened for specific inclusion criteria which involved the following; 1) participants had to be currently enrolled as a dance major at the university, 2) be free of any physical injuries that would limit their ability to participate and 3) be available for three to four workshops in the Fall Quarter. All the individuals who gave consent and responded to the recruitment were given an entry survey that contained details of the study *See Appendix F for Entry Survey.*

The entry surveys were collected approximately one week after they were distributed on Week Two of Fall Quarter. The entry surveys consisted of the following: 1) dance history, and 2) reasons for their interest in the workshops. Entry surveys were developed to gain a sense of

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<sup>1</sup> This study was exempt from the university's Institutional Review Board. All documents, protocols, and procedures were approved in advance by the Thesis Chair.

the experience the workshop participants had before being accepted into the process. The entry surveys collected the following information about the participants; 1) number of years experienced in improvisation, 2) partnering background and 3) knowledge of CI. The entry surveys also included a series of questions about the participant's experience with rejection, hardship and the methods used to deal with the emotional toll that goes along with them.

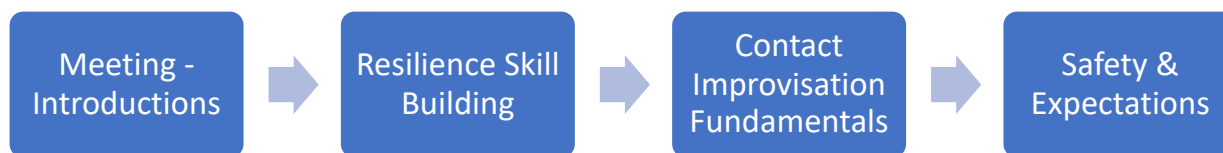
### **Dance Workshop Structure**

The structure of the first workshop included the following; 1) introductions, 2) deliver in-depth information about the research for the participants, 3) review safety information with regard to CI and 4) explore methods of self-awareness, self-regulation and mental agility practices. Workshop one and two were facilitated to guide the participants through an introduction of CI. There was little experience and knowledge about CI for many of the participants. After introducing the participants to the fundamentals and safety elements of CI, the resilience skill sets were introduced into the work.

#### *Introduction of the Workshop Timeline*

Each workshop was held in the Claire Trevor School of the Arts dance studios for two hours, each meeting period. The workshop meeting periods began with a brief check-in, when the instructor would inquire into the current emotional and physical well-being of each student. After the participants' answered and introduced themselves to one another, they were provided with context into why the workshops were being conducted regarding the intention to use CI as a means of practicing resilience building. The participants' responses to the introduction were recorded in the instructors' journal in private, after the workshop. The participants were informed of the resilience skill sets that were being focused on during the workshop meeting

periods. The five skill sets were, self-awareness, self-regulation, mental agility, connection and optimism. The responses of the participants regarding the research were recorded. The instructor then discussed sensitivity, touch and gravity as three fundamentals that were of interest regarding CI. The final portion of the introduction to the workshops included a discussion about safety and expectations in CI. The safety guidelines were read aloud and shared in an email document with the participants (see Figure 4.1). *See Appendix E for Safety Form.*



**Figure 4.1: Workshop 1 Timeline:** This timeline shows the sequence of events discussed during the first meeting period with workshop participants. All information was recorded in the lead researchers journal and necessary documents were shared electronically with the participants.

### *Grounding-Warmup*

Drawn from the research into CI warmup exercises, the workshop began with a grounding activity developed by CI researcher, Ann Cooper Albright. In her book *How To Land: Finding Ground in an Unstable World*, Albright illustrates a practice in self-awareness called “The Three Domes of Support,” (Albright 83). This was used as a tool to connect the participants to the first resilience skill set of self-awareness. The participants were asked to stand anywhere in the room with their eyes closed, hands were to be placed on their heads with their feet firmly planted on the floor. The participants were then asked to complete a body-scan of the three domes of support which include the head, chest and pelvis. Once the exercise was complete, the participants' hands were released by their sides. Next, the participants were guided through a written score developed by Steve Paxton known as “The Small Dance,” which is illustrated as well in Albright’s book (29). *See Appendix J + K for The Three Domes of Support and The Small*

*Dance.* The following warmup exercises focused on relating touch to self-awareness and self-regulation which are illustrated in the Workshop 1 Guide. *See Appendix B for Workshop 1 Guide.*

### *Contact Fundamentals*

Participants were taught fundamental weight sharing exercises such as tables and bridges and asked to verbally check in with themselves and their partners throughout their exploration periods. I provided guidelines while they improvised with each other and moved across the studio space. Later, the participants were given an improvisation score that was to explore rolling, sliding and jumping points of contact in order to see if they could stay engaged with the task by keeping a singular focus.

### *First Contact Jam*

At the end of the first workshop the participants had time to experience a contact jam. The instruction given to the participants was to explore the points of contact that were previously taught and to keep in mind the three resilience skills including self-awareness, self-regulation and connection. The participants had 20 minutes to improvise in and out of the dance space as they chose. Instrumental music was played as background noise to engage and inspire participants. After 20 minutes, the participants that were still moving were asked to find an ending to their exploration. It took approximately 3-5 minutes for all of the dancers to come to a stop. The participants took time to reflect on their experiences in journals before meeting and discussing as a group.

### *Workshop 2 Alterations*

The second workshop began in a similar fashion to the first with a brief period of time for checking in with the participants. The research goals, fundamentals and resilience skill sets were reviewed for the participants. Everything was discussed to see if there were any remaining questions before proceeding further into the work. The warmup and grounding exercises remained the same. Once physical connections were reestablished among the participants, three more CI fundamental exercises were taught which included back-to-back standing, back-to-back sitting as well as spirals to the floor.

Elevating the floor exercises to standing the participants were given instruction to discover how to lift another partner off of the floor. Additional time was used in order to investigate the exercise further, as opposed to moving to the second part of the workshop due to the hesitancy verbalized by the participants. The focus of the workshop shifted to address clear communication, self-awareness and expression with an emphasis on self-regulation. A discussion was held at the end of the workshop with the participants to discuss the challenges of the work. The participants were asked to continue their self-regulation explorations between the second and third workshop. *See Appendix D for Discussion Prompts.*

### *Reflection and Discussion*

The participants sat together in a circle in contact with one another after both workshops where discussion prompts were given to discuss what was gained or experienced in the first and second meeting periods. The connection within the circle involved massaging of calves, ankles and feet of person to the left and right of them in the circle. *See Appendix D for Discussion Prompts.* The responses were recorded in the journal of the instructor and applied to the remaining workshop. The participants were given journaling prompts between workshop two and workshop three to continue their reflections on what they experienced. The responses were



returned to instructor one week later and examined for common themes. *See Appendix G for Journal Prompts.*

### *Workshop 3*

Due to unanticipated scheduling conflicts only eight of the ten participants were able to attend the final workshop. After another brief check-in the participants were asked to begin with their grounding exercises they had learned in the previous workshops. The participants were asked to remain with their eyes closed as they were guided through the space into partners for their first connection of the workshop. The participants remained with this partner, with their eyes closed, through the first 45 minutes of the workshop. The eyes were kept closed to address possible distractions in space or with whom a dancer was in contact. All of the fundamental exercises were reviewed, as well as new exercises were introduced through vocal guidance by the instructor.

Once the participants had time to reflect with their partner, an introduction to authentic movement was given. Participants were asked to choose one person to keep their eyes closed and the other to witness the improvisation of the participant for three minutes each. During this time the instructor asked the witness (or the participant who was watching the partner who was moving) to take written notes on what they saw, how they were feeling and what questions may come up. After three minutes of the Authentic Movement practice the participants were asked to switch places with one another and repeat the exercise.

The workshop ended after two hours with a final reflection about the work. The participant's responses were recorded in a journal. After the discussion, the participants had the opportunity to stay and talk about the upcoming choreographed thesis project. All participants showed interest in continuing on with the work.

## Surveys

All surveys were administered via email to each participant. The participants were given a maximum of one week to return them. The participants were given a mid-way survey after the first two workshops. *See Appendix H for Midway Survey.* The participants were also given an Exit Survey that was to serve as a place for the participants to leave any last comments (not discussed in person) during the workshop meeting periods. *See Appendix I for Exit Survey.* All responses from the participants were collected and organized by the instructor. The surveys were examined for common themes within the participant's responses.

## CHAPTER FIVE: RESULTS

### Results

The results of the workshops suggest that through the confluence of CI and resilience practice participants were able to experience ways of illuminating their relationships with self-awareness, self-regulation, connection, mental agility and optimism. Through the introduction of touch, gravity and sensitivity as the main CI fundamentals, the participants experienced both positive and negative reactions towards their own resilience building within the workshops.

### Demographics

Participants included ten dance majors attending Claire Trevor School of the Arts at the University of California Irvine, eight of which completed all three workshops. Scheduling conflicts and illness were cited as the reason why two participants dropped out. There were nine females, and one male, median age was 20.9 +/- 0.57 years of age. There were no recorded previous injuries in any of the participants. None of the participants had any training in CI throughout their dance careers or training in building resilience. Eight of the participants were in their fourth year of study and two of them were in their third year of study at the university. The average years of formal dance training for the participants was 10 +/- 0.69.

### *Entry Survey-Common Themes*

Nine of the participants had experience with rejection, typically in their audition processes during their undergraduate programs for student or teacher run projects. Information collected from the entry surveys revealed that seven of the participants experienced feelings of doubt, worthlessness, concern of their ability to progress or feelings of insecurity. These participants viewed this form of rejection in terms of not receiving a job offer, as the process of

becoming a performer. The participants who did not respond well emotionally to rejection from auditions doubted their abilities to achieve a professional career in dance. A few participants dealt with their feelings by talking with friends, creating something meaningful to them (dance, visual art) or self-reflection. One participant had contemplated quitting dance completely after encountering feelings of rejection. Another participant looked at rejection as an opportunity to recognize that it opened the door for another equally valuable experience.

When asking the participants who have experienced rejection how they emotionally regulate, the responses were broad. Common answers included; 1) taking the opportunity to reevaluate what may be missing in training, 2) learning new ways of developing confidence and self-worth, 3) training harder physically, 4) seeking out someone in a similar situation to talk about what happened or 5) do something completely unrelated to dance.

Participants were asked about their personal definition of resilience. Responses included; 1) resilience is considered an opportunity to better yourself, 2) a chance to reevaluate any current hardships, 3) gain new perspectives or strength, 4) an act of perseverance, 5) adapting to new environments, 6) never giving up, 7) bouncing back or 8) being capable to stay grounded in strenuous situations. Nine out of the ten participants considered themselves resilient. The participant that did not consider themselves resilient responded that it was due to their reflection of being too emotional, sensitive and vulnerable.

#### *Journal Prompts-Post Workshop One*

Participants were given journaling prompts between Workshop One and Workshop Two that were returned and recorded for common themes among the participants. The first questions inquired how the participants felt in relation to their cooperation with one another, in the context of learning new CI skills. The majority of responses touched on the lack of awareness with a

focus on the feeling of hesitancy, towards touching another participant. The participants acknowledged that at times they were experiencing anxiety after or during the first workshop at the time unfamiliar exercises were being given. The majority of reactions from participants was to tense up in areas of their bodies that needed more protection in regard to their own safety and the safety of their partners. Fear, instability and intimidation were noted as emotions that were triggered throughout some of the early exercises. However, one participant described feeling comfortable executing every exercise given during the workshops.

When participants were asked to reflect on what it was like for them to bring their awareness to the breath within the workshop and CI exercises responses were generally the same from all ten participants. The participants stated that focusing on the breath in moments of hesitancy or fear, the ability to release unnecessary tension, refocus awareness and gain new sensations of movement or mobility became possible. The instructor noted the participants seemed to physically become more accessible within their bodies when consistent reminders were given about breath and its connection to gravity. Sharing experiences verbally for seven out of the ten participants seemed to give more clarity for managing physically and emotionally. Three out of the ten participants felt that verbal interactions created more hesitancy in the body during the first workshop.

Six participants chose to discuss “The Small Dance” exercise when asked about their specific interests in the first workshop. Participants discussed how it allowed for tuning into awareness through the connection shared with their partner. Participants expressed feelings of having the eyes closed during the exercise of the “The Small Dance” allowed for reflection of body with a partner, rather than when eyes were open. This reflection was a tool the participants expressed provided an emphasis on presence and awareness.

### *Midway Survey-Common Themes*

Three resiliency skill sets were discussed and executed physically during the first two workshops. Participants were given a midway survey in order to engage in the resiliency building practices between workshop two and workshop three.

The participants were asked to name specific emotions experienced in the workshops. The most commonly mentioned responses are organized below into positive and negative emotions experienced by the group. (See Table 5.1 and 5.2). Generally, the responses to the workshop were positive, which could suggest that the language of which the exercises were delivered could be effective. The emotions given by the participants in the surveys were then compiled into a list to find commonalities. The numbers on the tables indicate whether a participant experienced the emotion listed above or not. The positive and negative emotions experienced were found in the responses from the Midway Surveys.

**Table 5.1: Number of Responses to Positive Emotions Experienced**

<i>Positive Emotion</i>	<i>Optimism</i>	<i>Success</i>	<i>Present</i>	<i>Content</i>	<i>Empathy</i>	<i>Sensitivity</i>	<i>Excited</i>
<i>Experienced</i>	7	9	10	6	6	9	9
<i>Not Experienced</i>	3	1	0	4	4	1	1

**Table 5.2: Number of Responses to Negative Emotions Experienced**

<i>Negative Emotion</i>	<i>Anxiety</i>	<i>Stress</i>	<i>Frustrated</i>	<i>Fear</i>	<i>Hesitant</i>
<i>Experienced</i>	3	3	1	4	4

<i>Not Experienced</i>	7	7	9	6	6
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The results from the above tables suggest that the resilience related practices (through the medium of CI) have positive effects on undergraduate students. Emotions associated as negative (fear or hesitancy) were found when approaching new exercises but can be regulated with attention to specific emotions. This workshop suggests that exposing undergraduate dance students to exercises that typically invoke fear or hesitancy followed by a resilience skill practice, promotes positive emotional reactions such as presence, optimism and success more often than negative reactionary feelings.

#### *Exit Survey-Common Themes*

Even with two of the participants not attending the final workshop, all ten participants were asked to participate then return the responses to the Exit Survey within one week of receiving them. The two participants who did not participate in the final workshop were not recorded in the results of the common themes for the Exit Survey. The Exit Survey was the chance for participants to express reactions to any exercises that were attempted in the workshops. The question inquired in the survey into the participants thoughts about how the exercises could help develop resiliency in future careers as dancers. The participants were asked to be specific about the effects the workshops had as a student as well as ways it could benefit a future professional dance career.

Participants expressed feelings of validation in what their bodies were capable of, in both partner and individual work. Generally, the participants anticipate the work involved with building resilience and practicing CI will help confront any perceived weaknesses. One account from the project included a response from a participant describing that the experience of the

workshops helped achieve a “relaxed and peaceful state of mind” and encountered “a sense of comfort” through the connection of others. In one section of the exit survey, she writes about how the project affected the interactions between meeting periods that highlight the importance of a community and relating the skills to life outside the dance studio.

As a result of the environment created, I no longer felt as if I was being judged for how I moved. I was surrounded by a group of people that I knew cared about one another and the success of this workshop. The exercises helped us all establish a more embodied relationship with the self and with others through being connected and supportive. These interactions carried into our weekly technique classes where we were encouraged to practice touch with one another to keep fostering those relationships we would need in our futures. Doing this practice now makes me feel as though I will have a strong community behind me once I leave this university program.

There are clear areas of the research that require clarity for the participants to build resilience through CI. By providing clear vocabulary to implement the resilience skill sets, the experience connecting each to a CI practice will become more accessible. The research developing the resilience vocabulary through CI is multifaceted, complicated and ongoing. Each skill set requires its own research to clearly identify why and how it relates to a movement practice. The results have shown there is a space for this work within a curriculum that asks a lot of the students in terms of physical development. Providing experiences that push the boundaries of emotional limits produces positive effects for young dance students.



## CHAPTER SIX

### Tonic Function

#### Choreographic Exploration

In Contact Quarterly, *Tonic Function* is described by psychologist Julian de Ajuriaguerra as, the ability of the body to organize itself, to support its own movement, through the negotiation of gravity (Bigé 3). My research in resilience and collaboration with Katherine Aungier, the set designer and a UCI student, led to insights on the creation of supportive structural environments in conjunction with the body. The set design choices influenced much of the creative process and movement choices.

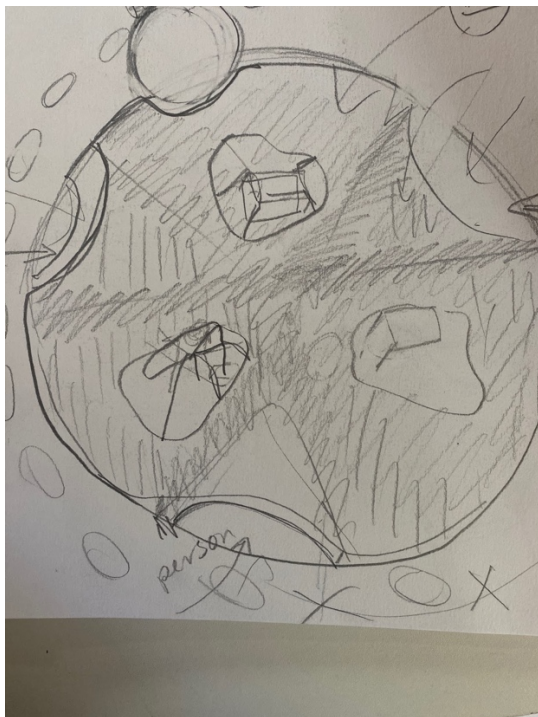
Originally, the idea for *tonic function* came from the curiosity and consideration of what success would look like for the individual while exploring themes of grit, identity and resilience. Additionally, I was questioning and exploring the relationship of the dancers' bodies in space in relation to gravity. During the creation process I was experiencing a personal relationship to gravity which affected the choreographic process. The original phrase work was created from feelings of heaviness, anxiousness and restrictions. These relationships informed movement choices that defined how I was dealing with my own resiliency. Unfortunately, the choreographic exploration for the live performance of this thesis was cancelled, due to COVID-19. In this chapter I will describe some concepts that were the basis for the choreographic process as it was intended for a live audience.

Inspired by defining what success would look like for every individual dancer, the research allowed for developing a multiplicity of tensions in the space, to inspire a tonal environment. Exploring multi-directionality in the movements and space occupied by the

dancers, would serve as a reminder of how the body responds to moments of fear, anxiety or hesitation in search of personal success.

### *Set Design*

The idea was to install an abstract landscape in which the dancers' interpretations of the space, would be discovered through their movement (See Figure 6.1). *Tonic function* was meant to be performed in the Experimental Media Performance Lab (xMPL) on campus.



*Figure 6.1: Set Design sketch by Katherine Aungier illustrating landscape plans.*

The xMPL at the Claire Trevor School of the Arts provides the ability to have seating in the round for about 70-80 audience members, raised a few inches off the floor by platforms. The landscape was meant to be made out of canvas, linoleum and wood with vibrant reds, oranges, yellows, pinks and browns. Aungier and I began to wonder how color can motivate the movement? These colors were meant to resemble a desert palette (See Figure 6.2 and 6.3) which

represented the solidarity and loneliness that can sometimes come with the sudden propulsion into a professional dance environment, following an undergraduate program.



*Figure 6.2: Color palette on canvas by Katherine Aungier.*



*Figure 6.3: Color palette on canvas by Katherine Aungier.*

In the rehearsal process I began to suggest to the dancers the color palettes and environment we would be working in. I asked if they would begin to react with the movement developed to their “imagined” environment. This changed the tone of the work, making it

somber and heavy, which evolved the first half of choreography. I imagine if the work had continued on, I would have named this *Movement One*, as a separation was needed from the later themes in the work.

Along with the floor landscape, Aungier made the suggestion of bringing in colored fabrics, in the same palette, that would hang from the lighting grid. This would both encapsulate the feelings of the work, literally and figuratively, as well as be a tool to cast shadows on the dancers throughout. The hanging structure never began, due to the cancellation of the performances.

### *Music + Lighting*

The music was in the process of being designed by another UCI student, Ezra Anisman. Ezra was discovered during a performance of a climate change themed tarot card reading on campus. I was captured by Ezra's sense of timing and sensitivity to the heaviness of the work. It was not until about three weeks before the cancellation of the thesis performances that Ezra and I began collaborating on the music score that would be played live, during the performance (See [link to work](#)).

We had begun to pull sounds from nature which included rocks, sand, water and air. I wanted to be able to emphasize the feelings of the dancers and the environment Aungier was creating with the severe sounds' nature creates itself. However, I found that the lack of rhythm began to irritate the dancers when trying to stay with one another through set choreography.

A little frustrated with my failed attempts to get the dancers to move in synchronicity when the moment called for it, I asked Anisman if they would be able to develop sections within the work that could produce a rhythm within the natural sounds. These moments with an added

rhythm began to feel cheerful, light and fresh. This is where the *Movement Two* was beginning to take shape.

With some feedback from the dancers we discussed using the lighting in the xMPL as a way of creating rhythm in the space for each of them to follow. Choreographers such as Wayne McGregor described in “Creative Cognition”, the use of multiple modalities when choreographing. McGregor asks dancers to imagine how something would feel, smell or use sounds to evoke a quality in the dancer’s movements (Kirsh 5). The dancers felt the use of their own sounds along with the pulse of the lights could assist in finding the synchronicity we needed. For example, the use of sound would evoke the frustrations felt when movement was meant to be synchronized with no counts. Some of these feelings of frustration were to be represented in the show posters and program (See Figure 6.4).



Figure 6.4: Poster for Tonic Function featuring two of the performers.

### *Reflection*

*Tonic function* eventually began incorporating my thesis interpretation with a humorous relief from the “seriousness” of creation. Looking back at the research and choreography

process, I was finding myself stuck many times when trying to be literal with the work and movement structure. The work of resilience building, for me, was missing a space for humor. In times of “choreographer’s block” I chose to approach my creation with a lighthearted humor to craft new movement phrases and tone. In the end, the movement crafted for this work incorporated both emotional reactions to the research itself as well as an adverse reaction to the demands of harnessing resilience.

The costumes design began to reflect the humor. The dancers were meant to wear dark green zip-up jumpers to reflect the serious routine of practicing dance and resilience. With white tulle and orange yarn wrapped around their head, this would echo their innocence and vulnerability felt after being sent out in professional environments. The makeup would have been bright orange around the lips and eyes to symbolize the ability to see and speak what it was the dancers needed in times of hesitancy, frustration or anxiety (See Figure 6.5).



*Figure 6. 5: Makeup idea for Tonic Function.*

Behind the set, music, costume and movement was the cast of dancers. The four dancers brought unique experiences from the past and interactions in the workshops developed for this research. The work of *Tonic Function* brings together a community of movers, to challenge what success is in order to redefine it.

I believe the work has the ability to be completed and performed at another time in the future. It will always reflect what resilience is all about, which is the ability to bounce back in the face of hardship.

*Link to Tonic Function:*

*<https://youtu.be/9KZPthJDs3s>*

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### Discussion

The information collected from the workshop sessions analyzed if the practice of building resilience (through the medium of CI) is useful to an undergraduate community of dancers. In order for the research to identify whether resilience practice could be incorporated into an undergraduate curriculum, the resilience skills had to coincide with a physical practice of CI. By gathering core foundational exercises by CI founders Steve Paxton, Nancy Stark Smith as well as secondary source information from Ann Cooper Albright and Cynthia Novack the workshops were shaped to suit the needs of the participants.

The inherent presence in CI practice to build resilience in undergraduate dance majors was the reason for this study. The personal testimonies and feedback given by participants revealed that the work of building a resilient mindset in an undergraduate program is not currently a focus for the students. Understanding a person's ability to build resilience through creative exploration can help prepare for participating in the demands of a successful future. Thompson and Jaque have argued that in order for societies to heal wounds (rejections) and promote a sense of well-being, more creative approaches may need to be explored (Thompson and Jaque 295). The creative approach that was investigated in this intervention by the participants was observed as an act of practicing resilience itself. It is vital to the embrace of the human condition as one prepares to meet adversity in order to overcome obstacles (295). The trajectory of an individual's life, dancer or not, is filled with a myriad of unexpected encounters. The unexpected findings of a gap in the undergraduate's training needed to be explored further.

Unfortunately, since the focus of a dancer's career seems to be on refining the body's approach to technique; as a result, mental development is being ignored. This research found



when the development of the mind is able to become involved with the training of the body, a dancer feels more embodied in the practice. The key points discussed within the practice of building resilience along with the associated CI exercises determined the importance of the relationship to self-awareness, self-regulation, mental agility, connection and optimism for the participants. More specifically the practices in self-awareness and self-regulation appeared to be most effective.

Feedback provided by the participants about the experience with “The Small Dance” and “Three Domes of Support” as self-awareness and self-regulation practices highlighted the importance of connection. Once participants found that connection with the self (physically and emotionally) supported the ability to explore connection with another mover, this connection took on a positive association. The experience of negative emotions normally suggests the inability to fully connect or progress in regard to difficulty levels in the practice. By providing students with the skills to emotionally regulate through challenging tasks, they proved to be more capable and willing to attempt work with a higher difficulty. Emotional regulation is highly important in the ability to become resilient. The exercises involved in practicing CI serve as a platform for students to learn how to self-regulate sooner with clarity, due to the need to rely on other movers.

The workshops were meant to be a space to enlighten the participants on exercises dealing with the five resilience practices. Within the findings of this research an unexpected theme was that of negative emotional reactions to the exercises within the workshop. For the participants who did not have much experience in CI or were uncomfortable with partnering and touch, much of the work proved to be challenging. However, with access to self-awareness an

emotional response to the work suggested feelings of validation and the ability to confront any perceived weakness.

### *The Theory of Resilience in CI*

The midway surveys and journal prompts served as primary information regarding the results of this research. Exit surveys provided feedback as well, which clarified what the strengths or weaknesses in the intervention from the participants' views were. Future studies should include questionnaires and surveys so as to obtain in-depth written response from participants. This was due to the inability of the participants to fully articulate in the workshop setting what was experienced with the abundance of information given. The analysis of thoughts, feelings and behaviors began once the feedback provided in the written surveys and prompts was evaluated along with the participants. Some participants stated the prompts and surveys allowed for the project to develop a sense of awareness comprehensively. These considerations found an established way of interpreting the resilience skill sets into CI movement practice.

A dancer that typically endures fifteen years or more of training before beginning to audition for the professional environment may risk taking a toll on personal development. Dancers spend much of their time staring in the mirror, placing blame as well as criticizing bodies for not achieving perfection. While the body is not being twisted, contorted, strengthened or stretched the focus should also be on the development of the mind. When the exercises such as “The Small Dance” and the “Three Domes of Support” described in the prior chapters were associated with developmental resilience building skill sets, the work of the mind was closely related to the work of the body, resulting in positive reactions from the participants. This research found the association of a positive mindset within movement practice creates a greater sense of community. Establishing a sense of community in various forms, as well as

strengthening the mind in terms of resilience during an undergraduate program, seems to be useful for the current needs of collegiate dancers.

## **Limitations**

There were various limitations that presented themselves during this project, including the short period of time meeting with the test group. This project relied heavily on the ability to know if the skills presented to the participants were useful in professional dance careers. Some of the participants have opted to check back in with the project after leaving the university program, but the results may be unknown for years to come.

Many dance majors did express interest in being a part of this project, but due to the inability to fit the workshop dates and times into busy schedules, some were unable to participate. This presented other limitations of a low participant turnout, which resulted in a low amount of data. Originally the project was meant to include up to twenty participants but ended up having ten participate in the first two workshops and eight in the final workshop. In addition to the limited size of the group, some participant responses had limited descriptions due to very dense undergraduate schedules in the Fall Quarter.

The university allowed limited time blocks to be reserved for the dance studios on campus. This did not leave any spare time in the first workshop week to hold space for an open CI jam, which was originally meant to serve as space for discovery for the participants as well as others who wanted to be involved.

Much of the verbal feedback was recorded by hand which resulted in the inability to record every response due to time constraints. The intention was to record the workshops and use the recordings for future research when the opportunity presented itself to expand the work.

## **Conclusion**

As I continue in dance education, I will need to build upon theories of how to approach resilience in dance in order to increase the probability of success for young students. The results from this investigation structure how a collegiate dance class can harness skills associated with resilience for young students to benefit the body and mind. .

The research explored the complexities of the participants' beings, as well as exploring a more embodied self - a self that is capable and resilient. Moving forward, the intention is to share the research with students in undergraduate dance programs. It is a unique skill to acquire, both in terms of CI practice and resilience.

CI gives information about one's own mass to communicate ideas kinesthetically. I believe this research filled the gap (for the participants who were involved) and opened the door for the practice of CI while expanding approaches to resilience practice. Observations in the workshops revealed that for the participants the breath became softer, bodies less rigid and minds stronger throughout the workshop meeting periods. These observations are what should be fundamental in the development towards supporting a collegiate dancer to be successful in their futures.

In conclusion, this intervention served as a pilot study for future investigation of incorporating resilience building techniques into various forms for an undergraduate dance community. This thesis is the first attempt to incorporate concepts and ideas of resilience into the method of CI. Through the process of giving attention to self-awareness, learning how to self-regulate, incorporating mental agility practice and harnessing community and optimism skills, one could potentially survive a sometimes-unforgiving world of dance.

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APPENDIX A  
APPENDIX A

**Workshop Study Recruitment Flyer**



**Thesis Research Workshops**

with Connor Senning – 2<sup>nd</sup> year MFA Dance Candidate

How are collegiate dance students trained for the professional body---the resilient one? How are they engaged in their preparation for a career in the dance world beyond the physical? Bridging the divide between how resilient we are and how resilient we need to be to survive a professional career in dance, these workshops draw on practices informed by Contact Improvisation to explore how intentional physical training and discussion on the resilient body can provide an embodied ground for success. This study will include three 90-minute workshops. Participants will not be compensated but may be considered for performance opportunity.

**If interested, please contact Connor.**

CSENNING@UCI.EDU

## APPENDIX B

### Dance Workshop One Lesson Plan

#### Goals and Objectives:

- Meeting – dropping inhibitions/boundaries
- Safety in giving weight
- Sensing and respecting limits
- Efficient skeletal support
- Giving weight
- Supporting a partner's weight
- Dancing in a continuously changing balance with another
- Following a point of physical contact

#### Discussing the Research (5-10 min)

- Why resilience? What did I want to accomplish with this? What success looks like to me and how it may look different to others. How can it relate to Contact Fundamentals?
- Formula for success in the workshop “sacred” space:  
ATTENTION + CURIOSITY = EXPLORATION
- Awareness of what IS creates safety and defines what else is possible.
- When we are aware of what IS we don't need to know where we are going, what is next will reveal itself. – Ann Cooper Albright

#### Five Resiliency Skill Sets

This highly experiential program includes a variety of practical learning methodologies. Participants have extensive opportunities to “learn by doing,” where they practice the resilience skills and receive feedback from instructors. -Penn Resilience Program

Self-Awareness-The ability to pay attention to your thoughts, emotions, behaviors, and physiological reactions

Self-Regulation – The ability to change one's thoughts, emotions, behaviors, and physiology in the service of a desired outcome

Mental Agility – The ability to look at situations from multiple perspectives and to think creatively and flexibly.

Connection – The ability to build and maintain strong, trusting relationships.

Optimism – The ability to notice and expect the positive, to focus on what you can control, and to take purposeful action.

#### Contact Fundamentals:

- *Sensitivity*
- *Touch*
- *Gravity*

Safety Talk (5 min)

Warmup (10 min)

**Name:** Three Domes of Support (5 min)

**Reason:** Return pressure into hands to understand how to activate core support and extend spine upwards towards the ceiling. *Self-awareness practice.*



2. **Name:** Small Dance (5 min)  
**Reason:** Investigating History of contact and history of the space we are dancing in.  
*Opening ourselves up to self-awareness. (engage authentically)*
3. **Name:** Finger Dance: (10 min)  
**Reason:** Early development by East Coast group Nancy Stark Smith, Steve Paxton, Neeta Little, Danny Lepkoff
  - Physical listening
4. **Name:** Learning to safely share weight (10 min)  
**Reason:** In order to explore the ability to sense the floor through another person's body, and safely roll across them without causing discomfort or pain.  
*Resilience relation to self-awareness, self-regulation and connection.*
  - Sensing the floor through your partner. Even if you leave the floor how do you find the floor through the connection you are sharing?
  - When in doubt. Soften. Reach out, reach away.
  - A way to understand the body is learning how to let go.
5. **Name:** Points for leverage (Tables, Bridges) (15 min)  
**Reason:** Adopting vocabulary of contact  
*Resilience relation to self-awareness, self-regulation and connection.*
6. **Name:** Rolling point of contact, surfing, sliding, jumping points. In and out of floor. (15)  
**Reason:** Building on modes of improvisation with another body. Sharing centers (core)  
*Resilience relation to self-awareness, self-regulation, mental agility and connection.*
  - Sharing core rolling points across the floor. The goal is not to produce movement but to stay in the dynamic reality and allow movements to produce themselves.
7. **Name:** Open Jam (15-20 min)  
**Reason:** Choosing parts to explore to move into a richer consciousness of the body.
8. **Name:** Sharing Experience (20-25 min) (Foot massage circle)  
**Reason:** To have open conversations with partners and groups in our shared experiences of trying to embody the subject matter we are looking into.

**Discussion Prompts:**

- Does this work in general give you a larger sense of feeling resilient?
- Did anyone have any thoughts about control or losing control? How does this relate to our ability to change our thoughts, emotions, or behaviors?
- In order to reach an embodied state of flow, we need to let go and give in to many aspects of the world around us. Did you reach a sense of flow in your contact? If not, what were you holding onto and is it something you can think about letting go in our next meeting?
- Have you taken time to think about how you are going to handle the possibility of rejection?
- I wanted to know more about what kind of self-awareness these exercises brought to light for you. What did you find you connected with physically that maybe you did not connect with emotionally

## APPENDIX C

### Dance Workshop Two Lesson Plan

#### Goals and Objectives:

- Establish deeper connections
- Review safety of giving weight
- Supporting a partner's weight
- Develop spirals into floor – back to back
- Following a point of physical contact

#### Review Research (5-10 min)

##### Five Resiliency Skill Sets

This highly experiential program includes a variety of practical learning methodologies. Participants have extensive opportunities to “learn by doing,” where they practice the resilience skills and receive feedback from instructors.

Self-Awareness–The ability to pay attention to your thoughts, emotions, behaviors, and physiological reactions

Self-Regulation – The ability to change one's thoughts, emotions, behaviors, and physiology in the service of a desired outcome

Mental Agility – The ability to look at situations from multiple perspectives and to think creatively and flexibly.

Connection – The ability to build and maintain strong, trusting relationships.

Optimism – The ability to notice and expect the positive, to focus on what you can control, and to take purposeful action.

#### Contact Fundamentals:

- *Sensitivity*
- *Touch*
- *Gravity*

#### Warmup (10 min)

1. **Name:** Three Domes of Support (5 min)  
**Reason:** Return pressure into hands to understand how to activate core support and extend spine upwards towards the ceiling. *Self-awareness practice.*
2. **Name:** Small Dance (5 min)  
**Reason:** Investigating History of contact and history of the space we are dancing in. *Opening ourselves up to self-awareness (engage authentically)*  
Feeling less. “Directing attention to smaller units of stimulation and change within the physical circumstance. Heighten the sense of sensitivity” (Smith 69)  
  
“Replace ambition with curiosity” (Smith 41)

3. **Name:** Reestablish Touch – compression, discovery, massage, swipes –leg warmup  
**Reason:** Establish connection between the dancers, and allowing the body to remain in a relaxed state while finding ways to use the body and share weight in order to warm one another up
4. **Name:** Back to Back Sitting + Standing – Spirals to the floor  
**Reason:** Contact Fundamental- a way of moving in and out of the floor through contact while maintaining a core connection. Moving in relation to the floor.
5. **Name:** Low Table/High Table.  
**Reason:** Finding ways to seek the floor with hands and feet. (*Mental Agility*)
6. **Name:** Hip Lift facing opposite ways  
**Reason:** (*Mental Agility*)
7. **Name:** Sharing Experience (20-25 min) (Foot massage circle)  
**Reason:** To have open conversations with partners and groups in our shared experiences of trying to embody the subject matter we are looking into.

**Discussion Prompts:**

- Thoughts on contact fundamental of touch?
- How do we support ourselves and how do we support others?
- What was a strength or weakness?
- How are you coping with your challenges in contact improvisation?
- What could you try differently?
- How do you stay engaged?
- How do you look at your experience in contact improvisation?

## APPENDIX D

### Dance Workshop Three Lesson Plan

#### Goals and Objectives:

- Continuing the practice of integrating resilience practices with teaching of Contact Improvisation to undergraduate workshop participants. Embracing vulnerability, hosting a space where students are willing to invest, create deeper connections and alter attitudes to experience what it means to be working towards resiliency. This is about individual capacity, to meet all the challenges that students will encounter.
- Introduce Authentic Improvisation

1. **Name:** Three Domes of Support (5 min)

**Reason:** Grounding the dancers, arriving energetically. Restructuring their thoughts to focus on the practice of building resiliency through the form of contact improvisation. (*Self-Awareness*)

*\*Eyes remain closed. Lead Researcher guide partners.*

2. **Name:** Review of back-to-back, tables, bridges, spirals and rolling

**Reason:** Reawaken participant's bodies to the practices of the form. Call upon their mental stamina to draw upon what it is they need to do to complete the task as a shared body (shared center). Wake up kinesthetic senses.

3. **Name:** Head-to-head

**Reason:** Listening with the spine. Shifting away from the mindset of perfection and using hardships for growth.

*\*Eyes open.*

4. **Name:** Exploration of Lifts (chest to chest)

**Reason:** Exploring advanced tasks with first initial approach vs. intentional optimistic approach. (*Optimism*) Taking notice of changes between approaches. Can the idea of approaching a movement with more optimism can change the success of the task? Use of positive affirmation and see if it changes the outcome.

5. **Name:** Authentic Movement – Introduction – Mover/Witness

**Reason:** This is an exercise in not making a decision in order to fulfill a task.

*\*Have participants that are the witness journal (3 min)*

6. **Practice:** Recognition/Reflection

**Reason:** Tying all of the aspects of resilience building skills back to what it was we were incorporating into the movement exploration.

## **Reminders for the Lead Researcher:**

### CONNECTION:

The power of the work is in the touch. Notice how you are feeling when you are touching and being touched. Allow yourself to have small communications within the support.

### SELF-REGULATION:

I want you to take notice of your emotions in the beginning of this work. Recognize that you have the choice in how you approach this work emotionally. While it may feel as though your choice of behavior is out of your control, it's not. Your feelings may sway you towards one path (resistance, hesitation), but you are more than those feelings. This is self-regulation. Become aware of your transient feelings. Monitor your body to get clues about how you are feeling if it is not immediately obvious to you. See beyond the discomfort at the moment to the larger picture (success).

OPTIMISM: Realizing that everything we did today was practice as well in promoting a more optimistic life. By disengaging from negative thoughts, creating happy memories and being mindful are all ways of improving your abilities to remain optimistic in your life.

### **Discussion Prompts:**

- Overall thoughts on all three workshops?
- Thoughts on Authentic Movement? Was this new? How can it be helpful or not?
- Does the work feel that it has space in your lives to keep developing?
- Anything that did not work?

## APPENDIX E

### Workshop Safety + Guidelines<sup>2</sup>

*Inspired by the Rules/Guidelines from Santa Monica, CA Jam*

*“Take care of your own safety while being aware of and honoring the safety of others.”*

1. It is okay to verbally and non-verbally invite a new dance or join an existing dance. Please tune in and “listen” for the answer, then proceed as appropriate.
2. Practice mutuality. Listen to and honor your own and other boundaries. When we take care of ourselves and encourage others to do the same, we create interactions that are mutual. This means never trying to convince someone to do something they are not comfortable with.
3. Everyone ALWAYS has the right to say “no”, “wait”, “not now”. It’s fine to step out of any dance or conversation at any time, and you are not required to give a reason why, though you can if it feels right to you.
4. Trust Is Earned! The practice of CI can be risky and often pushes conventional societal boundaries around touch and connection. Take the time to develop trust in your own abilities and your partners so you can safely explore and stretch your comfort zones in ways YOU like.
5. In dances, pay attention to landing gear at all times.
6. Jams can become social and playful spaces. If you are choosing not to move in the space, please move to the side and keep the volume of the conversations low to leave space for others.
7. Avoid strong scents like perfumes and cologne. Some people are sensitive to such things. Natural essential oils are okay if they are not too strong.
8. If a dance or interaction becomes uncomfortable and you are willing and able, please feel empowered and encouraged to open a conversation with your partner. Aim to be honest, clear, and direct. Try to avoid making assumptions or pointing fingers.
9. Have fun!

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<sup>2</sup> \*The workshop safety and guideline were verbally delivered to the participants during workshop one. The purpose was to inform the participants of ways to stay safely engaged with the process and understand general rules and regulations before the workshops began.

**APPENDIX F**

**Workshop Entry Survey<sup>3</sup>**

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

AGE: \_\_\_\_\_

GENDER: Male \_\_\_\_\_ Female \_\_\_\_\_ Do not wish to state \_\_\_\_\_

Year of Study: 1 \_\_\_\_\_ 2 \_\_\_\_\_ 3 \_\_\_\_\_ 4 \_\_\_\_\_

Numbers of years of formal dance training: \_\_\_\_\_

Numbers of years of Contact Improvisation Training: \_\_\_\_\_

Number of years in Improvisation experience: \_\_\_\_\_

Numbers of years of Partnering in dance experience: \_\_\_\_\_

In a few short words please describe your experience (if any) with partnering in dance:

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In a few short words please describe your experience (if any) with Contact Improvisation:

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In a few short words please describe your experience (if any) with Improvisation:

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<sup>3</sup> \*The Entry Surveys were delivered to the participants electronically. The purpose of the survey was to obtain general information, prior experience in specific dance forms and understand the participant's relationships with rejection, resilience and themselves. The surveys were collected prior to workshop one.

**Pre-Survey  
Self-Analysis for Dance Majors at UCI<sup>4</sup>**

*Please answer the following questions to the best of your ability in the space provided. Use the amount of space as a guideline or limitations to how much you answer.*

1. Have you ever had any experience with rejection? If so, how did you deal with the pain of a particular rejection and please explain how you went about dealing with those feelings whether it was through a physical, mental, or emotional practice.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. What would be your definition of resilience?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
3. Do you feel as though you are a resilient person?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
4. How will you deal with rejection in your future as the world of dance becomes more competitive for jobs and performance opportunities? Be specific.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
5. How do you value your sense of “self”? How do you value your sense of “other”? Define what “other” is to you.

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<sup>4</sup> \*The Entry Surveys were delivered to the participants electronically. The purpose of the survey was to obtain general information, prior experience in specific dance forms and understand the participant’s relationships with rejection, resilience and themselves. The surveys were collected prior to workshop one.





## APPENDIX H

### Workshop Midway Survey<sup>6</sup>

#### Self-Analysis for Dance Majors at UCI

*Please answer the following questions to the best of your ability in the space provided. Use the amount of space as a guideline or limitations to how much you answer.*

1. Are you able to name some specific emotions you experienced throughout the two workshop meetings so far? Explain.

2. Building resilience requires the five skill sets that we discussed. What has been your relationship to any of the following skill sets:

- Self-Awareness
- Self-Regulation
- Mental Agility
- Connection
- Optimism

---

<sup>6</sup> \*The Midway Survey was delivered to the participants electronically between workshop two and three. The purpose of the survey was to analyze how the participants were responding emotionally to the workshops and gain a sense of the information that was retained. The surveys were returned one week prior to the workshop two meetings.

## APPENDIX I

### Workshop Exit Survey<sup>7</sup>

1. Please choose one or two exercises that you embodied throughout the workshop meeting periods that stood out to you in terms of building your personal resiliency. Be specific about the effects it had on you as a student and in what ways it can benefit you in your future professional dance career.

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<sup>7</sup> \*The Exit Survey was delivered to the participants electronically following workshop three. The purpose was to collect any final thoughts of the participants that may not have been discussed in person. The Exit Surveys were returned one week prior to the third workshop meeting.

## APPENDIX J

### Three Domes of Support<sup>8</sup>

Except from *How to Land: Finding Ground in an Unstable World*. Ann Cooper Albright (83) (n.b. I use the term “dome” here to describe a rounded vault of support. We have a very clear dome in our upper palate. Sometimes, as in the case of the diaphragm of the chest, that dome moves to an inverted shape and back again with our breathing. The pelvic bowl is also shaped like an inverted dome.)

Begin standing with your feet directly underneath your hips, head stacked above (not in front of) your shoulders. Feel the line of energy from sky to earth running through your spine. Place a hand on the top-most part of your head and gently press down. Once you begin to feel that pressure, try to meet it by pushing back into your hand. Most likely you will feel your spine energizing and extending upwards when you do this. An image I like to use for this action is that of a water fountain or natural geyser running from the earth through my feet, legs, and spine and out the top of my head, coursing up into the air about seven feet and then falling back down to the ground. Sometimes I imagine that water is like a shower flowing over my skin. Try to keep that feeling of extending as a force, not a position while you release the hand on your head down to the side. Close your eyes and take a moment to feel the small dance of your balance and alignment. Bring your tongue to the roof of your mouth and trace its dome-like shape from the front of your mouth back towards your throat. Feel how that dome supports your brain and various sense organs from inside your skull. Play with moving your head from side to side, up and down, diagonally (yes/no/maybe), feeling how that dome can support the movement of your skull from inside rather than having to support your head from your neck muscles. Be gentle at first and explore the range of motion available to you without displacing your feet (but you certainly can bend your knees!). Then open your eyes and feel what it is like to move through the space with attention to this internal dome of support in the head.

Come back to standing and close your eyes again. Bring your attention to your breathing and the movement of the diaphragm in your chest. Visualize that web of connective tissue and muscle in the center of your ribs. As you inhale, it moves down into a bowl-like shape; as you exhale, it floats up into a dome-like shape. Play with initiating from this place of support in the center of your ribs, opening your eyes as you begin to travel through the space.

Once again, come into a stand with your hips released and your knees slightly bent. Close your eyes and visualize the inverse dome (bowl) of your pelvis. Shift your weight over to your right leg, left leg, then to the front and towards the back. Feel the way your pelvis supports not only your abdominal organs, but also the whole torso. Bounce up and down gently, feeling the buoyancy of that support and how your toned pelvis can lift weight out of your legs. Open your eyes and explore that support as you move through the space.

Finally, come back to a stand and feel all three domes of support (upper palate, diaphragm, pelvis). Imagine that they can talk to one another and play with that dialogue in motion. See how these domes affect your experience of balance, attention to your back, and being upside down. Oftentimes feeling the dome of support in the upper palate and the pelvis can help folks move into inversion more easily.

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<sup>8</sup> \*Three Domes of Support was given during workshop one, two and three to the participants. The above information was delivered by the lead researcher.

## APPENDIX K

### The Small Dance<sup>9</sup>

*The text is to be delivered slowly, with pauses between each sentence. [Steve Paxton]*

Relax deep into the cone of the eye socket. Imagine a line that runs between the ears. That's where the skull rests. Make the motion, very small, for "Yes." This rocks the skull on the top vertebrae, the atlas. You have to intuit the bones. Like a donut. The sensation around it defines it. Do the motion for "No." Between these two motions you can determine the length of the vertebrae.

... Ballooning of the lungs. Breathe from the bottom of the lung up to the clavicle. Can you expand the ribs out and up and back easily? Defining the diaphragm in terms of sensation. Bottom of the lung. Two domes of muscle. So with each breath you're massaging the intestine... What the diaphragm is doing is a signal to the rest of the body. Sky above, earth below...

The head in this work is a limb. It has mass. Mass may be the single most important sensation. The feeling of gravity. Continuing to perceive mass and gravity as you stand. Tension in the muscle masks the sensation of gravity...

You've been swimming in gravity since the day you were born. Every cell knows where down is. Easily forgotten. Your mass and the earth's mass calling to each other...

...Upward force of the bones. Shoulder blades fall down the back, relaxing the intestines into the bowl of the pelvis... In the direction the arms are hanging, without changing that direction, do the smallest stretch you can feel. Can it be smaller? Can you do less? The initiation of the stretch, along the length of bones, in the direction the force is already going. The small dance—you're relaxing and it's holding you up. The muscles keep the weight throughout the skeleton. Shifting weight from leg to leg, interface, taking weight, compression. Stretching along the line of compression. Center of the small dance.

Upright position... spine erect... Feel the bottom of the lung, the diaphragm, feel it massage the organs, down into the bowl of the pelvis, relax your genitals and anus... breathe deeply... exhale slowly... feel the pause at the exhalation... watch for the beginning of the inhalation... This thing, time... full of rush and pause... feel time go by through the breath... don't initiate the breath... just watch that period... try to catch your mind, the exact moment when the inhalation starts again...

Standing... Relax erect with the weight toward the back half of the knee, put some weight on the balls of the feet... relax the scalp... relax the eyelids... relax behind the eyes... deep into the cone of the eye socket... don't spend any energy blocking or focusing... let your ideas flow... because certain things mask other things... and it's better for this right now to have no concentration... feel the play of rush and pause of the small dance that holds you upright when you relax... through simple mass and balance... 60% on the ball of the foot, some to toes, rest back... knees a little relaxed... Let your breath guide your torso, make you symmetrical... let

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<sup>9</sup> \*The Small Dance was given during workshop one, two and three to the participants. The above information was delivered by the lead researcher.

your ribs be open to the ballooning of the lungs... arms fall sideways... Feel the small dance... it's always there... think of the alignment of the bones, limbs, towards the center of the earth... length of the bone...

...Take your weight over your left leg... what is the difference... in the thigh, in the hip joint... Calling this sensation "compression," take compression over the right leg, feel the change... compression down the length of the bone... Take your body to neutral... lean forward... compression in front, stretch in back... back to neutral... lean backwards, stretch in front, compression in back... don't have compression in the arms, there's no weight there... lean forward again... feel the difference... relax... neutral... lean back, stretch along the length of your body... neutral... stretch up... let the spine rise through the shoulders... let the head be supported on a line between the ears... make the motion for "Yes,"... rock the head... the atlas... make a stretch connection, a long line of stretch between the ball of the foot and the atlas, between the toes, the ball of the foot up the leg to the spine, to the atlas... You've been falling in gravity since the day you were born...

Imagine, but don't do it, imagine that you are about to take a step forward with your left foot. What is the difference? Back to standing...

Imagine but don't do it, imagine that you are about to do a step with your left foot. What is the difference? Back to standing...

Imagine but don't do it, imagine that you are about to take a step with your right foot... your left foot... your right... your left, right, left..... standing.

...Slowly let your body collapse into a squat... release into a voluntary fall. Breathe, squatting with hands on the floor, neck relaxed... see if you can relax in this position... and come up.  
[end]

***NOTES added by Steve Paxton, April 2008:***

1. "You have to intuit the bones. Like a donut. The sensation around it defines it."

A donut is a *torus*, a circular form with a hole in the center. The thought here is that the muscles around the bone have sensation, and the bone has very little. The sensations of movement between the skull and the atlas are vague, nonspecific, so the imagination supplies the exact site of the action. Understanding the anatomy of the site will give the imagination greater power to supply a picture of this action between the ears where the skull is supported on the spine. Generally, bones can be sensed during joint movement and when they are under compression (transferring weight to the floor). But these sensations are much more subtle than those of the surrounding tissue.

2. "Defining the diaphragm in terms of sensation. Bottom of the lung."

'The bottom of the lungs' is a phrase to bring consciousness to the approximate place of the diaphragm. That it is two domes of muscle, however, must be known anatomically. Also, many people do not sense that the diaphragm rises during exhalation, descends during inhalation. This movement of breathing provides pressure and release described as a massage of the organs and the intestines. 'The sky above, the earth below' is borrowed from Taoism. The point is to 'see' the air of the lungs and the organs below the diaphragm as having a changing but always

sensitive and intimate relationship divided and defined by the movement of the diaphragm, and to bring to mind the interior of the torso from clavicle to ischia via the gentle pressure and release.

3. "Continuing to perceive mass and gravity"

Gravity is a natural force; mass is what this force acts upon. The sensations of gravity and mass are identical, another example of an intimate and changing relationship. Generally, bringing mass and gravity to mind causes relaxation of muscle tensions. Another way to approach this sensation is to tense the muscles (holding against the force of gravity) and then release the tension. While standing, this process reveals the Small Dance, the reflexes which enable standing balance. Like breath, it is a natural event in the body that can be consciously observed and manipulated, as when you decide to fall to the floor—over-riding balance.

4. "Upward force of the bones"

This refers to the notion that the bones support the weight, notable if the muscles relax a bit. This is the sensation of resistance to gravity, and with that, and with the Small Dance, a way of acknowledging the skeleton's support and the variations of posture. 'The bones rise, the muscles relax,' is a description of a state for moving in which unnecessary muscle tension is absent. Necessary tension and tone will naturally remain active... it is a way to achieve an 'intimate and sensitive' relation to one's partner in CI, and also to the surface upon which you dance.

5. "Stretching along the line of compression"

Assuming compression has been sensed, for instance in the leg joints and long bones and feet—i.e., the sensation of mass supported by the bones, a subtle effect—then one can feel the resistance to the force of gravity, a thrust against the downward pull. It is an adjustment of the posture upward along the lines of skeletal compression. Muscular effort involved can be dropped once upward alignment is achieved.

6. "Center of the small dance."

Normally when I speak of the center, I mean the center of mass in the pelvis. But this phrase is ambiguous. It might mean the center line of the body's tubular shape, or it might refer to the non-conscious mental activity which maintains balance... Currently, I sense the small dance as a body-field event, centerless.

7. "Relax erect with the weight toward the back half of the knee"

The knees are slightly bent. If the knee is locked, the perception of weight will be toward the front of the knee. Generally during the stand, the knees are slightly bent forward, the pelvis slightly sitting toward the feet.

8. "Calling this sensation 'compression'..."

Shifting weight from leg to leg is sense-able. Centering that sense in the leg bones results in bone compression, muscle relaxation, which should reveal the subtle skeletal sensation.

9. "Lean forward... compression in front, stretch in back"

All of the materials in the Stand are simple observations of sensations or events of the body. Taking weight forward causes the muscles of the back to tense, whereas the muscles of the front of the body relax. It provides a clear difference in sensations between the front and back of the body, which strangely many people don't notice. This leaning event is related to the head nodding with which this transcript begins and implicated in the sensation of beginning to move forward.

10. "Stretch up... let the spine rise through the shoulders"

With shoulder tension, the muscles will tend to mask the compression and the thrust of the spine as it supports the skull. Thinking of the spine rising up through the shoulder girdle should cause the shoulders to relax, and hopefully, cause the head to rotate slightly forward.

11. "You've been falling in gravity"

Just a matter of fact, a reminder. Because it is constant, gravity is ignorable. This image aims to remind us that movement and gravity are another of those 'intimate and sensitive' relations in that every movement will relate to gravity—dramatized by the notion that only the surface on which one is supported is causing a pause in the fall. While standing, we are falling toward our feet, i.e., the force of gravity remains operative.

12. "Imagine but don't do it, imagine that you are about to take a step"

With this event, we are observing the power of the imagination relative to the initiation of movement. Currently, brain scans reveal that in the milliseconds prior to even the desire to move, the brain has already begun firing to support the movement. Our feeling of desire to take a step is quite a way down the chain of events that will result in movement. But it is the first one we can observe.