

Re-Imagining Plural Identities:
Cultural Code-Switching and the Dancing Body

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Abstract

What does it mean to have multiple cultural identities? As a German-American bilingual and bicultural individual, I've struggled to locate my sense of belonging due to the constant cultural navigation or code-switching that occurs when reckoning personal and societal expectations. My thesis research is rooted in exploring how my lived experiences with code-switching inform a physical and philosophical approach to research using the dancing body, where identity formation and performance are reimagined in creative practice. Language, culture, context, and movement drive this Practice-as-Research (PaR) project through a series of stages that culminate in my proposed fourth contemporary identity concept. Through a discussion of personal history, creative practice, and critical self-reflection, I re-think the sociolinguistic process of code-switching in relation to cultural scholars such as John Gumperz and Stuart Hall, and contemporary dance artists such as Sarah Michelson and Eleanor Bauer. As a white, female, German-American artist, I reflect upon my own privilege as a dance maker addressing code-switching, belonging, citizenship, and self-acceptance in my creative *praxis*. My research demonstrates the urgency of identity discourse in that it demands a re-evaluation of cultural identity that justifies plurality and fluidity of self through a kinesthetic choreographic practice of code-switching.

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Introduction: Traversing Cultural and Artistic Identities

Code-switching is not only grammatical but also a discursive process, that could not be analyzed with traditional linguistic methods.

- John Gumperz

Like a ticking clock, I swing the yellow caution sign and broom handle from side to side. The sign and its rhythm are symbolic in that they both serve as a physical manifestation of my experience with navigating a transitioning identity through liminal spaces. How can my lived experience of cultural code-switching with language and the body inform my creative process where identity is re-imagined using the dancing body? Drawing on poet and philosopher Édouard Glissant's perspective of cross-cultural poetics, language is an oral practice that is inseparable from the movement of the body (122). In my experience, dance as a discipline locates my identity expression within movement. Therefore, the dance making process offers me opportunities to physicalize the relationship between my mind and body. Over the past year, my creative process has become a way for me to explore the complexities of the relationship between my German-American identity, movement, and choreographic practice. Furthermore, my thesis demonstrates that navigating two languages and two cultures is not only an experience of who I am as a person, but also how I engage with my artistic desires.

My experiences with code-switching are the foundation for my research. Throughout my thesis, it will be important to understand that the sociolinguistic and anthropological roots of code-switching are necessary lenses for drawing connections between my cultural and artistic identities. As a white, European, German-American dance researcher, my personal experience with code-switching is related to a bicultural navigation of two identities that make up my cultural background. However, in the spirit of questioning identity, I want to recognize the fact that I am a

white person using my privilege and agency to associate with a concept more commonly used to express the experiences and challenges of those facing racial discrimination.

As sociolinguistic expert John Gumperz explains, there is an inherent “bi-directional relationship between language and culture,” which, when navigated in social scenarios, is referred to as *code-switching* – a sociolinguistic phenomenon rooted in the physical, the linguistic, and the cultural transition from one identity to another (4). In the example, *ich heiße* Ingrid and *ich* like *tanzen* (my name is Ingrid and I like to dance), the immediate transition from one language to the next and back again shifts not only the tone of the speaker, but also the associations and meanings of the word being orated. In addition, the response or reaction of the listener will depend on their linguistic and cultural capacities; at which moment I may have succeeded in communication and connection or fallen short of expectations, evoking further attachment or detachment to one or the other culture, or both; a process I must reconcile within myself, before a second utterance is made. Experiencing this process over and over has created well-worn pathways for me. The relationship between language, communication and the body is where much of my research takes place.

While Gumperz’s original definition of code-switching was used to describe the experience of European immigrants in rural U.S. communities, the term’s current use reflects an institutional shift in the meaning that occurred in the 1970s, when sociolinguists began using the term to describe the process by which African American and Hispanic communities abruptly altered their language and dialect to fit that of the majority white, English-speaking population in social or work-related settings (Morrison, Encyclopedia Britannica). In my research, code-switching has become an integrated experience of examining the relationship between language and my mind-body experience of transition as a way to locate the balance of belonging and independence in the creative process. Operating on this idea that language and dance are bound together by movement,

I made two choreographic works that included a solo, *Wildschwein* (2018) which means wild boar in English and, a group piece, *Achtung!... Identity Crossing* (2019) which translates to Caution! ... Identity Crossing, as a part of my research for this project. My thesis uses a Practice-as-Research (PaR) model because my work is not only based in the choreographic, but the physical *praxis* of movement. PaR is an artistic approach that functions to make space for research to take place outside the boundaries of written scholarship. With an autobiographical lens, my research investigates the construction of cultural identity within my own dancing body through the choreographic process.

I. Contextualizing Identity in Choreography

What do I mean when I use the term identity? How is my experience of cultural identity imbedded in my choreographic process? How should I locate my cultural identity in the historical discourse on identity formation?

Identity is a term I use in my project as a signifier that connects a group of individuals based on a common conception of self and others. Cultural identity is a specific type of identity that includes signifiers such as nationality, race, gender, social class, language, family, etc. I locate myself in this matrix as a German-American, white, female, middle class, English and German speaker with immediate family members who live in the United States and in Germany. Although cultural identity is not limited to these signifiers, they are the most prominent categories that have emerged in my research informing choreographic themes in my work. In particular, differences in cultural identity have a complex and fraught history. Throughout time, individuals have disputed nationality and cultural belonging, resulting in extremist actions such as murder, torture, and enslavement. From the documented horrors of colonialism to the current immigration politics in both the U.S. and Germany, cultural identity has been used against individuals to fuel isolation

and tragedy. My research brings identity politics into conversations with the body, further complicating the experience of identity by investigating transitional movement qualities and energetics in the body while asking questions about artistic agency and practice.

Pinpointing my own cultural identity has always been a challenge because of my German and American roots. As a result of these plural identities, I began contextualizing myself at an early age. Contextualization is the precursor to code-switching. The process merges grammatical, lexical and pragmatic knowledge, allowing bilingual speakers to locate what is said in an interaction in the context of presupposed background knowledge (Gumperz 4). In daily life, I use contextualization to navigate social situations. I recognize contrasting situational norms and respond with the appropriate language and cultural knowledge in order to properly situate myself in any given scenario. However, practicing this process of belonging comes at a price. Since childhood, I've learned how to show others that I am German and American. Whether by sitting on a train in Germany making eye contact with someone across the aisle trying to place my accent or talking with my American grandparents who always asked me to "please speak English, we don't understand you," I've learned how to subvert parts of my identity to fit in. To show cultural belonging. In my creative process, a similar practice of contextualization in choreography is also a carefully considered compositional step.

For example, in both *Wildschwein* and *Achtung!... Identity Crossing*, I make choreographic choices to situate myself in relation to my audience by contextualizing myself as an artist through the use of German cultural references in an American environment at Sarah Lawrence College in a contemporary dance setting. As the introduction of a popular German news show *Tagesschau* (daily show) plays from the speaker, an embodied energy of rigidity and consistency is experienced in the physical presentation of the dancer's bodies as we swing our arms back and forth with a

contained energy. This sharpness in the body informs the stern counting in French, English and German, and the volume eventually escalates from a whisper to a shout. My work includes these references to various languages and cultures in order to situate myself in simultaneous worlds, which is a common trait among those who code-switch. Upon reflection, I wonder what actions I would need to take as a choreographer if the work was presented in a different cultural context? Would those contexts change the meaning of the work? If so, how would I identify the unique cultural characteristics that influence the work?

The concept of contextualization is essential to my project because my research is based on the experience of code-switching and navigating identity expression in performance. Through contextualization I aim to not only locate myself, but also understand how identities are formed by theories that address cultural and racial experiences other than my own. My intention is not to steal from others, but rather to reevaluate my experience of cultural code-switching using the knowledge gained from analyzing contrasting perspectives. Although I may have learned about the meaning and function of language through a Western cultural lens, I am positive that my perspective is not the only way to understand my experience with code-switching and plurality as a white, European artist.

Furthermore, by looking at scholars such as Glissant, who study and theorize oral languages and cultural expression specific to oral practice, I can explore the relationship between spoken language and body movement while simultaneously reconciling my experiences with language, culture, and identity expression that have been shaped by western knowledge. My hope is that my research demonstrates an alternative way of navigating cultural identity through artistic practice in which language and the body are in direct conversation, and consider the impact of this relationship, its history, and culture in dance.

As a dance maker, choreography allows me to locate myself in a greater global discourse regarding identity politics. In doing so, I turn to cultural scholar Stuart Hall's perspective on society's contemporary "crisis of identity" (596). Hall argues that we are currently experiencing a "dislocation of central structures and processes that undermine frameworks historically used to anchor identity in the social world" (596). I attribute this dislocation of identity to the emergence of processes such as modernity and globalization. Hall's argument supports the urgency for my cultural identity research. He posits that the process of globalization has created a "crisis" by creating a contemporary search for acceptance of plural identities. Citing political scientist Anthony McGrew's definition of globalization, Hall describes the ways in which globalizing forces can positively "erode global and national boundaries making the world more interconnected" (619). This contemporary interconnectedness has the potential to productively destabilize previously separated identities, creating space for plural identities like mine. In my research, I found it necessary to examine both Hall's and McGrew's ideas not only to determine where and when the global erupts within the personal and the private, but also to identify the globalizing forces that have had an influence on my own life and identity.

For instance, my father chose to move from Germany to the U.S. in his late twenties in search of career opportunities, which later led him to meet my mother and start a bicultural family. Therefore, according to Hall, my bicultural identity exists as result of globalization. Although Hall considers "globalization as a possible weakening of national identity and therefore, a strengthening of other cultural ties in society," I think the intersection of identity is made possible through modernity, which has a complicated history related to *hypernationalism* – the belief that one nation is superior to another (621). Hall's notions bring up poignant, relevant questions about the evolution of cultural power and capital. At this time, for the purpose of my thesis, I will examine

the aspects of the contemporary that encompass the intersection of identity because I am not trying to rewrite the past. I am attempting to reimagine the future.

My thesis builds on Hall's three integral identity concepts of the Enlightenment, sociological, and post-modern subject. During my research, I arrived at a fourth identity concept based on Hall's emphasis on the "crisis of identity." I found Hall's argument rather essential because of his call for plural identity acceptance. However, my development of a fourth contemporary subject is not meant to be interpreted as an appropriated theoretical leap. Although my experience of identity formation includes feelings of plurality and cultural duality, I acknowledge that my experience only parallels Hall's theory because his research is based on the formation of racial identity. Compared to Hall's first three concepts, my fourth concept focuses on the importance of lived body experiences. From spoken language to embodied movement, I move away from Hall's argument by demonstrating the importance of approaching identity formation with the dancing body through choreographic practice based in kinesthetic intuition and understanding.

II. Approaching Creative Praxis with Jones and Parkinson

What are the values of practice-based research methods? How do I approach embodied knowledge? What is the purpose of the reflective process in movement research? In PaR scholar Simon Jones' *The Courage of Complementarity: Practice as Research as a Paradigm Shift in Performance Studies*, he explains that knowledge is gained in three ways from PaR. "The first way is *performance* – embodied and phenomenological know-how. The second way is *critical reflection* – action research. The third way is the establishment of *conceptual frameworks* – theory" (Jones 26).

My project uses choreography, an online blog, and written text to address these methods of knowledge production in creative practice. Each medium offers an outline for knowledge to be formulated in different ways. For example, the choreographic process organizes a physical relationship between the linguistic code-switching mind-body experience, the vlogging (video-blogging) of artistic process documents the reflective and analytical creative mind through visual examples, and the textual integrates the choreographic process and vlogging research into a space of written poetics. My approach is multifaceted in that my work is an investigation of plurality. Therefore, various research methods and practices are necessary to understand the complexities of code-switching.

As Jones explains “PaR occupies a type of ‘no-place’ in-between documents, events, expressions and texts”—and it is this idea of no-place where much of my theorization of the body takes place (27). My choreographic desire mirrors this feeling of the in-between. As a performer, I relish in moments such as transitioning between events, feeling ever connected to both where I was and where I am headed. These feelings are transparent in *Achtung!... Identity Crossing* when I find myself severed from the group, slowly backing away while they continue to move in swift unison. Although I long to join them, I am also tethered to the opposite side of the space where I am headed next. Caught in this transition between environments, my body begins to shake in an attempt to stay present in the no-place. This type of theoretical enactment of no-place in choreography is what Jones describes as *praxis*. *Praxis* is process by which a theory, lesson or skill is enacted in art.

As contemporary dance scholar, Chrysa Parkinson explains, *praxis* in the context of dance is an “active thought” or “thought-action,” bringing dance and movement into direct conversation with the idea (Parkinson 00:06:35 - 00:08:05). I use *praxis* in my research during the rehearsal

process as a tool for exploring the intersection of identity, spoken language, and code-switching with movement in the body. In my experience, *praxis* challenges the hierarchy of language in relation to dance because new ideas are generated through physical experiences. For example, embodying this linguistic transition from... *meine Muttersprache* to speaking English *als ich mein Körper slowly bewege* (my native language to English as I slowly move my body), is a way to train the kinesthetic self to continue flowing while the quick ruptures in language exercise plurality within the body. This *praxis* demonstrates a physical form of knowledge production gained through Parkinson's "thought-action." However, even though *praxis* introduces a way of thinking about research where space is reserved for active-thinking to flourish, it is challenging to find the appropriate balance between the body and language when discourses on language, culture, identity, and the body come into conversation with one another.

Although PaR seems like the perfect match for creative research such as dance making, there are institutional hierarchies that exist which make it difficult for dance to be in direct conversation with other mediums of knowledge such as math, architecture, physics, literature, etc. There is an inevitable un-write-down-able part of dance research that strengthens the internal inscription of movement knowledge and experience in the body, but simultaneously limits its translatability to language and thus, other discourses. Research through a physical practice like dance reveals the way dance's evanescent ontology is in particular difficult to apprehend, and that documentation is paramount to effective and accurate research. In order to address this, I developed the aforementioned personal online blog called *A map to a place called home* (2018) as a platform for documenting my ideas and discoveries throughout the creative process. Rather than undermining physical studio-based projects, the blog includes two of Jones' three writing strategies that support creative work which proved most effective for my research design: *writing-*

up (see fig. 1) and *writing-alongside* (see fig. 2). Additionally, Jones' *writing-up*, which provides a blueprint for the project, and *writing-alongside*, which creates a manual without a predetermined model, were two of the most useful modes of written documentation within my project as they were both descriptive in nature and emphasized the importance of personal reflection in a research process, something that became apparent in my own research when recognizing *praxis* in choreography as the integration of personal experience and theoretical ideas into choreographic choice making (Jones 27).

writing- up

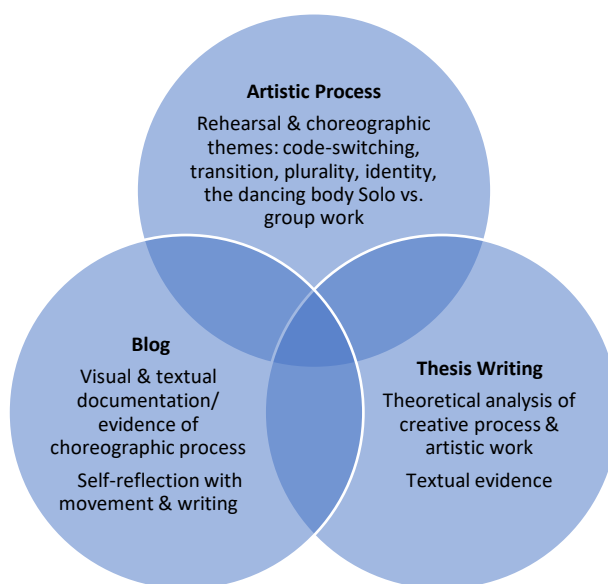
Today was especially useful because it provided me with the creative space I needed to generate movement material without judging it. I am working on shifting my clothing and hairstyle in the work, which is continually adjusting the way I present myself. This led me to think about locating the transitions between these moments of change. How is this related to my experience of code-switching and transitioning in and out of language?

- *A map to a place called home, Lab 3: Locating Transition (2018)*



(Fig.1, Lab 3: “Locating Transition”, Oct. 2018)

writing-alongside



(Fig.2, PaR Blueprint, 2019)

Writing-up is demonstrated in my project on the blog through both textual evidence and images. The blog provides a research timeline clearly situating my self-reflective thoughts and questions in relation to the overall process of the choreographic progress. *Writing-alongside* is exhibited by the theoretical and analytical writing process that documents this project and its many mediums through text. *Praxis* allows for these multifaceted mediums of tracking to integrate and be utilized in my project as a way to approach dance making, further discovering choreographic possibilities in the studio with the dancing body.

III. Language and Embodied Research Shaped by Kinesthetic Intelligence

Kinesthetic intelligence is tied to the self-awareness gained in dance training. My kinesthetic intelligence is connected to the experience of plurality in the body. To borrow from choreographer and scholar Ananya Chatterjea, “manifested kinesthetic intelligence is sculpted by physicalized repetition in technical and artistic practices” (26). In my research, I found that fostering kinesthetic intelligence served as a way to formulate conceptions of my identity through

body knowledge gained by years of ballet, improvisation and contemporary dance training. Calling upon my physical history of these techniques, I asked what does it mean to have multiple cultural identities in one living body? How do we experience plurality in the dancing body? How does cultural identity influence artistic practice and the creative process? The body is the constant and active component tethered to my identity. It houses my physicalized experiences of the external world. Therefore, the body's ephemeral nature and learned variability in dance bring me to consider code-switching, or the ability to move between two language idioms in a short period of time, as the point in which my research takes place.

A key moment in the research process occurred during an examination of code-switching in my solo. In my excitement to explore plurality and the in-between spaces of identity, I chose to dissect a particular moment of transition in my choreography that led to the discovery that transition is the navigation of movement from one point to the next. My third laboratory: *Transition in Language and the Dancing Body* (Nov. 2018), outlines the rapid cognitive switch between language as experienced in movement by the body. My arms quickly jolt from side to side, activating a sequenced response from my spine, head and pelvis. The forceful energy of the arms causes a 'lag' between the movement of my arms and the response from the rest of the body. This sequencing demonstrates my experience of code-switching. I define transition in language as the afore mentioned 'lag' time that occurs when switching from one linguistic pattern to another, a word and/or phrase that holds a place and makes space for another idea to emerge; for example, phrases like "such as," "thus," "for instance," and "in other words." Similar to contemporary choreographer William Forsythe who explains "I like the physical thrill of rapid shifts, as opposed to smooth transitions, and a 'fast twitch' body allows you to do this," I also define transition in movement as the physical shifts that stitch together states of being, such as, a shift in weight from

one leg to another, which prepares the body for what is to come (Downie and Kaiser, Dance Geometry (Forsythe), OpenEndedGroup). By thinking of transition in these two ways, both linguistic and kinetic, I am able to make choices about my choreography as a way to express plural experiences of plurality while code-switching. The results of my laboratories are further detailed in Chapter Two, where I discuss the specificity of my PaR approach and how I foreground choreographic research as a methodology for working through identity. The most exciting part about utilizing PaR is the opportunity for the process of choreographic possibility to become both the site and the subject of the research itself.

IV. Conclusion

In the following chapters, I will use my personal experience with code-switching and navigating two different cultural identities as a jumping off point to explore how those early, and at times bewildering and traumatic, formations can act as a schematic framework for my choreographic research and dance practice today. The italicized fragments interspersed throughout the thesis are meant to support my research. They contain personal memories, factual biographical information, choreographic descriptions of my work and the works of others, laboratory notes from my blog, and inspiring quotes that led me throughout my research process.

code-switch

Miar sind üs schu always really nöch gstanda, but we sind üs sogar no closer koh sit our sister uszoga isch. Whenever she haikunnt, miar would run to the door und umarmen sie ganz tight. Since miar ind U.S. zoga sind, dia hugs have become sogar no länger. Sometimes sogar zwenz'g (20) minutes long. Mengisch brüalen mer drbi.

- Romana Meyrat (performer), *Achtung! ... Identity Crossing* (2019)

In the first chapter, I weave personal anecdotes into Hall's examination of three historical identity concepts in order to arrive at a fourth identity concept—a contemporary subject proposal—in which the kinesthetic intelligence of the dancing body lies at the center of navigating my plural identities.

In Chapter Two, I will not only outline my PaR model as a way to locate my research method in conversation with contemporary dance artists such as Sarah Michelson and Eleanor Bauer, but I reflect on the three core elements of my project (the blog, my choreography, and the written thesis) as a way to analyze PaR as a discipline. My project asks what does it mean to use personal experience as a way to structure artistic practice, specifically choreography? What are the compositional tools necessary to engage in artistic research? How does code-switching inform my dance *praxis*? What is my physical and theoretical approach to dance making? Does PaR legitimize dance as a medium of thought and form of knowledge production? Or, is PaR a façade that does not take the nuances and quality of dance knowledge into account?

During this process, I experienced myself not only as a choreographer, but also as a researcher searching for a solution to understand cultural identity performance within creative practice. I set up a structure in which the tension between self-reflection and artistic intention blended into two separate choreographies. I firmly believe this PaR project has not only led me to reconcile my experience of many identities, but has also shaped my desires as a maker, identifying spatial and self-awareness as choreographic objectives.

Chapter I: Identity Formation Through Kinesthetic Experiences of Cultural Plurality

The oral, on the other hand is inseparable from the movement of the body. There the spoken is inscribed not only in the posture of the body that makes it possible, but also in the almost semaphoric signals through which the body implies or emphasizes what is said. Utterance depends on posture, and perhaps is limited by it.

- Édouard Glissant

How does my choreographic background and bicultural upbringing allow me to re-think cultural plurality with the dancing body in the context of Hall's theoretical framework of identity formation? In his book *The Question of Cultural Identity* (1996), Hall's "crisis of identity" maps the historical development of discourse on identity from the Enlightenment period to the post-modern era, concluding with the proposal for a theoretical, dislocated identity, in which the concept of identity is not singular, but is in fact an experience of plurality like the way that I kinesthetically experience my dual German-American self through movement.

facing plurality

I hold two separate passports and I have a German father and an American mother.

To face plurality is to face multiplicity in yourself and in others. It is to grasp the difficult notion that the individual is more than the sum of their identifying container. When I enter the studio each day, I face myself; I face myself in the mirror and I begin to move. From which identity do I move? With regards to Hall, do all of my identities move together?

The first subject of Hall's historical construction of identity is located in the 18th century Enlightenment period, where the conception of self was primarily articulated through a singular identity given to a human subject at birth. For Hall, "the 'center' or inner core of the subject continues to unfold while remaining 'continuous' or 'identical' with itself – throughout the individual's existence" (597). This notion aligns with the belief that individuals are defined by societal signifiers such as place, language, gender and religion that surround and describe the community in which they are born. Although we often find ourselves synchronous to the identities

of those in our community, it is possible to choose your own identifiers and for those to transform over time.

die Herkunft (origin)

My 88-year-old Oma (grandmother) lives in the same town in which she grew up. She speaks the Rhön dialect of Plattdeutsch that her parents spoke, visits the same Catholic church every Sunday and Wednesday, and continues to purchase bread at the local bakery that has existed for more than half a century. She survived a brain operation at 86 years of age.

According to Hall, the Enlightenment approach to identity was flawed; for individuals like my 88 year-old Oma, they are not only defined by their environment, but also by their personal desires and experiences. This is true of my personal conception of identity. For example, I exist in many environments like graduate school, social circles, home life, etc., but these elements do not encompass the entirety of my identity. I mention Hall's analysis of the Enlightenment subject because the idea that one is "born" into an identity is, at best, a simplistic method of categorizing individuals in our society based on a limited individualistic approach. Thus, the notion of the sociological identity, the second subject, that Hall brings better reflects the growing complexity of the modern world (597). In this particular subject, identity is constructed through an "interaction between the internal self and the external society" (597). Since Hall's definition of identity is developed through a bi-directional avenue of self-reflection, characterized by a projection of self onto society and an internalization of social meaning and value as an assessment tool, the sociological subject is "continuously formed and modified through a dialogue between the cultural outside world and the internal self" (597). This relationship proves challenging for the individual because one can easily be trapped between internal desire and external pressure.

belonging

One day while living in Germany in the second grade, I mistakenly brought my outdoor sneakers to my indoor P.E. class. My classmates immediately noticed and began taunting me saying "die Amerikaner sind so dumm" (Americans are so dumb) "sie wissen nichts über die Sauberkeit" (they don't know anything about cleanliness).

The blatant exposure of my “Americanness” was humiliating even though I knew that being American was part of who I am. I just wanted to fit in. Instances like these have continued to inform my perception of self as a cultural outsider both in the U.S. and Germany. This cultural isolation has impacted my cultural identity and my artistic practice and desire to express myself with dance.

shifting perspective

As I stare at the audience, a pre-recorded track of my Oma at her kitchen table in Germany begins to play. I am visually interrogating them from an upside-down position with my head in-between my legs. I scan the audience from right to left and back again, making eye contact with a select few. My expression shows how I relish in their unsettled expressions. Then, I slowly stand up and begin to undress by unzipping the top of my unitard.

- Wildschwein (2018)

Hall characterizes the sociological identity subject as one that must “align subjective feelings with the objective places we occupy in the social and cultural world” (598). In my own experience, the process of cultural alignment is complicated by an internal desire to be accepted as both American and German and by my external experience of appearing to be either/or in a given situation. In short, I use code-switching as a social tool to navigate and monitor my internal and external perceptions of self. As socio-linguistic scholars Regina Köppe and Jürgen Meisel suggest, “situational code-switching is a skill-set that is easily learned by bilingual children to adapt to their surroundings” (279). Based on personal experience, Köppe and Meisel’s perspective is exemplified by my second grade anecdote because in order to avoid social humiliation, I have had to learn how to shape myself to fit the external expectations of society. Despite the sociological subject of identity formation as a process that acknowledges the internal and external relationships, it still does not provide a space for multiple identities to exist within the same body. Thus, I follow Hall’s turn to a third subject of identity, “formation,” the post-modern subject.

Hall explains the post-modern identity concept by characterizing an individual possessing “no fixed, essential or permanent identity” (598). This shift in identity expression allows for an individual to contain a multiplicity of identities. This means that the focus of identity is not in relation to a unified conception of a coherent “self,” but rather, in true postmodern mode, contains multiplicities (Hall 598).

fluidity in transition

How many identities do I have? Are they always present? How quickly can I switch between them? What does the transition from one cultural identity to another look like in my artistic process?

From my perspective, Hall’s post-modern subject complicates the desire to feel whole through multiplicity. Therefore, in trying to develop a workable definition of identity as it relates to code-switching rather than reimagining the self as severed between cultures, I propose a singular container of self within which one’s plural identities exist. Since code-switching is a practice of navigation from one set of norms to another, this transitional process suggests that identity is locatable and that an individual subject’s identity can exist at the intersection of various identities. It is this liminal kinesthetic and performance space between identities that is critical to my thesis project, as this is what is transmitted when I move from one identity expression to the other in my choreographic research (see fig. 3). In my own artistic practice, I am asking how do I navigate these processes?

What are transitions and how do I pinpoint and locate them in language and in movement?



What does it mean to have a fragmented identity?



Is it possible to be fragmented in one living body?



Is identity intimate or private?



(Fig. 3, Lab 1: “5 questions, 2 languages, 1 body”, Oct. 2018)

I. Navigating Contemporary Dance Identities with Hall, Agamben and Bauer

layering

My German passport notes that my birthplace is Northampton, Massachusetts (U.S.A.)

The choreographic structure of both *Wildschwein* and *Achtung!... Identity Crossing* use language, music and memories that I associate with my German-American background in order to locate the interconnectedness of my identity. The experience of inviting the personal into my rehearsal process as material for compositional choice making has been complicated. In some ways I feel like it is invasion of privacy but, on the other hand, it has also functioned as a way for identity to intersect the desire for artistic self-expression. Just as Hall writes that, “within us are contradictory identities, pulling different directions, so that our identifications are continuously being shifted about,” my research proposes that the pluralities of identity exist within the choreographic navigation of my dancing body (598). It was easier for me to experience this dynamic relationship while working with a group of dancers in *Achtung!... Identity Crossing*. To articulate this desired effect, I chose to choreographically isolate myself from the group throughout the work. I used theatrical lighting techniques to demonstrate temporal simultaneity, quick shifts in movement quality to expose my internal struggle and segmented spatial orientation to reveal the division within the group dynamics. I set-up these dichotomies at the beginning of the work as a visual key for viewers and performers.

unity

The four of us stand grouped together with a fixed forward gaze whispering one... two... three... four... in three distinct languages (French, German and English). We simultaneously move our arms with constrained rigidity from side to side. As the tempo increases, the urgency of our counting ascends. Finally I find myself in a forceful shouting match trying to drown out the other voices, desperately searching for group unity.

- *Achtung! ... Identity Crossing (2019)*

This moment in the choreography ruptures my identity performance by exposing the façade of pretending absolute cultural unity exists. Despite the fact that the group appears to be moving

together disparities emerge, our voices get louder and the complicated dynamics are revealed. The exposure of this moment draws on the crisis of plurality or “crisis of identities” that Hall is referencing. What I am trying to show in this choreographic moment is the contemporary-ness of this discourse on identity. As a way to further define what constitutes the contemporary, I draw on philosopher Giorgio Agamben’s perspective of a contemporary as “one who can see the obscurity of the present by remaining distant and simultaneously questioning both the known and unknown of the future” (13), I locate my approach to choreography as a reflection of both the known and unknown parts of myself. My role in *Achtung!... Identity Crossing* is defined by a series of spatial and energetic ruptures in narrative. Although I am connected to the other three performers, navigating a severed bicultural past, present and unknown future complicate my experience as the maker of the work. This dynamic generates moments of both harmony and disharmony (intentionally and unintentionally) that represent my experience of plurality when code-switching and produce an experience for the viewer to witness the physical and emotional discomfort of my in-betweenness. Through dance composition I find that I am producing a type of awareness and possible knowledge about the in-between experience of the physical and kinesthetic body. As a choreographer, I wonder what dance-knowledge looks like? How is it shared? Is it through movement, writing, and spoken discourse?

Eleanor Bauer is an example of a dance artist and scholar revolutionizing the field of contemporary practice-based research because of her ability to name and generate knowledge regarding identity using the dancing body. In examining Bauer’s discussion on *thought* as an action that “is both totally embodied and situated,” she notes the generative relationship between “language-thought (words) and dance-thought (action), in which meaning and relation flourish from the untranslatability between the two concepts” (27). Thinking about thought and knowledge

generated in dance with what Bauer calls the “bind” (body-mind) is a contemporary approach because it acknowledges that there are many different mediums for thought (Bauer, *Dance Meeting*).

Dance-thinking is a concept that also appears in my choreography. One of the most prominent examples is my relationship to the silver unitard seen in both *Wildschwein* and *Achtung!... Identity Crossing*. The unitard exists as my second-skin. I shed it like a snake at the end of both works, and I have trouble letting go and peeling it off because it is a part of who I am and/or was. Furthermore, I intentionally experience the struggle of untangling myself from its elastic grasp, stretching it across my face, legs and arms each time I perform. My active use of the unitard means that it could be understood by Bauer as a “dance-thought”. Although the symbolism of the unitard is up for interpretation by the viewer, there is ultimately a clear connection between my body, flesh and self, developed by the struggle. The connection is externally transmitted through the physical relationship with the material and meaning of the unitard. In both works, one of my Swiss dancers, Romana, reads an imagined description of what the meaning of my relationship to the unitard is in German to the (mostly English-speaking) audience. Instead of allowing the language to describe the meaning of the action, I made this intentional choreographic choice because I wanted the focus to be on the body’s ability to cultivate a physical response through an interaction with the unitard. The aforementioned relationship between language and movement is what I believe Bauer is calling attention to in her research. There is an inherent untranslatability between language and movement that I am trying to highlight in my artistic work, as cultural code-switching it is not only a linguistic experience, but also an inherently physical process.

Although Glissant argues that language is intrinsically physical due to the experience of sound as related to breath and, thus, the living body, I am making a more specific distinction regarding physical knowledge as equal to knowledge transmitted with language. Choosing Romana to speak in German while I am simultaneously on stage engaging in a physical movement-oriented experience is an intentional choreographic choice. It demonstrates how the legibility of the dancing body when language is obscured, in this case by a foreign language. I have found that choreography itself can be used as a language for provoking code-switching transitions within the body. Bauer's writing also suggests this idea when she describes the fruitful relationship between language and dance. She ponders "*choreography* (dance writing) as a way to point out that dance has its own language (a structure, vocabulary, and logic), which allows it to be perceptible through action" (Bauer 5). In my choreographic practice, I use language as a support system for my work. Ideas, phrases, and identities are generated through verbal language. The body embodies the meaning and begins to generate its own language, which is further discussed in Chapter Two. Bauer warns fellow dance makers about the dangers of using language as the driving force behind creative processes, stating that language should, "...hold a place for an idea to incubate within a certain environment" but that, ultimately, the action (dance) is the element that transforms the understanding and generates discovery (14).

II. Conclusion

Throughout my research, I've asked myself questions about the relationship between dance and language similar to both Bauer and nineteenth century poet Stéphane Mallarmé. Bauer and Mallarmé seem to suggest that a mistranslation occurs when dance (or poetry) is forced to ascribe to linguistic structures that differ from their own. As I see it, Bauer's question "how (if at all) can dance-thought be translated into language-thought?" is an important one (5). Dance is a language

spoken with the body, not necessarily with words, but yet with meaning. Why does dance need to be translated? I think something is often lost in translation and, for me, that is what I've found when I translate moments from my choreography into written analysis in this thesis. As much as I would like to preserve and document the presence of the ephemerality of the body that one experiences while dancing or watching dance, I recognize that language alone lacks the capacity to fully capture it. This begs the question, what does it mean to write about dance? What happens to the choreography when we document and analyze it with descriptive language? Does the dance get lost? Mallarmé writes "Dance is wings, it is a question of birds and of departures into neverland (...)" by which I think he is suggesting that dance has its own form in which one can get lost, but that if you learn the way of dance, then you will be able to properly experience its possibility (107).

Although language is often thought of as the dominant and most important form of communication, my choreographic and artistic intention is for the dancing body to be the mode of thinking and generating knowledge through physical experience. My thesis offers an intersectional view by locating the plurality of identity within the body's experience in the context of cultural studies, performance studies, and practice-based research. Chapter Two examines this process of capturing physical thinking and problem-solving through movement trials and laboratories. The blog is a public display of my performed identity as a mover and visual curator, which contrasts the performativity of my choreographic work. However, in both mediums, I am expressing myself and my identity through code-switching, which I have also come to experience an embodied shift in a state of being.

Chapter II: Choreographing Identity Research

Language can do for dance what any surrogate can do for its referent: hold a place for an idea to incubate within a certain environment, nurtured by certain conditions and structures of thinking.

- Eleanor Bauer

How do I research code-switching using the dancing body? This idea lies at the root of what I am trying to unpack through my choreographic research. As a first time PaR practitioner, I am working to define my identity project through three separate lenses including my blog, two choreographies, and final written thesis. These elements are arranged in a way that allows me to see the overall structure of my research as its own choreography. My project arranges technology, dancers, questions, evidence, laboratories, more questions and finally my desires as a maker into one container ~~of~~ that illustrates my transition from cultural to artistic self. Cultivating my project using these various mediums has forced me to live in a constant state of self-reflection. The mediums make me wonder, what does it mean to code-switch as a white, female, German-American dance artist? How has this experience has affected my work? And, how do others perceive my work?

At the start of my research I asked, “how does my lived experience of cultural code-switching with language and the body inform my creative process in which identity is re-imagined with the dancing body?” Now, I’ve found that because my identity remains in a continuous state of discovery, so does my project. To echo the words of PaR scholar Paul Carter, who wrote “the condition of invention is the state of being that allows a state of becoming to emerge,” I believe my research is a life-long method for unpacking my relationship to the kinesthetic experience of my bi-cultural upbringing.

I. Cultural Identity Performance and Performativity: Online and In-Person

To begin my PaR project, I set up an online blog as previously mentioned to document my research. The title, *A map to a place called home*, reflects my desire to define cultural belonging as it relates to a feeling of home. My blog serves as a self-curated platform for sharing images, videos, and text depicting my research. The blog is not only an archival tool, but also a timeline where I can share personal frustrations, victories, and defeats with an invisible, ever-present, online audience. In essence, the blog has become a virtual presentation and performance of my identity.

Performance and performativity emerged as two fundamental concepts of identity formation over the course of my blogging, vlogging (video blogging) and movement research. I now understand identity performance as the exterior display of internal experience and self-expression, while performativity is the active manifestation of internal desire displayed in socio-cultural situations. In relation to my creative practice, I turn to philosopher and gender theorist Judith Butler to clarify the distinction between the two modes of performance.

Butler highlights the distinction between performance and performativity in a video titled *Big Think* (2011), in which she argues that performance implies taking on a role or acting in some way that is associated with the gender one is looking to portray. It is important to note that performance impacts the way in which both we and others and perceive ourselves. I perceive myself as a German-American dance artist and portray this image on my blog, but do others see me the same way? Performativity, on the other hand, is “an action that produces a series of effects (such as walking and talking), and consolidates an impression of being of a particular gender or identity” (Butler 00:00:05-00:00:45). In a moment of self-reflection, I recall the feeling of bouncing between the personal and formal realms of cultural expression cued by blended audio tracks in *Wildschwein*. As the recording of a *Kaffeezeit* (coffee time) conversation with my *Oma*

plays, I find myself in a nostalgic and reflective state, tugging an inside-out silver unitard over the narrator and dancer Romana's naked body. The reflected dullness of the inside of the unitard marks the transformation of my relationship with Germany from childhood to present-day. As my *Oma's* voice is drowned out by the early 2000s pop-song *Deutschland* by Die Prinzen, I scan the audience, expressing my state of contentment as I reflect on my childhood and look towards the future. This moment reflects performativity because I am actively adjusting my actions to suit (quite literally) my audible environment. For the purposes of my thesis, I often draw on Butler's distinction between performance and performativity to better understand part one of two facets of my research. The first part is the performativity of my identity in both social situations and performance spaces. The second part is the performance of my identity on the blog, which I later examine through Performance Studies scholar Richard Schechner. Both parts are important because each experience produces a similar outcome, one where I possess an innate desire to perform plurality through chorographic physicality.

adjusting expectation

I often find myself performing by adjusting and measuring my actions to fit the perception of what I think is appropriate in the current situation or environment.

What does it mean if the performance of self is malleable? Schechner's argument further elaborates on this question; in *Performance Studies: An Introduction* (2002) he writes, "performance is everywhere – in daily behavior, in the processions, on the internet and media, in the arts and in language" (110). With regards to the performance of identity on my blog, Schechner's insights are crucial in that they ask: if identity is indeed malleable and constructed through performance and performative actions which define and reinforce identity, then how does this play out in the process of code-switching? Both Butler and Schechner may argue that code-switching is a performative action because an individual's identity is actively being shaped by a

linguistic change. I would say that code-switching is more than just a linguistic shift in identity performance. For example, when you have a question in a German classroom, you do not raise your hand like you do in the U.S. In German culture, you raise your pointer finger and snap (if necessary) in a somewhat aggressive manner to get the attention of the teacher. This subtle shift in arm position may seem insignificant; however, the adjustment in spinal posture and the energetic nature of the action creates a performative shift. For the purposes of my research, the ability to recognize and adapt to these subtle situational cues highlights the embodied experience of code-switching that I am looking to share in my choreography.

false accents

In Germany, I not only eliminate speaking English in public spaces, but I refrain from saying English words with an American accent.

For instance, my desire to ‘hide’ the American-ness of my identity when I am in Germany mirrors the curation of self-performance that I also exhibit on my blog. As individuals we make choices about what we share with the world informing the way we choose to construct our identity online and in person. The blog presents a spectacle of my identity because it functions as a map of my process but also exhibits the “performance” of my research through a series of curated videos, images, and laboratory set-ups presenting my thoughts on one platform. To use PaR practitioner John Freeman’s aforementioned notion of the rehearsal studio as a laboratory or “site of formal experimentation,” I have established a documentation practice of performed code-switching as a way to understand the process and its relationship to language and the body (65).

II. Choreographic Studio Laboratories

To understand invention from a place of physical practice, I return to Chatterjea’s explanation of dance knowledge as a kinesthetic intelligence. Chatterjea characterizes this intelligence as “the ability to use one’s body in highly differentiated and skilled ways, for

expressive and goal-directed purposes” (23). With this in mind, I wonder if code-switching is a type of kinesthetic knowledge that can be trained? Could my choreography serve as a method for coaching this code-switching *praxis*? Parkinson’s definition of *praxis* and Bauer’s concept of “dance-thought” offer another key idea that relates to kinesthetic intelligence because in all three instances the dancing body is engaged in generating active mind-body ideas and connections.

I tested my version of “dance-thought” as a kinesthetic intelligence through a series of nine laboratory experiments based in the development of choreographic *praxis* in *Wildschwein* and *Achtung!...Identity Crossing*. In each laboratory, I challenged myself to focus on movement research as a non-representational form of code-switching. Simply put, I prompted myself to locate the physical process of navigating states of being and becoming my identities.

lab 1: 5 questions, 2 languages, 1 body

RQ: *How can I challenge my body to react and respond to two languages in one environment (MacCracken dance studio, Bronxville, New York)?*

Prompt: *Answer 5 biographical questions and assign one movement to each answer while switching from German to English. Questions include: full name (Ingrid Dehler-Setzer), age (twenty-five), place of birth (Northampton, Massachusetts), name of college (Sarah Lawrence College), area of study (Dance).*

Outcome: *The movement immediately became the steady reel of activity that bound together the memory of the physical and verbal answers I gave during this exercise. As the laboratory progressed, I increased the tempo causing the continuous verbal switch from English to German to fluster my ability to perform the movements without a delay. The outcome exhibits an internal and external relationship that is seemingly in synch until the movements become overwhelmed by the verbal switching. As the first laboratory, I found the situation was forced, which meant that the usual emotional component experienced when code-switching did not exist.*

- *A map to a place called home (2018)*

I included several laboratories into the final choreography of both *Wildschwein* and *Achtung!...Identity Crossing*. For example, the first laboratory evolved into an improvisational score that showcased my shadow self on the back wall (see fig. 4). The score exposed the plurality of languages I experience including English, German and the body. These simultaneous identities are illuminated and presented in the work as a clear example of the way in which I chose to

integrate my studio practice into the final performance. Each time I performed this improvisational score, I returned to a mental and physical state of uncertainty. I was reminded of the feeling of being exposed as I tried to reconcile the experience of plurality on stage. I chose to exhibit this moment of cultural navigation in the final in order to reveal the process of choreographic research and to offer a live presence of identity interaction in performance.

shadows of plurality

My shadow self, hovers behind me on the vibrant blue wall of the theater, revealing the ever-present plurality in my body. Although my hair covers my face, I feel exposed. I begin to undulate, the movement racing up and down my spine. I want to shake it off. I want to rid myself of this vulnerability.

- Wildschwein (2018)



(Fig. 4, “Wildschwein” photo by Ian Douglas, Dec. 2018)

The three methods of documentation presented above are an example of Jones’ model of *writing-up* my PaR research. All three modes of documentation are distinctive ways of making the work “legible” to the reader, viewer, and performer, which makes me wonder what it means to make something in the body legible? Does language have to be a part of physical legibility? What is the translation process from movement to language?

III. Writing as Choreographic Translation

When I reference writing, I am indicating the writing on my blog and in this thesis. Although they differ in style, both lexical methodologies offer a similar linguistic perspective on describing the creative process in the development and performance of *Wildschwein* and *Achtung! ... Identity Crossing*. Both the blog and written thesis analyze, theorize and synthesize my artistic *praxis* of physicalized code-switching using words instead of actions. As I mentioned in the introduction, Jones' *writing-alongside* was a tool I utilized both during and after the choreographic process. Although language is incredibly useful for communicating with the majority of individuals, I've found that it does not quite capture the specificity of my research. My focus lies on witnessing the live dancing body navigate cultural transition in code-switching rather than just describing the process.

What does it mean to use language and written text to describe dance? Does writing take something away from the physical realm of movement? What is lost? In my work, the kinesthetic experience (emotion and energetics) of the performer is less potent in writing. While writing offers an unpacking of my internal experience similar to the way in which the blog documents the rehearsal process and the vivid descriptions captures the visual environment and the internal dialogue of the performer, the corporeal experience of movement and the body are still missing from the written format. This leads me to believe that the dancing is as equally lost when writing as it is when using language. This notion mirrors the complexities in translation that both Bauer and Mallarme take issue with in Chapter One, which makes me question how the relationship between writing and dance inform possible power dynamics with regards to diverse forms of knowledge.

IV. Situating Code-Switching in Practice-as-Research

Working on movement research prompts outside of my thesis has given me a myriad of meaningful perspectives for approaching this type of work. After spending six weeks working with Sarah Michelson during a Guest Artist Lab series at Sarah Lawrence College (March 2019), I found her approach similar to my own in that she explores the moving body as a way to produce new insights regarding internal impulses. The mind-body awareness that she cultivates in her “single-action” movement practice has influenced my own understanding of how physical research generates from within the body.

“single-action”

I move, I pause, I move and move and then pause. I hear the command “ backup! [pause] back-up F [longer pause] go!” my body surges into action, cutting out habits for a split second while allowing my inner engine (body) and desire to take over the control panel (mind).

– Sarah Michelson, Sarah Lawrence College 2019

Michelson shared her method for interrogating the relationship between movement and the mind with our class in order to demonstrate the physical connectivity between what she calls the “engine” (body) and the “control panel” (mind). For Michelson, there is no separation between the intellectual process of understanding physicality and actually moving the body in space because active-movement allows for the awareness to be kinesthetic. In my own experience of single action, bodily knowledge and physical patterns were quickly revealed to me through the interrogation of the prompt. I began to call cues and commands for myself during the practice, which allowed me to better locate the intellectual pathway of moving-thinking or Bauer’s “dance-thought”. This awareness of thought reminded me of code-switching because of the moments of calculated shifting and preparation from either English to German or mind to body. When researching with Michelson, my awareness led to progress, which further contributed to my desire

to continue interrogating the relationship between the mind and body, but this time through language and movement.

It was at this point in my research when I met Eleanor Bauer at Sarah Lawrence College. Bauer explained her interdisciplinary process of text-based theoretical dance making. Her most recent work *A lot of moving parts* (2018) exhibits the “frictions, collisions, translations, love affairs, and gaps between dance and language” (Danspace Project).

“A lot of moving parts”

After an hour of continuous movement and traversing the space through storytelling, she arrives at the altar at the back of the stage where an oversized open book made of cream-colored foam ominously awaits her. As her body stills, she leans forward and rapidly begins to write. Black letters on white paper fall from the ceiling littering the ground around her as she continues to inscribe the book with her entirety.

- Eleanor Bauer, *Danspace 2018*

The poetic ending to Bauer’s performance feels like a metaphor clearly illustrating the hierarchy between language and dance. The movement that drives the work for the first hour occurs prior to the writing that takes place on the altar at the end of the piece. I think Bauer’s examination of *choreography* (dance writing), as mentioned in Chapter One, not only questions the inscription of language and letters on the dancing body, but also acts as a possible critique that reveals how movement is the origin of thought and that text precedes it. Thus, in an institution where written knowledge is taken more seriously than kinesthetic intelligence generated in dance, Bauer’s work in junction with PaR makes a strong statement, clarifying the order of operations in dance and demanding that physical knowledge must be taken seriously.

My research draws on Bauer and Michelson’s demand for institutional recognition of embodied knowledge. As a way to locate code-switching in relation to Bauer and Michelson, I filtered our three approaches through scholar Robin Nelson’s model of PaR. Nelson articulates that “researchers must be able to specify their research, set a timeline, build in moments of

reflection, capture moments of insight through documentation, locate praxis in a lineage and relate inquiry to broader contemporary discourse” (29). While working with Michelson, my colleagues and I generated a structure and vocabulary for her “single action” research that included some, but not all of Nelson’s processes. We set up three roles including practitioner (mover), orator (cue initiator), and observer (recorder). On one hand, each role provided a form of documentation and reflection that necessitated engaged participation and immediate analysis from each participant. On the other, Bauer’s research takes place in the physical and choreographic realm while also existing in the written. In her latest work, *A lot of moving parts*, Bauer accompanies her solo performance with two self-authored booklets. From my perspective, Bauer’s approach to PaR happens within a space of translation from dance to language and mind to body. Although I find my own approach mirrors both Michelson and Bauer’s in that we all share a desire to employ the dancing body to experience our work (in relation to Nelson’s PaR method of documentation, reflection and contextualization), I believe Bauer and I engage in a more comparable processes.

V. Conclusion

Choreographing my identity research using a PaR model was fruitful in that it gives my project a pre-determined formula for structuring my research. Drawing on Freeman, Jones and Nelson, I curated my PaR project using my own subject matter (code-switching) while stitching together tools such as dance laboratories, vlogs, images and choreographic descriptions generating an entire methodology or a “manual without a model” (Jones 27). I practiced persistent documentation and immediate reflection, strategies that became a critical part of my dance *praxis* and managed my desires as a choreographer. The laboratories preserved my discoveries and organized my thoughts through various mediums. The blog served as a digital archive for my research and became a space for me to reflect in “real-time” on unformulated desires that

manifested in my choreographic pursuits. Although flawed, the written components of my research provide a container in which the varied parts of the project exist in dialogue with one another.

Conclusion: Identity, Dance, and Belonging

I began my thesis research looking to clarify the connection between my cultural and artistic identities. As an emerging artist, I am in a constant state of defining my creative process as it relates to dance making and my experience of the world. Now I am wondering whether my German identity performance is about showing myself or others who I am. Does this change depending on who (friend or audience) I am communicating with? What does it mean to suppress an identity in the body? Through the exploration of various cultural expectations, plural identities, and transitional choreographic moments, I have arrived at a perspective of dance-making through a PaR approach that addresses part of my experience of code-switching from within the dancing body.

In the introduction I asked, “What does it mean to have multiple cultural identities in a singular body? How do we experience plurality through dance? How does cultural identity influence artistic practice and the creative process?” I demonstrated how dance can be understood as a form of kinesthetic intelligence in which the dancing body is trained to not only embody movement qualities, energetics, and techniques, but also the complexity of one's physical experience of identity (gender, race, culture, etc.). In my case, this complexity emerges in the navigation of code-switching. In defining my internal kinesthetic awareness of code-switching for myself as a research practitioner, I found it important to integrate my perception of cultural belonging into the choreographic. In both *Wildschwein* and *Achtung!... Identity Crossing*, I used cultural-specific references such as German party-music and daily television programming as well as embodied moments of German values such as efficiency and productivity to reveal my relationship to personal history fueling my creative and performative desires. Dance has become

the container in which my embodied German and American identities intersect, allowing me to flow in and out of states of being without feeling segmented or restricted.

In Chapter One I questioned, how does my choreographic background and bicultural upbringing provide me with a perspective on Hall's theoretical framework of identity formation as an approach to re-thinking cultural plurality with the dancing body? I showed how the importance of physical awareness led to the proposal of a fourth contemporary identity concept derived from Hall's discourse on identity formation. Since the body is connected to an individual's experience of the world, the kinesthetic knowledge embedded in the body informs one's cultural identity. Plurality is my experience of cultural identity, and it is a complex topic due to its historical roots entrenched in colonial and post-colonial discourse. Each time I reflect on my research I question my privilege as a white, female German-American artist making work about code-switching. I wonder how my work is perceived by others. Have I overstepped boundaries? My work is trying to show that dance is a personal and yet performative way for me to reconcile the search for cultural belonging. Code-switching is a process that I've engaged in instinctively since childhood and my research in dance provides a new perspective on navigating the transition from expression of my American and German qualities. My intention is not to elevate my experience above anyone else's, but show that I believe dance is a form of knowledge that provided a kinesthetic awareness of cultural transition for me.

Chapter Two outlines the structure of my PaR project (the blog, choreography, and written thesis) while asking, "What does dance knowledge look like? How is it shared? How does one make an experience in the body legible to an audience? Does language have to be a part of physical legibility? What is the translation process from movement to language?" I worked from personal and internal experiences while making both works, but often struggled to not only translate my

biculturalism, but make choreographic choices that weren't merely representational of code-switching. In order to do so, I shifted my approach from my solo process to collaborating with my dancers in *Achtung!... Identity Crossing*. What I found was that utilizing their personal multicultural backgrounds (French, German, and Swiss-German) to talk about identity and belonging in rehearsal allowed them to insert personal experiences of code-switching, making the experience more kinesthetic and psychological, embodying a dialog between us and a sense of connection with one another. Whether it was collaborating with my dancers, learning from Michelson and Bauer or developing my own research methodology, I'm confident in my current working definition of PaR.

my definition of practice-as-research (verb)

A form of academic research structured in a non-traditional way in order to reflect the relevance of disciplines rooted in discovering and generating active knowledge through creative and experience-based processes.

Although this definition covers the basic structure of my project, PaR is a relatively new field of study that has some structural flaws. As I mentioned in Chapter Two, I think PaR imposes formalized conceptions of what 'real' research looks like on creative artforms such as dance. I found that documentation through video was more useful than writing because it captured the actual movements of the body, whereas writing did not fully capture the kinesthetic experience of the movements. For me, the dancing body is the source of my knowledge and choreography is an expression of that knowledge through the arrangement of movement in time and space. I found the legibility of code-switching most potent not through written form, but rather communicated by myself and my dancers' live performance.

The intimacy of sharing identity with an audience is never something that crossed my mind until I heard audience members asking questions about my identity to one another. For example one audience member wondered aloud "so does the choreographer also speak German?" This is

an excellent question that I never considered because I myself don't speak (English or German) much during both works. This made me feel very vulnerable and makes me wonder how I am choosing to communicate as a choreographer? I thought I made conscious choices about how I presented myself in both pieces, but is it possible that I forgot that my audience doesn't necessarily know me? What does it mean to connect with an audience? How is my identity related to honesty? Is honesty a practice of intimacy? The line between my internal and external self is thin, not because it is weak, but because it is transparent. My drive to be external as a person and as a choreographer is strong and emerges in my work in the moments of snapping back from sadness and reflection to the joy of dancing to *Ein Stern* by DJ Ötzi. This presence of awareness is charged by how I want to connect with others. How might this change if the audience isn't willing to connect with me? A possible future direction for this research would include looking at intimacy and privacy in performance as a way to research the self.

Dance theorist Valerie Briginshaw brings to light the blurring of binary opposition that exists within the spatial discourse on intimacy and privacy. In an explanation of *Between/Outside* (1999), a dance film choreographed and filmed by Lucille Power, Briginshaw emphasizes the presence of the plurality of space(s) that can exist within the same moment, which begs the question of whether intimacy is synonymous with privacy. Space would be the next step for this thesis project. I wonder where identity falls on the scale of private and public space (specifically in performance). Since space is a physical place in which identities exist, then is it our choice as individuals to decide how we present ourselves in private and public spaces. Although some parts of identity are seemingly "public" because they are visible (for example physical appearance) does this imply that what we show is considered public identity information?

As exhibited in the excerpts of my personal history throughout this thesis, navigating plural identities whether cultural or other, has forced me to make decisions about expressing or subverting parts of who I am in performance. Using identity as a seed for dance-making has prompted me to think about the intimacy of myself and how I want to present the internal and external processes of who I am when navigating identity, desire and habit on stage. I wonder, is the stage a public or private space? Can it be both? With this, I leave one last thought. As an artist, I've learned to embrace my plural identities and recognize that the dancing body has become the intersection of my plurality in which the transition in and out of identities mirrors the constant kinetic flow of energy within the body that keeps me alive.

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